

## NGO PROGRAMMING AND POLICY ADVOCACY IN THE LAND SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

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### ABSTRACT

*Across the world, NGOs act as critical players in the promotion of socioeconomic by providing gap filling interventions. This article examined NGOs working in the land sector in Zimbabwe, paying special focus on their formation dynamics, programming, research and policy advocacy. The study identified around 155 NGOs working in the land sector. While NGO advocacy during the first decade was restricted to community welfare issues, by 2008, it had expanded to include topical issues such as land allocation, land rights, land use, water rights, gender rights and human rights, among others. NGOs such as the African Institute of Agrarian Studies were at the forefront, cogently articulating land reform discourse in Zimbabwe as a global phenomena with parallels across the world. Notwithstanding this, NGO land advocacy faced several structural and operational challenges. It suffered from a highly polarized environment, blurred lines of authority, mutual mistrust between State and NGOs, reluctance by donors to provide funds for land advocacy as well as deep-seated discrepancies in the conceptualization of land reform issues. Global experiences suggest that effective NGO land advocacy is most likely where there is mutual trust between state and non state policy actors.*

**Keywords:** NGO formation, Programming and advocacy strategies, Land sector reforms

### INTRODUCTION

Across the world, Non State Organizations (NGOs) are central facets of the process of socioeconomic development. They supplement government efforts by intervening in the deficit areas of poverty alleviation, income and employment creation, food security, provision of safe water and access to health services. NGOs also support development initiatives by providing professional advice and information, exerting pressure and also persuading governments to adopt their policy recommendations. NGOs also play critical roles in promoting sound institutional governance practices by monitoring and evaluating government policies (Moyo *et al.*, 2000). It should however be noted that while NGOs wield considerable power and influence, they have no authority to decide on policy issues. Their primary role is simply to lobby and influence decision makers on issues that affect their constituencies. It is also important to note that NGO advocacy effectiveness is largely a function of organizational capacity, autonomy, resource base, advocacy tactics and capacity to forge sustainable working relations with both state and non state institutions (Anderson, 1984).

The issue of NGO involvement in the land and agrarian sector cannot be conceptualized outside issues of landlessness (Moyo and Makumbe, 2000). While there are variations in its acuteness across Africa, Asia and Latin America, landlessness is generally evidenced by continued limited access to land, skewed land ownerships, diminished food insecurity levels, land conflicts and increase in land squatting (Moyo and Yeros, 2005). While land was the most single important resource around which the liberation struggles and independence politics were organized in post independence African countries, inherited legal frameworks for land administration and transfer were retained virtually unaltered (Bratton, 1994; Moyo 1995; Maguranyanga and Moyo, 2006). In South Africa, land remains the most intractable issues, with around 19 million rural poor blacks still landless to this day (<http://www.landaction.org>). Land ownership patterns are still heavily skewed in favor of yester year ownership set ups. While at independence in 1994, a Land Reform Program was adopted with a target to redistribute 30 per cent of agricultural land, by 2005, only 41 land claims had been settled out of the 63 000 claims that had been lodged (Moyo, 2006; Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Around 55 000 white farmers were still in control of 80 percent of the land. In Ghana, land is not owned by the state but by the chiefs, an alliance that resulted in land being expropriated through the chiefs. The authors also refer to Malawi and Kenya where colonial legal framework and ordinances for land administration were retained virtually unaltered. In Zimbabwe, the 'willing-seller-willing-buyer' land transfer model that was adopted during the first decade yielded land of low agro-ecological value (Moyo, 1987; Herbst, 1990; Alexander, 1994; Bratton, 1994; Gibbon, 1995; Jenkins, 1997). In Asia and Latin America, expropriation of native lands under colonialism left behind a trail of landlessness in which around 46% of the land in countries such as Brazil remained under private control (Carroll, 1992; Moyo and Yeros, 2005).

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was undertaken in two phases. The first phase desk research sought to identify and profile non state organizations (NGOs) working in the land and agrarian sector. This entailed interrogating their formation contexts, mandates, programming activities, advocacy issues, values, involvement in thematic land policy areas, institutional capacity, geographic and policy reach as well as governance frameworks. The second phase entailed field research in which questionnaires were distributed to twenty five NGOs located in and around Harare. These comprised the Zimbabwe Women Resources Centre Network, National NGO Food Security Network, Zimbabwe Project Trust, MS Zimbabwe, General Agricultural Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association, Department for International Development, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights, Zimbabwe Farmers Union, ZERO, NANGO, Poverty Reduction Forum, *Zambuko* Trust, Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa, Africa Resources Trust, World life Fund, Women and Land in Zimbabwe, MWENGO, Southern

African Peoples Solidarity Network, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, *Kunzswana* Women's Association, and, the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Women, Lands and Water Rights in Southern Africa, Women and Lands in Southern Africa, Community Technology Development Trust, FCTZ, Practical Action, Southern Africa for Indigenous Resources, Zimbabwe National Environment Trust, SOS Children Village Association of Zimbabwe and Action Aid International Zimbabwe (Mbaya, 2001).

Mop-up face to face interviews and discussions were conducted with selected key respondents drawn from six sampled NGOs, namely, the Women Rights Centre Network, the National Association of Non Governmental Organizations (NANGO), Community Technology Development Trust, African Institute of Agrarian Studies, Women, Lands and Water Resources in Southern Africa and the General Agricultural Plantation Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ). These key respondents were carefully selected on the basis of their long research and advocacy experience. For instance, the Executive Director of the African Institute of Agrarian Studies is one of the founding members of the institute and also a celebrated scholar on issues relating to land and agrarian reforms. NANGO is strategically positioned to provide an in depth overview of challenges in the NGO sector in Zimbabwe. Respondents from Women, Land, Water Rights in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre Network were particularly selected to generate regional insights into the situational and structural challenges besetting NGOs involved in the promotion of gender sensitivity in areas of access to land and water rights and the national land policy in general. The GAPWUZ has a long stretch of research and advocacy experience on farm worker issues in Zimbabwe. In fact the cause of the farm worker in Zimbabwe can hardly be fully appreciated outside the involvement of this union.

## STUDY FINDINGS

### NGO Formation Contexts

At the time of this study, there were around 155 NGOs that were directly and indirectly working on diverse land and agrarian issues, the bulk of which were post independence-era creations (Moyo and Dangwa, 2007). While the specific contexts accounting for their emergence varied from one organizational entity to another, generally, NGOs arose within contexts of perceived gaps in advocacy research, capacity, awareness, advocacy and lobby, welfare support, access to resources and rights, representation, gender biases and national policy delivery.

First decade NGOs were generally established within the development agenda of the state and therefore operated in close partnership with the state. They operated like government departments. Their scope of involvement was in the areas of perm-culture, environment, appropriate technology, biodiversity, food security and housing (Moyo *et al.*, 2000). Direct NGO

advocacy on land policy was yet to crystallize. It would appear that at this stage land policy issues were viewed as matters which could be directly addressed by the state. Among the NGOs that emerged during this decade are the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), the Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZPT), the National Farmers Association of Zimbabwe (NFAZ), the Zimbabwe National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and the General Agricultural and Plantations Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ).

During the second decade of independence (1990-1989), NGO formation largely revolved around social costs associated with the rolling back of the state under the IMF and the World Bank-initiated Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). This explains why NGO programming activities had a social service provisioning, poverty alleviation, gap filling and indigenization thrust. These NGOs can be grouped as shown below, depending with their broad areas of focus:

- Those that sought to promote the rights and interests of farmers. These included the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU), the Justice for Agriculture (JAG), the Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union (ICFU) and the Farmers development Trust (FTD).
- Those that sought to promote the welfare of the farm workers. These included the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, Farm Orphan Support Trust, Zimbabwe Agro Industry Workers Union, the Zimbabwe Horticulture, Crocodile, Sugar and Allied Workers Union, Farm Workers Action Group (FWAG). For these NGOs, formation matrices evolved around the deteriorating welfare conditions of the farm workers in the context of land reforms in Zimbabwe.
- Those that sought to promote gender inequalities. These included the Action Aid International Zimbabwe, Women and Land in Zimbabwe (WLZ), Women, Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa (WLWRSA), Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN), Zimbabwe National Environment Trust (ZIMNET), The Women Trust (TWT).
- Those that sought to promote community development. Within this group are NGOs such as the Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT), Development Aid from People to People-Zimbabwe (DAPP-Zimbabwe), *Kunzwana* Women's Association (KWA), Practical Action Southern Africa, Plan International, Christian Care, World Vision, Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), Lutheran Development Services (LDS) and the Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE).

Third decade NGO formation and advocacy can hardly be conceptualized outside the events of the 1997s. The year marked a shift to fast track land reforms characterized by land invasions and compulsory acquisitions of land. NGO advocacy and lobby began to thicken around the diverse core facets of landlessness such as land reforms, land rights, water rights, gender sensitivity in land reforms, human rights in land reforms, and governance issues (ZERO, 2001; CREATE, 2002). The post 2000 era witnessed the formation of Land NGOs such as the African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Women and Land in Zimbabwe and Women, Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa. Some NGOs which had initially not prioritized land issues in their programming activities began to incorporate land-related issues such as land rights, tenure, water rights, gender rights in land reforms and food security. This programming orientation reflected growing awareness of landlessness as a multi-faceted and cross cutting issue.

### **Extent of NGO Involvement in the Land Reform Process**

NGO involvement in land reform advocacy should also be assessed by the extent of their participation in five key phases of the land reform process, namely, land allocation, utilization, tenure, administration and adjudication (Ghimire and Moore, 2001; Moyo, 2001). Land allocation or distribution is inherently a conflict-laden process. It entails the transfer of ownership and titles from one group to another. It logically follows that those who stand to lose rarely take it lying down. Their extent of involvement varied with the nature of their advocacy focus. NGOs were involved directly and indirectly through advocacy, lobby, research and providing skills and legal training on matters relating to land, water and women rights, and land disputes, among others. Included in this pool were 'farmer associations' such as the Zimbabwe Farmers Union, Indigenous Commercial Farmers Association, Commercial Farmers Union, Justice for Agriculture Group and the Zimbabwe Commercial Farmers Union; 'gender pressure associations' such as Women Land in Zimbabwe, Women, Land, Water, Rights in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe Women Research Centre Network, The Women Trust (TWT), *Jekesa Pfungwa/Vuligondo* as well as 'human rights lawyers associations' such as the Zimbabwe Environment Law Association and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights.

NGO involvement in 'land utilization' revolved around issues of excessive regulations that undermined efficient utilization of land by newly resettled farmers, infrastructural development, availability of inputs (such as seed maize, fertilizer, drought power), issues of production and productivity, food security, cultivation of fragile lands as well as the extent of sustainability in land use. Involved in this advocacy activities were NGOs such as the Zimbabwe Farmers Union, Indigenous Commercial Farmers Union, ORAP, Community Technology Development Trust, Women, Land, Water Rights in Southern Africa; Care International; African Institute of Agrarian Studies and the Poverty Reduction Forum. NGO advocacy and lobbying sought to promote sustainable use of land resources for agriculture, housing and industrial development as well as

preventing the cultivation of fragile lands and environmental degradation. The nature of their involvement included:

- Identifying the production systems to be developed. Those involved included the African Institute for Agrarian Studies
- Organizing cheap credit. Involved in this were NGOs such as the Zimbabwe Farmers Union.
- Assessing the impact of land allocation on women. Involved in this were organizations such as the Women in Land in Zimbabwe (WLZ) and Women, Land, Water Rights in Southern Africa (WLWRSA).
- Developing appropriate technology. NGOs such as the ICDT and the Practical Action Southern Africa were involved in these activities.
- Identifying regulations that undermine efficient utilization of land. In this section were NGOs such as the Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association (ZELA), the Poverty Reduction Forum and the Women, Lands and Water Rights in Southern Africa.
- Providing information on land use classification and rights. Those involved included the ZIMNET, FOSENET, AIAS and WLWRSA.

Land tenure questions cover the rights to land, water and other resources. Security of tenure is ensured through legal and administrative instruments such as leases, permits and offer letters. Since these instruments invariably define issues of ownership, access, control and use of land; NGOs sought to investigate fairness and gender sensitivity in tenure systems. Among those that were involved were the Zimbabwe-Rights, the Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association, the WLWRSA, the WLZ, the ZWRCN and JAG, among others. The nature of their involvement entailed preventing evictions, mediating in land disputes, and raising awareness on tenure rights, among others. Their involvement was largely motivated by the observation that existing land laws discriminated against customary forms of tenure.

Land administration is mostly the preserve of authoritative governmental structures. NGOs involvement include lobbying government on fair legislation and support systems, conducting parallel evaluations and audits, raising awareness on entitlements, building institutional capacity as well as calling for transparency, fair legislation in land administration processes. Within this pool were Human Rights NGOs such as the Zimbabwe-Rights, ZELA, Women and Law in Southern Africa and Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights. Gender NGOs were involved through lobbying for gender sensitive support systems, awareness raising and entitlements while research NGOs such as AIAS were involved through conducting parallel evaluations and audits of the land reform process.

Land reforms are redistributive processes and as such are highly prone to land-disputes. Across the world, land courts have been established to provide land adjudication roles. Land adjudication is a highly legal and technical process. They involve lengthy court processes around issues of compensation and restitution, illegal evictions, illegal land occupations, legal representation of marginalized people and unfair justice systems, among others. NGOs were involved in conflict management, eviction prevention and land dispute arbitration. For instance, the *Inyika* Trust was involved through research and legal services in defense of land reform while the Women and Lands in Zimbabwe (WLZ) lobbied the Lands Committee to consider synchronizing legal frameworks that would address various facets of land disputes (CREATE, 2002). This lobby was mainly in response to several land disputes involving women's access, control of land and inheritance-related land disputes (in which women faced eviction upon the death of their husbands). By 2008, district level sub-committees on land disputes had been established.

### **NGO Programming Activities**

The extent of NGO involvement in the land sector can also be determined by scrutinizing the profile of NGO programming activities. Review of NGO programming activities point to involvement in diverse areas of research, capacity building and training, advocacy and lobby, gender awareness, environment, biodiversity, community development, poverty alleviation, food security, land and water rights, among other issues. Their programming activities reflect growing appreciation of land reforms as multi-faceted issues. However, direct land advocacy remained the least prioritized area, presumably because of the sensitivities associated with land reforms. With the onset of the Fast Track Land Reform Program, NGOs that had initially viewed themselves as land-centric recoiled from the land sector in apparent fear of being involved in political conflicts. Below is a synoptic review of the programming activities of the five case study NGOs in the land sector:

### **African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS)**

Research findings pointed to an organization that had established a niche as an intellectual and technical player in the local and regional land discourse. Its expertise was sought by several local and regional NGOs, international banks and government departments. Its research and publications on land and agrarian issues generated useful information for stakeholders interested in land and agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe. At the continental level, AIAS established itself as part of a broader global network through collaboration with other research institutions. The institute has working links with the Centre for Policy Studies of South Africa as well as Africa-Wide research networks with the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESERIA) of Senegal and the Third World Forum. Indications are that AIAS contributed substantially to the formulation and evaluation of the national land reform policy in Zimbabwe. Of particular note was its involvement in the initiation of the national land audit.

While there are mixed views on the impact of these audit findings, they in a way forced the government to go through some form of self evaluation. Some high profile individuals are reported to have been pressured into handing back some of their excess farms. Closely related to this, was AIAS' participation in the drafting and publication of the World Bank Policy Report-whose wide circulation among donors, NGOs, farmer unions and consultants highlighted issues of markets, inputs, land market and crop by crop approaches in the analysis of production.

Notwithstanding this, the institute was not spared by the socioeconomic challenges facing the country then. These contexts posed serious threats to its cardinal ideals of objectivity and rigor in research and advocacy. They also eroded its funding horizons, its capacity to attract and retain the services of highly experienced staff, researchers and consultants. While the institute responded to these challenges by prioritizing the training of young staff, returns from this initiative are likely to be eroded by high staff turnover. The institute is currently operating on a skeletal staff-a situation that is likely to see the institute shelving a number of its well intentioned programming activities.

It is also instructive to note that while AIAS made significant effort to build research and technical capacity as well as cultivating multi-disciplinary analytical approaches; institutional research culture is still heavily skewed towards the quantitative. This is particularly manifest in its analysis of baseline surveys. This overly quantitative thrust does not augur well for an institute that is particularly dealing with land and agrarian reforms as social processes. While capacity for quantitative analysis is indeed available, the capacity to generate social meaning from statistical research findings was low note in its baseline surveys. The institute can capitalize on this by exposing its research department to social science methodological frameworks. In particular, the institute must encourage synergy between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### **Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU)**

The ZFU is the legitimate representative of communal, resettlement and small-scale commercial interests in Zimbabwe. Its effectiveness suffered from financial and institutional constraints. While as a membership based union, it had the right to collect a small levy on the sales of various smallholder crops, this hardly suffices for the diverse mandates it has to deal with. Its ability to speak for smallholder farmers was complicated by the fact that only one-fifth of its potential constituencies were paid-up members. The ZFU also had no formal systems in place for prioritizing members' needs or monitoring the impact of its various programs on different categories of members. Withstanding these weaknesses, the ZFU managed to gain strong political influence through its corporatist relationship with government. Government prioritization of the development of the small-scale sector facilitated ZFU access to key decision-making in government.



### **General Agricultural Plantations Workers Union of Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ)**

The General Agricultural Plantations Workers Union of Zimbabwe remained the most institutionally visible farm worker union in the farms, horticulture, plantations, fisheries and forestry. Its lobby and advocacy, mostly undertaken in cooperation with other NGO partners under the banner of the Farm Workers Action Group, contributed significantly to the incorporation of the issue of former workers on the national land reform agenda. Its lobby targeted key state institutions such as parliament and departments of agriculture. For instance, in its presentation to the Parliament Portfolio Committee on Lands and Agriculture on the situation of housing and tenure for farm workers in newly resettled areas in 2005, GAPWUZ lobbied that:

- Farm workers be given special consideration in land allocation,
- Farm worker families be given residential security through the introduction of settlement villages (self contained communities) in resettlement areas,
- Farm workers be included in NSSA housing schemes, and
- Infrastructure such as schools and clinics is provided to farm workers.

The Union also launched the Grassroots Project which was aimed at forging closer links with workers committees and farm workers in strategic commercial areas in the provinces of Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Manicaland. Notwithstanding this, GAPWUZ programming activities have been dogged by several institutional and contextual challenges. The geographical isolation of individual farms made effective union organizing difficult. Farm owners also used laws of trespass against GAPWUZ. The Union also lacked sufficient resources for mobilizing and organizing farm workers who are very mobile and scattered across the country. On individual farms, links between workers committees and unions were problematic as workers' committees established under the Labor Relations Act of Zimbabwe (LRA) provided direct representation to employees. Most workers did not afford to pay subscription fees. GAPWUZ was affected by political and economic dynamics, especially in the second decade of independence. ESAP and drought also induced retrenchments in the coffee, tea and sugar estates, instituting visible dents in the GAPWUZ membership. These dents became more visible with the split of the sugar workers from GAPWUZ in the late 1990s.

### **Community Trust Development Technology (CTDT)**

Its programming activities, has made significant inroads in highlighting integrative approaches to national development. In particular, its prioritization of appropriate and sustainable agricultural technology, food security, biodiversity, plant genetic resources, biotechnology, bio-safety, environment and desertification encouraged the fusion of modern and indigenous knowledge systems within small-holder farming communities. Its practical approach also underlined the need to view land in a holistic context, that is, as a mechanism for addressing poverty, water, environment, housing, and food security. Equally visible in its approaches, was the need to view

development as a technology issue. CTDT also has strong collaborative networks within and outside governmental circles, established partnerships with the department of Research and Extension Services, Organization for Rural Associations for Progress, Zimbabwe Farmers' Union, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, Regional Environment Organization, Scientific and Industrial Research Development Centre. At regional level, CTDT partners with institutes such as the Food Security Network of SADC NGOs, SADC Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy, and the CBAN. At international level, its partners include Global Coordination Unit-Chile, Intermediate Technology Development Group Consumer International, Food Agricultural Organization Commission on Genetic Resources, Rural Advancement Foundation International, International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, SEARICE Philippines, and NORAGRIC. However, given prevailing funding challenges and the largely practical nature of its activities, an overly multi-sector focused programming approach is bound to overstretch its limited resource base.

## **DIRECT LAND ADVOCACY**

Although there were around 155 NGOs involved in issues related to land and agriculture, direct land advocacy was lowly prioritized. This was even the case where land advocacy was grafted in NGO programming activities. The general perception was that it was too sensitive for local NGO involvement. Land and agrarian issues constituted a tiny portion in the programming activities of most NGOs. This was even noticeable even in the advocacy activities of some of the five NGOs identified by [Moyo and Dangwa \(2007\)](#) as directly involved in land advocacy. In fact, interviews revealed that most NGOs did not view themselves first and foremost as land NGOs, arguing that the land issues are just but a tiny portion of their broad focused advocacy programs. Further, it was also evident among those few that viewed themselves as 'land NGOs', a common advocacy vision on the land reforms was yet to emerge.

There were also noticeable gaps in the conceptualization, visioning and interpretation of unfolding land and agrarian issues among NGOs, especially on the extent to which compulsory land acquisitions and farm occupations ('farm invasions') could be relied upon. This in turn led to marked differences in NGO focus, advocacy strategies and prioritization of issues. Review of their reports revealed distinct variations in the language used to describe the land reform process. Some preferred pejorative terms such as '*jambaja*' or 'farm invasions' in place of 'farm occupations'; a 'radicalized state' in place of a 'dictatorial state'; 'squatters' in place of 'farm settlers'; 'indigenous land occupiers' in place of 'squatters or land grabbers or invaders', among others ([CREATE, 2002](#); [IVHU, 2006](#); [Moyo and Yeros, 2007](#)).

## NGO INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

While the need to institutionalize capacity for research and advocacy was a prioritized goal in most NGOs, organizational effectiveness suffered from the deteriorating socio-economic environment which directly and indirectly restricted NGO advocacy, research and programming. Funding suffered as some European-based organizations became less inclined to fund projects relating to land advocacy in Zimbabwe. The highly politicized nature of land issues interfered with NGO outreach activities in resettlement areas. Interviews revealed several cases in which field/implementing officers (were in some cases) denied access to their target communities. The political sensitivity of land issues also had a peeling effect on NGO objectivity (especially in their analysis of the implementation of land and agrarian reforms). NGOs involved in land and agrarian advocacy and research generally shied away from sensitive issues such as one man one farm policy, issues of governance and transparency in land reform processes and the impact of the FTLRP on productivity, among others.

There were also noticeable duplications in NGO programming activities, with some NGOs almost going by same names and others struggling to justify and define their space. This scenario was mostly visible in NGOs that are focusing on women, land and water rights.

There was also a noticeable tendency to focus on too broad and diverse range of issues. For instance, a single NGO would be involved in areas as diverse as food security, research, advocacy, micro financing, dam construction, inputs supply, farmer training programs, health, education, poverty alleviation, democracy and governance, human rights, peer education, vocational training, irrigation, and AIDS/HIV etc.

While there were variations in NGO resource mobilization capacities, the overall impression was that the majority of NGOs were stressed in terms of mobilizing funds through consultancy services. This left most NGO programming activities heavily relying on external donor funding, a financing framework that had inherent tradeoffs. For instance, the insistence on quantifiable results by donors forced most NGOs to engage in projects that yielded quick returns to the detriment of longer-term development-oriented projects. Donor funding is mostly project specific and in this way forces most NGOs to tailor their projects to attract donor funding, irrespective of whether or not they have the capacity to implement them. Short-term funding interfered with NGO strategic planning and growth as it was difficult to plan for more than two years. This explains why most NGO programming activities had a one-year focus.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article examined the nature of NGO involvement in the land and agrarian sector, particularly interrogating their formation contexts, programming, advocacy strategies and institutional effectiveness.

NGOs have been central institutional players in the national development process during and after independence, providing diverse gap filling functions in various sectors of the economy. There are around 155 NGOs working in the areas of poverty alleviation, income generation, community development, biodiversity, environment and provision of basic services such as water, food and health, among others.

While first and second decade NGO involvement was visibly restricted to traditional agrarian-related issues, by 2000 there had emerged a cluster of NGOs with direct interest in land reform advocacy. These researched and provided advocacy, consultancy and training in areas relating to the impact of reforms on productivity, food security and the environment; water rights, women access to land, tenure rights, and, land disputes, among others. NGOs such as the African Institute of Agrarian Studies went beyond this to capture the issue of landlessness in Zimbabwe and Africa as global phenomena with parallels in Asia and Latin America.

Notwithstanding this, NGOs involvement in land reform advocacy was not without challenges. The land reform program was highly politically sensitive, scenarios that restrained NGO involvement from direct land advocacy. NGO advocacy was also compromised by funding problems. Donors were reportedly less inclined to provide funds for programming activities on land reforms. Additional challenges were in the form of noticeable gaps in the conceptualization and interpretation of the land reform process and duplications in programming activities, with some NGOs almost going by same names while others were struggling to justify and define their space.

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