

Land Tax Reform In Namibia: A Resource or A Problem?

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ABSTRACT

This paper covers the land tax reforms and pricing of land that have implications involved in acquiring for accommodation purposes. Suffice to say, land reforms have implications on the livelihoods of a specific community depending on the age of development. In Namibia, like any other countries of Africa that share the same problems in terms of land tax reforms, pricing of land has skyrocketed and have attracted debates from the youth to the old guards of the echelons of government. It is therefore safe to say that there are major constraints in terms of colloquial development that looks to the past, the present and the future when it comes to land matters. The situation is very excruciating as it sees the farmers of the country bowing down in their need for farming as a result of not realizing their developmental targets through owning land for such purposes. The implications are so severe such that this paper has made some research works from the Japanese land tenure systems and contrasted these matters with the Namibian systems of land taxation.

In Namibia, subsistence farming is the key to rural livelihoods and in the absence of communal and state land, the majority of the people will continue to languish in poverty.

Comparisons with the western styles of life in Africa staggers to visible extents and to immediately conclude that land reforms would address the plight of the majority of the people living in destitution and poverty would therefore cascade to a longer stride which the countries of Africa should consider. It is not easy to develop everyone else in a short timeline, but there needs some more time to realize the goals, targets and objectives of poverty.

The land prices in cities and towns continue to escalate and it is not easy for the common people and lowly-ranked people to make ends meet in terms of affording purchasing land and houses. Flats and sectional titles also do not provide for security of tenure because of the legalities involving them.

Keywords: land tax reform, Meij Government, Dynasty of Japan, Imperial Diet, Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with land tax reform. The issues of land tax reform follow an observation on the Meij Government or Dynasty of Japan. The paper extensively discusses various land reform problems that affect the ruled people in Namibia and a comparative and learning experience is based on the Japanese land reforms of 1873 that took effect. Namibia is also facing an uphill when it comes to land reforms. Zimbabwe has also been a matter of mention as it went on land reforms and had some disappointing ends.

2. Objectives/Purpose of the study

- To analyse the viability of the implications of land tax reforms in Namibia by critically assessing the historical Japanese land reforms;
- To assess the land taxation processes of the historical Japanese land reforms and comparing them to the Namibian situations;
- To draw conclusions on how Namibia would have learnt on the dilemmas of land reforms applied by the Japanese Government.

3. Methodology

The methodology employed is qualitative and the relevant information was explored to ensure that land tax reform is addressed in the situation of the Japanese Government and draw arguments how this would be a learning process for Namibia. Literature search using interpretive approach.

4. Result/Findings

In the final analysis, it was found that the following are the results:

- The elite scramble for land because they have resources to acquire it and the poor continue to be poorer and land scarcity occur;
- The poor communities are deprived of life since they are dependent on land for their survival because most African countries' populations are surviving mainly in rural areas where subsistence farming is the mode of survival;
- The current farmers are discouraged and sell all they have and invest their money in the banks where they live comfortably on the profits from that money only without being actively involved in the production sector;
- The tax returns are not feasible, because of the nature of the topography and productivity of the land itself. Some farms allocated are mountainous and are therefore lacking grass and general productivity;
- The aridity of the countries where water is a scarce resource discourage aspiring farmers to install requisite infrastructure from the far located rivers to the mainland, e.g. for a Namibian farmer to get water from Kunene River to Gobabis, or from the Orange River to Okahandja in order for them to irrigate their land or even for pastoral purposes is in itself unattemptable, because of the vast distance;
- **Farmers do not pass their skills, knowledge and experience to anyone else:** As experienced farmers get discouraged and leave the farming industry and everything else relating to this industry into the hands of governments to struggle with how they would use the land productively;

- **The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) goes down:** This is so because most of the population in the land are unemployed and do not contribute to the GDP of the country. The country will always be underrated in terms of global or continental index.
- **Failure of the country to produce:** due to this failure of the country to produce its own products and target lucrative markets, the country depends on other countries for commodities;
- **Huge cuts in employment rates:** This happens because those who were employed by the farmers lose their jobs due to cuts in the number of employees farmers should keep as a consequence of rising land taxes;
- **Escalation of poverty:** Escalation of poverty occurs because those who were employed in the farms were unskilled in terms of formal qualifications and for them to get jobs in the cities and towns of the country becomes difficult;
- A sharp increase in criminal activities were also some of the major concerns especially in Namibia where the unemployed people arrange themselves in gangs or as individuals of two people go and attack and kill farmers in their farming areas;
- **A sharp increase in urbanisation regarded as a limelight:** youthful people come to towns to look for jobs in order for them to make ends meet in terms of survival and thus overload urban planning and service provisions;
- **Impoverishment of rural areas:** Due to urbanization, those who were living in the farming industry and are now jobless stream to go find places to live in the cities and towns of the country, thus overloading urban and town-planning schemes by dictating major budget chunks that are planned to cater for informal settlements where they demand for accommodation and municipal services;
- **Future aspiring farmers dwindle:** Since there is no more motivation and profits in the farming industry for the farmers to hold onto farming, because farmers are paying more taxes and outweigh profits as compared to gains, the desire to farming by those who want to join this industry dwindle.

5. Discussion

Experience has shown that each time you touch on the land ownership, eruptions of volcanoes begin. The land is not an easy issue to go by, because it is embroidered with the touch on someone's life and existence. The person who acquired land long time ago to be taxed heavily leaves many questions to be desired as such a person has lived for many years without taxation of some sort. What should be important is that there is no land without existence in a specific region or area and that the area is also influenced by the politics of some sort. The land matters determine an economic factor and are not issues of just nominal nature. Learning from a **Japanese Land Tax Reform of 1873**, or *chisokaisei* (地改), which was started by the Meiji Government in 1873, or the 6th year of the Meiji era. It was a major restructuring of the previous land taxation system, and established the right of private land ownership in Japan for the first time.



Natural vegetation in Namibia (Jan. 2014):

Courtesy of <http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

The previous land taxation system in Japan was first established during the Taika Reform in 645 A.D. along with the adoption of the Chinese judicial system known as the *ritsuryō codes* (律国 *ritsuryōkokka*). The previous system was an imitation of the **Tang Dynasty's corvée** taxation system, known as the *soyōchō* system (租調 *soyōchō*). It happened that taxes were paid in the form of rice and other crops under this system, and the tax rates were determined through the land survey created by **Toyotomi Hideyoshi**. It must be mentioned here that a proportionate annual tax was assessed according to the yield of a given plot of land in the country. The principal farmer's name was registered in the land survey, and that farmer would be held accountable for the land tax. The payment could also be held as part of the village's collective responsibility under the **Murauke System** (村制 *Muraukesei*).

As years progressed, the Meiji Government announced the reformation of the land taxation system in 1873 as part of the Meiji Daijōkan Ordinances (太官告 *daijōkan fukoku*) and efforts at instating the system began the following year.



Vast uncultivated land for animal paradise in Namibia, (Jan. 2014):

Courtesy of <http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

The government initially ordered individual farmers to measure the plots of their land themselves, calculate their taxes, and submit the results to local tax officials. However, difficulties arose with the honesty of the measuring system when the 1874 budget showed that collected taxes fell far below projected values.

To address this system in the manner the government perceived turns of events, the government responded by establishing a land tax reform department in 1875, and began

aggressive efforts to install the system. Under the direction of the new department, each prefecture was assigned a set amount of taxes it was required to collect. It happened that the department forcefully changed land values to meet the set amount if values reported by farmers did not meet projected values for that specific taxation period. It was not just welcome as such but instead, caused widespread resentment among farmers, and several large-scale riots erupted around the country. In January 1877, the government lowered the tax rate from 3% to 2.5% in an effort to regain support for the land tax.

The department's aggressive system continued through 1878, but the strictness of rules gradually decreased as it became clear that required amounts would be met and as well to avoid riots. The reforms had taken complete effect by 1880, seven years after the start of the reforms.

As mentioned earlier, taxes were paid in rice and crops until the end of the *Edo* period, and the cultivator was held as the taxpayer under the previous system. It must be mentioned that taxation was also inconsistent, as values differed in certain regions of the country. The new land tax created a uniform system which taxed landowners based on the worth of their land, and were paid in cash instead of crops.

From the foregoing, it was observed that there were main changes between the two systems which I will list as follows:

- Taxes were calculated as a proportion of the cash value of the land based on harvest potential, rather than the actual crop yield;
- A cash-based system over payment with crops;
- A uniformly set tax rate at 3%; a reduction from the previous system;
- The landowner, confirmed by the issuance of land bonds, was liable for the taxes instead of the farmer;
- The system was standardized across Japan.

When the land tax reforms took effect, it should be made clear that problems erupted. There is an expectation that in any reform or change that takes place, serious issues may be overlooked, which if not taken care of, may have long term effects on the economic growth of any country in the world.

It should also be mentioned that change is an excitement to some and despondency to some.

The reform was therefore necessitated by the stabilization of the tax revenue where government could be assured of a steady income because the tax was set at a constant rate against the value of the land, and revenue did not fluctuate with crop yields since tax income became independent of crop fluctuation. And most essentially, the risks of crop fluctuation were pushed from the government to the farmer.

Government could not see any peace or rest as the land tax reform ended up increasing the burden on villages with hunter-gatherer lifestyles in uncultivated lands, and resulted in several farmer insurrections against the Meiji government, including the Ise Revolt (伊暴 *Ise bōdō*) and the Makabe Revolt (真暴 *makabe bōdō*). The discontent also helped fuel the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (自民運 *jiyūminken'undō*). The Meiji government saw no peace trails until it resorted to lowering the tax rate to 2.5% in 1877 in fear of further revolts.

Japan went on to honour the private land ownership, which was recognized for the first time with the issuing of land titles. The previous practice of land ownership was the Public Land *Public Citizen Laws* (公公制 *kōchikōminsei*), which stated that all land was under the sole ownership of the Emperor, such that individual farmers were merely borrowing the land from feudal lords, who in turn were borrowing the land from the Emperor. The reform abolished this archaic system of land ownership, and started to allow landowners to use their property as a financial asset in collateral or other investment. This law therefore, became one of the first steps towards the development of capitalism in Japan, paralleling the English (and later United Kingdom) statute Quia Emptores enacted several centuries earlier.

As events turned and prior to the enactment of the land tax reform, the unilateral embargo on trading and selling farmland was rescinded in 1872, and the use of real estate as collateral for agricultural loans was legalized in 1873.



Land used for subsistence farming in Namibia (Jan. 2014): Courtesy of <http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

However, suffrage rights stepped in when the previous feudal contract system became obsolete because the landowner was the one held responsible for taxes, and gave landowners the right to participate in politics. Later when the Imperial Diet was established; many of those given the right to vote in the lower house belonged to this land-owning class.



Vast uncultivated land in Namibia (Jan.2014): Courtesy of <http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

As mentioned earlier in the previous system; rice and crops collected from each fiefdom were sold and distributed by wholesale dealers via *daimyo* storehouses in Edo or Osaka. This reform therefore allowed farmers to sell their crops for cash directly to local merchants, and had a large effect on

Japanese commerce, and hence, was the beginning of commerce and circulation of currency.

Japan further progressed to establish land bonds and in 1879, the face of a land bond issued sprang to the fore grounds. Japan began with land bonds (地 *chiken*), which were recorded in a registry as a result of the land surveys implemented by the land tax reform. These land bonds created a system of verifiable land ownership; indicating the person responsible for taxes; established buying and selling rights; allowing real estate commerce and credit to become dependent on these bonds.

It is vital to mention that the land bond registry was dissolved in 1889 after its duties were handed over to the land register department in 1884. Payment of taxes was managed solely by this new department until 1961, a period of seventy-seven years in operation. All addresses, zoning classifications, and acreage information were transferred to the land register department, so it can be said that current Japanese land ownership records are directly traceable to the land tax reform.

Finally, it must be mentioned here that details in the registry were not always accurate because of the primitive surveying techniques used by farmers at the start of the reform. This was both due to time and personnel limitation, and deliberate tax evasion attempts, ("rope stretching" (縄ひ *nawa nobi*) and "rope shrinking" (縄み *nawa chijimi*) resulting in inaccuracies in the modern registry. The Land Registry Inquiry (地調 *chisekichōsa*) was seen to be effective in order to create an accurate registry for all of Japanese land owners.

Often times, some African countries have embarked on policies of land taxes and land reforms. Land tax may discourage farmers if it is highly taxed and may result in jeopardizing farming or any efforts that aims at feeding the nation. Land is the backbone of all economic activities and acts as an investment for a human being. No one in glowing economic terms may want to cope with land tax that is discouraging benefits, incentives and profits. Africa cannot afford a sharp transition of taking away land or tax land unreasonably as these might leave long lasting scars on the life forms of her people.

We have also seen in the foregoing statements that the elite may live the life of dragon flies to capture all land in the land reform without any farming knowledge to promote economic growth. The taking away of land or commercialization of all communal land may also pose threats to those who are living in subsistence farming, henceforth attracting uprisings, pogrom and insurrections against states. African states should not be moved by instincts that come with commercialization of all communal lands in fast paces, but rather take precautionary measures on ensuring that they move steadily with their own people. Care therefore should be taken as well when expropriating land or taxing land, because the farmers with the requisite knowledge may be destabilized and lose focus due to frustrations they get from the governments that are tasked with the responsibility of protecting property and rights of their citizens (Kingsey, 1999).

Significantly, some lands are not fertile, but are rather physically and topographically rocky and may not be necessarily beneficial for livestock or agronomic purposes and

may remain so for centuries without any yields. Some lands are alkalinity and may not be of use for agricultural purposes. How would the land tax address these? Other countries are landlocked and arid so to mention. As a result of these; the entire infrastructure provisions may be difficult to acquire and install for effective farming.

In attempted land grab in Cameroon had the following consequences: "International protest appears to have halted a 73,000 hectare palm oil and lumber venture by the multinational Herakles Farms Corporation in Cameroon. The deal had awarded Herakles a 99-year lease at only \$1 per hectare a year. Studies confirm the company's "intention to make huge profits in transfers and assets on the cheap," said Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director of the Oakland Institute. Such transactions "should serve as a reminder that the land rush that has brought investors into the African nations is not driven by philanthropy, despite claims to the contrary." Brendan Schwartz, of Greenpeace International, said the scheme "is not a development project," but would, in fact, create "unemployment and underdevelopment."

African countries are endowed with peasant life and to introduce the land reforms, taxations and expropriations of land; the following should be in waiting:

- The elite will scramble for the land because they have resources to acquire it and the poor would continue to be poorer and land scarcity may occur;
- The poor communities would be deprived of life since they are dependent on land for their survival because most African countries' populations are surviving mainly in rural areas where subsistence farming is the mode of survival;
- The current farmers may be discouraged and sell all they have and invest their money in the banks where they would live comfortably on the profits from that money only without being actively involved in the production sector;

Farmers would sell all their properties including livestock, land, equipment, infrastructure and live luxury lives in towns and cities like those in the white collars because they have invested all their monies and are living on interests accruing therefrom. Zimbabwe is a good example to learn from in this case. When farms were taken away by the government through land reforms, Zimbabwe now imports maize from South Africa to cover the gap between the current shortages to the next harvest, which is around April.

It is stated that at least 2.2 million people in rural areas require food aid before the April harvest season according to a survey by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee. This report is given by government and aid agencies.

Zimbabwe received 300 tonnes by road through Bulawayo (city). These tonnes are then moved to other parts of the country to feed the starving communities in rural areas. Zimbabwe is importing a total of 150,000 tonnes from South Africa and hopes that this would cover the period between now and April, which is regarded as a harvest season.

It is clear that as a result of Zimbabwe enforcing vigorous land reforms without regarding checks and balances of what might happen in the future, she has been facing perennial food

shortages resulting in the government importing maize from neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Zambia to augment local production. It must be stated clearly here that those farmers that were rooted out from Zimbabwe went to neighbouring Zambia where they were welcomed and to date they have started making inroads in the farming sector thus heightening the economy of that country.

According to a survey by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee which groups government and aid agencies, the following were observed: *"Poor food production has been blamed on land reforms which saw the seizure of white-owned commercial farmers under President Robert Mugabe's land reforms for redistribution to landless blacks. The government says poor rains in recent years are to blame for the drop in food production."*

"Zimbabwe needs over two million tonnes of maize annually but last year the country produced only 800,000 tonnes, a drop from 1.4 million tonnes the previous year. Last year the government signed a deal to import maize but deliveries have been slow."

"We are still getting maize imports from Zambia but the movement of the maize has been very slow," the Deputy Agriculture Minister David Marapira told AFP according to the SAPA/AFP Report.



Vast uncultivated land in Namibia (Jan. 2014):
Courtesy of <http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

- The tax returns may not be feasible, because of the nature of the topography and productivity of the land itself;
- The aridity of the countries where water is a scarce resource will discourage aspiring farmers to install requisite infrastructure from the far located rivers to the mainland, e.g. for a Namibian farmer to get water from Kunene River to Gobabis, or from the Orange River to Okahandja in order for them to irrigate their land or even for pastoral purposes is in itself unattemptable;



Vast uncultivated mountainous land in Namibia (Jan. 2014): Courtesy of
<http://www.bing.com/images/search?>

- Farmers may not pass their skills, knowledge and experience to anyone else, thus leaving everything into the hands of governments to struggle with how they would use the land productively;
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) goes down, because most of the population in the land are unemployed and do not contribute to the GDP of the country. The country will always be underrated in terms of the global or continental index.
- Failure of the country to produce, which then depends on other countries for commodities;
- Huge cuts in employment rates;
- Escalation of poverty;
- A sharp increase in criminal activities;
- A sharp increase in urbanisation regarded as a limelight;
- Impoverishment of rural areas due to urbanization;
- Future aspiring farmers dwindle.

In conclusion therefore, it is incumbent on African states to understand that the onslaught caused by land reforms is massive and very difficult to deal with. This is like throwing a dry leaf to float on a vast sea without any cause or effect. The majority of the African populations would continue to suffer in poverty, because the timeline to industrialize everyone in the state or country is very long and bitter. Looking at the nature of unemployment rates, technology, skills, remoteness of the rural areas that need to be industrialized by trying to secure employment for everyone, the cost of land to an ordinary person who has no such means to acquire land and finally, the lack of innovations in the African continent; it is therefore readily acceptable to foresee that much is left to be desired in embracing land reforms as means of productivity.



Subsistence farming in Namibia as a form of survival on land for the poor: January 2014:
Courtesy of
<http://www.bing.com/images/search>

Commercializing of the land in Namibia, Botswana, or Zambia or in most countries of Africa is a distant dream and cannot be given preference at the stage. These are long range settlements that may even account for other two or three millennia in a row to be realized.

Important to note is that: **IF YOU WANT TO DESTROY A COUNTRY, DESTROY THE FARMING BASE AND MORAL VALUES, THEN WITHIN A FEW YEARS, THE COUNTRY WILL BE IN DESOLATION.**

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Land Reform in Namibia: Slow Pace, Debatable Benefits

JOHANNESBURG, February 19, 2004 (IRIN) Namibia's land reform process is being questioned by some who find the pace too slow, while others argue that its benefits are debatable.

The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act of 1995 provides for the acquisition of agricultural land by the government, for redistribution to Namibians "who do not own, or otherwise have the use of, agricultural land, or adequate agricultural land and, foremost, to those Namibian citizens who have been socially, economically or educationally disadvantaged by past discriminatory laws or practices".

The land reform process in Namibia is based on a "willing-seller, willing-buyer" principle, with the government having first option on any commercial farm for sale.

Only 30,720 people out of an estimated 243,000 landless Namibians were resettled by 2003, and critics have said the country's piecemeal land reform had moved far too slowly since independence in 1990, and delivered far too few tangible benefits to its land-hungry citizens.

The government has countered that its hands were tied, as some of land offered by the commercial agriculture sector was unsuitable for resettlement.

On Monday the authorities launched a Land Tribunal to "determine the purchase price in instances where there is a dispute between the owner of commercial agricultural land and the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, once that land has been offered for sale to the government," the ministry said in a statement.

Researchers have suggested that many beneficiaries were unable to sustain themselves on their allocated land, which has led to calls on government to provide more long-term support to new small-scale farmers.

Just 15 farms, a total of 6,483 hectares, were acquired for resettlement in 2001/02. Figures for 2003/04 are not yet available, but in late 2003 the government had acquired just 124 farms, totaling more than 700,000 hectares, since land reform began in 1995. Well below the target of 9.5 million hectares in five years.

Pressure has mounted for more radical measures, with newspaper headlines drawing comparisons to Zimbabwe's controversial fast-track program. In recent months Namibia's farm workers' union threatened to invade commercial farms in what they dubbed "land-sharing and not land grabbing". The union said the move was prompted by the eviction of farm workers from farms across the country.

In a statement condemning the planned land invasions, the Lands and Resettlement Minister, Hifikepunye Pohamba, acknowledged that the "pace of acquiring land meant for resettling formerly disadvantaged landless Namibians is not moving fast".

He said this was because "some farmland offered to the government [was] totally unsuitable for resettlement purposes. Some of these farms offered are very stony and desert-like areas. Therefore, the ministry cannot buy these unproductive farms and put people on them".

Pohamba noted that land was a sensitive issue in Namibia and the entire southern African region, and had to be handled "with the utmost care". Upon launching the Land Tribunal, he said the land question in Namibia was both crucial and complicated, "in that it is the most important and primary means of production, because every development activity takes place on land".

His ministry was about to complete a database of all beneficiaries resettled over the years, their dependents and livestock.

Questioning land Reform

In its "Vision 2030" statement, the ministry said the annual average resettlement rate was 2,222 people, and it was hoping to resettle between 68,000 and 70,000 by 2030. An amount of N \$50 million (US \$6.5 million) has been set aside over the next five years for the purchase of farms.

It admitted that the "acquisition of land and the subsequent process of land distribution and access, through resettlement and rehabilitation programs, have so far proved to be a hard nut to crack. Its complexity stems from various inherent factors, such as land availability in relation to the skyrocketing demand for it".



Namibia is very dry, making much of the land suitable principally for pasture and leaving farmers who receive relatively small holdings from the land reform unable to earn a living.

The ministry is now questioning whether the current mode of land reform is the best one for the country. In an overview of its work, the ministry asked: "Does resettlement and rehabilitation (as part of land reform) contribute positively to the overall goals for national development, and if so, how much?"

Analysts have pointed to a lack of post-resettlement support as a major stumbling block to successful implementation of land reform policy. A report by Namibia's Legal Assistance Center (LAC), 'One Day We Will Be Equal ... A socio-legal perspective on Namibian Land Reform and Resettlement Process', said "the only reason that rampant starvation and malnutrition do not ravage the resettlement projects is because the government operates a food-for-work program in virtually every resettlement project".

"Beneficiaries of resettlement projects are caught in a vicious [cycle] because of their poverty: they have to sell agricultural produce to obtain some cash, which in turn lands them in a food deficit situation."

It added that "one of the main criticisms against the resettlement program has been that it does not provide sufficient training on how to effectively utilize land obtained from the government, nor does it provide access to modern farm equipment".

LAC researcher Willem Odendaal, who co-authored the report, told IRIN that "there's a definite lack of capacity building programs". There was "a lack of transferring skills, basic

technical skills and basic managerial skills to the beneficiaries on these projects".

"Another problem is that people are not close to markets. Also, if they are lucky to produce some produce for the markets, they don't have the means, the organisational or managerial skills, to organize themselves," he explained.

"It's very difficult for people to have access to credit to make improvements on the piece of land they are allocated, as there's definite insecurity in terms of the transfer of ownership of title deeds," Odendaal said. Many beneficiaries of land reform were unable to secure loans because they had a long-term lease agreement with the state, and not title to the land.

No Substitute For A Title Deed

The ministry has argued that "long-term lease agreements with the incumbent beneficiaries ... give new impetus to the resettlement program in general, and will raise revenue to secure the long-term sustainability of the program". "Lease agreements will encourage beneficiaries to increase the productivity of their respective plots and add value to the resettlement program," the ministry said.

However, the research conducted by LAC indicated that "lending institutions, inherently conservative in nature, are not likely to lend money based on collateral of uncertain legal title, although (in theory) a loan might be given on a properly registered 99-year lease which had some marketable value".

But there "is no substitute for clear and unambiguous legal rights to land [which was] absolutely necessary for [new] settlers to compete in a modern agricultural economy", the report added.

"If your property is not registered, then it has complications - in the sense that you cannot get a loan to improve your land, you cannot put land up as surety to improve the land and buy basic equipment," Odendaal said.

"Thus, the reality of life in the resettlement projects is of settlers being dumped on a few hectares of poor land, equipped with hoes and shovels, and expected to earn a living. This is a process certain to fail - a viable resettlement program requires an infrastructure to support settlers while they gain access to the kind of substantial agricultural enterprises that can support a reasonable lifestyle," the report concluded.

With all this in mind, many resettled beneficiaries have opted to lease their plots, mostly to communal farmers from overgrazed areas, for as much as N \$200 (US \$30) a month. Some, said Odendaal, had opted to abandon their plots for a chance at a better life in urban areas.

Time For A Re-Think

A newly created Permanent Technical Team (PTT) on Land Reform will undertake a survey of 40 percent of the 124 farms acquired by government that are earmarked for resettlement, to "establish the socioeconomic profiles of the resettled people or beneficiaries", and review the existing policy and legal framework dealing with land reform and natural resources management.

The PTT hopes to develop "a comprehensive Land Reform Plan of Action". Pohamba has said this "Action Plan would then map out the future direction of land reform in Namibia".

Germany, the country's former colonial power, announced last year that US \$7.8 million of a recent development aid package of US \$25.66 million would go towards the country's land reform program and to finance the PTT.

The LAC study argued that "the land reform and resettlement process must be carefully evaluated as a poverty-amelioration measure".

"Simply put, the future of small-scale agriculture in Namibia, as well as in the rest of rural Southern Africa, may be economically very limited. Therefore, resettling 100,000 or more Namibians on small-scale agricultural schemes may never be an effective way to reduce rural poverty," the report concluded.

The country is currently in the grip of a food security crisis, with some 650,000 people in a population of around 1.8 million said to need food aid this year.

A combination of ongoing drought and flash floods has severely eroded the coping ability of rural dwellers and subsistence farmers.

According to Odendaal, "in Namibia there's a history of how commercial farmers were supported with subsidies in the old apartheid days ... and in the dry season their subsidies just increased".

"It's very difficult to farm in Namibia, and I think government has been under-estimating climate conditions in this country," he noted. "People need to be able to sustain themselves, and [more than] 10 years into the resettlement program, they have not been able to do so."

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Table 1: Land distribution in southern Africa as a percentage of total land

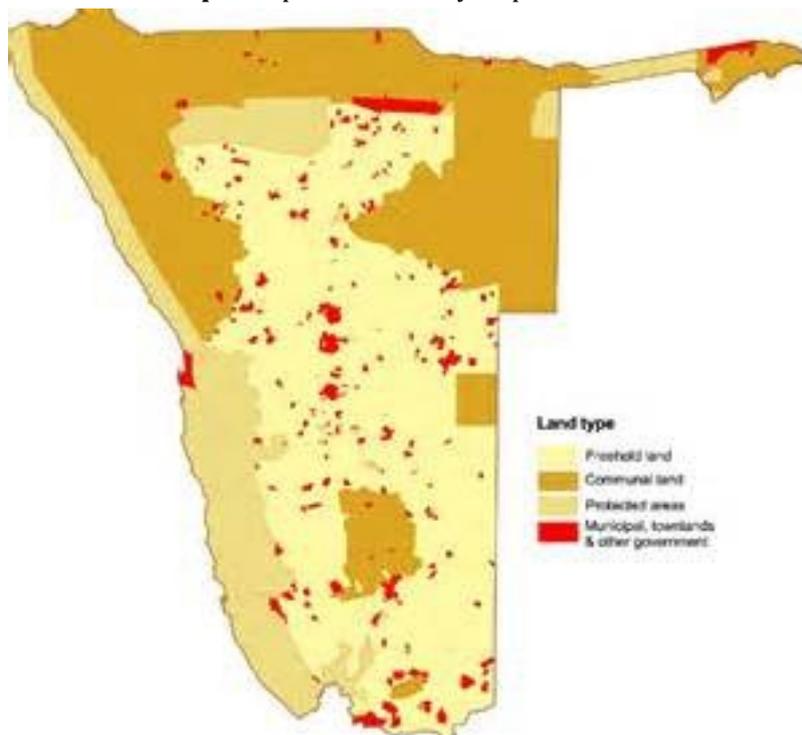
	Individual tenure	Communal lands	Other public lands
Angola	5.4	88	6.6
Botswana	5	70	25
Lesotho	5	90	5
Malawi	4.3	78.7	17
Mozambique	2.9	93	4.1
Namibia	44	41	15
South Africa	72	14	14
Swaziland	40	60	0
United Republic of Tanzania	1.5	84	14.5
Zambia	3.1	89	7.9
Zimbabwe	36	42	22

Source: World Bank, 1999; Moyo, 1998.

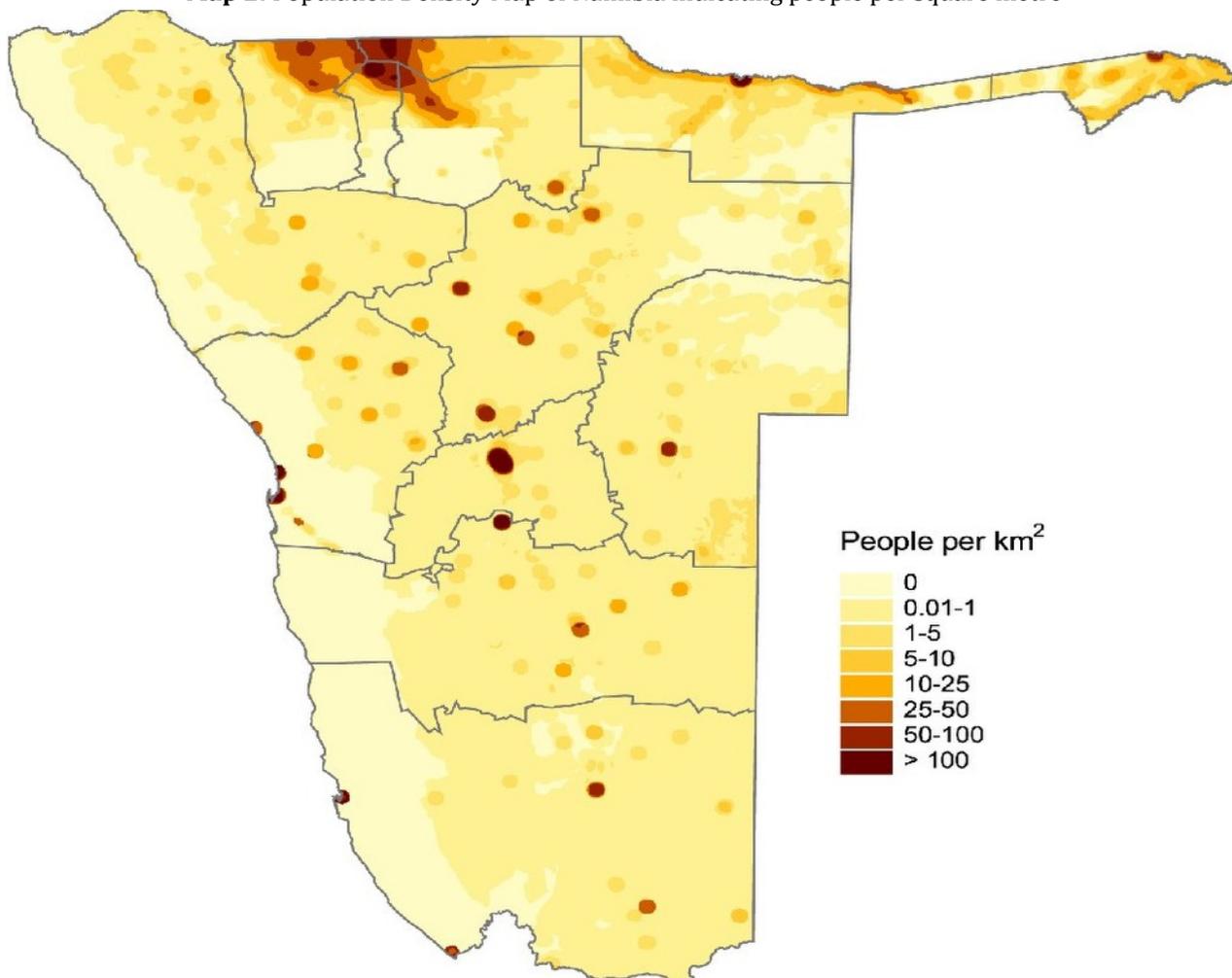
Table 2: Agrarian subsector as a percentage of gross domestic product

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Commercial	3.2	4.9	4.1	3.9	3.2	2.4	2.6	2.8
Communal	1.7	2.7	2.8	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.7	2.7
Total	4.9	7.6	6.9	6.5	5.8	4.8	5.3	5.5

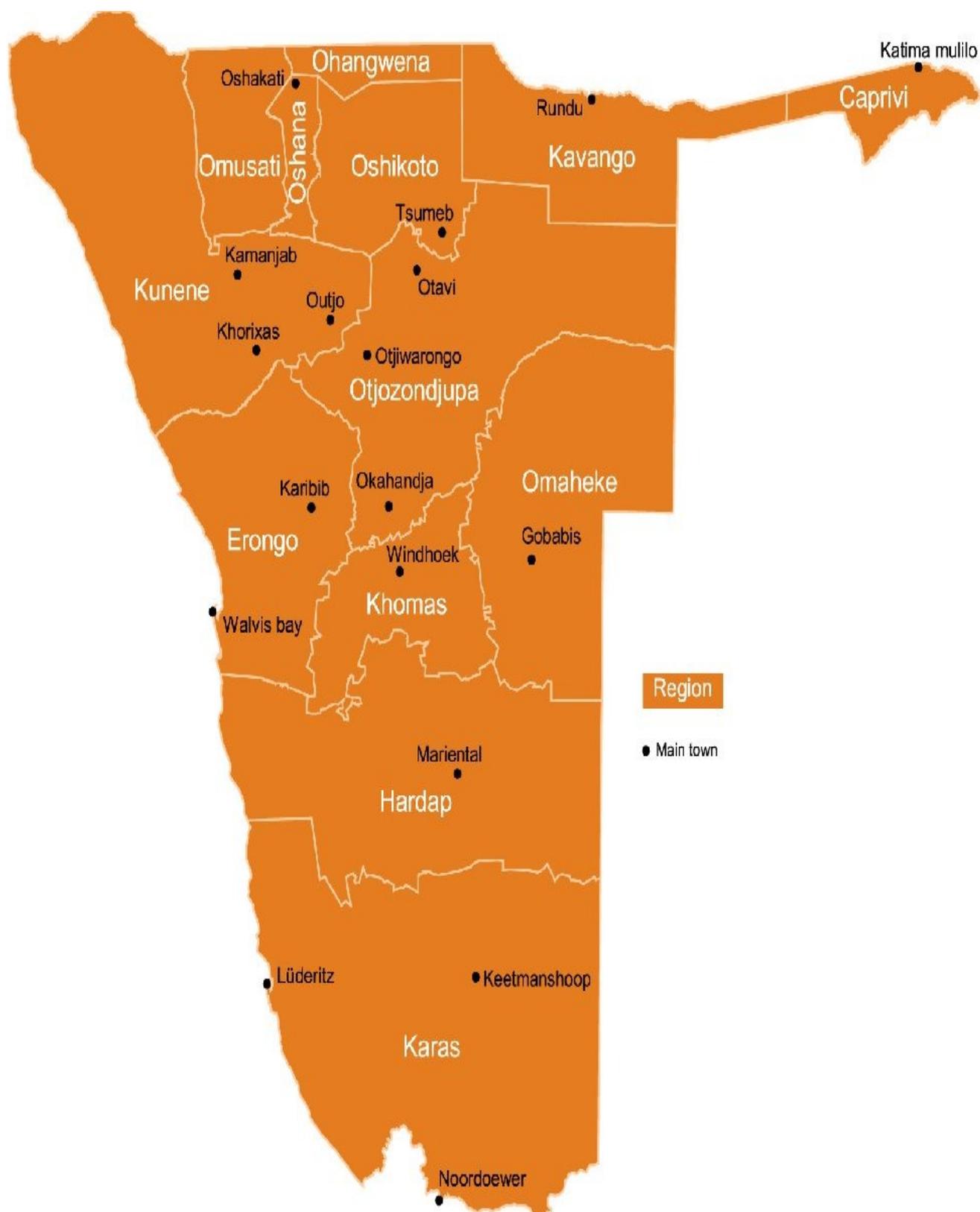
Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2001.

Map 1: Population Density Map of Namibia

Source: http://www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skep_pges/maps.htm

Map 2: Population Density Map of Namibia indicating people per square metre

Source: http://www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skep_pges/maps.htm



Namibia Map with Regions

Source: http://www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skep_pgcs/maps.htm