

The Gender Dynamics of Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme

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Abstract

The paper explores interfaces between gender and land reform with specific reference to women's ability to access land and participate in land reform processes during the fast track land resettlement programme in Zimbabwe. Statistics indicating beneficiaries of A1 and A2 resettlement models were abstracted from the national quantitative data base on the fast track land reform programme compiled by the Presidential Land Review Committee in 2003 and interviews with members of district and provincial land identification and allocation committees and beneficiaries of land. The paper posits that lack of a gender numeric target, diverse and non-specific land allocation criteria countrywide may have derailed women's ability to access land. Women's stake in land reform may have been compromised following the ideological transition from land reform targeting the landless to re-conceptualizing land reform to establish a new crop of indigenous large-scale farmers.

Introduction

Posterman and Hanstad (2005) define land reform as agrarian reforms whose purpose is to reduce socioeconomic marginalization of the rural poor and other socially excluded groups by granting them access to land and formalizing their control over land. Over one billion people outside the developed world depend on the land for livelihood (Oxfam 2003). For such people land has multiple values as a symbol of wealth, status, power, autonomy and as a key factor for subsistence and economic activities (FAO 1999). While there are intra-country and inter-country differentials in the spatial, temporal and socio-political context of land reform, reasons for undertaking state sponsored land resettlement programmes range from the need to redress socio-economic inequalities arising from systemic racial discrimination due to settler colonialism in order to achieve historical, social and political justice (Meer 1999). For

countries with a history of colonialism, land reform is an integral component of a social transformation agenda that seeks to redress a post-colonial legacy of land alienation and dispossession. It is also a policy instrument to alleviate rural poverty and inequality. Effective implementation of land reform can improve household welfare; safeguard human rights including the right to food, economic access to food and the right to an adequate standard of living (Quisumbing et al. 1995).

In Zimbabwe, land resettlement has been an ongoing process both within and outside the formal process. The period following independence (1980) saw the inception of planned and systematic resettlement programme. Land reform was a major objective for waging the war of independence. At independence there were overt socio-political and economic pressures for land reform arising from the need to correct the racially skewed land distribution and ownership associated with settler colonialism. However, the number of resettled households has not been at par with the ambitious targets that government has set for itself periodically. Land reform in Zimbabwe has basically taken the form of decolonization or redistributive land reform where land is transferred from large scale white farmers to 'land hungry peasants' for the purposes of resettlement. Inability to meet resettlement targets has been invariably attributed to lack of political will, constitutional limitations, budgetary, administrative, technical and logistical constraints exacerbated by periodic droughts and demographic investment. By 1989 formal resettlement had stalled. The impasse in resettlement caused a crisis of expectation and frustration among the electorate as the number of landless people continued to grow.

The fast track land reform programme officially known as Zimbabwe's accelerated land resettlement programme refers to radical and controversial land seizures arising from widespread compulsory expropriation of white owned commercial farms by the state. It was officially launched on the 15 July 2000. Component processes of the programme included accelerated land identification, acquisition, demarcation and simultaneous settler emplacement in all provinces of the country (Utete 2003). To facilitate rapid acquisition of the land, government amended the constitution in April 2000 in order to acquire land without obligation to pay for the land except for improvements. The fast track land resettlement programme was precipitated by rejection

of the draft constitution in February 2000. Constitutional amendment retrospectively legitimized the land invasions. Earlier resettlement programmes were disparate from the fast track land resettlement programme 'in terms of the philosophy, practices and procedures of resettling people' (Utete 2003:27). Whereas resettlement before 2000 targeted the landless, the fast track land resettlement programme aimed to encourage agricultural productivity by giving land to a new crop of black large-scale farmers. Selected characteristics of resettlement programmes before and after 2000 are compared in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of characteristics of the land resettlement programme 1980-1989 and the Fast Track Land Reform programme (2000).

Criteria	Land resettlement 1980-1989	Land resettlement 2000-2003
Mode of land acquisition	Willing seller - willing buyer basis at prevailing market prices	Compulsory acquisition/ illegal invasions and land grabs. Compensation offered only for improvements
Donor support	Funded with internal and international resources	No donor support due to unconstitutional land acquisition method
Criteria for selecting beneficiary	Landless	Arbitrary/ favours distinct interest groups e.g. war veterans and political elite
Legal framework to guide the resettlement process	In place before land redistribution	Started with no legal backing. There was ex post facto regularization via constitutional amendment
Property rights and security of tenure	Guaranteed in constitution and statutes	Not guaranteed by the constitution or statutes
Justification for land reform	To attain historical, social and economic justice	Predominantly to shore up waning political fortunes

Provision of basic infrastructure	Provision of basic infrastructure was mandatory before resettlement	No post transfer support infrastructure and services.
Gender numerical targets	Not specified	Not specified
Joint ownership for spouses	Not specified	Not specified

At inception, the fast track land reform programme was scheduled to last only three years. It caused widespread racial polarization and was condemned for violating constitutional rights of individuals including property rights and for violating national and international legislation. It was also condemned for the opaque, often chaotic, undemocratic and exclusionist nature of its implementation. Despite teething problems spawned by the fast track land resettlement programme over 90% of previously white owned commercial farmland had been transferred to black farmers by the end of 2003. Table 2 compares pace of resettlement in terms of hectareage expropriated before and after the fast track land reform programme.

Table 2. Land Ownership pattern before and after the fast track resettlement programme

Land Category	Before the fast track land resettlement programme		After the fast track land resettlement programme (2003)	
	Area (million ha) as at June 2000	Percent of total area	Area (million ha)	Percent of total area
A1	Not applicable	-	4.2	11
A2	Not applicable	-	2.2	6
Old resettlement	3.7	9	3.7	9
Communal	16.4	41	16.4	41
Large-scale	11.8	30	2.6	6
Small-scale	1.4	4	1.4	4
National Parks	6.0	15	6.0	15
State Land	0.3	1	0.3	1
Other	-	-	2.8	7
Total	39.6	100	39.6	100

Source: Utete (2003)

Demands for gender equity to land are often met with formidable resistance because such demands are perceived as a challenge to patriarchal control (Palmer 2005). The patriarchal system does not allow women to inherit land from husbands or fathers (FAO 1999). While men have primary right to land, women's rights are not ascribed but are secondary, derived or relational as wife, mother or sister (Palmer 1985; Jacobs 1989; Madhu 1998; Oxfam 2003). Women's heavy dependence on the formal land rights of others causes insecurity as such rights can be withdrawn due to divorce, death of a spouse or concurrent polygamous unions. Each of these situations can strip a woman of her basic livelihood asset (Lambrou 2005). Irrefutable evidence abounds in the literature on gendered land rights to suggest that there is a crisis of access and ownership of land among women. In Zimbabwe, Kenya and Zambia women own less than 2% of the land but produce 60%-80% of food crops (FAO 2000). Ninety-eight percent of permits issued to resettled couples between 1980-1989 in Zimbabwe were issued to men. Only 2% were issued to women (Petrie et al. 2003). Registration of resettlement land in joint husband and wife's names has not gained currency in national land reform and resettlement discourses due to conceptualization of head of household as predominantly male (Cornheil 1997). Paradoxically female heads of households, widows and divorced women are frequently denied access to land in resettlement schemes (ZWRCN 1998).

In spite of incorporating the principle of equality in the national constitution, matters of property ownership, inheritance and divorce are governed by clauses upholding customary law over the constitution (WLSA 1997). Other constraints to women's ability to access land reform or participate in land reform processes are attributed to ignorance. According to FAO (2003), rural women in many parts of Africa harbour a traditional conception of land ownership and are largely ignorant of processes and procedures of the land reform programme. They lack information and knowledge of legal opportunities to safeguard their rights. They suffer from inertia, are risk averse due to internalized oppression and are sidelined by men who dominate national and traditional institutions tasked with authority to identify beneficiaries and to allocate land. In the absence of gender numeric targets, male dominated land allocation committees tend to subliminally perpetuate patriarchal gender stereotypes. They are also likely refuse to allocate land

to women. In addition powerful economic and political elites sometimes use formal or informal practices of exclusion (Moyo 2004).

There are also gender legal barriers to accessing land reform. Modern and traditional laws tend to be interpreted in favour of male ownership and control of land. In the absence of a gender explicit land reform and administrative framework, existence of legal plurality imposes limitations on women's ability to access land reform (Brown 1995; FAO 2003). Where customary law coexists with other statutory instruments, customary law prevails. This undermines public commitment shown by government to the gender equality principle as demonstrated by signing and ratifying national, regional and international conventions and protocols (WLSA 1997).

Justification

Land is an emotive and highly contested issue (Mgugu and Chimonyo 2004). It is a potent anti-poverty asset yet women's access to land and agrarian reform is an often under-researched aspect of land reform (Cross and Hornby 2002; Posterman and Hanstad 2005). A confounding factor is paucity of gender-disaggregated data on land reform (FAO 2003). National quantitative databases generally show total number of resettled households. Some countries do not have gender numeric targets in their land reform administrative frameworks. According to Lambrou (2005), land rights are an area of gross discrimination. In view of widespread feminization of poverty, land reform implementers need to recognize the diverse and vital role that women play in agriculture.

There is a confluence of opinion to support the view that land reform is a fundamental developmental priority and a plausible instrument for social and economic empowerment. Article 14 of CEDAW (1997) states that women must benefit from rural development and must have equal treatment in land and agrarian reform. While gender equality has been highlighted as a central concern in the Millennium Declaration and is mandated under Goal 3 realizing gender equality is instrumental to achieving all MDGS. Land reform is potentially an effective poverty focused policy objective. Inevitably women's ability to access land reform is critical for poverty reduction and it impacts positively on family welfare, nutrition and health (Lahiff 2003). Because 75% of Zimbabwe's

population derives a part of its livelihood from rural areas, land is a critical productive asset (CSO 2002). There is need, therefore, to analyze the impact of the fast track land reform programme on women's access to land and agrarian reform.

Objectives

The paper seeks to;

- evaluate criteria and practices used for allocating land during the fast track land resettlement programme and analyze their impact on women's ability to access land
- contribute to gender and land discourses

Methods

The paper is an ex post-facto analysis of the fast track land reform programme and its likely impact on women's ability to access and participate in land reform processes. In order to get women's objective situation, the paper used the national quantitative data base on the fast track land reform programme compiled by the Presidential Land Review Committee of 2003. Interviews were also conducted with members of district and provincial land identification and allocation committees and some land beneficiaries most of whom preferred answering questions off the record for fear of political reprisals or expulsion from the land. Review of literature covered land reform policy document analysis and reports by NGOs and Women Land Lobby Groups. Because of the high number of government ministries and departments that were involved in the fast track land reform programme, sectoral data fragmentation and bureaucratic procedures at department, and ministerial levels make research access and accessibility of data difficult. Because of the controversies surrounding the programme's implementation, much of the information pertaining to the fast track land reform programme is officially regarded as classified information.

Results and Discussion

There were two basic resettlement models under the fast track land reform programme namely Model A1 and Model A2. All land acquired under the fast track land reform programme is state land. A1 model was intended

to decongest rural areas. Beneficiaries got small farms of about 5 hectares in villages. A second variant was the self-contained small farm. Selection for A1 beneficiaries was the responsibility of Provincial Land Identification Committees and District Land Identification Committees (Utete 2003).

The A2 model was intended to create a crop of black commercial farmers. Ninety-nine year transferable leases would replace freehold title in the large-scale farming sector. Settler selection was made on the basis of applications for land to the Ministry of Agriculture. Table 2 shows beneficiaries of resettlement land by province and gender for A1 farms.

Table 2. Beneficiaries of resettlement land by province and gender for A1 farms

Province	Percent beneficiaries of land in provinces by gender		Percent beneficiaries of land in provinces as proportion of total male/ female adult population		Percent beneficiaries of land in provinces as proportion of total male/ female headed households	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Manicaland	81.6	9.9	1.5	0.3	4.5	1.4
Mashonaland Central	88.3	11.7	3.0	0.3	8.6	2.6
Mashonaland East	76.4	23.6	2.7	0.7	7.8	3.4
Mashonaland West	80.5	19.7	4.0	0.9	6.5	5.1
Masvingo	84.0	16.0	3.1	0.6	11.5	2.9
Matebeleland North	84.3	15.7	2.7	0.4	8.9	2.6
Mashonaland South	87.6	12.4	--	--	2.9	2.5
Midlands	82.3	17.7	2.4	0.4	13.2	1.6
National Average	83.1	15.8	2.7	0.5	7.8	2.8

A disproportionate number of women were unable to access land. Gender disaggregated data shows that 15.8% of those allocated A1 farms were women. Female beneficiaries of A1 farms were 0.5% of the total adult

female population in a country where women make up 52% of the population. By contrast male beneficiaries of A1 farms were 83%. The number of women allocated land is way below the gender parity. Women head 34% of households in the country (CSO 2002). However the number of women land beneficiaries expressed as percentage of all women headed households is only 2.8%. A male head of household was 3-4 times more likely to be allocated land compared to a woman head of household. The high proportion of women countrywide who were unable to access land arises from government's inability to create an environment for women to access land. Absence of gender numeric targets in the fast track land resettlement policy framework or as part of the criteria for allocating land shows government's weak commitment towards gender equity. The Minister of Agriculture shot down a proposition by the Women Land Lobby Group to fix a quota of resettlement land to be allocated to women by subjectively claiming that land will be allocated to those who qualify for it without special consideration for women or any other interest groups (Carmen 2001; SARDC 2001). A host of hostile policy frameworks prejudice women's ability to access land (Mushunje 2001). Women suffer from double discrimination as women and as women within specific categories (Ikhadal et al. 2005). Former women farm workers, for example, were not given priority for resettlement. Only 1% of land beneficiaries were farm workers (Marongwe 2004).

During the 2002 fast tract land reform programme like in previous land reform programmes, women were treated as a homogenous group ignoring their varying socio-economic circumstances (Palmer 2002). Uniform categorization of women makes it difficult for land reform to target vulnerable groups in each sub category since not all women experience patriarchy in the same manner (Lambrou 2005). Married women, for example, are often excluded from benefiting from land reform as potential beneficiaries because of a variety of social and institutional factors. Erroneous belief in de facto equality among family and household members often subsumes their interest under those of their husbands' allotment (Palmer 1985). However differential power relationships among members of a family often deprives women of the right to a livelihood.

Gender-neutral norms favour male life situations (Ikhadal et al. 2005). Classifying beneficiaries of land as male/female masks the gendered

nature in allocation of productive resources such as land. Joint registration for resettlement land was not in the policy framework either during the fast track land resettlement programme or in earlier programmes. Vice President Msika shot down the proposal as being contrary to cultural norms, beliefs and practices. The assumption is that land is a prescribed domain for males. According to Palmer (2005), the example demonstrates how custom is invoked to defend indefensible practices. It also shows discordance between legal plurality that gives precedence to customary law and the equality principle in the context of the family. Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya are some of the countries in Southern Africa who have already legislated for joint ownership of land to protect women from dispossession following death of a spouse, divorce or concurrent polygamy (Ikhadal *et al.* 2005).

Table 3 shows criteria used for selecting beneficiaries of Model A1 land.
Table 3. Criteria used for allocating A1 farms

Beneficiaries by category	Percent
War veterans	20
Uniformed forces	10
Others	70

There were no uniform land allocation criteria across provinces but throughout the country, war veterans and uniformed forces received preferential treatment. Lack of gender sensitive criteria for resource allocation directly and indirectly marginalizes women and other vulnerable groups. Table 4 summarizes methods by which land was accessed.

Table 4. Methods used for acquiring land by gender of beneficiary

	Percent	
	Male	Female
Application	55	10
Land invasion	20	3
Other means	10	2

More men than women acquired land through land invasions because the burdens of child-care, domestic responsibilities and social

reproduction made land invasions a less suitable option for women to acquire land. There was no basic infrastructure on the farms that would allow women to move on to the farms with their families (Cross and Hornby 2002). Fear of social sanction after joining gangs of marauding land invaders also constrained women's ability to use land invasions as an option for getting land (Beall 2005). This was further compounded by the realization that security of tenure was not guaranteed on account of competing claims for the same land between commercial farmers, farm workers, new settlers and the state. Applications for A1 farms were sent through traditional power institution. Because chiefs and councilors are predominantly male they represent the very patriarchal institutions that work towards consolidating power in their own hands and who may perceive women's entitlement to land as a threat to existing power relations (Cross and Hornby 2002). Application procedures were considered bureaucratic. Some people did not know the administrative procedures for applying for land (Moyo 2004). Under 'other means', land was allocated to party supporters on a partisan basis or individuals related to powerful elites who did not need to follow bureaucratic application procedures. Conflicting mandates, in the identification and allocation of land coupled with political interference, political regionalism and irregular allocation resulted in double and multiple farm ownership at the expense of vulnerable groups. Overall concern was with achieving pre-determined resettlement numeric targets rather than empowerment (Masiwa and Chipungu 2004).

At all levels in all provinces women were in the minority (fewer than five) among members of the land-allocating and application adjudication committees sometimes made up of up to 26 members. Participation in land reform processes by intended beneficiaries is a likely mechanism of making institutions that distribute resources representative and accountable. Tanzania's Village Act of 1999 established quotas for women's participation in land allocation and dispute resolution committees. They made it mandatory to include at least three women in the 7 member village land committees (Hilhorst 2000; Ikhadal et al. 2005). Table 5 shows beneficiaries of A2 farms by province and gender.

Table 5. Beneficiaries of A2 farms by province and gender

Province	Percent beneficiaries of land in each province by gender	
	Male	Female
Manicaland	90.9	9.1
Mashonaland Central	90.1	9.9
Mashonaland East	no data	no data
Mashonaland West	88.72	11.3
Masvingo	91.7	8.2
Matebeleland North	82.2	17.7
Matebeleland South	79.6	20.4
Midlands	95.2	4.8
National Average	76.1	11.6

The overall share of women is low. Country wide only 11.6% of those allocated commercial farms were women compared with 76.1% men. This figure is way below the gender parity. A predominant method for allocating A2 farms was through application although some farms were obtained following evictions. Like the situation on A1 farms the criteria for allocating land was variable. Some offer letters were generated from Head Office while others came from Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement (Utete 2003). There were no checks and balances resulting in double or multiple allocations. Some provinces adopted a point system as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Criteria for accessing A2 farms

Criteria	Maximum points
Evidence of adequate financial resources	50
Ownership of fixed and movable assets in applicant's name	30
Experience in agriculture	10
Training in agriculture	10
Gender (male)	5
Gender (female)	10

Although being female attracted more points than being male the criteria excludes a lot of women who own assets which are registered in the husband's name as per the prevailing patriarchal customs and practices (Kalabamu 1996). Only 11.6% of beneficiaries of large-scale commercial farms were women. Joint title could have allowed more women to access A2 farms.

Conclusion

Land reform is an important developmental option that can be used to achieve MDGS particularly the need to reduce poverty by 2015. Like earlier land reform programmes (1980-1989) the fast track land reform programme marginalized women. Because of the political and ideological controversies surrounding its implementation, the fast track land reform programme may have entrenched long term forms of inequality with respect women's ability to access, own, control, use and manage land. The expectation was that land reform would be used to achieve both gender justice by redistributing land in a manner that would benefit both men and women. Focus on racial equality among other factors may have eclipsed the need for gender equality. The continued marginalization of women in land reform processes and constrained access to land shows the gap between policy and implementation and between principle and practice (Walker 2001). The government signed international, regional, human rights instruments that require legal and organizational measures to facilitate pro-poor and gender equal policies (Ikhadal et al. 2005).

The Utete Report of 2003 noted the chasm between the number of male and female beneficiaries of both A1 and A2 farms. It recommended that women be allocated a quota of at least 40 percent of all land allocations and funding (Utete 2003). The Women's Land Lobby Group had requested for 30 percent of land allocations. Government had previously never legislated an earlier quota request of 20 percent. The Rukuni Commission of 1993 that was appointed to recommend measures to improve production in communal and resettled areas left out any discussion of women's tenurial rights. This signifies latent and prevailing hostile policy environment which militates against achieving gender equity in land set aside for resettlement. It is most probable that women's stake in land reform may have been lost following the ideological transition from land reform targeting the landless to re-conceptualizing land reform to establish a new crop of indigenous large-scale farmers (Palmer 2005).

Gender targets are critical to allow land reform implementers to transition from rhetoric to concrete empowerment of women by prioritizing women as a special category. Given the centrality of land as a critical livelihood asset, land reform can be used as a short to medium term mechanism for reducing poverty. Inequitable land distribution is a cause for continuing poverty. There is growing perception that using a human rights based approach to land reform may enhance woman's access to land by addressing unequal power relations that relate to decision making processes and distribution of material resources. Using a human rights based framework based on international legal standards such as the right to livelihood and the right to equality may remove land from the private realm of the family into the sphere. The extent to which women in practice will benefit from any improved legal or administrative framework on land reform based on gender equity will be shaped by prevailing and varied socio-political and economic contexts and the aggressiveness of their demands to government and the ability of micro and macro level institutions to uphold the principle of equality.

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