

# Was land redistribution in zimbabwe a good or bad thing

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Was Land Redistribution in Zimbabwe a Good or Bad Thing Introduction In 2000 the Zimbabwe government under Robert Mugabe put in place a “ fast track” resettlement program. The stated objective of this exercise was to take arable land in the possession of the rich white farmers and give it to the landless poor and middle class black people of Zimbabwe for raising their economic levels. However, strong reports of the use of strong arm tactics by the militias of the ruling party and discriminatory allotment of land that went against the said objectives of the exercise became rampant. Democratic governments in the developed world and human rights groups protested this turn of events and painted the whole exercise as an abuse of human rights for the benefits of the ruling party and their henchmen. (1). However, history has demonstrated that redistribution of land can be an effective means to rural welfare, and prevents the rural people from migrating from rural areas to the growing and overpopulated cities. An unbiased look at the beneficiaries of the resettlement exercise shows that they are in much better economic state than they were earlier. (2). This argument in favor of the resettlement program by the Zimbabwe government raises the question was land redistribution in Zimbabwe a good or bad thing? Land Reform Prior to the “ Fast Track” Resettlement Program in 2000 The “ fast track” resettlement program has been portrayed as a Zimbabwe government initiative to wrest land from mainly white-owned rich commercial land for redistribution to the poor rural landless in Zimbabwe. However, this runs against the grain of many land reform initiatives of post-Independence government of Zimbabwe prior to the “ fast track” resettlement program in 2000, and the opposition that these land reforms that targeted confining the

farmers to the Communal Areas, leading to the withdrawal of the land reform initiative. Dande in Northern Zimbabwe was the site of a land reform initiative in 1987 with the objective of rationalizing local land use to enhance the efficiency of land use. Land in Dande is owned by the Chiefs in the area based on support provided by the Mhondoro mediums. Mhondoro mediums are a strong influencing factor in Dande and they were at the heart of the opposition to these land reforms. Mhondoro mediums address the collective problems of the community within their sphere of functioning. They draw their strength from the faith of the communities in the belief of their ability to provide solutions for the problems like drought, epidemics, and famine by communicating with the netherworld. Mhondoro medium opposition to the land reforms in Dande led to it being given up. The Dande exercise in land reforms is used by observers to show the lack of genuine interest in the post-independence Zimbabwe government to find a solution for the landless people in the Communal areas and only a tool for drawing support for the government election time. The land reforms program taken up just prior to the 2000 general elections was merely a ploy by the Zimbabwe government to reclaim the support from a dispirited electorate reduce the rural base of the opposition MDC party. (3). Impact of the "Fast Track" Resettlement Program in 2000 The land reform in 2000 led to gross macro-economic instability. The combination of massive land reforms and macro-economic instability has led to a sea change in the agricultural production and markets for agricultural products. The economy after 2000 have provided many opportunities, because of the shift away from the very restricted dualistic and racial economic structure that was in place prior to it. Yet, there are both

costs and challenges and the benefits have not been evenly spread to everyone. Examining the cattle growing settlements the land reform has opened up new land for cattle rearing, but not spread across to all areas. Evaluation of the patterns of cattle ownership in the newly opened out cattle growing lands show that there is a very uneven distribution. Another aspect is that all the cattle rearing people are not able to access markets and sell their cattle. This disparity in cattle ownership and access to markets has only worsened since the politically motivated clampdown in 2007, and raised the dependence on political patronage for ownership of cattle growing lands and access to markets. (4). The American Perspective America under George Bush has viewed with disapproval the violence that was associated with the land reform in 2000 and laid the blame of the poor financial state of the economy of Zimbabwe on President Mugabe and his land reform actions. As a consequence, the American administration laid restrictions on Zimbabwe that only heightened the financial distress in Zimbabwe and the plight of the people in Zimbabwe. The main thrust of the American restrictive action targeted the stepping down of President Robert Mugabe and the holding of fresh and fair elections. Yet, there claims that the poor state of the economy is really result of the pushing through of Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act by President Bush, in spite of the protests from Zimbabwe and the South African Development Community (SADC). The motivation from such action on the part of the American administration is claimed to stem from the low opinion of President Bush and many of his advisors on the ability of the black people to efficiently run their own affairs and their economy. (5). Conclusion The Land Reforms in 2000 have been

blamed for the economic ruin of Zimbabwe. Yet, can all the blame be laid on the government of Zimbabwe or were there external players that contributed to the economic problems of Zimbabwe? Has it been all gone wrong for Zimbabwe in the aftermath of the land reforms, or are there emerging pictures of economic development? The jury is still hung and more evidence is required. Only time will tell whether land redistribution in Zimbabwe was a good or bad thing. Works Cited 1. Manby, Bronwen. "Zimbabwe". Human Rights Watch 14. 1(2002): 1-44. 2. Rosset Peter, Patel Raj & Courville Michael. Promised Land. Oakland, California: Food First Books. 3. Spierenberg, Marja. "Spirits and Land Reforms: Conflicts about Land in Dande, Northern Zimbabwe". Journal of Religion in Africa 35. 2 (2005): 197-231. 4. Mavedzenge, B. Z., Mahenehene, J., Murimbarimba, F., Scoones, I. & Wolmer, W. "The Dynamics of Real Markets: Cattle in Southern Zimbabwe Following Land Reforms". Development & Change 39. 4 (2008): 613-639. 5. Boateng, Osei. "Zimbabwe: If only Bush will look the facts in the face". New African 424 (2003): 46-48.