

Socio-economic outcomes of the Zimbabwe Fast-Track Land Reform program in terms of productive efficiency

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Abstract: Zimbabwe undertook a Fast-Track Land Redistribution Program (FTLRP) from 2000 to 2003 where former peasants were allocated land previously owned by white commercial farmers. The government viewed it as a political necessity that would foster economic growth and stability. There has been mixed views on the success of this program mainly due to the rapid pace of implementation and limited fore planning of the exercise that resulted in several varying outcomes. This study looked at the FTLRP's socio-economic outcomes based in terms of productive efficiency. Questionnaires were administered to 56 beneficiaries and 56 bureaucrats in the Idhlahla Kippure-ram Resettlement Schemes, located on the outskirts of Masvingo town, Zimbabwe. Socio-economic outcome indicators such as food security, employment and income security were considered. Production efficiency was scored using indicators such as acreage under cultivation and harvest achieved. Eighty percent of the beneficiaries reported general improvement in the overall agricultural productivity efficiency compared to before being resettled and that they could now meet their household food requirements, that of their extended families and they had increased their household incomes. Eight five percent of the beneficiaries felt that they were contributing to national agricultural production and food security. On the other hand, the bureaucrats had a less positive view of the FTLRP. While acknowledging the improved production by the resettled farmers, they had serious concerns about lack of government support in terms of farm mechanization and equipment, which resulted in resettled farmers failing to produce at a commercial level. The bureaucrats felt that institutional support was lacking in terms of health and educational facilities and general government services, which are important for the social wellbeing of the new farmers. The study highlights that the government needs to improve social infrastructure to improve the welfare of the settlers.

Keywords: Economic performance; Land redistribution; Productive efficiency; Socio economic outcome

Introduction

As it became apparent that the white landowners were not forthcoming in relinquishing their vast land holdings, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted the compulsory land acquisition. The highly unequal bimodal agrarian structure was drastically altered by extensive redistribution, which resulted in the creation of a relatively more diversified tri-modal agrarian structure that made up of small, medium, and large farms, with an estimated 170 000 family farms developed by the FTLRP (Moyo et al., 2009). The government was employing the willing buyer willing seller strategy at the time of the FTLRP. This strategy was in some ways slightly more successful than its predecessor in terms of the land tracts that were acquired, but it was not sustainable or effective because neither the government nor Britain, the former colonial power, had the funds to compensate the white owners of commercial land (Masunungure & Chimanihire 2016).

The Zimbabwean FTLRP has been preceded by several land other reforms globally. Land reforms were implemented in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan prior to significant industrialization, with 33.3%, 27.3%, and 26.9% of their respective countries' arable land being redistributed (Binswanger et al., 1995). Thus, industrialization was significantly influenced by the land reforms (Kay, 2002). The same trend was observed in Latin America where post-colonial states inherited highly unequal patterns of land ownership dominated by latifund expropriation of indigenous

community lands in Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras led to the establishment of the highly unequal patterns of land ownership (De Janvry, 1981).

However, the Zimbabwe FTLRP was a hotly debated reform initiative on both a national and international level for several reasons. It has all too frequently been associated with the extensive removal and subsequent replacement of different people, agriculturally related production systems, aspects, and processes. However, the truth is much more nuanced. Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform has been studied in terms of how processes like land acquisition, allocation, transitional production outcomes, social life, gender, and tenure, have influenced and been influenced by the forces driving the programme. Some have been in-depth and offering important empirical research on how the land reform program has changed the agrarian structure to one that is based on small- to medium-sized farmers. Still the FTLRP changed land ownership across farm and class categories creating new agrarian classes and challenges that are yet to be fully investigated (Mkodzongi, & Lawrence 2019).

Zikhali (2008) asserts that economic, egalitarian, and political motives are often used to justify the need for redistributive land reforms, defined as redistribution of land from the rich to the poor (Ghatak & Roy 2007; Ballet, Sirven & Requier-Desjardins, 2007). The main economic rationale for land reform lies in the inverse-farm productivity relationship, which argues that given technology levels, small farms are more efficient than large farms due mainly to fewer problems of supervision (Tarisayi 2013); Faasen & Watts, 2007). The argument reflects that FTLRP is not usually propelled by positive decision-making processes but is probed by political drive and will.

There are conflicting ideas concerning the effect of the FTLRP in relation to socio-economic development outcomes. Many organizations, institutions and people emerged to respond to the FTLRP (Cousins & Scoones, 2010). Ndhlovu (2022) suggests the use of in-depth, ideologically free and neutral approaches in its analysis so as to reveal its detailed outcomes. One such approach is the New Institutional Economics (NIE) perspective which is an economic perspective that focuses on the institutions that underlie economic activities, that is, the social and legal norms and regulations that support economic activity. The NIE's central proposition is that institutions are important, and they are acquiescent to the analysis of the economy (Mooya & Cloete, 2007). There are a number of key concepts in the NIE, but the concepts, which are directly relevant to this study, are theories of property rights.

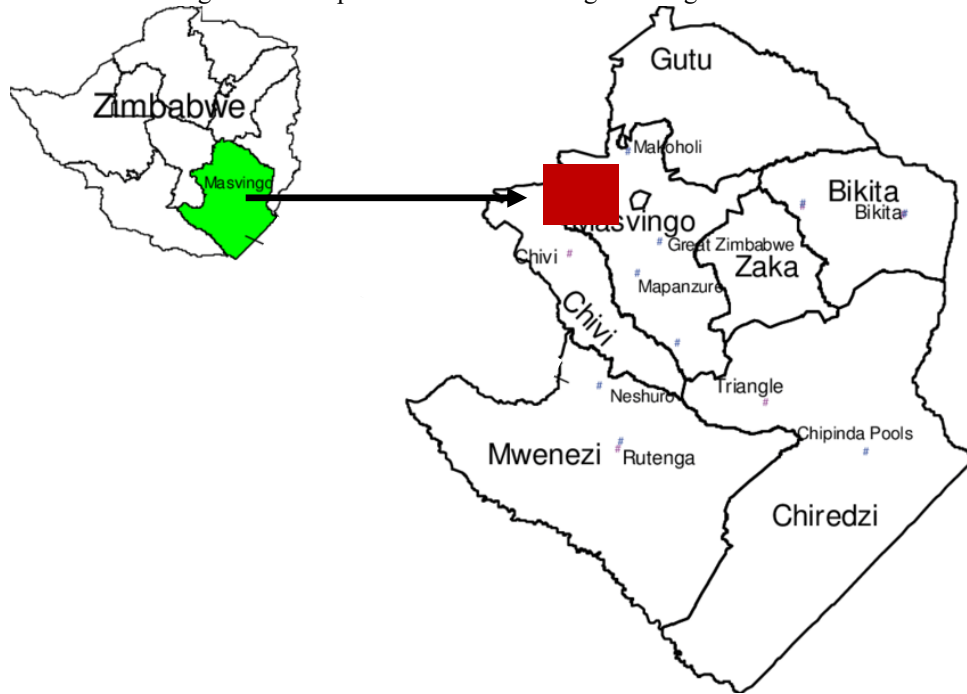
This study investigated the socio-economic outcome of the FTLRP in Zimbabwe using the Idhlahla and Kippure-Iram Resettlement Schemes in Masvingo as a case study from the perspective of the New Institutional Economics (NIE). This study focused on the voices of the newly resettled farmers in the selected resettlement schemes in Masvingo. The rapid nature of the land redistribution program meant that peasant farmers who had been using rudimentary farming methods took occupancy of larger farming area without being trained and financed to meet the new challenges in efficient productive use of the new land. Most of the studies so far have analyzed the FTLRP problems and issues at a high level, thus ignoring the voices of the people at the grassroots level (Serrat, 2008). Importantly this study also looked at the bureaucrats' involved in this scheme at a micro and macro level.

Materials and Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted at Idhlahla and Kippure-Iram Resettlement Schemes, located in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe (Fig.1). The GPS coordinates of the area are -20.060386, 30.770184. The two resettlement schemes are in a peri urban area. According to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Fisheries, the Masvingo Idhlahla Resettlement and Kippure-Iram Resettlement Schemes have 60 beneficiaries each, giving a total of 120 beneficiaries. The area is considered semi-arid and is classified as region 4 using the national scale of 1- 5 where region one has the best farming conditions.

Figure 1. A map of Zimbabwe showing Masvingo Province



. Source Google Maps

The bureaucrats who participated in this study included government officers in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Department of Economic Development, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs participating in land and agricultural reform activities) and Agricultural Unions in the Masvingo Province.

A cross sectional study was carried out using questionnaires administered to both beneficiaries and bureaucrats looking at FTLRP production trends of major crops and livestock, agricultural inputs and support services, agricultural labour, and ways to increase the productive capacity of the land beneficiaries. It also examined land use patterns, k2production, and the productive potential of the land beneficiaries. The questionnaires were based on a 1-5 Likert Scale with 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5=strongly agree. A calculated mean of less than 3 was assigned a negative response, 3, neutral and above 3 a positive response. Standard deviation was also calculated.

Results and discussion

Fifty six (56) beneficiaries and 56 bureaucrats were interviewed. Participants in this study were predominantly male (73.3%). All the bureaucrats had at least high school education and most of them had tertiary education.

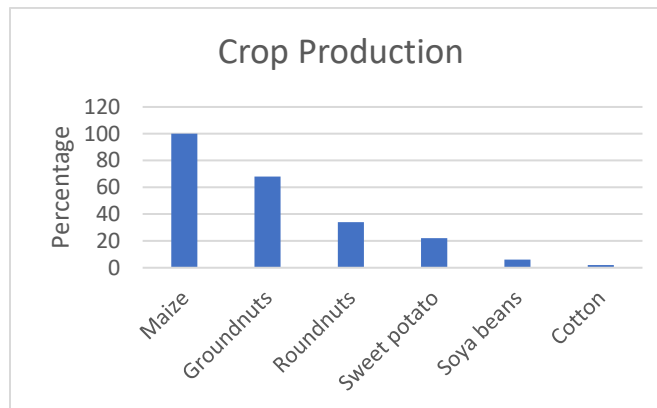


Table 1. Crop production

All the beneficiaries had cultivated maize and 66% cultivated groundnuts. Roundnuts and sweet potato were also cultivated in small quantities and mainly for household consumption (Table 1)

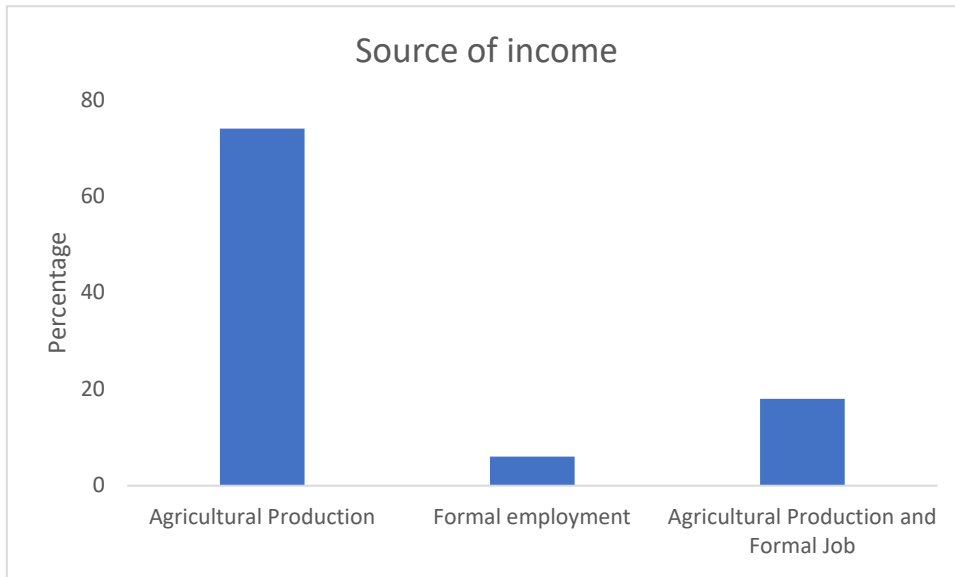


Table 2. Source of income

The major source of income was agricultural production. Some settlers have not quit their jobs and supplement their income with formal jobs. There are a few settlers who are not yet growing crops or owning livestock on the farms and rely on their formal jobs (Table 2)

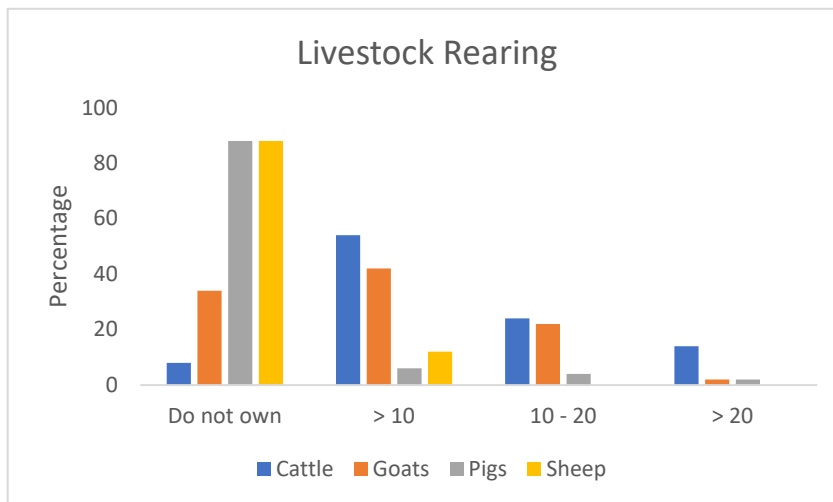


Table 3. Livestock rearing

The beneficiaries reared cattle, goats, pigs and sheep (Table 3). Most of the beneficiaries owned less than 20 livestock for each livestock type. Cattle doubled up as draught power for use in ploughing and carrying goods to and from the farm. At least 56% of the beneficiaries had scotch carts and use them as transport. Only 34% of the beneficiaries had a either a motor vehicle or a lorry. The majority used bicycles.

Table 4. Socio economic outcomes (productive efficiency): Combined

Descriptive Statistics					
SOCIOECONOMIC OUTCOMES(PRODUCTIVE EFFICIENCY)	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
The overall farms productive efficiency has significantly improved post land distribution	102	1	5	2.35	1.224
Beneficiaries are members of cooperative projects that boost productive efficiency of the land	102	1	5	2.78	1.295
The efficiency of production of agricultural crops and cattle breeding has significantly improved since settling on the land	102	1	5	3.36	1.326
Easy availability of household labour has increased the productive efficiency of the allocate land	102	1	5	3.40	1.163
Participation in cooperative projects enhances the economic and productive efficiency of the allocated land	102	1	5	3.46	1.369
Productive efficiency of the allocated land has significantly contributed to national agricultural production and food security	102	1	5	3.50	1.032
Productive efficiency has increased output beyond household demand to cover extended family demands as well	102	1	5	3.62	1.053
Productive efficiency has a potential of boosting household incomes	102	1	5	3.66	1.121
Cooperative projects help to enhance the productive efficiency and capacity of the allocated farms in the District	102	1	5	3.68	1.153
There is a need for improvement of the quality of the land to boost productive efficiency	102	1	5	3.70	.910
Productive efficiency of the land has significantly improved the wealth of the land beneficiaries since accessing the land	102	1	5	3.74	1.116
There are private organisations that are actively involved in projects to enhance the productive efficiency and capacity of the farms	102	1	5	3.82	1.085
These project initiatives did not exist prior to land distribution in the District	102	1	5	3.93	1.154
Measures are put in place to enhance the economic efficiency of input costs	102	1	5	4.08	1.012
The government has developed programs to carry out the qualitative assessment of land productive efficiency	102	1	5	4.08	.767
There are mechanism put in place for monitoring productive efficiency of the land	102	1	5	4.12	.904
Valid N (listwise)	102				

The participants had a high perception of measures taken to enhance the economic efficiency of input costs, the government programs of carrying out the qualitative assessment of land productive efficiency and mechanisms put in place for monitoring productive efficiency of the land (Table 4). However, the overall assessment of productive efficiency was low.

Table 5. Socio economic outcomes based on productive efficiency

Group Statistics					
SOCIOECONOMIC OUTCOMES(PRODUCTIVE EFFICIENCY)	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error
The overall farms productive efficiency has significantly improved post land distribution	Beneficiaries	56	4.32	.636	.085
	Bureaucrats	46	3.78	.814	.120
Beneficiaries are members of cooperative projects that boost productive efficiency of the land	Beneficiaries	56	2.82	1.377	.184
	Bureaucrats	46	4.02	.906	.134

The efficiency of production of agricultural crops and cattle breeding has significantly improved since settling on the land	Beneficiaries	56	2.88	1.192	.159
	Bureaucrats	46	4.04	.729	.107
Easy availability of household labour has increased the productive efficiency of the allocated land	Beneficiaries	56	3.86	.943	.126
	Bureaucrats	46	3.41	1.275	.188
Participation in cooperative projects enhances the economic and productive efficiency of the allocated land	Beneficiaries	56	3.84	.826	.110
	Bureaucrats	46	3.35	1.233	.182
Productive efficiency of the allocated land has significantly contributed to national agricultural production and food security	Beneficiaries	56	4.13	.810	.108
	Bureaucrats	46	3.26	1.255	.185
Productive efficiency has increased output beyond household demand to cover extended family demands as well	Beneficiaries	56	3.48	1.009	.135
	Bureaucrats	46	3.96	.698	.103
Productive efficiency has a potential of boosting household incomes	Beneficiaries	56	2.30	1.127	.151
	Bureaucrats	46	3.37	1.254	.185
Corporate projects help to enhance the productive efficiency and capacity of the allocated farms in the District	Beneficiaries	56	2.64	1.313	.175
	Bureaucrats	46	4.46	.504	.074
There is a need for improvement of the quality of the land to boost productive efficiency	Beneficiaries	56	3.95	1.227	.164
	Bureaucrats	46	4.24	.639	.094
Productive efficiency of the land has significantly improved the wealth of the land beneficiaries since accessing the land	Beneficiaries	56	2.77	1.279	.171
	Bureaucrats	46	1.85	.942	.139
There are private organisations that are actively involved in projects to enhance the productive efficiency and capacity of the farms	Beneficiaries	56	3.34	1.066	.143
	Bureaucrats	46	3.70	.963	.142
These project initiatives did not exist prior to land distribution in the District	Beneficiaries	56	3.61	1.123	.150
	Bureaucrats	46	3.76	1.196	.176
Measures are put in place to enhance the economic efficiency of input costs	Beneficiaries	56	3.70	1.094	.146
	Bureaucrats	46	3.98	1.064	.157
The government has developed programs to carry out the qualitative assessment of land productive efficiency	Beneficiaries	56	4.09	1.100	.147
	Bureaucrats	46	4.15	.595	.088
There are mechanism put in place for monitoring productive efficiency of the land	Beneficiaries	56	3.84	1.262	.169
	Bureaucrats	46	4.04	1.010	.149

The beneficiaries were of the view that overall farm productive efficiency had significantly improved post land distribution compared to the bureaucrats. Most of the responses were similar for the beneficiaries and the bureaucrats although the bureaucrats felt that they had put mechanisms in place for monitoring productive efficiency of the land compared to what the beneficiaries considered (Table 5).

A summary of average responses show that the responses were not significantly different between the beneficiaries and the bureaucrats (Table 6). It was shown that the beneficiaries and the bureaucrats' perceptions on the socio economic impact of the FTLRP in terms of economic performance and poverty alleviation as measured by rural livelihoods in the allocated land were statistically significantly not different ($U = 1227.500, p = 0.689$).

Table 6: The Mann-Whitney U Test Statistics

Test Statistics ^a	
	Socio Economic Outcomes-Productive Efficiency
Mann-Whitney U	1227.500
Wilcoxon W	2307.500
Z	-.415
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.689
a. Grouping Variable: Sample	

The productive potential of the various members of society in subsistence or commercial enterprises is enhanced by social policies that prioritises production focus (Tom 2020). Socioeconomic development occurs when the societal needs for subsistence and commerce are satisfied and at national and international levels, development transformation is improved.

The participants in this study, both the beneficiaries and the bureaucrats indicated that the socio-economic outcomes of the FTLRP has to a large extent impacted them positively in terms of the economic performance as measured by changes in their rural livelihoods. On average, the FTLRP has changed the livelihoods of the beneficiaries as they reflected that their livelihoods were not satisfactory before settling on the land as evidenced by the mean of 3.99, before settling on the allocated land they depended on employment income (mean of 3.36). Access to land also improved the economic livelihood of the beneficiaries as indicated by the mean of 3.94 as well as providing employment for the entire households. This assertion is supported by a mean of 3.40. The beneficiaries' household incomes significantly increased since farming on the resettled land (mean of 3.66) and members of the households beneficiaries were able to take care of their extended families from the farming income as their socio economic statuses became better (mean of 3.62). The decisions to settle on the allocated land were largely motivated by the benefit derived from productive use of land and potential to earn income. This assertion is evidenced by the mean of 4.22. Driven and motivated by economic benefits, the beneficiaries found it quite easy to settle in their new allocated land, as supported by the mean of 3.94.

Farm production remains a principal livelihood strategy of the local people in many rural areas of the developing world and Zimbabwe is not an exception. While the Zimbabwe's FTLRP has significantly changed the socio-economic conditions of the land reform beneficiaries in the two settlement schemes in Masvingo Province, in terms of economic performance and poverty alleviation as measured in terms of improved rural livelihoods, the changes have since occurred at household levels. Aggregately, the land reform in Zimbabwe is still struggling to contribute to the economic development and growth that it used to before the reforms were embarked on. At household level, as clearly indicated in the results and findings in this study, land reform beneficiaries' livelihoods have significantly improved. Most of the interviewees for example indicated that prior to the land reform they depended on meagre employment income, but now their household incomes had improved and increased such that they were now able to take care of their extended families as well. They were able to finance their household education needs and they have been able to acquire and access resources that they were not able to prior to land reform.

The findings indicate that both the beneficiaries of the land reform and the bureaucrats perceived that the socio-economic outcomes of the FTLRP reflect positive developments with regard to the productive efficiency of the allocated farming land in the two settlement schemes in Masvingo Province. The overall perception by both beneficiaries of the land reform and the bureaucrats was that the socio-economic impact of the FTLRP in terms of the productive efficiency of the allocated farming land has been significant. The results indicated that the overall productive efficiency of the allocated land has significantly improved following the land reform and distribution. The noted productive efficiency has been facilitated by land reform beneficiaries' engagement on cooperative projects that are boosting the productive efficiency of the land. Noted in this study is that there has been specifically efficiency in the production of agricultural products and cattle breeding boosted by the easily available household labour.

The study participants, the beneficiaries in particular were of the view that their productive efficiency significantly contributed to national agricultural production and food security to an extent of contributing to the economic growth of the country, particularly through ensuring that the domestic supply of food is sustained through lower prices. The beneficiaries were now able to meet food demand for their households as well as their extended families. Furthermore, productive efficiency has a potential of boosting the households incomes and thus improve the socio-economic status of the resettled community as well as alleviating poverty. These results are significantly in harmony with studies elsewhere. According to the advocates of agriculture as an engine of growth for example, productive efficiency of farming land increases food production in the economy and operates as labour source. Arguably, these are two crucial resources, which are exported from the agricultural sector to the rest of the economy. A study by Wichman (1995) investigating the relationship between agricultural growth, nutrition, and labour productivity found that the agricultural growth increases food consumption through productive efficiency, improves nutrition in the society, and ultimately raises labour productivity and efficiency in other sectors of the economy as well.

The results further indicate that the engagement of private organisations in active projects that enhance the productive efficiency of the allocated land has been positively accepted by both land reform beneficiaries and bureaucrats, who acknowledged that such projects initiatives did not exist prior to land reform and distribution.

Mechanisation and Institutional Support

It is clear from the results and findings of this study that operating at commercial level by the new farmers has great challenges. The 99 year leases that the government issued to the land reform beneficiaries seem to be lacking the legal clout and bankability. As a result, the current and new farmers who benefited from the FTLRP are finding it difficult to borrow from the country's financial institutions. This limitation has significantly hampered the real agricultural economic recovery in Zimbabwe. It has become difficult to restore the agricultural sector back to its levels of productivity prior to the FTLRP. Productivity in most of these land reform allocated farms is struggling to rise above the subsistence levels of productivity. Furthermore, infrastructure such as schools, clinics, roads, water, and sanitation have not been developed to meet the new farmers' needs.

Like in many countries, agriculture can be an engine of growth in Zimbabwe as it can generate the resources needed in other sectors of the economy to feed and sustain the whole process of the economic growth. It is in this vein, that growth in the agricultural sector tends to be pro-poor as it seeks to harnesses poor people's key assets such as the farming land and labour, and can create viable economies in the rural areas where the majority of the poor people dwell. There are arguments that suggest that only small-scale agriculture can achieve a sustainable rural economic growth and its associated poverty reduction ability if it is pushed beyond the subsistence levels of productivity. These arguments are in harmony with the perspective of the NIE.

Given adequate and maximum support from the government of Zimbabwe particularly in providing technical support in terms of training in agriculture, mechanisation and other inputs would have gone a long way towards leveraging the small-scale agriculture productivity running in the settlement schemes throughout the country to optimise beyond the subsistence and peasant levels. Currently agricultural activities in these small-scale agricultural schemes is seasonal as it is dependent on the rain season. Once the rain season is over, very little farming activity takes place until the next rain season. Prior to the FTLRP these targeted farms were operating on a commercial basis with irrigation throughout the year. All these challenges are a clear testimony that the government of Zimbabwe did not plan properly for its FTLRP.

The argument is that the government of Zimbabwe when embarking on its land reforms ignored the importance of institutional frameworks, a critical ingredient in institutional economics development approach. The major difference between the economics of rich and poor nations is arguably in the different institutional frameworks that drive the economic development trajectories of these classes of countries (Cousins, 2011). According to Aliber and Cousins (2013) institutions are the key to explaining economic performance. A country's institutions can therefore be seen as the mechanism that shapes its economic performance and subsequently influencing its rural agricultural transformation through land reform such as the Zimbabwe' FTLRP (Cousins, 2011).

Relevant to this study is the broader institutional framework perspective of the NIE that shapes the functioning of the land reform and agrarian reforms, this current study is in harmony with the North's approach. North (1981) states that NIE changes the neoclassical economics perspective from a static to a dynamic theory in a sense that institutions are dynamic and never static, they change in response to new economic opportunities and approaches and advances in the division of labour. Accordingly, North reiterates that the NIE evolved as a movement within the social sciences,

especially in economics and political science, and unites theoretical and empirical research in examining the roles played by institutions in furthering or hampering economic growth and development.

Farm productive efficiency and redistribution

The perceptions on the improved productive efficiency of the allocated land in the two settlement schemes in Masvingo Province clearly indicate that whatever purported productive efficiency is being realised does not go beyond the subsistence levels of farming and agricultural activity that measures to the expectations of the NIE perspective. The Zimbabwean economy requires restoration back to the levels of farm productive efficiencies that were experienced prior to the FTLRP and consented efforts to even push the levels much higher in order to achieve sustainable development particularly in the rural areas of the country. Prior to the FTLRP Zimbabwe was known as the breadbasket of Africa exporting tobacco, corn and wheat for example to the wider world, especially to other African countries.

It is clear from the results and findings of this study that the assessment of the productive efficiency of the allocated farming land in the two selected resettlement schemes in the Masvingo Province were based on the personal understanding and conceptions of what productive efficiency entails in the perceptions of the respondents and participants in this study. The respondents were merely comparing the productive efficiency of the communal peasant farming they used to engage in with the current and certainly improved productive efficiency of the government allocated farming land. The challenge is that the government has done very little in terms of developing and putting in place systematic and institutional measures for measuring the productive efficiency of the allocated land in the resettlement schemes, thus falling short of the expectations of the NIE perspective.

The government should take responsibility for developing sustainable infrastructure in these resettlement schemes. Such infrastructural developments as educational and health facilities are crucial for the development of these land reform created communities. It is the responsibility of the government of Zimbabwe to develop the farm schools and health facilities so that they can meet the standards of other facilities in the country. The community at these resettlement schemes took great initiatives to build some farm schools temporary structures for example and the government should therefore support these initiatives by developing them further.

Conclusion

Both the FTLRP's beneficiaries and bureaucrats reported that the program's socio-economic results had a significant positive impact on their economic performance as evidenced by changes in their rural livelihoods. The FTLRP has, on average, changed the beneficiaries' means of subsistence because they acknowledged that, prior to settling on the land, those means were insufficient. Benefits realised in these areas influence realisation of social protection. The institutional framework did not adequately support FTLRP especially the 99 year leases. There is a need for mechanisation and general financing of the new settlers to improve productivity and move to commercial farming. Most of the beneficiaries utilised only a fraction of the land under their ownership and used draught power for cultivation. Farming operations are only carried out in season due to lack of irrigation capacity. Security of tenure enhances stability of the land beneficiaries, motivation to invest and utilise the plots productively. The NIE demonstrated the need to strengthen institutions to boost production and improve socio economic outcomes.

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