

## **EAST AND SOUTH-EASTERN ZIMBABWE**

**Papers from the  
1987 Study Tour of the Geographical Association of Zimbabwe,  
31 August to 4 September, 1987**

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Since the arrival of the first white settlers in Zimbabwe in 1890, the land question has remained a major source of friction between the black and white communities. Land alienation began with the establishment of the first native reserves in Matabeleland in 1894, culminating in the Land Tenure Act of 1969. Under the Act, the country was divided almost equally between the whites (including Asians and Coloureds) and blacks, although the latter group comprised some 95% of the population. The division of land was also inequitable with respect to the quality of land that was allocated to each racial group. Under the Land Tenure Act, 29,7% of the large-scale commercial farmland fell within Agro-ecological Regions 1 and II, compared with 9,4% of the communal farmland. Three-quarters of the communal farming areas fell within Natural Regions IV and V. Moreover, the communal areas have become increasingly over-populated with both people and livestock over the years. Average population density in the communal areas at the 1982 census was 25.5 persons per sq. km, compared with 7,6 persons per sq. km in the large-scale commercial farming areas and 12,4 per sq. km in the small-scale commercial farming areas (national average = 18,8 per sq. km). However, average figures hide areas of very high density: for instance, Zimunya communal area had 162 per sq. km, Ngorima communal area 149 per sq. km and Chinyika communal area had 112 persons per sq. km in 1982.

The land redistribution and resettlement programme that was launched shortly after independence was aimed at (a) redressing the inequalities in land allocation and (b) relieving population pressures in the overcrowded communal areas. However, the government also recognised the significant role of the large-scale commercial farming sector in terms of providing jobs for some one-third of the total number of people in formal employment (in addition to their dependents), producing food and industrial raw materials, and earning essential foreign exchange through agricultural exports (e.g. cotton, tobacco and coffee). Consequently, only land that was vacant or not effectively utilized, or appeared to be held for speculative purposes, would be purchased for resettlement. Several criteria were set in the selection of land for resettlement, including:

- a) land near or adjacent to communal areas would be preferred;
- b) land should not be actively farmed;
- c) blocks of land for purchase should be large enough to allow for economic provision of schools, clinics etc.

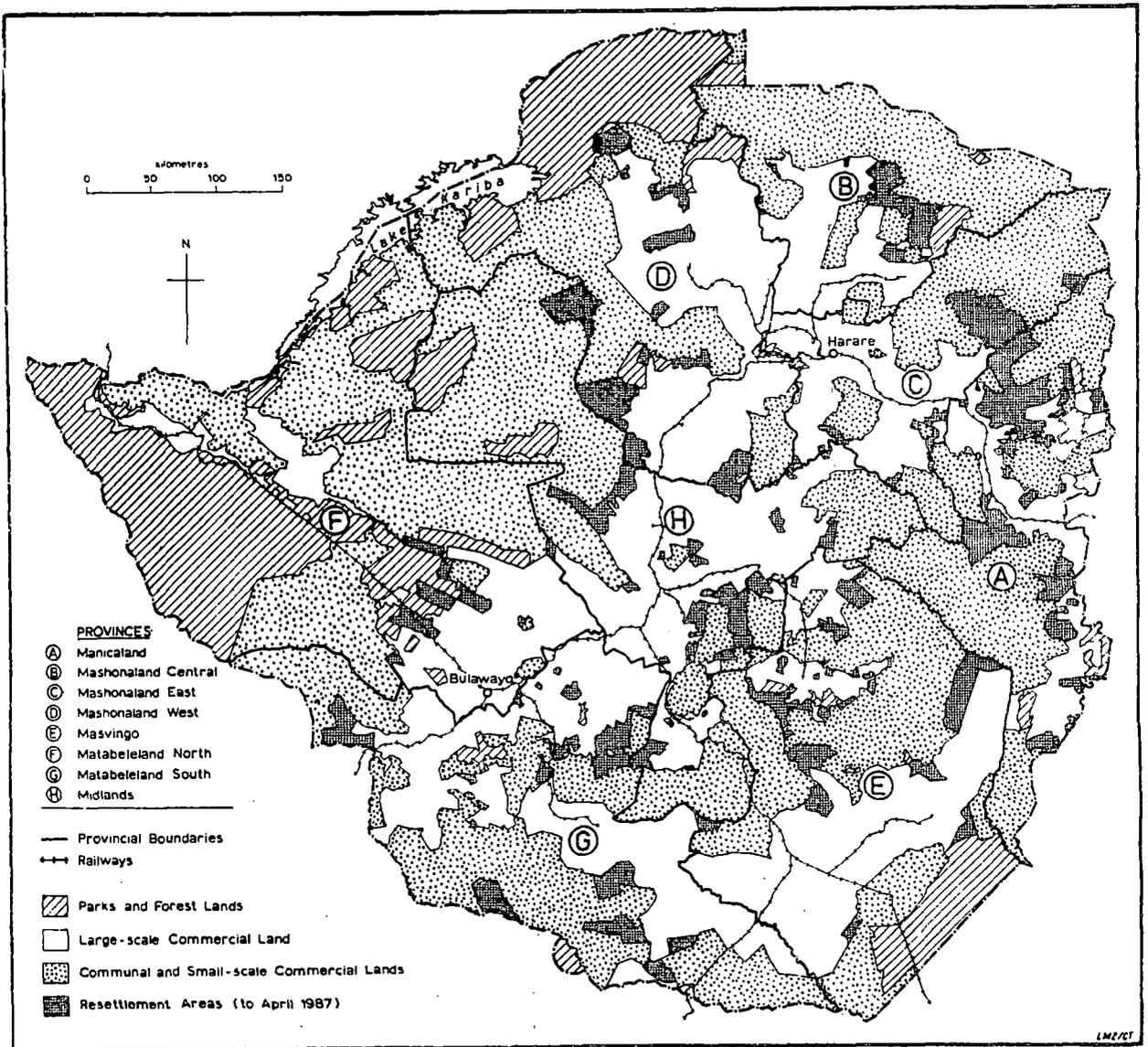
The cumulative effect of these criteria and other constraints is that some three-quarters of the land that has been acquired for resettlement to date is located in Natural Regions III to V (Fig. 1).

The Lancaster House constitution does not allow compulsory expropriation of property, including land. Consequently, land for resettlement may only be purchased on a 'willing-seller willing-buyer' basis and at current market prices. These requirements have raised considerably the cost of land purchase for resettlement. Foreign financial assistance for land purchase that was promised at independence has not all materialised. More recently, government has sought to reduce the

cost of land purchase by changing the law so that it now has the 'right of first refusal' for any rural land that is offered for sale.

Initially, priority in the resettlement programme was given, first to returning refugees and other war-displaced persons who were unemployed and had no other land rights, and secondly to those people who had too little land to support their families within the communal areas. More recently, farmers with land in the communal areas have been eligible for resettlement, provided they renounce their land rights within their home areas. The latter category are intended to provide a demonstration effect on their less experienced colleagues in the resettlement areas.

Fig. 1: Distribution of resettlement areas at April 1987



Initial plans were to resettle some 33 000 families over a period of three years while the bureaucratic machinery acquired the necessary experience. Following the report of the Riddell Commission in 1982, it was then planned to resettle some 162 000 families by the middle of 1985 (i.e. during the 3-year Transitional National Development Plan period). However, progress has been much slower than anticipated. By the middle of 1986, some 36 000 families only had been resettled on about 2,6 million ha. of land. During the current First Five-year National Development Plan period 1986-1990, it is proposed to resettle only about 15 000 families annually. A major reason for the slow progress to date is the lack of money for land purchase and development, compounded by the recurrent droughts that have created further problems of programme implementation.

A total of five settlement models are being used in the resettlement programme. Model A is the Normal Intensive Resettlement model which consists of individual family settlement in nucleated villages, with individual arable holdings of up to 6 ha. and communal grazing within the village boundaries for between 5 and 20 livestock units. The amount of arable and stock allocations per family depend on the agro-ecological conditions of the area, with more stock in low rainfall areas where crop cultivation is less viable. A variant of the model is the Accelerated Intensive Resettlement model. This was introduced to tackle the problems of squatters by settling such families into organised settlements with minimum initial planning and infrastructural provision. Services and infrastructure are provided at a later stage. Model A marks the least departure from the settlement and land use patterns of the communal areas. A majority of the settlers to date have been resettled under this model.

Model B involves the resettlement of groups of between 50 and 200 members under communal living and co-operative farming. Large farms are therefore transferred intact from their previous owners to the co-operatives. By early 1987 there were some 80 Model B schemes in operation or planned.

Model C comprises an intensive individual village settlement and arable land (similar to Model A) around a state-owned core estate. The estate is owned and run by the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) which also provides extension and marketing services to the settlers or outgrowers.

The above represent the original three settlement models in the resettlement programme. More recently, two other models have been proposed, primarily to accommodate the agro-ecological conditions in low rainfall areas. Progress achieved in the implementation of these two models is not clear.

Model D is not a settlement model as such, but is designed to make more efficient use of land in the drier parts of the country. It involves the use of former commercial ranches for grazing purposes by farmers in the adjacent communal areas. Each community has access to the ranch once every three or four years during which time their own grazing within the communal land can recover. The communities benefiting from the scheme are expected to contribute towards the costs of running the ranches and to control stock numbers in order to avoid overgrazing.

Model E involves settlement based on group ranching on former commercial ranches in areas where climatic conditions or the lack of

arable land preclude a crop-based form of settlement. Where feasible, a commercial game management component, under the guidance of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, may be incorporated. The livestock holding may be divided into a small proportion of individual family-owned stock for domestic purposes but the majority will be group-owned stock for commercial purposes.

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