

**A HISTORY THAT HAUNTS THE PRESENT GENERATION: AN ANALYSIS  
OF THE ORIGINS OF THE LAND PROBLEM IN ZIMBABWE**

**Percyslage Chigora,**  
*Midlands State University*

**Tobias Guzura,**  
*Midlands State University*

**Introduction**

The land problem in Zimbabwe arose largely from colonisation by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in 1890 and the subsequent involvement of the British Government throughout the entire colonial period up to independence in 1980. The inequitable distribution of land is inseparable from the north-south relationship that has existed since independence between the former imperial power and the independent state in Africa during both the period of colonialism and the postcolonial era. This paper analyses the origins of the land problem in Zimbabwe from 1890 to current issues that are compounding the strained relations with Britain in the period 1997 to 2002.

**The sources of the Land Problem**

According to Jeffrey Herbst (1992), the appropriation of African land by European settlers resulted in the creation of anomalies in land distribution and is the basis of the inequitable distribution of land and enduring structures of unequal society in

postcolonial Zimbabwe. After the failure by the British South Africa Company (BSAC), to secure the vast gold mines that they had hoped to find based on Rider Haggard's legendary biblical land of Ophir and the fabled King Solomon's Mines, agriculture took over as the backbone of the settler economy. In order to secure their livelihood as settlers, the British designed strategies and policies that involved alienating land from the indigenous black people as well as obtaining cheap labour. The Royal Charter of 1889 became the first piece of legislation that authorized the BSAC to occupy a territory and exercise governmental authority over it (Moyana 1984:9). Article 24 of the Charter authorized the Company to alienate land and make grants for white settlers. This provision became the legal basis for land grabbing by white settlers from 1890 to 1894 (New African no.387:8), despite the fact that the Charter made no specific mention of land ownership. The whites relied on Article 14 to justify their actions, which reads:

*Careful regard shall always be had to the custom and laws of the class or tribe or nation to which the parties respectively belong, especially with regard to the holding, possession, transfer and disposition of lands, and estate or intestate succession thereto (Moyana, Op cit: 2.)*

That the whites took advantage of the Charter to dispossess the blacks of their land is a clear issue. What has largely remained unsaid is the fact that, as shown by Moyana above, the Charter actually had a clause that sought to protect black interests which were disregarded by the whites.

The policies adopted by the settlers in the early years of colonialism in 1894 involved the expropriation of land and cattle from black people and relegating them to

regions that were previously regarded as unsuitable for cultivation. On 18 July 1894, the British promulgated the Matabeleland- Order-In Council whose Section 49 provided for the establishment of a Land Commission to assign land to Africans. The Commission executed its duties in an offhand manner assigning two waterless tracts to the Ndebele. The creation of the Gwaai and Shangani reserves in 1894 followed by similar activities in other areas especially those in Mashonaland made a great contribution to friction between the indigenous people and the white settlers. The two reserves themselves were characterised by Kalahari sands of very low fertility and known for their peculiar hydrological content. The Ndebele described them as waterless deserts and cemeteries and they actually refused to occupy them (Ibid). The need to reclaim their lost lands was to serve as a strong rallying point for the Africans in the First Chimurenga, (1896-97). Despite a plethora of other causes, the land issue was central to the uprisings.

According to Cliffe and Stoneman (1989:12), the white settlers in early years were faced with two problems that related to labour shortage and competition from black agriculture. This led them to resort to “alienation of the best land on the high veld, relegating most black farmers to the middle or even lowveld, regions not previously regarded as suitable for cultivation...the provision of extension services, cheap credit, etc. to whites only...later on discriminatory marketing policies guaranteeing white farmer higher prices than black farmers under the White Agricultural Policy” (Ibid). Thus, land alienation in this context can be viewed as a strategy to prevent the prosperous Africans from competing with the Europeans.

The forced movement of Africans into the reserves and the increase in discriminatory policies against African farmers led to reduced yields. Laws and orders

were passed in the entire period of colonialism that sought to improve the livelihood of the settlers and undermining those of the African black population. By 1910, land that had been appropriated by whites had amounted to 23.4% and 26% declared native reserve later to become Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs) (Ibid). These areas were badly watered, sandy and largely unfit for human settlement. The creation of these Tribal Trust Lands was to serve as a strong rallying point for later day nationalists.

Table 1 represents the distribution of land because of legislations that were passed namely, the directive of the Native Affairs Department of 1910, 1930 Land Apportionment Act, Maize Control Act of 1934, Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969. These Acts had the support of the British Government through the colonial office directly by acts of commission or indirectly by acts of omission. An example can be drawn from the Land Apportionment Act, which empowered the Governor in Southern Rhodesia to, from time to time, assign portions of the unassigned area to the European or to the Native area, depending on the need. The Land Apportionment Act was the most important law governing land distribution. It established the principle of possessory segregation between black and white. The Act gave away most of the arable land to the European farmers who often received more land than they could utilize (Moyana, Opicit p 131). Africans evicted from their land had to be resettled in unproductive areas.

The Act was passed because of the Morris Carter Commission report and was passed into law in 1931. The Commission had the cumbersome task of coming up with a land policy that was to ensure the consolidation of white control of the land while at the same time also ensuring the provision of much needed labour for the newly established

white farms and mines. The resultant Act rescinded the Africans' rights to land ownership anywhere in the colony and as compensation, they were given the right to purchase land in the Native Purchase Areas. (Stoneman Colin and Lionel Cliffe, Opicit.12)

The Land Husbandry Act generated racial tension between whites and blacks. Only people who were actually working a piece of land in an area at the time of its implementation received land. The Act's promulgation was a result of a belief in the philosophy that communal land tenure led to misuse of land. As such, it was believed that security of individual tenure would give Africans the incentives to adopt 'good husbandry' and maximise production. In order for them to get the right of tenure, peasants had to get a permit to cultivate land called a 'farming right' and a permit to graze called a 'grazing right' (Tshuma 1997:25). Without a permit, the cultivation or grazing of livestock was illegal. However, these rights expired on the death of a holder and were not disposable of by will (Ibid.). In other words, despite the claim that the act empowered Africans, vis-à-vis land ownership, it did not allow them permanent 'ownership' on the same terms as their white counterparts.

According to Cliffe and Stoneman, these legislations had the net effect of converting black farmers from successful enterprising people growing surplus of food into impoverished subsistence farmers in overcrowded reserves practicing traditional techniques that were often inappropriate to the unfamiliar harsh environment (Collin and Cliffe 1989 Opicit 12). Further, it destroyed the viability of peasant agriculture leading to the removal of competition to white agriculturalists and providing them with cheap

labour whilst at the same time because of inadequate wages the black workers failed to sustain their livelihoods (Ibid. 3)

**Table 1. Distribution of land following legislations passed in 1911, 1930 and 1941**

<b>Category</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>1930</b>	<b>1941</b>
Native reserves	21 390 080	21 127 040	21 000 000
European Area	19 032 320	49 149 174	48 394 000
Native Purchase Area	-	7 464 566	7 859 942
Undetermined Area	-	88 540	62 563
Forest Area	-	590 500	987 742
Unassigned Area	51 628 800	17 793 300	17 780 918
<b>Total</b>	<b>92 051 200</b>	<b>96 213 123</b>	<b>96 213 120</b>

V, H. Moyana, Opicit p, 69, 45, 70

In the early 1970s, there was an attempt to seek alliance with blacks through creating African Purchase Areas where the successful blacks, though few, could access better land. However, as noted by Cliffe and Stoneman, this strategy was pursued intermittently and was at times reversed when it seemed to risk creating competition that would harm white interest. (Colin and Cliffe, Opicit.13)

In 1977, land laws were amended and racial classifications were abolished because of the Riddell Commission of 1976's findings and recommendations. The Commission had recommended that the most fundamental way in raising the income of families in the peasant sector to a level that would meet their minimum needs was to give them land. The inequitable land distribution for the African population was not solved since few blacks could afford to buy land and white area farms; hence, the continued demand for land amongst peasants. According to Jeffrey Herbst, by 1979 the population of native reserves exceeded the carrying capacity of approximately two million people. (Herbst Opicit p131)

In 1979, during the Muzorewa regime, a rapid process of buying of leasehold farms by whites and the provision of leases to black farmers was pursued in anticipation of majority rule. Land distribution under the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government saw the transfer of four million hectares of land to two hundred small holders and capitalist farmers. However, given the size of the black population in the native reserves there was no significant move in the demand for land. The continued need for land intensified the liberation struggle leading to the talks at Lancaster House in 1979.

The racial division of land at independence was not significantly different from what it had been before. Hence, the Commonwealth Observer Mission in 2002 reported that,

*At independence Zimbabwe's arable land was classified into five grades according to productivity, with the most productive cropland classified as Grade I and the least productive as Grade V. White farmers were allocated 78% of all Grade I and Grade II land. 75% of the land allocated to black smallholders was Grade IV and V deemed fit mainly for grazing cattle. (New African, May 2002 p. 24)*

Popular expectations for an egalitarian land redistribution programme, which rose during the bitter struggle for independence, were not realized and the capitalist farming elites, who were predominantly whites, maintained their dominance on land ownership. Table 2 shows that there was a slight improvement in ownership of land by blacks after the programme implemented up to the beginning of 1997. These disparities had continued where the hectares allocated

to communal farmers were meagre given that closer to 70% of the population of Zimbabwe live in rural areas.

The Lancaster House constitutional talks and the subsequent constitution indicate that the solution to the Zimbabwean land problem was a political rather than a military one. Independence for Zimbabwe did not provide the needed solution to the land problem as was envisaged during the liberation struggle. The Lancaster House Constitution provided limitation as property rights were to be respected and land for resettlement had to be purchased on a willing seller-willing buyer basis, a provision that could not be amended during the first ten years of independence. According to Ibbo Mandaza, at the Lancaster House talks, the British interests were served since the joint British-US strategy at the talks was to assign the white settler factor an importance commensurate with the normal decolonization situation (Mandaza 1986:2). The major setback for the new Zimbabwe was that the Lancaster House Conference provided imperialism with the opportunity to be an umpire in a match in which it had vested interest (Ibid.)

**Table 2. Land distribution in 1997**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Size( in hectares)</b>
Communal	16355.0
Large scale commercial farms	11.213
Small-scale commercial farms	1238.7
Resettlement areas	3290.0
State farms	500.0

(SARDC Environmental Policy Brief, ZIMEAs No 9, July, 2000 p.2)

At independence,

*over 6 000 white large-scale commercial farmers owned 15.5 million hectares (39%) of land with 8 500 African small scale commercial farmers on 1.4million hectares (4%) and an estimated 700 000 indigenous*

*communal area households subsisting on 16.4 million (42%), 75% of which was in the driest and least fertile agro-ecological zones.*

A major setback for the new Zimbabwe was that the Lancaster House Conference put in place measures for the adoption of the so-called ‘market assisted’ or ‘negotiated’ land reform (Deininger 2003:45) in the form of the willing-buyer, willing –seller principle applied in the period 1980 to 1990. Under this arrangement, the government was forced to buy poor land, as the farmers were reluctant to sell prime land. To make matters worse, by 1985, land prices had shot up by 48% (Mumbengegwi 1986:212). ‘Negotiated’ land reform was also accompanied by a strict adherence to the protection of property rights (Tshuma, 1997:16) and this in the end meant that most white farmers could easily evade losing their farms as these rights protected their ownership of the land. Unfortunately, these policies did not significantly improve access by the poor to land or give them more secure tenure. In the period 1980-1990, very little was achieved in terms of tangible changes in terms of land ownership and poverty alleviation in the country. Furthermore, under the Lancaster House Agreement, landowners whose land was acquired by government could demand payment in any currency of their choice (Herbst Opicit p42) and in most cases; they wanted payment in United States dollars.

With the expiry of the ten-year constitution restriction provision in April 1990, the Parliament of Zimbabwe passed a bill that allowed the government to acquire farmland and pay compensation at its discretion. The need to pursue land reform as a development policy was not pursued with vigour as new thinking and efforts were directed towards promoting domestic and foreign investment (Herbst Opicit p 129) under the International Monetary Fund (IMF)‘s Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

(ESAP). However, despite the new thinking the need for land redistribution was not completely forgotten. The Land Acquisition Act enacted in 1992 granted the state the authority to compulsorily designate and obtain any land for resettlement purposes, thereby paving the way for a rapid resolution of the inequitable distribution of land.

The commitment to land redistribution was shown by the appointment of the Land Tenure Commission of 1994. The Commission reported that the land issue in Zimbabwe was extremely complex and the biggest problem facing the people and that it involved dealing with the economic and political realities of the past. Despite the findings, the Zimbabwean Government made no major strides in addressing the land problem. According to Sam Moyo (1995), this is attributed to the emergence of neo liberal views in which the geo-political forces and market systems played a role in disempowering views on redistributive policies as they have negative consequence on investment. Another consideration by the Zimbabwean Government was that a move to redistribute the land had adverse effects on the attainment of majority rule in South Africa. It was largely felt that if the government went ahead and redistributed land, this would raise fears of a similar situation in South Africa leading to hardened resistance from the Boers and increased support for them from the West.

### **The Dimensions of the Land Problem**

The debate over the land issue in Zimbabwe is,

*Around the question on the adequacy of the quantity and quality of land redistributed, the method and costs of land acquisition and redistribution, the efficiency of land use in both the large scale farms and resettlement*

*areas, the suitability of those benefiting from land redistribution, the fairness of procedures for dealing with land demands and the economic impact of land reform (Moyo Opicit:).*

These problems bring a situation in which various stakeholders in different sectors, that is, communal, commercial farmers; the donors, responsible government authorities and other stakeholders have different interests concerning these policy areas leading to conflicts situation.

The root causes of the current impasse on the land problem are centred on the frustration of the peasants over the non-restitution of their historical rights to land. Having supported the liberation struggle during the late 1960s and early 1970s because of their grievance over land (Ranger, 1985), they expected immediate solution to their land hunger. Thus, the failure to get land quickly led to the peasantry taking the law into their hands. The land occupations that became prevalent in the late 1990s did not start then, they had been taking place since the 1980s (Marongwe 2003:157).

The international dimension of the land problem in Zimbabwe is linked to the method and costs of the land reform. The major policy that has affected the relations between Zimbabwe and Britain has been the funding of the land reform process, which the government of Zimbabwe sees as mainly the responsibility of the British Government. This is based on the commitments made at Lancaster House in 1979 in which Britain and the United States had promised to make funds available for the redistribution of land. According to the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administration (2001:24), of the seventy-five million pounds for land distribution, which

Britain had promised only thirty-three million, was provided for purchase of land and resettlement and the US offers of US\$1 billion, failed to materialize. Thus, the resettlement that took place after independence only managed to resettle few families and resettlement was done in mostly marginal areas.

The British Government denies this and feels that the money that they provided met most of its targets. Claire Short noted that based on what they were told; the package of assistance for resettlement that was provided after independence did manage to meet most targets (New African, February 2002, p 24). However, this contradicts the allegations by the British that the funds provided by their government since the independence of Zimbabwe was misused and the land ended up in the hands of the wrong people.

The beneficiaries of the inequitable land distribution in Zimbabwe have an international dimension. According to Adromidas (2000:53), on 10 July 2000 those who own land in Britain, that is the British Country Land Owners Association and the Scottish Landowners Federation assisted in the formation of the Zimbabwe Farmers Holiday Trust Fund, which would assist the white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe to take a holiday with their relatives in Britain. The Trust was organized and sponsored by those who own large tracts of land in Britain who had the desire to expand land ownership worldwide. An example of these owners of land in Zimbabwe is the Oppenheimer family, who founded the Anglo-American Corporation and owns private ranches in Zimbabwe. Hence, Britain in its conflict with Zimbabwe wants to slowdown or maintain the dominance of agribusiness industry from production to marketing by large London-based Companies and individuals of British citizenship and descent and stop the whole process

of land redistribution. Such a hold back of the fast track land reform would ensure that the economic interest and livelihoods of the companies and the individuals would be maintained.

There are a number of organizations and individuals that represent the interests of the landowners in Zimbabwe. Andromidas names highly placed individuals in Britain who have interests in land in Zimbabwe. These include the Earl of Stair and Sir Chippendale Keswick, the Director of Anglo-American Corporation, De Beers and the Bank of England (Andromidas Opicit p 55). The failure by these groups to contain the unfolding events in Zimbabwe means their interests in farming and agri-business are going to be affected throughout the world given the fact that “the gathering storm in Zimbabwe is indeed a storm in a teacup...because of its potential ripple effect, that is, its capacity to rupture and engulf the entire world” (Daily News, 13 November.)

The domestic actors in Zimbabwe’s land problem require an assessment to review the extent to which the domestic forces played in compounding the conflict. Critics of the policy of Zimbabwe argue that the government was vindictive in its designation of farms for resettlement with the whole programme not being transparent and undermining the rule of law. However, it should be noted that the owners of farms earmarked for resettlement had a legal right to contest the acquisition in the Administrative Court. For example, in 2001, 841 out of the 1 471 farms initially identified as suitable for resettlement in 1997, five hundred and ten were later found to be inappropriate, hence they were de-listed with the remaining 120 uncontested farms remaining available for immediate resettlement. This shows that the land reform process was within the bounds of law and thus formed the basis upon which transparency can be assessed.

The white commercial farmers that are resisting efforts by the government to carry out land reform are still being perceived as wanting to maintain their interests hence preserving the status quo. According to the research carried out by Probe Market Research in December 2000, the white commercial farmers cling to racial divisions of land although they claim to be committed and concerned about majority Zimbabweans (CIS Opicit p21). Those against fast track land reform believe that the economy would be damaged and the entire agricultural sector destroyed. These critics cite the shortages of maize faced by Zimbabwe in 2001 and 2002 especially with the reports that nearly one million Zimbabweans faced acute hunger. In addition, the fact that a program was put in place to import maize through the World Food Program for distribution in Zimbabwe, a country once known as the breadbasket of Africa is used as an explanation showing the damaging effects of the programme to the economy. However, such, arguments fail to take into account the drought that affected most farmers in 2001 and 2002 not only in Zimbabwe but also in the entire Southern African region.

The violence that led to the beating and sometimes murder, that characterized the land occupations shows the failure by the Zimbabwean Government to maintain the rule of law and honour human rights. Zimbabwean Government authorities failed to curtail the situation and reports indicate that government vehicles transported those who invaded farms to the farms they intended to occupy and they were further armed and paid by the government (<http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/zimbabwe/politics/tumpkin/3.html>). The activities of the government and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party indicate their supportive nature of what was taking place. For instance, the call by Mugabe that he would not send forces to remove those occupying

farms citing that Britain had done that when Smith declared Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 indicate the role the government played in enhancing the violence on the farms. However, the fact that there were reports of white commercial farmers that harassed and even killed those who had occupied farms means that the violence occurred in a dialectical way.

Although the land reform process could have been politicized and targeting the white commercial farmers, the invasion of farms was mixed with both white and black farms being invaded and also the farms owned by the blacks including farms owned by those in the government that include the ministers and ZANU PF officials, being compulsorily acquired. (<http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/landow/post/zimbabwe/politic/tumpkin/3.htm>). This shows the dimension that the whole process of land invasions and acquisition of land for resettlement targeted those who owned large tracts of land irrespective of skin colour or political leaning.

Irrespective of criticism, both at home and abroad the fast track land reform process continued in Zimbabwe with the government only announcing its end in August 2002. Zimbabwean Government figures show that 210,520 families have been resettled on 3,159 farms on an A1 model, a 100% uptake, with the A2 model experiencing difficult problems but with a more than 50% uptake (Ankomah, Opicit, 2003 p 14). Despite the end of the much criticized fast track land reform, it appears that the debate will continue, especially given that the drought affected crops in most areas thereby reducing crop yields.

The government by introducing a land reform process wanted among other issues to remove racial disparities in land ownership and wanted to reduce poverty in the

country. In this regard, land reform holds a promise as a means to stem the rural-urban migration that is causing developing cities to grow beyond their capacity in an effort to provide enough jobs. The land reform exercise has already shown that beneficiaries are quite substantially better off than others are. (K, Deininger et al 2000:34) Resettled farmers have shown marked improvements. Their livestock wealth has almost tripled and their productivity has increased significantly. (Moyo Opicit p23). Furthermore, accounting for agro-ecological endowment, the income of resettled households is more than five times as high as that of communal households in similar areas (Ibid). The 70,000 households which had benefited from land redistribution, by 1995 represented about 5% of the peasant farmer population, but produced between 15 and 20% of the marketed output of maize and cotton, while also largely satisfying their own food consumption needs ( Kinsey, 1999:178).

Experiences elsewhere show that land reform, properly managed can serve as a panacea to many ills confronting the country. One advantage that could be accrued from a land reform process is that small farmers are more productive, more efficient, and contribute more to broad based regional development than do larger corporate farmers such as those who held large tracts of land prior to land reform (<http://www.foodfirst.org/media/press/1999/smfarmsp.html>). Furthermore, small farmers with secure tenure can also be much better stewards of natural resources, protecting the long-term productivity of their soils and conserving functional biodiversity on and around their farms.

Only through changing its development orientation from the export-led, free trade based, industrial agriculture mode of large farm and land concentration characterised by the displacement of peoples can Zimbabwe hope to stop the downward spiral of poverty,

low wages, rural urban migration, and environmental degradation. Redistributive land reform and a reversal of the dominant macro-economic export oriented policies hold a bright promise of change towards a smaller farm, family-based model with the potential to feed the poor at affordable rates, lead to broad based development and conserve biodiversity and productive resources (<http://www.twnafrica.org/print.asp?twID=217>). The redistribution of land can fulfil a number of functions in a more sustainable development.

Where land has been really redistributed to a majority of the rural poor, the results have invariably been real, measurable poverty reduction and improvement in human welfare. The economic successes of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, and Cuba resulted from such reforms (Sachs 1987:301). Zimbabwe could take a leaf from these countries and adopt some policies in resemblance. In contrast, when reforms were half-hearted and gave poor quality land to the people, land reform failed to affect broad-based changes (Sobhan 1993:23). Thus, what comes out is that land reforms if properly and fully instituted trigger broad based development. The inclusion of the poor in development leads them to build domestic markets to support national economic activity. In other words, the redistribution of land to landless and land-poor families can be a very effective way to improve their welfare as real measurable poverty reduction and improvement in human welfare occurs.

In many cases, there is a strong relationship between land reform and poverty reduction. In the majority of cases, there is a significant improvement in the standards of living for land reform beneficiaries. Leite shows that settlers in reform settlements in Brazil,

*Earn more than they did before, and than do still landless, they eat better, they have greater purchasing power, they have greater access to educational opportunities, and they are more likely to be able to unite their families in one place rather than lose family members to migration (Leite et al: 2004:39).*

One could, therefore, say that land reform holds a promise as a means to stem the rural-urban migration that is causing developing cities to grow beyond their capacity in an effort to provide enough jobs. Even in Zimbabwe, the ongoing land reform exercise has already shown that beneficiaries are quite substantially better off than others (Deininger et al, 2000:34).

Another way of considering the spin off benefits from land reform policies in the developing world is by considering the costs of job creation and income earnings. In Brazil, estimates of the cost of creating a job in the commercial sector range from two (2) to twenty (20) times more than the cost of establishing an employed head of household on farm land, through agrarian reform (Stedile 1998:29). Thus, it becomes clear that land reform actually becomes about more jobs at a cheaper rate than the formal methods of job creation. Land reform beneficiaries in Brazil have an annual income equivalent to 3.7 minimum wages, while still landless labourers average only 0.7 of the minimum (Ibid.). In real terms then, land reform is a viable alternative to the dominant development models currently touted by most development practitioners in rural development. Infant mortality rates among families of beneficiaries have dropped to only half of the national average for these Brazilian families (Langevin and Rosset, 1997:12). Such statistics

provide a convincing argument that land reform indeed is a more effective social policy than the large scale agrarian practices of the foreign absentee farmers. In the case of India, Besley and Robin (2002:420) argue that after land reform, small farms have absorbed far more people into gainful activity and reversed the trends of outward migration from rural areas. This is mainly because; small farms use more labour and often less capital to farm a given unit of area. Thus, Zimbabwe's A2 model could serve as a possible source of employment for a large number of the unemployed in Zimbabwe.

The agricultural principle of 'inverse relationship between farm size and output' also shows that land reform can in the long run prove to be a long lasting solution to the problem of sustainable rural development in Zimbabwe. Rosset (<http://www.foodfirst.org/media/press/1999/smfarmsp.html>) looking at this principle shows that redistributive land reform is not likely to run at cross-purpose with productivity issues. In a survey of 15 countries looking at the relationship between farm size and total output it was concluded that farms of a smaller size were much more productive per unit area about two (2) to ten (10) times more productive than larger ones (Tomich et al, 1995:54) Ziegler, (2004:6) also supports the contention that land reform can be a viable tool for development when saying that

*Agrarian reform that is truly transformative and Redistributive has proved to be fundamental in reducing poverty and hunger in many countries and can be a key to generating economic growth that benefits the poorest.*

One could then be in a position to say that such an outlook is justified of land reform as it is likely to bring about better housing, education, health services, transportation, local

economic diversification, and more recreational and cultural opportunities which is what development is all about.

Turning to the environment, one can safely say that small farm activities are friendlier to the environment in comparison to big farm activities. Whereas large, industrial style farms impose a scorched earth mentality, on resource management, through a policy of no trees, no wildlife, endless monocultures, and small farmers can be very good stewards of natural resources and the soil. For example, small farmers utilise a broad array of resources and show a vested interest in the resources' sustainability. (Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty Agrarian Reform in the Context of Food Sovereignty, the Right to Food and Cultural Diversity: Land, Territory, and Dignity Paper presented at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development- Porto Alegre 7-10 March 2006). Furthermore, their farming systems are diverse, incorporating and preserving significant functional biodiversity within the farm through indigenous knowledge systems. By preserving biodiversity, open spaces, and trees, and by reducing land degradation, small farms provide valuable ecosystem services to society.

## **Conclusion**

The land problem in Zimbabwe has its origins deeply rooted in the colonisation of Zimbabwe by the British in 1890. The process of land alienation appeared in the period right from the effective occupation of the country by the Pioneer Column. The colonial masters soon embarked on a massive land grabbing exercise in which the indigenous people were pushed off all the prime land. Through various racially biased policies the

black majority were pushed to the peripheral agricultural unviable marginal areas. The Royal Charter of 1889 granted to Cecil John Rhodes' BSAC was the first legal instrument that was used by the whites to alienate land. Article 24 of the Charter authorized the Company to alienate land and make grants for white settlers and it was on its strength that land grabbing by white settlers in the period 1890 to 1894 was undertaken.

In subsequent years, whites introduced various legislation to continue their land expropriation practices. These include inter alia, The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 described by the white administration as 'a monument of Rhodesian justice' and seen in other circles as the 'Magna Carta' of the land question in Zimbabwe, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1957 which only served to further disempower the blacks and dispossessed them of their last pieces of wealth in the form of livestock and the Land Tenure Act of 1962. Through these various pieces of legislation and other policies the land alienation process, which began in the colonial era, continued up to Zimbabwe's independence and has continued afterwards through Britain's acts of omission and commission.

The continued land policies by the former colonial power was based on a desire to maintain its interests on its former colony based on the new thinking on globalisation and neo liberal thinking characterising the world today. As a result of this desire, despite having initially agreed during the Lancaster House Conference to fund a land redistribution exercise in postcolonial Zimbabwe, the British soon reneged on their promises and showed an intransigent unwillingness to see the success of such a policy. The Zimbabwean government showed great tolerance and patience in anticipation of the

British to fulfil their promises to no avail. The continued delay of the British in fulfilment of promises made at Lancaster House in 1979 finally forced the government in 2000 to adopt the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme whose implementation led to Zimbabweans finally claiming what is rightfully theirs. This action was greeted by outright anger by the British and their Western allies and it irrevocably set Zimbabwe's foreign policy on a new path. Thus, the British actions led to events which have permanently altered not only Zimbabwe's history, but also her foreign policy. Since the implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, Zimbabwe has been ostracised, isolated and made a subject of international condemnation which has only served to strengthen her resolve to see to it that her people fully take control of what is rightfully theirs. As a result, a process begun in 1890 has up to the present continued to haunt the present generation, as theirs is the fate to suffer the consequences of the process to redress past injustices.

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