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Centre for Conflict Management  
and Transformation



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## Challenges to Social Service Delivery in Zimbabwe's Resettlement Areas



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Challenges to Social Services Delivery in Resettlement Areas Report

**To request a copy please contact:**

Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation  
28 Oxford Avenue, Newlands  
P.O. Box A1755, Avondale  
Harare, Zimbabwe

**Tel:** + 263 4 746016, 776784 **Email:** [info@ccmt.co.zw](mailto:info@ccmt.co.zw)

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# Abstract

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This paper outlines challenges to the provision of basic social services in resettlement areas in Zimbabwe, particularly adequate health facilities and schools. The paper discusses the process of resettlement, which took place rapidly and with little planning. Research was conducted in Midlands province in Vungu and Tongogara districts, in Kushinga, Lukhuluba and Zhaugwe wards. Data was collected through individual interviews, consultations and focus group discussions. Research findings explore the dynamics of the new settlements and how political and ethnic cleavages have contributed to the challenges of social service delivery. Schools in these communities are in very poor condition, and health facilities are dangerously distant. Community members must walk long distances to and from schools and clinics. Conflicts therefore arise often in the competition for and use of these services. In summing up these challenges, the paper highlights the conflict potential of the failure of service provision in the fragile and polarized communities living in resettlement areas. The goal of this analysis is to assist district authorities, line ministries and others working in resettlement areas to ameliorate the shortcomings in social service delivery and promote the wellbeing of resettled communities.



# Preface

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This paper's findings are based on the work of the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT), whose work seeks to help communities and government in constructively dealing with conflicts. CCMT has ongoing interventions in Tongogara and Vungu districts in Midlands Province, with the main focus on Zhaugwe, Kushinga and Lukhuluba resettlement areas. The analysis critically examines the challenges to social service delivery and the impact these challenges have on development.

Data was gathered through interviews and desk researches and dialogue meetings done by the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation.

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# Introduction



The aim of this research paper is to identify and analyse challenges to the provision of basic social services and to highlight the conflict potential of the developmental agenda in the resettlement areas in Zimbabwe. In particular, the paper seeks to assist and enable district authorities, line ministries and other agencies to ameliorate the shortcomings in social service delivery and promote the wellbeing of resettled communities.

The paper uses case studies from Vungu and Tongogara districts in Midlands province.

“the paper seeks to assist and enable district authorities”

The paper draws on interviews, focus group discussions and dialogue meetings with members of these communities to examine the root causes of the severe shortcomings in social service provision in Zimbabwe's resettlement areas.

## Background

The Zimbabwean government launched the Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR) in 2000. Unplanned occupations had started towards the beginning of that year, led by the country's liberation war veterans.



Government authorities then sought to organise and rationalise the newly formed and unplanned settlements. The chaotic process of resettlement made this difficult. Many people resettled in areas where there were no basic social services like water and sanitation facilities, educational facilities or even roads. Since then, resettlement areas have seen little improvement in social service delivery. People have continued to settle in these areas despite the absence of basic social services and challenges to the legality of the land reform process, including a judgment by the regional SADC Tribunal.

The land occupations of 2000 were a turning point in Zimbabwe's history, with far reaching impacts on the social, political and economic landscape of the country. Thousands of Zimbabweans have sought to improve their livelihoods by moving their families to resettlement plots on former commercial farms. More than a decade after the initial land occupations, a great deal has been written on the issue of land reform by academics, professionals, religious groups and NGOs. Many have written about the contestations over land, human rights violations on the farms, land tenure systems and the impact of the land reform process

on the economy of the country.<sup>1</sup> Few studies have sought to understand the daily realities of people who dwell in these areas, however. These complex and nuanced dynamics can only be understood with reference to the realities on the ground.

This research does not address the politics or legality of resettlement. Rather, it explores the daily realities of people living in resettlement areas, identifies challenges and the conflict potential inherent in these challenges. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations for government, local authorities and NGOs to address social service delivery challenges being faced in resettlement areas.

## Research problem

Social service delivery is one of the core mandates of local authorities in Zimbabwe. Hospitals and clinics, schools, clean water and sanitation make up the minimum infrastructure expected of any human settlement. During Zimbabwe's economic crisis local authorities and government have been assisted in providing these services by NGOs, foreign governments and religious groups. For the past fourteen years much attention has been channelled towards "the land question" (the legality of

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<sup>1</sup> Eg, Ian Scoones, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities*, (James Currey: 2010); Sam Moyo, *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White Settler Capitalism*, (CODESRIA: 2013), Human Rights Watch, *Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, (Human Rights Watch: 2002).



the settlements, the issue of offer letters and models of settlements). Government, academics and donors have neglected the imperative to provide basic infrastructure to the increasing population in resettlement areas<sup>2</sup>.

It is established practice in rural Zimbabwe that much basic infrastructure is built with the help of the community, mobilised by traditional leaders. Technical expertise is provided by the central government through departments like Physical Planning, Public Works as well as local authorities such as the Lands Committee. However in resettlement areas people face challenges including lack of community cohesion, lack of central planning, and the absence of basic infrastructure such as roads. Attempts to redress developmental shortcomings have led to conflicts in resettlement areas that have often been construed as political conflicts. Pursuing development projects without addressing the root causes of the challenges is likely to exacerbate conflicts. Development must therefore be pursued in a way that does not increase the conflict potential within these areas.

## Research objectives

The primary goal for this study is to understand challenges to development in resettlement areas in Zimbabwe. A search of the literature has yielded few or no studies that have explored these challenges, although land reform has been a topical issue in the country since 2000<sup>3</sup>. The second motivation is to provide government, local authorities and NGOs with empirical data on the conflict potential of the development agenda in resettlement areas.

## Research questions:

1. What is the current state of social service delivery in resettlement areas?
2. What are the major challenges being faced by (a) community members and their leadership (b) local authorities (c) central government in ensuring basic social service delivery in resettlement areas and how can they be addressed?
3. What is the conflict potential of these challenges in resettlement areas as raised by community members?

<sup>2</sup>There are about 150 000 families (about 750 000 people) living in resettlement areas and a satellite school can have as many as 450 children and medical care is through mobile clinics.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Alois Mlambo, "From Education and Health for All by 2000 to the Collapse of the Social Services Sector in Zimbabwe, 1980–2008," *Journal of Developing Societies*, 2013, vol. 29, 355.



# Methodology



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“Resource conflicts involve the full range of community authorities, sector ministries and service providers”

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## Research site

CCMT's work in Midlands province identified resource conflicts as common in the region, particularly in resettlement areas. CCMT's research sought to understand the underlying causes of these conflicts and how communities respond to such challenges. Resource conflicts involve the full range of community authorities, sector ministries and service providers.

CCMT was initially invited to intervene in conflicts relating to primary and secondary schools in Vungu and Tongogara resettlement areas. Tongogara and Vungu are part of the eight districts in Midlands province, close to the provincial capital Gweru. Vungu District, formerly known as Gweru Rural, is predominantly comprised of newly formed resettlement areas occupied during the FTLR. The population of the area is mainly supported by agricultural initiatives, as there is little other economic activity.

A large part of Tongogara District is also resettled farmland, with the communities involved in farming for subsistence. Unlike Vungu, however, there is a wider range of



economic activities as the area includes the mining town of Shurugwi. As a result most of the youth in the area are involved in gold panning and small-scale chrome mining.

CCMT conducted research in three case study resettlement areas - Kushinga and Lukhuluba in Ward 18 of Vungu District, and Zhaugwe in Ward 18 of Tongogara District.

### Data collection

The study used qualitative research methods. Data was gathered from forty key informant interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviewed people included staff from Vungu Rural District Council,

councillors in the Social Services committee, the District Administrator, Department of Physical Planning, Ministry of Education as well as members from the District Land Committee and twenty community members. In Tongogara data was gathered from the District Administration, the Lands Committee and the social services department at the Council. Data was collected from community members through focus group discussions and interviews. Documentary evidence such as official government correspondence, policy papers, maps and court judgments were also examined.



*"Few studies have sought to understand the daily realities of people who dwell in resettled areas, however. These complex and nuanced dynamics can only be understood with reference to the realities on the ground."*

# Findings



## The dynamics within the new settlements

In resettlement areas there is less community cohesion than in more established communities. New inhabitants have not had time to come together and form the community bonds commonly found in many communal areas. Resettlement areas are inhabited by people of different cultures, beliefs, values and general way of life. People came from different parts of the country to settle in an area where they felt the land would better support them. People do not trust their new neighbours as trust takes time to build. Mistrust can escalate into a fight

for control of resources as community members seek access to and control over economic resources and services. Such conflicts may then assume political or ethnic dimensions.

CCMT's research found that many issues in resettlement areas are perceived through a political and ethnic lens. In Vungu District, resettlement communities comprise different ethnic groups, including Ndebele, Karanga and Shona. These various people perceive each other as distinct groups and sometimes regard each other as a threat. In Kushinga there



are tensions between the Karanga from Zaka and the people from Shurugwi. In interviews with CCMT staff, people from Shurugwi have accused those from Zaka of being involved in witchcraft. In Lukhuluba, one respondent involved in a conflict over the allocation of a school site claimed that he is being removed and persecuted for being a Shona in a Ndebele dominated settlement. Interestingly though, the Ndebele inhabitants of that area do not identify their conflict with the Shona inhabitants as an ethnic conflict, but rather a resource conflict. They claim that the community member in question claims exclusive use of former farm boreholes and a farmhouse block, which could be used by the community as a classroom block.

Resettlement areas are highly politicised. Although inhabitants are largely aligned with ZANU (PF), political tensions and conflicts are rife. The privileges and power of leadership in the political structures in the resettlement areas allows leaders to protect his/her own interests and those of his group in this very uncertain landscape. As a result, positions within the political leadership are hotly contested and lead to deep division within the resettlement areas.

Some resettlement communities have received external resources and support for provision of services like schools and health facilities but divisions in the community have impeded development. In Kushinga, the community is

divided over the siting of a secondary school. The community has gone for more than 10 years without having a secondary school built in the area, despite a grant for construction from UNICEF through the Ministry of Education. As a result, secondary level children continue to use the primary school premises. In order to sit for examinations, secondary students were travelling fifteen kilometres to the nearest secondary school, as the primary school did not have an examination centre for the secondary school students.

In Zhaugwe children use an old farmhouse for their learning. The building is dilapidated. Different grades exchange the use of a single room as classroom. Snakes and owls are sometimes seen in these rooms, endangering and distracting the children. Teachers do not have sufficient housing. In Zhaugwe, eight teachers are using one house with three rooms, with both males and females sharing the same facilities like toilets.

These difficult conditions lead to conflicts between community members and the school authorities. Community members have confronted the school authorities, citing lack of development at the school. School authorities in turn argue that the community itself is failing to mobilise resources for the development of the school. In Zhaugwe, a school block was started



with the support of the District Development Fund in 2006. The community failed to complete the construction, which is still lying idle and beginning to disintegrate. Meanwhile, the satellite school in Zhaugwe has had a zero percent pass rate for the past three years.

The absence of secure land tenure is an additional factor that militates against development and the delivery of services. Community members are not sure how long they will be allowed to stay in these areas, as they do not have title deeds to their plots. Authorities from the Lands Ministry confirmed that resettled farmers hold only offer letters and not title deeds. Offer letters are the confirmation of settlement stating that government has agreed to permit an individual to use and occupy a certain plot. However offer letters do not specify the time frame and conditions that apply to the occupation of land. Plot holders are instructed not to build permanent structures on the land. Weak tenure rights reinforce resettled community members' sense that they owe political allegiance to the ZANU (PF) party.

The threat of sudden removal also discourages resettlement communities from investing in community infrastructure, as in the case of the failure to complete the Zhaugwe school block described above.

## Common social service delivery challenges in resettlement areas

Compared to communal areas<sup>4</sup>, resettlement areas are less developed for a number of reasons. Most commercial farms had little social service infrastructure when resettlement took place. Some infrastructure is no longer functional as it was vandalised during the land invasions. The viability of infrastructure also depends on the community's ability to maintain it. In the following section, this research report examines challenges to the delivery of schools, health facilities and water in resettlement areas and demonstrates the conflict potential of these challenges.

## Construction and maintenance of schools

Most resettlement areas in Zimbabwe have little if any schools infrastructure. Satellite schools have been established in old farmhouses and tobacco barns without basic materials like benches and tables. The buildings are dilapidated and have often not been maintained since they were converted to classroom use. Communities struggle to find qualified teaching staff. The average primary school pass rate for schools in Tongogara resettlement areas has been less than three percent for the past three years, while for the communal areas in the same district it has been over thirty per cent.

<sup>4</sup> Zimbabwe's communal areas are where the majority of black Zimbabwean farmers reside and practice agriculture for subsistence purposes. Sometimes they produce excess crops and livestock products for sale. A notable feature of communal areas is that the inhabitants do not possess title to the land. The land is communally owned and allocated to families for arable farming and settlement. Historically, allocation of arable land in the communal areas was the responsibility of the chiefs. After the independence in 1980 this responsibility was given to locally elected district councils.



<sup>5</sup>The Zimbabwean government has set as a national objective to reduce the distance to schools to 3 km. However in resettlement areas primary schools are placed at distances reaching as much as 15 km for primary schools, as described by one female respondent: *“There is no school closely in the area and the children end up travelling more than 15 kilometres to school. We have travelled a lot engaging the district and provincial leadership requesting for us to have a school but nothing has materialised as yet.”*

Communities in Zhaugwe have no choice but to use satellite schools even though their wish is to have a fully-fledged school for the children. They cannot construct new buildings or complete half built structures for the school facilities as they lack funds to purchase cement, doorframes and windows. In Lukhuluba, one shed being used as a classroom is shared by up to five different grades, making the teaching environment an impediment to learning.

In some areas it is unclear to both community members and leadership who is responsible for the provision of educational services in resettlement areas. There are conflicts between the District Council, the Education ministry and the community over the provision of primary and secondary education. The

Education ministry, represented at district level by the District Education Officer, places responsibility with the District Council. The Council in turn argues that their only responsibility lies in providing the basic infrastructure, and that the community itself is largely responsible for providing the necessary materials. Council by-laws typically mandate that for local development projects the community should provide the locally available resources like moulded bricks and labour. The community should also be consulted and approve proposed development projects. According to one of the community leaders interviewed in Tongogara, such consultation and approval has not taken place as people are unable to agree on developmental priorities. Questions of leadership and legitimacy have left resettled communities without a unified development vision. As a result, even where central government or other bodies provide development assistance, implementation frequently encounters challenges. Before such assistance can be effective, communities must be supported in addressing these leadership and legitimacy challenges.

### Health facilities

As is the case with schools, resettlement areas face a shortage of health facilities like clinics and

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<sup>5</sup> Zimbabwe National Strategic Plan for the Education of Girls, Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2005-2010, Specific Objectives No.3. Available online through kubatana.net at [http://www.kubatana.net/docs/chiyou/unicef\\_zim\\_national\\_strategic\\_plan\\_0610.pdf](http://www.kubatana.net/docs/chiyou/unicef_zim_national_strategic_plan_0610.pdf)



maternal centres. In some communities people have to walk as far as 25km to access the nearest medical centre, as no commercial or public transport is available. Prior to resettlement, commercial farmers usually maintained roads that serviced the farms, and often provided transport to those in medical need. Since resettlement, this gap in service provision has remained unfilled. As a result, some women have given birth on the way to the clinics, while others are said to have died along the way. In some cases, local authorities have provided mobile clinics, which focus on vaccinating children under five. Mobile clinics cannot service the whole community, however, because of shortages of staff and limited funding. Those receiving anti-retroviral treatment may walk even longer distances to receive the medical support they need. In Zhaugwe people have to walk as much as 20km to reach the nearest clinic to access health facilities at the ward centre where they receive anti-retroviral treatment. District authorities interviewed also confirmed that some people from the most distant areas sometimes do not come to get their drugs, making their health situation even worse.

One respondent stated *"We have a clinic in Somabula which is very far and not well resourced, but we also have a mobile clinic*

*which visits us at different intervals, this mobile clinic however only caters for the young ones. Sometimes people die on their way to the clinic because the distance is very long."* Another respondent who is a leader of a village said that *"... the closest clinic is 19km away, and is just a baby clinic. A number of deaths have been recorded of people dying while they are on their way to Gweru where the closest hospitals are found."* The acute shortage of facilities also means that existing facilities are oversubscribed.

### **Access to safe and clean water and sanitation**

Resettlement areas face a big challenge in the provision of water for human consumption and also for consumption by livestock. Water shortages are an inevitable result of rapid, unplanned settlement. Many former commercial farms in Midlands Province do not have rivers or safe accessible water sources, except where there are dams. Prior to the resettlement, commercial farms mostly accessed potable water from borehole systems that are no longer maintained because of the cost associated with regular servicing. It is also alleged that some farmers sabotaged infrastructure as they left their farms.



Potable water is an especially acute challenge for schools. One respondent said that *“at our school water runs out in the last half of the year and this makes it difficult for children to come to school when there is no water.”* In Zhaugwe, water shortages are common, with the communities failing to repair the boreholes because of protracted conflicts over administration and the legitimacy of the farm committee. Children have been forced to return home because a school cannot safely operate without water.

In some resettlement areas, settlers have illegally monopolised water sources situated on or close

to their allocated plots and have refused to share with the rest of the community. In Lukhuluba there is a borehole next to the school but school children and teachers are not able to access water, as the adjacent plot holder has privatised the water source. Teachers end up walking a long distance in search of water each day before the school starts. As a result, during the dry season community members walk 5 km in search of the nearest water point when they could easily access water from a nearby homestead. Such water difficulties greatly increase the risk of serious medical outcomes such as cholera.



*“There is no school closely in the area and the children end up travelling more than 15 kilometres to school. We have travelled a lot engaging the district and provincial leadership requesting for us to have a school but nothing has materialised as yet.”*



# Governance challenges in resettlement areas



## **Absence of a clear governance and leadership hierarchy**

Resettlement areas face a crisis of leadership. Community and district leaders have conflicting views as to who has responsibility for which administrative areas in the governance of the resettlement areas. One community member in the Kushinga resettlement area described the lack of common understanding: “Resettlement areas came under the government policy on land reform, however there are challenges in administering the areas particularly because we are not clear who is responsible for

managing our areas, the local authority, the government or the Lands committee”.

The responsibilities of each institution are not clear to the community members. This has made it difficult for the communities to know where to go or who to ask when they have a challenge or are in need of basic services.

Respondents from Zhaugwe understood the responsible authority for their area to be the Lands Committee, which is chaired by the District Administrator. Community members



feel compelled to approach the office of the District Administrator whenever they have a challenge, despite the fact that many issues fall under the Rural District Council. On the same note, 50% of the respondents from Vungu resettlement areas felt that it is the responsibility of the Council to provide basic services, while another 50% believed that this responsibility lies with the government through the District Administrator's office. The widespread confusion about responsibilities makes it difficult for resettlement communities to organise themselves to demand provision of basic social services.

Moreover it is not clear who is responsible for the leadership of the communities in resettlement areas. When the fast track land reform programme began, government appointed caretaker community leaders to safeguard resources in resettlement areas, including the farmhouses<sup>6</sup>. Boreholes, agricultural equipment and other resources were to be treated as community resources. These caretakers were combined into a "Committee of Seven" responsible for each farm. These Committees can be highly influential and powerful both politically and administratively. In some areas, Committee of Seven members have used their position to advance their own individual interests or

those of a particular group to which they are aligned. The same community has for two years failed to repair a borehole constructed for them by Council because of the perceived illegitimacy of one leader whom they accuse of being forced on them and having overstayed in power.

A 2003 directive issued by the Government of Zimbabwe sought to place resettlement areas under the jurisdiction of traditional chiefs and headmen. However both Vungu and Tongogara resettlement areas are still governed by Committees of Seven. Respondents stated that these Committees have become powerful and now regard themselves as traditional leaders: "...and now these people don't want to relinquish the positions for others, they are now acting as owners of these resources and not as custodians." Most committee members are war veterans who are feared within the communities. In Lukhuluba, some of the committee members have gone on to claim infrastructure designated for social service facilities - farm houses, dip tanks and feeding pens - for their own personalised use.

As a result, development in resettlement areas has been impeded by conflicts of interest between the personal interests of

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<sup>6</sup> These caretaker leaders were typically "war veterans." Although their appointment was informal and not provided for by statute, these leaders were nonetheless recognised by the formal structures of the District Administrator and Rural District Council.



leadership and the needs of the community. CCMT's research indicates that, as is so often the case, children, women and sick people bear the brunt of such conflicts, deprived of schools, potable water and clinics.

### **Tensions between political party structures and local government structures**

Residents of resettlement areas are vulnerable to the effects of political patronage, as suggested above. ZANU (PF)'s political party structures are present in resettlement communities. In communal areas, Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOs) are charged with developing their communities, and are supposed to do so without regard to party politics. However, from their inception VIDCOs and WADCOs have had strong partisan ties, including appointment of representatives of ZANU (PF)'s youth and women leagues<sup>7</sup>. In resettlement areas, the Committee of Seven, also known as the Farm Committee, has taken up the governance and development role of the VIDCO<sup>8</sup>. However, according to the law, the village head chairs the VIDCO. The exclusion of the village head from the Committee therefore results in further confusion and conflict.

In Kushinga, the site of a new school chosen by the councillor and village head together with other community members was rejected by political leaders including war veterans and members of the ruling party. The village head alleged that he was beaten by community members during the 2008 election campaign because of his position on the school siting issue.

### **Insufficient planning of the areas**

When the land reform process began there was no Ministry dedicated to land allocation, nor were adequate resources allocated to provide infrastructure for such a large resettlement. Plot demarcations were carried out by personnel from Agriculture and Rural Extension (AREX) and the District Development Fund who did not have technical expertise in physical planning. Fast tracked land allocation gave little consideration to subdivision that would ensure community access to existing infrastructure.

### **Government effort towards service delivery**

People in resettlement areas feel that the government at both central and local level does not prioritise their needs in the same

<sup>7</sup> Makumbe, John. *Democracy and Development in Zimbabwe: Constraints of Decentralisation*, SAPES Trust: 1998, p. 29. For further discussion of the partisan dominance of rural local governance see Muzondidya, James (200) "From Buoyancy to Crisis, 1980-1997" in Raftopoulos, Brian and Mlambo, Alois (eds.) *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008*, p.178

<sup>8</sup> Traditional Leaders Act, Section 17.



way they do the needs of residents of the communal areas. One farm leader in Vungu said, "We had a councillor who rarely came to our area. The most frequent time they came was probably twice a year towards election time. As such we feel that our issues were not represented to the councils and other service providers. They promised to deal with our schools issue but they never came back. Now that we have a new councillor, we anticipate to see a positive change and we don't expect the new councillor to behave like the outgoing councillor." Resettlement community members blame councillors and the other political leaders for furthering their personal interests at the expense of the community. One respondent mentioned that in their community the only help they received from the politicians and local authority was when there was drought and they brought bags of maize and beans because it was towards election time.

In Lukhuluba, respondents felt that the government has not fulfilled their most pressing needs, including a school: "They have not provided us with a school, we have asked them to demarcate a school site for us to start building but nothing has been done so far. Someone came and invaded the place and the local authority is not doing much to remove that person from the area."

Furthermore community members feel that local authorities are not providing responses to their requests so that they are unaware of any progress or plans. They bemoan this poor communication and lack of feedback as a source of many conflicts within their communities. Given the declining economic status of the country and the failure of local authorities to access funds for development, communities need to know what the responsible authority is doing to address their needs. One community leader responded "We have asked for market places but the government failed to respond, we asked them to remove the illegal farmer and they did not again. It looks like the local authority and the government do not seriously consider our plights and they do not even communicate".

Some respondents blamed the government's failure to support their areas not only on lack of concern but also on corruption and mismanagement of resources. "Looking at the reality, the government only provided cement for the blackboards in the classrooms, however the cement was not enough, and when we went to enquire, they said they had provided enough cement but the community did not receive it. It therefore means that the officials diverted it for their personal needs. We feel powerless to challenge these officials because we might be victimised." Communities feel



that their funds are being embezzled and they are powerless to challenge the status quo, as they are afraid taking up their issues might mean their removal from the areas.

Community members do recognise local government for some initial efforts to bring community cohesion. Some respondents acknowledged that local government officials have at times tried to bring people together so they can work together improve their communities but it is the people who resist. The people are so deeply involved with their internal conflicts that sometimes they cannot cooperate to take full advantage of development projects. As described above, the Kushinga resettlement community received cement, doorframes and window frames from the Ministry of Education through the council for the construction of the school. Yet the community failed to build the school as members are in conflict over the siting of the school.

Resettlement community members are also at times accused of failing to contribute to the development of their community. Community members resist paying their taxes and levies. One council official argued that they cannot attend to a community that does not even contribute anything to a council. One village chairperson stated “The council tells us to

pay our rates so that we receive treatment for our livestock but people resist, at the end it is us who suffer.” From this perspective then, communities themselves are also liable for the lack of development by refusing to cooperate with the government authorities.

### **Community development initiatives**

Communities are often able to mobilise resources and coordinate themselves to improve their own wellbeing, and resettlement areas are no exception. In some cases, community members have devoted their scarce resources to community projects. This includes individual initiatives like brick moulding for the construction of a school and community groups repairing roads and bridges that lead to schools and clinics. Community members in Kushinga area cited some initiatives by individual farmers in the area who used their own resources to repair and maintain the major road and boreholes. These efforts could not be sustained, however, due to limited support from the wider community. Resettlement communities experience endemic conflict, with the result that they typically have low morale and limited community cohesion, undermining support for development initiatives. In the aftermath of such failed initiatives, community members



accuse each other of destroying infrastructure that others have worked to maintain.

In Zhaugwe, respondents indicated that it is difficult to mobilise the community to support a community project because “the people are not united;” they support different leaders, who are in conflict. As a result community members who support one leader do not attend meetings convened by another. Factions openly denounce one another.

### **External service provision initiatives in resettlement areas**

There has been limited support to resettlement areas from civil society and the public sector. Resettlement respondents gave a variety of explanations for why NGOs were not more involved in resettlement areas. Many respondents felt that it was NGO policy to stay out of resettlement areas. Others attributed the absence of NGO initiatives to poor road networks. However some felt that the government has not done enough to convince NGOs to work in the resettlement areas.

Community members attributed NGO reluctance to work in resettlement areas to the perception that the land reform exercise was not properly planned, such that NGOs cannot channel funds to areas whose legal status is being challenged. Some respondents felt that resettlement areas are highly politicised zones that are difficult for NGOs to enter. Some district and political leaders are unwilling to permit any NGO work in resettlement areas, diverting NGOs to areas where there are fewer challenges. One respondent felt that “encouraging NGO support to resettlement areas should be a priority for both government and donors as this could help in improving service delivery in these communities.” This approach would go a long way to mitigate the dire state of basic service delivery in resettlement areas. However, without significant efforts to ameliorate the structural conditions that generate conflict in resettlement areas, development initiatives continue to risk aggravating existing divisions and resentments.



# Conclusions

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The complex political and social dynamics of Zimbabwe's resettlement areas present severe challenges to the delivery of essential social services, which in turn produces conflict amongst the residents of these areas.

1. There is an urgent need for development initiatives to improve service delivery in resettlement areas. However, it is equally imperative to ensure that developmental initiatives do not exacerbate divisions in the community and contribute to violent conflicts.
2. The failure to clearly delineate leadership roles in resettlement areas perpetuates competition between parallel leadership structures – traditional, official and unofficial – dividing resettlement communities into factions competing for dominance and legitimacy.
3. Government departments have not clearly established and communicated their responsibilities in the development of resettlement areas. Communities are uncertain which offices to approach for which issues, resulting in an uncoordinated approach to development initiatives.
4. Local government authorities do not effectively communicate with resettlement communities, particularly with respect to development plans.
5. Individual plots in resettlement areas have not been clearly and reliably demarcated.
6. Ownership over existing infrastructure in resettlement areas has not been clearly established, resulting in conflict and impeding social service delivery.
7. Resettlement community members do not have secure tenure over their plots, diminishing their investment in community cohesion and development.



# Recommendations to Government:



- Invest in hard infrastructure including schools, Water Sanitation and Hygiene facilities and health centres.
- Support local economic development initiatives.
- Clarify and provide for secure tenure for resettlement farmers.
- Make available planning documents for resettled farms.
- Revive and strengthen Rural District Development Committees to support sharing of development ideas between relevant government departments, Rural District Council and traditional leadership.



# Recommendations to Civil Society

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- Build the capacity of local leaders in resettlement areas – council, government and traditional - in community development work.
- Encourage the participation of full range of local leadership in development initiatives in order to foster community cohesion given ethnic and political diversity of resettlement communities.
- Prioritise development of social service delivery in resettlement areas and recognise that development initiatives in resettlement areas require particular care not to exacerbate existing conflicts over social service delivery. Without such care, development initiatives have the potential to trigger dormant conflicts in fragmented resettlement communities.





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