



# Livelihoods after Land Reform in Zimbabwe

## Working Paper 11

Traditional Authority and Fast Track Land Reform:  
Empirical Evidence from Mazowe District,  
Zimbabwe

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June 2010

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## Working Paper Series

The land reform that has unfolded in Zimbabwe since 2000 has resulted in a major reconfiguration of land use and economy. Over 7 million hectares of land has been transferred to both small-scale farm units (the A1 model) and larger scale farms (the A2 model). The land reform has had diverse consequences, and there is no single story of what happened and its implications.

The Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK), the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, South Africa), the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS, Harare), the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Trust (CASS Trust, Harare) and the Ruzivo Trust (Harare) came together to support a small grant competition aimed at generating new case study insights based on original and recent field research by young Zimbabwean scholars. The aim was to bring together solid, empirical evidence from recent research in the field. There were over 70 applicants, and 15 small grants were offered. The result is this Working Paper series. All papers have been reviewed and they have been lightly edited. In all cases however they remain work-in-progress.

Today policymakers are grappling with the question of ‘what next’? How can a new agrarian structure be supported, and a vibrant rural economy be developed? Yet such discussions are often taking place in a vacuum, with limited empirical data from the ground and overshadowed by misperceptions and inappropriate assumptions. We hope this series – together with the wider research work being undertaken by our organisations and partners – will help to enhance policy making through a solid evidence base.

As these papers clearly show, there have been highly varied impacts of the post-2000 land reform: on rural livelihoods, on agricultural production, on markets and the economy, on farm workers and employment, on the environment and on institutions and governance arrangements, for example. And these impacts have played out in very different ways in different places. These papers cover a range of themes and offer insights from across the country.

They add up to a complex picture, but one that offers key pointers for the way forward. They counter the excessively pessimistic picture often painted about Zimbabwe’s land reform, yet highlight important failings and future challenges. We very much hope that they are widely read and shared, with the insights made use of as Zimbabwe charts its way forward.

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**The small grant competition was coordinated through the Livelihoods after Land Reform research programme ([www.larl.org.za](http://www.larl.org.za)).**

# Summary

The government of Zimbabwe implemented the accelerated land reform and resettlement programme commonly referred to as the fast track land reform programme in the year 2000. To be able to implement the programme, the government used existing land administration institutions but had to create new ones such as land committees from national to district levels in addition legal reforms were done to compulsorily acquire land for resettlement. Traditional leadership, who had vested interest in the land question, created an administrative hurdle for the government which had to accommodate a number of interest groups. This analysis with empirical evidence from Mazowe district shows how the authority of traditional leaders was exercised, or undermined, by the fast track land reform. It also critically explores how interests and expectations of traditional leaders were pursued, how traditional authority was exercised and challenged, on the other hand how their power was either institutionalised or undermined during and after the FTLRP. The research shows how traditional leaders feel undermined by the whole land administrative system implemented post 2000 and their expectations were not met, including land restitution and decongestion of communal areas. They were simply recognised through inclusion of in the District Land Committee, where they had limited influence. Chiefs from Chiweshe communal area argued that land reform had not benefited '*vana vemuchiweshe*' (the people originating from Chiweshe). In spite of these challenges, traditional leaders remain instrumental in community building in new resettlement areas. Therefore prospects exist for the devolution of land management authority which embeds wishes of the traditional leaders.

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# Acronyms

CRD	Center for Rural Development
DA	District Administrator
DLC	District Land Committee
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MLARR	Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement
MRDC	Mazowe Rural District Council
RDC	Rural District Councils
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front Party

# Introduction

Traditional leaders are generally regarded as custodians of land and natural resources under communal tenure in Zimbabwe, despite what the Traditional Leaders Act and the Rural District Councils Act provide for. Traditional leaders are also important in community governance and development that is culturally driven. Under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) traditional leaders exerted their vested interests in the land reform stemming mostly from a desire for land restitution, as well as deriving economic benefits for their own people who were farming in areas with poor agricultural potential. This paper will critically explore how these interests were pursued, how traditional authority was exercised and challenged, on the other hand how their power was either institutionalised or undermined during and after the FTLRP. In this way I will establish the future prospects for traditional leadership in resettled areas.

The research work was guided by the hypothesis that implementation of the fast track land reform programme did not meet the expectations of traditional leaders - chiefs, headman and village heads - who too had vested interests in the programme. In fact the programme could have undermined their authority and sown seeds of conflict between the mainstream land governing institutions in the country and themselves. The gap between political expectations and administrative capacity has been particularly difficult in the FTLRP, and why contests over authority at the local level have been massive.

The FTLRP resulted in creation of A1 and A2 resettlement models. The A1 resettlement model has two variants, the villagized and the self-contained model. The villagized A1 model can either be crop based or livestock based, also referred to as the Three Tier model. The later is found in the drier agro-ecological regions IV and V. The villagized model was meant to relieve land pressure in over-populated communal areas while at the same time maintaining the social and cultural fabric of the settlers by resettling as much as possible households with common origins and from the same villages. The Model A2 (Commercial Farm Settlement Scheme) was aimed at de-racialising commercial farming (Matondi and Munyuki-Hungwe 2006) through providing small, medium and large scale farms to indigenous people with farming capacity (experience and resources to finance operations). To access land under A2 model applicants had to prove their financial capacity which can lead to development of a viable commercial. The A2 farmers can apply for a 99 year lease from the Ministry of lands meant to secure tenure and access to private agro-finance.

The state and its local protégés (war veterans, the ruling party authorities mixing up with technical bureaucrats) have remained steadfast in controlling the goings-on in the resettlement areas. The vesting of formal powers of allocating customary lands to non-traditional or land committees to the regulation of occupation and use rights has been a matter of concern to traditional leaders in particular (Matondi 2007). During *jambanja* leaders of the farm occupations, mainly war veterans, allocated land without formal technical considerations. These extra-territorial structures tended to override government institutions and personnel from providing advice, extension and the regulation of land rights (Matondi 2007).

The influence of chiefs on land management issues has historical significance. Historically, pre-and post-colonial governments have periodically interfered with the traditional leaders' authority to allocate land to best suit their needs. The Communal Land Act of 1982 shifted the authority from the chiefs to District Councils and to Village Development Committees (VIDCOs). In 1996, Cabinet accepted the advice of the Rukuni Commission (Rukuni *et al.* 1994) that this should be reversed. Chiefs command respect in rural

areas hence in the late 1990s and after 2000 the ruling party ZANU PF started to provide incentives such as cars arguably for political expediency.

## Study methodology

The research was founded on a number of assumptions and questions on traditional leadership in the new resettlement areas. Through the research I probed on who the traditional leaders in new resettlement areas are and what roles they are playing there-in? I question on whether the traditional leadership institution is functional in new resettlement areas considering that commercial farming areas were largely not influenced by traditional leaders before 2000? Other questions that the research sought to understand are as follows:

- What is the criteria being used to choose traditional leaders (*sabhuku*) in the new resettlement areas? How is such leadership legitimised?
- What happens at the death of a *sabhuku* in the resettlement areas?
- What power does the chief or village head have in presiding over land issues and local scheme level?
- Is representation of the traditional leaders adequate in the district lands committee? What are the power relations between elected and unelected leadership at district level?
- Do the existing land governance institutions in the new resettlement areas relate and conduct business on land matters with or without traditional leaders?
- Traditional leadership in the new resettlement areas has been blamed to be ineffective but there is no social breakdown on schemes. The question is how has this been possible?

Empirical evidence was gathered from Mazowe district from 2004 to 2007, as part of the broad Lands and Livelihoods programme housed under the Center for Rural Development (CRD). The study used both qualitative (base line survey) and quantitative research tools to generate data that explains a wide range of issues. Qualitative tools employed include focus group discussions, personal key informant interviews and observations by the researcher. The paper is based on work carried out since 2004 in Mazowe district. In the year 2007, 539 respondents in new resettlement areas were captured. Multiple tools were used to compliment and verify the collected data. Interviewing A1 farmers was quite easy unlike A2 farmers most of whom do not reside on the farms.

Mazowe district is located in Mashonaland Central Province. It is one of the seven (7) districts in Mashonaland Central Province. The district is divided into 29 wards, 13 of which are found in Chiweshe communal areas and 16 in former commercial farming areas. Its southern administrative centre, 'Concession', is about 60 kilometres from Harare. This is where most of the government administrative services are found. There is a good road network and trunk roads to the city of Harare. Communities in the newly resettled areas of Zimbabwe are made up of black farmers (A1 and A2) who are of diverse backgrounds and origins, former farm workers, new farm workers and a few remaining white farmers.

## Policy issues around land governance

Continuation of centralised systems of governance, coupled with a lack of transparency and low consultation and corruption, have resulted in low levels of policy dialogue and development as well as

poor systems of land administration. Sadomba (2008) outlined how the land allocation was criticised at a Mashonaland West Provincial Stakeholder Dialogue Meeting in 2004 on ethnic and regional lines, corruption and unilateralism. In addition to the colonial legacy and poor governance, some cultural practices, especially discrimination of certain segments of society including women<sup>1</sup> and inadequate representation in traditional systems continues to impede land governance. There has been a multiplication of institutions that mediate access to land, water and wild resources at the local level in newly resettled areas. Chiefs, village heads, party leaders (ZANU PF), war veterans, district administrators and the district land committee are contesting the role of traditional authority in land allocation and administration in resettlement areas.

Traditional leaders have historically gained respect from their subjects through their association with ancestral spirits who are 'protectors of the people and the environment' by their allocation of land and resolution of disputes. SLSA Zimbabwe (2001) note that traditional authorities often link environmental health with ancestral guardianship and this is articulated using the medium of religious belief. Consequently, traditional authority is still important as it mediates access to land and natural resources in rural areas. Their relevance in new resettled areas is however contested by the aforementioned groups. ZANU PF political party recognizes the importance of traditional leaders for they exert considerable influence on the rural electorate, hence traditional leaders have had a role in the fast track land reform programme as members of the district land committees. The influence that they exerted in the committees is something else, which is what this paper will also try to analyse.

Rukuni (1994) points out that land resettlement program in Zimbabwe emphasised land redistribution for social justice especially poverty alleviation and correcting historical imbalances. On the other hand (Jacobs and Chavunduka 2003) argue that the land reform program has not had a complementary institutional reform component to support this principal objective of social justice. In post independence Zimbabwe, between 1980 and 1992, there was no local authority for resettlement areas, of which these existed for communal and large scale commercial sector. During this period (Moyo 1999) argues that land reform was implemented with the institutional form and structure of land administration from colonial times, whose appropriateness for the envisaged objectives remained unquestioned. Such an approach to land reform is too centralised and an unresponsive system of land administration which is epitomised by high costs (financial/time) involved in securing land rights and in unfair land allocations through corruption.

The lack of attention to institutional reform has led critics to question the political will and institutional imagination of both the central government and international organisations involved (Bryant 1998). The general consensus among academics is that in the absence of appropriate institutional reforms, the economic benefits from land reform and resettlement will not be forthcoming. According to Jacobs and Chavunduka (2003) lack of participation by local people (ordinary peasants and their leaders such as chiefs, headman, village heads, who are not elected) has resulted in an ambiguous definition of property rights, insecure tenure, a general failure to utilise land reform as a vehicle for economic development, and failure to appreciate the value and place of land in the country's overall development thrust. Through this paper I will demonstrate how the role of traditional leaders has been largely undermined

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<sup>1</sup> At the household level, men inherit land from within their families. Women have secondary usufruct rights which they get by virtue of marriage under customary land tenure.

during and after the fast track land reform programme through establishment of *ad hoc* committees and mixing of old and new institutions to deal with land matters.

## **Land administration legislation**

The Communal Land Act (Chapter 20) of 1982 seeks to provide for the classification of land in Zimbabwe as Communal Land. This Act which replaced the Tribal Trust Land Act of 1979 stipulates that land in communal areas is vested within the President of the country. The vesting of title in the presidency means land is a pawn in the hands of powerful officers and organs of the central and local governments. This kind of institutional arrangement provide fertile ground for abuse of authority which is enhanced by a lack of accountability, transparency or legal and institutional checks and balances in the top-down system of land administration (Jacobs and Chavunduka 2003). The Act also stipulates that occupation in the Communal Lands is subject to the consent of the Rural District Council which is a conducive brooding space for conflict between traditional leaders and Rural District Councils.

The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17) of 1998 provides for the appointment of village heads, headmen and chiefs among other provisions. Appointment of a chief is done through traditional systems of lineage in close consultation with the Ministry of Local Government who presides over the installation ceremony. However, the President has the power to appoint and demote a traditional leader from an area for various reasons, such as behaviour not consistent to that expected of a traditional leader. Jurisdiction overlaps have been noted in Mazowe because available maps show the boundaries for chiefs only in the communal areas.

The Rural District Council Act (Chapter 29:13) came into effect in 1988. As custodians of the land at local level, the Mazowe Rural District Council (MRDC) has the power to remove any new resettled farmers if they are deemed undesirable. However, with the commencement of the fast track land reform, such powers became vested in the district land committee, meaning MRDC, could not unilaterally evict settlers. The Act does not allow traditional leaders to allocate land without the approval of the rural district council. It was however observed that chiefs and village heads continue to allocate land in communal areas, these traditional leaders are respected more by ordinary villagers than their counterparts in resettlement areas.

## **Local level land management institutions**

The Fast Track Land Reform was executed and managed by both new and existing institutions. While the composition of these structures reflects the institutions ordinarily associated with the management of land issues, their legality remains unclear. The role of traditional leaders in land committees was such that it undermined their authority on land matters.

Under the A1 model, government adopted a village development committee synonymous to those that are found in communal areas. The committee has the responsibility of managing the day to day activities on the farm such as natural resources management and resolution of conflicts. The Committee of Seven was selected by local level institutions and within it, is a village head that is an appointee and consists of six other members elected by settlers.

Land identification during fast track land reform was co-ordinated by the National Land Identification Committee chaired by the Office of the Vice President. This Committee was replicated at all the governance levels. The Provincial Lands Committee was chaired by Provincial Governors whilst District Lands Committees were chaired by District Administrators. The Governor chairs the provincial land

committee whilst the district administrator chairs the district lands committee. The district committee, just like the provincial committee draws its membership from government departments, council, presidents' office, war veterans, ZANU PF party officials and traditional leaders.

In Mazowe district, over and above the village heads, there are three chiefs namely Negomo, Makope and Chiweshe and headman Nyachuru. Their functions are directed by the Traditional leaders Act. All the chiefs were allocated A2 farms under the fast track land reform programme. They too got vehicle (Mazda B1800) and some farm machinery as government tried to forge alliances with them ahead of future election. The traditional leaders in Mazowe have had mixed feelings about the land reform and its benefits on their community.

The District Administrator (DA) chairs the District Lands Committee and until recently was the sole signatory of A1 offer letters, which in itself was centralising power in an individual. Without power devolution, an office becomes too powerful in matters where there are many stakeholders with various interests making them prone to abuse of power and corruption. The DA is the head of government at the district level and oversees operations and functions of the Rural District Council. His power in the land reform lay in authority to allocate land through signing of an offer letter. This was source of conflict between the office, traditional leaders and other interest groups.

### **Challenges in land administration**

There is therefore a general contestation among the civil, political and traditional authority over who has the powers to register land rights, allocate and administer land and resolve disputes in new resettlement areas. In addition, this ambiguity in the role each of the three and their tendency to jostle for supremacy rather than complementing each other increase the tenure insecurity of newly resettled farmers. On the other hand decision-making on land matters is hampered by lack of good quality information which is supposed to be managed by the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement. Jacobs and Chavunduka (2003) concluded that land administration in Zimbabwe is too centralised and top-down in nature.

## **Roles and expectations of traditional leaders: Perspectives from Mazowe District**

Traditional leaders in newly resettled areas have numerous roles and responsibilities (Table 1). According to the respondents, their major role is in settling disputes (55%) which is done at the chief's court mainly followed by upholding traditional rituals (29%) which is their second most important role. Chiefs have to preside over their two courts one in the communal areas and another one in resettled areas, which is meant to reduce distance travelled by people attending court sessions.

**Table 1: The roles of traditional leaders**

Perceived role of traditional leaders	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Organise traditional rituals	120	22.2	29.0
Settling and resolving disputes	226	41.9	54.7
Preside over national functions	13	2.4	3.1
Promote local culture and beliefs	43	7.9	10.4
Village head presents village issues to the chief	5	0.9	1.21
Spearhead development issues	2	0.3	0.5
Natural resources management	4	0.7	0.9

Box 2 gives some cases which illustrate the issues that traditional leaders have to deal with and how the issues are handled. They work closely with the police especially on criminal offences such as murder, rape and theft. Sanctions are also imposed by the chiefs on people who are found guilty of certain offences. Livestock have been used as payment to the chief, if someone 'insults/angers the spirits of the land'.

**Box 1 Serious crimes and recourse in newly resettled areas**

A number of land related disputes have been recorded in Mazowe resettlement areas. People would fight and in some cases kill each other over land disputes which include neighbours ploughing down other peoples cropped fields, shifting of boundary markings or cattle straying and destroying crops among others. By 2007, under Chief Chiweshe's area three people have died in land related disputes. The first case involved farm workers, in the second case a cattle buyer was killed by the people who had sold him a beast and the last case involved a farm worker who was murdered after being promoted to foreman position. The chief normally handles civil cases and refers criminal cases to the police. He also plays a major role in cases where the plaintiff has to be compensated. The chief has to appease the ancestral spirits for crimes committed in their area especially on cases of murder.

Criminal cases are more rampant in new resettlement areas than communal areas because of the diversity of people in terms of culture, which you find in resettlement areas. There are also too many people from outside Mazowe, some of these people do not know local values and norms and others simply disregard them and this is said to anger ancestral spirits (Traditional leaders feedback meeting, June 2008). Another notable case of disregard of local values involves a man from Masvingo who burnt *dumba* (traditional clothes worn by Mbuya Nehanda, the one who was beheaded by white colonialists) that were in a hut (Chief Chiweshe, personal interview 2007). Traditional leaders also blamed the police for not handling criminal cases in a just way, especially if a thief has been caught; as they refer criminal cases to them. The police stand accused of releasing suspects after accepting a bride and this does not deter criminals and would-be criminals. The role of traditional leaders in community building is being undermined by such issues; as they would appear as if they do condone criminal acts.

**Restitution and land reform**

Alongside other groups of people, Fast Track brought its own expectations among traditional leaders. Among other things, traditional leaders expected greater roles in beneficiary selection and land identification (which would presumably address land restitution claims) but they played a peripheral role in these processes. This was despite the move by the state to force stronger alliances with

traditional leaders through a number of incentives such as easy access government inputs, provision of monthly wages, and provision of vehicles among other things. As these expectations were not met, it is evident in Mazowe that there are farms which are still being contested based on restitutions issues. At a hilly areas on Hurlingbery farm a local spirit medium *svikiro* is claiming that the areas belonged to their forefathers and the person who was allocated that farm should vacate and pave way for their settlement. The current settler is resisting the move by the *svikiro*, in spite of the fact that the *svikiro* has already held a traditional ceremony called *bira* to appease the spirits on the hill at the mountain. The *svikiro* also blames the new farmer of indiscriminate cutting down of trees, a fact that is evident even to passer-bys.

The issue of lost land rights is therefore of paramount importance as a motivation for accessing land through post independence land reform programs in Zimbabwe. Failure by the independent government led by Robert Mugabe to address many land restitution claims relating to forced removals during the era of the white have created a significant land hunger in Zimbabwe (HRW 2002). This is true in Mazowe were the legendary spirit of Mbuya Nehanda who inspired the first Chimurenga is believed to have resided. About six clans (Sadomba 2008) including the Hwata clan led by *ambuya* who also claims to be possessed by the spirit of Nehanda are land restitution claimants in Lowdale of Mazowe valley.

Land restitution claims by traditional leaders do exist in Mazowe, for instance the both the Hwata and Mbare clan claims in Lowdale farms in the Mazowe valley commonly referred to as kugomba (valley). On the other hand the Mbare clan also of Mazowe, though their chieftainship is still to be resolved in the district, they also claim land in the former commercial farms (Traditional leader's workshop 2009).

Sadomba (2008) traces the movement of the claimants of land in the Mazowe valley (ku Gomba). However, existence of numerous clans claiming land restitution in the same areas in Mazowe creates confusion on who really is possessed by the spirit of mbuya Nehanda. There will always be claims and counter claims which put central government administrators in an awkward position. However, Chief Chiweshe indicated that it is only him and the Hwata/Goredema people who can appease the spirit of Nehanda in the country. On the contrary the Mbare clan does not even recognize the chieftainship of Chief Chiweshe (Key informant interviews 2007). What is critical regarding the issues of land restitution, which to date the government seem to have taken for granted is balancing the need to increase agricultural production in newly resettled areas on one hand, on the other, the fact that some people only wanted to get back land that belonged to their fore-fathers and not to necessary commercially farm. For instance, the Hwata people who have officially been resettled in the Gomba area, Lowdale farm, cannot use fertiliser.

Unlike, in Zimbabwe's land reform in South Africa land restitution in one of the pillars of addressing colonial injustices emanating from apartheid. The Restitution of Land Rights Act was the first law to be passed after the elections in April 1994 in South Africa. Traditional leaders in Zimbabwe have not effectively utilised the avenue of land restitution during the fast track land reform which could also have contributed to the general dissatisfaction among the people of Chiweshe communal areas, which are still over-crowded. To traditional leaders, land reform was not just redistributive but also had a component for restitutions, even though the government only recognized the former.

## Restitution and boundary disputes between chiefs

As noted above, there are numerous land claimants in Mazowe from different chieftainships. This has also spilled into contemporary disputes over areas of jurisdiction between the three chiefs and the Hwata clan, who are claimants to Hwata chieftainship (Box 2). All the chiefs claim jurisdiction over certain former commercial farming areas in Mazowe. However, with regard to traditional authority over resettlement areas, the Minister has to make a declaration for any piece of resettlement land to fall under a traditional leader. This has not happened in Mazowe and many other districts yet (Chief, Negomo feedback workshop 2009) chiefs continue to claim jurisdiction over land in newly resettled areas based on historical boundaries of chieftainships, which themselves are contested. Chief Chiweshe of Mazowe claims that the land in which he has been resettled following the fast track land reform (Mhangura farm of Mazowe) belonged to his fore-fathers. He claims that a sign that the ancestor were happy on his settlement was discovery of a pangolin<sup>2</sup> at Nharira now Nhangura farm. This contest has negative impacts on land governance and general community building. The contentious question is, to whom a settler under contested terrain will then report, or owe their allegiance to?

### Box 2 Boundary disputes between traditional leaders

Chief Makope's jurisdiction extends from Chaona through Mashonga along Musengezi and Mvurwi bordering Zvimba through to Manyere. He claimed to have given land to two chiefs, Chiweshe and Negomo. He pointed out that there are some boundary disputes between him and Chief Chiweshe and Chief Chipiro. On the contrary, Chief Chiweshe describes his jurisdiction to stretches from Seke Chirambahuyo to the Harare international airport, from there to Lake Chivero through to Nharira which forms the boundary with Chief Nyamweda through to Mvurwi bordering with Guruve. There exists an overlap in the Mvurwi area between the two chiefs and area which falls under new resettlement areas.

The relationship that exists between traditional leaders and the government is not healthy for good governance and does not promote effective implementation of the Traditional Leadership Act. Chiefs, headmen and village heads are paid a monthly allowance by the government. This gives the notion that they have an employer and so pay allegiance to the state. Traditional leaders are therefore at the mercy of the 'employer' who naturally would expect allegiance from the 'employee'. The Traditional Leaders Act prohibits them from being politically active but should represent the interests of all their subjects who might have different political allegiances.

## Land beneficiary selection and traditional leader's role

The traditional leaders in Mazowe have had mixed feelings about the land reform and its benefits on their community. The chiefs in Mazowe indicated that they do not have authority to allocate land in new resettlement areas. This is done by the lands committee, of which they are members, but cannot influence decision made in the committee. As a result of this lack of influence, traditional leaders felt that the people originating from Mazowe district did not benefit much from land redistribution in their own district. It is "*mabvakure*"; people from farm away areas that benefited (Chief Makope/Chiweshe, personal interviews 2007). In addition, the chief indicated that "*It is going to take time to have peace in Mazowe because 10% of the settlers came from Mazowe and the majority 90% came from outside the*

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<sup>2</sup> Pangolins are rare animals which are associated with chieftainship and when found they are supposed to be handed over to a local chief under traditional custom.

*district*". However, survey data shows that 52.2% of resettled farmers in Mazowe district have their origins from Chiweshe communal areas, through analysis of the last two digits on beneficiary national identification. A parallel study by the Mazowe Rural District Council, after chiefs had raised the concern that 'children from Mazowe' had not benefited, revealed that 44% of the beneficiaries originated from Mazowe district. Sampling was random and not purposeful, which could explain the disparities in statistics, it later emerged that there were particular areas to which most people from Chiweshe communal areas were settled. The ZANU PF District Coordinating Committee (2007) chairman indicated that they had to use force to stop further settlement of outsiders from Hariana farm in Mvurwi moving to northern farms, when they had realised that people from Chiweshe were being left out. People originating from Mazowe, got mainly A1 farms with a handful getting A2. This is a major bone of contention for the traditional leaders and other opinion leaders from the district.

## **Influencing the land allocation process**

Traditional leaders expected to play a direct and significant role in specific aspects of Fast Track Land Reform programme but on the ground these expectation did not materialise. This is despite the fact that they too are members of the District Lands Committee which is the authority that recommended people to access land. There are only three chiefs in the district who are outnumbered by technocrats that also make the committee. Further, the chiefs indicated that they wanted better representation in the committee. The authority of traditional leaders was limited to recommending individuals from villages in Chiweshe communal areas, for them to access land through the lands committee. One chief referred the DAs office as that of the "native commissioner". The native commissioner existed in colonial times and practically disempowered the chiefs. As one chief remarked *"as chiefs we do not have power to prevent implementation of some decisions that are made in the lands committee, this is normally done by the chairperson of the committee, the DA"*. In essence inclusion of the chiefs in the lands committee was to some extent meant to institutionalise them in the land reform process, whilst neutralizing their power again. One chief referred their inclusion as *"mere window dressing"*. To this end the authority of traditional leaders in land governance was undermined following the fast track land reform programme.

Only 0.9% of the respondents indicated that got land through chiefs, with the majority 35.2% and 22.7% having accessed land through the district administrator and by involvement in Jambanja respectively (Table 2). The DA was very central in accessing land especially for the A1 farmers however an official in the DA's office indicated that *"The land reform has been greatly politicized hence it is very difficult to clearly follow some of the laid down policies on land identification and beneficiary selection"*. It is evident from the statistics that traditional leaders had limited influence in beneficiary selection and actual land allocation. This is where the concerns of the traditional leaders emanate from.

**Table 2: Process of accessing land**

How they got land	Type of scheme				Total		
	A1		A2		No.	%	
	No.	%	No.	%			
Jambanja	79	14.7	43	8.0	122	22.7	
Applied to ARES	5	.9	1	0.2	6	1.1	
Applied to DA	170	31.7	19	3.5	189	35.2	
Applied to Councilor	33	6.1			33	6.1	
Applied to ZANU PF	6	1.1			6	1.1	
Applied to Chief	3	0.6	2	0.4	5	0.9	
Applied to Min. of Lands	19	3.5	99	18.4	118	22.0	
Applied to Lands committee	21	3.9	23	4.3	44	8.2	
Inherited	7	1.3	1	0.2	8	1.5	
Not answered	6	1.1%			6	1.1%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>65.0%</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>35.0%</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	

It is clear from Table 4 that there were many avenues that one would follow to be able to access land. This in itself is an indication of an administrative system that was in shambles during implementation of the fast track land reform programme. Whilst applying for land through ARES or any of the agencies in table 4, is not the same as being allocated land through that channel. It shows that there were many avenues one would pursue, as a means to an end. The Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement and the DAs office were the *bona fide* land allocating authorities for A2 and A1 farms. Respondents at a focus group discussion at Selby farm were of the opinion that having many agencies allocating land predisposed the whole land allocation system to corruption and favouritism. It is not surprising that authorities could bend the roles tacking advantage of the confusion that engulfed the whole reform process. At a focus group discussion held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2009 at Kawanzaruwa village in Chiweshe communal areas people who did not access land blamed it on lack of knowledge as to which office they were supposed to submit applications. Those who also submitted applications to some of the above mentioned agencies did not get land and complained of being referred to countless offices before they got tired of the process.

### Traditional leaders role in land allocation

Chiefs in Mazowe district had limited influence in the land allocating institution; the district land committee. At the pick of the fast track land reform there was only one substantive chief in the district, the late chief Negomo. In a committee dominated by technocrats from government departments the voice of the chief was overshadowed. This was a major reason forwarded by the traditional leaders to have led to the “children from Chiweshe” *vana vemuchiweshe* not benefiting as much as they would have wanted from the land redistribution exercise. The chiefs felt that it was upon themselves as the ‘owners’ of the land and custodian of the culture and African beliefs as well as appeaser of the spirit mediums of the land to allocate land and not technocrats, some of whom do not now sacred places in the area.

Chief Makope indicated that the lands committee was disempowering them in an unprecedented way (Personal interview, January 2007). He noted the issue of double land allocation which is done by the lands committee on one hand, on the other, the failure by the same committee to resolve disputes that follows. It would be left upon themselves as the traditional leaders who are on the ground to attend to some of the land related disputes. As a result of this, the chief has been boycotting the lands committee

meetings since November 2007. During the interview the chief could not hide his bitterness on the way land was allocated in his area. In-fact he indicated they had together with other chiefs requested to be allowed to allocate land as they do in communal areas but nothing has been done about this request. The issues raised by chiefs in Mazowe are aptly summarized by Moyo (2006) who noted that the demand for land among various groups led to competition for political and economic capital to be gained from allocating land rights between government bureaucrats, politicians and traditional leaders.

## **Settler-traditional leader relationship**

The diversity of land claimants and beneficiaries in newly resettled areas has created new social formations and class relationships in the former commercial farms. The number of people in the former commercial farms has obviously increased through subdivision of farms and settling of people. For instance at Hay-grange farm in Glendale the farm was subdivided into 85 plots under A1 model over and above about 200 former farm worker households that still reside on the farm. The origin of the settlers is diverse, as previously alluded to, which has implications on how people on the farms relate to each other. Traditional leaders indicated that they were not being accorded the respect they deserve from some resettled people. However, just like other chiefs, chief Makope, pointed out that there are *“some people in his area who want to be their own leaders, especially those that came from other areas (vabvakure) as a result of the land reform”*. These sentiments were shared by the traditional leaders in the district including the headman and some village heads to say that *vabvakure vanoshora mambo* they belittle the chief. On scheme level, the village heads were not respected as much as those in the communal areas because they too were given land, unlike in communal areas where they can allocate land. *“Ma 15 haana kuwana minda”* comment by Chief Makope in reference to the last two digits of the national identity number which represent district of origin.

## **Perspectives from land beneficiaries**

A2 farmers indicated that they do not fall under any particular chief, which has ignited the furry of chiefs. The A2 farmers have done this by not abiding by the traditional rites such as chisi, a traditional rest day, which is a Friday in Mazowe district. One A2 farmer actually remarked during an interview that they are the *“new white farmers”*. Contrary to this notion that white farmers did not respect chisi, traditional leaders indicated that the white commercial farmers used to show respect of traditional rites and other ceremonies through *kupetera*. *By kupetera* they would contribute resources in cash and kind to traditional functions in the district.

On A1 farms outsiders, feel strongly that they are not being treated fairly by not being appointed village heads. At Barwick farm, such settlers indicated that shona culture and traditions are the same with minor variations hence this should not be used as an excuse. One farmer even indicated that it about knowing one's roles and responsibilities and abiding by the county laws, and not culture. Within the same vein they argued that they should be treated just like their A2 counter parts by both traditional leaders and government departments. However, respondents to the questionnaire indicated that traditional leaders are effective (80%) in administering their duties and were happy about it (91.3%). It is therefore critical to re-assert the authority of traditional leaders in rural areas, including new resettlement areas.

During a report back meeting in resettlement areas (Selby farm) one participant remarked that, the village heads were allocated land just like everyone else, unlike in communal areas where they have power to allocate land, hence how can they be respected. This notion on authority of traditional leaders

is generally shared among most resettled farmers especially those that do not have their origins in Mazowe district.

## **Appointment of village heads**

The appointment of village heads on A1 schemes is a matter of concern to the chiefs. Village heads provide leadership to the committee of seven on the farms, a structure that mimics the village development committee in communal areas. On some farms in Mazowe, the leader of this committee is referred to as chairman which is a contradiction to the generally agreed position that village development committees are chaired by village heads. Before official installation of a village head by the chief in the presence of council and/or officials from the DA office the base commander or some ZANU PF party structure leader normally a war veteran would preside over socio-political and developmental issues on the A1 scheme. Chiefs in Mazowe are irked by the installation of people who do not originate from Mazowe as village heads in newly resettled areas. *"...how can these people respect our traditional beliefs, culture and customs in Mazowe if they do not know them"* this was the major concern of Chiefs Chiweshe and Makope. Chief Chiweshe has been labelled a segregator for this reason, which he denies to say that *mabvakure* should only qualify for traditional leadership roles as village heads after residing in Mazowe for at least 10 to 15 years. Their installation is resulting in them not respecting chiefs of the area. On the other hand Chief Negomo is of the idea that village heads just like the chiefs are employees of the government who have to go through the official vetting process before they can be installed for they are also paid by the government.

Social conflicts were reported at scheme levels between village heads and some settlers. The Mazowe RDC CEO indicated that he has had to deal with such conflicts. In a personal interview with him, it emerged that conflicts were emanating from the way in which the village heads were appointed and the fact that some settlers do not respect local norms and beliefs. *'Some settlers do not respect local values, for instance Chief, Negomo complained about some people who were killing pythons and eating them. On farms where a village head is not from the Rozvi clan under chief Negomo, other settlers might not respect the traditional leader because they do not come from the chieftainship lineage. This also applies to chief Makope of the Shumba clan and Chiweshe of the Shava clan.* This was despite the fact that in most cases installation of village heads was done by the DA, Council representative and chief of that area (Box 3). What some settlers queried was the criteria for choosing the village head, which was basically an evaluation on one's potential and not lineage issues, as is norm with succession under traditional leaders. They looked at one's potential as a leader and then install him/her. This is creating conflicts because they feel that they should have considered lineage. The end result is general governance at the scheme level is compromised and this has potential negative effects on farm production, natural resources management and community building. Unlike in the communal areas, the authority of the village head in resettlement areas is easily under-mined by settlers.

### **Box 3: Appointment of a village head**

At Amelroy farm in Glendale ICA, the male village head was appointed in 2002. He indicated that he was appointed based on his understanding of the local culture, tradition and norms and his strong belief in them. He was appointed village head by the late Chief Negomo. The chief wanted someone to help him take some goats and cattle meant to be scarified at *Gomba* (altar) where the Hwata clan resides, in Mazowe, and no one came forth, except himself. He was actively involved in the proceedings that took place at the shrine. He was just appointed in the presence of the District Administrator, Chief Negomo and the ZANU PF representatives. He added that the ZANU PF party officials vetted him to ensure that he is a member of the ruling party. He pointed out that there were some problems during the nomination process because some people wanted the village head to be chosen through votes. This was mainly a suggestion by *vauyi*, people from outside Mazowe district which was resisted by the chief. Village heads appointed this way feel they rightly deserve the positions and have had limited conflicts with the DA, RDC and chiefs.

## **Traditional leadership and land management**

The Traditional Leaders Act provisions give chiefs authority to prevent unauthorized settlement or use of land and ensuring the efficient management of resources within the communal areas. These provisions are also expected to be upheld as traditional leaders conduct their business in new resettlement areas (Personal interview with District Administrator 2007). However, very few respondents in the study (1%) indicated that traditional leaders have a role in natural resources management. Chiefs bemoaned that the country has been destroyed and it is not only painful to them but also shameful for within a period of seven years a considerably short period of time *“we have destroyed what was protected for years. This shows a high level of irresponsibility by communities in new resettlement areas”*. Destruction of natural resources is a serious issue and include indiscriminate killing of wildlife, gold panning, cutting down of trees without control and burning of grass and veld areas. Traditional leaders are incapacitated to ensure sustainable utilisation of natural resources in newly resettled areas both in terms of lack of firm authority over the settlers who are of diverse backgrounds and also manpower shortage to police the huge areas under their ‘jurisdiction’. To date (2007) Chief Chiweshe alone has had to deal with more than twenty cases involving abuse of natural resources. Offenders were made to pay fines at council which is positive synergy between the traditional leaders and local council.

## **Conflicts in governance at the local level**

The pressure and euphoria for access to land created numerous administrative hurdles for the state (Makadho 2006). The sidelining of some chiefs within the land committee, for one had to boycott meeting for up to six months, in protest, impacts negatively on land governance. Chiefs did not play a role in the beneficiary selection and land allocation for A2 farmers. Selection of A2 farmers was done at provincial and national levels where chiefs had no influence, whilst they are members of the district land committee. Preferential treatment accorded some chiefs because some held national positions in the senate also exacerbated conflicts amongst the chiefs themselves. The senator on the other had would use his political power to bulldoze decisions made in the district committee, or impose people from his chieftainship on the waiting list of people who want land. Another emerging area of conflict in new resettlement areas of Mazowe is between ward councillors village heads within their wards that are perceived to be or are from the other political party. Three cases were reported in which councillors where dethroning appointed village heads that belonged to a different political party than theirs.

Conflicts over control of the land redistribution process and management after settlement were abundant. Table 3 summarizes some of the key clashes that occurred at local level, which had a bearing on traditional leaders.

**Table 3: Conflicts involving traditional leaders**

AREA OF CONFLICT	ATTRIBUTES OF CONFRONTATION
Boundaries and jurisdiction	Mainly among the three chiefs in Mazowe resettlement areas The state does not recognize chieftainship in new resettlement areas, boundaries only available in CAs
Political allegiance	Chief actively involved in politics which is condemned by MDC and other political parties Some elected councilors after June 2008 demoted village heads deemed belonging to another political party (affected both MDC and ZANU PF village heads)
Corruption in land allocation	In land allocation by senior ZANU PF party officials and some civil servants especially on A2 resettlement model <sup>3</sup>
Land demarcation and allocation	Chief X subdivided Ballyhooly farm which originally had 6ha A1 plots into 3ha plots to accommodate 'his people' Some chiefs imposed a quota of 5 plots on each A1 farms to be reserved for their people Lands committee undermining traditional leaders by virtue of their poor representation in the committee Land was allocated by the DA and lands committee which is a disregard of African tradition and unhu according to chiefs
Natural resources use and management	Traditional leaders accuse settlers of irresponsibility in utilisation of natural resources Outsiders blamed for killing scared animals such as monkeys and python Councilors authorizing cutting down of woodlots without consultation with village heads e.g. at Selby and Hariana farms
Restitution	Some areas <i>anoera</i> are sacred hence should be allocated to people who have the spiritual right to appease the spirit mediums
Culture and norms and tradition	A2 farmers disregard authority of traditional leaders by not respecting <i>chisi</i> Appointment of village heads from outside Mazowe who do not know local traditions

### Synergies among the leaders in new resettlement areas

In spite of the challenges faced and concerns of the traditional leaders with the implementation of the fast track land reform program, these leaders have been instrumental in maintaining peace and stability. This has been achieved through leadership and resolving of civil and some criminal cases in

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<sup>3</sup> The sons and daughters from Mazowe thought that they were going to get land for free but, outsiders used money and their influence to get it (massive corruption) (personal interview with Chief Chiweshe, 2007)

communities. Traditional leaders work closely with the police especially on criminal cases such as theft, rape or murder, even though the police are accused by settlers for releasing suspects from custody without trial. The only sanctions imposed to perpetrators of murder by the chiefs have to do with appeasing the spirits for having someone killed '*ropa radeuka*' in their area. Regardless of some major differences between the leaders, synergies have also been developed in the participation of the chiefs in the lands committee as they sometimes feel under represented. They represent their constituencies in the lands committee making them accountable to decisions made, there-in. Traditional leaders are also responsible for natural resources conservation, a role which is also played by the RDC. The chiefs indicated that they do not allow killing of certain animals which include pythons and monkeys. The RDC, DA and chiefs' work together in some instances in the installation of village heads, also facilitate collection of levies on behalf of the council in new resettlement areas.

## **Rebuilding the authority of traditional leadership**

The study observed seriously weak inter-institutional coordination between national and sub-national structures, as well as interference from political players especially with regard to listing and de-listing of properties/farms and beneficiary selection. The land administration system in Zimbabwe was noted to be dual and top-down in nature, without transparency and accountability (Jacobs and Chavunduka 2003). The acting DA indicated that sometimes, people would come to her office with letters signed by someone in a 'higher' office at province or in Harare instructing her to allocate that person land. In some cases the person would just come with a signed offer letter. This often led to conflicts on the land upon realization that there are double allocations of land. Sadomba (2008) points to the fact that there were deliberate double allocations due to presence of more than one office that gave offer letters. Displacement of land occupiers by the elite (Sadomba 2008) compounded land conflicts on the ground. The Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement (MLRR) should ensure that all resettlement areas just like communal areas come under the jurisdiction of Rural District Councils. An increase in the breakdown of customary management arrangements and the often dysfunctional mixture of old and new institutions and practices on land governance is creating confusion in newly resettled areas. Some institutional structures derive their authority not from the legislative instruments but from the executive, which constitutes and reconstitutes them (Jacobs and Chavunduka 2003) a case being the village committees and both the district and provincial lands committees.

Land management institutions in Zimbabwe such as the District Lands Committee are ad hoc committees created upon realization of the need to manage the fast track land reform programme over and above existing institutions such as RDC, traditional leaders and the DA's office. The district lands committee's legal backing is hazy as an institution which is liable to lawsuit considering the role it plays in beneficiary selection, land allocation and dispute resolution in new resettlement areas. Newly resettled people are often uncertain about the nature of their rights and confused about the extent to which institutions affect them, which might prompt some people to challenge decisions made by the committees in the courts of law. Matters are further clouded by local and national political conflicts over the whole land reform process even though on paper the main political parties agreed on its irreversibility in the Global Political Agreement. Overlapping roles between land management roles of some institutions and production roles exist between government departments and traditional leaders, all having realised the importance of having control over land issues be it its allocation or use.

The effectiveness and relevance of indigenous customary tenure systems in new resettlement areas has not received due attention in the debate on land governance in Zimbabwe post fast track land reform.

The importance of customary land tenure systems is often underestimated however these are an integral part of the social, political and economic framework of rural communities. Considering that the model A1 tenure system is crafted in a way that mimics communal areas both in terms of set-up and governance, traditional leadership has a role to play in their administration. Whilst traditional customary imperatives might not gel with commercial production objectives of the government, community development in new resettlement areas requires that traditional leader play a role. As noted earlier people in new resettlement areas have diverse origins and social status it therefore is important a system is put in place that can 'unify' them and build viable communities. Munyuki-Hungwe (2007) alluded to the fact that unity in these resettlement areas is mainly fostered on political and religious lines. Despite many problems that seem to occur at local level, there are prospects for improving livelihoods and production of the people who were resettled. The fact that traditional leaders are being rewarded with a wage at the end of every month undermines their independency as articulated in the traditional leaders and RDC acts. The responsible Minister has to make the necessary declarations regarding traditional leaders' jurisdiction in new resettlement areas. Such a declaration would assert the authority of traditional leaders in resettlement areas. In essence land tenure reform policy should be flexible and gradualist with regard to the role of traditional authorities.

## Conclusion

The land question has always been and remains at the core of Zimbabwe's political, economic and social development. It remains the root of the political tension within the country and with the former colonial power, Britain and the western nations. The dual land tenure system inherited from the colonial master, political pressure and general dissatisfaction among the war veterans and ordinary peasant in the states commitment to resolve the land issue culminated into sporadic land occupations across the country. Competing forces emerges in the control of the fast track land reform programme pitting the government, ZANU-PF, war veteran rural district councils and traditional leaders. The constitution was revised to ensure legitimate land take over, however, these reforms were not wholesome enough. Land administration mechanisms remained incapacitated in managing the land issues in Zimbabwe. Traditional leaders have been caught up in the struggle to control the land reform process. Their assumed roles in communal areas have not been easily applied in newly resettled areas. Influence of traditional leaders in the district land committee is insignificant. This institutionalisation of traditional leadership has undermined their authority on land matters. Evidence form Mazowe districts depicts a frustrated traditional leadership which has been caught up in the politics of land reform. Despite these challenges there exists potential for reasserting the authority of traditional leaders in the land governance system of the country.

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