

RESEARCH Report 51

Zimbabwe's new land crisis: Large-scale land investments at Chisumbanje

Prosper Matondi and Clemence Nhliziyo



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Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
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Acronyms

AU	African Union
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Authority
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
DEPIC	District Ethanol Production Committee
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
FEPA	Federation of European Philatelic Associations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GNU	Government of National Unity
KASA	Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Sudliches Afrika
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MoAMID	Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development
MLRR	Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PYD	Platform for Youth Development
RDC	Rural District Council
SOLIFONDS	Solidarity Fund for Social Liberation Struggles in the Third World
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TILCOR	Tribal land Development Corporation
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
VIMBO	Vendor Induced Management Buyout

Introduction

Purpose and objectives

Zimbabwe's investments in agriculture, after a contested Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) underpinned by often violent land occupations (these were largely contained by the state by 2005), have triggered a debate on the meaning and import of 'international land grabs' (Matondi 2015). Internationally, the debates have been increasing, with the drive towards the cultivation of feedstock for the production of renewable fuel being one driving force. The mandatory blending of bio-fuels in national fuel stocks has been accepted and today 62 countries have introduced mandatory blending, with South Africa introducing a target of 2% blending in October 2014. It is in respect of the emerging trends that we sought to decipher the meaning of 'land grabs', 'international land grabs' and 'agricultural investments' as these mean different things in different contexts. A key observa-

tion that provides contrarian analysis is the material fact that the FTLRP was an 'internal', instigated and implemented programme that does not conform to externally driven 'land grabs' of an international nature. Based on this differentiation, this paper sought to understand: 1) the interest and role of the Zimbabwe government and its contribution to the first large-scale private investments undertaken by GreenFuel in Chisumbanje; 2) the impact of the project on local communities' land rights and livelihoods; 3) the role of the local institutions, be they technical or administrative in facilitating and mediating investment, particularly on land; 4) the capacity of local and national institutions to structure a land agreement palatable to the local communities; and 5) the role of GreenFuel as the land users.

In order to answer these broad questions, fieldwork at the local level in Chisumbanje was

Map 1: Location of Chisumbanje



key in interfacing with the different actors on the land issue, by understanding what roles they were playing. We commenced with the premise that the community of Chipinge District, (see Map 1) in which Chisumbanje is located, has a rich history of contestations over land, and has been affected by forced land transfers and dispossession numerous times during the colonial era, from 1923 when the first Sabi-Lundi Master Plan was designed, until it was fully operationalised with the setting of the experimental station in the middle of the 1960s. In addition, Chiefs in the area, based on customary systems, have moved people to create new villages and open new lands, while local authorities (in colonial times District Administrators and today Rural District Councils) also transferred land for new business centres and a variety of development projects. However, in the large-scale commercial farming sector, land changed hands through market means (willing seller–willing buyer), yet with customary systems the Tribal Land Development Corporation (TILCOR), now the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA), became a major player in the development of the now communal land taking over the Sabi-Lundi Master Plan, in areas where most communal land is found.

The meaning of this history is that communities have endured decades of land transfers that span over 100 years, thus defining Chipinge as a site of struggle by a variety of interest groups. It is in this context that the GreenFuel investments cannot just be seen as an expression of land ownership and use, but rather as the whole genre of economic development and the path that agriculture needs to take into the future. Interrogating the role of government as a land authority, as well as its capacity to work with local communities and GreenFuel, was a key aspect of this research work. Nonetheless, government functionaries with a long history in the area – in the form of ARDA – shaped our understandings of modernisation and development, as a colonial construct of the 1960s, in particular when both the Rhodesian colonial government and Government of Zimbabwe strategically sought to substitute for fuel imports by producing ethanol domestically from 1972 to 1992. The land crisis goes back all the way to this period.

Framing the key questions and issues

In order to understand land issues in Chisumbanje, three conceptual approaches have been adopted for the study:

- 1) Land governance analysis: This approach focuses on the effectiveness of the state and private sector in managing land as a contested policy process, and on how strategies and programmes either solve land problems or accentuate them. As investment decisions are formulated, a key question is the extent to which communities with rights to land are or are not part and parcel of the project design, and how they are affected as the project expanded from its initial design. For the project to take root, the key production factors were, of course, land and water. We assessed the decision making and governmental systems and processes at play in mediating issues that arose. The Chisumbanje Ethanol Project managed to build comprehensive processes of stakeholder engagement, in which those directly affected as well as other interested parties were involved, but to differing degrees. When working in local communities, it is paramount to take on board the views of minorities and the voices of the most vulnerable in society before making decisions.
- 2) Power analysis: The framework also adopted a power analysis to address questions on the project systems, structures and processes: Who are the drivers/blockers to negotiating land rights in large investments and why? Who sets the local land policy agenda? Whose ideas and values dominate decisions on land allocation for any form of investment? Given available land, who gets what, and when and how do they get it? How do formal institutions shape the distribution of costs and benefits of land as a key resource? How do informal social networks shape local land allocation processes? Power analysis places emphasis on understanding the formal and informal power underpinning decisions on how land is distributed, in the context where there are powerful actors (with money) requiring land against communi-

ty power, holding on to a history of land utilisation that in itself defines the character of power in negotiating for large-scale investments.

- 3) **Countervailing community power:** Communities are not usually powerless as assumed, and Scott (1985) showed how they use passive power to deal with state authority and private investors. The case of Chisumbanje shows that communities can invest in direct conflict with the state and government, and in the process obtain concessions. In most cases, communities, as the less privileged, use cultural power, past agreements and their majority to claim and reclaim their stake. Cast in a framework of broader development, countervailing power falls in five categories: a) cultural mobilisation; b) the use of soft forms of lobby by communities, if and when they lose the land game; c) the use of counter livelihood rights to induce government and the company to access land; d) picketing at governance institutions and the company to get the land concessions; and e) the ability to negotiate strategically with different types of actors, especially community activists such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), war veterans and traditional leaders.

Background to the study and the field site

Stake on land-related matters

To date, Zimbabwe has not developed a comprehensive national land or agricultural policy. However, regional policy frameworks prescribe a broad direction for agricultural policy, for example, the vision at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) level is 'to promote development of an efficient, competitive and sustainable agriculture sector, which assures food security and increased income' (Southern African Development Community 2011). In line with this vision, Zimbabwe has had a draft agricultural policy since 2013, aimed at increasing production for both household and national food security; increasing funding for agricultural infrastructure and the sector; improving produce quality; improving production technology;

preserving natural resources; and effectively managing and administering land reform.

The study explored the political and policy positioning of the Chisumbanje Ethanol Project at national level, in terms of the power play, the actors and the implications of the investment on the national land investment policy and related controversial issues of community displacement, as indicated in numerous studies (Hall 2011; Zamchiya 2011; Mutopo and Chiweshe 2012; Mandihlare 2013; Tigere 2013; Thondhlana 2014). The displacement discourse is clouded by uncertainties around who actually owns the land. In our research we sought to establish this matter, given that the Chisumbanje land is not Fast Track Land and is in communal areas. From the literature cited, the number of displaced is also not clear, nor on which particular land, making it impossible to definitively conclude that communities have been displaced or that the company has displaced them.

Out of the 1 008 families who lost land, 172 families were compensated with 0.5ha of irrigated land. In the Chisumbanje area the ten affected villages are Tazwa 1, Tazwa 2, Guwarekipi, Madhwayi 1, Madhwayi 2, Madhwayi 3, Mazembe, Vhutuza, Muyondozi and Ndofeni. In Chinyamukwakwa, 388 families out of the 694 families affected were compensated, again with 0.5ha of irrigated land¹.

Some of the analyses published to date have not taken into account that GreenFuel as a company does not deal with land issues at policy level, and that they went into Chisumbanje fully aware that ARDA had some estates not used. In fact, ARDA directs them on the plan and where they needed to invest in the land. To then accuse the company of directly displacing the communities without pointing a finger at the state makes the whole reading of current literature contradictory. After going through the different approaches of research done by many of the referred scholars, we found that most of them had not spoken to the company authorities to hear their side of the story. Our view is that perspectives across the various actors need to be established, and how land decisions are being made to be put this investment in its proper context.

¹ There is also contestation around the correct figures, for instance, the company says 176 families have been compensated in the Chisumbanje area, while interviews with other informants say the figure is 172. However, what is clear is the general consensus on most of the issues except the exact ownership of the land.

Chisumbanje production model and its performance

The Chisumbanje and Middle Sabi Estates are protected by the ARDA Act, as the land belongs to ARDA; it is a partnership between ARDA, Macdom Investments and Rating Investments. The Chisumbanje Ethanol Project is a public-private partnership between the government through ARDA, under the Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development (MoAMID). ARDA was formed in 1965 (as TILCOR) with its major role to boost agricultural production and rural development, as well as productive utilisation of state land, especially in communal areas. ARDA leasing land from Chipinge Rural District Council (RDC) was central to the initial offer of land on a lease basis to GreenFuel in Chisumbanje. All land is owned by the state and administered by the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement (MLRR), which to date has not provided a statement on the Chisumbanje Project, this ostensibly because the land is statutorily owned by MoAMID.

The Chisumbanje main investor is a local Zimbabwean company called GreenFuel with subsidiary companies (Macdom Investments and Rating Investments). Government, through ARDA, invested US\$36.7 million in land and immovable assets and Macdom Investments injected the capital and hold a 90% stake in GreenFuel, while the government has a 10% stake. The total investment into GreenFuel is US\$230 million (GreenFuel undated). The project utilises ARDA estates to grow sugarcane for ethanol blending. The Chisumbanje Ethanol Plant (GreenFuel) is a Zimbabwean company operating subsidiaries producing sugarcane as Macdom Investments in Chisumbanje and Rating Investments in Middle Sabi, which is 80km from Chisumbanje. Chisumbanje has 8 500ha of sugarcane, while Middle Sabi has 3 500ha. The combined total, in the new land opened in Nuanetsi of 1 000ha, provides a total of 13 000ha for 2015 (GreenFuel undated). The government of Zimbabwe, represented by its agricultural investment arm ARDA, started as a Build-Operate-Transfer contract and later on changed to a joint venture in 2012. ARDA leases the land from the Chipinge RDC. The sugarcane produced from the two estates is processed by GreenFuel into ethanol at a plant located in Chisumbanje (Zuze GreenFuel 2014).

GreenFuel also has an out-grower model of production with smallholder producers that it assists with a full package of support, including canal development, water provision, tillage and inputs. The issue of out-growers raises an important analytical dimension with respect to the inclusivity of the business model in the Chisumbanje sugarcane bio-ethanol value chain. Interviews with senior company officials revealed that there are 116 out-growers on 400ha of land and 125 war veterans on 250ha of land. However, the model is a unique model in that the farmers are not much involved in the production but are just land holders; the company does everything for them and pays them at the end of every harvest. From the company's perspective, this is because the farmers do not have expertise in producing the expected quality of sugarcane required for the production of ethanol. This means smallholder farmers are automatically excluded from actively participating in the primary production because of the sugarcane quality requirements for processing.

However, there are inconsistencies when it comes to out-grower schemes. In an interview one out-grower lamented:

When they cut the sugarcane, we asked about the position of our fields and we sought audience with the investor, but the investor said 'ARDA did not tell me that there are settler farmers within the land', but promised to give us back our land and the sugarcane after the first ratoon.² When he harvested the first harvest, we then asked about the position of our fields but nothing concrete came out of it. As we speak, the company owes us more than \$300 000 for three seasons which we were not paid. When we asked he said, he is not selling the ethanol so he cannot pay. Now that he is selling again he is still not paying (Key informant interview 2014).

The company buys sugarcane from the farmers at US\$4/tonne and the expected yield per hectare is 135 tonnes. In Middle Sabi, there is a plan to develop 6 000ha for the out-grower scheme under the A2 model – the model of medium-scale farms, established after Fast Track Land Reform (Zuze GreenFuel 2014). Though there was agreement about the US\$4/tonne selling price, the out-growers are now comparing prices with

² Ratoon is a product that is found after a process of rationing, which is a practice of growing a crop from the stubbles of previous crop. The ratoon can save costs on preparatory tillage and planting material; it gets the benefit of residual manure and moisture; ratoon crops mature earlier and give more or less same yield as new sugarcane cane. In general, only one ratoon should be taken because the incidence of pests and diseases increases and deterioration of soil can take place if it is done several times.

Triangle and Hippo Valley out-growers who are being paid US\$7/tonne, a difference of US\$3/tonne, and the farmers have not yet been paid the US\$4/tonne since 2010 (Maara Parliamentary Portfolio Committee 2014). Under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Macdom admits that it still owes the farmers US\$178 000 (Macdom Investments (Private) Limited and ARDA Chisumbanje Settler Scheme Farmers 2013).

The ARDA Chisumbanje Settler Scheme Farmers (116) signed a MoU with Macdom Investments, where Macdom developed the out-grower's land and established a sugarcane crop thereon. It has been maintaining the crop together with the land and its related works. The out-growers have agreed to reimburse Macdom for all the capital expenditure incurred in the development of the land and sugarcane crop, as well as all associated maintenance and operation costs (Macdom Investments (Private) Limited and ARDA Chisumbanje Settler Scheme Farmers 2013). The total amount the out-growers in Chisumbanje owe to Macdom in development and maintenance fees is US\$2.4 million, which the out-growers will pay via stop order for a period of three years (Macdom Investments (Private) Limited and ARDA Chisumbanje Settler Scheme Farmers 2013). However, after the three seasonal years, the out-growers will choose to either sell to Macdom or to any other company that buys sugarcane. Under the agreement, Macdom is obliged to supply water for irrigation purposes, as well as other seasonal inputs nec-

essary for the production of merchantable quality sugarcane on the out-growers' plots.

Out-growers could potentially benefit from GreenFuel, given that it has the exclusive licence to supply ethanol for mandatory blending with petrol. However, recently Triangle Valley provided ethanol for blending with petrol after GreenFuel had run short for mandatory blending. GreenFuel, which is the only company licensed to produce ethanol to meet the 20% mandatory blending with petrol, has 9 100ha (inclusive of 660ha of out-grower farmers and settlers) under sugarcane, supplying an ethanol plant with an annual production capacity of 120 million litres. Seventy-four million litres of ethanol have been produced so far, with 54 million being produced in 2014. GreenFuel can potentially achieve yields of 130 tonnes per hectare. However, due to unpredictable water and electricity supplies, an average yield of 120 tonnes of sugarcane per hectare and 70 litres of ethanol from one tonne of sugarcane has been achieved. Water and electricity are very expensive costs to the project and not conducive to an investment environment (GreenFuel undated). By 2030, the expected sugarcane output will be 4.8 million tonnes from 40 000ha, which will be converted to approximately 320 million litres of ethanol per annum for supply to Zimbabwe and SADC (South Africa mainly, which shall soon introduce a 2% mandatory blending in petrol when it does not produce enough ethanol). Currently GreenFuel is generating 18MW using 282 495 tonnes of bagasse (ibid.).

Large-scale sugarcane investments from a global and national lens

International guidelines and relevance for Zimbabwe

Of the major initiatives taken lately at an international level, to regulate large-scale land deals, is the formulation of international guidelines, including the World Bank Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment; the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, as well as the Minimum Core Human Rights Principles of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. The FAO Voluntary Guidelines, endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (May 2012) is widely publicised and the most recent global initiative for the regulation of land tenure in general, and large-scale farm investments in particular. The FAO guidelines were more inclusive than the World Bank principles in their formulation process (White et al 2012); they are also a lot more 'holistic' in their approach, where land rights are characterised by being 'inextricably linked with access to and management of other natural resources' (Preface of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines 2012; the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2014 land policy guidelines).

In the context of the Chisumbanje ethanol investment, loss of land use rights by local communities has brought about a wide range of consequences in terms of loss of access to various other natural resources, including water, grazing lands and forest woods, on which local livelihoods depend. Yet these problems are precisely the reason why, at the AU level, priority is given to creating guidelines upon which countries may craft relevant policies. The reasons are glaringly obvious: a widespread alienation of land from local communities with contested or inadequate compensation packages, smallholder producers are marginalised in favour of large-scale investors who received better protection and gender-based inequalities are highlighted.

Underlying factors include weak land governance and administration systems, which fail to protect the land rights of communities, claims which are not responded to because of weak democratic governance and institutions (UNECA 2014). This discord also applies to the unequal power relations of investors and communities, where government at times is absent, unwilling or complicit in the contract negotiations. But at the end of the day, fiscal revenue pressures lead to favourable concessions to investors who may face high costs of doing business, volatile institutional and community arrangements, high transaction and settling costs, and failure to resolve conflicts that flare up every year. The Chisumbanje Project has faced these complex difficulties, prompting the need for negotiations towards a win-win solution for both communities and the company so that the economic multiplier effect of its presence and product ranges can be appreciated.

In Zimbabwe there remains no clear land policy to guide land administration. The Chisumbanje Ethanol Project provides an example of the necessity of a comprehensive land policy to complement the energy policy, which seems to be a priority of government. This means for any future investments in energy, which require land even beyond the customary systems, there is a need for clarity and guidelines should be followed on agricultural practices that support other sectors, such that energy can fit into the wider context of land reform to support smallholder commercial agriculture. One possible way of enforcing such voluntary international guidelines is through their incorporation into national laws, which then give rise to statutory rights and responsibilities. This, however, reinforces the state-centric approach in the governance of land deals, since it gives the ultimate discretion to the state to decide on whether or not to incorporate such principles into state law.

Zimbabwe national land investment guidelines

Land policy framework

Zimbabwe last developed its land policy in the 1990s with the objective of redistributing about five million hectares of commercial land for resettlement on a willing buyer-willing seller basis. There were various attempts to revise the policy at the end of the 1990s without success but the programme for land transfer continued anyway, which facilitated engagement between civil society, government, funding agencies and the international community towards developing a programme of resettlement. But this was overtaken by the FTLRP. Government had to rely on a raft of legal instruments and constitutional amendments to effect fast track land reform because it had no policy underpinning it. And these legal instruments became de facto policy but limited only to land as a resource; less importance was placed on fisheries and conservancies because the key priority was the transfer of land from those with the land to those without. Therefore, though international guidelines were developed in principle, they hardly speak to Zimbabwe's land reform.

Government development and land management institutions

Given the yawning gap on land policy during the time of the inclusive government from 2009–2013, investors had to rely on ad hoc communities, while having to deal with local stakeholders complaining on behalf of the communities on the matter of land displacement. Curiously, ARDA, on whose land the project has been carried out, has been rather mute when land-related matters are discussed because it provided the land on a lease basis as part of its contribution to the project. The expectation that ARDA would clarify the land ownership and lease arrangement has not been fully explained, leaving GreenFuel to defend the project on land-related matters, which should ideally be a privy of government.

However, government did set up an inter-ministerial task force during the tenure of the inclusive government, led by the Deputy Prime Minister. The conclusion drawn by the task force was that the Chisumbanje Ethanol

Project was of strategic and national importance, with the potential for reviving industry. But beyond the national importance, there were three interrelated problems: the role of the community, technical-related problems and the business model. The task force sought solutions for balancing the interests, as a basis for providing a win-win scenario for these three potentially conflicting areas of interests. The task force was disbanded at the conclusion of the Government of National Unity (GNU) in July 2013, and a new government took over and put up a new programme of resettling households, led by the Chipinge RDC and the District Administrator (DA) under the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing.

Some of the key institutions that were part of District Ethanol Production Committee (DEPIC) took responsibility for land matters after July 2013. These are the:

- Chipinge Rural District Council (RDC): The land that the ethanol project is on falls under the jurisdiction of the Chipinge RDC. In terms of the laws of the country, the Chipinge RDC administers all communal lands and Old Resettlement Areas, as well as areas of designated growth points. The role of the local authority comes in if the company needs to expand: they need to engage with the Chipinge RDC as they are the land authority. The allocation of the 0.5ha to the farmers who lost their land is a process which involves the RDC, the company, Agritex and the Department of Irrigation in the Ministry of Agriculture, and allocation was based on those who lost their land during expansion. When the investment expanded into the Chisumbanje area, which is communal but earmarked for the ethanol project, the 0.5ha compensation was factored in. According to the Chipinge RDC, the people knew that the area was earmarked for expansion and no one built houses on the land they cultivated. The settler farmers have leases with the Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement, and Council has leased the land which Macdom now occupies as well as the small-scale schemes where households have been compensated with 0.5ha plots.

By April 2015, a partial solution by Chipinge RDC and the DA's office seems to have been found, where GreenFuel invested in a community irrigation scheme alongside the opening of new land. This meant that of the 1 008 displaced families, only seven remained and the RDC was in the process of making frantic efforts for them to be accommodated in the 0.5ha scheme. According to the District Administrator of Chipinge, supply for the 0.5ha was being outstripped by demand in a context in which there was initial heavy resistance to the scheme. This gradual acceptance has been caused by improved (but at times volatile) relations between GreenFuel and the community, and more visible signs of GreenFuel investments beyond the sugarcane farms. Improved performance of the initial beneficiaries of the 0.5ha set an example and when compared to the performance of the cotton sector and the banana sector, which was underperforming, sugarcane at least provided an income for the households who benefited.

- Traditional leaders: De facto all communal area residents have enjoyed customary land rights well before any colonial and post-colonial governments. Therefore, all communal land is de facto, vested in the community and families and administered by the traditional leadership (Rukuni 1994). De jure, however, all communal land vests in the President who permits it to be occupied and used in terms of the provisions of the Communal Land Act (Shivji et al 1998), and administered by the RDC and the lower echelons of local government described earlier. The contradictions and contestation between de facto and de jure signify the nature of contemporary challenges with the governance structures and the functioning/dysfunctioning of these structures in discharging land management responsibilities. It is a consistent problem that plays out clearly in the case of the Chisumbanje Ethanol Project.

Civil society players and consumer organisations

The Platform for Youth Development (PYD) is the most significant pressure group that has been 'fighting for the land rights of the community' in Chisumbanje. The PYD has been working with the villagers on this matter since 2008. It has engaged Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, who filed a court application at the High Court of Zimbabwe to stop Macdom and her sister companies from encroaching outside the boundaries they have agreed on with ARDA. The PYD was also involved in the now defunct District Ethanol Production Committee (DEPIC). International civil society players from Switzerland, such as the Federation of European Philatelic Associations (FEPA) (a continental federation of 43 national European federations undertaking support work to the PYD through solidarity with the affected communities), Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Sudliches Afrika (KASA) (an ecumenical service that works with civil society and churches on social and economic human rights and their political implementation), and Solidarity Fund for Social Liberation Struggles in the Third World (SOLIFONDS) (which works on indigenous land rights) petitioned by the ethanol investor, GreenFuel and its owner Billy Rautenbach, to respect and honour existing land boundaries and ensure that the local Chisumbanje and Chinyamukwakwa villagers continue to survive and feed their families. FEPA, KASA, SOLIFONDS and other partners urged GreenFuel to respect dialogue with Chisumbanje and Chinyamukwakwa communities as a way of solving the existing land conflict.

The PYD has consistently fought for the rights of communities, including just payment of workers employed by the company. The consistency of this lobby has made it possible to highlight community rights and to pressure both government and GreenFuel to respond through a variety of community initiatives. According to GreenFuel, they also envisage a situation of balanced reporting of the positives they have undertaken, and acknowledged that the land rights matter could have

been handled differently had they had the assistance of government. They emphasise that they produce a wide variety of products, more than 1 000 companies benefit from the investment, they have a variety of Community Social Responsibility programmes, and they have increased their employment to 9 100 workers in an economic situation where elsewhere there are more job lay-offs than jobs created.

Land for sugar investments in Chisumbanje

Acquisition of land in communal areas

The Chisumbanje Ethanol Project is a unique project in that it acts contrary to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme that took land from white farmers for redistribution to the black poor farmers. In this case, the state has supported the removal of rural households from what the people of Chisumbanje consider their communal farming land (Thondhana 2014). Biofuel development activities have acquired communal land, despite the fact that such land is integrated into rural communities' livelihood practices, which depend on agriculture and natural resources (Cotula and Vermeulen 2009). This trajectory of land acquisition is in sharp contrast with the new wave of twenty-first century global land reform, which aims to redress insecurities from colonial policies that arose in the twentieth century (Hall 2011). Among the fundamental concerns was that the land that falls under communal land was acquired by private investors for commercial purposes.

The manner in which private investors acquired land under customary use and ownership for the investment is a concern. Community issues ranged from forced relocation of families to the failure to provide fair compensation for the land taken by the project – including those under the state agency ARDA. At the height of the crisis between the company and the communities in Chisumbanje and Chinyamukwakwa, Cabinet set up the District Ethanol Project Implementation Committee (DEPIC), comprising traditional chiefs, area legislators, the district administrator, councillors, police, members of the President's office and community representatives, including NGOs (the PYD). The DEPIC was working towards resolving problems between the company and the communities.

Displacement discourse and its contestation

Field interviews showed that most displaced farmers complained that they were neither

consulted nor formally advised about the land acquisition agreements before the land clearance commenced (Focus Group Discussion May 2014). GreenFuel responded that though they are the producers, the lease of ARDA binds them, which is in the forefront of handling land issues and negotiating with the communities. This is where it gets entangled in a maze of complexity, because ARDA and government indicate there are no issues, given that the Chisumbanje Project has been given national status. This implies that land rights of communities are dealt with according to government on the basis of its national programmes, such as land allocation. A key informant interviewee noted that:

The coming of GreenFuel saw one thousand and eight (1 008) farmers losing their land that ranged from 2ha–40ha to the company, and out of the 1 008 from Chisumbanje, only 172 farmers were compensated with 0.5ha irrigation schemes per family. The company had slashed down crops that belonged to the farmers during land clearance and takeover, and only compensated the farmers with US\$3.00/ha. Now the community is failing to send their children to school because they do not have the land to till and have no jobs. The few who have been employed are not being paid up; employees at GreenFuel have gone for more than three months without pay despite the company now selling the ethanol produced (Key informant interview 2014).

However, the consultations were confined to the chief, Chief Garahwa, and the Chipinge RDC, and the Ethanol Project went ahead without the people's approval. According to Chief Garahwa, although the company brought about irrigation schemes as compensation to those who lost their land, several problems bedevil the whole issue.

The first issue is that the people here are not used to irrigation plots, hence the reluctance to accept such plots and in the beginning people were resisting such. The second issue is an issue of compensation itself, those

³ There is also contestation round the correct figures, for instance, the company says 176 families have been compensated in Chisumbanje area, while interviews with other informants say the figure is 172. However, what is clear is the general consensus on most of the issues except the exact ownership of the land.

who lost their crops were not adequately compensated and out of the over 1 000 people who lost their land in Chisumbanje, only 172 were compensated with the 0.5ha irrigation plots. We expected the investment to benefit the community to a greater extent since it took land away from the community, changing the livelihood patterns of the local people. However, this seems not to be happening as the company is no longer fulfilling its promises. My people expected to be involved in the sugarcane production as out-growers or contract farmers, but as of now only a few people are involved in sugarcane production as out-growers and I have been asking the company to provide me with a list of the out-growers but nothing has been done so far. As the Chief I recommend the company go back to the promises they made from the beginning and improve on their relationship with the community for the investment is of national strategic importance (Chief Garahwa, 2014).

What shocked the community was that the company 'acquired 40 000ha' of land that included land belonging to settlers who had valid lease agreements with ARDA and land that belonged to the community under communal land, without any form of consultation. Asked about the lack of consultation in a meeting that was between the company and the community, the GreenFuel Assistant General Manager, Raphael Zuze, said, 'Why do you think we should consult you and who are you? We consulted the Chief and the DA!' (Key informant interview 2014) There was also the use of intimidation and the investor's disrespectful attitude, supported by state agencies such as the police (Thondhlana 2014).

Conflicts over land allocation to communities

Conflict arose between the government and the investors on one side and the small-scale farming communities on the other. In Chipinge the conflict involves the Agriculture and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) in partnership with GreenFuel versus communal as well as resettled farmers who have land offer letters on ARDA land. Some of the issues at the centre of the conflict include displacement, which needs thorough understanding:

According to the local MP (Enock Porusingazi), to enter into the joint agreement, the compa-

ny used the correct channels and those who mattered were approached. People knew the boundaries of ARDA and ARDA did not have sufficient resources to utilise the land and villagers occupied the idle land and ARDA simply reclaimed its land. Even the greater Chisumbanje plan (Bechtel Report 1985) showed the need for expansion. This, according to the MP, is why people did not build in the estate, they only did farming. He, however, admitted that people were not given adequate notice, and an all stakeholders meeting was supposed to have been conducted, and not enough notification was given (Porusingazi 2014).

The communities have been allocated a uniform 0.5ha per family, which is not adequate in all cases to compensate households which lost crops in the process of the establishment of the project's dams and canals. The owners of the project at Chisumbanje have tried to involve and compensate the farmers who lost their land. Macdom Investments set aside 0.5ha of irrigated portions of land for small-holder farmers to engage in horticulture projects to compensate for their losses. The company provides the farmers with irrigation services and gives them logistical support. Furthermore, 241 farmers are also contracted by the company to grow sugarcane, which they sell to the company.

Conflicts over 'favourable' land allocation to war veterans

There are 6 000ha of land under sugarcane in Chisumbanje Estate (Macdom Investments), where there are 116 out-growers on 410ha of land and 125 war veterans on 250ha of land (Zuze GreenFuel, 2014). The company then buys sugarcane from the farmers at US\$4/tonnes and the expected yield per hectare is 135 tonnes. In Middle Sabi, the company is utilising 3 500ha of original ARDA land with no displacement of the community, and there is a plan to develop 6 000ha in Middle Sabi for the out-grower scheme under the A2 resettlement model of medium-scale farms.⁴The allocation of a 'significant' amount of land was interpreted by communities that GreenFuel wanted to curry favour with the company for political reasons. However, this seems to have backfired, as the war veterans were then accused by the communities of being sell-outs.

As can be deciphered from War Veteran 4 (see Box 1 pg. 13), conflict exists between war veterans and the general population. There is no doubt that the company provided more land and support to war veterans than to ordinary people. They could afford this because the war veterans were fewer, they could be a source of conflict and negative mobilisation that would disrupt the project, and according to policy on land, all allocations need to meet a 20% quota in terms of the number of plots or the size of land, whichever applies. Therefore, the company was within the policy parameters to provide such concessions. However, the communities then accused the war veterans of selling out and being the spokespersons of the company, because of the benefits given to them.

A war veteran representative said that the Chisumbanje Ethanol Investment is tantamount to colonisation, and villagers suggested a halt to their operations until they consulted the displaced communities. In spite of having been accused of wanting to close down the company project through their actions, war veterans holding protection-for-community-benefits placards are typically careful to point out that they are not 'against the project'.

Women's land rights in the context of 'displacement'

The investment affected women and men differently, which means taking gender as a mediating factor in the Chisumbanje Ethanol Project. However, by gender profiling, the actual effects of the project on women (Behrman et al 2011) are missed, given the skewed rights that in an African set-up places men far ahead of resources ownership and access compared to women. This is not new, and Paradza (2010), by examining the communal areas, challenged the received wisdom that women are always disadvantaged. She noted misinterpretations and misrepresentations of African family structures and the division of labour, and how resources are shared in the family set-up. Who owns what when it comes to looking after families arises as a source of conflict when the family is dissolved due to divorce or death of a male spouse because of cultural methods of handling property (which in any case have transformed in the last few

decades). The heir to property is usually the son, but is given responsibility for the whole family left behind, hence the concept of ownership becomes moot. Nonetheless, in families where there are girl children, interference from other family members seems to be a key issue, though it may not be as widespread as in the past.

A dominant thesis around gender in Africa is that on any land deal, poor rural women lose out because they do not have reliable access to land, secure land tenure or customary land rights (Gaidzanwa 1985, 1995). Yet Matondi (2012) also found that where the state has done a 'land deal' in the form of the FTLRP, women have largely lost out — not just land, but are also second best when it comes to the resources available to use the land. Investments in mega-projects on customary lands shift household dynamics in terms of their roles, income-generation activities and property rights. However, a surprising finding was that women in Chisumbanje were not lobbying for access to irrigation plots or lost land to be 'their' personal property, but rather for their spouses who had been pushed out or incorporated in small-sized land of 0.5ha and very far from their places of residence. While they acknowledge that some work was done in the community (e.g. bridge construction), women pointed out that it was not intentional development for the community. They indicated that it was a way to facilitate company operations, and communities benefited by accident. The greatest complaint for women was articulated in the following manner:

As women it was promised that projects will be established for us. We applied for projects and to this day nothing has been done towards this. These projects include the construction of a chicken run with them giving us the chickens which in turn we would sell to the company for its workers. They promised us a market place, for other villages they have done so but for our village they have not. They said they would offer us employment to cook sadza for the workers and would employ people to feed the chickens but all this was not done. They did, however, construct three boreholes in this village, one of which is no longer being used as the water is contaminated, the other one's pipes are not enough and have been shut down, and the last one is the one working

4 This is a Fast Track Land Reform model administered under the Agricultural Land Settlement Act (Chapter 20: 01). The model is said by government to increase the participation of black indigenous farmers in commercial farming through the provision of easier access to land and infrastructure on full cost recovery basis. The model is to empower black entrepreneurs through access to land, inputs and to close the gap between the white and black commercial farmers. The land is issued on a 99-year lease with an option to purchase. Land is allocated in the following manner: peri-urban (2–50 ha.), small-scale commercial farm ranged from 20ha. In AER 1 to 240ha. In AER V, medium-scale farm ranged from 100ha in AER 1 to 1,000ha in AERV, and large-scale ranged from 250ha. in AER 1 to 2000 in AER V. Interview, Rafael Zuze (Assistant General Manager) GreenFuel, 14 May 2014, GreenFuel Boardroom, Chisumbanje.

Box 1: Story of War Veteran 4

I shall speak on behalf of the war veterans and not focus on the community at large. As war veterans we went to war mainly to claim back our land. We did not want to be located on unfertile rocky territories. So as each person went to war, we had the mindset of coming back home to be located on fertile land. Historically we were told that in Chisumbanje we would be located in the far, unfertile territories and we objected to this under the notion that we had fought for the land. This relocation we believed was being caused by the Smith regime so after the war, no one was relocated to the unfertile territories of Masvingo and we remained on our land. ARDA had its own territory and we were clearly aware of these boundaries. As war veterans come the era of land invasions, we decided not to go to Masvingo or any other area but we wanted to concentrate on attaining our benefits from our local area. We invaded ARDA state land and said we wanted the government to give us land portions in that territory. Letters were written and sent to the MLRR and it was agreed to have land apportioned at DRC, located further up from ARDA. People got between 3–5ha.

War Veteran 4 indicated that they were content but we were then told that they would be considered as candidates for state land to be distributed later.

So when the company then came we were already benefiting and we were told not to cultivate in that area. As war veterans we complied with this request as we were told that we would be given a place to cultivate together with our community. We agreed to this as this was a project that was said would benefit the locals and nation at large. A lot of promises were made including of dam construction, hospital construction, irrigation set up, and that we would be part of the out-grower scheme. We gladly welcomed this and although they ploughed down our crops, they said that they would compensate us. Some people had about 5ha of land with cotton being destroyed; maize was put in a Scotch cart and sold. With that having been done and over time we assessed, as war veterans, the progress of the company in terms of helping us. We decided to demonstrate and we called upon the community and their response was that you as war veterans were the ones whose land was taken and as a result you need to go and stand for yourselves and we will do the same. Little did they know that the company started getting land from us, the war veterans, and were going to spill over to the rest of the community.

The community was reluctant to listen to us and we then proceeded to go and demonstrate by ourselves as war veterans. I thought it was clear that I highlight the history of the land distribution that ended up happening as the rest of the local community could say to you that war veterans are the ones that benefited the most from this investment. The community did not agree to assist us and we started to make arrangements as a team of about 500 war veterans, all the way from Chipinge South and other wards, not only Chisumbanje. We sat down with the company and we referred them to the initial promise they made to us that they would consider giving us state land. They offered to make us out-growers and they took a group of 125 war veterans first. Each was given 2ha of planted sugarcane. From this benefit, it is necessary to assess the benefits of these 2ha given to the people. This is a challenge. All we were told was we have 2ha, not that we know specifically where these 2ha are or what it takes to cultivate this land.

(*Focused Group Discussion 2014*).

Women living in Chisumbanje reported that their farms were in the area taken by the company, and that people lost land ranging from 3–10ha. They claim they were not allocated irrigable plots as compensation. From a production perspective GreenFuel did not, until the formation of Vendor Induced Management Buyout (VIMBO), a community development-based organisation, respond to women's demands. Yet women complained how they were affected as their rights over family property shifted and livelihoods changed to fully depend on the company or associated companies, depending on GreenFuel products. This material point has been missed in most of the gender-type analysis to date.

We argue that the major change in land and resources tenure affected women in diverse ways. For some, as family units broken in the past by lack of economic opportunities were being reconstructed. Prior to the land investments, the poor rural women of Chisumbanje and Chinyamukwakwa often had reliable access to land, secure land tenure or customary land rights, and could do what they liked with minimal support from spouses. As witnessed by *The Zimbabwe Independent* (2013) during a tour they '...came across George Chinyamukwakwa (42), his wife Elizabeth Makuyana (28), their two sons Lovemore and Robert, harvesting their maize crop. They were working together in their field, an increasingly rare phenomenon in a Zimbabwe whose high unemployment levels have driven many across the borders in search of the proverbial greener pastures while tearing families apart' (Moyo 2013). However, not every woman has been pleased with the project.

Historically, some were farming on the plots between 1983 and 1998, yet others had only started with new families in 2006. Women in focus group discussions (FGDs) also pointed out that the loss of land affected everyone, as the children of traditional leaders lost their land, yet others were accommodated in the war veterans' section. The distance (30km away) to the new plots and size of the land were raised as contested matters. The authorities promised that the land was for temporary use, without any specifics or anything written down. They said that men would be given sugarcane farms and this 0.5ha was

meant for the women. The dams to supply the irrigated plots are located at the margin of the sugarcane plantation. The biggest problem is a small part of the community got the 0.5ha plots, so other members of the community have no incentive to take care of their animals. The villages that were affected are Masunde, Bepe, Madwayi, Zuwarekipi and Vhutuza. Out of 1 060, only 172 got plots, so those with cattle will simply set their animals free.

The narratives from the women are about being left out of the project while they see developments and other villages benefiting. Here is a typical case of inadequate communication. GreenFuel maintains it can only do so much for the community, but cannot solve all the community problems. A public relations exercise that involved community engagement to explain the phased approach to the projects expected for women was underway through VIMBO in 2015, when the Ruzivo Team was on the ground in April. In raising many other issues, this created an impression that the community and women have not benefited or will not in the long run benefit. The company's business case for profitable and sustainable operations, and the sequencing of community development plans, is not getting through to the community. So when they see developments in other villages, they feel left out and vent anger towards the company. Their anger reflects the desire for local benefits, which needs the collective efforts of the communities, the company and government and its local structures. A suggestion we make for women and youth is the need for rotational benefit so that all villages and communities feel the reach of the company's economy that comes through multiplier effects.

Dynamics of land use transformation

At the initial stage the company employed many locals, with figures of those employed by the company rising up to 1 000. With increased production and opening of new land, GreenFuel indicates that it has 9 100 permanent and casual employees (GreenFuel undated). Greater problems arose in 2011 when the company closed due to the low uptake of

ethanol in the country. Because of the politics that were characteristic of the GNU era, many locals were retrenched and when the mill reopened they were either replaced by whites or blacks from other regions (Key informant interview 2014). Chief Garahwa expected the investment to benefit the community to a greater extent since it took land away from the community, changing the livelihood patterns of the local people. However, this seems not to be happening as the company is no longer fulfilling its promises (Key informant interview 2014). A key informant interviewed had the following to say:

The so-called investment has done more harm than good to the community. The community relied on farming as its key livelihood activity, with farmers growing cash crops and food crops way before GreenFuel came into the area. The community used to grow cotton as a cash crop and cotton companies used to have depots at the local business centres where they provided farmers with inputs and bought the cotton from them. This had seen a boom in the local economy with people being able to build better houses for themselves, as well as a boom at Checheche growth point where shops that include banks, hardware, grocery shops, car sales and many other services have been established. Many parents were able to send their children to school through cotton production and produced food crops with excess grain being sold to the Grain Marketing Board (Chief Garahwa 2014).

Conflicts and resolution of compensation

In Chisumbanje the issue of compensation is twofold: first, compensation for lost lands is contested; second, compensation for lost produce as the company admitted to having ploughed crops that belonged to the community. Communities have raised issues of their crops having been destroyed by the company. A road construction activity led to the 'destruction of crops', which caused a media and international outcry. However, GreenFuel indicated that field destruction happened outside Chinyamukwakwa, in Mangokova, where a road was to be constructed. They further pointed out that the deal for the opening of the road was agreed with by the DEPIC, which was dissolved when the negotiations

were taken over by traditional leaders. In fact, the community was informed a year earlier of the plan for the road, and that GreenFuel would open the road when the crops had been harvested. Yet when problems arose during construction, in front of traditional leaders GreenFuel agreed to compensate to avoid conflict on a crop that was already harvested and paid for, based on expected yields as assessed by Agritex. It is also not clear if all the destroyed crops were compensated for or not, and how the company and the community planned for food security parameters. The company seems to have acknowledged and admitted its culpability in the destruction of the crops as they gave the following statement:

The company, through their Human Resources Manager Mr. Zuze, agreed that they 'are responsible for the destruction of crops belonging to the residents since 2008; we are consulting with Agritex to establish the value of the destroyed crops so that we can start compensation'. This statement was made at a meeting at Chisumbanje on the 18th of August 2011. More than one thousand villagers, including Chief Garahwa, Headman Chisumbanje, Chinyamukwakwa and Matikwa, attended (South West Radio 23 August 2011).

However, an important point to observe is that the company was not strategic in its handling of the crop that was on the land targeted for production, as directed by ARDA. According to Chief Garahwa, instead of taking a hard-line stance, it would have been proper to negotiate directly with the communities, allow them to harvest and then carry out awareness programmes on the precise areas where the company was planning to plant the following season (Chief Garahwa 2014). This would not have encouraged the politicisation of the issue, and could have fostered better relations between the company and the community. The Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2012 waded into the issue and provided recommendations:

The Company should immediately compensate and resettle the 117 households that had offer letters and were displaced from ARDA estates. With Government and ARDA supervision, the Company should

engage the farmers directly and pay the compensation in lieu of the land user rights that were lost, and negotiate terms for the farmers to continue to live on the estates as out-growers and producers to the Ethanol Project. Of the 117 farmers who held sub-leases in ARDA estates, 116 have stayed on as out-growers of sugarcane to the Project. Their major grievances have been non-payment of compensation for land user rights and slow payment for cane delivered to the project in the 2010/2011 season. Of the total, US\$196 800 due to the farmers for that season, US\$161 800 had been paid and US\$35 000 was outstanding and was only paid on 14 September 2012. All payments to these farmers are effected through ARDA. With Government and ARDA supervision, the Company should go into direct arrangements for payment of these farmers, and should avoid delays in paying for crop deliveries

(Mutambara Press Statement 2012).

It seems that prior planning was not participatory as communities were not aware that certain parts of the land they were using were targeted for sugarcane production. Such targeting needed to specify the timing and also announce when the land would be needed by the company so that communities will not commit resources (finance, seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, tillage and labour), only to see them ploughed up by the company. Acknowledgement on its own is not enough and compensation needs to be paid, as affirmed by the mission and report of Deputy President (Mutambara 2012). However, there seems to be no follow-up discussion of what this lost land (used for securing food security) means for the future food requirements of the community.

Is the Chisumbanje Ethanol Project a land grab?

A thorough analysis of the global trends in land investment and Zimbabwe's own investment policy indicates that the Chisumbanje Ethanol Project does not fit the land grab discourse of the international dimensions mentioned above, for a variety of reasons. Though issues of land displacement are contextual and real, it would seem that issues of community benefit is a priority matter across all stakeholders, including GreenFuel itself. Interviews, including community members, traditional leaders, officials in government and a variety of technocrats in government at national level, point out that GreenFuel is a national project with a national status, where negotiations for land was done directly at the highest level of government. In an interview with a senior government official on 27 April 2014, and affirmed at a meeting of technical directors, government officials were open and clear that land issues matter little because Zimbabwe is not short of it. Rather, they would like to look at ethanol as a first test case for land expansion, which is available for small- to large-scale producers of ethanol and other energy-related crops for import substitution, as well as allowing for economic development enablers.

State authorities are aware that there are local community contestations and have sent in a high level government team for resolving land-related conflicts in Chisumbanje, Triangle and Hippo Valley estates. Beyond the discourse of 'land grabs' are diverse experiences, which need proper contextualisation, rather than firm conclusions being drawn from one case. Stakeholders with power also need to be part of the greater dialogue. Clearly, the purpose of 'government is to govern' (Mbiriri 2015), and in this case, Zimbabwe needs energy, while protecting the people from unfair and unequal treatment, whenever any investment is undertaken.

The first large-scale investment in energy and commercial agriculture since 2000 has brought up several points. There are no other investments, outside of hydro and thermal energy, as well as road improvements. The point of

government is that 'doing something rather than nothing' is better in getting the energy sector play its role as an enabler for economic growth and development' (Mbiriri 2015). Certain realities escape analysts of Chisumbanje. This is why we presented the evidence we got from both supporters and those who oppose the project, be it for economic, political and other reasons: the first reality is that GreenFuel Company is leasing land from ARDA and has little say on land-related matters, and only waits for instructions from ARDA on where to plant sugarcane. This means government has the strongest say on land ownership, so issues that arise on land-related matters should be addressed to government and not the company.

Second, government is a shareholder in the project with the same rights as GreenFuel Company, which is the reason why ARDA is central to the project. ARDA claims that it has more land in the area that it has not been using for generations and had ceded the land on a temporary basis for the use by communities. While this on its own does not take away the rights of the communities who have historically been in the area, local communities have not taken ARDA and Chipinge RDC to court. Chiefs in the area indicated that they have been aware of these arrangements since 1964. However, a problem then arises that for generations, communities have established themselves on state land, and their removal would seem to violate their tenure rights, which is why delicate and sensitive negotiations have to take place.

Third, it is critical to engage with traditional chiefs, yet in the case of Chisumbanje there have been contradictory statements from the traditional leadership. Engaging in conversation is crucial, and the international guidelines could be helpful. It would seem that Chief Garahwa was more concerned with the promises made than the land issue. In an interview he noted that when GreenFuel came in, they made promises to him as a chief and to the community as a whole, which they are not fulfilling, and the investment is no

longer benefiting the community as initially promised. According to Chief Garahwa, problems arose when ARDA invaded people's land when it was common knowledge that ARDA had its own land (which was fenced) and everyone knew the boundaries. During the invasion of the people's land, the GreenFuel Company, as directed by ARDA as to where to do the phased development, destroyed crops which were ready for harvesting. Though these crops were compensated for, it did not please local people. Headman Chisumbanje, presiding over sixteen villages with ten of the sixteen affected by the land displacement carried out by Macdom Investments, pointed out that people used to grow maize for food and cotton as a cash crop, and were able to build houses using the proceeds from cotton. During better seasons they would sell excess grain to the GMB. Yet most of the families who lost their land can no longer grow food and cotton for sale; even their cattle do not have anywhere to graze.

However, the Chief and the Headman admitted that they were consulted on behalf of the community and that is why they carried out a traditional ceremony to bless the investment. While there were indeed contested land issues, with communities displaced and compensation required, the displacement is not on the scale of international land grabs of large proportions. Eventually GreenFuel will end up with 40 000ha across several estates and at least three processing plants (Chisumbanje, Middle Sabi and Nuanetsi) of a similar size, all modelled around core estates and complemented by out-growers. While displacement is displacement, some would argue the context needs to be put in perspective. First, it is the manner in which such displacement takes place that requires examination; in this case, the state is to blame because it was in charge of directing where GreenFuel could go. It therefore remains erroneous and disingenuous to blame the company that literally has no land and is under a Joint Venture with the state, which retains all rights over land.

Second, it also has to be said that the company has not refused land compensation. The compensation has been slow but is being paid, which makes the investment party compliant with AU and FAO land policy guidelines. Constraining economic high costs of doing business affects the project performance and what it can deliver to the communities that are greatly in need of development, which at times is beyond the scope of what it can provide.

Third, GreenFuel could also have done better in its negotiations with ARDA, the Chipinge RDC and MLRR on land-related matters. Government has seen potential in biofuels and already 62 countries have mandatory blending. The draft Biofuels Policy is being considered for wider investor beneficiation (domestic and international) because targeted land available after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Nonetheless, GreenFuel was squeezed by the politics of Zimbabwe and could not produce ethanol for blending for almost three years until 2013, delaying compensation to the communities.

Fourth, it would seem that the former Deputy Prime Minister, by coming down hard on the company, seemed to have lost sight of the fact that ARDA (and government parastatals under his government) had approved all the plans and was in the forefront of the land 'give away'. It is unclear why the Deputy Prime Minister did not engage with the parastatals such as ARDA which are responsible for land and which hold significant shares. This context needs to be taken seriously beyond the international agreements (voluntary or otherwise) to address the needs of the communities. Such solutions to a national project need to be provided in a context of non-confrontation and non-politicisation. As seen through the related investments that have come courtesy of the ethanol production by GreenFuel, the benefits to the local economy are not being disputed by the communities.

Conclusion

The Chisumbanje Ethanol Development Project is a strategic investment for government at national level. Ethanol development in Chisumbanje is premised upon the development of 'marginal' and 'unproductive' land to generate benefits such as energy security and independence, efficient irrigation schemes, smallholder out-grower schemes, job creation, electric power generation and the stimulation of downstream industries. Most local people, particularly displaced farmers, felt they had been left worse off than they would be without the biofuel investment. There is a clear collision between national interests and local communities in Chisumbanje. The state envisions biofuel development as a pathway to development — an economic opportunity to energy independence — while the locals see it as a threat to their livelihoods.

Rather than being merely 'marginal' or 'unproductive', the land appropriated for ethanol development was crucial for land-based livelihood activities such as food and cash-crop farming, livestock production and direct natural resource use, among other income sources (Thondhlana 2014). Some of these income sources were reported to be increasingly insecure due to recurrent droughts, for example, maize crop farming. However, other drought-resistant crops, such as sorghum, and activities such as cotton farming and livestock production, represented a buffer against fluctuations in other income sources. Lands perceived as marginal by the state and large private investors do, in most cases, provide a vital basis for the livelihoods of poorer and vulnerable groups (Benjaminsen et al., 2006; Hall, 2011; Nalepa and Bauer, 2012). The ethanol policy processes and direction should be informed and guided by the realisation that the dry land communal farming system in Chisumbanje has multiple production objectives, which form part of the local way of adapting to income stresses.

Political and private interests may underlie the seemingly noble shift towards ethanol production, which breeds winners and losers

in emerging ethanol development projects (Shattuck 2009). The Government of Zimbabwe may have been especially keen to satisfy the needs of ethanol investors, because they are some of the few private investors who were prepared to sidestep international concerns about the country's political problems. Thus, from a policy perspective, it is also important to understand the political configurations that shape pro-ethanol production arguments. Furthermore, the extent to which national policy legal frameworks provide adequate safeguards for local land and resource access rights, and effective mechanisms for local participation in decision making, will frame whether increased ethanol investments and initiatives will translate into new opportunities for or further marginalisation of local communities. More powerful individuals and groups of people have greater access to resources, such as irrigated land.

The trajectory of the Chisumbanje case revealed that the investors are struggling to find a balanced model in relation to fair compensation to the local people for land and losses in crops. The Chisumbanje case reflects that the immense potential opportunities anticipated, in diverting a natural resource, such as land and water from the small-scale farmer to the large-scale commercial farming project, requires greater stakeholder coherence in their approach to addressing design elements, while working collaboratively to ensure that no one party is prejudiced. An empirical study of the Chisumbanje case shows that there are both positive and negative consequences to the project. There is a compelling case for more grounded community development approaches beyond the company in order for the local people to secure their livelihoods. The locals feel disempowered and more marginalised, despite some of them getting menial jobs. In the long term, there is a need for incremental development to level the playing field for a win-win situation for the company and the local communities, but this can start only if and when dialogue commences with all the players.

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