

AFTER LAND REFORM - WHAT NEXT

Notes on the SAPES Trust Policy Dialogue Forum held on 13th November at SAPES in Harare.

Key presenter: Professor Ian Scoones. Discussant: Charles Mangongera, the MDC Director of Policy.

Chair: Professor Mandivamba Rukuni

Ian Scoones is a Professor in development studies in the UK; he has conducted field work in Zimbabwe since the mid 1980s. Many of you are aware that he has recently published a book: "Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities." He has a considerable following in the academic world and his views have been readily embraced by those anxious to shed a favourable light on the Fast Track Land Reform.

Scoones introduced his subject with the proposition that the process of land reform was now accepted as being irreversible and concluded that we need a new narrative to move forward that accepts the past and works towards the future.

He gave a presentation on his ten year study of 400 households in 10 sites in Masvingo province since Fast Track. He sought to use information gathered from this study to debunk a number of common perceptions that he describes as five myths. I have stated these simply below and place key words in capitals.

- 1). Land reform has been a TOTAL failure
- 2). The land LARGELY went to Cronies
- 3). There has been NO investment
- 4). Agriculture is in COMPLETE ruins, creating chronic food insecurity
- 5). The rural economy has COLLAPSED.

I would suggest that the use of such definitive terms makes nonsense of any measured or reasoned discourse. To make a case, one has simply to show that a glass, once full of water, still holds a few drops with which one can anoint the current sorry state of affairs! However I shall leave discourse on this to those better able to argue from an academic perspective! For those interested in a detailed critique of Scoones work, the recent article by Dale Dore is particularly valuable. This review can be accessed on our website or at: <http://www.sokwanele.com/thisiszimbabwe/archives/8239>

Scoones summarised his findings: One in five of the households had *dropped out*, some were *hanging in*, others were *stepping out* and others *stepping up*. This is both interesting and suggestive terminology. There were a number of issues studied and some key observations were:

1. Production and marketing now involves mostly informal markets. Networks are complex and there are poor statistics that aggregate production or the relationships.
2. Food security has been adversely affected by drought and a lack of irrigation. However by 2008 most resettled families produced around a ton of maize and were family self sufficient.
3. Access to inputs. There has been low input use and limited availability of fertilizer. He suggests that the industry should restructure as well as develop products geared to the changed requirements of the new consumer. He noted that whilst current finance for Agriculture was around 5-600 Million Dollars per annum, 75% of this went to contractors. This was lamentable, although contracting was clearly promoted as a driver of production and marketing. He believes there has been no sustained preparation for *transition*; clearly a reference to some imagined final destination or vision.
4. Investment. Describing the investment which he graded as starting from zero, the research estimated that over an 8 year period, the 400 households studied had built or accumulated assets including

livestock of around \$2000.00 each. This he deemed impressive. Such statistics however show little regard to the macroeconomic effect of Fast track on the general population.

5. Farm labour and employment. Their research indicated that around 8% of former farm workers were beneficiaries of land though generally of very small portions.(This estimate is higher than most reports we are aware of but corroborates the generally limited areas allocated to ex farmworkers.) Of the estimated 350,000 previously employed workers he estimated that: 10,000 had established new households;70,000 were still working within the diminished commercial sector;25,000 were still in situ within the fast track areas living in former farm compounds;45,000 have been displaced and the remaining 150,000 have returned to the communal areas.(There was no mention of migration across borders or death)Whilst he acknowledged that life had been difficult for ex farm workers he noted that the new farm workers were incredibly vulnerable.
6. Tenure and security. This was perceived as quite varied. He denounced Freehold as cumbersome and high cost and discounted it as a failed experience in other African countries. He did note that it was time the country adopted the findings of the 1994 Land Tenure Commission which recommended a multi form tenure system. He made no mention of the rule of law.

A most telling remark was probably the understatement of the evening: "Land reform has not been a roaring success". A slide showing a rural store with the name painted above its entrance was telling: "Shandaudye"... "Work so you can eat"... land reform has performed way below potential and where relative success has been achieved this is largely in the A1 sector. One questions how exactly he would define an escape from poverty. The A2's are clearly struggling and whilst they can play a role in the future they need a considerable injection of public investment to ensure their integration and value. He downplays the importance of political affiliation in regards to land allocations by his assertion that most A1 beneficiaries were ordinary peasants.

He referred to the economic apartheid of pre 2000 as being over; such language is a clear reference to a less than objective view of white commercial farmers whose identity and economic contribution to Zimbabwe can be derogated so easily. He did however he noted there were a number of challenges:

Land administration, the land audit and outstanding compensation

Tenure systems need a multiform approach

Rural finance and Private investment

Public infrastructure investment

Input supply and agro dealers

Research and extension

Statistics and data collection

Rural development

He suggested that we need to become *real* because we are stuck in the past working on false assumptions (largely related to former Commercial farming); we need to think out of the box and discard the old myths.

The paper was followed by a discussion and comments led by Charles Mangongera, the MDC Director of Policy. He had received only 2hours notice of his role and stressed that the views expressed were his own although they would clearly be in line with the broad policy directions of MDC.

He opened by mentioning that the land issue was one of the reasons for the war and it remained a major issue. How do we improve and manage it for a better Zimbabwe? What happens on the land determines what happens elsewhere in the country.

The principle policy motivation should be to address and reduce poverty and job creation should be primary outcome particularly where only around 10 % of the workforce is formally employed. He dismissed the oft mentioned *sanctions* simply: "What *sanctions*?" and queried what contribution the agricultural revolution was making towards employment opportunities in the broader economy. He questioned food security and drew attention to the country's lamentable dependence on imports from South Africa and the considerable trade in chickens from Brazil.

On the broad question of who got land and the suggestion that empirical evidence showed that there was a broad based allocation across all strata's of society; he referred to the rural environment where his mother still lived where elite capture was the primary result. Clearly the allocation even at A1 level was partisan and he queried whether land hunger had been addressed. Whilst there are some keen to regard the current allocations as an end achieved that should not be revisited, it is clear there remains considerable disquiet in the general population and who is to say there will not be fresh disruptions. This was a clear warning to those who are reluctant to entertain a transparent and corrective review of what has taken place.

With regard to financing of production he noted there are clearly many questions:

- There is no Collateral and the business of farming has been undermined by turning the land into dead capital.
- There should be no more state interventions by Gono and appeals to Biti to provide this and that is off the mark.
- The private sector needs to know that the land is *capital* and it must be able to use this to drive out rural poverty by moving beyond the model of "Shandaudye".

He concluded by saying we need economic democracy.

From the floor concerns were expressed that the new model outlined by Scoones was likely to replicate the ecological and economic problems experienced in the Communal Areas. One of the participants called for a show of hands from those present as to their preference for either a 99 year lease or freehold. Whilst most declined to express an opinion, those that did were 2:1 in favour of freehold. This contributor noted that currently 32 out of 54 African countries are food insecure and a radical look at creating a functional land market would likely resolve this. Genuine farmers should be on the land rather than those who simply regarded land holding as a right. The real myth that fast track has created, is that everyone is a farmer and is entitled to free land!

There was an acknowledgement that profitable business was at the core of successful farming, although there was a clear divide in opinions between those who support a proper business environment underwritten by bankable security and the rule of law and those who advocate for a continued informal sector proliferation. There was strong sentiment from the floor for the need to resolve the present before we attempt to move on.

In response to the noted recent rise in tobacco production, there was concern that the current process was leading to massive negative ecological impact particularly from indigenous tree cutting to fuel this resurgence and also the impact of new plot holders whose primary interest was informal mining and not farming. Was this sustainable? We must avoid the danger of turning the whole country into an extension of the Communal Areas.

From a political perspective it emerged that Zanu(PF) is anxious to delete all provisions for a Land Commission from the current draft constitution. This would put paid to any Land Audit.

The last word was given to Minister Murerwa who had missed the initial part of the meeting. He expressed satisfaction that Fast Track had settled past inequities in land distribution but that he was aware that economic linkages to the broader economy exist and need attention. Land should not be discussed in a vacuum as there were social, economic and political implications to consider. Challenges remained as regards security of tenure, the debate on property rights and land markets. He questioned the value of formal property rights... "What value is a piece of paper?"... and suggested the recent failure of the Ministry of Finance to secure an uptake in the market of the recently floated Government treasury bills was despite their full securitization. He referred to other issues in the economy in particular the liquidity crunch and the *ongoing sanctions*. In reference to the Land Audit he acknowledged that, whilst this was an agreed

provision of the GPA there were insufficient resources to do more than improve the ministry's capacity and database. It was perhaps more than clear for those present that we can expect little to zero movement in this regard for as long as he is in control.

He noted the considerable volume of research work taking place on the ground and requested researchers share this information to assist in policy formulation and conflict resolution. There appears to be no obstacle to accessing the ground for those likely to produce complementary findings!

On the subject of compensation he referred to the challenge of funding and the 4 million dollars allocated in the last budget. (He actually said 4 billion and quickly corrected himself... perhaps a reflection that he is aware of the real requirements to resolve this issue!!)

Judging by the expressions in the audience we have a clearly divided national perspective o what can be defined as success and what direction should be adopted to uplift Zimbabwe. The discourse on land is, I therefore believe, far from over!! Whilst there are those focused solely on ensuring there is no return to the past, there is an equally determined broad constituency keen to see an accountable and transparent movement away from what can only be described as the current descent into a feudal system.

I hope these notes are of interest,

Best regards,

Ben Gilpin.

ARAC Manager

Commercial Farmers' Union