

American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)

e-ISSN :2378-703X

Volume-3, Issue-4, pp-103-107

www.ajhssr.com

Research Paper

Open Access

Zimbabwe's Land Reforms: What About People with Disabilities?

Tom Tom, Emmanuel Munemo

Department of Development Studies, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Department of Disability Studies and Special Needs Education, Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe

Corresponding author: Tom Tom

ABSTRACT: People with disabilities have rights and development needs that should be achieved to enhance their socioeconomic and political wellbeing. The paper focuses on the situation of people with disabilities in the process of and the aftermath of the Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR). The land reform is considered as 'tool' for changing the lives of the black masses through owning and utilising prime agricultural land. People with disabilities are considered as one of the groups that have been covertly or overtly excluded from development leading to historical 'disability gaps' and injustices. Focusing on Bata and Bodeli farms in Shamva district (Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe) and adopting a transformative approach, the paper explores the constraints experienced by people with disabilities. These include low access to land due to limited participation in informal land occupations, frequent travelling to district offices of the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement which most of the people with mobility challenges could not manage, individual and social construction of disability leading to exclusion in land allocations, high poverty levels among people with disabilities and lack of disability-friendly agricultural equipment and assistive devices. The paper argues that people with disabilities should own land as a key factor of development and should be supported appropriately to utilise and maximise benefits from agricultural land.

Keywords: Development, Disability-friendly agricultural equipment, Land reform, People with disabilities, Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Recognition of the rights of people with disabilities is an international governance and development theme. In essence, development and governance are increasingly being evaluated on how well they satisfy the human rights of various groups. The Zimbabwe government introduced the Disabled Persons Act in 1992 in recognition of the rights of people with disabilities. The Act makes several provisions with the welfare and rehabilitation of disabled persons being at the core. The disability issue is also a concern at regional and sub-regional levels. For example, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Disability Protocol that was championed by the Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD). Disability was one of the key themes for the 'Review of SADC Protocols and Other Key Relevant SADC Documents to Assess the Extent to which they are Inclusive of Disability Rights' (SAFOD, 2019).

The United Nations (UN) which is a global body on international governance and development recognised the rights of people with disabilities through the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (A/RES/61/106) on 13 December 2006. The Convention was opened for signing on 30 March 2007. There are currently 177 ratifications to the CRPD and 92 ratifications to its Optional Protocol. The CRPD is a landmark international treaty, an international development tool and is at the heart of the disability movement (UN Department for Social and Economic Affairs, 2019). The national, regional and international policy provisions on disability are indications of its importance in the context of development and governance hence increasing calls for disability inclusion. Depending on context, disability is among the obstacles to participating in and benefiting from development projects and programmes. However, the hindrances posed by disability vary depending on the type of disability, community response, policy frameworks and other factors.

Since 1980, Zimbabwe embarked on three phases of land acquisition and resettlement (1980-1998, 1998-2000 and 2000-2004) (Chipenda, 2018; Chibwana, 2016; Moyo, 2013; Moyo and Chambati, 2013; James, 2015; Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, 2012; Murisa, 2009, 2013). Various scholars focused on the land reforms, interrogating the motivations, processes and outcomes of the land reforms. The fast track land reform

programme has been hailed for redistributing 13 million hectares of land to 180 000 families within a short space of time (Scoones, *et al.*, 2011; Scoones, 2018; Moyo, 2013). Such targets had not been met in earlier phases of land acquisition and resettlement. With specific reference to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), debates informed by diverse ideological and epistemological standpoints have been witnessed over the years pertaining to the outcomes. These include the neopatrimonial, human rights, livelihoods and political economy approaches (Chibwana, 2016). However, the focus of this paper is not specifically on dwelling on these debates but to interrogate the FTLRP from a disability perspective.

Against a background of seeking to understand the outcomes of the fast track land reform programme, a disability lacuna exists. Limited attention has been paid to people with disabilities in terms of access to land, utilisation of the land, production, social protection and social reproduction. This paper is grounded in the FTLRP. These gaps demand scholarly attention and policy intervention in the quest to improve the life chances and benefits of people with disabilities in the land and agriculture sector.

II. STUDY APPROACH

Bata and Bodeli are farms in Shamva district in Mashonaland Central Province of Zimbabwe. Both are former large scale commercial farms (LSCFs) owned by whites prior to the fast track land reform programme. The farms are located along the Bindura-Mount Darwin highway with Bata being by the highway while Bodeli farm is approximately 3 kilometres off the highway. The two farms were acquired for the resettlement of A1 land beneficiaries (the villagised model). Both farms are in close proximity of Madziwa communal area which lies to the north and various other farms that were acquired and sub-divided into either A1 or A2 plots.

Approaches, designs, sampling, methods, data sources and ethics of research are key themes in the contributions of various scholars on social science research (Creswell, 2012; McGregor and Murname, 2010; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Interpretivism was the guiding research worldview because the thrust of the study was to capture a disability perspective of the land reform. This goal demanded exploration of fast track land reform processes, experiences, achievements and failures from the lenses of disability. Qualitative design was the most appropriate for the desired exploration. Those with disabilities, agricultural technical and extension and lands officers, village heads (*masabhuku*), village development committees (VIDCOs) and ward development committees (WADCOs) were sampled purposively. These have key information pertaining to disability, land reform and development in the farms. All other participants (land beneficiaries, farm labourers and members of the communal areas) were sampled on the basis of convenient availability. While acknowledging that these sampling techniques are not based on probability, they were the most appropriate in the context.

Both secondary and primary data were collected. Existing sources on the fast track land reform programme, its outcomes and disability issues were consulted. These however, were not specific on Bata and Bodeli farms and biases may have been deliberately or otherwise infused in the data. Primary data had to be gathered that were specific to the context and to issues of disability. Primary ways of gathering data were all qualitative (indepth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation, informal interaction and questioning). These articulated the qualitative orientation of the study. As is the norm, ethics of social science research were applied (informed consent, respecting the participants in their diversity, confidentiality, privacy, provision of adequate feedback, trustworthiness, responsible reporting and avoidance of harm – physical, psychological, social and political)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several crucial aspects are important for considering people with disabilities and the processes and outcomes of Zimbabwe's land reforms. However, in the context of this paper, particular focus is on the fast track land reform programme and selected key themes (informal access to the land; accessing the land formally; individual and social construction of disability; economic challenges, agricultural support and production and disability friendly agricultural equipment. These are contextualised within Bata and Bodeli farms in Shamva district in Mashonaland Central Province.

3.1 Accessing the land informally prior to 2000

Broadly, under the fast track land reform, land was accessed informally and formally. The former was marked by spontaneous and wide occupation of large scale commercial farms (LSCFs) belonging to the whites. This was the dominant way of getting land in the initial phase of the FTLRP (that is the phase prior to formalisation in 2000). Able-bodied men and male youth moved from the communal areas (CAs) and towns and cities to occupy LSCF in what is locally termed *Jambanja* which is a component of the Third *Chimurenga* (Third Liberation Struggle). The *Jambanja* was led by war veterans (Sadomba, 2013; Masuko, 2013).

In this early phase of the 'war' of dispossessing the whites of land that they had forcefully and deceitfully taken from the black majority during British colonial administration, people with disabilities (particularly those with visual impairment and mobility challenges), women and children were left behind in communal areas (and towns and cities). These groups were not considered 'warriors' who could partner the war veterans in effectively in pushing the whites off the land. The nature of the *Jambanja* was suitable for these groups. Most of the people with visual impairments and mobility challenges did not participate in the 'struggle.' Accordingly, most of the people falling within these groups were not allocated land. At Bata and Bodeli farms, none of the initial informal occupants of the farms is blind, deaf or has mobility challenges). This partly explains why on formalisation, few people with disabilities owned land in their own right/names.

3.2 Accessing land formally in and after 2000

On formalisation of the land occupations in 2000, people had to apply for land and those who had occupied the land informally had to be formalised through issuing of offer letters (Murisa, 2009). This process required those who needed land to travel to district offices of the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement to lodge their applications. Travelling to the district offices was not once-off. The applicants had to travel regularly to check the status of their applicants. These processes were cumbersome and not practical for most would be land beneficiaries with visual and mobility challenges.

Applications to be considered for A2 plots had to be backed by proof of capital (Moyo et al., 2009). This requirement militated against most of the people with disabilities who may not have been formally employed or engaging in other significant economic activities that guaranteed substantial income and capital to be used as proof to apply for land. Broadly, access to formal employment and engagement in significant economic activities by most people with disabilities is a lacuna in Zimbabwe's formal economy. In addition, people without are struggling penetrate or sustain wellbeing in both the formal and informal sectors. The situation for most people with disabilities is even worse considering a history of exclusion or non-participation in most key sectors.

3.3 Individual and social construction of disability

People with disabilities, participants in Bata and Bodeli farms, district administrator, district lands officers and traditional leaders were unanimous on both individual and social construction of disability as hindrances to accessing land and other key opportunities at community and national levels. Low or non-participation in both informal and formal land occupation has also been attributed to how people with disabilities lack view themselves in relation to others in households and the community; and confidence they have in themselves. Inclusion of people with disabilities in neighbouring Madziwa communal areas and three in the selected farms revealed that some of those with disabilities deliberately chose not to apply for land because they considered that they may fail to utilise the land adequately mainly due to their condition, limited or no capital base or lack of support from family, government and other organisations. The capital base consideration is consonant with the view that most of the people with disabilities are 'poor' regardless of variations in conceptualising poverty.

On the other end are inhibitions created by social construction of disability. Family and community perceptions of disability led to the covert or overt exclusion of people with disabilities. Some family members did not encourage members with disabilities to apply for land. Moreover, in some cases the village head (*sabhuku*) and chiefs recommended some people to the District Administrator and District Land Committees (DLCs). People with disabilities were reported to have been directly excluded. Individual and social constructions of disability therefore influenced the way those with disabilities accessed land through both formal and informal ways. Societal factors that inhibit the participation of people with disabilities are explored by Munemo (2019).

3.4 Economic challenges, agricultural support and production

The aftermath of the FTLRP is marked by national economic woes, low agricultural support and a plethora of production challenges (Mazwi, Muchetu and Chibwana, 2015; Scoones et al., 2011, 2015, 2017; Dekker and Kinsey, 2011; Mkodzongi, 2013; Chibwana, 2016; Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, 2014; Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, 2012). Support of the farmers in the two farms (and generally across Zimbabwe) by the government is low mainly due to the dwindling performance of the national performance. Unavailability and exorbitant agricultural inputs are hampering production. These are major production constraints.

Current support for the farmers include technical support from the agricultural technical and extension (Agritex) officers who are readily available in the wards, the Presidential Inputs Scheme and state-led or private-led contract farming. The Presidential Inputs Scheme provides farmers with two bags of fertilizer and ten (10) kilogrammes of maize seed. These inputs fall far behind the minimum that the farmers want. State-led contract

farming is in the form of Command Agriculture. Both state-led and private-led contract farming require collateral and should be paid back. However, state-contract farming was reported to be flexible compared to private-led contract farming that is exploitative. Additional production constraints include dysfunctional irrigation equipment and infrastructure, tobacco barns, less lucrative agricultural markets, shortage of draught power and labour, and destruction of crops by wild animals. Given these production constraints, people with disabilities without a firm capital base or alternative sources of income (salary, remittances and so forth) and most farmers in general, are at a disadvantage in terms of land use and production. The social protection and reproduction of people with disabilities through utilising land are low in the two farms.

3.5 Disability-friendly agricultural equipment and assistive devices

At the two farms (Bata and Bodeli), three people (one with visual impairment and two with mobility challenges) do not own land in their own right but are contributing to household and farm labour. People with diverse disabilities from neighbouring communal areas come to the farms to offer casual labour or to search for permanent jobs. Interaction with people with disabilities on and off the farms showed gaps in agricultural equipment and assistive devices. Current agricultural equipment is not meant for their needs while most lack assistive devices such as mobility aids (wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and white sticks). Disability issues in Zimbabwe are a key theme in the work of several scholars (Munemo, 2019, 2015; Manatsa, 2015; Munemo and Tom, 2013)

People with disabilities emphasised that disability is not inability, and that they can contribute to household and farm activities in productive ways. However, the shortages of assistive devices and vacuity of disability-friendly agricultural equipment and technology limit their participation. Support from government, non-governmental organisations, private sector and other development players is low. These constraints impede the functionality of and gains for people with disabilities. Overall, the nature of the fast track land reform did not provide opportunities for pre and post settlement support for land beneficiaries in general and people with disabilities in particular.

IV. CONCLUSION

Land is a key resource that has potential and real benefits in improving people's lives. Socio-structural inequalities including disability can be addressed through reconfiguring land tenure and broadening their participation in other sectors of the economy. In Zimbabwe, land reforms were intended to enhance wellbeing of the land beneficiaries and that of their communities and national economic performance through providing land as key resource. The FTLRP had major redistributive outcomes as evidenced by the redistribution of 13 million hectares of land to 180 000 families (170 000 in A1 and 10 000 in A2 schemes).

Despite production and market constraints, renowned scholars have provided evidence that the land reform is enhancing social protection and reproduction of the land beneficiaries. Productive capacity that had been reported as the least outcome in early phases of land reform is also improving. However, the situation of people with disabilities pertaining to accessing land, utilising land, social protection and social reproduction brings to the fore various lacunae.

Policies at national level and, conventions and protocols pertaining to disability are of limited utility if they cannot be put in practice (changing the life chances of people with disabilities). Basing on the Bata and Bodeli farms case studies, addressing the land and agricultural support needs of people with disabilities depending on context and specific requirements, is an appropriate social policy dimension. However, not all people with disabilities need land to enhance their wellbeing. Inclusion of people with disabilities in land reforms and appropriate support in agriculture and other sectors is essential yet a nuanced understanding their situations and needs is essential within and beyond land reform and agriculture. The government of Zimbabwe should consider distributing land to people with disabilities who have interest, and who can be capacitated to utilise agricultural land. The government can network and collaborate through bilateral ties and work with local and international NGOs, private sector and charity organisations to provide for the needs of land beneficiaries with disabilities. Organisations for people with disabilities including the National Association of Societies for the Care of the Handicapped (NASCOH) and the Federation of Organisations of Disabled People in Zimbabwe (FODPZ) should advocate for the land rights of their members.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chibwana, M. W. T. (2016). *Social Policy Outcomes of Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP): A case of Kwekwe District. PhD Thesis.*, University of South Africa.
- [2] Chipenda, C. (2018). *After land reform: What about the youth?* Conference presentation delivered at the International Conference on Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World organised by the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI), International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands, 17-18 March 2018.

- [3] Creswell, J. and Plano Clark, V. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [4] Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Conducting, planning and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4th Ed)*. Boston: MA Pearson.
- [5] Dekker, M. and Kinsey, B. (2011). Contextualising Zimbabwe's land reform: Long term observations from the first generation. *The Journal of Peasant studies*, 38(5), pp. 995-1019.
- [6] Hanlon, J., Manjengwa, J. and Smart, T. (2014). *Zimbabwe takes back its land*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.
- [7] James, G. (2015). *Transforming Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe: Experiences of Fast Track land Reform 2000-2012*. PhD Thesis., University of the Edinburgh.
- [8] Johnson, R. B. and Onwuegbuzie, AS. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), pp. 14-26.
- [9] Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In, N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd Ed.)* (pp. 1065-1122). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [10] Manatsa, P. (2015). Are disability laws in Zimbabwe compatible with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities? *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Innovation*, 4(4), pp. 25-34.
- [11] Masuko, L. (2013). Nyabira-Mazowe War Veterans Association: A microcosm of the land occupation movement. In, S. Moyo and W. Chambati (eds.), *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism* (pp. 123-156). Dakar: CODESRIA.
- [12] McGregor, S. L. T. and Murname, J. A. (2010). Paradigm, methodology and method: Intellectual integrity in consumer scholarship. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34(4), pp. 419-427.
- [13] Moyo, S. and Chambati, W. (2013). Introduction: Roots of Fast Track Land Reform. In, S. Moyo and W. Chambati (eds.), *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism* (pp. 1-28). Dakar: CODESRIA.
- [14] Munemo, E. (2019). Privacy and confidentiality concerns of people with visual impairment in the electoral process in Zimbabwe. *American Journal of Humanities Social Science*, 2(3), pp. 26-37.
- [15] Munemo, E. and Tom, T. (2013). Access and support of assistive technology for people with visual impairments in open and distance learning (ODL) institutions in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research & Policy Studies*, 4(3), pp. 553-559.
- [16] Munemo, E. T. (2015). *Enhancement of access and inclusion of people with visual impairments in the electoral process in Zimbabwe*. PhD Thesis., Zimbabwe Open University, Zimbabwe.
- [17] Murisa, T. (2009). *An analysis of emerging forms of social organisation and agency in the aftermath of Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*. PhD Thesis, Rhodes University, South Africa.
- [18] Murisa, T. (2013). Social organisation in the aftermath of 'Fast Track': Analysis of emerging forms of local authority, platforms of mobilisation and local cooperation. In, S. Moyo and W. Chambati (eds.), *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism*(pp. 251-330). Dakar: CODESRIA.
- [19] Sadomba, Z.W. (2013). A Decade of Zimbabwe's Land Revolution: The Politics of War Veteran vanguard. In: S. Moyo and W. Chambati (eds.), *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism* (pp. 79-122). Dakar: CODESRIA.
- [20] SAFOD (2019). Regional advocacy platform on the campaign for SADC Disability Protocol. Available at: <http://www.safod.net/safod-content/cid/120/regional-advocacy-platform-on-the-campaign-for-the-sadc-disability-protocol/> (Accessed 17 March 2019).
- [21] Scoones, I. (2018). *Land reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges for policy*. s.l: Kindle Edition.
- [22] Scoones, I., Marongwe, N., Mavedzenge, B. and Murimbarimba, F. (2011). Zimbabwe's land reform: Myths and realities. *Africa Today*, 57(4), pp. 125-139.
- [23] UN Department for Social and Economic Affairs (2019). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): Fact Sheet*. New York: UN Department for Social and Economic Affairs.
- [24] United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (A/RES/61/106)*. New York: United Nations.