



The Impact of the Land Reform Programme in Matabeleland North Province: A Case of Woodlands Resettlement Area in Hwange, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Land reform has always been a contentious issue in Zimbabwe mainly because of the methods used to acquire land. The land reform process began in 1979 after the signing of the Lancaster house agreement in an effort to equitably distribute land between the black and minority whites. The market based approach was used in the early phases of land reform and later on, the government led compulsory land acquisition called the Fast track land reform programme. This study was aimed at investigating the impact of the fast track land reform programme at Woodlands resettlement in Hwange, Matabeleland north province. The researcher assumed that resettlement was carried out on what was formerly a game reserve. The geography of the area does not favour crop farming. Soils are deficient in plant nutrients and rainfall is below 650mm and yet Zimbabwe land reform emphasized poverty alleviation. The study was conducted using the qualitative research approach. A case study was chosen as a research design. Questionnaires were developed and distributed to 30 respondents drawn from Woodlands resettlement using simple random sampling technique. The findings revealed that people were resettled in what was formerly a game reserve and this has resulted in human-wildlife conflict. There are mixed feelings about the impact of land reform on livelihoods at Woodlands. It is recommended that the government should step in and prioritise infrastructure development in the area. The absence of a clinic, secondary school serviced road and other social services need urgent attention as these factors are important in poverty alleviation.

Keywords: Land reform, Livelihoods, Poverty, Resettlement, Farming.



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1. Introduction

Land is one of the most valuable natural resources of a country. It represents the principal form of wealth and the main source of economic and political power (Zarin and Bujang, 1994). Land reform has always been a contentious issue in Zimbabwe. It all started with the signing of the Lancaster House Agreement in 1979 as a way of equally distributing land between the historically disenfranchised blacks and minority whites. At the attainment of independence in 1980, most of the productive land was in the hands of white minority group while the black peasants were relegated to mostly inferior land in the drier and drought ridden parts of the country. Between 1979 and 2000 the market based approach was the main mechanism of land transfer. The principle of the willing buyer, willing seller was applied with economic help from Great Britain (Moyo, 2005). From these transactions, it is evidently clear that the sellers were willing to let go of only less productive land. These negotiated 'sunset clauses' protected the white commercial farmers from government land acquisitions for the first ten years after independence (Chitsike, 2003). The fast track land reform programme was a redistributive land reform that entailed compulsory acquisition of land largely from the commercial farmers who held land under private tenure (Zikhali, 2008). According to Moyo (2005) a fast track, state driven approach was introduced during 1997 in Zimbabwe culminating in extensive land transfers by 2004.

Fast track land reform was considered as a way of redressing the colonial imbalances in land holding at the same time serving as a barometer for empowering blacks to fight poverty and underdevelopment. The main objective of the land reform process was to alleviate population pressure in the communal areas and mainly to improve the standard of living of the largest and poorest sector of the population of Zimbabwe (Chitsike, 2003). Matunhu (2011) says that land reform in Zimbabwe served as a barometer for empowering blacks to fight poverty and underdevelopment. The objectives of land reform in Zimbabwe were largely political and placed great emphasis on welfare and poverty alleviation (Ayuk, 2007).

Woodlands is a resettlement area in Matabeleland North Province. It is in the Matetsi ranch under Hwange West Constituency. The resettlement area has 109 households resettled under model D or the three tier scheme. This model was intended for low rainfall areas. Ranches were taken up to be used for grazing by the communal communities. The main objective of the model was to reduce pressure on communal grazing areas by increasing the amount of grazing land to communities. Matetsi ranch was initially owned by a white farmer who practised game ranching. The initial idea behind resettling people in Woodlands area was for pasture. The resettled farmers practice crop growing and livestock rearing as well as game ranching under the Communal Areas Management programme for Indigenous Resources (Campfire). One of the objectives of the fast track land reform programme was to improve the standards of living of the largest and poorest section of the community. This objective would seem to be almost impossible to achieve at this resettlement area due to the distribution of rainfall in this area. Rainfall is very low and unreliable, ranging between 450 and 650mm annually.

The Kalahari sands are the common type of soil at this resettlement area. These sands are deficient in plant nutrients and cannot support crop growth without the addition of artificial fertilisers. Use of fertilisers is also limited by the persistent dry weather. The fact that the resettled farmers have to co-habit with wildlife poses another dilemma of who should come first, the wildlife or human population? Farmers at Woodlands resettlement area have expressed concern over the idea of co-existing with wildlife as the later poses a risk to their security, crops and livestock. The issue of wildlife and its problems to the community needed to be understood whether the community benefits from it or not. This indicates the importance of establishing land use before resettling people to avoid conflicts.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Woodlands is the only resettlement area in Hwange district in Matabeleland North province. Farmers were resettled on land formally used for game ranching. The soils in this part of the country are mostly Kalahari sands that are deficient in plant nutrients thus rendering them unsuitable for crop growing. Rainfall is very unreliable in this region reaching annual lows of between 450 and 650mm yet land reform was instituted in order to reduce poverty. The question is how these farmers will cope in such conditions also worsened by the presence of wildlife. The success of the land reform process at Woodlands resettlement area is still not clear. The study therefore sought to highlight the impact of the land reform programme in Matabeleland North Province which falls under the agro-ecological region IV. Agro-ecological region IV is characterised by severe dry spells during the rainy season. Annual rainfall averages between 450 and 650mm.

Investigations were made to attain crucial data needed to achieve the aims of the study which were:

1. To investigate the extent to which the land reform has benefited the resettled farmers.
2. To determine the farming activities being carried out by the resettled farmers.
3. To assess how the resettled farmers are coping with wildlife at their new resettlement site.
4. To explain the challenges facing the newly resettled farmers at Woodlands.
5. To determine the criterion used to resettle people at Woodlands.

1.2. Research Questions

1. To what extent has the land reform process benefitted the resettled farmers at Woodlands?
2. What are the farming activities that were carried out by the previous owner of the ranch?
3. What are the current farming activities being carried out by the resettled farmers?
4. Since the farm was for game ranching, what measures have been put in place to enable the resettled people to practice crop growing and livestock farming?
5. What are the problems facing the resettled people at Woodlands resettlement area?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Theory of Land Reform

The neoclassical school treats land like any factor of production. The theory looks at land reform as an integral part of the strategy and policy of economic development. According to [Zarin and Bujang \(1994\)](#) the neoclassical school holds a view that there is a direct relationship between land reform and economic development. Neoclassical theory on the other hand notes that whilst land reform is essential for providing a stable base for a country's future economic development, it does not follow that reform will guarantee development.

The neoclassical school of thought predicts that the way the market allocates resources such as land is efficient while government administered reallocations of land from landowners to cultivators would likely reduce agrarian output. They further predict that rent ceilings and transfer restrictions on agricultural land will reduce investment in land improvement and encourage conversion to non-agricultural land. The first prediction opposes the claim that land reform would lead to a more efficient allocation of land while the second prediction hypothesises that agricultural land productivity and supply of agricultural land would decline under land reform ([Zarin and Bujang, 1994](#)).

The land reform programme in Zimbabwe was established to address the imbalances in land distribution which was in favour of white minority settler farmers. The main objective of the land reform programme was to alleviate poverty mainly in the rural areas. However, there is little evidence of success of the reform programme in country.

The neo classical school of thought is relevant in the Zimbabwean context because most of its predictions are true. There has been a severe reduction of agricultural output in the country and this has resulted in Zimbabwe importing food crops like maize from neighbouring countries to avert food shortages. The theory also predicts a reduction of investment on land improvements leading to conversion of agricultural land to non- agricultural land. The method of land acquisition has implications for poverty reduction. The neoclassical school of thought predicts that government administered reallocations of land from land owners to cultivators would likely reduce agricultural output. This prediction has come true in Zimbabwe where state led land reforms transferred land to black peasants who did not have the means and expertise to run the farms productively hence the reduction in agricultural output country wide.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study was conducted using a mixed approach research design. The strength of the qualitative paradigm is that it studies people in terms of their own insider perspectives rather than the outsider perspective

The quantitative paradigm was used to design questionnaires. [Edmonds and Kenedy \(2012\)](#) define quantitative research as "a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks narrow specific questions, collects quantifiable data from participants and analyses these numbers using statistics." The idea behind using the quantitative research design was to enable the researcher to obtain the demographic composition, gender distribution, age and marital status and household size at Woodlands resettlement area. These demographic characteristics are important in determining the success of the resettlement programme in terms of poverty alleviation. For example, [Quisumbing \(2003\)](#) observes that the entire well-being of a household can be better achieved by giving women greater access to economic development.

Woodlands resettlement area in Hwange rural was chosen as a case study. It may be noted that in this research, a case study was chosen due to its following advantages which are; in depth study and production of detailed descriptions of the phenomenon; development of possible explanations of the phenomenon and evaluation of the phenomenon ([Gall et al., 1996](#)). Research instruments that were used to collect data are the questionnaire, interview guide and document analysis

3.2. Population and Sampling

The population at Woodlands resettlement area is 2 784 people. The target population in this study were 30 resettled farmers amongst which were the Ward Councillor, the Headman, the Agricultural extension Officer and Parks and Wildlife officers. The involvement of the resettled farmers was of paramount importance in measuring the impact of land reform programmes in the drier regions of the country that were initially set aside for game ranching. Simple random sampling was used to obtain the sample of resettled farmers. Simple random sampling was applicable because the population under study was homogenous with respect to characteristics under study.

Purposive sampling is a sampling method in which elements are chosen based on the purpose of the study. Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample of Parks and Wildlife Officers. The purpose of involving the parks and wildlife officers was to obtain information on the wildlife and how the resettled farmers are managing to co-habit with the wildlife.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

The key informants constituted mainly of the resettled farmers who participated in the completion of questionnaires. Some of the information was collected through focused group discussions coded FGD1 and FGD2.

4.1. Demographic Composition of Respondents

For the purpose of this study, four demographic characteristics were examined for the Woodlands community, namely age gender, marital status and household size.

Table-1. Age distribution of the population sample

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
20-24	0	0
25-29	1	3,3
30-34	2	6,6
35-39	5	16,6
40-44	6	20
45-49	8	26,6
50-54	6	20
55+	2	6,6
Total	30	100

All the 30 respondents indicated the age category to which they belong representing a hundred per cent response.

Over 70% of the sample is over 40 years of age. While this may not be representative of the entire Woodlands community, it shows that the community is composed of a mature population which is likely to drive the resettlement programme towards attainment of its nationwide intended goal of poverty alleviation in rural areas. The study also revealed that 26.5% of the population were youths who fall in the 24-39 age categories. This is important in the economic recovery of the country.

4.2. Gender Distribution

Table-2. Gender distribution among the Woodland Community

	frequency	Percentage
Male	11	36
Female	18	60
No response	1	3,3
Total	30	100

Table 2 shows that there are more women at Woodlands resettlement area than men. In terms of poverty alleviation, such a distribution is in line with the recognition of the view that the economic well-being of the entire household can be better achieved by giving women greater access to land for economic development (Quisumbing, 2003).

4.2.1. Marital Status

Rural economies revolve around the family unit. The structure of the family is often a pivot around which rural development programmes are planned. Table 3 shows the distribution of the population sample in terms of marital status.

Table-3. Distribution of Woodlands Community according to marital status

	Frequency	Percentage
Married	12	40
Divorced	2	6,66
Widowed	8	26,66
Single	6	20
No response	2	6,66
Total	30	100

A 93% respondent rate was obtained for this question. 40% of the woodlands community is married while approximately 26.66 % of the respondents are widowed.

4.2.2. Size of Household

The household is generally considered as the functional unit of the economy. Table 4 shows the distribution of the Woodlands community by size of the household

Table-4. Distribution of woodlands community by size of household

Number of people excluding respondent	Frequency	Percentage
2	2	6,66
3	6	20
4	8	26,6
5	3	10
6	4	13,3
7	2	6,6
8	1	3,3
9	1	3,3
10	0	0
No response	4	13,3
Total	30	100

A response rate of 86% for this question was obtained. The response indicates that the average household at Woodlands resettlement area is approximately 6 people including the respondent.

4.3 Expectations of the Respondents

The respondents were asked what they intended to do with the land they had been allocated. [Table 5](#) shows their response.

Table-5. Distribution of Woodlands community by land use

	Frequency	Percentage
1. Crop farming	17	56,6
2. Livestock farming	8	26,6
3. Build a home	5	16,6
Total	30	100

In order to ascertain the occupational status of respondents, two questions were asked about their previous occupations and their intentions once they were resettled. 56% of the respondents wanted land for crop farming while 26% of the respondents wanted land for livestock ranching. 16% of the respondents wanted land for the purpose of building their homes.

4.4 Responses from Focus Group Discussions

This group was made up of 7 males and 5 females residing at Woodlands resettlement area. From the discussion, 10 out of 12 participants indicated that they had been successful in practising crop farming while 7 out of 12 indicated that they had been fairly successful in livestock farming. All the participants indicated that they had been fairly successful in building a home and none wished to lease out their land.

On the question on how the land had helped the tenants increase their income from farm activities, 10 out of 12 participants indicated that owning land had increased their income from farming activities to a large extent. All the participants indicated that the land reform programme had aided them to be able to provide food for people in their households. All the participants felt that the land reform process had failed to provide employment for other members in their households.

From the discussions with FGD1, the soil at Woodlands resettlement area is predominantly clay which favour the growing of maize and other drought resistant crops like sorghum, rapoko and millet. The better crop yield can also be attributed to the clay soil. Lack of irrigation equipment is impacting negatively on their farming needs and as such crop growing is only seasonal. Participants expressed a need to grow vegetables and other winter cops but could not do so in the absence of irrigation facilities.

Participants from FGD1 and FGD2 both indicated that they had access to inputs like seeds and extension services and this enabled them to have a better crop yield. To improve the crop yield, participants indicated that before planting, they dig holes and add manure to each hole before the seeds could be planted. The participants indicated that this type of planting ensured that the soil remained fertile for the crops to thrive well. From the discussions, it emerged that this method of planting maize was very labour intensive and tiresome hence it was not favoured by most of the participants. The participants however stated the need for more training in order to attain better farming skills.

Participants from both FGD1 and FGD2 indicated that the government had been supportive in achieving the aims of the beneficiaries through availing of the agritex extension workers and provision of seeds. The participants however noted that the resettlement area does not have a secondary school and a clinic. Those requiring medical care have to access it from the town of Victoria Falls which is 29km away from Woodlands resettlement area.

Participants from both FGDs 1 and 2 felt that the government had given them the chance to take part in decision making pertaining to the resettlement area. The beneficiaries from the onset were responsible for allocating land to those who wish to be resettled. However some of the beneficiaries felt that the government should also have played a role in allocating the land to the beneficiaries instead of leaving it to the farmers. The resettled farmers at Woodlands run hunting activities during winter where professional hunters are engaged to guide tourists who visit the area for trophy hunting at a fee. Each household receives an average of \$200 per month from the hunting proceeds.

On the question on poverty, 8 out of 12 participants from FGD1 indicated that the land reform had reduced poverty to a moderate extent while 6 out of 7 participants from FGD2 felt the process had reduced poverty for them and their households to a large extent. This was attributed to the fact that participants from FGD2 are in formal employment and so ownership of an asset like land would work favourably for them.

Interviews were carried out with the ward councillor at Woodlands to establish the size of the land allocated to each beneficiary at Woodlands resettlement area. The first people to occupy Matetsi Ranch were war veterans in 2001. According to some of the respondents during focus group discussions the owner was given 7 hours to vacate the land which had been previously used for game ranching. Thereafter a committee was formed by some of the beneficiaries and these were tasked with resettling those who wished to be resettled. No set criterion was ever followed to resettle the beneficiaries at Woodlands. However most of these beneficiaries had been victims of the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina, an urban clean-up exercise that saw multitudes of people being forcibly evicted from slum settlements in Victoria Falls urban. Each beneficiary was allocated an average of 4 hectares of land including land for building a homestead.

Another interview was carried out with Parks and Wildlife officer to establish the challenges of co-habiting with wildlife. It was established that wildlife poses a real challenge to the beneficiaries of the land reform programme at Woodlands resettlement area. Lions create challenges on the resettled farmers. They kill livestock and endanger the lives of the resettled farmers. Elephants are a big problem to the beneficiaries as they destroy crops and vegetation. From the interviews it became clear that the farmers would not give up their land just because of the wildlife and have come up with ways of co-habiting with them. Farmers harvest their crops early to prevent them from being destroyed by the elephants as there is no enclosure that separates the farmers from the wildlife. Poaching was highlighted as a major cause of concern at Woodlands resettlement area and the wildlife official expressed fear that if nothing is done to curb this, some species would be extinct in the future.

5. Discussion

5.1. Lessons Learnt From the Zimbabwean Land Reform Process

The majority of the beneficiaries at Woodlands resettlement area are females. Women and children are often the most affected by poverty world over. Rural poverty is caused primarily by a limited access to resources. This limitation may result from an imbalance between population and available resources. In terms of poverty alleviation, such a distribution at Woodlands resettlement area is in line with the recognition of the fact that the economic well-being of the entire household in general and the women and children in particular, can be best achieved by giving women greater access for economic development (Quisumbing, 2003).

The study established that most of the respondents have undergone basic primary education which indicates that they can read or write. Chamunorwa (2010) observes that there is need by agritex extension workers to compliment this education by reaching out to these new farmers who have less experience in farming techniques. Before receiving land through the fast track land reform programme, the majority of the Woodlands community were either unemployed or employed in the non-agricultural sectors. Approximately 26% of the beneficiaries of the land reform programme had been previously employed in the agricultural sector as labourers. This indicates the extent of an agricultural knowledge base within the Woodlands community. This is important in establishing the training needs of this community in farming techniques as a tool for fighting poverty.

For most of these beneficiaries, this was their first time to gain direct access to land. For most beneficiaries this was a positive transformation which meant that these people would be able to produce staple food crops for subsistence purposes as well as transfer to urban areas for household consumption with urban based families. Some of the beneficiaries at Woodlands resettlement area sell their surplus in Victoria Falls urban thereby raising income for other household necessities.

Moyo (2005) noted that the fast track land reform programme created a new socio economic group of urban based semi absentee land lords. The survey at Woodlands resettlement area actually concurs with Moyo (2005)'s observation. A number of respondents reside in Victoria Falls town and the majority of them are in formal employment. During the planting, weeding and harvesting season, family members travel to their resettled areas to undertake the required work. Those respondents, who indicated dual residence, hire unemployed young men and women to act as caretakers in their absence. These caretakers are paid cash ranging between \$60 and \$100 and at times an assortment of goods. The researcher also established that there is a campfire programme which operates game hunting during winter. Beneficiaries to the resettlement programme at Woodlands indicated that each household received \$200 from the hunting proceeds as well as game meat.

The study revealed that farmers practice dry farming where the land is tilled and the seeds are planted just before the onset of the rains. Government extension workers encourage farmers to dig holes up to fifteen centimetres in depth and then apply manure to that hole instead of spreading it over a wide area. Maize seeds are then planted in each hole and farmers are encouraged to water the planted areas. According to the respondents in this study, crop yields using this farming technique are much higher compared to normal way of growing crops. The respondents however indicated that although this technique results in higher yields, it tends to be labour intensive because the extension workers encourage that lines need to be drawn and the holes spread out evenly.

Use of fertilisers is very low in this resettlement area in the absence of irrigation facilities. The extreme temperatures discourage the use of fertilisers. Moisture deficiencies in these drier parts of the country could mean that the application of fertiliser may cause crops to wither and die because of the high temperatures. The absence of irrigation facilities at Woodlands resettlement area means that the farmers are relying on rain fed cultivation. Crop production becomes seasonal and farmers cannot grow winter crops which could have improved their livelihoods after selling their products. The use of drought resistant varieties of seeds has helped the farmers to attain sufficient yields for family consumption. Yields are even higher from millet, rapoko and sorghum. The problems with these crops are birds that always threaten the size of the yield.

Woodlands is a resettlement scheme that occupied a game reserve. Co-habiting with wildlife is a factor against a good harvest and is a source of conflict between conservationists and the settlers. Since this resettlement occupied a game reserve, wild animals including those that form the big five, that is the elephants, buffalo, lions, leopards and the rhinos, roam the area. When the first occupants invaded the ranch, the fences separating the game animals were cut-up and removed and now there is no boundary that controls the movement of the animals. Elephants often wreak havoc destroying crops as they move about in what used to be a game reserve. As a coping mechanism the farmers have devised a system of harvesting their crops prematurely before the herds of elephants destroy them. According to the respondents of this study elephants usually pass through an area yearly at the same time as last. This knowledge of elephant behaviour has made it possible for farmers to know when to harvest their crops.

Besides elephants, lions have also proved to be a menace to the farmers. Cattle, goats and even the farmers themselves are at risk from these predators. Herding of cattle and goats has to be done to ensure their safety. When the first beneficiaries came to the game reserve, the first thing that they did was to cut the fence separating the reserve from human settlements and as such the beneficiaries of the land reform and the wildlife are now both on the losing end. Extreme poaching is likely to result in some animal species becoming extinct.

While the speedy re-allocation of land was a noble idea, the manner in which it the whole process was conducted created a lot of serious environmental challenges. The fast track land reform programme in Zimbabwe completely ignored the importance of the environment. Matabeleland North province lies in the agro-ecological region IV where rainfall is erratic and low. The soils are deficient in plant nutrients making the region more suitable for extensive cattle ranching and wildlife sanctuaries. Instead of cattle ranching and Safaris, the land has been turned into maize production zones. This is against the geography of this area as the soils are being exposed to erosion through tilling.

When the war veterans invaded the game reserve, trees were cut indiscriminately to clear land for the establishment of fields and homesteads. Clearing of the bushes involved the use of fires. This disturbed the whole ecosystem as trees and grass which serve as habitat for wildlife was destroyed. The fast track land reform programme in Zimbabwe ignored the co-existence of people and wildlife. The resettled farmers feel threatened by the animals

and the people are also a threat to the existence of these animals. Wildlife is being destroyed through illegal hunting. Some poachers even go to the extent of poisoning water sources to kill animals for example elephants for their ivory. Those resettled farmers who have found it difficult to produce on their farms are now resorting to wood carving, a practice which is seeing forests slowly disappearing. What is worrying is that not much is being done by the government to curb such practices.

The state led fast track land reform in Zimbabwe however ignored the importance of the environment. In comparison, the early phase of the land reform programme was well co-ordinated hence there was minimal damage to the environment.

Shumba *et al.* (2011) hold the notion that poverty and environmental degradation are closely linked. He states that a degraded environment produces less worsening the vulnerability of these communities that are directly dependant on natural resources. The extent of environmental degradation at Woodlands will make it impossible for future generations to survive on it. The fact that these zones were initially meant for extensive rearing of animals means that the current usage is in conflict with the geography of the area.

Besides environmental challenges facing resettled farmers at Woodlands, the accessibility of the area is also a cause for concern. Woodlands resettlement area is located some 29km from Victoria Falls town. The train is the only means of transport for the majority of the resettled farmers. Shumba *et al.* (2011) observes that a rural road network has a significant effect on the distribution of facilities in the rural areas and has a potential of reducing the level of poverty of rural people. Poor road infrastructure cuts off the resettled people from accessing inputs and other essential information necessary for rural development. A poor road network means that the capacity to fight poverty is limited.

Another challenge facing the resettled farmers at Woodlands is the lack of health facilities. Shumba *et al.* (2011) states that access to health facilities is one of the social components of sustainable developments. He further observes that sustainable development can be attained in the absence of disease. The lack of a health facility at Woodlands means that the people can only access health services in the town of Victoria falls which is some 29km away. Coupled with the poor road network, the resettled farmers are very much disadvantaged. Health facilities should be within acceptable distance that is accessible to people.

Poor and inadequate water and sanitation facilities are among the many issues being faced by the Woodlands community. Good sanitation enables people to enjoy better health and this enables them to channel their time, money and energy on activities that will improve their livelihoods. At woodlands, boreholes are the only sources of water and these are scattered in order to serve all the resettled farmers. The challenge is that these boreholes often breakdown and the farmers do not have the skills to repair them. During the dry season the water levels also become low and drawing water from the borehole for livestock and domestics purposes becomes a challenge to the farmers.

At Woodlands resettlement scheme there is one primary school but there is no secondary school to enrol those who would have completed their primary education. A number of respondents indicated that some of these children attain secondary education in Victoria Falls town where they stay with relatives. Some children drop out of school after completing grade seven because they do not have relatives to stay with in Victoria Falls in order to continue their education. Education is a critical component of sustainable development. One of the key ways of moving and staying out of poverty is through investing in education. Education is vital for development purposes. Knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to shape a sustainable future can be transmitted through the right education. Education is also a key component in averting any forms of conflict that may crop up between farmers and their environment. With the right education farmers can tackle environmental issues that may arise.

5.2. Conclusions

Land reform in Zimbabwe has always emphasised poverty alleviation. Given that Zimbabwe still has one of the highest poverty levels in Sub-Saharan Africa, the land reform needs to be implemented in a manner that will generate sustainable livelihoods. The implementation of Zimbabwe's land reform was seen as a rural development strategy. However, the method of land acquisition has implications for poverty reduction. The speedy allocation of land through the fast track land reform programme was a noble idea at first but the manner in which the whole process was conducted resulted in acute food shortages and irreversible environmental challenges in the country. The early phase of the resettlement programme was well conducted hence there was minimal damage to the environment.

Evidence is showing that disorder is prevalent on farms. People were put on land without essential support services and this has affected the objectives of the land reform programme. The study revealed that the success of the land reform at Woodlands resettlement area is still to be tested by time. Although most of the respondents felt that the land reform was a success for them, there is the issue of environmental sustainability. The geography of the area makes the area unsuited for crop growing. The unreliable rainfall coupled with the infertile soils and the presence of wildlife is a cause for concern. Despite these challenges, beneficiaries to the land reform grow a variety of drought resistant crops enough for family consumption. This research revealed that at Woodlands resettlement area, the beneficiaries are co-habiting with wildlife and this is causing a lot of challenges for the farmers. This study also revealed that the fast track land reform programme created a new socio-economic group of urban based land lords. During the planting, weeding and harvesting season family members undertake the required tasks. When they are in the city, they hire unemployed young men as caretakers in their absence. The research also established that these new type of land lords are better placed when it comes to issues of poverty as they are also in formal employment and thus they can afford to buy the required inputs for their lands. The future of most beneficiaries is uncertain at Woodlands resettlement area. This is compounded by the geography of the area which is not favourable for crop growing. The responsible authority needs to ensure that these farmers get the necessary assistance if the goals of land reform are to be realised and poverty eradicated.

5.3. Recommendations

The study draws the following recommendations:

- i. If the fast track land reform programme is to bring sustainable development at Woodlands resettlement area, the government should step in and prioritise infrastructure development. The absence of a clinic, a secondary school and a serviced road network need urgent attention if the initial goals of land reform are to be realised. A functional road network will increase the capacity of all stakeholders to fight poverty.
- ii. Environmental degradation is another cause for concern at Woodlands resettlement area. A degraded environment produces less, making the resettled farmers more vulnerable to poverty. Community based programmes through the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) should be used to empower the community on the conservation of the environment.
- iii. Stiffer penalties should be enforced by the state when dealing with poachers in order to curb poaching activities. More game wardens also need to be deployed to protect the wildlife. The government also needs to consider putting up fences at Woodlands resettlement area to separate the resettled farmers from the game as both feel threatened by the presence of the other.
- iv. The settling of people at Woodlands which was a game reserve needs to serve as a lesson to the government of Zimbabwe of the importance of establishing land use before resettling people. Co-habiting of humans and a non-human community is a source of conflict as the two fight for control of the area.
- v. The government also needs to invest heavily on irrigation facilities to enable the farmers to practise winter cropping instead of relying on rain fed agriculture.

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