

A Situational Analysis of Former Commercial Farm Workers in Zimbabwe, a Decade after the Jambanja

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Abstract

This study follows barely ten years after Zimbabwe embarked on a controversial fast track land reform programme. The study aimed to assess the situation of former farm workers still residing in farm compounds. A study sample of 100 households from 8 selected compounds in Mazowe district were interviewed based on availability. It was noted that most former farm workers still live in acute poverty with low calories intake per day, insecure land tenure, poor accommodation, low levels of education and unstable sources of income. Based on the results of this study, the authors give a number of recommendations which include allocating the workers land, creating employment opportunities for the workers, providing accommodation, helping them acquire Zimbabwean citizenship. Results of the study can inform the government and other stakeholders on the long overdue need to address the plight of former commercial farm workers.

Keywords: farm workers, land reform, Zimbabwe, situational analysis, Mazowe district

INTRODUCTION

The struggle for land has been highlighted as a key phenomenon in the development of man in both developed and developing countries. Ownership and distribution of land is a key factor in class formation, structure and differentiation (Wekwete, 1991). The land question in Zimbabwe stands out as one of the most important political question before and after independence in 1980. During the Lancaster House Conference which saw the independence of Zimbabwe it was estimated that up to US\$ 500 million would be acquired to purchase land for resettlement on a willing buyer willing seller basis (Wekwete, 1991). The colonial evolution of the Zimbabwean agrarian history is well documented (Palmer 1977, Riddell 1978, Moyana 1984 and Mutizwa-Mangiza and Helmsing 1991). The history depicted racial apportionment of land between the white settlers and the indigenous people. Disequilibrium in land distribution was deliberately created in the colonial period between 1890 and 1980 (Muchemwa et al, 2011). At independence in 1980, a new ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development was formed to spearhead resettlement. The process from land acquisition to land resettlement was a long procedure involving a long bureaucratic chain. This and the shortage of resources militated against the planned resettlement programme in Zimbabwe as well.

Land reform is one of the tools used to fight poverty in most regions of the developing world. Proponents of land reform have also claimed that land reform is an instrument for the pursuit of social equity (Sachikonye, 2003). Around the late 1800s, the British whites colonized Zimbabwe and the colonization was marked by uneven distribution of land with the master whites occupying the fertile land. The land question became an issue since then and was part of the armed struggle that saw Zimbabwe gaining independence in 1980 (Alexander, 2006). Since the colonial period, black political parties mainly ZANU PF1 promised the electorate land and this mandate had to be fulfilled once it got into power. Land was allocated after independence in 1980 but not up to expectations due to financial problems. Since the colonization of Zimbabwe, the commercial farming sector provided the lowest wage and living conditions and job security. For many decades, the bulk of farm workers were migrant laborers imported from the neighboring countries of Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia but of late Zimbabweans have infiltrated the sector as laborers. It is therefore the purpose of this study to assess the situational of former commercial farm workers

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adversely affected by the *Jambanja*. The study can act as a shriek to the government so that it can map intervention strategies to help the affected people.

The *Jambanja*

For many years after the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the white commercial farmers continued holding on to the land despite promises to those who participated in the liberation struggle that land was a serious question. War veterans who waited for a long time, were disgruntled and it was between 2000 and 2002 when Zimbabwe embarked on a chaotic and controversial land reform programme under an operation code named the *Jambanja*, Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) or the “Third Chimurenga” (Alexander, 2006). The country’s leadership justified the reform on the grounds that it was imperative to bring about equity through poverty reduction (Sachikonye, 2003). Various terms ‘an agrarian revolution’, ‘Third Chimurenga’ (liberation struggle) or ‘*Jambanja*’ (direct action), this latter phase of land reform involved the acquisition of 11 million hectares from white commercial farmers for redistribution in a process marked by considerable coercion and violence (Sachikonye, 2003b). Alexander (2006) notes that the title Third Chimurenga evoked an epic lineage of wars against settler rule. This was the time of *Jambanja*, a term popularized in a chart-topping song about extramarital affairs and commonly taken to mean a state of disorder and lawlessness. This direct action was embarked on despite that between 1980 and 1990 land reform has been slow due to shortage of necessary resources. However scholars like Muchemwa et al, (2011) argue that socio-economic and political reason for egalitarianism validates the distribution of land from the rich to the poor. An estimated 300,000 small farmers were resettled and about 30,000 black commercial farmers had received land by the end of 2002 (Sachikonye, 2003b).

However as Alexander (2006) argues, ZANU-PF’s referendum defeat in 2000 marked a moment when it became clear that the ruling party faced a major electoral challenge in the shape of the Movement for Democratic Change formed in 1999. Youth militia were created spearheading a reign of terror. War veterans and the land issue then took centre stage. The economic consequences of the FTLRP in combination with drought, international isolation and political conflict were catastrophic.

There were two models of resettlement under the government’s Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Implementation Plan. These are the A1 and A2 models. A1 or small holder farming was undertaken on a villagised basis with communal grazing land or self contained units. A2 schemes targeted large scale farmers who had the capacity to mobilize resources on their own.

About 200,000 farm worker households were displaced by the FTLRP and an estimated 150 000 workers continued working on the farms (Sachikonye, 2003). This means that the workers lost their jobs, shelter and basic services. Before the FTLRP, farm workers were marginalized and they constituted the very poor of Zimbabwe (CSO, 2002). Thus the outcome of the programme has been the loss of jobs and livelihoods by farm workers on the one hand, and the acquisition of land as a resource by several hundred thousand small farmers, and black commercial farmers on another hand (Sachikonye, 2003).

A total of 11,5 million hectares of land changed hands between 2000 and 2001. The government had passed laws for compulsory acquisition of land and transfer to both the black small and large commercial farmers. Most farm workers who lost jobs were excluded from the land reform programme; less than 5 percent of them were granted land (Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, 2003).

The Plight of Farm Workers

The bargaining power of farm workers has often been weak. Prior to the start of the “fast-track” land reform in 2000, some 320 000 farm worker households making up a population of between 1, 8 to 2 million lived on the farms. The massive job losses were due to the eviction of almost 90 per cent of white commercial farmers from the land. The new small farmers and commercial farmers who gained access to this land had little capacity to absorb the jobless farm workers. Magaramombe (2001) notes that the ex-farm workers have adopted various coping strategies including piece-work, informal trade, gold panning, fishing and hunting for survival.

With the take-over of the farms, access to housing has become insecure to most. There have been instances of evictions from farm compound houses by the new settlers and farmers. Evicted farm workers have sometimes sought shelter and livelihoods in a growing number of “squatter camps” or informal settlements that have mushroomed around farms for example in Concession, Gambuli and Chihwiti (Sachikonye, 2003). Extensive food shortages amongst farm workers represent one theatrical effect of their wobbly social situation following employment loss. Their descent into chronic poverty was a culmination of a number of factors but principally the FTLRP (Sachikonye, 2003). As noted by Alexander (2006), farm workers have become an itinerant, poor and unstable class almost destitute and constantly drifting.

The withdrawal of regular wages and decent accommodation and sanitary facilities militates

against the capacity of households to provide food and basic care to the sick. Nonetheless, piece-jobs are neither secure nor remunerated at the same level as permanent jobs. There are no benefits such as leave and medical care. Another coping strategy related to income-generating activities is mainly informal vending of agricultural produce (vegetables, fruit and legumes) and of second-hand clothing. This was undertaken on farms, nearby farming towns and mines (Sachikonye, 2003).

The legacy of that paradigm is that commercial farm workers, although the largest proportion of Zimbabwe's proletariat, form one of its poor segments which has no access to land and housing rights (Magaramombe, 2001). The large scale commercial farms, the largest employer of formal labor employ 450 000 full time workers who together with their families make up about 2 million people or 20 % of the country's population (Magaramombe, 2001). A study by the General Agriculture and Plantation Workers' Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) in 1999 put the figure of "alien" farm workers at 30 percent of the total farm worker population. However, because of illiteracy and lack of understanding of many issues, migrant workers do not apply for citizenship even though they may have been resident in the country for more than five years.

Low levels of education make it difficult for farm workers to secure any other form of employment outside the farms. Some then resort to illegally settling on private property or in prohibited areas as a large number have cut ties with relations in communal areas and therefore do not have anywhere else to go (Magaramombe, 2001).

Whilst it cannot be doubted that the land reform program in Zimbabwe has provided an opportunity to the previously disadvantaged black community, its capacity to be a significant employer is highly questionable (Masanganise and Kambanje, 2008). Evidence from Mazowe has indicated that the majority of farmers mainly grow food crops and have limited capacity to produce for export unless government and private sector come in with export oriented initiatives (Masanganise and Kambanje, 2008).

Other important economic activities include vegetable gardening, fishing, beer brewing selling and hunting. The main vegetables produced in gardens are covo, carrots, spinach, tomatoes, beans, sweet potato, and onions. Vegetables are often exchanged for a variety of commodities (Honye and Tavugara-Mpofu, 2010). Hunting is also common in the bush surrounding the farm. Sorghum beer brewing and selling is often done by poorer households to increase access to income.

Dependence on payment in kind from farm owners work for land preparation and planting, as well as food purchases, are high to meet consumption requirements (Honye and Tavugara-Mpofu, 2010). Poorer households derive much of their income from agriculture related labor activities. The overall picture is one of massive job losses — affecting about 70 per cent of the original farm workforce (Sachikonye, 2003b). However, despite the large job losses, a considerable proportion of farm workers remain living on the farms (Moyo, 2003). There is evidence to suggest that up to 50 per cent of farm workers stayed on even if they no longer held jobs (Sachikonye, 2003b). In general, female workers suffered greater loss of employment.

THE STUDY AREA

Mazowe district falls in Zimbabwe's natural region 2 which has average annual precipitation between 800-1000mm that falls from November to March. Average maximum temperatures range between 20 to 35 Degrees Celsius in the summer season. The main livelihoods system is labour-based. There are two main seasons, namely the summer season (*zhizha*) from September to April, and the winter season (*chirimo*), from May to August. Livelihood activities are planned in line with the rainy season which occurs from November to March. Land preparation activities begin just before the beginning of the dry season.

METHODOLOGY

The study was essentially qualitative and descriptive in nature. It sought to gather data on the socio-economic situation of former commercial farm workers in Zimbabwe. The target population included all former commercial farm workers in Mazowe district. The research project also sought to investigate the workers' potential to empowerment taking into cognizance their levels of education, demographic factors, survival strategies, life skills levels, assistance from NGOs etc. The study selected 8 farm compounds from across Mazowe district and these are shown in figure----below. The study focused on workers still residing on compounds as it is difficult to get information on the whereabouts and situation of all laid off workers. Some would have gone to try and find casual work on other commercial farms, some skilled workers (including drivers and mechanics) may have found employment elsewhere and that others may have gone to communal areas (Magaramombe, 2001). For the purpose of this study, a former farm worker was defined as a person who used to work on a commercial farm and left the job because the farm was taken for the FTLRP

Table 1. Location and sex of respondents

Compound	Number of respondents		Subtotal
	Male	Female	
Sekerere	5	5	10
Virginia	7	6	13
Heyshot	3	4	7
Major Brown	10	9	19
Fox	8	9	17
Adula	4	7	11
Hamilton	11	6	17
Concopia	3	3	6
Total no of respondents		51	100
49			

A sample of 100 households was selected from the 8 farming compounds in Mazowe district on the basis of availability. Data were collected through intensive interviews with the household heads between November and December 2011.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table 2. Educational levels of respondents

SEX	Never been to school	Primary education	Secondary education	Professional course
MALE	5	41	3	2
FEMALE	11	38	0	0

Table 2 above shows the educational levels of farm workers which leaves a lot to be desired with only three with secondary education and two with professional courses. The situation is very pathetic given that secondary education is now the entry qualification in most jobs in Zimbabwe. There is also a gender imbalance between men and women in terms of education with men being slightly educated than women. Some scholars, Ndoro (2006), Moyo and Ngobese (2006) and Moyo (2007) have argued that the impact of the *Jambanja* was worse on women than men. This might suggest that the needs of farm workers are not homogenous. The highest number of respondents has primary education which is basic education in Zimbabwe. This scenario exists because the whites made it a mandate that they only schooled their black employees up to that level, a situation which prevailed since the colonial period.

This legacy is well documented by Riddell (1980), Maravanyika (1989) and Madzokere (1995). Education was used as a political weapon which made the blacks poorer and less powerful while the whites became richer and more powerful (Madzokere, 1995). However, what is puzzling is the fact that is state of existence spilled into independent Zimbabwe while the government watched. It is therefore the duty of the government to rectify the situation. It is almost impossible for these farm workers to secure employment outside the farms.

Table 3. Age distribution of respondents

AGE RANGE	NO	PERCENTAGE
Below 20	0	0%
21-30	17	17%
31-40	37	37%
41-50	22	22%
51-60	16	16%
60+	8	8%
TOTAL	100	100%

The highest number of respondents is in the 31-40 years age range. This suggests that when the farms were invaded around the year 2000, they were in the 21-30years age range and only 8% of the respondents are the elderly that is above 60 years. Simple arithmetic suggests that these are either second or more generation from the actual immigrants who came to the then Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Chances are very high that they have lost contact with relatives in the respective countries of origin.

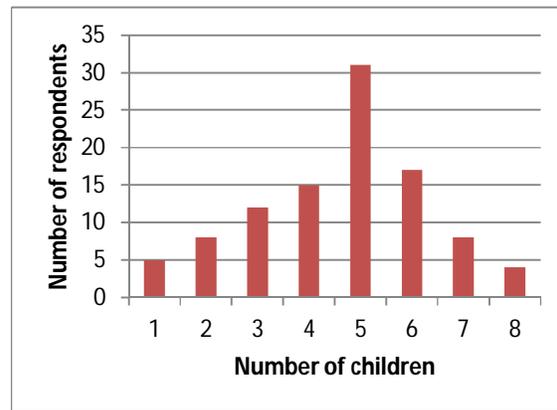


Fig 1. No. of children of respondents

Generally, the farm workers just like many poor people in most developing countries have more children, with an average of five children per respondent. This is very sad given that most of the respondents do not have decent sources of income and live in poverty.

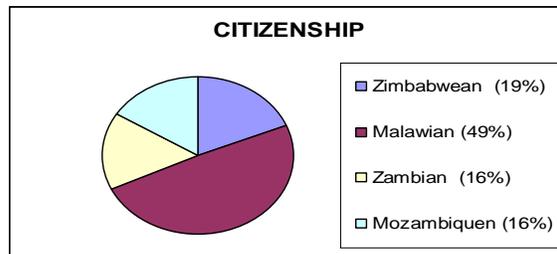


Fig 2. Country of origin of forebears of respondents

As shown in fig 2 above, more than 80% of the respondents are not of Zimbabwean origin. This is sad given that most of them have citizenship problems. As well they were excluded in the allocation of land as noted earlier by Moyo et al (2000). The government of Zimbabwe took a

xenophobic stance on migrant workers as shown in a statement by one politician ‘all your farm workers are Mozambicans, Malawians and Zambians and can be shipped home at a moment’s notice’ (*Zimbabwe Independent*, 5 December 1997). Moyo et al (2000) and Sachikonye (2003) argue that this line of thought has been exploited by politicians since the late 1980s to disqualify farm workers from securing land rights.

Registration Documents

It is shocking to note that 63% of the respondents indicated that some of their children don’t have birth certificates. The major setback was that the parents did not have identification particulars. Close to 45% of the respondents have parents of foreign origin from different countries, for example a person can have a mother coming from Malawi and a father from Zambian. All these might not have renounced their citizenship. Most of the respondents were second and third generation immigrants respectively. If somebody does not have a birth certificate, he cannot acquire a national identity card. It is difficult to acquire formal employment without it. Of late, the government of Zimbabwe is insisting on a Birth Record when registering for a Birth Certificate. The birth record is difficult to get where a child is born at home and never taken to the nearest health facility for registration. This is the situation with farm workers.

Table 4. Number of meals per day

Number of meals per day	Number	Percentage
1	13	13%
2	79	79%
3	8	8%

The study indicated that most of the respondents (79%) live a near normal rural life in Zimbabwe with two meals per day which are usually lunch and supper. A pitiable situation is that of the 13% which is relying on one meal per day. However, this number is more likely to increase during the dry spell where pierce jobs are few. A significant number, 89% of the respondents cited sadza (a thick porridge from mealie meal) as the main type of food. However home made bread and beans were also mentioned. Asked what they ate the previous night, 92% of the respondents cited sadza and various dishes of relish, only 8 percent cited other meals excluding sadza.

Table 5. Main source of income for respondents

Main source of income	Number	Percentage
Full employment	3	3%
Pierce jobs on farms	44	44%
Vending	16	16%
Gardening	13	13%
Gold panning	13	13%
Others	11	11%
TOTAL	100	100%

The major source of income cited was pierce jobs on the farms. This included either the farm where one stayed or surrounding farms. The jobs included

planting, weeding and harvesting although other activities like shelling and packing harvests were also mentioned. Vending also yielded a number of responses. The respondents sold vegetables and firewood mainly in the nearest townships. However, some also mentioned selling fruits and airtime at bus stops along highways. The three in full employment are engaged by the new farmers, one as a manager, one driver and the other a security guard. These indicated that they were doing the same jobs to their previous employers. A total of 13 male respondents showed that they were eking a living out of gold panning. The panning was done along river banks or in the Jumbo area (near Jumbo gold mine). Those in gold panning showed to be better off compared to the rest of the respondents. They indicated that though they often clash with police, on average their income is above US\$150 every month.

Table 6. Estimated monthly income

AMOUNT US\$	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Below 50	9	9%
51-100	75	75%
101-150	12	12%
151-200	3	3%
201-250	1	1%
251+	0	0%
TOTAL	100	100%

As shown in table 6 above, most of the respondents live on less than a dollar per day. This situation depicts abject poverty among the former farm workers. The sources of income in table 5 and the levels of income in table 6 leave the government with a long journey to travel in terms of empowering former farm workers. As highlighted by Moyo (2007) and Sachikonye (2003), the new farmers don’t have the capacity to absorb all the laid off employees. Further more, what is pathetic is that the government of Zimbabwe is yet on another mayhem so called “indigenization” where they are demanding shareholding in companies. Just like the situation in the farms, this is also set to create another calamity. These chaotic programmes create more problems than they solve when one looks at it from a humanitarian point of view. In short something needs to be done to address the issue of former farm workers in Zimbabwe. The situation is worsened by low levels of education and lack of political representation among farm workers. Some politicians are not interested in them since most of them don’t have Zimbabwean citizenship and therefore cannot vote.

Table 7, Type of land tenure

Type of tenure	Number	Percentage
Indefinite stay at a farm compound	77	77%
Squatting	13	13%
Staying on allocated land	10	3%
TOTAL	100	100%

Table 8. Type of accommodation

Nature of accommodation	Number	Percentage
Bricks under asbestos/corrugated iron sheets with electricity	14	14%
Bricks under asbestos/corrugated iron sheets without electricity	29	29%
Pole and mud under grass thatching	43	43%
Plastic/ metal self designed cabin	14	14%
TOTAL	100	100%

Table 7 and 8 above shows that the situation of the former farm workers in terms of tenure and accommodation is still problematic, ten years after the *Jambanja*. They don't have land and therefore cannot think of December accommodation. As indicated by Alexander (2006) squatter camps have always been the norm in farming areas. Those with decent accommodation are staying on the houses left by the former white farmers. There is no known reported case of a new black farmer who builds or improved accommodation for the workers under study.

Availability of Social Protection Services

The government of Zimbabwe and a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) are running various social protection programmes both for children and adults and these include Public Assistance, Basic Assistance Education Module, Assisted Medical Treatment Order and Cash Transfers. A number of NGOs are strengthening rural livelihoods through programmes live livestock rearing, small grain production and other income generation projects. Despite the availability of all these services only 23% indicated that they are aware on at least one such programmes and surprisingly only two respondents were beneficiaries.

Table 9 . Distance to the nearest health facility

Distance	Number	Percentage
0-10km	44	44%
11-20km	43	43%
21-30km	13	13%
31+km	0	0

From table 9 above it can be seen that a significant percentage, 44% of the respondents live near a health facility. This is in line with Zimbabwe's Primary Health Care Policy which states that a person should travel at most 8 kilometres to get to the nearest health facility. However, just like any other rural area in Zimbabwe, health facilities are urban biased and most rural poor travel more than 10 km to get to the nearest health facility. About 97% of the respondents highlighted that if they visit a health facility, they have to pay hospital fees for themselves. This is

despite the availability of AMTOs in Zimbabwe and the plethora of other factors militating against accessing such facilities. In turn most respondents indicated that they only visited hospitals for serious ailments like malaria which they cited as their major health problem. However it is worth indicating that this study did not focus on the HIV status of respondents.

Challenges Vexing Former Commercial Farm Workers

Almost all the respondents were crying for land. They were either staying on the compound at the mercy of the new farm owners or on insecure tenure provided by self designating village heads. The respondents indicated that they would appreciate if they are allocated land. A more serious case to note is that of respondents staying at Fox Compound. This is so because a semi-urban township- Glendale is extending at an alarming rate, allocating stands towards their direction and in no time they have to move somewhere. Nearly 45% of the respondents indicated that they have to work for the new farm owners for a stay at the farming compound or they risk eviction. They should do so despite the fact that remuneration is very meager and are not paid at agreed rates and times. The respondents indicated that their future is uncertain since their stay is indefinite and based on the mercy of someone. Land for cultivation is also another challenge. Where they grow crops, they have to seek fallow land from the new farmers and they have to pay either in cash or in kind. Some have been allocated temporary land by self designating headmen most of whom are politicians who want to gunner support. We cant even talk of decent accommodation where land tenure is that delicate.

Another challenge mentioned is the availability of secondary schools in the farming community. Most white farmers only build primary schools. The respondents indicated that, even if they want their children to continue to secondary educated, the schools are non available within their reach. Children have to commute to school which is beyond the reach of many.

Drinking water has been cited as a major challenge in several compounds including Fox, Virginia and Hamilton. Quite often they fetch running water from nearby Mazowe River for drinking or they use unprotected shallow wells on the river banks. All these three areas had their sources of tapped water disconnected by Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZINWA) due to payment problems. White commercial farmers used to pay water and sometimes electricity bills for their employees but now no one is responsible hence the disconnections. This poses a health risk especially if there is an outbreak of waterborne diseases such as typhoid or cholera.

About 40 of the 44 respondents who rely on piece jobs on the farms indicated that usually there are no jobs during the dry season which usually stretches from May to October. This is because unlike the white commercial farmers, most new black farmers rely on natural rains and there is no irrigation. This means that the respondents will be short of income during a significant part of the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government of Zimbabwe should provide farming land to those farmers who are interested in agriculture and those who are not should be allocated rural settlements somewhere in the country.
- There is also serious need to improve rural service centers in farming areas.
- The government should see to it that the right to residency of former farm workers should not be tied to employment at the farm.
- The government should build secondary schools in farming areas
- The government and other interested organizations should provide safe sources of water in farming compounds.
- There is also need to include farm workers in government housing schemes
- Rural District Councils should provide housing land for former farm workers at affordable rates.
- The farm community needs to be educated on the importance of registration documents and the process followed in renouncing citizenship.
- Governments should scrap citizenship renouncing for those who cannot afford.
- The elderly in farms without close relatives should be taken to old people's homes
- The government should support NGOs targeting farming communities like the Farm Orphan Support Trust and The Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe. (Currently they are almost grounded due to lack of funding).

CONCLUSION

Though land reform is considered one of the prominent tools in poverty alleviation in any given country, some form of order should be followed in administering it. It can be seen from this paper that the chaotic land reform programme has created a number of challenges in trying to address the land imbalances between the whites and the blacks. Innocent farm workers have been adversely affected through loss of employment, accommodation, interruption of education and many other factors. The government of Zimbabwe and interested parties should therefore address the plight of affected groups through programmes like provision of accommodation, providing social amenities, building schools and many other relevant intervention strategies. Of more importance, further researches

should focus on the implications of the FTLRP of the social ties of affected people and the extent of human rights violations it caused.

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