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Growth, Income Inequality and Poverty Reduction
in Namibia

Dr Anne Epaulard

Economic Diversification, Income Inequality and
Poverty Allevation in Namibia

Dr S Wangwe

Comments on 'Economic Diversification, Income
Inequality and Poverty Allevation' in Namibia

Mr R L Ritter

Fiscal Policy, Income Inequality and Poverty Allevation
in Namibia

Dr O A Akinboade

Comments on 'Fiscal Policy, Income Inequality and
Poverty Allevation in Namibia

Research Department, Bank of Namibia

Land Reform, Income Inequality and Poverty Allevation
in Namibia

Dr W Werner

Comments on 'Land Reform, Income Inequality and
Poverty Allevation' and 'Lessons to be learned from other
African Countries Land Reform processes'

Dr Siphon Sibanda



BANK OF NAMIBIA

ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM 2003

**POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
IN NAMIBIA**

Edited by Research Department

' **Bank of Namibia**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface and Overview	1
Opening remarks, Tom Alweendo	5
Growth, Income Inequality and Poverty Reduction in Namibia, Anne Apaulard	7
Economic Diversification, Income Inequality and Economic Development in Namibia, Samuel Wangwe	31
Comments on "Economic Diversification, Income Inequality and Economic Development In Namibia", Reiner Ritter	49
Fiscal policy, income inequality and Poverty Alleviation in Namibia, Oludele Akinloye, Akinboade	55
Comments on Fiscal Policy Inequality and Poverty Alleviation Paper Research Department, Bank of Namibia	99
Land Reform, Income Inequality and Poverty Alleviation, Wolfgang Werner	103
Comments on Land Reform, Income Inequality and Poverty Alleviation, Siphosibanda and Lesson to be learned from other African Countries Land Reform processes	131
Conclusions and Issues emanating from the Symposium Research Department	189

PREFACE AND OVERVIEW

Preface

The fifth Annual Symposium of the Bank of Namibia on the topic Poverty, Income Inequality and Economic Development took place on August 22, 2003 at the Windhoek Country Club Resort. One of the objectives of the conference was to discuss the link between poverty and income inequality and their impact on economic development in Namibia.

It is important to point out that the Bank of Namibia supports and promotes economic policies that help to achieve sustainable economic growth, and which can reduce poverty and improve equity in the economy. On that basis, another main objective was therefore to identify effective policy strategies that assure that the benefits of the growth are shared equally among the population. For this reason, international experts in these fields have been invited by the Bank of Namibia to participate in the Annual Symposium and to share their knowledge and experiences with the view to contribute to the reduction of poverty in Namibia.

Overview and Reflections

Mr. Tom K. Alweendo, the Governor of the Bank of Namibia in his opening speech emphasized the importance of reducing poverty and achieving a more equal income distribution, so that everybody can benefit from economic growth. He emphasised that while, the interest of the Bank of Namibia is to promote economic policies that maintain monetary and financial stability and lead to economic growth, these policy should also be consistent with poverty alleviation and the improvement of equity.

Dr. Anne Epaulard from the International Monetary Fund presented a paper on Growth, Income Inequality, and Poverty Reduction in Namibia . The paper gives an overview of the key economic variables that describe the current status of poverty and income inequality in Namibia. Namibia has one of the highest GDP per capita among the Sub-Saharan African countries, but also has one of the most unequal income distribution in the world. The paper identifies three different scenarios for the evolution of income inequality and growth in Namibia. The plausible scenario, which takes into account a slow reduction of the inequality (the gini-coefficient of 0.63), shows that the annual growth rate needed to half the poverty rate within 10 years is 3.7 percent. These projections appear to be quite achievable. Finally, sectoral policies are believe to be more effective than overall macroeconomic policies in reducing income inequality.

In the paper "Economic Diversification, Income Inequality and Economic Development in Namibia", Prof. Samwel Wangwe from the Economic and Social Research Foundation, Tanzania, addresses the question how strategies that involve economic diversification can be formulated to reach a high and sustainable level of economic growth and simultaneously lead to poverty alleviation and a more equal income distribution. The paper concludes that economic diversification should be implemented on different levels, namely within the same sectors, into new sectors as well as in diversifying exports. Furthermore, Prof. Wangwe identifies productivity as a key contributor towards diversification and advises a shift from low to high productivity production systems. Special attention should be paid to the agriculture, the SME and the informal sector as well as to tourism, manufacturing and education.

Mr. R.L. Ritter (Economist), as a discussant, pointed out that economic diversification is a product of pursuing a policy of wealth creation through competitive advantages. He believes the objective rather should be to pursue competitive advantages and learning clusters within a framework of sustainable development. He further argues that Namibia has a small internal market and its future ability to grow will depend more on growing exports.

Prof. A. O. Akinboade from the University of South Africa presented a paper on Fiscal Policy, Income Inequality and Poverty Alleviation in Namibia. First, The paper acknowledges that Namibia has already made important strides in poverty reduction policies, which can be seen e.g. in the consistent fiscal spending on social services in several areas. The paper also gives a poverty profile of Namibia, revealing e.g. the fact that the vast majority of the poor lives in rural areas, and that the households headed by women are living in poverty more often than those headed by men. It is also affirmed that poverty is more pronounced, especially among the unemployed. The paper suggested that the tax policy could be considered and used as an instrument to achieve a more equal income distribution. A number of policy suggestions are made by the paper, which include the reforms of the school fee system, the health sector and the implementation of a revised social safety nets program. The discussant, John Steytler of the Bank of Namibia, complemented the paper for its detailed analysis on the role of fiscal policy. However, he cautioned that the analysis would be more meaningful if placed in the in the context of the Namibian economy.

LAND REFORM, INCOME INEQUALITY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION

WOLFGANG WERNER¹

1. Introduction

Sustainable and equitable improvement in the quality of life of all people in Namibia .

This is the vision of NDP 2, which maps out Namibia's development trajectory for the period 2001/2-2005/6. It argues that in the short- and medium term a multitude of income generation and safety net initiatives will be required from both the private and the public sector to sustain a new pattern of growth which will reduce poverty while accelerating economic growth (RoN 2002a: 50-51).

The primary concern in formulating this vision was undoubtedly the high level of poverty experienced in the country. It is estimated that between 50 percent and 67 percent of all households (depending on the measure used) are poor. 85 percent of consumption poor households are located in rural areas (RoN 2002a: 559). They make a living on just 55 percent of the national average income (N\$ 17,198 in the mid-1990s). The northern and north-eastern regions are considerably poorer than the central and southern regions. Annual household incomes in five of the former regions (Ohangwena, Caprivi, Omusati, Oshikoto and Okavango) was less than half of the national average (Hansohm et al 1999: 19). These are regions where access to land is obtained through customary tenure arrangements and where farmers practice cultivation together with animal husbandry. With the exception of Otjozondjupa region, average household incomes in regions where commercial farming is taking place are above the national average. These average figures conceal intra-regional income differentials, however. Urban areas such as Windhoek, for example, increase the regional average for Khomas Region considerably.

To compound high poverty levels, the distribution of income is highly skewed. Namibia has the unenviable reputation of displaying some of the highest income inequalities in the world. In the late 1990s its Gini-coefficient was 0.70 (Hansohm et al 1999: 17). Ten percent of households representing 5.3 percent of the population

¹ Dr. Werner is an Independent Consultant in Windhoek, Namibia

consume 44 percent of total private consumption, while 90 percent of households consume an estimated 56 percent. The richest 10 percent of the population receives 65 percent of income (Ibid.).

The pattern of poverty in Namibia mirrors the unequal distribution of land. At Independence in 1990 the new Namibian government inherited a highly skewed distribution of land. Approximately 36,2 million hectares representing 44 percent of the total land area or 52 percent of agriculturally utilisable land continue to be held under freehold title. This land is commonly referred to as the commercial farming sector. Under previous Apartheid policies, access to this land was reserved for white farmers, who owned that land under freehold title. The sub-sector is still dominated by white land owners (RoN 1991: 147).

By contrast, the non-freehold areas, formerly known as native reserves and referred to today as communal areas, comprise about 33,4 million hectares, representing 41 percent of total land area or 48 percent of agricultural land. However, these aggregate figures overstate the agriculturally usable land in communal areas, as large tracts of communal land are situated in semi-desert areas, with mean annual rainfall ranging between 50-100mm, or are rendered unusable for agricultural purposes due to the absence of exploitable ground water. If these factors are taken into consideration, the commercial farming sector (36 million ha.) comprises 57 percent of agriculturally usable land, and communal areas only 43 percent or 27 million ha (Ibid.). This underlines the fact that access to productive land and agricultural resources was structured along racial lines before Independence.

While land reform is widely regarded to play a major role in alleviating poverty in the country, policy statements in this regard remain ambiguous. The National Land Policy states that government policy will at all times seek to secure and promote the interests of the poor and ensure equity in access to land and in security of tenure (RoN 1998: 1). Cabinet, after a retreat at the end of the year 2000 was reported to have reiterated the importance of land in alleviating poverty by having stated that without achieving a breakthrough in the land reform programme, the fight against poverty would not succeed (New Era 22.12.2000-12.1.2001).

However, the importance of land in alleviating poverty does not enjoy similar prominence in some key documents on poverty alleviation. The Poverty Reduction Strategy for Namibia, which was approved by Cabinet in 1998, does not accord redistributive land reform a long-term role in poverty alleviation. It argues that the agricultural base is too weak to offer a sustainable basis for prosperity and foresees

that in a quarter century from now, the large majority of the country's inhabitants are likely to have moved into urban centres (RoN 1998a: 3, 5). While the Poverty Reduction Strategy sees a significant potential in alleviating poverty through the development of the livestock sector, further opportunities for the development of cultivation in the freehold or commercial farming sector are regarded as limited. It argued that at best, land reform and an associated shift to intensive cultivation could yield a one-time gain for poverty reduction in those few areas that are well watered but presently farmed by extensive commercial methods (Ibid.: 10). These statements echo the conclusions drawn by a World Bank study on poverty reduction that preceded the Poverty Reduction Strategy (World Bank 1997: 12). Land reform does not feature in the National Poverty Reduction Action Programme 2001-2005 (RoN 2002d) which was tasked to concretise the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

The Second National Development Plan (NDP 2) also does not provide any more detail on how land reform will support a broad based rural development strategy aimed at reducing poverty. In a cross-sectoral chapter on poverty reduction (RoN 2002a: 558f), access to land as a strategy to reduce poverty is not discussed at all. The only reference in that particular chapter to land and poverty alleviation is found under the heading of targets and performance indicators for the agricultural sector, which simply states that land will be provided to poor landless families (Ibid.: 565).

Although poverty alleviation remains high on the land reform agenda, calls for land redistribution are driven by other concerns as well. Most important in this regard is the demand for greater equity in land ownership. Colonial land dispossession left indigenous communities with little more than 40 percent of agricultural land in 1990. With the exception of an estimated 15 percent of the land that is either desert or land proclaimed as nature reserves, the remainder was owned by white farmers. Land reform, and redistributive land reform in particular, is here to stay. In implementing a land reform programme, the National Land Policy commits government to secure and promote the interests of the poor and to ensure equity in access to land and security of land tenure (RoN 1998.: 1).

This paper will start by presenting a brief discussion of the current framework and government policies with regard to land reform and poverty alleviation. It will not only focus on redistributive land reform but will also look at tenure reform in the non-freehold or communal areas. It will conclude by asking a few questions about land reform and suggest some improvements to the programme.

2. THE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

A programme of land reform was started in 1990. The programme consists of four main components:

- . Redistributive land reform;
- . Tenure reform;
- . Development of unutilised communal land; and
- . The Affirmative Action Loan Scheme.

A policy and legal framework is in place to guide land reform. This consists of the following:

- . The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia;
- . Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, 1995;
- . White Paper on Resettlement, 1997;
- . National Land Policy, 1998;
- . Communal Land Reform Act, 2002.

Redistributive land reform

Redistributive land reform is implemented in accordance with the provisions of the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, 1995² (RoN 1995a). The provisions of the Act include the following:

- . it lays down a preferential right of the state to purchase commercial farm land;
- . it provides for market related compensation;
- . it establishes a Land Reform Advisory Commission consisting of stakeholders to advise the Minister of Lands;
- . it prescribes the way in which commercial farm land was to be planned and allocated;

² The Act will be referred to below as the Land Reform Act

- . it provides for the subdivision and survey of holdings for small scale farming.
- . it restricts the acquisition of commercial farm land by foreigners; and
- . it establishes a Lands Tribunal to solve possible disputes over prices between sellers and the government.

The Land Reform Act provides a very wide definition of beneficiaries of land reform. These will be

Namibian citizens who do not own or otherwise have the use of agricultural land or adequate agricultural land, and foremost to those Namibians who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory practices.

The National Resettlement Policy (RoN 2002b: 3) narrows the definition of main target groups down to three main classes:

- . people who have neither land, income nor livestock;
- . people who have neither land nor income, but few livestock; and
- . people who have not land but have income or are livestock owners, but need land to be resettled on with their families and to graze their livestock.

Income levels do not matter in the selection of land reform beneficiaries according to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (The Namibian 21.11.2002).

Within these broad categories previously disadvantaged Namibians with less than 150 large stock units or the small stock equivalent qualify for resettlement (Ibid.: 5). Farmers whose livestock numbers exceed this maximum need to apply for a loan under the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme administered by Agribank, to buy a farm. Priority will be given to members of the San community; ex-soldiers; displaced, destitute and landless Namibians; people with disabilities and people from overcrowded communal area (Ibid.: 3-5)

The National Resettlement Policy (Ibid.: 3) lists the objectives of and options for resettlement on land acquired under the Land Reform Act. Amongst other things, government will seek

- . to give an opportunity to the target groups to produce their own food with a view towards self-sufficiency;
- . to create employment through full-time farming;
- . to bring small holder farmers into the mainstream of the Namibian economy by producing for the market; and
- . to alleviate human and livestock pressure in communal areas.

Redistributive land reform and resettlement are thus aimed at alleviating poverty by improving the productive capacity of the poor by purchasing and allocating land to enable them to make a living (Ibid.). After five years of government support, settlers are expected to completely support themselves (Ibid.: 8). The White Paper does not spell out exactly the level of welfare at which settlers are expected to support themselves and make a living. It merely asserts that a target minimum income level has to be established (Ibid.: 6).

Namibia's land and resettlement policies seek to bring about this improvement in the standards of living of previously disadvantaged people by transforming the large scale commercial farming sector into small-scale units. Anticipating increasing pressures on existing land as a result of population growth, the National Land Policy proposes to make the subdivision of large scale farming units conditional on the maintenance of farming units of an economically viable size (RoN: 1998: 16).

The determination of what constitutes an economic unit was left to the Land Reform Advisory Commission (LRAC) which was established in terms of the Land Reform Act. Underlying its recommendation on minimum farm sizes was a minimum target income for beneficiaries of N\$ 15,000 per annum. This figure was proposed by the Central Bureau of Statistics as the minimum required to provide a decent standard of living for a household of 5-6 people. Based on this figure the LRAC decided that beneficiaries should not be allocated less than 1,000 ha. in the central and northern regions for livestock farming and at least 3,000 ha. in the southern parts of the country.

Tenure of resettlement land

Government's position on tenure rights to redistributed land seems ambiguous. The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, 1995 provides for the granting of 99 year leasehold rights to allocated farming units and subsequent registration of such

lease agreements in the Deeds Office. The Land Reform Act also provides for the possibility to buy an allocation after five years, subject to certain conditions. In terms of the Act, however, these rights are circumscribed in so far as rights to assign, sublet, mortgage or in any way encumber a farming unit allocated by the MLRR is subject to the written approval of the Minister. However, in a legal opinion the Office of the Attorney-General expressed the view that a mortgage could be registered on any lease agreement registered in the Deeds Office.

In spite of this legal opinion, the Draft Land Tenure Policy (RoN 2002f) continues to state that the rights of settlers will be subject to a number of limitations which include the right of the Minister to change the agreement with settlers and the power to revoke a lease if the holder is in breach of the terms and conditions relating to the productive use of the land, financial viability etc. The Draft Policy proposes that even the erection of buildings on a holding should be prohibited unless consent from the Minister has been obtained.

Towards the end of 2002 the Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation introduced an amendment to the Land Reform Act, in which he proposed that the section of the Act which provides for the option to purchase a farming unit after five years be deleted. Such land, he argued, should never be for sale. Instead, it should rather serve as place where some future potential commercial farmers should graduate from and be able to acquire their own agricultural land .

Communal land reform

Tenure reform in the non-freehold or communal areas was not regarded as particularly important by policy makers. In view of the fact that the majority of Namibians are living off the land in communal areas and indications that traditional tenure rules and administrative structures are disintegrating, tenure reform in communal areas should enjoy a much higher priority. On the one hand, a programme of tenure reform would go some way to secure the customary rights to land and natural resources of rural people. On the other hand it would protect small scale farmers on communal land against future land inequalities as local elites and agri-business seek to secure rights to land. Finally, secure tenure relations in non-freehold areas may have a positive influence on investment and economic development in these areas that have been neglected under the Apartheid dispensation.

The Communal Land Reform Act (RoN 2002e) which was passed in the latter half of 2002 and signed into law in early 2003 addresses many of these issues. In broad

terms, the Act provides for the registration of all land rights held in communal areas. It distinguishes two different kinds of rights to be recognised: (i) customary land rights; and (ii) rights of leasehold.

With regard to customary land tenure, the Act recognises and confirms the powers of traditional leaders to allocate and revoke rights in land. However, customary land administration will be formalised. Proposed Communal Land Boards will control customary allocations and revocations of land rights. Future applications for new customary allocations of land will have to be addressed in writing to the Traditional Authority. After their approval, the latter will have to inform Communal Land Boards about new allocations and furnish particulars with regard to such allocations to the Board. Once the Board has satisfied itself that a particular allocation does not infringe on the land rights held by another person, does not exceed the maximum area prescribed and does not fall into an area reserved for common usage, such a right will be registered by the Communal Land Board and a certificate of registration will be issued to the applicant. In this way customary land rights will be legally protected.

Existing customary land rights holders will have to apply to their respective Land Boards for recognition and registration of their land rights. The same criteria used in new allocations will be applied to assess the legitimacy of such allocations. Should there be reason to doubt the validity of a claim or that there are conflicting claims, Land Boards will have to initiate a hearing.

The Act provides for the inheritance of customary allocations through the Traditional Authority of a particular area. These provisions are aimed to ensure that rights to land will remain in a particular family for as long as a family wishes to keep them. Any other transfers of customary rights can only occur with the written consent of the Chief or Traditional Authority of a particular area.

The Communal Land Reform Act seeks to make unused communal land available to individuals under leasehold with a view to promote agricultural development. This will effectively reduce the areas of jurisdiction of traditional leaders by bringing customary land under the control of the state. The Act empowers the Minister of Lands to designate portions of a particular communal area within which long term leases may be granted for agricultural development purposes within such a designated area. Designation has to be preceded by consultations between the Minister, the Land Board and Traditional Authority under whose jurisdiction the proposed designation falls. Communal Land Boards are only authorised to grant

rights of leasehold if Traditional Authorities have consented to this. Should the latter refuse, the Land Boards will submit the matter to arbitration.

Grantees of leaseholds may be required to survey their land at their own expense. Once surveyed, the leasehold will be registered in the Deeds Office under the Deeds Registries Act, 1937. The Act also provides for the legalisation of enclosures of communal pastures and prescribes an elaborate procedure for assessing such applications. This procedure affords members of traditional communities who feel aggrieved by enclosure to contest these. Finally, persons who are aggrieved by a decision of a Traditional Authority and/or Land Board will be able to appeal against such a decision to an appeal tribunal appointed by the Minister of Lands.

Development of unutilised land

The development of unused communal land for agricultural purposes is the third component of the land reform programme. The feasibility of this option was investigated for the National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question in 1991. The consultants concluded at the time that this was a high cost option and that benefits were unlikely to be widely distributed (RoN 1991: 498). Following up this option, the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation appointed consultants to investigate the potential and feasibility of developing unused communal land for agricultural purposes. They identified approximately 13,700km² (1,370,000 ha) of communal pasture land that could be developed in the four north-central regions and another 8,860 km² (889,000 ha) in Kavango (IDC 2000: 32; 2002: 18). It is proposed that these farms be developed into commercial units ranging in size between 3,600 and 4,000 ha. The development cost of a farming unit that size was estimated to be N\$ 392,000 compared to the average of N\$ 1,2 million the Ministry had paid for developed land (Republikein 16.5.2002).

The Affirmative Action Loan Scheme.

An Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (AALS) was first implemented in early 1992. Its primary objective is to relieve grazing pressures in the non-freehold or communal areas by encouraging well-established and strong communal farmers to purchase commercial farms (Agribank 2002: 12). Initially only full-time farmers qualified for an Affirmative Action loan, but in 1996 an amendment enabled part-time communal farmers to benefit as well.

Currently the following criteria must be fulfilled to qualify for an AALS loan:

- . The applicant must be identified as a farmer in the communal areas.
- . He/she must own a minimum of 150 large stock or 800 small stock or the equivalent thereof.
- . Proof must be rendered by the authority of the communal area of the numbers of the applicant's stock in the area.
- . The applicant must furnish proof that he/she has removed his/her total stock out of the communal area (Agribank 2000: 15).

In terms of the AALS, Agribank provides loans for a 25 year period at interest rates which are subsidised by the government. Loans are granted against security of mortgage bond and productive use of land is insisted upon. A ten year restriction clause is registered against properties to avoid speculation. In practical terms this means that AALS farmers may only dispose of their land during the first ten years with the consent of Agribank in concurrence with the conditions imposed by the Minister of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development. The subsidy contributed by government must be paid back when selling within ten years (Agribank 2000: 14).

Different repayment schedules apply to full-time and part-time farmers. Full-time farmers are not required to repay either interest or capital during the first three years. From year 4 onwards, the outstanding amount is redeemed over the remaining 22 years at an escalating interest rate. Part-time farmers may elect to service the interest portion only during the first three years, redeeming the outstanding amount over the remaining period at interest rates that are determined by non-farming income bracket. Another option for part-time farmers is to capitalise the interest portion for the first three years and redeem the outstanding amount in the period thereafter (Agribank 2002: 13).

State guarantees were introduced to finance the difference between the purchase price of commercial farmland and the reasonable value of that land for agricultural and pastoral purposes. The latter valuation is based on what the land can produce, and is generally well below the market price. It was anticipated that communal area farmers might experience difficulties in financing this difference. The total amount of land acquired under the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme is summarised in Table 1

Table 1: Summary of loans granted under the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme, July 2003

Category	No. of applications	Total hectares	Total loan granted (N\$)
Full-time farmers	307	1,799,001	254,513,059
Part-time farmers	214	1,172,906	199,691,400
Total	521	2,971,907	454,204,459

Source: Agribank 2003

It is interesting to note that more than four times as much land was acquired by previously disadvantaged Namibians under the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme than through the official resettlement process.

3. IMPACT OF LAND REFORM

To date no independent assessment of land redistribution and resettlement has been carried out. This makes it impossible to put forward authoritative statements on the impact of land redistribution on the macro-economy, the environment and poverty alleviation. A Technical Task Team was appointed by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation recently to review resettlement experiences to date within the next nine months.

At the outset it can be stated that the impact of land redistribution on the land ownership pattern in the freehold sector has been modest. By March 2003 the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation had acquired 118 commercial farms comprising 709,568 hectares at a cost of N\$ 105,4 million. Included in the total number of farms are five farms that were donated to government by a large Namibian business group. In total 1,479 families or 8,874 people were resettled by government. Of these one third or 493 households are headed by females (Pohamba 2003: 3, 5). It must be assumed that the total figure of resettled people includes those resettled on resettlement schemes on non-freehold land.

The total amount of land owned and utilised by previously disadvantaged Namibians in the freehold sector amounts to approximately 13 percent. This total is made up of land bought for resettlement as well as 66 farms which were bought prior to Independence to accommodate small scale farmers from non-freehold areas. In addition, 2,971,907 hectares of land were acquired under the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme. Table 2 below provides a summary.

Table 2: Total area of land owned/utilised by previously disadvantaged Namibians in the freehold sector, 2003

Year	Type of acquisition	No. of farms	Total area (ha.)
1990	Representative Authorities	181	980,260
2003	Resettlement (MLRR)	118	709,568
2003	Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (Agribank)	521	2,971,907
	TOTAL	820	4,661,735
	Total freehold area		36,000,000

Source: RoN (1991: 126); Pohamba (2003: 3); Agribank 2003

Evidence on the socio-economic impact of land redistribution of beneficiaries is contradictory. In 1999 it became clear that the results of resettlement had been disappointing in some instances. The Minister of Lands was quoted as saying that We had hoped resettlement would empower these categories to improve their livelihood, but alas, not so many of our resettled beneficiaries have changed for the better. Most of them have even degraded the land we have allocated to them (The Namibian 6.5.1999).

That some land reform beneficiaries experienced problems establishing themselves on allocated land was borne out by reports in 2000 that some settlers on two farms in Omaheke Region were leasing out their allocated land to communal farmers for as little as N\$ 200 per month. The former were described as cash strapped peasants with very limited means (The Namibian 17.5.2000).

There is reason to believe that access to credit continues to be a problem for some land reform beneficiaries, making it difficult for them to buy livestock and other means of production. In part this problem relates to a lack of resources in the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation to produce survey diagrams of allocations so that these can be registered in the Deeds Office. Very few lease agreements have been registered. Unless lease agreements are registered in the Deeds Office, settlers cannot use heir land as collateral for agricultural credit.

Against these disappointments, however, the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation reported recently that land reform beneficiaries had made substantial progress in improving their living conditions. The Minister of Lands stated in the

National Assembly that some resettled farmers who had very few livestock when settled had accumulated sufficient numbers to qualify for Affirmative Action loans administered by Agribank (Pohamba 2003: 4). This statement could not be independently verified.

Evidence on the impact of land redistribution on the environment is scattered and purely circumstantial. In the latter half of the 1990s suggestions were made that land was degraded by settlers, when the Minister of Lands was reported to have said in the National Assembly that most people resettled by Government had run their newly-acquired land into the ground. Because of that, resettlement was suspended during 1998 to allow the Ministry of Lands to revise certain aspects of the programme. After this internal revision, more emphasis was placed on providing professional services to beneficiaries and constant supervision, particularly on stock breeding and control so as to avoid overgrazing (The Namibian 6.5.1999).

It is not possible at this stage to speculate on the macro-economic impact of land redistribution. Baseline data on the productivity of commercial farms is notoriously difficult to obtain. It is thus not possible to compare current productivity levels with those prior to acquisition and redistribution. It is likely, however, that the settlement of small scale farmers has increased the output on some commercial farms, if it is borne in mind that many white commercial farmers are selling farms in order to retire. But no systematic analysis has been carried out to establish the costs and benefits of resettlement and the impact on overall agricultural production and output. It can be assumed, however, that the overall impact on the national economy has been slight, as the number of farms purchased to date amounts to less than 3 percent of the estimated 4,200 farming units in the country.

Budgetary impact is also insignificant. During the five year period 1995/96-2000/01 government provided N\$ 20 million annually for land purchases. For financial year 2003-2004 the budget for land acquisition was increased to N\$ 50 million. This amounts to barely 0.4 percent of the overall expenditure of N\$ 12.3 billion and to little more than 4 percent of the total development budget. Once again, this amount is not likely to have a major impact on the overall budget.

Farm workers

The impact of land redistribution on farm workers is likely to have been negative. Farm workers are widely regarded as the poorest employees in the country. The Commission of Inquiry into Labour-related Matters affecting Agricultural and Domestic

Employees concluded that they found themselves caught in a cycle of dependency and poverty (RoN 1997b; Werner 2001a). On a number of indicators such as access to acceptable housing, running water, sanitation, education and health services they were worse off than other employees. Of particular concern is the insecurity of tenure on farms, which, amongst other things, has led to unfair dismissals.

Towards the end of 2002 the insecurity of tenure of farm workers both on commercial farms and redistributed land was dramatically highlighted, when a commercial farmer in Omaheke Region obtained a court order to evict generational workers from his farm without an alternative place to accommodate these workers. This gave rise to the temporary occupation of the farm by SWAPO Youth League members and high level meetings to diffuse the situation. At the same time, the eviction of farm workers from farming units allocated to land reform beneficiaries by the MLRR was given considerable publicity. Protests about these actions was limited to the press, and no action was forthcoming from any quarter in support of farm workers rights on redistributed land.

Although no accurate data on evictions of farm workers from redistributed land is publicly available, it must be assumed that most farm workers on such land have lost access to employment and land without compensation (Werner 2001a; Werner 2002a). At present no integrated plan exists to accommodate farm labourers within the wider ambit of land reform and rural development. For as long as this is not in place, farm labourers are likely to be the losers of land reform. In a very profound sense, redistribution would alleviate poverty among those who were allocated land by increasing poverty levels among dismissed agricultural workers.

In response to the crisis on the commercial farm in Omaheke, the President instructed the Minister of Lands to secure tenure for farm workers along the lines recommended by the Commission of Inquiry into Labour-related Matters affecting Agricultural and Domestic Employees. A Committee chaired by the Minister of Lands was appointed to do the groundwork for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission (The Namibian 15.11.2002).

It is not clear whether the brief to the Minister of Lands and his committee included the lot of farm workers who lost and stand to lose access to employment and land a result of land redistribution. Suffice to say therefore, that the Commission had some very specific recommendations on the matter. Amongst other things it recommended that:

- Government consider agricultural employees as primary beneficiaries of the land reform policy, in order to break the cycle of poverty and dependency from which generational workers, in particular, suffer;
- Government allocate State-owned land to, or purchase freehold land for individual or groups of agricultural employees and their families;
- Government and agricultural banks consider granting loans to agricultural employees to buy into, and thereby jointly own, private land, on condition that employees obtain a minimum 50 percent share of such property; and
- Government consider purchasing privately-owned land in selected areas to be used for the resettlement of currently employed or retired agricultural employees and their dependants, and to be managed on an individual or collective basis (RoN 1997b: 228).

Dismissals of farm workers from redistributed land illustrates a particular dilemma of redistributive land reform. This dilemma is determined to a large extent by the fact that the land targeted for redistribution is of a marginal nature with limited scope for intensification. At present, the commercial farming sector employs on average one labourer and his dependents on 1,000 hectares of land. In terms of the recommendations of the Land Reform Advisory Commission, allocations of agricultural land should not be less than 1,000 hectares in the central and northern regions and at least 3,000 hectares in the more arid south. A rough calculation suggests that sustainable redistributive land reform will not necessarily put more people on the land than are currently employed in the commercial farming sector. While redistributive land reform along these lines will contribute towards greater equity in land ownership, its impact on poverty levels may be relatively small.

Communal land

Due to the recent approval of the Communal Land Reform Act, the impact of tenure reform on communal land administration has been insignificant. However, the Ministry of Lands has acted swiftly to establish Communal Land Boards, and at the time of writing these had been established in just about all regions. These Land Boards will play an important role in making land and resource tenure more secure in non-freehold areas and help to facilitate dispute resolution. More secure tenure, both in terms of customary allocations and leasehold, is likely to encourage investment in communal areas and thus bring about economic development.

Namibia's proposed Green Scheme is one recent example of how the prospect of leasehold in non-freehold areas has positively impacted on investment decisions.

4. STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Government has been consistently criticised for not redistributing land fast enough. The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation and other stakeholders have advanced several reasons for the delays. These include a perceived unwillingness of commercial farmers to offer quality land to the state, inflated land prices, the lack of a credited valuation institutions resulting in prolonged negotiations (RoN 2002a: 245) and the cumbersome provisions of the Commercial (Agricultural) Land Reform Act of 1995. It must be conceded that some or all of these factors have contributed towards the slow pace of redistribution. These impediments need to be investigated with a view to remove some of the obstacles in order to accelerate land delivery to beneficiaries.

However, despite these problems, the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation has far exceeded the targets set by the first National Development Plan (NDP 1) for land acquisition. During the NDP 1 period it purchased 450,000 ha. of freehold land or three times more than targeted (Werner 2002b: 6). Targets for land acquisition and resettlement are equally modest for NDP 2 (2001/2002-2005/2006). These commit the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation to buy at least 360,000 hectares of land and settle 180 families by 2006, i.e. 36 families per year for 5 years starting from 2001/02 (RoN 2002a: 247).

In view of the 243,000 Namibians (40,500 households) who are in need of land (RoN 2001b: 2) these targets do not seem high enough to reduce rising pressures for accelerated land redistribution. This must have been the assessment of Cabinet during its retreat in late 2000. In view not only of poverty levels in Namibia but also the unfolding situation Zimbabwe it decided that it was necessary to accelerate the acquisition and settlement of land considerably. It therefore decided that a minimum of 9,552,072 hectares of land should be acquired until 2005 (within 5 years of the retreat) for resettlement. At an average price of N\$ 250 per hectare this would require N\$ 1 billion. Cabinet expressed the hope that foreign partners would provide financial support (New Era 22.12.2000-12.1.2001). In order to accelerate land reform, additional options for land acquisition and allocation need to be explored without compromising the constitutional and legal framework governing land reform.

Optimising benefits by reducing the vulnerability of beneficiaries

Small holder farming is the preferred model for resettlement, as it allows the benefits of agriculture to be shared amongst large numbers of people in an equitable and sustainable way (RoN 1995b: 34). In addition, a substantial body of economic literature argues that small scale farms tend to be more productive than large farms. On the one hand labour on small scale farms consist mainly of family labour, thus reducing intensive supervision and transaction costs associated with hired labour (See Hansohm et al 1999: 9). On the other hand, small farmers are more efficient, because they have few livelihood alternatives but to exploit their own and families labour. (Maxwell and Wiebe 1998: 20). The transformation of large scale commercial farms into small scale units should, therefore, improve the productivity of freehold agricultural land in the medium to long term, in addition to impacting positively on a more equitable distribution of land.

The potential benefits of small scale farming are likely to be reduced unless a number of serious issues are addressed. Perhaps the most issue relates to vulnerability to drought of small scale commercial farmers. Drought is a permanent feature of agricultural production in Namibia. Evidence suggests that Southern Africa and Namibia are becoming progressively drier (Sweet 1998: 11). This implies that the risk of agricultural failure both in terms of cropping and livestock farming is high. Successful farming is thus crucially dependent on effective drought preparedness planning and responsive drought management.

Large scale commercial farmers on freehold land pursue several strategies to cope with drought. In general they are able to draw on greater reserves of capital during droughts than small scale communal farmers and have better access to markets and supplies, making it possible to sell and buy livestock and supplies quickly. They also find it easier to obtain credit to fund drought mitigating strategy on account of the fact that they have collateral. Apart from being better able to move livestock from one locality to another during localised droughts, commercial farmers able to maintain some surplus grazing through conservative stocking (Sweet 1998: 26-27).

By contrast, the traditional response of communal farmers to drought is to move animals to seasonal cattle posts. Buying fodder is an option that only wealthier farmers can afford. For several reasons, the selling of livestock in response to drought is not a common strategy particularly among smaller communal farmers (Ibid.: 25)

It is not known, however, how small scale resettlement farmers will respond to droughts. The sub-division of commercial ranches into small scale farming units is likely to create major challenges in terms of establishing appropriate support infrastructure. The management of small herds on fenced commercial farming units is likely to be difficult due to the uneven spatial distribution of rainfall and the unavailability of fall back areas in times of drought (Adams 2000: 3). It remains to be seen whether the size of allocated land units is sufficiently large to facilitate conservative stocking rates without jeopardising reasonable income expectations. Unless properly addressed, grazing pressures are likely to impact negatively on animals, pastures and the soils.

To reduce the vulnerability of land reform beneficiaries to drought, appropriate agricultural support services and long-term multi-level agricultural development planning is required (RoN 1995b: 13). This will be greatly facilitated by a better understanding of the characteristics of beneficiaries. Access to off-farm income streams will also have to be developed and strengthened.

Encouraging the sub-division of commercial farms

At present, the willing seller willing buyer principle is the main mechanism to improve access to agricultural land by previously disadvantaged people. It has been widely blamed for the slow progress in land delivery. Some of that blame must go to the provisions of the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, 195. These provisions were designed initially to facilitate transparency in the acquisition and allocation of land purchased by the state as well as the sustainable utilisation of such land once allocated through proper planning. A review of these provisions is called for to decrease the time between first offer of a farm and allocation without jeopardising proper planning and transparency.

In addition to the current mechanism of buying and allocating land, different options have to be explored to enable the landless to obtain land more swiftly. One option is to encourage prospective settlers to buy small portions of large commercial farms. The sub-division of commercial farms is still governed by the Sub-Division of Agricultural Land Act (No. 70 of 1970), which requires that the Minister of Agriculture has to give his consent before sub-division can take place. The latter must be satisfied that sub-division will not result in the creation of uneconomic units. In the 1980s an economic unit was defined as an area of land that could sustain at least 400 large stock units or 2,000 small stock (Adams and Werner 1990: 66). These

criteria reflected the income expectations of white farmers, but may not be appropriate for small scale farmers.

Since Independence, these criteria have been revised. Approval for sub-division is now granted for portions of land that can support at least 200 large stock units or 1,000 small stock units. However, these requirements are still higher than the criteria for resettlement, which determine that anybody with more than 150 large stock units or the equivalent in small stock should apply for an Affirmative Action Loan. The viability of relaxing criteria for sub-division even more to accommodate farmers with less than 150 large stock units or the small stock equivalent should be looked into. Appropriate financing mechanisms need to be developed by Agribank to enable people to obtain credit for the purchase of small commercial farming units. Moreover, this option should be open to part-time farmers.

On the one hand this option is likely to ease pressures on the state to provide small scale farming units at its own cost, by developing a framework that will encourage small scale farmers to buy their own land. On the other hand, large scale commercial farmers will have an opportunity to sell some of their land to private buyers without necessarily having to sell their entire farm.

Townlands

Approximately 350,000 hectares of land is registered in the name of municipalities. These areas are known as townlands and intended to provide for the future expansion of towns. Keetmanshoop has the largest townlands measuring 62,000 hectares followed by Gobabis and Windhoek with 48,290 and 47,812 hectares respectively (RoN 1991a: 124). To this must be added 160,000 hectares controlled by settlements such as Aranos, Kalkrand and Aus. The total area controlled by local authorities and settlements thus amounts to slightly less than the total amount of land bought by government. Most of this land is fairly well developed into grazing camps and stock watering points. It is leased to stock farmers for grazing on a tender basis (Ibid.: 123). Modalities to make this land available to previously disadvantaged Namibians on favourable terms should be investigated. This may provide the urban poor with some form of subsistence.

Decentralising land acquisition and resettlement

The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation has made some progress in decentralising resettlement. Regional Resettlement Committees consider

applications for land and forward their recommendations to the Ministry in Windhoek for approval. By definition this is time consuming. Modalities should be investigated to let Regional Resettlement Committees take final decisions, subject to a review of the Land Reform Advisory Commission (World Bank 2003a: 8).

The acquisition of land remains a highly centralised process. The Land Reform Advisory Commission which has to make recommendations to the Minister with regard to the purchase of land on the basis of land use plans prepared by the MLRR sits only in Windhoek. Decentralising land acquisition is likely to accelerate the process of acquiring land and allocating it to beneficiaries. It may also facilitate a better match between the available land and the needs and expectations of prospective settlers, and increased involvement of beneficiaries in planning and implementing their own resettlement. At present the MLRR provides whatever support is provided free of charge. Some resettlement projects even have project managers (World Bank 2003a: 7-8).

This option is only feasible if more resources are made available to the Ministry of Lands, both financial and technical. Planning capacity at regional level in particular needs support.

Settler selection and access to off-farm income

The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation estimates that 243,000 people are in need of resettlement. This figure includes people from overcrowded communal areas, ex-farm workers, unemployed and landless people (RoN 2002b: 2). Specific needs of these people are likely to span a wide spectrum ranging from wanting land to meet welfare needs to needing land for commercial purposes. Criteria for resettlement provide for all these categories.

Government came under harsh criticism towards the end of 2002, when it became known that some well paid people including senior civil servants were allocated land under the land reform programme. While these actions are incongruous with the emphasis on poverty alleviation, care should be taken not to reject the broad categories of beneficiaries set out in the National Resettlement Policy out of hand. To be sure, these include some not-so-poor people. The latter are likely to have access to off-farm resources that may assist them in building up their farms, but also to survive regular droughts. This will in turn free the Ministry of Lands from having to support people who are able to look after themselves and concentrate on those in need of financial and other technical support.

In order to do this, clear settler profiles are needed. This will enable the Ministry of Lands to tailor support packages specifically to those groups of beneficiaries listed in the National Resettlement Policy. Beneficiaries with the means to do so should use their own resources to develop and sustain their farming enterprises.

Financial support

Without operating capital, land reform beneficiaries are not likely to establish successful and productive farming enterprises. Government should consider introducing a settlement grant to get small-scale farmers off the ground. Depending on the category of beneficiaries, the payment of a settlement grant may be made conditional on a nominal contribution from settlers.

In the long run, however, settlers will need access to credit. This seems to be a serious problem at present. Reports surfaced in 2000 that some land reform beneficiaries on two farms in Omaheke were leasing out their land allocations to communal farmers for as little as N\$ 200 per month. Those leasing their land were reported to be cash strapped peasants with very limited means (The Namibian 17.5.2000).

However, access to credit is dependent on collateral. Section 42 of the Commercial (Agricultural) Land Reform Act provides for the registration of 99-year lease agreements in terms of the Deeds Registries Act, 1937 (Act 47 of 1937). However, this requires a diagram approved by the Surveyor-General, implying that every subdivided portion of a former commercial farm needs to be surveyed for the purposes of such a diagram. This process has been severely delayed by a lack of financial and human resources to carry out surveys. The result is that land reform beneficiaries are not able to raise credit on the strength of their land allocation. The requirements of the Deeds Registries Act as well as the survey legislation should be reassessed in order to explore ways to expedite the registration of commercial farms land. Considerable work has already been done for the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation in the urban context regarding alternative ways to define boundaries of land such as photogrammetry (See e.g. Alberts et al 1995; 1996; Christensen et al 1999).

Another option that could be explored is the possibility of extending the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme administered by Agribank to small groups of farmers. An appropriate credit contract would need to include a binding agreement to the principle of joint liability for the loan, a capital requirement similar to that applying to individual applicants, e.g. for the group to jointly own at least 150 large stock units

and an agreement that the group can lease or sell the land of a group member who is in arrears (World Bank 2003a: 7).

Joint venture partnerships

Mechanisms for the participation of farm workers as co-owners of land-based enterprises should be explored. Models such as equity share ownership schemes have already been established in high value niches in South Africa. This option would offer opportunities for previously disadvantaged Namibians and farm workers in particular, to participate more fully in their enterprises as co-owners. While this would increase their responsibilities, potential benefits are also likely to be higher. Individual farmers in the freehold sector have already started to explore ways to involve their workers more. In the communal areas, joint ventures in tourism are already in existence, offering rural communities much higher returns on their land than would otherwise be possible (D Haese et al 2002: 48-49; Werner 2002). These initiatives should be documented and supported both legally and financially.

Where joint ventures prove difficult to implement, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into labour Related Matters affecting Agricultural and Domestic Employees (RoN 1997b) should be implemented to improve tenure security on farms, both commercial and resettlement. Several ways to achieve this are being implemented in South Africa (See Werner 2002a). These should be critically assessed and applied in Namibia. This is a task that needs the support from farm owners/lessees, government, trade unions and NGOs.

Capacity building

Land reform beneficiaries often lack skills and experience to farm commercially. In an unpredictable environment such as Namibia, localised experience is frequently required to make a success of farming. In recent years, isolated groups of commercial farmers have begun to share their experiences and skills with commercialising farmers. Up to now these initiatives have been purely voluntary and driven by goodwill. As these efforts are competing for time with the work schedules of commercial farmers, it is not clear how long they can be sustained on this basis.

An assessment of current initiatives should be made to strengthen them and put them on a more sustainable footing. Issues that need to be looked at include skills levels among commercial farmers and their ability and availability to share them. These need to be matched with training needs of newly settled farmers. On the basis of these findings, a structured training programme should be worked out. Financial

support will be needed to provide for the logistics of such training as well as to compensate participating commercial farmers for their services at professional rates.

Monitoring and research

Efforts to accommodate larger numbers of people on agricultural land need to be strengthened by appropriate support systems. In order to do this effectively, research is necessary to better understand the nature of commercial small scale farming. Constant monitoring will enable organisations involved in supporting land reform beneficiaries to adapt their support strategies as and when required.

5. CONCLUSION

To date the Namibian government has sought to address the land question within the constitutional and legal framework of the country. Policies and legislation exists to guide land reform in the freehold and non-freehold areas. Having stuck to the provisions of this framework has contributed to a pace of land redistribution in particular that is widely perceived as being too slow. It is likely that pressure will increase on government to set aside the legal framework in the interest of accelerated land redistribution. These pressures can only be contained by accelerating land redistribution. In order to do this, more resources need to be made available to the MLRR, both financially and in terms of technical capacity. Budgetary provisions for land purchases do not always reflect the importance of land redistribution. Alternatives need to be explored to augment exiting efforts to broaden access to freehold land. Efforts already underway to build human capacity through training need to be supported. The Technical Task Force appointed recently is likely to come up with recommendations on how the process can be improved in future.

While land redistribution has been the priority of government since Independence, tenure issues in the non-freehold areas will be addressed more seriously now that the Communal Land Reform Act is in place. However, its implementation will require additional resources. A new institutional framework needs to be created which in turn requires trained personnel.

It is important to emphasise that there are no ready made and fail safe solutions for the problems and difficulties encountered in the implementation of redistributive land and tenure reform. The viability of different options needs to be tested in the form of pilot programmes. Successful land reform is an iterative process. Constant monitoring and evaluation of different options is necessary to make adjustments where these are called for.

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