

The Role of Resettlement in Social Development in Zimbabwe

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The resettlement programme is a post liberation strategy of the planned and organised movement of the poor peasantry onto state-acquired former commercial land, previously reserved for white farmers. Its immediate focus has been on the problems of the rural poor where:

- a) Thousands of families in the communal areas (CAs) were and are still landless.
- b) Many more have land that is too small or ecologically unsuitable, so that they can not produce enough to survive.
- c) Others because of impoverishment, war or the shortage of grazing, lack adequate ox draft power. Neither do they have enough cattle manure to fertilise their arable holdings.

Historically large tracts of land were alienated by colonial governments to white farmers or private companies running estates and plantations. The processes were deliberately designed for the peasantry to suffer acute land shortages and pressures and become cheap migrant wage labourers. Added to this, the impact of the colonial army's notorious "Operation Turkey" during the war of national liberation was to deliberately destroy the already limited agricultural capacity of the CAs in order to deny guerrillas food. It is estimated that between 1 and 2 million people were displaced from the CAs. Some were herded into so-called "protected villages" and others had to flee from war zones to towns and neighbouring countries. The peasantry thus supported the liberation war in order to recover their lost land. At independence, therefore, resettlement became the instrument for land redistribution in favour of the landless and displaced rural poor. This particular land reform was seen as a compelling argument for structural changes in agrarian relations but more importantly, as a solution to the short term crisis of expectation of the peasantry, by the new popularly elected government.

Conceptually, therefore, resettlement aims at redistributing land in order to restructure Zimbabwe's inherited agrarian economy of unequal distribution of wealth, land, income, other opportunities and resources. In correcting the imbalances between the two subsectors of agriculture — commercial and peasant — resettlement attempts to provide alternative productive employ-

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ment opportunities for the rural poor to improve their living standards and transform peasant agriculture. The various original models of resettlement are continually being redesigned to create conditions leading to the socialisation of agriculture and its integration with the national economy.

Thus, Government's undeclared policy on the national question has been to view the new land schemes as establishing new, cohesive, progressive and dynamic communities out of the many individuals from different parts of the country — all of whom are from the poor sector of the peasantry.

This follows from the selection procedures which identify the landless and rural poor as individuals rather than socially homogenous groups (e.g. clans, chieftancies, etc.) as targets for resettlement. The schemes themselves are expected to be agriculturally and economically viable. Settlers are not excluded from the benefits of scientific and technological progress such as high yielding seed varieties, artificial insemination and so forth as was the case under colonialism. The farmers also benefit from economic advances in the form of higher producer prices for crops and other agricultural products, improved marketing and credit facilities which were denied them before. As the land schemes are amenable to adopting improved methods of farming, targeted cash incomes are higher at \$400 per family per annum over and above subsistence compared with less than \$200 for the peasantry in CAs. The system of administration and management is democratic as local leaders are all popularly elected. There are no chiefs and village headmen in resettlement areas. The resettlement processes and procedures therefore discourage spontaneity of settlements and attempts to revert back to traditional methods and systems of agriculture and administration.

The major short- and long-term objectives of the resettlement programme include: provision of relief of pressure on over-populated land; extension and improvement of the base for productive agriculture in the peasant farming sector; and improvement of the standard of living of the largest and poorest sector of the population of Zimbabwe. They also include the amelioration of the plight of people who have been adversely affected by the war and their rehabilitation. As well as provision, at the lower end of the scale, of opportunities for people who have no land and who are without employment and may therefore be classed as destitute; and the bringing of abandoned or under-utilised land into full production as one facet of implementing an equitable policy of land redistribution. The expansion or improvement of the infrastructure and services that are needed to promote the growth of people and of economic production; the achievement of national stability and progress in a country that only recently emerged from the turmoil of war; and that resettlement in all its forms (core estates and outgrowers, agricultural collectives, individual settlers, etc.) should eliminate the country's dependence on the numerically small, but economically strong, large scale commercial farm sector. It should be in a position to play a similar role to that of the commercial sector, in the long run,

in the spheres of agricultural investment, employment, production, yields, food security, foreign exchange earning and saving etc.; and be able to realise autonomous self-management and self-government with government workers only playing an advisory role; with the ultimate goal being to achieve the socialist transformation of agriculture.

It thus became clear from the onset what the operational situation required if the agro-economic objectives of resettlement were to be achieved and the settler communities were going to be able to absorb fully the significant changes in their new social but unfamiliar environments. In other words, the criteria for evaluating the success or failure of the new land schemes would not only measure tangible economic costs and benefits, but would lay great stress on social returns as well. Rates of return on capital invested, increases in yields per unit area of land/labour, increases in marketed output, incomes per family etc. have to be counterposed with improvements in diet, health, life expectancy, literacy, skills etc. of the new communities on the other hand. But even more key to these socio-economic criteria, the failure or success of the programme depends on the ability of the disparate resettled communities to use the schemes and build upon them. This therefore called for the introduction of a settler development programme designed specifically for the social development needs of the settlers.

The conceptual framework of resettlement had already been worked out by the colonial civil service but it had to be modified operationally to suit the new socio-economic order by the incoming Government workers. Two fundamental preconditions had to be met in the new land schemes. Firstly, government agents of change in the development process not only needed technical expertise, but somehow, they also had to be understanding and competent social workers. The resettlement programme involves a package deal composed of various inputs that are amenable to controlled management, e.g. 1 classroom/teachers house per 20 families, establishment grant per 0,5 ha/family, 1 borehole per 20 families, 5 ha net arable per family, etc.

The management units modelled along the technical-commercial type, and their associated economies of scale benefits, do provide a solid foundation for the physical and the agro-economic development of the schemes. For the all-round success of the programme, however, these management inputs have to be supplemented and complimented by social extension type inputs which are nothing more than various aspects of social engineering. The importance of the dual role of government agents — being technical experts and social workers simultaneously — can best be appreciated by considering that the resettlement programme has never engaged professionally trained social workers to provide an input into the social development of settlers.

Secondly, arising from the experiences gained during the war of national liberation in the liberated and semi-liberated zones, it was absolutely essential to organise and mobilise the settlers on various levels on a democratic basis for

development to take place in the new land schemes. The settler development programme which the department of rural development has implemented to date has seen the settler human resources as key to the eradication of underdevelopment in these areas. Therefore, positive and progressive changes in settler values, attitudes, changing perceptions, consciousness and social relations are a prerogative to the fulfilment of the socio-economic objectives of the resettlement programme. At every project, an elected scheme development committee (SDC) has been established with sub-committees at village and area level. Within each committee, an executive heads sub-committees with various responsibilities for agriculture, political mobilisation, health, education, women's and youth organisations, logistics, conservation of natural resources, security, production, etc. The functions of the committees at various levels differ considerably with the lower tiers dealing with day to day problems and basic services to the community whilst the higher tiers take responsibility for overall policy issues and finance. This has been the only way of accelerating the development of a community spirit and community living to enable each scheme to become a viable, cohesive and progressive rural community. It is on this basis that settlers have been willing to work together for the betterment of themselves, their families and local communities, through their own efforts in constructing primary and secondary schools and other community facilities.

Being capable of making their own decisions on any particular matter, they are also able to take care of their own welfare.

Furthermore, our settler development programme (the unsung song of resettlement) has tried to foster a responsible and responsive settler leadership for two reasons. Firstly to pave the way for effective popular participation and involvement in the development processes of the schemes. Secondly, in a bid to raise settler consciousness, self-organisation and power vis-a-vis bureaucrats. In this context, the resettlement officers who manage schemes are required to work themselves out of jobs by systematically and practically handing over management functions to SDCs over time. Thereafter they move to new schemes to repeat the process *ad infinitum*. Formal and informal settler organisations covering every facet of social activity have been created to suit the varying needs and circumstances prevailing in each scheme.

These social organisations and structures have greatly facilitated the settlers in decision making, and mobilisation of the human resources for self-help, self-improvement, community spirit and community living. With these specialised sub-committees, the SDCs have also proved very useful channels through which government and non-Government development services can be provided economically to the settlers — e.g. agricultural extension, credit, and all other forms of training. It is through these institutional structures that an integration of resettlement schemes with communal areas will be realised when the unified local government system is enforced in the near future.

The composition of the resettled communities in terms of their origins as at December 31st, 1983 was:

(i)	Ex communal areas	62%
(ii)	Ex farm labourers	15%
(iii)	Ex urban workers	6%
(iv)	Inter Provincial migrants	3%
(v)	Returning refugees from neighbouring countries	1%
(vi)	Ex "protected" villages	9%
(vii)	Ex African Purchase Areas farmers	1%
(viii)	Others*	3%
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*Mainly exforeign migrant workers now married to Zimbabwean women. They qualify to be registered as Zimbabwean nationals but have not taken the necessary steps to change their nationalities because of ignorance or complex legal procedures. Most of them have been in the country for 10 to 20 years.

With such a diversity of backgrounds and experience, there was no other way of establishing cohesive and progressive communities in the new land schemes except by adopting the settler development programme. Tendencies of the dependency syndrome were quite apparent at the initial stages of resettlement, particularly in the first twelve months. Certain sections of the settlers saw themselves as passive objects of development waiting to receive hand-outs from Government. Conversely, the same section of settlers viewed Government workers as the subjects and givers of all kinds of aid. This kind of self-pity and impotence had to be eliminated at the very beginning amongst the settlers through the settler development programme whose philosophy has been summarised in the following verse:

If you give a hungry family a food hand-out

The family will eat once.

If you encourage the family to farm

The family will eat for the rest of its life.

If you are thinking a year ahead

Grow a seasonal crop.

If you are thinking ten years ahead

Plant a tree and other perennial crops.

If you are thinking one hundred years ahead

Organise, mobilise and educate the people.

By growing seasonal crops, you will harvest once

By planting a tree and perennial crops you will harvest ten fold.

By organising, mobilising and educating the people

You will harvest one hundred fold.

It was thus possible at the earliest stage to forestall general disgruntled tendencies amongst the majority of settlers if promised aid did not materialise on time, or if the cost of pioneering resettlement became unacceptably high for others. The settler development programme provided the settlers with the

necessary confidence and motivation to make resettlement a success by urging them on under all kinds of difficulties and obstacles.

In summary, it can be said that resettlement has contributed to social development in Zimbabwe in the following ways:

- a) By encouraging new dynamic leadership in the new communities to prepare for more effective popular participation and involvement in development through the SDCs and repatterning of some traditional organisations and structures. In the process, the consciousness of settlers and their power vis-à-vis bureaucracy has been raised.
- b) By the development of physical resources such as cattle dips, handling pens, roads, schools, clinics, rural service centres, potable water supplies, improved housing, land clearing, small irrigation schemes, woodlots, conservation measures and so forth which assist the settlers in raising levels of agricultural production and productivity. Whilst there is limited communal production of crops, there is, however, a wide range of other projects and expanded production activities which are carried out by settlers. These include woodlots, gully reclamation, erection of paddocks and boundary fencing, construction of primary and secondary schools, small irrigation projects, repairs and maintenance of village borehole water supplies and improved housing.
- c) By the provision of facilities and services at reasonable distances from villages, e.g. borehole water, pre-school nurseries, mother and child care, woodlots for firewood, and compulsory schooling. These have positive implications for reducing the subordination of women. As a result, the consciousness of women in resettlement areas, their self-organisation and access to power and services are increasing much faster than in communal areas.
- d) By producing self-managing systems which enable settlers to make fundamental decisions on investment, distribution, organisational techniques, etc. This way, the development process is being popularly managed in line with the new social order.
- e) By enabling the new communities to assert their autonomy and influence in managing their relations with the external environment, particularly in the labour and produce markets. Settlers and their communities are thus able to take overriding decisions on fundamental issues affecting their lives instead of being dictated to willy nilly by the outside world.
- f) By extending the community's control over its physical, socio-economic and political environment to overcome poverty, impotence, dependency and underdevelopment. The settlers are being armed with the skills and knowledge in various spheres of life — leadership and organisation, agriculture and irrigation, soil and water conservation, repair and maintenance of boreholes, etc. — to bring nature to serve them.

Resettlement has thus made a significant impact on social development in

the country. The impact of its contribution can best be appreciated after considering its achievements to date. By June 30, 1984, a total of 37 Model A, 152 Accelerated, 31 Model B and 1 Model C schemes in 48 of the country's District Council areas had been implemented. 28 800 out of a projected 33 100 families had been allocated holdings. This means that approximately 225 000 people were directly benefitting from the programme. The physical side of development had realised the following:

4 000 km of village access roads opened.

625 boreholes sunk.

89 wells dug.

204 cattle dips/handling pens constructed.

primary schools with 584 classrooms and teachers' houses built.

12 secondary schools operating.

1 13 clinics built and 6 others under construction.

1 14 completed rural service centres and 9 under construction.

On the social side, the existence of the extended family system is second only to the small scale irrigation schemes. A survey carried out by the Department on 31 of the Model A schemes indicates that the average family size is between 8 and 10 while it is 12 to 15 on small irrigation schemes, with the national average estimated at 6 to 7. Some 23% of the total population of the resettlement schemes consists of relatives and their dependents. This partly explains why in most resettlement schemes school enrolment is double what it is supposed to be. For other land schemes neighbouring on communal areas, children from there enrol at these schools. Residents of neighbouring communal and commercial farming areas also benefit from social and physical facilities in the schemes.

All these social changes have taken place without the involvement of social workers. It is only in the last eighteen months or so that they have been brought in to help with two kinds of problems — drought relief and foreign aged destitutes who cannot be resettled. It is perhaps time that social workers are directly involved in articulating social development programmes for rural areas as well as evaluating those that are being currently implemented.

As experts in developmental social work, they can make useful contributions to the solution of social problems that have been left unresolved in the land schemes so far and any new ones that will come up from time to time.

In conclusion, it ought to be recognised that SDCs, in using and building on the new land schemes, face numerous problems. The SDCs have no legal standing and therefore lack legislative powers on internal matters. They have no financial resources of their own nor forms of taxation to raise funds for local administration or development projects. However, once the SDCs have been incorporated in the restructured and unified local government system, they will acquire the necessary legal powers to function as local authorities. At present the SDCs are not accountable to the settlers even though they have been

popularly elected. What they do is to replace the traditional representatives of the ancien regime at scheme level — the chiefs, village headmen, etc. They are popularly elected organs and thus have achieved a popular legitimacy. As such, SDCs have been convenient stop gap measures to fill the void of local authorities in resettlement areas.

Once they have been elevated to the lower tiers of local government of village development committees (VIDCOs) and ward development committees (WARDCOs) SDCs will become institutions embodying elements of both the state apparatus and the peasantry. At that stage they will pose a problem of identity. Whom and what will they represent — the state or the peasants? What will be their relationship to land reform, to the state's declared intention of creating a socialist agriculture, and to the aspirations of the peasantry for land, equality and democracy? Will their leadership be taken over by rich peasants and traders who will in turn emasculate the movement through manipulation of gender and other groups? Or will the SDCs continue in their successful formal organisation of the settlers, as organs of self-management, self-rule, people's power and popular economic bodies in a socialist framework?