

**AN EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY OF LAND REFORM IN ZIMBABWE:  
A CASE STUDY OF CHIRUMANZU DISTRICT,  
MIDLANDS PROVINCE**

BY

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## Abstract

Land reforms are carried out in different countries during different periods for various reasons. For the African countries, land reforms aim to address social and economic injustices of the colonial period. The economic, social and political dimensions of land reform usually overshadow the importance of environmental sustainability. For any land reform process to score economic and social points, it should deeply embrace environmental sustainability. The aim of this research was to evaluate the environmental sustainability of land reform in Zimbabwe through a case study of Chirumanzu district, in the Midlands province. Primary data was collected through the administration of household questionnaires to households sampled through multistage cluster sampling. Secondary data was collected from government offices in Mvuma and Kwekwe. The environmental sustainability was evaluated through the application of the Ecological Footprint accounting system. The Ecological Footprint accounting system calculates the human consumption of the ecological resources (Ecological Footprint) and compares it with the calculated available ecological resources (biocapacity). The data was processed through the five stages of the Ecological Footprint and biocapacity computation system. The Ecological Footprint system identified cropland, grazing land, built-up land and forestland uses as applicable in this research. An Ecological Footprint and biocapacity was calculated for each land use. The total for all the land uses gives the Ecological Footprint and biocapacity for Chirumanzu resettlement areas. The difference between biocapacity and Ecological Footprint determines the environmental sustainability status of the study area. The total Ecological Footprint results reveal that land reform in Zimbabwe is generally sustainable. However, the general situation masks the disparities found in the different land uses. The cropland and built-up land uses reveal ecological deficits. These are attributable to more than planned households settled in the area. The grazing land use reports a huge ecological reserve. This is attributable to very low livestock ownership in the resettlement areas of Chirumanzu. The huge ecological reserve in the grazing land use cushions the narrow ecological deficits in the cropland use and built-up land use to paint an overall ecological reserve. Compared to the national situation, the district environmental sustainability situation is very much different. The district largely reports environmental reserve while the nation reports an environmental deficit. This leads to a conclusion that land reform in Chirumanzu district is weakly environmentally sustainable. It is recommended that land reforms consider environmental sustainability as an important cornerstone for its success. An audit should be carried out to ascertain households on the ground against the planned numbers.