
Chapter · November 2015

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Retrieved on: 01 July 2016
Resettled Yet Unsettled?: Land Conflicts and Food (In)Security in Insiza North, Zimbabwe 2005-2013

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Introduction

Land resettlement has been a huge source of debate in Zimbabwe amongst scholars, civil society, political movements and the general public. After independence, there had been some resettlement in the country, but the scale and controversy was nothing comparable to post-1999 fast-track land reform programme (FTLRP). The failure of the Draft Constitution of 2000 seems to have prompted the land occupations. This draft had a clause that provided for the compulsory acquisition of land by the state from white commercial farmers to redistribute to black Zimbabweans. However, the ‘NO’ vote that won the day disappointed those who had hoped to access land.\(^2\) Over the years, there have been varied interpretations of the impact of the FTLRP, and these have tended to be divided largely into two extremes. On one hand, scholars such as Mamdani (2009), Hanlon et al (2013) and Scoones et al (2010) have hailed the land resettlement and redistribution exercise. On the other, scholars such as Raftopoulos and Mlambo (2009), Matondi (2012), Nyamunda (2014) and Pilossof (2012) have been critical of the exercise, pointing to some of its irregularities.

There have also been works that have looked at the conflicting dimensions of land resettlement since 1980, focusing on the tensions with the western world, the white commercial farmers, as well as conflicts at policy levels in the implementation of the exercise (Moyo and Matondi, 2001). Others have emphasised the violence that characterised some periods of the resettlement exercise (Shadow Report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, 2007), including that unleashed on fellow black Zimbabweans such as farm-workers. This chapter builds on existing

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\(^1\) We would like to acknowledge the funding of part of this research by the Organ for National Healing and Reconciliation.

\(^2\) The ‘NO’ vote was largely triggered by the clause that seemed to increase the executive powers of the President.
literature on land-related conflicts, paying attention to tensions between and amongst black Zimbabweans which arose from land resettlement, particularly from claims for restitution.

In this chapter our main concern is with historicising and examining land conflicts in Insiza North, as well as examining their impact (potential or otherwise) on food security in the district between 2005 and 2013. The questions we ask are: What sparked the tensions and turmoil in Insiza? What was the role of the state in the unfolding conflicts? What impact did these conflicts have on food security, especially at household levels? It is in addressing some of these questions that we observed a number of things. Firstly, we noted that the period between 2005 and 2013 was characterised by anarchy and loss of control by the state and local government over developments in the country, generally. This seems to caution us from overstating the hegemonic control and influence of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) Government, which have been emphasised by some scholars (Hammar, 2009; Alexander and Chitofiri, 2010). Secondly, members of the Insiza North community became increasingly ‘unsettled’ by the developments in their area. Thirdly, the response of the state shows internal contradictions and inconsistencies in terms of its policies and attitudes towards resettlement of different groups of people in the district. Finally, the conflicts in Insiza and their unsettling effects have had a negative impact on food security, at least at household level.

In this chapter, the term ‘unsettled’ is used to mean ‘insecurity’, including that of tenure. It is also used to imply a psychological state of uncertainty. As the chapter demonstrates, there is a strong link between security of tenure and food (in)security. Writing on land politics in Insiza between 1893 and 2000, Alexander (2006: 1) uses the phrase “unsettled land” in relationship to the physical settling on the land. This ‘unsettled land’ is also examined within the context of “the geography of displacement, expropriation, and re-appropriation” (Ibid). In a broader sense, Alexander (2006) uses the phrase to refer “to the making and unmaking of authority over people and the land on which they lived and farmed” (2006: 1). In a way, Alexander’s use of the phrase ‘unsettled land’ has overtones of insecurity and uncertainty, which can be caused by displacement, expropriation and re-appropriation.

The height of land-related conflicts in Insiza North was the return of Chief Solomon Jahana in 2006 to this area from Gokwe in the Midlands Province. Jahana and his people had originally been moved by the colonial state in 1965 to make way for commercial white agriculture, particularly
ranching. Basing his argument on restitution, Jahana won his applications to return to his homeland. But his place of origin had already been occupied by the new African settlers, and this heightened tensions in the area. Both the pre-Jahana settlers and the Jahanas strongly felt the land was legitimately theirs. The former made reference to their struggles while ‘fighting’ to get the land during *jamanja*, while the latter pointed to their historical attachments to the land (see also Muzondidya, 2007). The race card that had been used to displace the white commercial farmers could no longer be used in this case, and this contributed to the complication of the Jahana case.

Admittedly, Insiza North has experienced huge harvests by resettled farmers, and has been described by some officials and resettled farmers as the breadbasket of the area. However, because of incessant land-related conflicts and population pressure, among other things, investigations suggest that settlers in Insiza have been ‘unsettled’ by the recent land reform developments. Insecurity is high, and this, we argue, has had a negative impact on food security, apart from its potential to derail whatever successes the resettlement exercise has had.

While the land conflicts in Insiza District are a commentary on the nation state and its control (or lack of it) of the citizens, they also reflect on how citizens themselves negotiate, contest and carve their niches for survival. This becomes part of a greater process of state/nation building. However, conflicts can be destructive and retrogressive. Perhaps an obvious point we should stress from the outset is that though land conflicts have been widespread in the country, the experiences of land resettlement in Insiza North must not be universalised or used to judge the outcome of land resettlement in other parts of the country. A much wider investigation involving several case studies would be most ideal to make any universal conclusions about conflicts and land resettlement in Zimbabwe.

**Methodological and Ethical Issues**

In terms of geography, the northern areas of Insiza District constitute the resettled areas while the southern region is largely communal areas. The soils in the communal areas, partly as a result of years of continuous cultivation, are poor and not able to support robust crop production. This is unlike the Debsshan Ranches which lay uncultivated for years,

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3 The term *jamanja* has assumed various overtones and implies a disorderly/unorganised and, to some extent, rough process. This term has generally been used by the settlers themselves to refer to their resettlement.
serving largely as pasture land. In terms of ethnicity, the southern areas are largely populated with Ndebele-speaking people,⁴ while the north is dominated by people coming from the Midlands Region who are largely Shona.⁵ This situation has also contributed to ethnic-oriented conflicts over land, compounded by the arrival of Chief Jahana and his subjects of 80 families who are originally Ndebele (The Chronicle: 1 January, 2010). The coming of Chief Jahana electrified the district, triggering several conflicts, and making the land issue in the area an extremely emotive and sensitive one which, in most cases, was politicised by both the settlers and the politicians in the area.

The study employs interviews collected from officials of the Insiza Rural District Council, the Land Committee, Ministry of Lands and Land Resettlement, Jahana settlers, earlier settlers (pre-Jahana) in the concerned wards, and some local leaders in these wards. From these interviews we were able to get both official and unofficial versions of the land-related conflicts in the district. Individual and group interviews (focused group discussions) with the Jahana people were very insightful as they helped us to appreciate their plight as well as expectations in much clearer ways. Some of the interviews were conducted with earlier resettled farmers in Insiza North, while others were with Insiza settlers based in Bulawayo. Newspaper articles were also important sources of information as they documented the conflicts in the district, giving detailed accounts and useful statistics.

On an ethical note, and also for the protection of respondents' identities owing to the sensitivity of the unfolding land developments, the study does not use actual names for both the official and non-official interviewees. However, we do indicate the capacity in which the interviewees were commenting, that is, as a settler or an official, and we use numbers to identify different officials and settlers.

**Contextualising the Land Conflicts**

During the time of the Government of National Unity (GNU), from 2009 to 2013,⁶ the FTLRP decreased in momentum and, in some circles, the

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⁴ Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
⁵ Interview with Settler 4, Bulawayo, 27 February 2013.
⁶ The Government of National Unity came into power in 2009 up to the harmonised elections of June 2013. During the days of the GNU, there were some isolated cases of land invasions, but these were publicly criticised and did not receive overt blessing from central government. For an analysis of the GNU, see Brian Raftopoulos 2013 (Ed), *Hard Road to Reform: The Politics of Zimbabwe’s Global Political Agreement*. Harare: Weaver Press.
dust of resettlement was generally considered to have settled. In Insiza North, however, land resettlement remained an unfinished business, particularly in Debshan Ranch (Mpalawani, Mpopoti, Lambamayi and Gwamanyanga which are part of wards 20 and 21). The area has been plunged into a number of land-related conflicts emanating from such aspects as claims for restitution on already settled land, double allocations and boundary disputes, and settler clashes with Council authorities. Land conflicts are not peculiar to Insiza North. However, the twists and turns, the violence and attention drawn by these conflicts make Insiza a fascinating case study.

Part of Insiza North was under the Debshan Ranches, some 137 800 hectares owned by Oppenheimer. After 2000, Debshan became a potential target for war veterans who dominated the resettlement movement in most parts of the country, at least in its early stages (see also Sadomba, 2011). Oppenheimer is said to have “volunteered” some 65 800 hectares for resettlement, though his farm was protected by international agreements (Ministry of Lands and Lands Resettlement Matabeleland South Audit Report, 2006: 57). However, this is not to suggest that land came on a silver platter for the settlers in Insiza. Like in most parts of the country, land resettlement in Insiza North was characterised by jambanja. Both war veterans and non-war veterans actively participated in putting various forms of pressure to have land allocated to land hungry citizens.

The Brewing of Land Crises in Insiza North

Scholars have been interested in explaining the origins of conflicts, especially in the African contexts, and many explanations have been offered. Scholars such as Collier (2008) see resources as being at the centre of conflicts in Africa, though this has been contested (Jones, 2008). The case of Insiza North, however, seems to confirm the resource curse thesis, with land being the resource at the centre of the conflict (see also Alexander, 2006). As noted, the land issue in this area is also complicated by claims for restitution. Chiefs such as Jahana and another, Mazetese, who were evicted from the area during the colonial era also made claims to the land after resettlement had been carried out. The former has since

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7 In an informal discussion with one land official at Makombe Building, we were told that the land resettlement exercise was a never-ending process as long as there were people hungry for land (interview with Lands Official 6, 8 April 2013).

8 Interviews with Settler 5, Bulawayo, 28 February 2013. War veterans are former members of the liberation armies that fought the colonial regime for the independence of Zimbabwe. These played a crucial role in the jambanja.
moved to Debshan Ranches with his people, while the latter has begun formal proceedings. Some interviewees noted that land conflicts, particularly in wards 20 and 21, have also been fuelled by poor policy framework, and politicisation of land by both the settlers and the political elite. Ethnicity has also fuelled the conflicts in the area, particularly ethnic tensions between the Shona and the Ndebele.

Conflicts over land in the district predate Chief Jahana’s return from Gokwe in the Midlands in 2006. His return only worsened an already potentially explosive land situation. By the time Chief Jahana came to the district, the area he claimed to be his former territory was already overpopulated as a result of a series of official and unofficial resettlements after 2001. Officials, particularly environmentalists, became increasingly concerned with environmental challenges, among other things, that could emanate from this situation. Around 2004, a re-planning exercise was recommended which would result in the decongestion of the Debshan Ranches (The Chronicle, 8 June 2004). The recommendations were that there be a cut-off date of 25 May, 2001 to be used to consider who should be moved or remain settled in the area. Thus, only those that had come to the area before the cut-off date were to be considered legitimate settlers in the area, while those who had come after that date would be relocated elsewhere. It was not clear where and when they would be relocated. This probably contributed to the resistance by post-2001 settlers/arrivals.

Another conflict over land that predates Chief Jahana’s return is that of individuals that were resettled in parts of the Debshan Ranches not earmarked for resettlement. In an interview with one of the Council officials, it was indicated that Debshan was protected from resettlement by some bilateral and international arrangements. Individuals, who settled themselves in the farm were, therefore, ‘illegal’ settlers. Efforts were made by Council officials to settle these individuals, but the officials faced stiff resistance. These ‘illegal’ settlers remained there hoping that part of the farm would eventually be transferred to them. In the initial years, conflict was rife between these settlers and the Debshan Ranches management, as fences of the ranges were vandalised and farm cattle also ravaged the crops of resettled farmers. As part of conflict resolution, the management fenced in the illegal settlers and protected

9 Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
10 This summary of explanations came from a range of interviews conducted.
11 Written notes by Council Official received in March 2013.
12 Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
their farming areas with fences. The management was also involved in a number of projects to promote their neighbours, including providing heifers, and constructing roads and buildings. These gestures have helped the illegal settlers to co-exist with the management at Debshan Ranches.¹³

Chief Jahana’s return to Debshan in 2006 was perhaps the most unsettling and persistent source of conflict in the district. The terrain in which Chief Jahana and his people had been resettled in Gokwe was neither suitable for cattle ranching, which was one of their traditional practices, nor for sustainable crop production. Describing his area in Gokwe, Chief Jahana indicated, “This land is not fit for human settlement. There were no people when we arrived, only wild animals and stones all over...The soils are poor and there is a perennial problem of water for people and animals” (The Chronicle, 15 November 2006). Under such circumstances, Chief Jahana and his people had always been determined to return to their original land. Jahana noted, “We have always viewed this place all these years as temporary. We did not come here on our own accord” (Ibid). It is said the negotiations for returning to Debshan Ranches began immediately upon independence in 1980, but Chief Jahana was advised to wait until the dust of the liberation struggle had settled. In an interview with Jahana settlers, it was indicated that for the next two and a half decades after independence, Chief Jahana had continuously presented his case to government, but each time there seemed to have been an excuse for delay, until he received a nod from the state around 2005.¹⁴ This version of the story is confirmed in another interview with a senior Council official.¹⁵

The question that one may ask is, why did it have to wait till after 25 years for Chief Jahana to finally get the nod from government? This could be appreciated within the context of heightened political tensions of the day when the ZANU-PF Government was under threat from opposition politics. The Jahana case had a potential to further divide the electorate and thus weaken the revolutionary party in the face of growing support for the main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The Chiefs Council, for example, which is a representative body of chiefs in the country, was in strong support of Chief Jahana and his return. Because of the influence of chiefs in the rural areas, the Chiefs

¹³ Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
¹⁴ FGD with Jahana settlers, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
¹⁵ Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
Council was an important political ally for any party that was keen on securing the support of the rural electorate. The support that Chief Jahana got from the Chiefs Council could partly explain why Chief Jahana eventually won the day.

By the time Chief Jahana returned to Insiza North, the area, particularly ward 20 and 21, had been overpopulated — with over 1 700 families, yet technical experts had recommended a carrying capacity of only 700 households.¹⁶ Those that had already been settled during the FTILRP did not take lightly the return of Chief Jahana with his people. Their greatest fear was that they would be displaced from their newly acquired land. Thus, most resettled families did not welcome the Chief and his people. One settler protested, “Jahana has no place here. Where was he when we were having jambanja and going through thick and thin? He cannot expect to just sleep and wake up to benefit from a process he never participated in. We went through hell to get this land.”¹⁷ The fears of displacement were worsened by the official welcome celebrations for Chief Jahana organised by the political elite and state officials. The Jahanas were ‘temporarily’ settled at the farm compound, but their presence inflamed the area as individuals and different groups sought to prevent their access to land.

**Actions and Reactions**

There are a number of measures that settlers in the Debshan Ranches area took at various stages partly in an effort to avoid displacement. For example, when the cut-off date of May, 2001 was announced, one of the affected settlers’ responses was to invite friends and relatives to settle in the area. As one Council official indicated, “The moment the cut-off date was mentioned and a deadline for those that resettled after May 2001 was given, these people actually began the mobilisation of more people to come and occupy the same area until the idea was reversed. Even to this day, people are still coming into the area.”¹⁸ To a certain extent, the reactions of the masses echo what Scott (1985) termed “weapons of the weak”. This refers to various measures adopted by the dominated to

¹⁶ Written notes by Council Official received in March 2013. The Chronicle, 6 July 2012, however, notes that in that year only 265 families had no land to be settled on. This figure does not take account of those settled where they should not be. Clearly, overpopulation is one of the greatest problems facing Debshan Ranches.

¹⁷ Interview from Settler 1, Bulawayo, 6 February 2013.

contest and negotiate their survival. Later, the coming of people had little to do with the threat of the cut-off date, as some individuals and influential settlers realised some personal benefits they could register from selling land to new settlers in the area, or from simply facilitating these resettlements.\(^\text{19}\) It is also alleged that one, Chief Vezi Maduna, from Insiza South instructed his people in 2010 to go and invade the land in Insiza North after realising that his people were not benefiting from land resettlement in his neighbouring area (\textit{Sunday News}, 8 August 2010). The then Member of Parliament for Insiza, Andrew Langa (ZANU-PF), acknowledged that the situation in his constituency was not “pretty” after people from as far as Midlands Province came in large numbers to occupy farms and places they found “vacant” (\textit{Sunday News}, 18 September 2011). For the MP, “the issue of land invasion had gone out of the limits…”,\(^\text{20}\) and he described the continued ‘invasions’ as “unfortunate…illegal activities happening at a time when the district is trying hard to resettle people who have been on the waiting list for more than five years” (\textit{Ibid}). As late as July 2012, \textit{The Chronicle} (6 July 2012) was reporting that the Insiza District Lands Committee was facing a challenge of people who were resettling themselves in Debshan resettlement area. Eventually, the pre-cut-off date settlers were outnumbered by far, and the new settlers were now a stronger voice politically that any politician would ignore, at their own peril.\(^\text{21}\) Indeed, as politicians campaigned for parliamentary positions, they assured these people of undisturbed settlement.

Land in the district was also highly politicised. An official from the Insiza Rural District Council noted, “People on the ground, including their leadership, are clever in politicising everything in such a way that every effort at solving the problems will eventually hit a brick wall”.\(^\text{22}\) As part of its strategy to regain the parliamentary seat lost to the MDC in 2000, ZANU-PF politicians promised new settlers security of tenure, and also advised them to disregard the cut-off date. To avoid displacement, settlers also deliberately exploited ZANU-PF’s fears of losing the electorate. As

\(^{19}\) Unofficial resettlements have been rife in the district and are allegedly being done by very influential war veterans in the area. One Council official is also alleged to have participated in illegal land deals and was dismissed when he was discovered.

\(^{20}\) \textit{Ibid}.

\(^{21}\) Interview with Council Official 1, Filabusi, 5 February 2013.

\(^{22}\) Interview with Council Official 5, Filabusi, 7 April 2013.
one of their conditions to support ZANU-PF, the settlers, for example, successfully negotiated for offer letters for their land which would at least give them some modicum of security on the land.\textsuperscript{23} Admittedly, these same offer letters could also be revoked willy-nilly by the state, but such a move would be difficult to execute at a large scale — again, numbers would work to the advantage of the settlers. The tactic of inviting more settlers to create a strong political voice paid off in so far as dislodging talks about the cut-off-date policy.

The settlers in the undesignated area of Debshan Ranch resisted the District Land Committee’s efforts to relocate them elsewhere, and vowed to resort to violence should there be attempts to use force to relocate them. When Chief Jahana arrived in Insiza North, the area experienced unprecedented violence, tensions and turmoil. Officials were threatened, physically attacked, and trees, stones and so on were used to block roads away from officials. There were physical attacks and counter attacks between the Jahanas and the earlier settlers in the area. The land issue became increasingly emotive, was heavily politicised, and local leaders such as councillors and village chairpersons lost control. There was a total defiance of government and Council officials and their orders. It also became difficult to implement any policy based on the cut-off date mentioned earlier, considering, among other things, the potential humanitarian and political crisis that could have emanated from any forced displacement of such huge populations. All these developments were manifestations of deepening land conflicts whose cumulative effect was insecurity of tenure, which also has a direct impact on food security in the district.

One settler noted, “Most people were not happy with Jahana’s arrival because most of the land he occupied was for grazing and this consequently reduced land available for the animals.”\textsuperscript{24} This partly explains the resistance to Jahana’s resettlement in Insiza North. The violence and tensions in the district were disturbing, attracting the media.

\textsuperscript{23} Offer letters are some form of title deeds in that they confirm one’s entitlement to land offered by the state. However, unlike land with title deeds, that with offer letters could not be traded, but both gave security of tenure. In some instances, however, offer letters have not been a surety against displacement partly because of double/multiple allocations where two or more individuals have offer letters for the same piece of land. The written policy of the government in such instances has been that land belongs to the first to get an offer letter.

\textsuperscript{24} Interview with Settler 2, Insiza North, 8 April 2013.
and authorities' intervention from different angles. In fact, when we went to do field work in the area, we were warned that this was at our own risk because of political volatility in the area. When officials attempted to go and re-peg the area, they at times faced physical attacks and were chased away. In July, 2012, the Chairperson of the District Lands Committee, Ms Sithandiwe Ndumo Ncube, noted, “There are instances where the [technical] team is threatened with violence, and this has stalled progress in this area. We have lived with this problem for too long” (The Chronicle, 6 July 2012).

The resettled farmers viewed with suspicion anyone who came and wanted to discuss the land issue. When senior government officials, including governors and ministers, went to the Debshan Ranches to welcome Jahana, roads were blocked with logs, trees and stones to prevent their coming. 25 Indeed, the violence being meted out did not seem to have any boundaries. The then Governor and Resident Minister of Matabeleland South, Angeline Masuku, even told of her own experiences and threats from people in Debshan Ranches. She reported, “There are people who have the guts to threaten the Governor, what more with officers? The issue of threats is real and needs to be addressed and looked into so that problems at Debshan are brought to finality” (The Chronicle, 6 July 2012). Indeed, violence also erupted as villagers from Insiza (allegedly from Chief Maduna's area) also clashed with the settlers from the Midlands Province. In July 2011, the Sunday News (5 July 2011) reported that, “The cases of land disputes have been on the increase in Insiza North and the latest clash was between Insiza villagers and Midlands settlers”.

It was not only the officials and technocrats that were in danger of physical violence. Jahana and his people have also had clashes with the settlers, and more often than not, were the victims. This violence took various forms, including attacks using dangerous physical objects such as hoes, stones, knives and axes. 26 In response to the violence in the area, “the state security tried to stop violence and bring some order”. 27 The state also provided “physical protection to the Jahana people because they were targets of radicals who did not want them in the area. There were also arrests that took place as a result of attacks on Jahana subjects”. 28

25 Interview with Council Official 3, Filabusi, 7 April 2013.
26 Interview with Jahana settler, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
27 Interview with Council Official 1, Filabusi, 5 February 2013.
28 Interview with a law enforcement agent, Filabusi, 7 April 2013. This was also confirmed in an interview with Council Official 5, Filabusi, 7 April 2013.
Anyone who tried to monitor, and perhaps put an end to the chaos in the illegal resettlement was threatened. A Council official explained the situation of one village chairperson in one of the wards: "Many people are still coming in. I remember asking the village chairperson in the area what they were doing to jealously safeguard their land, but he says if you tell some of the people involved anything that suggests putting a stop to their activities, they will threaten you with death, and there is nobody to protect you." Though the physical attacks had subsided considerably by 2013, there still remained threats of violence and, at times, stones were thrown at their shelters in the farm compounds during the nights. Insults in which the Jahanas were told to pack and go were also not uncommon.

Admittedly, there were many who stood to benefit from the crisis and apparent chaos, as well as lack of close supervision in the area. For example, it is alleged that some war veterans and other individuals sold land to land-hungry individuals for cash or cattle while the poor Jahana people remained deprived of access to adequate land. Even some Council officials were accused of taking advantage of the apparent confusion and indulging in corrupt practices, such as receiving money for land allocations, something not allowed by the Zimbabwean law which prohibits the sale of non-private land. All this contributed to a process of 'self-resettlement' which excluded official sanctioning. People resettled themselves, sometimes through connections with influential individuals in the area, some of whom claim to be war veterans. The result of these developments have seen further complexities in the land situation, sometimes culminating in double allocations of land, causing head-shrinking challenges to land officials.

The unresolved nature of the land crises in Debshan has also seen the building up of potential social and economic disaster. One of the obvious challenges has been overpopulation. The Chronicle (6 July 2012) indicated that, "the area is now overpopulated with indications that about 265 families do not have land to be resettled on". The overpopulation in the area continues to be a threat to the environment through overgrazing and pressure on other resources. One Council official was pessimistic:

29 Ibid.
30 FGD with Jahana settlers, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Interview with Council Official 3, Filabusi, 8 April 2013. The interviewee indicated that one official was actually reprimanded and relieved of his duty after allegations of receiving bribes to allocate land.
I think moving away from political interests especially when making important decisions can help. It is important to let technocrats do the work. The area is largely savannah grassland. Imagine the overpopulation that is there currently. Where will families derive energy sufficient for such a large population? Where will they get enough wood in such a savannah grassland area? There are also challenges of water; this indicates that in a few years to come, diseases will erupt. Also, concerning keeping livestock, it’s difficult to imagine it being a success.35

The situation was also worsened by the Jahana settlers who had been temporarily settled at the former farm-workers’ compounds awaiting resettlement. At these compounds there is overcrowding, creating the danger of disease outbreaks. Access to adequate land is a challenge for these settlers.

As hinted earlier, the land conflicts in the area have also assumed an ethnic dimension, resulting from the fact that the area is in Matebeleland and is expected to be occupied by people from Matebeleland. In reality, it is the Shona and not the Ndebele of Matebeleland that have been taking up land in the area, and it is alleged that this also led Chief Maduna to encourage his Ndebele subjects to “occupy the land so that it could not be occupied by people from Midlands”.36 Confirming this development, the Sunday News (8 August 2012) noted that “people who were on the waiting list for land under Chief Maduna and surrounding areas, have since been instructed to go and acquire ‘their land’ by the chief”. The return of Chief Jahana, who is Ndebele, to an area now predominantly Shona, did not help the ethnic tensions. One settler observed, “Ethnic tensions are common. You hear people saying this area is for the Shona and some say it is for the Ndebele. Even if you talk of the Jahana issue, it is rooted in such differences”.37

There have also been latent conflicts over space in Insiza North, and this has a potential to worsen the land situation if not handled with care. There is need to deal with these looming conflicts once and for all before they fully manifest. The major one is that of other chiefs who, encouraged by Jahana’s move, are claiming restitution around the same area in the Debshan Ranches. The most persistent of these chiefs is Chief Mazetese who claims to have been Jahana’s neighbour during the colonial era.38

34 Interview with Council Official 1, Filabusi, 5 February 2013.
35 Interview with Council Official 1, Filabusi, 5 February 2013.
36 Interview with Council Official 5, Filabusi, 7 April 2013.
37 Interview with Settler 3, Bulawayo, 6 February 2013.
He is said to have been displaced by the colonial government in the same way that Jahana was. Chief Mazetese has begun his official applications to return to Insiza with his people just as Jahana has done, but given the overpopulation in the area, this option is probably out and would only save to make Insiza a time bomb in terms of social, economic and environmental developments. The suggestion made was that if he were to come, he should only come by himself but, “Mazetese says the people now settled in the area are not his and he wants to come with a battalion of his people.”

**Land Conflict and Food Security: The Jahanas**

The availability and access to land as a basic means of production remains a thorny issue in Insiza District and elsewhere across the country. Access to land can have a huge bearing on the food security situation of families as this may affect subsistence and commercial production of food and non-food crops as well as animal husbandry. Scholars have noted that food security is dependent on three factors: availability, accessibility and affordability of land (Scanlan, 2003; Krishnaraj, 2005). We agree with Scanlan (2003) that there must be a reliable supply of food, and individuals must be able to acquire it, and also derive nutritional well-being from food security. The Jahanas’ limited access to land has, however, compromised their access to food. Without any concrete source of livelihood, the Jahanas also face challenges in affording food products. At the time of arrival from Gokwe, the Chief occupied a farmhouse out of the benevolence of the Debshean Ranches management, while his subjects accommodated themselves in the farm compound. The uncoordinated movement of Chief Jahana and subjects forced the Insiza Drought Relief Committee to adopt emergency programming, which entailed the provision of maize packs as a way of alleviating the plight of Chief Jahana and subjects, who ironically, had no access to their ‘birth right’, thereby compounding their food insecurity at the time of arrival in the district. The Jahanas lacked what Sen (1981) calls production-based entitlements as they had no land for either crop cultivation or pasture for their animals.

In essence, the 80 food-insecure families could not survive without external assistance. The access to land, and subsequently to food, for Chief Jahana’s subjects was generally limited. Chief Jahana and his

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38 Interview with Council Official 2, Filabusi, 9 April 2013.
subjects' relocation further fragmented and limited the type of production possible in Debshan Ranches. The decision to allocate at least an acre to each household on a temporary basis until the Insiza District Lands Committee (DLC) identified vacant land to resettle Jahana and subjects was intended at improving their food security situation. It must be noted that despite efforts to distribute small pieces of land to the Jahana, not everyone of them benefited due to the unavailability of sufficient land. The Jahana people express grief that their lot has not changed in terms of their ability to adequately feed their families. Those who could not withstand the heat were forced to return to their 'barren' land in Gokwe, where there was less fear of harassment or physical violence. Those who remained also complained of continuous sabotage by the resettled farmers, which included driving cattle into the fields allocated to Jahana's people.

The limited size of the allocated land failed to meet Jahana subjects' quest to attain their estimated food requirements. During a focus group discussion, respondents concurred that the size of land allocated to them was too small to produce enough food to meet their required weekly consumption ratios per family, averaged at 20 kg of mealie-meal, as most families have an average of eight people per household. In a separate interview one old woman, a Jahana subject, lamented about the sizes of these plots:

When we came here, the already resettled people were against our relocation, and the idea of our getting land to sustain our families. We were really in a quandary until later on when an AREX official came to allocate us an acre per each household. The acres are too small to sustain our big families, hence we are wallowing in poverty, and we do not even have any food.41

Some of these families had sold most of their belongings, especially livestock, to raise transportation costs from Gokwe to Insiza, and had no other sources of income apart from reliance on subsistence farming to feed their families. The allocated fields on average produced a total of about 100-150 kg of maize per season if they had access to inputs such as seed, fertilizer and draught power, which they, however, lacked after relocation. The resistance to Jahana's subjects by the resettled villagers resulted in the marginalisation of the former, even during the distribution

40 FGD with Jahana settlers, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
41 Interview with Jahana Settler 1, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
42 Ibid.
of government subsidised agricultural inputs such as maize seed and fertilizer.

Apart from having limited pieces of land, resettled villagers at times denied the Jahana people access to those same small pieces of land or the produce. Some had those same acres forcibly taken away from them by people claiming right to the land, with women at the receiving end as evidenced by the narration of one female respondent who lamented thus:

Some people dispossessed us of the land allocated to us by the IDLC. I reported the case to the DA but nothing came out of it. The person who took away my small piece of land allocated me an even smaller piece of land, which is constantly grazed by his cattle.43

The subjects also indicated that these plots were quite a distance from their homesteads, further restricting their ability to effectively utilise and protect their lands and their produce. It was also not uncommon for the resettled farmers to drive their cattle into the small plots owned by the Jahanas or simply leave the cattle unattended in the areas where the plots were located claiming that these were grazing pastures for the resettled farmers’ cattle.

Debshan Ranch and Resettled Farmers

The resettled farmers in Insiza North are known for their successful production particularly of the maize crop. One official noted, “Wards 13, 20 and 21 are surely the breadbasket of the district, they produce more than any ward in the entire district...but we are sitting on a time-bomb.”44 This time-bomb referred to the land conflict and crises in the region which seemed to go unchecked. Thus, for the earlier resettled farmers, food security is under threat. Tensions in the region have also caused uncertainty and security amongst the settled farmers. Without assurance that their land will not be further subdivided or even repossessed by the state to accommodate the Jahana people, commitment to, and investment in land, as well as production, have been severely affected. The types of crops grown and the structures built are affected to some extent by the commitment that one has to their land, and this commitment can be negatively affected where certainty is unclear. When the state assured Jahana of support with resettlement in an already overpopulated region, the result was to heighten insecurity of tenure.

43 FGD with Jahana settlers, Debshan, 8 April 2013.
44 Interview with Council Official 1, Filabusi; 5 February 2013.
Cattle holdings have a direct impact on crop production and the value of draught power, transport and manure is substantial. Since 2001, the herd size at household level in the region was reported to be growing.\textsuperscript{45} On average, a household currently has a minimum of five herd of cattle. However, over the years cattle production has been under threat in the region, hence compromising on livelihoods, and by extension, food security. In particular, the population pressure has resulted in drastic reduction of pastures, which fact has discouraged re-stocking.\textsuperscript{46} As already shown, the Jahana people were accused by the resettled farmers of having taken the former's grazing pastures. The grazing pastures have not only been constricted by the arrival of the Jahanas, but also by spontaneous and unofficial resettlements that began as early as 2002.

Meanwhile, the continued incursions and subsequent official and unofficial land occupations reduce the average hectare per household, including grazing area per household. The land use plans stipulate that an average household should have an average of five hectares. The plans also reserve communal grazing area, strive to protect wetlands, and prohibit cultivation on mountain sides and stream banks.\textsuperscript{47} In cases where conflicts mainly involved double land allocations and boundary disputes, the land usually remained unproductive, rendering the household food reserves insecure as people fight for the control and use of land rights. Sometimes, sabotage manifests through destruction of crops which also negatively affects household food security. However, these instances are isolated and not peculiar to the region. But perhaps more unsettled are the 'illegal' settlers at the Debshean Ranches. Their plight is real though their relations with management seem to have improved. Even the local District Council recognises them as illegal settlers, yet, they have been allowed to stay partly because of their stiff resistance and also the fact that management at Debshean Ranches accepted to accommodate them. The settlers at Debshean Ranches, thus, do not have security of tenure. As observed elsewhere, this can have a negative impact on food security because insecurity limits the extent of investment a family can put in the land and its produce.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{46} Interview with Council Official 4, 8 April 2013.

\textsuperscript{47} Interview with Council Official 4, 8 April 2013.
Conclusion
The land resettlement exercise was a necessary process. Indeed, many Zimbabweans, especially of the older generation, were enthusiastic about having a piece of their own land. While the resettlement exercise may have registered some successes at other fronts, it is important to acknowledge some of the unresolved conflicts of this exercise. This chapter has attempted to bring to the fore some of these conflicts using the case of Insiza North. Overpopulation in the area, compounded by the unofficial resettlements and, most importantly, the return of Chief Jahana, threatened the environment and only heightened the land crises in the region. The case of Insiza North presents a very disturbing picture of chaos and anarchy, as well as many questions on the role of the state and state-machinery in instigating, abating, sustaining and solving land conflicts.

References


