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An Evaluation of the Relationship between Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme and Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study of Nyabira Area in Mashonaland West Province

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Abstract:

The study sought to investigate the relationship between Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and poverty alleviation. The research focused on three farms in Nyabira area of Mashonaland west province in Zimbabwe. The research sought to understand the causes of poverty before the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), the relationship between the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and poverty alleviation, the benefits of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and whether the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) was a conflict resolution tool or not. A mixed methodology comprising both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) research approaches was adopted. Documentary analysis in the form of newspapers, desktop research and publications provided secondary data. Research findings revealed that before the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), poverty was caused by shortage of arable land, poor farming methods, shortage of farming implements and climatic changes. The majority of the respondents concurred that the land reform programme had alleviated poverty. The respondents were also of the opinion that the land reform programme brought with it some benefits. Landless people were able to access land; the land reform programme alleviated poverty and created employment to unemployed members of the community. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) managed to solve the longstanding land dispute. From the research findings, it is recommended that the Government of Zimbabwe should continue to avail more land to its citizenry but it should make sure that the land is put to good use. Since the other causes of poverty before the land reform programme were shortage of farming implements the government should ensure that these available before each planting season. Irrigation equipment should also be made available. The government of Zimbabwe should avoid creating more land disputes by giving land to people who are not originally from a particular area at the expense of the local community. Land should be distributed to any deserving person, irrespective of gender to avoid further gender imbalances.

Keywords: Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), Land Reform, Land Reform Program Phase One (LRPP I), Lancaster House Agreement (LHA), Poverty, Conflict, Conflict Resolution

1. Introduction

The need to regain land was the major cause struggle for independence in Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980, the land issue remained a contentious issue with the new Zimbabwean government obliged to resettle the landless population on one hand and on the other hand both the British government was not forthcoming on funding or supporting the land reform. With or without the financial support from its former colonisers, the Zimbabwean Government had to find ways and means of redistributing the land to the majority of the populace. The land redistribution exercise aimed at alleviating poverty among the Zimbabweans. There was also need to relieve pressure on the heavily congested rural areas and in the process addressing colonial imbalances that saw a few white commercial farmers occupying land tracts of arable and fertile land while the majority of back Zimbabweans were pushed to dry and unproductive land that became known as the "reserves". It is against this background that the impact of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) was assessed on three farms in Nyabira area of Mashonaland West Province. From the study, the resettled farmers have recorded success in poverty alleviation and the people's lives have been transformed for the better. Despite harsh economic conditions that have been prevailing since the year 2000 when the government embarked on the land redistribution exercise and at times unfavourable climatic conditions, hard working resettled farmers have managed to make ends meet and some of their lives have changed for the better.

According to Moyo (2000), the impact of land reform in poverty alleviation can be proved by property being acquired, better standards of living, investments in livestock by the majority of resettled farmers, and hard currency derived from sale of tobacco and other cash crops. This clearly shows that farmers have greatly benefited from the land redistributed exercise and the assistance that has come in the form of tillage equipment and subsidised inputs has gone a long way in alleviating poverty among the resettled farmers.

2. Literature Survey

Schoones (2003) asserts that access to land and provision of productive inputs is a strong predictor for poverty alleviation. He further states that the importance of land in an agricultural economy needs no emphasis. It constitutes the primary form of wealth and source of political power. In Zimbabwe, where the majority of people obtain their livelihood directly from agriculture, land ownership and use have always been sensitive issues and became major areas of dispute for blacks and whites since 1890s. According to the Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa (Volume 12, No.4, 2010), land alienation was a central feature of the colonial economy and by 1894 the Land Commission had dispossessed the indigenous people of over 80% of their cattle and land was alienated to mines, farms and industries. The concept of African Reserves was to ensure permanent supply of cheap labour to the white settler economy. Land reform was adopted in 1980 in order to redress past colonial inequities in land ownership, decongest and reduce poverty in communal areas. Land acquisition was aimed at reducing the 14.7 million hectares of agricultural land held by white farmers at independence by approximately 50 per cent. The remaining white commercial farming areas were to be desegregated through promoting black entry into the sector.

Moyo (2000) noted that Zimbabwe's land reform comprised of two phases: the first phase from 1980 to 1996 namely Land Reform Program Phase One (LRPP I), and the second commenced with the gazetting of 1471 farms for compulsory acquisition in 1997. During the first phase, a number of donors including Britain provided financial and/or technical in order to facilitate the process of land redistribution and compensation.

Moyo (2000) further states that in 1992, after the government was no longer constrained by provisions of the Lancaster House Agreement (LHA), the Constitution was amended in order to provide for the redistribution of land within the country. By 1997, however, much of the fertile land remained under control of a few thousand white farmers. Moreover, much of the land that had been distributed remained in the hands of a few black elites. According to (Moyo 2000), the population in already overcrowded communal areas increased and land hunger intensified. In 1998, international donor governments held a conference to mobilize support for acquisition of land. These governments adopted a set of principles in order to guide "Phase II" of land reform in Zimbabwe. The principles included respect for the legal process, transparency, poverty reduction, consistency and ensuring affordability for acquisition and allocation of land grants.

Subsequent to those proceedings, however, the relationship between the Zimbabwean government and donors faced instability which forced the former to abandon market-based land reform accusing donors of attempting to maintain the colonial distribution of wealth. Political and social tension over land-distribution and compensation intensified in late 1990s which resulted in peasants moving onto white-owned farms (Moyo, 2000).

According to the Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa (Volume 12, No.4, 2010), in July 2000, the government adopted the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). The process was an inefficient and inconsistent method of allocating land. Moreover, there were increasing concerns that the method was not monitored by the judicial system. Zimbabwe's land reform process was more diverse and complex than most. The reform process failed to meet the country's needs due to a number of constraints which included absence of a conducive social and political market, parsimonious funding of the Land Reform (LR) process, legal loopholes in the laws governing land acquisition and structural weaknesses of institutional framework executing the programme. Despite its problems, Zimbabwe's LR process managed to establish a relatively more equitable distribution than what was obtained under apartheid regime of Rhodesia.

3. Conceptual Framework

This research was underpinned by Kant's Ethical Theory. Kant's ethical theory states that a deed is considered ethical if it serves the majority of people and make them happy unlike pleasing the minority at the expense of the majority. The United Kingdom (UK) and its ally the United States of America (USA) were for Willing Seller, Willing Buyer concept which protected the interest of a small minority at the expense of the majority. For the purpose of this study, the Ethical theory justifies Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP).

4. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, mixed methodology was adopted. Both qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) research approaches were employed. There was documentary analysis as secondary data, in the form of newspapers, desktop research and publications. Newly resettled farmers and ordinary members of the community were also consulted mainly for their divergent views as primary sources of data.

5. Findings

This section presents findings of the study. The data was collected through in-depth interview, documentary analysis and questionnaires.

5.1. Response Rate

Table 1 shows that twenty (20) respondents were successfully interviewed. This shows that all those interviewed had their responses were captured and that gives a hundred percent (100%) of the interviews conducted. This could have been attributed to the fact that all the prospective interviewees who were sampled responded to the questions that formed the basis of the research study. The table also shows that twenty questionnaires were administered and that fifteen (15), which translates to seventy-five percent (75%), were returned while five (5), which translates to ten percent (25%), were returned. The non-return of questionnaires could have been due to the sensitivity of the subject matter or the fact the respondents had no time to respond or were not even aware of the research subject.

Number of Respondents interviewed		Questionnaires		
		Sent	Received	Non Response
20		20	15	5
Percentage	100%	100%	75%	25%

Table 1: Interviews conducted and questionnaire response rate

5.2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

In relation to the study, personal attributes of the respondents/participants was sought to establish the background information. An appreciation of the background information was vital in that it had a bearing on the conclusions that would be drawn. Availability of such information would help the researcher in coming up with appropriate recommendations. The respondents were drawn from individuals of different backgrounds. This enabled the researcher to have a cross-sectional view of how the respondents judged the Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), whether it was value addition or value subtraction.

5.2.1. Respondents' Gender

A total of thirty-five (35) respondents took part in the research. Of these, twenty-five (25) were male and thirteen (10) were female as shown in table 2.

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage
Female	10	29
Male	25	70
Total	38	100

Table 2: Respondents' gender

5.2.2. Respondents' Age

A total of 35 participants took place. There were 10 female participants and 25 male participants. More participants were from the 31-40 which constituted thirty-seven percent (37%), followed by those from the 41-50 age group which constituted twenty-three percent (23%). The 51-60 age group had four (4) participants which constituted eleven percent (11%). The above 60 age group had five participants, constituting fourteen percent (14%). The 21-30 age group and the below twenty age group had three (3) and two (2) participants each which constituted nine percent (9%) and four percent (4%) respectively. The respondents' ages are shown in table 3 below.

Age	No of Respondents	Percentage
Below 20 but above 18	2	4
Aged between 21 – 30	3	9
Aged between 31 – 40	13	37
Aged between 41 – 50	8	23
Aged between 51 – 60	4	11
Aged above 60	5	14
Total	35	98

Table 3: Respondents' age

NB: The above percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

5.2.3. Respondents' Level of Education

All respondents had completed "O" level. Five participants had completed 'O' level, seven had completed 'A' Level, seven had obtained Diplomas, eight were first degree holders, five had masters' degrees, two were doctors and one was a professor. The high level of education among the respondents enabled the smooth flow of data collection. The respondents understood and spoke English fluently during the in-depth interviews. The high literacy level was also shown in the way the questionnaires were answered.

Level of Education	No of Respondents	Percentage
'O' Level	5	14
'A' Level	7	20
Diploma	7	20
Degree	8	23
Masters	5	14
Doctorate	2	6
Professor	1	3
Total	35	100

Table 4: Respondents' Level of Education

5.2.4. Respondents' Marital Status

Of the thirty-five (35) respondents who participated in this research, eight (8) were single, thirteen (13) were married, five (5) were divorced while another five (5) were widowed. Four respondents had separated.

Marital Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Single	8	23
Married	13	37
Divorced	5	14
Widowed	5	14
Separated	4	11
Total	35	99

Table 5: Respondents' marital status

NB: The above percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

5.3. Participants/Respondents views on the causes of poverty before the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP)

Shortage of arable land, poor farming methods and shortage of farming implements were cited as the causes of poverty before the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) was introduced in Zimbabwe.

5.3.1. Responses from the Questionnaires

The causes of poverty were highlighted as shortage of arable land: forty-five percent (45%), poor farming methods: twenty-five percent (25%), shortage of farming implements: twenty percent (20%) and climatic change: five percent (5%).

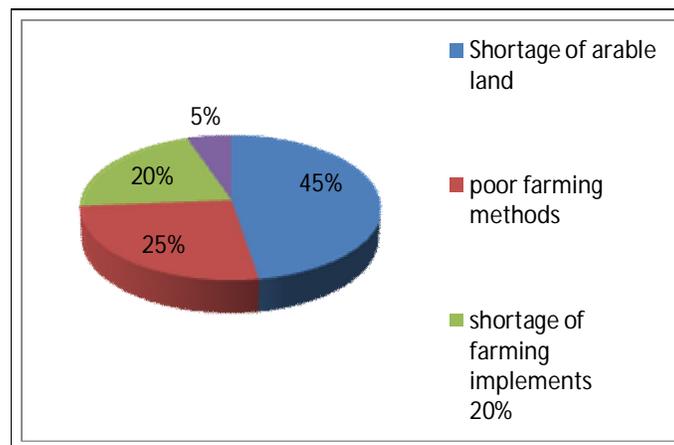


Figure 1: Causes of poverty (Questionnaire)

5.3.2. Views from the interviewees

From the interviews, the causes of poverty were highlighted as shortage of arable land: fifty percent (50%), poor farming methods: twenty percent (20%), shortage of farming implements: twenty percent (20%) and climatic change: five percent (5%).

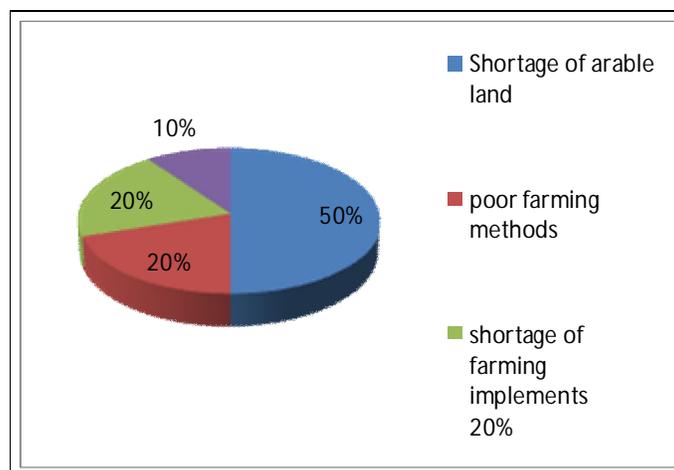


Figure 2: Causes of poverty (Interviewees)

From both the interviewees and the questionnaires, shortage of arable land was the major cause of poverty.

5.4. Relationship between the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (Ftlrp) and Poverty Alleviation

The majority of the respondents from both the questionnaires and interviews concurred that there was a strong relationship between the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) and poverty alleviation. The general consensus was that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) alleviated poverty.

5.4.1. Responses from the Questionnaire

Figure 3 shows that 80% of the respondents highlighted that land reform alleviates poverty while 15% of the respondents indicated that land reform programme does not alleviate poverty. 5% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure.

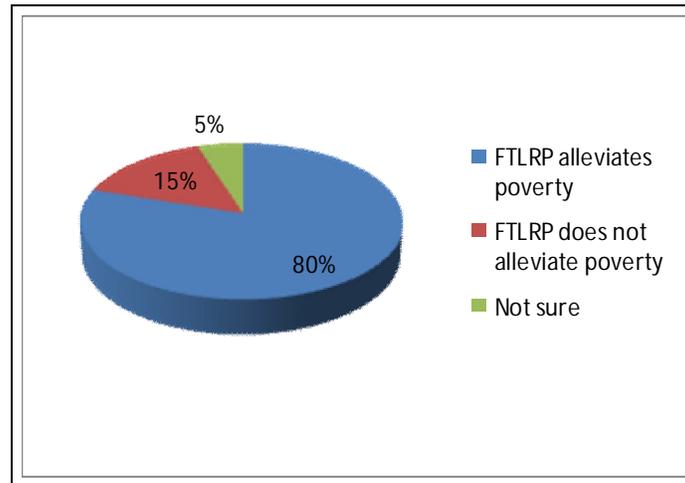


Figure 3: Land Reform as a tool of Poverty Alleviation (Questionnaires)

5.4.2. Responses from the Interviews

In Figure 4, 71% of the respondents indicated that land reform programme alleviates poverty while 22% of the respondents were of the opinion that the land reform programme does not alleviate poverty. 7% of the interviewees were not sure of the impact of the land reform programme on poverty alleviation.

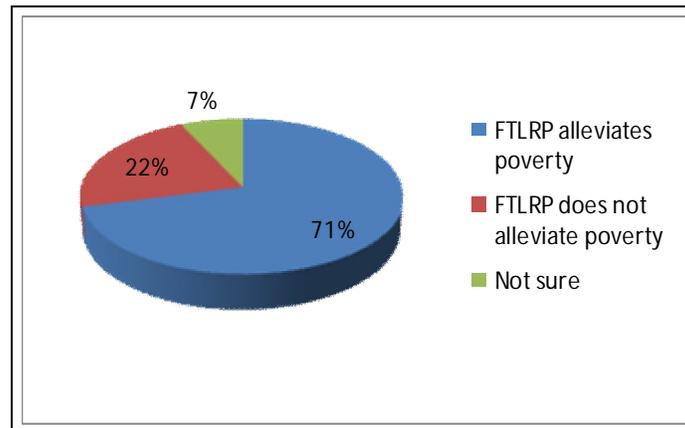


Figure 4: Land Reform as a tool of Poverty Alleviation (Interviewees)

5.5. What were the Benefits of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP)?

The benefits of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) were providing land to the landless, alleviation of poverty and employment creation.

5.5.1. Responses from the Questionnaire

As indicated in Figure 5 below, 70% of the respondents indicated that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) provided farming land to the landless. 15% of the respondents indicated that the land reform programme alleviates poverty and another 15% indicated that the land reform programme led to employment creation to the previously unemployed members of the community.

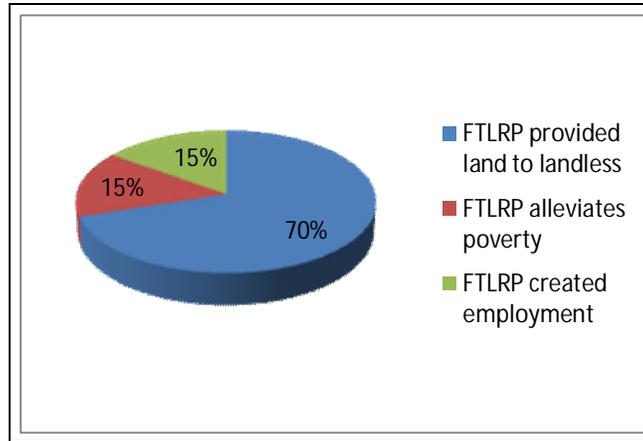


Figure 5: Benefits of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) (Questionnaires).

5.5.2. Responses from the interviewees

65% of the respondents indicated that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) provided land to the landless, 20% of the respondents said that land reform programme alleviates poverty and 15% indicated that the programme creates employment. The responses indicated in figure 6 below.

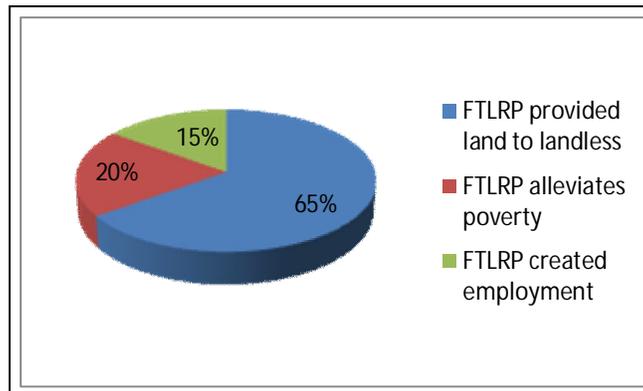


Figure 6: Benefits of Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) (interviews)

5.6. Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) as a Conflict Resolution Tool

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) according to the respondents resolved long standing land dispute while others indicated that it created more land disputes. The other respondents indicated that they were not sure.

5.6.1. Responses from the Questionnaire

Figure 7 shows that 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) resolved the long standing land dispute, while 20% indicated that the programme created more disputes. 10% indicated that they were not sure.

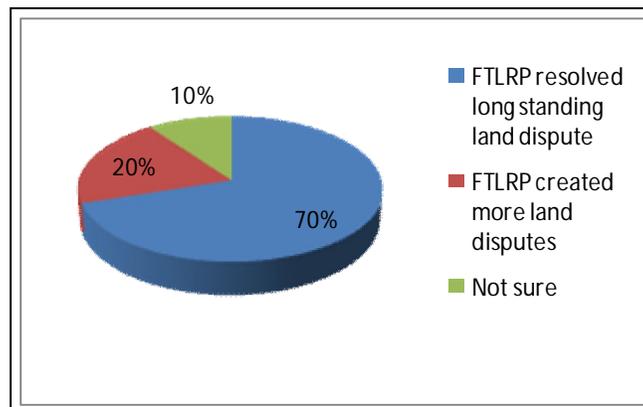
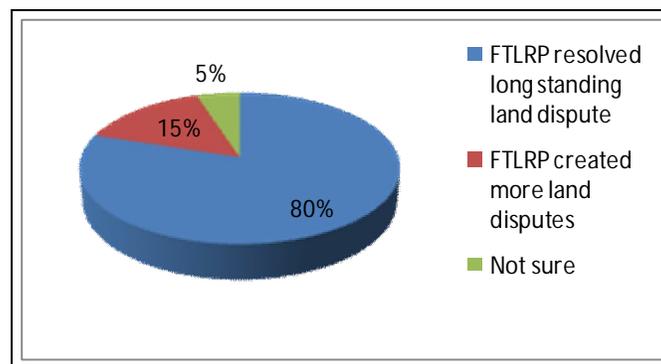


Figure 7: Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) as a conflict resolution tool

5.6.2. Responses from the Interviews

Figure 8 highlights that 80% of the respondents indicated that the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) resolved a long standing land dispute while 15% indicated that the programme created more land disputes. 5% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure.



8: Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) as a conflict resolution tool

6. Discussion and Analysis

From the study, shortage of arable land, poor farming methods, shortage of farming implements and climatic change were the major causes of poverty in the community. Shortage of arable land was attributed to colonial domination in which fertile land belonged to a minority group while the majority black Zimbabweans were confined to unproductive land where unfavourable climatic conditions were experienced. In Zimbabwe the colonial masters maintained the same brutal policies which impacted negatively on the lives of Zimbabweans in general and Nyabira area in particular according to this study. The colonial master's policies of discrimination, oppression and unjust system of governance impacted negatively on people's lives. Land scarcity as a cause of poverty in Nyabira area is reflected by 50% and 45% of the respondents from the interviews and questionnaires respectively. According to Baregu (2001), the Land reform programme in Zimbabwe was meant to decongest and alleviate poverty through the allocation of this vital factor of production. Literature further points out that Land reform has alleviated poverty in other countries which have had land redistribution and were well supported financially by former colonial masters, occupying force or by the donor community. Countries such as the Asian Tigers (South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Japan who had the support of USA as the occupying force then, had successful Land Reform and have managed to alleviate poverty argues EI Ghonemy (1999), although it was in an effort by USA to uphold its interests in Asia, which was to curb the spread of communism (Geisler 1984). Land Reform in the Latin American countries like Bolivia, Chile, Mexico etc have not had successes such as the Asian Tigers because of lack of funding by the donor community. The USA had different interests in Latin America, ranging from emphasizing the Willing Seller, Willing Buyer concept which impacted negatively on Latin American government's financial standing to finance Government of Zimbabwe resulting in partial Land Reform or none at all (Carter 1996). According to Moyo (1998), in Zimbabwe the Willing Seller, Willing Buyer concept was not successful because the colonial master failed to fully support Land Reform as agreed at Lancaster House Agreement. Even the USA who had promised 1 to 1,5b USD failed to support Government of Zimbabwe land reform, which meant that they favoured the property rights claim by minority former colonisers to be reinstated. The Government of Zimbabwe later ignored the Willing Seller, Willing Buyer principle because it lacked funding or financial support from the donor community.

The Government of Zimbabwe recognised legally the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in retrospect because the above mentioned principle failed to produce positive results. In Nyabira, land reform alleviated poverty through hard work on the allocated land. In Nyabira, the beneficiaries of the land reform programme engaged growing cash crops like maize, tobacco soya beans, cotton and sugar beans. Besides growing the above mentioned crops, the newly resettled farmers tried their hand in horticulture. Livestock production gained momentum and in the process improving the lives of land reform beneficiaries in the area.

Findings the research revealed that 15% of the respondents that responded to the questionnaire were of the opinion that land reform does not alleviate poverty while 22% of the interviewees were of the same opinion. 5% and 7% of the respondents from the questionnaires and interviews respectively were not sure whether land reform programme alleviated poverty or not. Acevedo (1996) noted that the impact of the land reform programme could have been felt through financial assistance and other developments like schools, hospitals, roads and other social amenities would have been possible. The respondents who indicated that they were not sure whether allocation of land alleviates poverty or not could have failed to comprehend the consequences of Willing Seller, Willing Buyer concept and its impact vis-a-vis the Fast Track Reform Programme strategy adopted by Government of Zimbabwe. The failure to fund adequately the land reform programme by the colonial master resulted in negative thinking about land reform programme.

Land was taken by force and the indigenous black people of Zimbabwe were killed and basic human rights were ignored observes (Katz 1996). Through the Land Apportionment Act racial regions called Tribal Trust Lands were created. These areas were sandy, stony and generally infertile. Furthermore these areas were designated in low rainfall patterns or in semi arid regions. The aforementioned negative policies, instruments and conditions impacted negatively on the people of Zimbabwe. Poverty increased

in these tribal regions due to low subsistence farming output caused by sandy or infertile land, persistent droughts and lack of government support. The purpose of the Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe was to decongest the rural population and to reduce poverty. The beneficiaries of the land reform programme in Nyabira area have been growing cash crops such as tobacco, maize, soya beans and cotton. According to the beneficiaries of the land reform programme, their lives have changed for the better and they concurred that the programme was a poverty alleviation tool.

The respondents highlighted that the benefits of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) were that land was provided to the landless people, poverty was alleviated and the programme also created employment to the unemployed members of the local community. Those respondents who indicated that the programme provided land to the landless were consistent with literature. According to Potts (2000), Land Reform may consist of a government initiated or government backed property redistribution, generally of agricultural land. Land Reform can, therefore, refer to transfer of ownership from the more powerful to the less powerful: such as from a relatively small number of wealthy (or noble) owners with extensive land holdings (e.g., plantations, large ranches, or agribusiness plots) to individual ownership by those who work the land or ordinary rural folks contends Potts (2000). Such transfers of ownership may be with or without compensation. Compensation may vary from token amounts to the full value of the land (Thiesenhusen 1995).

This research also sought to find out if Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme was a tool of conflict resolution or not. According literature, land reform is a tool of conflict resolution as proved by many countries which have had land reform. Land Reform entails equal distribution of land usually from landowners to the landless. The impact of Land Reform is that it takes from the few to give the majority and more often land conflicts are resolved. (Gesler 1994) contends that the Asian Tigers Land Reform was successful and managed to curb the spread of communism in those countries but the Latin American countries were not so lucky because Land Reform in their region was not well supported financially and as a result land conflicts have persisted. (Gelser 1994) further argues that world stability is determined by superpowers like USA, Russia, UK, France and China. The USA interests in Latin America are to endorse countries following liberal policies and Land Reform issues are neglected and conflicts have increased.

From the research, 70% of the questionnaire respondents and 80% of the interviewees indicated that the land reform programme in Zimbabwe managed to resolve a longstanding land dispute. 20% and 15% of the respondents from the questionnaires and interviews respectively indicated that the programme created more land disputes.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) has both social and economic benefits. Socially the programme managed to resolve the long standing land dispute. In Zimbabwe land was taken by brutal force from its rightful owners by the minority colonial masters. Black Zimbabweans were deprived of their land and this became the source of conflict and Land Reform became a tool of conflict resolution through the land redistribution which started after independence in April 1980. Land was the most conflicting resource between the minority whites and the black indigenous Zimbabweans and its equal redistribution is considered by many scholars, academic and political analysts as the vital tool to manage the Zimbabwean conflict.

Economically, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) enabled some former landless people to engage in serious farming activities and in the process generating income for themselves. Their standard of living improved, poverty was alleviated and employment to unemployed members of the community was created. Despite all these benefits, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) did not specifically target women for land allocation as a disadvantaged group. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme was a noble cause, but it did not ensure democratic outcomes for women. It is apparent that the programme could not fully address women's concerns for land ownership and control. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme diminished the opportunities or spaces for women to be empowered and shrunk the democratic spaces for genuine participation of women in development processes by denying those rights to land, widening gender inequalities and ultimately exacerbating their poverty. Women in Zimbabwe still have undefined and insecure land rights hence their control on land and its produce is compromised. Apparently, the contentious 99 leases are flawed and cannot be used as collateral. The situation of women is worsened by lack of infrastructure, technical services and agricultural inputs. Feminist scholars, such Jackson and Pearson (1998), alluded to the view that one should not assume a direct correlation between land reform and the liberation of women. Land reform does not automatically guarantee that women will be better off.

Based on the findings from the research, the following recommendations are made. Allocation of land should be transparent and conclusive for positive agricultural production to take place and this translates into national development. Land reform should be gender sensitive and therefore should not discriminate one gender group in favour of the other. It is important to note that understanding the gaps in terms of gender in the fast track land reform is a crucial step in any reconstitution of post land reform policies that may be done in Zimbabwe. In future, any land reform policy measures in Zimbabwe should be guided by the new constitution that protects women's rights to property. Future land reform policies should take into consideration women's rights. Land reform programmes should benefit every deserving Zimbabwean, irrespective of one's political affiliation, race, class and ethnic background. The government of Zimbabwe should avoid creating more land disputes by giving land to people who are not originally from a particular area at the expense of the local community. Land should be distributed to any deserving person, irrespective of gender to avoid further gender imbalances.

Land Reform beneficiaries should have full ownership of land and the Government of Zimbabwe should guarantee so that beneficiaries can access loans from banks. Government of Zimbabwe's agricultural inputs must be distributed fairly and transparently and resettled farmers must pay back the loans at a reasonable interest rate. The Government of Zimbabwe should encourage and assist in availing irrigation equipment so that available water bodies maximise agricultural production in times of drought. Underutilized land should be repossessed by the government and redistributed to hardworking and deserving people.

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