

# **COMMUNITIES SPEAK OUT ON LAND REFORM IN ZIMBABWE**

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Two Provincial Workshops were convened by ZERO in partnership with FES and HIVOS between the start of the farm invasions/occupations (February 2000) and the parliamentary elections (June 2000) in Mashonaland East, West and Central Provinces and Matabeleland North and South provinces.

The workshops solicited community views on the land reform process with special emphasis on the farm invasions. The original invitation sought the participation of six representatives from each district in a province comprising: two traditional leaders, the Chief Executive Officer for each Rural District Council, and three ordinary community representatives, of which two had to be women.

Of particular significance was the attendance of a number of war veterans at the Mashonaland Provinces workshop and the apparent unity in terms of the emotions about land and feelings on the farm invasions.

It is interesting to note how different the views of communities in the two provinces were. The following table is the summary of the key issues and the views raised at the two workshops. The tabular presentation allows for a comparative analysis of community views from the two provinces.

Issue	Views : Mashonaland	Views: Matabeleland
Definition of land problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of political will to resettle people: 20 years of promise and no delivery</li> <li>▪ Slow process of planning</li> <li>▪ Increasing poverty due to ESAP</li> <li>▪ Poor use of available land</li> <li>▪ Congestion in communal areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unfair land distribution</li> <li>▪ Land policy unclear</li> <li>▪ Unplanned resettlement</li> <li>▪ Political bias: government should represent all people</li> </ul>
On the land reform process in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The pace has been too slow</li> <li>▪ The process has not been clearly explained and transparent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only a select few have been resettled</li> <li>▪ The process is not transparent</li> </ul>
Settler/beneficiary Selection and land use planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Previous process settled people without farming knowledge</li> <li>▪ Previous process gave too much power to the resettlement officer</li> <li>▪ There is need for land use plans before people are settled</li> <li>▪ Planning should involve all relevant stakeholders including, govt. agencies, RDCs, NGOS, Professionals etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Every Zimbabwean is eligible for resettlement but priority should be given to the land less</li> <li>▪ Settler selection must be transparent</li> <li>▪ Traditional Leadership should play active role in resettlement</li> </ul>

Issue	Views : Mashonaland	Views: Matabeleland
Land Acquisition and distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Land should not be bought back</li> <li>▪ Acquisition must involve all important players</li> <li>▪ There should be speedy acquisition</li> <li>▪ The farm sizes recommended by Agritex, according to each natural region should be adopted</li> <li>▪ Communal land should remain state owned with 99 year leases being granted</li> <li>▪ Communal title deeds may be granted in the communal areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need for dialogue and understanding among all stakeholders</li> <li>▪ All under-used land should be repossessed</li> <li>▪ Only those with expertise should be settled on Model A2 (small holder commercial scheme)</li> <li>▪ Adequate social infrastructure must be provided</li> <li>▪ People must be empowered through provision of skills and equipment.</li> </ul>

Issue	Views : Mashonaland	Views: Matabeleland
On the farm Invasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is no such thing as "farm invasion" we are merely repossessing our land. "We should only talk about land repossessions not "Farm Invasions"</li> <li>▪ The invasions are the only thing that will show government that we are serious about the need for more land.</li> <li>▪ The villagers and the war veterans are in it together</li> <li>▪ People should invade farms that are near their communal land and should not deprive others the opportunity to be settled by invading farms outside their districts</li> <li>▪ Where will those people who reside far away from commercial farms e.g. those from Kariba be resettled if the invasion are staking a claim on land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ War veterans should stop taking the law into their hands</li> <li>▪ Lawlessness should not be tolerated, rule of law must prevail</li> <li>▪ Those in power should separate party politics from land distribution</li> </ul>

Issue	Views : Mashonaland	Views: Matabeleland
Way forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is an urgent need to decongest communal areas</li> <li>▪ Need for proper planning of resettlement schemes</li> <li>▪ Land reform must be done in an orderly and transparent manner</li> <li>▪ Adequate financial resources must be made available for infrastructure provision in resettlement areas</li> <li>▪ There should be adequate stakeholder consultation in the land resettlement process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need for bottom up approach to the process</li> <li>▪ Intended beneficiaries must be trained before resettlement</li> <li>▪ Current production levels should be maintained or improved</li> <li>▪ Legal approach to land acquisition is best option.</li> </ul>

The table clearly shows the political hand at play, and indicates the extensive knowledge that communities have which unfortunately has not often been used to their benefit. In conclusion it is interesting to note the following:

- Whilst the participants from Mashonaland criticized the slow pace of land reform they were adamant that the invasions were a necessary revolutionary step that would show the government and donors the seriousness of the land problem in Zimbabwe.
- Despite the Mashonaland Provincial participants coming from different districts, their resolve in getting land was unquestionable since land occupies a central place in the livelihoods of communities

- The power that the war veterans yield over communities was also evidence by their domination of proceedings at the Mashonaland Provincial workshop. One would ask whether the mood and deliberations at the workshop would have changed if the workshop had taken place after the elections, or if only ordinary community representatives had attended.
- The participants from Matebeleland were more objective and had a "sober" view of the whole process; this may be attributed to the traditional political division which has always seen the Ndebele people not supporting ZANU (PF) government as they feel it does not fully represent their needs.
- The major difference of opinions between the participants from Mashonaland and those from Matabeleland was on the farm invasions. The participants from Matabeleland regarded the farm invasions as unlawful and giving power to those who do not have the full mandate nationally.
- It is interesting however that there were some areas of convergence especially around the definition of the land problem, land acquisition and settlement and the way forward.
- The communities agreed that land in communal areas should not be held under freehold title and the traditional leadership should play a critical role in land resettlement