



## Transcript Q&A

# Land Reform in Zimbabwe Revisited: A Qualified Success?

Admos Chimhowu

Lecturer, Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester

Jeanette Manjengwa

Deputy Director, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Zimbabwe; Co-author, *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land*

Teresa Smart

Visiting Fellow, Institute of Education, University of London; co-author, *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land*

Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP

Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee; UK Foreign Secretary (1995-97)

Chair: David Simon

Professor of Development Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London

31 January 2013

The views expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of Chatham House, its staff, associates or Council. Chatham House is independent and owes no allegiance to any government or to any political body. It does not take institutional positions on policy issues. This document is issued on the understanding that if any extract is used, the author(s)/ speaker(s) and Chatham House should be credited, preferably with the date of the publication or details of the event. Where this document refers to or reports statements made by speakers at an event every effort has been made to provide a fair representation of their views and opinions, but the ultimate responsibility for accuracy lies with this document's author(s). The published text of speeches and presentations may differ from delivery.

**David Simon:**

Thank you very much Admos. Well unfortunately Sir Malcolm is not yet with us, so rather than cool our heels, we will deploy him in the traditional role of discussant at the end of the discussion in the hope that he is able to hear at least part of it, as a context and lead-in.

So let me then in the process of opening to the floor just simply make a few more clarificatory remarks. Land reform is always controversial because land is the most basic resource, and inevitably with any form of reform and/or redistribution – which of course are not identical things – there are winners and losers.

And I've also already heard in recent days, as media attention has come to focus on the book, some misperceptions. The book does not argue, nor do its authors, that the mechanism, the process by which the land was taken, was ideal, or good, or anything else.

The focus of the book is what is happening on the land subsequent to that and that's come out very clearly from all three speakers, and I really would like us to concentrate the discussion tonight on what the book has done, what the authors have undertaken by way of research rather than on the other process which, as Admos has said, is going to still need to be resolved by mechanisms over which none of us here have any control.

**Question 1:**

Given the violent nature of the land grab by ZANU–PF as well as the historical initial land grab by the colonial settlers, what suggestions does the panel have to make sure that the same does not happen across the border in South Africa, which has exactly the same narrative?

**Question 2:**

Is the development over the past 30 years in structures of supply input, agricultural extension and the marketing of produce synchronized with this development in relation to land reform?

**Question 3:**

Scoones' study and the book differentiate between successful and unsuccessful farmers: the most successful are undoubtedly small commercial farmers. Did you find any equivalent process in the areas you looked at?

It was emphasized that small commercial farms employ labour. Whose labour is this?

**Teresa Smart:**

As with the white farmers before, we found variation. The sense is that a third is successful and commercial. They're selling enough and they're earning more than the standard salary for a teacher or a civil servant. Their standards of living have improved.

There is probably less than a third who is struggling and will need a lot more support. We gathered the data over the last three seasons, the three seasons after dollarization, and we saw in most cases that the farmers were continuing to improve each year. But there is a variation, and in the book we go into much more detail about what we think of the factors that really helped. We'd see two farmers next door to each other, one incredibly successful and one struggling, and they seem to have the same sort of land and the same access to agriculture.

Many farmers are not employing the labour that was on the farm when they took over. There was a big move against this but they are employing gradually, and by the time we were gathering data in 2011 the data showed that a six-hectare, eight-hectare farm was employing four to six full-time local labourers. Family were employed as well as non-family labourers.

On the question of marketing inputs and extension: the one thing that is absolutely clear is that the extension service in Zimbabwe is paralleled by none, and we've come from doing a huge amount of work in Mozambique. These extension officers are working very extensively in providing a huge amount of technical support; they were running field days and providing a lot of ideas about new methods of farming.

People were amazing in how they found markets. The further away from the road – people told us they sent a sizeable amount of maize to the grain marketing board, but they also sold to local people in the communal areas.

People were struggling to have the money to buy inputs. That was seen in many cases, because when you sell your maize, you get money and you go and spend it on school fees, repairing your house, buying clothes for your children and other essentials and then when you need to buy the inputs you haven't got enough money. But one thing that was clear was the quality and the work the agricultural extension officers put into developing agriculture.

### **Jeanette Manjengwa:**

I don't know what lessons South Africa can learn from what's happened in Zimbabwe from the 1940s and 1950s land occupations, but there's a lot of lessons to be learnt from the 2000s.

The main one is that there was a lot of frustration that caused the violence. South Africa must definitely step up its land reform process. Since independence, it hasn't met its targets regarding land reform. If it doesn't make it a priority it could very well have a worse situation than happened in Zimbabwe in 2000. It's not just about restitution, but resettlement as well. Having said that, the situation in South Africa is different; it's more complex.

### **Admos Chimhowu:**

The situation in South Africa is untenable and if they pretend they can go on like this, they'll probably have a worse situation than the Zimbabwe one, and the faster they do it the better. In most of these cases the asset transfer programmes have to be done relatively quickly and orderly but in most of the cases in history we know that things often have to come to a head before things like that happen.

What needs to happen in Zimbabwe is a reorientation of our bureaucrats, so that they begin not to think about supporting small scale farmers. For most of these institutions, the infrastructure is still geared towards the support of large scale farming. In Zimbabwe, it's mostly the donors and the NGOs who are trying to support these small scale agribusiness dealers to go into input supply and output marketing. I think this is probably one of the areas which the inclusive government still needs to go into.

This book also talks about cases where some of the former white commercial farmers have found this is an area they can go into. Without land they have gone into other areas of agribusiness which is the input supply and output marketing, sometimes offering contracts. The evidence in this book suggests that some of the contract farmers are actually contracted by people who lost their land during the reforms.

### **Teresa Smart:**

This is a growing state and will improve the situation of providing contracts, and many of the previous farmers taking over higher up the value chain are providing transport and inputs and support in that way.

### **Admos Chimhowu:**

The bigger issue for me is that the Ministry of Agriculture needs to reorient its thinking to imagine Zimbabwe as mostly being a country where we have smallholder farmers with most of the land, and to begin to think of new ways to create new institutions to support this type of activity.

### **David Simon:**

Of course the experience is relevant not just to South Africa but also to Namibia, where redistribution has been very slow and is also led by the principle of the seller willing to buy at market rates.

The February issue of *New African* carries two articles on this issue – one on the actual process, which ends with the salutary warning that Namibia is sitting on a time bomb for very similar reasons to those which we've just heard in relation to South Africa – but the second one, equally telling, is a profile of the Lands Tribunal in Namibia, which was created by the land reform mechanisms just after independence. It's been running for 18 years, and how many cases has it had to arbitrate on? None.

### **Question 4:**

One of the biggest issues often faced after redistribution is the inevitable pressure to sell land, as there's an increasing demand for good quality commercial land. What did you observe in relation to people's ability to hold onto their land and continue to improve productivity?

### **Question 5:**

Can you explain the many references in the book to Sir Malcolm Rifkind's thesis?

### **Question 6:**

How did the role of gender play a part in this? Did women have access to the land reform and were there gender differences in productivity on the farms?

### **Teresa Smart:**

Malcolm's thesis provided an open and direct view about what was going on in parliament over 40 years from 1930, when the Land Apportionment Act divided Rhodesia into two parts, defining what was white land and what was

African land. This Land Apportionment Act was changed 44 times, and Malcolm lists them all between then and about 1964.

Holding onto the land – when we started this research, we'd been told that people don't have security of tenure. They have offer letters and there are some farmers who have 99-year leases but we met very few of them. We'd been told that this meant people couldn't use this land to get loans, it didn't give them security and it was hard to invest in the land.

We found the opposite. When we were there it was 2010 and 2011, farmers had been on the land for 10 years and this offer letter had become for most farmers what they used as their right to be on the land; that nobody was going to move them. They were investing in the land. They invested their money in inputs, in better seeds, in getting equipment and building or improving a house or transport. They couldn't sell it because all they'd had was an offer letter. So you don't have a movement of people handing over or selling land; it was their land and they were proud of it.

**David Simon:**

Did you get a sense whether gender had in any significant way played a role in the allocation mechanism in the way that it did for example in the 1980s resettlement scheme criteria?

**Jeanette Manjengwa:**

Generally, women did benefit; 80 per cent of the small farms were allocated to women-headed households. Apart from that, there were many more women who benefitted through their husbands to have more land and better land to farm. We saw some positive development, for example a policy by the government to have both spouses' names on the permits or offer letters, which is important in inheritance.

Besides looking at the statistics and data in the survey, we also tell some narratives of women: what type of women got the farms and what are they doing on the land. We saw different experiences: women who were war veterans, women involved in commercial farming and women who achieved peace of mind and a degree of self-sufficiency through their land, instead of perhaps becoming second wives in the communal areas and sharing a small hectare of communal land with another wife.

Another thing we noticed is that even if the farm wasn't in their name, women were taking decisions alongside their husbands, unlike in family issues where traditionally the men make the decisions.

**Teresa Smart:**

In some cases it was more than just making decisions alongside their husbands. We found that it was the women who were making the key decisions. We were finding more and more they were the strong, productive farmers.

**Question 7:**

What's been the impact of the land reform, given that Zimbabwe is still reliant on food aid? Who are the main beneficiaries and who are the losers? You used the number 70,000 farm workers, not including their families as you do for the small scale farmers. That figure is only a third of the often-quoted figure for farm workers. What's your evidence for 70,000?

**Question 8:**

What would the success of these farmers look like if they were able to work with international community agencies?

**Question 9:**

How many farms was the study done on, and in what regions? The facts don't add up: the country is in desperate need of food supply, and agriculture is 60 per cent down of where it was 14, 15 years ago. Who was the land taken back from? Was it taken back from foreigners, or was it taken back from Zimbabweans?

**Teresa Smart:**

Some of those questions are the same: who are the beneficiaries and who are the losers. I'll talk about farm workers: where did we get the information from? It was data from a very good report, and data that was gathered that was uniform across the research was that there are 165,000 full-time workers – 100,000 of them are still employed on the estates, in sugar and plantations.

However, the data shows that about 67,000 lost jobs during the structural adjustment period in the 1990s, and that was a huge loss. They are the losers, and as we show in the book, many of them have gone into gold

panning, which is a great problem in terms of the environment. What we can say is that we have almost a million full-time workers that are partly family members and that's data we gathered from a range of sources.

We chose to do our main study in Mashonaland, partly because of Ian Scoones' work in Masvingo. When the book was published, we were told that Masvingo is poor land; it's not representative even if it's working there. So we made a clear decision that in our research we were going to choose the area that everybody was looking at: the area around Mashonaland Central and East where the land was good. We backed up what we saw through first hand research with the huge amount of detailed research done across the country. We also added on the study done by Bill Kinsey looking at the 1980s land reform.

### **Jeanette Manjengwa:**

I wanted to address the question about who are the main beneficiaries. To start with, this was a process you applied for. People would reply to an advert in a newspaper or apply to the district office in a communal area. There's a whole range of people who benefitted from the land. A lot of research has shown that in fact, the majority of people who benefitted were subsistence farmers who were living in the communal areas with little rainfall or bad soil. There were also some unemployed people from the urban areas who benefitted from the programme, and also professionals: civil servants, teachers and nurses who preferred to farm. There were patterns where one spouse would keep such a job and the other preferred to farm.

### **Teresa Smart:**

During land reform, some farms was divided into smaller farms of about 50, and the majority of the people who moved onto these farms moved as part of the occupation, and it was those who showed initiative and determination. Other farms were divided into larger farms – 60, 80, 100 hectares – and for that there was a requirement that you needed some financial backing and knowledge behind you. Many generals or those who worked in the civil service had grown up on farms. You had to have some finance. It was often a house in Harare which they mortgaged to put the money into building a farm.

### **Admos Chimhowu:**

The book is very candid about who got the land. One of the myths that Scoones and others have also addressed is whether or not all the land went



to people with connections. In the book it's very clear on the different classes of people that benefitted, including the political and bureaucratic elite. But most of the land went to people from the communal areas who occupied these farms when they were taken over.

**David Simon:**

It sounds as though it would nevertheless be very interesting to get nationally disaggregated data in the way that it was done in the mid-1980s. A lot of the early discussion about the different models of resettlement reform were initially discussed in terms of national aggregates, but in the mid-1980s, a team disaggregated by agro-ecological zone, by province and so on and you started to get a much more richly variegated picture.

**Admos Chimhowu:**

Can I just mention that the 2006 report has got all the answers in terms of who got what land and where?

**David Simon:**

Unfortunately time is marching, so we need now to move towards a conclusion. So Malcolm I introduced you but the one thing I didn't say is that you have observed the land issue in Zimbabwe with as long a lens, time-wise, as anybody else. With that in mind, as well as your ongoing interest in that part of the world, we look forward to your remarks.

**Malcolm Rifkind:**

Thank you very much indeed, and I'm delighted to be here. I'm sorry I arrived a little late. I wrote my master's thesis on the politics of land in what was then Southern Rhodesia, and I actually lived in the country for two years from 1967–69. I was an assistant lecturer at what was then the University College of Rhodesia in what was then Salisbury, now Harare. This was during the UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence) period. From the point of view of most of the rest of the world, the issue was about the Rhodesian Front, Ian Smith, majority rule, political power and all the traditional things you would anticipate, all of which were valid. But there was another fundamental issue which you could not disassociate from the political struggle, and that was the issue of land.

I'm not an agronomist, so I chose to do a political history from 1890 until 1960 for my thesis which included the period when there was a serious attempt during Garfield Todd's time and Edgar Whitehead's time as prime ministers to repeal the Land Apportionment Act which failed.

It's worth remembering that although there are obviously similarities between the old Rhodesia and South Africa, it wasn't apartheid in the sense that South Africa tried to implement. And yet there were strong similarities in some respects. The Europeans, the white Rhodesians at that time – although not all of them – defended the Land Apportionment Act and argued that it was primarily there to protect African land and the African reserves that might otherwise have been lost. There was some truth in that, but of course it was a large dose of special pleading.

The land was approximately 50-50 – 50 per cent African, 50 per cent white – but of course didn't take into account two facts: 6,000 farmers on the one side and 300,000–400,000 on the other side. One of the things that was hardly mentioned at the time was that even though 50 per cent of the land was owned by white farmers, a vast proportion of that was not used. They didn't have the manpower, the capital or the will to use it, but for political reasons there could not be an acceptance on why it remained in their section of Rhodesia, and that added to the frustration and the anger of that time.

It has always been the argument of Mr Mugabe that commitments were given by the British government at the time to assist with the acquisition of white land so that it could be transferred to black farmers. What they chose to overlook is that a fundamental qualification of that offer to help was that there had to be a willing seller and a willing buyer, and there was no way that any British government could have been party to expropriation. So the reality was that over a number of years during the early years of Mugabe's reign, nothing very much happened.

There is no doubt in my judgement that the way in which Mugabe expropriated the land was vicious, cruel and unjustified – partly because no compensation was provided to any of those who lost their property, partly because of the methods that were used that involved some people being murdered or injured or evicted from their properties in the most terrible way, and partly because at least a significant number of the beneficiaries were the cronies of the regime who had no legitimate claim to be landless farmers. That doesn't discount whatever benefits the book may rightly identify. That makes it very difficult for the sanctions that have been imposed – not on the country, but on the over 100 individuals who were most involved in that

system – to be withdrawn, unless there is hard evidence of a real spirit of reform in Zimbabwe, and we're not there yet.

There is convincing evidence that – whatever the evil in the way in which it was done – that clearly there are many people in Zimbabwe who are now benefitting from new opportunities that did not exist before. I was interested to see the very strong argument that the overall levels of agricultural production have got back to the levels that existed before the expropriation. If that is true it is very impressive and not widely enough known.

I conclude by saying that I hope this does not get copied in South Africa, not because land isn't an issue, but because the methods that we used damaged not only the government responsible for them, but also those who see Africa as having a fantastic future, but who have been rightly very depressed and concerned by the trauma of Zimbabwe.