



Land, Environment
and Development Project
LEGAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE

Livelihoods *after* land reform

Namibia country report

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2010

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ABBREVIATIONS

AALS	Affirmative Action Loan Scheme
ACLRA	Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 of 1995
CBO	community-based organisation
FURS	Farm Unit Resettlement Scheme
LAC	Legal Assistance Centre
LISUP	Livelihoods Support Programme
LRAC	Land Reform Advisory Commission
LSU	large-stock unit
MAWF	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (2005 onwards)
MAWRD	Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development (1990-2005)
MLR	Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (2005 onwards)
MLRR	Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (1990-2005)
NANGOF	Namibian Non-governmental Organisations' Forum
NAU	Namibia Agricultural Union
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NNFU	Namibia National Farmers Union
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRC	National Resettlement Committee
NRP	National Resettlement Programme
NUNW	National Union of Namibian Workers
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PTT	Permanent Technical Team on Land Reform
RoN	Republic of Namibia
RRC	Regional Resettlement Committee
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SSU	small-stock unit
SWA	South West Africa
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation (political party)
WSWB	willing seller, willing buyer (model)

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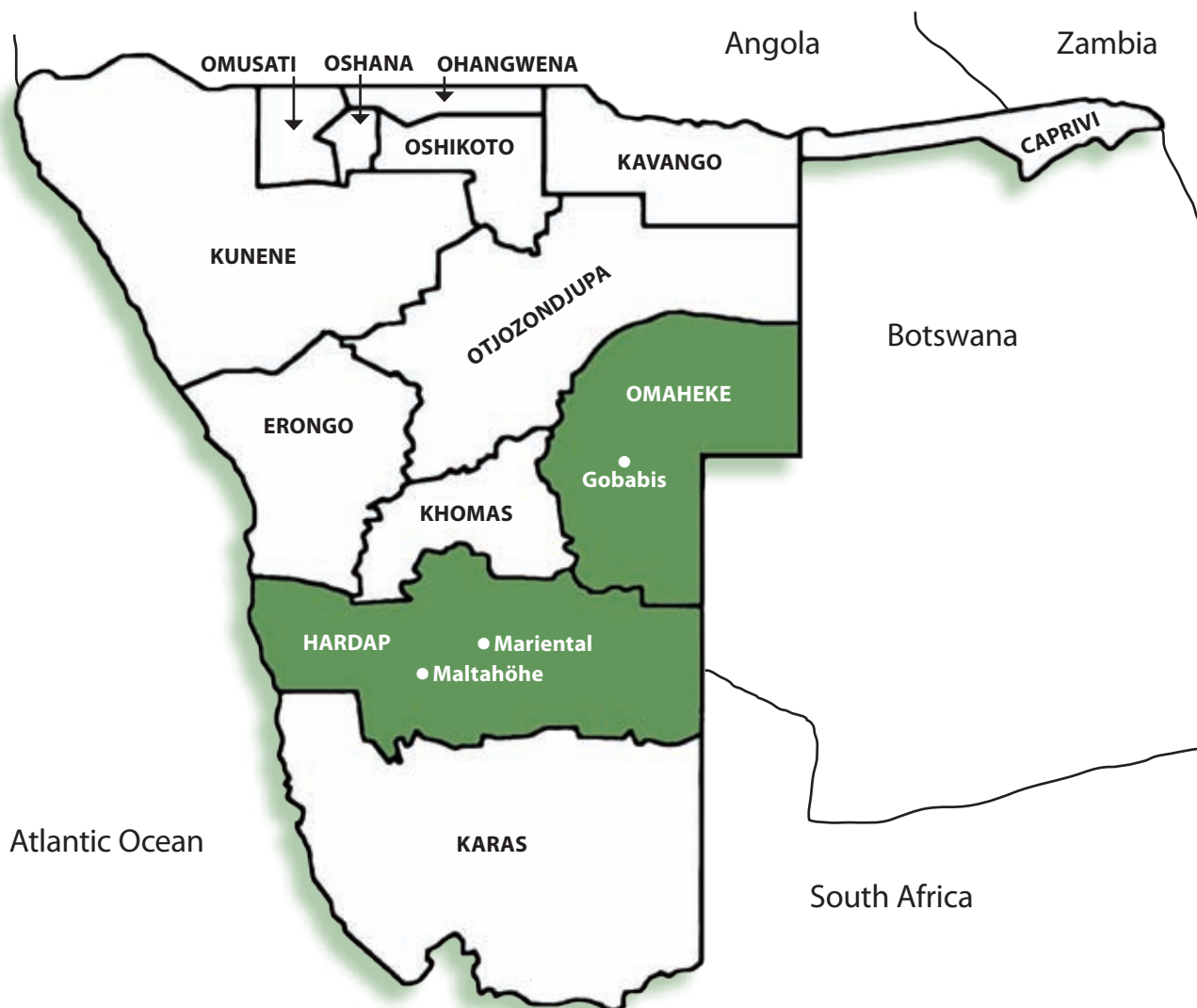
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BACKGROUND ON THE STUDY AND LAND REFORM POLICY

Section A



THE MAIN STUDY AREAS



THE STUDY SITES

HARDAP

GROUP RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

Bernafey – Mariental District
Westfalen – Mariental District

FURS RESETTLEMENT FARMS

Halifax
Mara
Tulpvlei
Jackalsdraai
Panorama
Weiveld

— cluster, Maltahöhe District
— cluster, Mariental District

Sekretarispan – Mariental District
Uitsicht – Mariental District

OMAHEKE

GROUP RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES – Gobabis District

Drimiopsis
Skoonheid

FURS RESETTLEMENT FARMS – Gobabis District

Danel
Du Plessis
Grootrooibult
Rosenhof
Rusplaas
Wolseley

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the study

In 1990, Namibia emerged from colonial rule with a skewed distribution of agricultural land and high levels of poverty. The new government led by SWAPO Party initiated a process to address the land question within the first few months of Independence. A *National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question* in 1991 was the foundation on which the Namibian government developed its land reform programme. The Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation started in 1990 to acquire freehold farmland for subdivision and allocation to previously disadvantaged Namibians. This component of redistributive land reform was complemented by the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (AALS) established in 1992. The AALS provided subsidised loans to previously disadvantaged Namibians to acquire large-scale commercial farms under freehold title.

The primary objectives of land reform in Namibia were to address injustices which large-scale land dispossession had brought about, and to reduce poverty and inequality. However, little empirical work has been done to assess the impact of land redistribution on poverty levels and the livelihoods of beneficiaries. The most comprehensive survey on the impact of land redistribution was conducted by the Permanent Technical Team on Land Reform (PTT) in 2003/04. The primary objective of this survey on “livelihoods after land reform” is to add to the existing body of knowledge on land redistribution.

Through case studies in Hardap and Omaheke Regions, the survey explored the extent to which land redistribution is reducing poverty and meeting livelihood improvement objectives. The specific research objectives were the following:¹

1. Provide empirical data, in a systematic and comparable form, on livelihood impacts and agrarian structure in the post-land reform setting.
2. Understand what conditions – including appropriate land transfer mechanisms, resettlement models, tenure arrangements and post-settlement support – are likely to result in poverty reduction following land redistribution.
3. Advance conceptual thinking about post-transfer livelihood options, interrogating what is meant by ‘viable’ land reform in the southern African context.
4. Develop replicable methodological approaches for assessing impacts at different scales – e.g. household, scheme/project, regional economy – for use as assessment and monitoring and evaluation tools.

¹ Verbatim excerpt from the official LaLR website home page (<http://www.lalr.org.za>).

An important element of this research was gauging how beneficiaries perceive the benefits or otherwise of land reform. The information they provided in this regard made it possible to examine the notion of ‘viability’ in a different light. While acknowledging the importance of economic considerations in land use, the study has shown that for many beneficiaries, these have been only some of the considerations, albeit important ones, with regard to resettlement. Other considerations such as a secure home or a place for retirement were in many cases more important than those of agricultural production. In this regard, this report complements the book entitled *This is my land* (von Wietersheim, 2008) which documents beneficiaries’ perceptions of the impact of improved access to land.

This study was carried out as part of a research project covering Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia, co-ordinated by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. The overall aim of the project was to provide information which would enable a comparison of the impacts of land reform on livelihoods and the wider patterns of agrarian change after land reform in different settings across selected sites in three southern African countries.

1.2 Research methodology

For the study in Namibia, Hardap and Omaheke Regions were selected as the main research areas. One reason for this is that the agro-ecological characteristics of these regions broadly correspond to those of Limpopo and Masvingo Provinces, the main research areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. Within Hardap and Omaheke, the oldest resettlement and AALS farms were selected for the research based on the assumption that the impact of land reform on beneficiary livelihoods would be more pronounced on these farms than on farms settled more recently. Proposals for research farms were discussed with Regional Council representatives in separate meetings in Mariental in Hardap and Gobabis in Omaheke, and shortlists were agreed upon. For the research in Hardap, an attempt was made to select an equal number of respondents in Maltahöhe and Mariental Districts to reflect the different agro-ecological characteristics of the western and eastern parts of the region.

Group resettlement schemes were integrated into the sample in both regions. The schemes were Bernafey and Westfalen in Hardap, and Skoonheid and Drimiopsis in Omaheke. Approximately 40% of the official group scheme beneficiaries were interviewed on the latter two schemes.

For logistical and other reasons, resettlement farms were clustered. In Hardap the farms Halifax, Mara and Tulpvlei in Maltahöhe District formed a cluster, and Jackalsdraai, Weiveld and Panorma in Mariental District formed a cluster. In the latter district, Sekretarispan had to be studied separately as an outlier.

In Omaheke, four farms around Skoonheid, namely Rusplaas, Rosenhof, Grootrooibult and Danel, formed a cluster, and Du Plessis was also close enough to be included. Most of the field



Mara resettlement farm, Hardap.

sites in Omaheke were in Steinhausen Constituency, and interviews were also conducted in Gobabis, Kalahari and Otjombinde Constituencies.

A desk study on land reform in Namibia in general and the two target regions in particular provided the background for the fieldwork. The Hardap fieldwork was carried out between August 2007 and March 2008, and the Omaheke fieldwork in September, November and December 2008. The findings for each region were written up in a draft report. Sequencing the fieldwork in this way enabled the research team to review its experiences in Hardap before commencing with the work in Omaheke.

The research process was the same in each region. The first step was to visit the identified group resettlement schemes, resettlement farms and part-time farmers to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews. This step served firstly to introduce the study and the research team to beneficiaries and secure their willingness to participate, and secondly to obtain information on beneficiaries' life histories. These interviews were subsequently transcribed. The second step was a quantitative survey, for which a questionnaire was developed based on examples from Namibia, Zimbabwe and Limpopo Province in South Africa. In Hardap the questionnaire was directed to the same beneficiaries whose life histories had been recorded in the qualitative interviews.

Having completed the quantitative survey in Hardap, the team realised that the questionnaire was too ambitious in scope. Firstly, the respondents were intimidated by the number of questions. Then, many questions on livelihoods that were relevant in Masvingo and Limpopo proved irrelevant in the Namibian context. Moreover, the small sample of interviewees



created problems of interpretation and generalisation. The questionnaire was simplified to make it more ‘user-friendly’ for Omaheke, but still it remained a fairly long questionnaire. While the resettlement and AALS beneficiary sample was small in Omaheke, two sizeable group resettlement schemes, namely Skoonheid and Drimiopsis, allowed for interviewing representative samples.

Due to time and budgetary limits, it was impossible to obtain samples of the three main categories of land reform beneficiaries large enough to allow for statistical generalisations. Long distances between beneficiaries were a major limiting factor in terms of time and costs. It was not uncommon that after making appropriate arrangements for interviews, the team arrived only to find that the respondent had left the farm for some urgent business in town or on a neighbouring farm. Since many of the small-scale farmers on resettlement farm units do not have telephones, the team often had to arrive out of the blue and hope that interviewees were available.

In mitigation of these logistical problems, it should be remembered that it was never an aim of this study to provide information that is statistically valid for the entire country. The purpose of the quantitative survey was to provide some empirical data on the beneficiaries interviewed, while the main aim of the study was to generate *qualitative* information aimed at explaining and describing perceptions and processes.

Information on the farms selected and the number of interviews conducted on each farm is presented below for small-scale farming resettlement or Farm Unit Resettlement Schemes, group resettlement schemes and the AALS.

Farm Unit Resettlement Schemes (FURS)

Table 1 below reflects the numbers and locations of the FURS respondents in Hardap and Omaheke. In Hardap, 15 full-time and 4 part-time farmers were interviewed and all also responded to the quantitative questionnaire. In Omaheke, 8 full-time and 12 part-time farmers were interviewed, and a total of 12 responded to the questionnaire. Unfavourable weather conditions (heavy rains and floods) limited the number of FURS respondents in Omaheke.

Table 1: FURS survey sites and number of beneficiaries interviewed

REGION	FARM NAME	SIZE (ha)	YEAR BOUGHT	INTERVIEWS		QUESTIONNAIRE	
				Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Hardap	Mara	4 303	1991	3		3	
	Tulpvlei	2 810	1991	1		1	
	Halifax	2 758	1991	1		1	
	Jackalsdraai	4 601	1991	3		3	
	Weiveld	5 481	1991	1	1	1	1
	Uitsicht	5 000	1991	1	1	1	1
	Panorama	5 721	1991	1	1	1	1
	Sekretarspan	5 439	1991	4	1	4	1
Total Hardap				15	4	15	4
Omaheke	Grootrooibult	5 489	1996	2		0 (of 2)	
	Rosenhof	3 406	1993		2	3 (of 8)	
	Danel	5 023	1997		1	4 (of 4)	
	Rusplaas				1		
	Skoonheid			3	2		
	Drimiopsis			1			
	Wolseley	5 042	1992	2			
	Du Plessis	4 102	1997		6	5	
Total Omaheke				8	12	12	
Total All				23	16	31	

Group resettlement schemes

In total, 37 beneficiaries on group resettlement schemes were interviewed and 49 responded to the questionnaire. The two schemes in Omaheke supported many more beneficiaries than the two in Hardap. The sample size in Omaheke can be regarded as fairly representative of the two schemes – said with some reservation due to the ever-fluctuating numbers of people living on these schemes. As will become clear, beneficiaries of group resettlement schemes differ from other beneficiaries to a high degree in terms of personal characteristics as well as resettlement aspirations and expectations.

Table 2: Group resettlement survey sites and number of beneficiaries interviewed

REGION	FARM NAME	SIZE (ha)	YEAR BOUGHT	INTERVIEWS	QUESTIONNAIRE
Hardap	Bernafey	3 729	1995	3	3
	Westfalen	1 191	1995	1	1
Total Hardap				4	4
Omaheke	Skoonheid	7 104	1993	17	21
	Drimiopsis	2 262	1991	16	24
Total Omaheke				33	45
Total All				37	49

Affirmative Action Loan Scheme (AALS)

The number of AALS beneficiaries interviewed was limited relative to the other groups. The main reason for this is that they are the only possible respondents on their large-scale commercial farms, and some were unable to keep the appointment for the interview. Due to the long distances between farms, it was not logistically feasible to reschedule appointments, and a few long journeys were taken in vain. By contrast, FURS and group resettlement farms with their multitudes of beneficiaries provided alternative respondents for interviews. Also, as with the FURS sample, unfavourable weather conditions (heavy rains and floods) posed a problem for reaching AALS beneficiaries in Omaheke.

In Hardap a total of 10 AALS farmers were interviewed, of whom 6 were full-time and 4 were part-time farmers. Their farm sizes ranged from 3 500 ha to 20 000 ha. In Omaheke, a total of 5 AALS farmers responded to the questionnaire, of whom 3 were full-time and 2 were part-time farmers. Their farm sizes ranged from 4 000 ha to 5 000 ha.

The Namibian Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) attended to the data capturing, cleaning and analysis for Hardap, and Survey Warehouse did the same for Omaheke. The latter also conducted further fieldwork in Omaheke in February and March 2009.

Gathering quantitative data by means of a 'normal' survey proved challenging as the farm-level economic data was very patchy. This is partly due to beneficiaries, particularly in the FURS category, not having recorded incomes and expenditures for their farming and other economic operations. For the group resettlement schemes, economic data at both scheme and household level was impossible to obtain. The absence or lack of this data makes it very difficult to calculate farm budgets and gross margins based on production data. In turn this means that no significant conclusions can be drawn as to whether or not land redistribution has improved the beneficiaries' economic livelihoods. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that no baseline data exists against which comparisons can be made.

Collecting data in group resettlement schemes in Omaheke was a challenge on its own. Obtaining information on dates, ages and numbers of livestock and people was a major problem. Not only were most beneficiaries functionally illiterate, but also they had differing notions of time and numbers. In some cases it was impossible to establish the number of children in a family, and in many cases, dates of birth and settlement could not be ascertained; only those possessing an identification document knew their precise date of birth.

Despite the problems experienced in gathering quantitative data, the research team believes that the *qualitative* information presented in this report will prove useful in assessing the impact that land reform has had on the livelihoods of beneficiaries. The beneficiary testimonies recorded herein will make clear that the benefits of access to land cannot be reduced to economic gains in all cases. The allocation of a small parcel of land was the only option for many previously disadvantaged Namibians to establish a home of their own, secure in the belief that they will not have to move again, and that their children will be able to enjoy the sense of stability that a family home normally provides.

2 LAND REFORM AND POVERTY: NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Rural poverty in Namibia

Namibia is reputed to have the most unequal distribution of income of all countries. Its Gini Coefficient of 0.63 in 2003/04 placed it right at the top of a selection of 30 countries. Explanations for this state of affairs include that the racist policies of the apartheid regime prior to Independence restricted the access of the majority of citizens to economic and social resources. In addition, Namibia's traditional reliance on the extraction of natural resources such as diamonds has meant that production is highly capital intensive rather than labour intensive (Central Bureau of Statistics 2008: 37).

Who are the poor? The National Land Policy defines the poor as people who are “landless or ... with little or insufficient access to land who are not in formal employment or engaged in non-agricultural activities” (RoN 1998a: 1). The National Planning Commission (NPC) recently put forward a narrower definition. This has been elaborated in the review of poverty and inequality which is based on the expenditure data of the 2003/04 Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) conducted by the NPC's Central Bureau of Statistics. Based on the cost of basic needs, this definition of poverty replaces the previous one which defined poverty in terms of the food share ratio of expenditure. The cost of basic needs definition acknowledges the fact that even if households are able to meet the basic food requirements of all their members, they are still deprived if they lack the resources required to purchase clothing and shelter.

The review of poverty established a food poverty line based on a minimum nutritional intake of 2100 kcal per day per adult, amounting to a cash requirement of N\$127.15 per month per capita. Non-food expenditures were added to the food poverty line to arrive at a lower bound poverty line describing “severely poor” households and an upper bound poverty line describing “poor” households. The monthly Namibia Dollar values per person for different poverty lines are as follows:

Poverty line	2003/2004 (N\$)
Food poverty line	127.15
Lower bound poverty line – “severely poor”	184.56
Upper bound poverty line – “poor”	262.45

Source: CBS 2008: 3

The upper bound poverty line of N\$262.45 per month per capita translates to an annual amount of N\$3149 per person or N\$15747 per household of 5 people. Therefore, technically speaking, the average Namibian household of slightly more than 5 people earning less than N\$15747 per annum is defined as poor.

Using this definition of poverty, the review calculated that 27.6% of all Namibians were poor, and 13.8% of those were severely poor (ibid.: 6). Most poor households were found in rural rather than urban areas. Just over 38% of rural households were poor, and 19% of those were severely poor. The corresponding figures for urban areas were 12% and 6% (ibid.: 10).

In the study area, 32% of households in Hardap Region were poor, and 22% of those were severely poor. The situation in Omaheke was marginally better with 30% of households being poor and 17.5% of those severely poor (ibid.).

Realising that statistical information provides only a static snapshot of poverty with little indication of how people themselves perceive poverty, government initiated a programme of participatory poverty assessment (PPA) in all 13 regions of the country from 2004-2006. The main objective of the PPAs was to acquire a deeper understanding of poverty by gauging the perspectives of poor people themselves. The information obtained added some meat to the statistics on poverty by establishing how the poor understood poverty and well-being and what they did to cope with poverty.

In Omaheke there was general agreement among the participants in different groups that poverty is a “condition of earning, having and owning close to nothing and depending on other people for one’s livelihood from day to day” (NPC 2006a: 36). There was also general agreement as to what constitutes “well-being”. Rural communities stated that well-being is defined by the ownership of assets, especially livestock, and additional income through employment. Access to land for grazing and cultivation as well as clean water for humans and livestock were seen as fundamental to well-being. Thus, not having access to sufficient land and water contributes to rural communities’ vulnerability to poverty (ibid.: 38).

Farm workers likened their lives to those of flies: constantly hungry and moving from one place to another in search of food until they fall down and die in the milk. This anecdote sums up the high level of mobility of farm workers, who are always on the lookout for better living and employment conditions (ibid.). Not having a house or place of their own to which they can retreat when they lose their employment contributes to farm workers’ vulnerability to poverty (ibid.: 40).

Views on poverty in Hardap were very similar to those in Omaheke. Poverty was defined as not having anything on which to build “an existence” and not having any material goods such as clothes and decent housing to support an existence. Limited resources for subsistence farming with livestock or gardening were seen as central to poverty. Conversely, well-being was defined in terms of ownership of assets, especially livestock, and income through formal employment. In view of the importance of farming, well-being relates to



access to land for grazing and cultivation, as well as to clean water for people, livestock and gardens (NPC 2006b: 49-50).

The definitions of poverty and well-being presented above are not exhaustive, but they indicate that for many people, access to land, water and livestock is a fundamental ingredient of well-being. This perception has found its way into national policies and political rhetoric, where land reform is regarded as a fundamental element of poverty reduction. The National Land Policy commits government to “seek[ing] to secure and promote the interests of the poor” at all times, “ensuring that they are in practice able to enjoy the rights of which they are assured in principle” (RoN 1998: 1). The Namibian Cabinet was reported to have stated that “without achieving a breakthrough in the land reform programme, the fight against poverty would not succeed” (*New Era*, 22.12.2000-12.1.2001).

Despite these political assurances and promises, Namibia displays a curious disjuncture between stated political objectives regarding poverty reduction and the implementation of redistributive land reform. While the need to support the poor through improved access to land is articulated in many official documents of the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR), the role of land reform in poverty reduction programmes is poorly spelt out in policy documents dealing with poverty more specifically.

Namibia’s principal statement on poverty reduction, the *Poverty Reduction Strategy for Namibia*, was approved by Cabinet in 1998. It does not accord redistributive land reform a long-term role in poverty alleviation. Instead, it observes that “the agricultural base is too weak to offer a sustainable basis for prosperity”, and foresees that “in a quarter century from now, the large majority of the country’s inhabitants ... are likely to have moved into urban centres ...” (RoN 1998b: 3, 5). While the Poverty Reduction Strategy sees significant potential for alleviating poverty through the development of the livestock sector, further opportunities for the development of cultivation in the freehold or commercial farming sector are regarded as limited. It argued that at best, “land reform and an associated shift to intensive cultivation could yield a one-time gain for poverty reduction in those few areas that are well watered but presently farmed by extensive commercial methods” (ibid.: 10). These statements echo the conclusions drawn by a World Bank study on poverty reduction that preceded the Poverty Reduction Strategy (World Bank 1997: 12). Land reform did not feature at all in the National Poverty Reduction Action Programme 2001-2005 (RoN 2002) which was intended to concretise the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Despite the Poverty Reduction Strategy being quiet on the role of land reform in poverty reduction programmes, Cabinet has continued to demand that land reform contribute to poverty reduction. In April 2006, Cabinet approved the recommendations, strategic options and action plan on land reform submitted by the Permanent Technical Team on Land Reform (PTT). These include recommendations that the action plans of national programmes such as Vision 2030, the National Poverty Reduction Programme and NDP2 (sic) “should specify quantifiable indicators and targets relating to poverty reduction, employment creation and income distribution in the short term”, and that government should improve the screening and selection of beneficiaries by “determining whether current criteria are socially, economically and politically appropriate”. In addition:

Urgent attention should be given to the priorities of those groups urgently in need of resettlement. Policy should, as a matter of urgency, take into account the priorities of disadvantaged groups in need of resettlement, such as farm workers and women ... Policy amendments should encourage community driven resettlement, giving priority to beneficiaries who indicate a preference for rural, agriculture-based lifestyles and who have agricultural experience and/or other land-based production experience (RoN 2006: 2).

These directives are not borne out by NDP3 which was released in 2008. The overarching strategies of NDP3 to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty include strengthening and diversifying the agricultural base of poor rural communities by, inter alia, encouraging diversification and improving agricultural production. However, improved access to land through land reform does not feature (RoN 2008: 195). While NDP2 also did not provide any detail on how land reform would support a broad-based rural development strategy aimed at reducing poverty, it did at least mention that land would be provided to poor, landless families (RoN n.d.: 565).

The absence of a discussion of the role of land reform in poverty reduction in NDP3 suggests that a fundamental rethink among technocrats on poverty alleviation has taken place in recent years. There is evidence that a reassessment of the role of land reform in poverty reduction has been underway in the MLR. The first indications of this appeared in the Ministry’s *Annual Report for 1998/99*, which referred to a “paradigm shift in its search for an integrated and sustainable resettlement programme”. The report suggested that this was a response to both a lack of suitable land for resettlement and budgetary constraints for buying, demarcating and upgrading farms.

The paradigm shift appears to have been away from beneficiaries with few assets and little experience in agriculture towards those who could bring sufficient assets and experience into the process to farm productively. In terms of the new paradigm, “it was imperative to expand [the] list of priority groups to include people who can add value to the resettlement programme by making a contribution to the maintenance of allotments and pay monthly lease amounts to government” (MLRR, *Annual Report 1998/99*: 33). In a ministerial workshop two years later, it was observed that individual beneficiaries were more successful than “the poorest of the poor” and provided employment opportunities. In the same workshop,

the concern was expressed that “in retrospect the focus on resettlement as the only strategy to assist the landless and poor people, particularly the San, may have been unwise” (MLRR 2001b: 5-6).

In subsequent years, the ability to farm productively or engage successfully in any other enterprises offered on resettlement projects became a more prominent criterion in selecting beneficiaries for resettlement. It was also expected that those intending to farm with livestock should own the appropriate number of animals as determined by the carrying capacity of each project. Moreover, beneficiaries should be able to support cost recovery measures such as payment for water (MLR, *Annual Report 2004/05*: 14).

This paradigm shift culminated in the drafting of new selection criteria for potential land reform beneficiaries. These are conveyed in the Ministry’s “Draft Resettlement Manual” produced in 2008. The criteria state that the ability of beneficiaries to farm productively is of paramount importance to the social and economic success of the National Resettlement Programme (MLR 2008: 44). Farming productively is the fundamental tenet of the criteria, as productivity “contributes towards poverty reduction, improve(s) living standards and foster(s) economic development” (ibid.). Consequently, to be considered for resettlement, it is necessary to require that applicants demonstrate their ability to farm and that they belong to the previously disadvantaged majority – thus “the primary beneficiaries of resettlement farms are previously disadvantaged ‘farmers’” (ibid.). In terms of the new selection criteria, applicants for resettlement whose livestock numbers match the carrying capacity of the farm unit stand a better chance of being allocated land than those with too few or too many livestock. Referred to as the “livestock ratio”, this is a means to enable beneficiaries to utilise their land optimally right from the start (ibid.: 45-46).

The focus of resettlement is increasingly on economic development, and this leaves little room for settling people who have no assets and few farming skills. Von Wietersheim (2008: 120) observed a “clear shift from political to economic objectives of land reform”. Earlier aims to settle as many black people as possible on white-owned farms appear to have given way to the aim of ensuring that beneficiaries contribute to developing the country’s economy.

Despite the emphasis on the ability to farm, provision is made for resettlement programmes of a social welfare type, which offer appropriate support services to accommodate people who lack assets (e.g. farm workers) and/or farming skills. Depending on the specific target group (war veterans, San community members, people with disabilities, etc.), applications for land-based welfare projects should be directed to the responsible line ministry (Health and Social Services, Veteran Affairs, etc.) The function of the MLR under this proposal would be to make land available for such projects, but not to manage social welfare programmes (MLR 2008: 16-17).

What seems to emerge is a discourse on land reform that distinguishes much more clearly between ‘economic’ land redistribution and land-based ‘welfare’ programmes. It is not easy to trace all the reasons for this altered approach. Financial and administrative costs of providing support to beneficiaries appear to be among the reasons for the rethink on poverty

reduction. Adams (2001: 3) argued that the change may have “reflected the government’s worries about the high cost and the lack of sustainability of attempts to resettle the poor”. Budgetary constraints were cited in several annual reports as the reason for government no longer being able to provide the support that beneficiaries need. In 2003 a contribution to the official newsletter of the MLR quoted the Minister as saying that government would no longer be able to provide basic support and food to beneficiaries on a monthly basis (*The Land*, 7(7), 2003: 5).

2.2 The politics of poverty and land reform

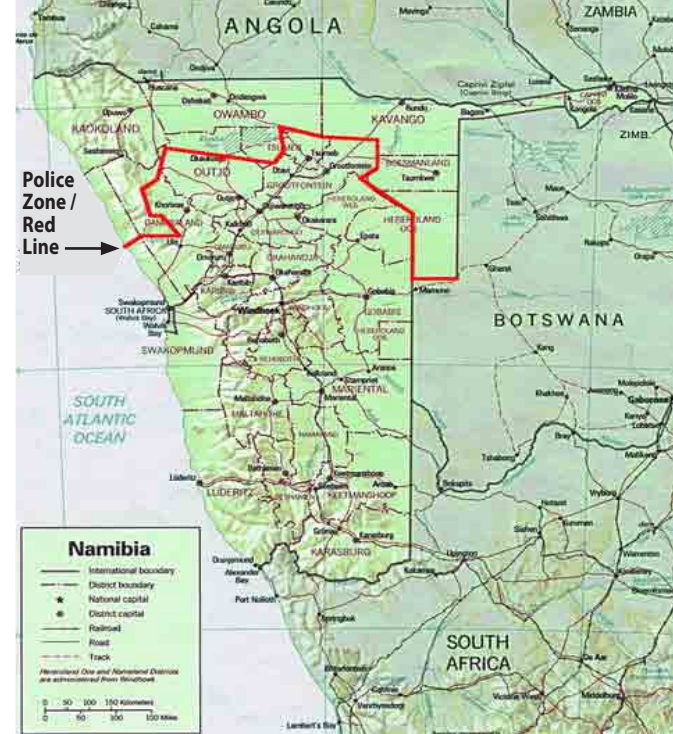
Three main factors have shaped and influenced the politics of land reform in Namibia. In the first place, the process and pattern of colonial land dispossession affected different population groups in Namibia differently. Secondly, political and economic reforms initiated by the South African regime in response to the armed struggle were designed to support a fledgling black middle class in Namibia by, inter alia, promoting the notion of large-scale commercial farming. Finally, post-Independence class interests have determined the nature and pace of land reform.

Namibia is probably the only settler colony in which European settlers appropriated large areas of agriculturally marginal land, leaving the higher rainfall areas in the hands of indigenous population groups. Large-scale land dispossession mainly affected the Herero, Nama and Damara communities, who were transhumant livestock farmers in the central and southern parts of Namibia. Their loose socio-political structures reflected the need for flexibility in the utilisation of natural resources which was essential for surviving in an arid to semi-arid environment. At the same time, these same structures made them more vulnerable to colonial conquest than communities which practised mixed farming in the north-central and north-eastern regions of the country. Strong, centralised structures of those communities were a major factor in Germany’s decision not to pursue any large-scale land dispossession in those regions.

Therefore, the majority of the population practising mixed farming in the north-central and north-eastern regions have never been dispossessed of their land by a colonial power. To be sure, land dispossession and the drawing of international borders have circumscribed the mobility of people in the mixed farming areas of north-central and north-eastern Namibia. Dispossession in the sense of uprooting and relocating communities to different areas has never happened in the same way in those parts of the country as it did further south in the former “Police Zone” (Werner 2002: 55; Dobell 1995: 193n). By contrast, the dispossessed Herero and Damara communities within the Police Zone were resettled in “native reserves” on the eastern and north-western margins of their customary grazing areas. While pastures have been abundant in those areas, water remains scarce.

SWAPO, which led the armed struggle against the colonial regime, drew most of its support from communities in these northern and north-eastern regions, which are still inhabited by close to 60% of Namibia’s population. For the historical reasons just mentioned,

the land question did not occupy as central a role in SWAPO's political programme as it did in the programmes of political parties which represented the dispossessed more broadly, an example being the South West Africa National Union (SWANU). The latter came to represent predominantly the Otjiherero-speaking people who were directly affected by land dispossession. As Tapscott (1995: 155) observed, many of the demands of SWAPO related instead to the "disadvantaged position of their constituent members". In its early stages the movement campaigned for the abolition of the migrant labour system and the opening of the commercial sector in former Owamboland to blacks.



This pattern of land dispossession formed the foundation of colonial rule and shaped what was known as "native policy". Indigenous black communities' access to land was restricted to "native reserves" in their different guises: bantustans, homelands and communal areas. However, the first stirrings of national resistance against continued South African rule in South West Africa in the late 1950s drove the South African government to embark on a reform programme that not only laid the foundation of its despised bantustan strategy, but also sought to strengthen and promote an incipient black middle class. It sought to bring about these reforms by providing the latter with access to private agricultural land in the communal areas.

The first nationalist movement, being SWANU, came into existence in 1957, and SWAPO's formation followed. With these developments, the South African colonial state was faced for the first time with "organised mass resistance to its political domination" (Innes 1980: 576). South Africa followed a broadly dualistic strategy in its attempts to counter opposition to its rule. On the one hand it sought to smash any nationalist organisation through increased physical repression, while on the other hand it set out to split up Namibia into a number of separate, tribally demarcated bantustans (ibid.).

The broad concept for these reforms was laid out by the Commission of Enquiry into South West Africa Affairs (RSA 1964) appointed under the chairmanship of FH Odendaal in 1962.² It was required to come up with "recommendations on a comprehensive five year plan for the accelerated development of the various non-White groups of SWA", and –

... ascertain how further provisions should be made ... for their social and economic advancement, ... proper agricultural, industrial and mining development in respect of their territories and for the best form of participation by the Natives in the administration and management of their own interests (ibid.: 3).

² This commission is commonly referred to as the "Odendaal Commission" after its chairman.

As will be discussed below, a number of socio-economic changes in terms of customary tenure, for example, were introduced to harness the small class of communal farmers, traders and teachers who increasingly perceived customary tenure as a factor that limited their options for accumulating more wealth. Believing that a healthy middle class might act as a buffer against the forces of liberation, the pre-Independence Administration was keen to support the development of such a middle class.

In mid 1977 these proposals were augmented by the repeal of a range of discriminatory pieces of legislation including those on influx control, residential settlement and inter-racial sex and marriage (Tapscott 2001: 310). These changes “stripped away the barriers to Black social advancement which was so characteristic of the pre-Odendaal period” (Abrahams, 1982: 22). In 1982 and 1984, national development conferences were held under the auspices of the then Directorate of Development Co-ordination to review development policies and bring them in line with the political demands of the time. With regard to future agricultural development, one of the long-term objectives identified by the *Draft National Development Strategy for SWA* released in the mid 1980s was to develop “a financially healthy middle class of agriculturalists” by transforming “‘traditional’ agriculture into ‘market oriented’ production” (cited in Adams and Werner 1990: 105).

The new structures of ethnically based representative authorities – a modern version of the old bantustans – provided opportunities for small groups of politicians, civil servants, teachers and nurses to earn salaries on a par with those of their white counterparts and vastly higher than those of the average black worker. A lack of accountability allowed for some individuals to enrich themselves through corrupt practices. While not condoned, this was tolerated by the colonial government to retain the support of second-tier authorities (Tapscott 2001: 310). More generally –

[as a result of the] ‘new political dispensation’, the establishment of the National Assembly and Ministers Council, Namibianisation of the civil service, the creation of eleven ethnic administration, the massive departure of skilled white workers, and the legal abolition of the Colour Bar in the private sector ... skilled and qualified blacks are, for the first time in our history, able to become mobile in an upward direction (Abrahams 1982: 23).

This new black elite was able to escape “from the clutches of poverty into the White man’s world” (ibid.).

Despite the hardships of the liberation struggle, it created its own elite among those in exile and to a lesser extent those who remained in Namibia (Tapscott 2001: 314). Apart from the cadre of political and military leaders, those who obtained an education in exile enjoyed much better employment opportunities and lifestyles after Independence. These people came to occupy top positions in the government bureaucracy and the wider economy.

At Independence, the new SWAPO government introduced a policy of national reconciliation to overcome racial and class divisions it inherited. While this policy was expedient in the interests of forging a new national identity, it also “reinforced the status quo by protecting the

pre-Independence gains of the minority, by reproducing existing relations of production and by legitimising patterns of social differentiation that had existed in the colonial era (ibid.: 313).

Tapscott (ibid.: 314-315) argued that at Independence, a new elite comprising much of the existing elite but swelled by a new organisational elite of senior administrators, politicians and business people emerged in Namibia. The interests of the incoming elite coalesced to a large extent with the interests of the old and largely white elites. The process of developing a broader class identity which transcended colour was facilitated to some extent by pre-Independence reform processes which led to a limited degree of racial integration. Elite formation, therefore, was not strictly along ethnic lines (Tapscott 1995: 163). The new elite inhabited “an economic and social world largely divorced from that of the majority of the urban and rural poor” (Tapscott 2001: 314).

While enjoying political power, the new elite did not enjoy significant economic power. Symbolising this lack of power and economic independence was the fact that most freehold land was owned by whites. During the debate on the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act in 1994, a former minister and senior SWAPO MP stated the following:

We feel that as long as land remains with the white people we are not independent. [This] is a sentiment throughout this country for as long as you are black. You can see it in this House, from the time that this debate started the unanimity on this issue, not only in principle, but in anticipated reality. Among us blacks, there is no difference, no difference whatsoever (RoN, *Debates of the National Assembly*, 1994: 33-34).

The demand for land redistribution, in a profound way, united the new elite across ethnic and party-political lines.

Policy statements on the importance of land reform for poverty alleviation not only addressed a real developmental problem in Namibia, but were also part of a populist agenda aimed at legitimising the new elite. However, there is little political pressure on the ruling party and government to implement a land reform programme that addresses the needs of the poor and dispossessed. On the one hand, the previously dispossessed remain a minority, wielding little political power. This helps to explain why it was relatively easy for government not to entertain any demands for the restoration of ancestral land to dispossessed communities. On the other hand, while the poor are many in number, they are not organised and hence not able to place any pressure on government to act. Alfred Angula, the General Secretary of the Namibian Farm Workers' Union observed the following:

Land is not yet a political issue. It is not top priority for the Government. The ruling party is strong: SWAPO does not need the land campaign to convince people to vote for them ... Maybe the land issue is not a top priority because every Minister has already got his farm. They can postpone this issue ... until there is strong pressure from the poor. Of course the poor first have to get organised ... Action may come ... It is just a question of time (Alfred Angula in Hunter 2004: 116).

With no organised movements to demand a more pro-poor land reform programme, government has considerable flexibility to implement a programme that benefits the middle class.

2.3 National agrarian structure and trends

Two main factors determine agricultural production in Namibia: climate and land ownership (Sherbourne 2009: 74). Low and highly variable average annual rainfall limits the options for agricultural production. Only 8% of the country receives an average annual rainfall higher than 500 mm, the minimum regarded as necessary for dryland cropping. Thirty-seven per cent receives between 300 and 500 mm annually, and the remaining 55% receives less than 300 mm per annum on average (Brown 1993: 91).

In pre-colonial times, production systems were relatively well adapted to the arid conditions of the country. A high degree of flexibility and mobility of herds made it possible to track available grazing and water resources, with little risk of overgrazing. Low population densities facilitated such a range management system.

The advent of formal colonialism and the large-scale land dispossession that followed in its wake introduced new forms of land ownership in Namibia, namely freehold title. The mobility and flexibility required to utilise grazing in arid to semi-arid environments gave way to bounded areas – settler farms – to which individual livestock herds were restricted. Access to these new freehold farms was reserved for whites only.

It was mentioned above that this process was highly uneven across the country. Large-scale land dispossession affected almost exclusively indigenous livestock farmers who practised transhumance in the country's arid and semi-arid central and southern areas. Having lost their grazing areas in central Namibia to white settlers, they were relocated to so-called native reserves – later called homelands, bantustans and communal areas – on the eastern and north-western margins of the central grazing areas. Large numbers of people were forced to live and farm in these reserves, which led to high densities of people and livestock relative to the available resources, in particular water. Individual settlers, on the other hand, had access to large areas of land ranging from a few thousand hectares in the central and northern areas to well over 10 000 ha in the arid southern regions.

Communal areas cover approximately 41% of the country's surface, while the freehold sector covers 44%. In the former communal areas, most farmers acquired access to and held land rights under customary tenure regimes. However, since the 1970s a wealthy and well-connected elite has gradually enclosed communal rangelands for their private use, largely without any authorisation from either traditional authorities or central government. Due to a neglect of these areas in terms of infrastructure development (water supply, access roads, extension services, etc.) as well as a high concentration of people and livestock, the vast majority of people in the communal areas are small-scale farmers barely able to satisfy their subsistence needs. Many have to complement their agricultural outputs with

non-agricultural income streams to make ends meet. In the freehold sector, on the other hand, landowners operated large-scale farms or ranches designed to breed livestock for commercial purposes. Generous subsidies and access to concessionary finance enabled white settler farmers to develop infrastructure on their farms. However, despite such subsidies, commercial farming is risky, and before Independence it experienced severe economic and financial strain.

Due to the aridity of the central and southern regions of Namibia, the predominant form of land use is extensive livestock farming. Sixty per cent of the freehold farming area receives an average annual rainfall of less than 300 mm and another 35% between 300 and 500 mm. Only 5% receives more than 500 mm and is thus suited for rainfed cereal production (Brown 1993: 91). As a result, approximately 14 500 000 ha of freehold land is used for extensive cattle ranching and 21 400 000 ha for extensive small-stock farming (Mendelsohn et al. 2006: 42, 52).

The primary regions for cattle farming are Khomas, Omaheke, Otjozondjupa, Kunene and Oshikoto. The number of cattle on freehold land increased rapidly during the first half of the 20th century and peaked at 2.6 million head in the late 1950s. This increase in cattle numbers was attributed to the development of new water points and camps in the freehold areas (Lange et al. 1997: 2). Since then, numbers have declined steadily to 792 897 in 2005, which represented about one third of the entire national cattle herd. Despite the decline in cattle numbers, beef production per hectare remained constant between the 1950s and the 1990s. This, according to Lange et al. (ibid.: 12), suggests that the decline in cattle numbers was largely compensated for by an increase in herd productivity.

In the small-stock farming sector, after 1915 the South African Administration promoted farming with merino sheep in the southern regions. However, the years of drought in the early 1920s showed that karakul sheep were better suited than merino and Afrikaner sheep to the country's arid southern landscape. The first flock of 10 karakul sheep arrived in SWA

Maltahöhe District, Hardap – an arid region best suited to small-stock farming.



from Germany in 1907 (Werner forthcoming). Although settler farmers initially displayed little interest in taking up karakul breeding, the total flock increased more than tenfold during the Great Depression and drought years of the late 1920s and early 1930s, from 106 155 in 1926 to 1 125 912 in 1935 (Bravenboer 2007: 362). The gradual increase of karakul peaked at 4 572 794 in 1970, but declined dramatically from 1980 onwards as the market for pelts began to deteriorate. In 2005, the karakul herd in Namibia totalled 183 501 (ibid.).

During the 1980s the agricultural sector came under increasing pressure. Prices for the country's major agricultural commodities declined sharply. While beef prices were 762c/kg in 1981 (at 1990 prices), they reached a low of 513c/kg in October 1990. Lamb prices were also much lower in 1990 than they were in 1981 (Moll 1994: 8).

The karakul industry was hit not only by lower prices and drought, but also by the collapse of the international pelt market. By the late 1980s the overproduction of mink pelts, an emerging recession and the negative impact of the anti-fur campaign in Europe caused considerable instability in the market. Coupled with increases in farm inputs, "the profit margin was forced to an unknown negative level", and in a relatively short period of time, karakul farming "was changed into an insecure, non-profitable farming set-up" (Bravenboer 2007: 230, 235).

Up until Independence, freehold farmers benefited from a range of direct and indirect subsidies as well as tax concessions. Two financial institutions provided subsidised agricultural credit: the Land Bank and the Agricultural Credit Board. The former lent money to freehold farmers with assets of more than R500 000 (R = South African Rand) at interest rates ranging between 7% and 10%. The Agricultural Credit Board lent money at interest rates ranging between 1% and 4% to farmers with assets of less than R500 000. It was estimated that in 1990, 3 450 out of 4 000 or 86% of freehold farmers enjoyed cheap credit from one of these institutions (Moll 1994: 27). These credits were not available to farmers in the communal areas.

Apart from concessionary finance, freehold farmers also benefited from direct subsidies. These were typically in the form of cash for grazing relief, bush encroachment, soil conservation, boreholes and other items. Bodies promoting karakul and/or beef farming received subsidies on exports as well as a loan to the meat corporation (ibid.: 6).

However, the generous state financial support provided to white commercial farmers was not sufficient to stave off a crisis in the commercial farming sector. In 1982 the Representative Authority of the Whites commissioned consultants to investigate the profitability of farming in the country and make proposals on how to improve the situation (Harrison 1983). Among other things, they found that since circa the mid 1970s, farm profits were too low to provide an 'acceptable' standard of living. While the preceding drought was not any worse than before, its financial impact was far more serious due to inflation. The consultants also found that there were too many individual farm businesses in the country for the type of farming practised, and recommended that "provision should be made for the State to purchase land belonging to farmers whose properties are unlikely to be viable in future" (ibid.: i).

In 1984 the SWA Agricultural Union conducted its own investigation into the financial position of farmers (SWALU 1985). Detailed microeconomic analyses of the assets and debts of commercial farmers were carried out, and these showed that although the debt ratio (*skuldlas*) of 49% of farmers was healthy, the financial situation of 23% of farmers was critical in 1983. Particularly critical was the position of young farmers in the age group 26 to 35 years (ibid.: 46-47).

Independent Namibia thus inherited a commercial farming sector that was financially bruised. The adverse economic and climatic factors before Independence and the uncertainty about the future under a SWAPO government combined to “force a ‘shake-out’ in the cattle and sheep industries”, leading to a decrease in the number of white commercial farmers on the land, even though government support was still in place (Moll 1994: 8). This situation was compounded after Independence because most direct and indirect subsidies disappeared. The effect of this was that although consecutive droughts did not bring about a significant consolidation of farms, the number of farmers who relied on off-farm income increased (Lange et al. 1997: 15). Forty per cent of commercial farms were found not to be economically viable based on size and carrying capacity (Rawlinson 1994, quoted in ibid.: 105).

Declining per hectare returns for commercial livestock farming since the 1970s resulted in debt levels of the sector increasing steadily, passing the N\$1 billion mark in 1999 (Werner 2000: 33). Commercial farmers increasingly shifted resources to non-traditional farming activities such as game farming, hunting and tourism regardless of whether they were farming with cattle or small stock (Kruger and Werner 2005: 10). The extent to which this has happened cannot be quantified as hardly any data has been published on the issue.

Many farmers who used to farm with karakul responded to the collapse of the international karakul market by switching to mutton production. They started to farm with dorper sheep and goats. This, however, generated its own set of problems as meat-producing small stock required a greater intake of pasturage (Bravenboer 2007: 260). Overstocking became frequent as farmers sought to generate similar revenues from mutton production as they were able to generate with karakul pelt production.

In addition, the early 1990s witnessed the introduction of ostrich farming under intensive conditions in the southern regions (Erb 2004: 5). The fortunes of ostrich farming were short-lived, however, and in recent years dedicated ostrich abattoirs have been converted to allow for slaughtering small stock.

Post-Independence policy changes provided opportunities for farmers – commercial and otherwise – to engage in horticultural production in areas with sufficient water. While maize and wheat was produced under irrigation as well as rainfed conditions in small locations – the Otavi highlands and the Hardap irrigation scheme for example – Namibia remained largely dependent on imported fruits and vegetables. In 2004 the Agronomic Board of Namibia introduced the National Horticulture Development Strategy which was designed to stimulate the development of a sustainable horticulture sector. This strategy was complimented in



Land prepared for cultivation at Westfalen, Hardap.



Successful maize cultivation at Westfalen.

October 2004 by the Namibian Horticulture Market Share Promotion to increase the market share of local producers in local retail sales. The overall objectives of this initiative were to increase food self-sufficiency, substitute imports and create employment (Sherbourne 2009: 82).

In a related development, government embarked on a large-scale irrigation initiative called the Green Scheme in August 2003. The scheme entails increasing the area under irrigation from 8 600 ha to 27 000 ha and creating 10 000 permanent and 34 800 part-time jobs over a 15-year period. The model is based on a private-public partnership designed to stimulate investment in the sector (ibid.: 84). Green Scheme projects are envisaged to consist of a core large-scale farmer who is obliged to provide technical and marketing support to a limited number of small-scale irrigation farmers.

The importance of the agricultural sector to the national economy has decreased steadily since the 1970s. While the sector contributed 16.1% to GDP in 1976, this declined to 8.7% in 1981 (Harrison 1983: 2). A year after Independence it stood at just below 9%, but since 2000 its contribution has exceeded 6% only in 2006 and 2007. On average about one third of agriculture's contribution to GDP emanates from the communal areas. Real growth in the agricultural sector stood at 1.7% from 1995 to 2007 compared to 4.1% for the national economy as a whole (Sherbourne 2009: 73-74). However, the sector remains very important in terms of its forward and backward linkages, and particularly in terms of the number of people it provides with subsistence of one kind or another.

The structure and transformation of commercial farming on freehold land has presented the MLR with challenges and opportunities. As will be shown in section 2.5 below, the dominant model for resettlement is based on extensive small-scale commercial livestock farming. Land on offer is assessed with criteria in mind that facilitate the implementation of this model. Land suitable for game or tourism farming and small-scale irrigation has not been considered for acquisition to date, as no models exist in terms of which beneficiaries could be supported. This is clearly limiting the amount of land that can be considered suitable for resettlement. Also it helps one to understand the MLR's constant complaint that it does not receive enough offers of suitable land.

2.4 Land reform and rural development policies

Land reform is poorly integrated into wider development policies and programmes in Namibia. It remains a sectoral responsibility aimed at addressing imbalances in freehold land ownership and enhancing “the welfare of the people through improved productivity” (RoN 2008: 114).

To start with, Namibia still does not have a rural development policy. The NDP3 states that during 2006 the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development “embarked on a participatory, multi-sectoral approach of consultations” in all 13 regions as part of the preparations for a rural development policy. Significantly, the key challenges identified do not include access to land or any other land-related issues, but instead, “lack of access to quality public services such as education, health, water, roads and agricultural extension services”. The consultations also suggested that it was appropriate to update and streamline a number of sub-sector policies developed after Independence. As a result, the National Agriculture Policy and the National Drought Policy were updated (ibid.: 196-197).

2.5 Farm planning and ‘viability’

Any assessment of the impact which access to land has had on poverty reduction among those with few assets has to be carried out against the background of Namibia’s models for resettlement. Underlying the national resettlement approach are two basic models:

- group farming; and
- small-scale commercial farming.

The AALS model is not discussed in this context as it does not target asset-poor people.

2.5.1 Group farms

The National Resettlement Policy provides for two models of group resettlement (MLRR 2001a: 7):

- group holdings; and
- co-operative holdings and other legal entities.

The first model caters for a formal or non-formal group composed of people who cannot form a co-operative but are interested in engaging in agricultural or other production as a group. The second model caters for duly registered co-operatives or other legal entities such as companies and close corporations. The rationale for the latter model is “to facilitate the smooth functioning of the co-operative type of resettlement project and to monitor and control the use of financial input made by the Government” (ibid.). For most of the post-Independence period, group resettlement has been referred to as “co-operative resettlement”, but this description has gradually disappeared.

Officially the MLR runs 14 group resettlement projects across the country. Half of these are located in communal areas and the other half in the commercial or freehold sector. Group resettlement projects were launched in haste after Independence (MLRR 1996: 19; Suzman 2001: 90-91). This reflected the need to accommodate large numbers of exiles who had no shelter, employment or other income. Topping the list of potential beneficiaries ahead of ex-soldiers in the National Resettlement Policy are members of the San community. The reason for this prioritisation was as follows:

[The San] have endured exploitation and discrimination at the hands of their fellow citizens throughout history. This includes the exploitation by colonial forces who used them as trackers and later left them helpless in former military camps. At present the San people are in the hands of farmers in both the communal and commercial areas as well as other sorts of employers where they are marginalised and subjected to unfair labour practices. These people have suffered tremendously as a result of historical changes caused by the political constellations and ecological constraints. Therefore, they need to be helped in realising a new living by developing existing skills and acquiring new ones to be able to secure their sustenance (MLRR 2001a: 3-4).

Many former San soldiers who were employed by the South African military were literally abandoned and left to their own devices at Independence. They were then accommodated in group resettlement projects mainly in the north-eastern communal areas.

A consequence of the haste with which group resettlement projects were established was that little planning went into the process. The basic concept underlying the approach was that beneficiaries were to engage in dry-land crop farming for own consumption, combined with other small income-generating activities to “make them self-sufficient in the long term” (MLRR 1996: 19). These included brickmaking, small bakeries and sewing activities. Some group schemes were assisted with the procurement of farm implements and provision of drinking water, irrigation equipment, materials and supplies, seed, fertiliser and pesticides. The policy was for government to support “the poorest section of beneficiaries for the first five year period, [whereafter] they were expected to be trained and properly equipped to become self-reliant” (*The Land*, 1(1), 1998).

For most group resettlement schemes, no selection of settlers took place. An assessment of group schemes in 2000 found the following:

[Beneficiaries] simply found themselves in so-called ‘co-operative’ projects, and were instructed by government officials to work collectively on certain activities. Rather than moving towards self-reliance and independence, nearly all beneficiaries exhibit(ed) attitudes of dependency towards the projects (Werner and Vigne 2000: 30).

Group resettlement schemes were essentially “social welfare projects providing free accommodation, food and other transfers” and showing “few signs of being resettlement projects as commonly understood” (ibid. 2000: 32; Meliczek 2008: 10). The National Resettlement Policy states that beneficiaries should be self-reliant and self-sufficient by the fourth year, but the MLR continues to provide regular budgetary support to official group resettlement

projects. This is meant to be spent on preparing land for crop production, clearing land, irrigating, drilling boreholes, purchasing fencing materials and constructing houses. The MLR has not set a cutoff date for providing such support (Meliczek 2008: 11).

Ongoing government support to group resettlement schemes has probably contributed to the fact that these schemes have not recorded significant dropout rates. To the contrary, many of these schemes, including Drimiopsis and Skoonheid (two of the LaLR study sites in Omaheke Region), have attracted outsiders in the form of illegal settlers and informal settlements (ibid.: 10).

Since most group resettlement schemes continue to be dependent on government financial support, a rethink on group schemes has taken place in the MLR and the Ministry is no longer promoting them (ibid.: 12).

2.5.2 Small-scale commercial farms

Currently, small-scale commercial farming or the Farm Unit Resettlement Scheme (FURS) is the most prominent component of redistributive land reform. This model entails acquiring and subdividing large-scale commercial farms, and allocating portions or units to individual beneficiaries according to allocation plans developed by land use planners in the MLR. The Land Reform Advisory Commission has recommended that the units allocated should not be smaller than 1 000 ha in Namibia's northern regions where rainfall is higher, and not smaller than 3 000 ha in the more arid south comprising Hardap and Karas Regions. To qualify for resettlement, beneficiaries may not have more than 150 large-stock units (LSU) or the small-stock equivalent thereof. In 2004 the average sizes of the units allocated to FURS farmers were 2 138 ha in the southern half of the country and 1 200 ha in the more fertile northern regions (PTT 2005b: 40).



Cattle farming in arid Hardap.



Cattle farming in more fertile Omaheke.

The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act (ACLRA) of 1995 provides for the granting of 99-year leasehold rights to allocated farming units and subsequent registration of the lease agreements in the Deeds Office. In terms of this Act, leasehold rights are circumscribed in so far as any actions that may in any way encumber a farming unit allocated by the MLR, such as rights to assign, sublet or mortgage, are subject to the Minister's written approval. However, in a legal opinion the Office of the Attorney-General expressed the view that a mortgage could be registered on any lease agreement registered in the Deeds Office.

2.6 Viability

Land reform in Namibia faces the challenge of maximising the number of people benefiting from land redistribution without threatening the viability and sustainability of the land reform programme, and with it the livelihoods of the people settled. However, the notion of 'viability' is contested. As will be shown, the dominant views on what is viable and not viable are informed by a narrow business perspective. This is not to say that such a perspective is not important. Part of the reason for the continued currency of this particular discourse is that it makes sense to many farmers who run their farms as businesses. But, as this report will show, for many land reform beneficiaries, the definition of viability is much broader; it also encompasses tenure security and hence the right to take their own decisions on their own livelihoods.

This section will provide a brief history of the discourse on viability.

The prevailing resettlement model and farm planning criteria are rooted in a discourse on agricultural development of communal areas that was started in the 1960s. As in other countries in Southern Africa, notions of viability and the approaches to farm planning that followed from those have been based on a "modernisation narrative" (Cousins and Scoones 2009: 2). Underlying this narrative was the colonial government's desire to create a middle class of farmers, arguably as a bulwark against the rising tide of national liberation.

As discussed above, the Odendaal Commission (RSA 1964) was tasked in the early 1960s to propose a reform model for Namibia. Underlying the Commission's thinking was a linear development model. It argued that the first aim of economic development had been achieved in SWA, this being the establishment of "a modern economy in the Southern Sector by the White group" and concomitant "selective transformation" of the "traditional socio-cultural background" of indigenous communities. It saw SWA to be on the verge of a second phase of economic development, "namely where non-White groups have increasingly to be given the opportunity, necessary assistance and encouragement to find an outlet for their new experience and capabilities" (ibid.: 429). The Commission characterised this process as the transition from a subsistence economy to a money economy, whereby "the traditional system of supplying their own needs and of self-support was gradually supplanted by a *money system* peculiar to the system of the Whites" (ibid.: 425). Future development programmes in Namibia had to build on these tendencies by "consolidat[ing], expand[ing] and convert[ing]" existing reserves into homelands "in which groups concerned could develop their own viable

economy” (ibid.: 429). Economic activities had to be brought to the reserve areas through a “broad programme of capital expenditure [in which] the various population groups can participate [without] disrupting their existing strong traditional family and homeland ties” (cited in Innes 1980: 577).

It followed from these basic assumptions that agriculture in the communal areas had to be “modernised”. More specifically:

[The Commission] consider[ed] the development of animal husbandry in all its branches to be vitally important to the inhabitants of these areas. In this development the efficient marketing of livestock and of meat is a decisive factor ... (RSA 1964: 277).

As far as the Commission was concerned, the improvement of livestock husbandry was primarily a matter of improving animal health and the quality of breeding stock.

Although the Odendaal Commission was “much more an intervention into *politics* than agricultural production *per se*...” (Pankhurst 1996: 418), its proposals on agricultural development were taken up and operationalised in the *Five Year Plan for the Development of the Native Areas* (hereafter “5-Year Plan”, SWA [1966]) in the mid 1960s. This plan recommended specific interventions for improving agricultural production in the communal areas. The underlying assumption guiding its deliberations was that “agricultural planning must ... pave the way in converting an existing subsistence economy to an exchange economy” (ibid.: 94).

The basis for “scientific agricultural planning” (ibid.) hinged on two main elements:

- the classification of communal areas into agro-ecological zones in order to capture the ecological characteristics of each area; and
- an “assessment of the carrying capacity of the grazing and the determination of the size of economic farming units” in order to estimate the “ultimate human carrying capacity for the region to be planned (ibid.: 95).

“Scientific agricultural planning” had to be complemented by an agricultural extension programme “based on transforming the traditional subsistence farming pattern into one conforming to the requirements of a market economy” (ibid.). Extension work should be aimed at improving livestock production, more specifically at controlling disease “and to provide the necessary amenities for rational livestock farming” (ibid.: 97). The 5-Year Plan also proposed the establishment of training and research projects to support the process of “modernising” agriculture.

Recommendations of the 5-Year Plan for the modernisation of agriculture and thus the transition from subsistence to commercial farming included proposals on transforming customary land tenure systems into more individualised land tenure. For the predominantly Otjiherero-speaking communal areas, for example, it recommended “a large scale fencing programme”. Here, argued the 5-Year Plan, “proper pasture rotation” was “a prerequisite for optimal utilisation of available resources” and could only be achieved through enclosure:

With the erection of fences, grazing camps can be given the necessary rest periods during certain times of the year and thus offer more abundant and better grazing to animals (ibid.: 163).

Although similar recommendations for fencing communal land were not made for all of the communal areas, this particular approach to improving range management and animal husbandry, i.e. the privatisation of communal rangelands by way of fencing, became firmly embedded in agricultural planning in communal areas generally. Native Affairs officials soon promoted the individualisation of customary rangeland tenure through the introduction of fencing in other communal areas. The Chief Agricultural Officer in Ondangwa argued in 1969 that “fencing and water will be needed to promote sound veld and stock management practices.”³ A year later, a sub-committee of the “Planning and Co-ordinating Committee” submitted that “the present system of land ownership and utilisation had a limiting influence on the administration (extension) and production (lack of continuity) as economic asset [sic]”.⁴

The concept of “economic units” became a popular tool in the process of transforming customary land tenure on a “healthy and economic basis”.⁵ Translated into current development jargon, this statement expressed the assumption that economic units were a precondition for sustainable agricultural development. The concept became firmly embedded in agricultural planning in subsequent decades. In the mid 1980s, participants in a Development Conference held in Windhoek were told that economic units needed to be defined primarily on the basis of livestock farming, and any additional contributions from rainfed cultivation, dairying or other intensive farming activities should be regarded as bonuses. The carrying capacity of different agro-ecological regions would ensure that overstocking would not take place. Criteria to determine economic units should be the same throughout the country, even where communal land was surveyed (SWA/Namibia 1984: 171).

These proposed changes sought to bring agricultural planning and development in line with the wider reform process of the 1980s which, among other things, abolished formal racial discrimination measures. Until then, different criteria were applied to planning in communal areas and the white freehold sector. The first documented attempts to define economic units in communal areas date back to 1971 when it was recommended that the size of an economic unit in former Owamboland should support 100 LSU or 400 small-stock units (SSU).⁶ This recommendation was approved by the so-called Owambo Cabinet – a homeland institution – and applied to farm planning. By contrast, the minimum size of an economic unit for white farmers had to support at least 400 LSU or 2000 SSU at the official carrying capacity (Administration for Whites 1987).

³ (OVA), 49, 6/9/1, Hooflandboubeampte Ondangwa: Insake vraelys, 25 June 1969, p.4.

⁴ OVA, 49, 6/8/4/1, Vergadering van die Onderkomitee oor Dorpsbeplanning en ontwikkeling en Landbouontwikkeling van die Beplannings- en Koördinerende Komitee op Woensdag 2 September 1970, p.2

⁵ OVA, 49, 6/10/2-7(I), Die Sekretaris (no date, no title), p.13.

⁶ OVA 49, 6/10/2-7 (II), Sekretaris Departement van Landbou en Bosbou to Sekretaris van die Hoofminister, Ondangwa, 2.7.1973, p.2

Before Independence, proposals to develop private farms on communal land corresponding to economic units resonated well with a small but growing black middle class, who regarded this as a means to obtain the equivalent of a large-scale commercial farm in the communal areas – free of charge. This middle class was able to articulate its interests in the applicable ethnically based Representative Authorities – modified versions of bantustans. Ethnic politicians used their bantustan political platforms to exhort the virtues of privatising communal land in the interests of improved agricultural output and healthier pastures.

One variant of the agricultural model first expounded by the 5-Year Plan proposed for communal areas in the south was that farms of 8 000 ha should be subdivided into 2 000 ha units. These were to be allocated to communal farmers owning 400 or less small stock. As the latter built up their herds, they would be allocated another 2 000 ha up to a maximum of 8 000 ha. Those who did not succeed would be persuaded to leave subsistence farming and work in a different sector. At a size of 8 000 ha, approximately 270 farms could have been developed in the Nama communal area. A lack of funds prevented the Representative Authority of the Nama from implementing these proposals (Adams and Werner 1990: 105).

In the Otjiherero-speaking communal areas, the size of economic units was linked to expected annual incomes. Individual fenced farms on communal land had to be big enough to provide their beneficiaries with an annual income of R20 000 to R25 000 in the 1980s. This would have required about 350 head of large stock, and at a carrying capacity of about 12 ha/LSU and a stocking rate of 85%, the minimum farm size should have been 4 900 ha (ibid.: 106). Sixty farms measuring 5 000 ha were surveyed for individual farmers in the Herero communal areas.

Before long, Herero and Nama ethnic politicians criticised the sizes of economic units at 5 000 ha and 4 000 ha respectively as being too small. Realising that the existing communal areas were not able to satisfy their demands for large farms, they argued that whites should be forced to make some of their land available (ibid.: 107).

The perceived need to transform communal agriculture and to gradually replace customary tenure with individualised fenced units also received support from rangeland managers who subscribed to the “tragedy of the commons” thesis. The last pre-Independence “Minister of Agriculture”, for example, stated at the 24th Congress of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa in 1989 that land degradation was common in communal areas. Without producing any evidence, he ascribed this perception to the fact that customary tenure systems did not make provision for any form of initiative, did not provide for private ownership and made the optimal utilisation and conservation of the land impossible (cited in Werner 1994: 30). The ideal solution to this problem “would be to break up the whole communal system into economical units which [are] operated on a purely commercial basis” (ibid.).

This particular discourse on the perceived shortcomings of customary tenure survived well into independent Namibia and was perpetuated by senior government ministers. Freehold and customary tenure were now characterised as “first and second class systems of land tenure” (Hamutenya 1997: 32). This categorisation was taken over by the National Land

Policy (RoN 1998: 1). What defined second-class tenure was that people holding customary land rights were not able to use their land as collateral for credit. Consequently, they were unable to develop economically. Moreover, because the second-class tenure system did not provide for ownership of land, land degradation due to overgrazing and overcropping ensued. And finally, little investment was taking place particularly in newly created towns in communal areas because of the absence of private ownership (Iivula-Ithana 1997: 12).

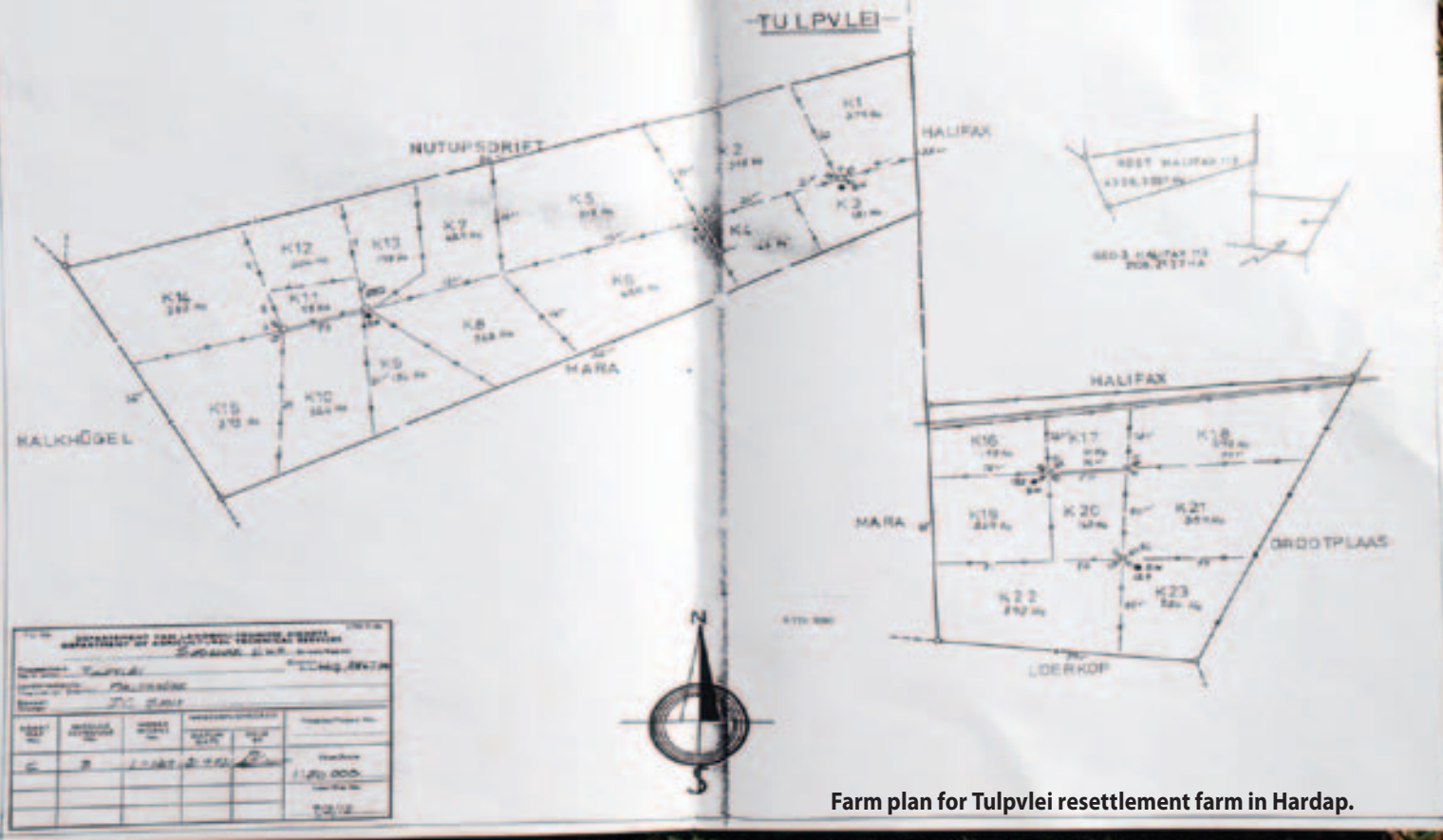
According to the then Minister of Trade and Industry, Hidipo Hamutenya, government had three basic options at Independence for dealing with the existence of first- and second-class systems of tenure, i.e. freehold and customary tenure. The options were (Hamutenya 1997: 32):

- nationalising freehold land for redistribution;
- completing the process of alienating and privatising all communal land; and
- continuing with the status quo.

Each of these options had far-reaching implications. Nationalisation might have resulted in the destabilisation of the agricultural sector with a resultant loss of employment opportunities. Turning communal areas into private property would have placed most communal land “into the hands of a small elite of white and black landlords”, creating large-scale landlessness and destitution. For these reasons, government opted for the third option, “at least temporarily and then to introduce a process of gradual reform of that system” (ibid.). The role of the state was to lay “the foundation and framework upon which private economic activities can flourish” (Angula 1997: 51).

The continuity in thinking about viability was possible because there were no alternative models put forward by small-scale communal farmers and landless people. A number of different resettlement and redistribution options with their respective financial costs and likely impact on equity were prepared for the National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question in 1991 (Purcell 1991), but these were not properly discussed at the conference and have not been discussed since. Instead, the conference resolved, *inter alia*, that government should appoint a technical committee on commercial farmland to evaluate facts and information regarding unutilised land, land held by absentee owners, land tax and viable farm sizes in different regions. While this exercise was valuable in itself, it also transformed the political question of land redistribution into a technical one, arguably giving government more time to develop a land reform programme.

This Technical Committee on Commercial Farmland was duly appointed, and it submitted a report in 1992. The report conveyed the different options developed for the Land Conference but without a critical assessment of their appropriateness. Consequently, the committee did not make any recommendation on any of the options. The only recommendations it made in this regard referred to farm sizes for individual beneficiaries: in cases where people bought their own farms, they should not have been smaller than 4 000 ha, but could have ranged from 2 000 ha to 3 000 ha where people made use of subsidies to buy land. Where the state acquired land and resettled beneficiaries, minimum farm sizes should not be less than 1 500 ha (Office of the Prime Minister 1992: 180).



In order to complement land redistribution in the freehold sector, government pursued the idea of identifying so-called unutilised communal land with a view to surveying small-scale commercial farms and allocating them to previously disadvantaged Namibians. The consultants hired by the MLR to carry out this investigation included planners who served in managerial positions in the pre-Independence Department of Development Co-ordination in the 1980s which published several tomes on (agricultural) development in pre-Independence Namibia, espousing the virtues of economic units as a means to promote the development of a middle class. It is therefore no coincidence that the model for developing communal land into small-scale commercial farming units is identical to those first developed by the 5-Year Plan.

This discourse on communal land and customary tenure had an impact on land reform in the communal areas. On the one hand, a number of wealthy and politically well-connected people fenced off communal land for individual use without proper authorisation by the state, thereby continuing a process that had started before Independence. The extent of privatisation is not clear, but that it has impacted negatively on transhumance patterns in some communal areas has been documented (Cox et al. 1998).

The discourse on agricultural planning and development just discussed also found its way into the National Agricultural Policy of 1995 and the National Land Policy of 1996. The former stated that the subdivision of agricultural land would be permitted only if, inter alia, “appropriate provision is made for the maintenance of farming units of an economically viable size and the long term sustainability of natural resources and agricultural production on the land” (RoN 1995: 35). This principle was incorporated into the National Land Policy which stated that the subdivision of large-scale farming units should be conditional on the “maintenance of farming units of an economically viable size” (MLRR 1998a: 16).

The determination of a viable unit size for small-scale farming under the land reform programme was left to the Land Reform Advisory Commission (LRAC) established in terms of the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act. The LRAC is composed of stakeholders in various sectors and line ministries. On the face of it, leaving the determination of minimum farm sizes to the LRAC reflected an acknowledgement that the determination of minimum income levels to be obtained from farming units is not simply a matter of economics. To be sure, “there is a cut-off point below which a piece of land cannot be farmed on an economically viable basis”, but “any size above this absolute minimum depends on the income expectations people have”. “Economic units” therefore had to be negotiated by all stakeholders (PTT 2005b: 22).

Little is known about how the LRAC arrived at the economic units that form the basis of resettlement, but it is known that a sub-committee of this body was tasked to come up with scale models for large- and small-stock farming, agronomic farming ventures, dual-purpose farming ventures, small-scale irrigation, and broiler and pig production (MLRR 1998b).

The sub-committee assumed that the cost of living of beneficiaries of land reform would be in the region of N\$15 000 per annum in 1998. This figure was based on statistics obtained from the National Planning Commission which suggested that the “minimum cost of living to ensure a decent livelihood” was N\$12 442 per annum for an average family size of 5.7 persons (ibid.: 18). On the basis of this projected income, the sub-committee calculated cash flow projections for different farm unit sizes using the profit margin method (ibid.: 19). The MLR has increased the minimum projected income to be achieved by beneficiaries to N\$28 000.

It is not clear to what extent these calculations informed the LRAC recommendation to allocate units no smaller than 1 000 ha in the northern regions and no smaller than 3 000 ha in the southern regions. This is so particularly in view of the sub-committee having shown that a beneficiary would have only a small surplus of N\$1 650 p.a. on a 1 780 ha unit in an area with a carrying capacity of 1 LSU per 10 ha, farming with 178 LSU, of which approximately 50% would have been breeding stock (ibid.: 23). This suggests that a unit smaller than 1 780 ha would not have shown positive cash flows and an annual income of N\$15 000.

The issue of ‘appropriate economic units’ for beneficiaries remains contested. While the MLR has settled for a relatively small farm size, organised agriculture favours large-scale farms. This reflects a perception shared by a substantial number of both black and white Namibians, that small-scale farming is not economically and financially viable. A Cabinet Minister put this very bluntly in stating that he could not see resettlement farms succeeding as they were too small: “... the previous owner of the farm could only survive on that farm because he or she was the only farmer, so that, particularly in dry years, they could rotate their animals” (von Wietersheim 2008: 166).

Underlying definitions of economic units have been narrow conceptions of what is viable and not viable. Viability has been assessed exclusively in terms of financial benefits. The

Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU) summarised this succinctly in arguing that farming is a business like any other in the economy, so resettlement farms should also be viewed as businesses. Consistent with this argument, the NAU proposed using the criteria of medium-size enterprises as a benchmark for setting the minimum sizes of resettlement farm units. A medium-size enterprise (excluding manufacturing) is defined as having an annual turnover of N\$1 million, no more than 10 employees, and annual working capital of less than N\$500 000 (NAU 2003: 54).

More recently the NAU recommended, firstly, that 500 LSU be regarded as an operational unit, hence as viable. This requires farm sizes ranging from 5 000 ha in the best grazing areas to 8 000 ha in more arid areas. Secondly, only farmers owning more than two operational units (i.e. 10 000 ha to 16 000 ha) should be encouraged to offer their land for redistribution (NAU 2005: 9).

The MLR continues to use a small-scale farming model based primarily on livestock farming to assess land for acquisition. A criterion recommended by the LRAC for assessing the suitability of land for resettlement is that a piece of land must be able to support at least 80 LSU or 500 SSU, assuming that the appropriate infrastructure is in place and in working order. The potential of a piece of land to support cropping is determined by its growing period.⁷ Under the best possible farming conditions, these criteria should enable beneficiaries to exceed the minimum annual income by a handsome margin, depending on where they were settled.

Confining the approach to resettlement to such a narrow model has led to several problems. The most publicised problem is that the MLR does not receive enough land “suitable for resettlement”. This is attributable to several factors, an important one being the narrow set of criteria used to select land for resettlement. Many small portions of irrigation land, for example, are waived because they are not regarded as suitable for resettlement. Similarly, smallholdings close to urban areas are waived as there is no appropriate model to support beneficiaries pursuing intensive agriculture.

In addition, the current approach leaves little room for beneficiaries to articulate their needs and preferences regarding their livelihood. It is an approach based on farms and not on people. This LaLR study has shown that many applicants for resettlement do not necessarily want a piece of land large enough to farm commercially. The main priority of a great many of them was to obtain access to land on which to establish a secure home of their own. But the absence of alternative resettlement models left them with no option other than to apply for a small-scale farm, and if successful, to obtain access to a piece of land exceeding 1 000 ha which they never had any intention of farming except on a household subsistence level.

In many instances, the size of the unit allocated to beneficiaries did not match with their productive assets such as livestock numbers. Consequently, beneficiaries were not able

⁷ Growing period is defined as the period during which the precipitation, i.e. rainfall, exceeds half of the potential evapotranspiration (Huesken et al 1994: 4).

to utilise all of their land, and large tracts were underutilised. In 2004 the PTT found that many resettlement farms were underutilised because beneficiaries did not have enough assets, particularly livestock.

It is a moot point whether beneficiaries whose livestock numbers are too low to use their land allocations fully would be able to become successful small-scale commercial farmers as the resettlement model envisages. Indications are that even with optimum numbers of livestock, beneficiaries would find it impossible to generate enough revenue from their land to sustain themselves as well as cover the costs of asset depreciation and replacement.

Schuh et al (2006) have provided detailed financial and economic calculations which show that under optimal management and pasture conditions, small-scale resettlement farmers can generate incomes on their allocated units. However, these are very small. A rough calculation of gross margins based on the Maximum Income Derivation calculations provided in the “Draft Resettlement Manual” (MLR 2008) not only supports this view but also shows that gross margins for a 3 000 ha unit in the south are much higher than for a 1 000 ha unit in the central and eastern regions.

The “Draft Resettlement Manual” assumes a cattle herd of 150 head in its calculations. However, the optimum stocking rate on a 1 000 ha unit with a carrying capacity of 1 LSU per 15 ha should be no more than 67 head. The second assumption that was changed related to running costs. The “Draft Resettlement Manual” assumes these to be 60% of turnover. In view of the fact that resettlement beneficiaries are placed on developed farm units, these costs have been revised downwards to 40%. Based on these assumptions, and using the formula used by the MLR, the following picture emerges regarding farm turnover and income:

Table 3: Gross annual income for cattle farming

LSU	Females (60%)	Calves (75% calving rate)	Replacement calves (15%)	Calves for sale	Price per calf	Turnover	Expenditure (40% of turnover)	Gross income per annum
67	40	30	5	25	2 500	62 500	25 000	37 500

Gross annual incomes for small-stock farming depend on whether beneficiaries are farming with sheep or goats. For current purposes, no distinction is made between these two forms of production, but the gross margins are very different. For the small-stock sector, as for cattle farming, similar adjustments to the Maximum Income Derivation in the “Draft Resettlement Manual” have been made. A stocking rate of 1 SSU per 5 ha was assumed, and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Gross annual income for small-stock farming

SSU	Females (80%)	Lambs (90% weaning rate)	Replacement lambs (15%)	Lambs for sale	Price per lamb	Turnover	Expenditure (40% of turnover)	Gross per annum
600	480	432	65	367	350	128 450	51 380	77 070

These gross margins do not include depreciation and investments. Furthermore, they are based on most favourable conditions, which hardly ever exist in agriculture. If the costs of

capital investments and replacements are considered, it becomes clear that a gross margin of N\$37 500 leaves very little surplus for household subsistence and investments on the farm. Moreover, this gross margin can only be achieved if the allocation is utilised fully. This implies that there is no spare grazing for drought years. The smaller farms are in arid environments, so they are the most vulnerable to drought. Due to their small sizes, they offer very limited opportunities to farmers to apply flexible farming practices. The expected impact of climate change on the arid and semi-arid parts of the world will further compound this problem.

Apart from raising doubts about the economic and financial sustainability of resettlement units as small-scale commercial farms, the figures also suggest dramatic inherent inequalities in land allocations in the central and southern regions. Tables 3 and 4 show that annual net incomes on cattle farms are substantially lower at N\$37 500 than those on small-stock farms at N\$77 070. Beneficiaries settled on 3 000 ha in the south are able to keep 30% more livestock on their land than cattle farmers. Cattle farmers can keep a maximum of 67 LSU on a 1 000 ha farm at a stocking rate of 15 ha per LSU compared to 100 LSU in the south, if 600 SSU are converted to LSU. In many cattle farming areas, bush encroachment has contributed to the relatively low carrying capacity.

The current small-scale resettlement model is only likely to yield moderate levels of success if beneficiaries can satisfy the following requirements (GFA 2003: 14):

- Beneficiaries must either own enough livestock or have the financial means to acquire some to use their land fully.
- Unless beneficiaries have sufficiently large herds to utilise the unit fully, they must have access to off-farm income or other capital to finance their cash needs before the production system starts to produce a surplus.
- Beneficiaries should have experience or at least the potential ability to manage medium-size enterprises (such as a 1 000 ha farm).

This research has found that only a few resettlement beneficiaries satisfy these requirements, which suggests that there is a mismatch between the prevailing resettlement model and the knowledge and asset base of beneficiaries. Without access to other, non-agricultural income streams, beneficiaries find it difficult to survive.

This mismatch appears to have brought about a change which von Wietersheim (2008: 120) characterised as a “clear shift from political to economic objectives”. Many senior policy and decision makers no longer regard land reform as necessary to solve the country’s poverty problems (Prime Minister N. Angula in *ibid.*: 160). Instead, resettlement should concentrate on the middle class and assist them to become full-scale commercial farmers.

Borrowing from a modernisation discourse, this process was perceived by some as a smooth linear progression. In 2002, the then Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation and current President of Namibia stated that resettlement land should “serve as a place where some future potential commercial farmers should graduate from and be able to acquire their own agricultural land” (MLRR 2002: 3). This view was reiterated recently by another

Cabinet Minister who argued that the beginner or weaker farmers “should first start in the communal area, establish themselves there, and then qualify for resettlement”. Middle-class or aspirant farmers were left in-between weaker communal farmers and those who qualified for an AALS loan. They did not want to farm in the communal areas and did not have the means to buy a farm. “Therefore, a resettlement farm should be a place of empowerment, where somebody is put, not for 99 years but for a number of years, to establish himself and then become commercial” (Minister W. Konjore in von Wietersheim 2008: 166). This line of reasoning entails that resettlement farms provide the middle class with a cheap means to accumulate capital.

One must conclude that redistributive land reform is constrained by a resettlement model that focuses very narrowly on extensive livestock farming. For most of the land targeted for redistribution, this is the only sustainable land use option, and indeed it is likely to benefit those who want to farm with livestock. However, there are many poor Namibians who will not be served by this model because they do not want land primarily for farming purposes. In other cases, planners in the MLR are waiving small parcels of irrigation land and larger game farms as the dominant resettlement model is not geared to crop and game farming.

Little debate has taken place on additional options for resettlement and livelihoods on redistributed land. The PTT (2005a: 29) recommended that resettlement models be developed that encourage beneficiaries to co-operate and accept joint responsibility for shared resources. Another possible model, entailing the purchase of commercial farms for communal area expansion, was rejected at a land reform workshop in 2001. According to Adams (2001: 2), an official in the MLRR said that “communal area expansion [is] unacceptable as a policy option”. However, if the point of departure for successful land reform is improved livelihoods for the poor, resettlement models proposed in the past may need to be revisited with a view to developing additional models.

Apart from these concerns, the small-scale commercial farming model which was adopted for resettlement needs to be reviewed to establish whether it will achieve the formal and perceived objectives of land reform in its current form. For one thing, the model in its current form is not likely to be economically and financially sustainable as allocated units are too small to generate sufficient income to sustain beneficiaries and finance depreciation and capital investment costs. To the extent that this is true, beneficiaries will continue to depend on financial inputs from the MLR to maintain and replace essential infrastructure.

Apart from not generating sufficient revenues, the sizes of resettlement units make it impossible for beneficiaries to ‘graduate’ from resettlement to an AALS loan. The minimum requirement for an AALS loan is 150 LSU, which is double the livestock number that a beneficiary is able to keep on the minimum farm sizes allocated in the central and northern regions, and 50% more than can be kept in the southern regions.

The final point on the current resettlement model is that it contains inherent inequalities. The minimum unit sizes in the south make it possible for beneficiaries to keep 40% more livestock than is possible on the minimum allocations in the central and northern regions.

2.7 Beneficiary selection criteria

The selection of beneficiaries is a serious bone of contention in the land reform programme. The root cause of this contention is that the criteria for selecting beneficiaries do not include any income-related criteria, which has resulted in well-off people such as Permanent Secretaries, Governors and senior civil servants benefiting from the programme.

The National Resettlement Policy sets out three broad categories of potential beneficiaries which are defined by different asset bases: (1) people with no land, no livestock and no employment; (2) people with no land and no income but some livestock; and (3) people with income and livestock but no land. In addition, specific target groups were identified for resettlement: members of the San community; ex-soldiers; displaced, destitute and landless Namibians; people with disabilities; and people from overcrowded communal areas (RoN 2001: 3-5). The National Resettlement Policy also lays down other criteria, including: having a background and interest in agriculture or other related activities on resettlement farms; and being prepared to hold the allocated land under leasehold and to adhere to the stipulations of the lease agreement under threat of eviction in case of transgression (*ibid.*: 5).

These criteria are so broad that it has proved difficult to apply them in a transparent and consistent manner across the country. They are wide enough to give Regional Resettlement Committees (RRCs) considerable space to recommend people who are not necessarily in need of land. This led to land being allocated to people who might have been previously disadvantaged, but who have more than made up for that since Independence by, *inter alia*, being appointed to well-remunerated government and parastatal posts. The current Governor of Omaheke Region, for example, has benefited from the resettlement programme, as have the Deputy Director of Land Use Planning in the MLR and other government officials.

Beneficiaries of Bernafey group resettlement scheme in Hardap.



Moreover, while 80% of beneficiaries are allocated less than 1 000 ha per beneficiary, others, who are not disadvantaged, receive considerably more land. In one case, a farm of 11756 ha was allocated to a man reported to be the Managing Director of a fishing company whose wife was reportedly the Regional Director of Education in Omaheke (*The Windhoek Observer*, 20.12.2008).

Public dissatisfaction with the selection of beneficiaries has surfaced in the national press from time to time. For example, there have been accusations of rampant nepotism in allocating land in Omaheke. In 2007, *New Era* reported under the headline “Murky land handouts” that relatives of the Regional Director of Planning in that region had been allocated land. He was reported to have been a member of the RRC. The newspaper criticised the fact that there was no transparency in land allocations. The MLR practice of placing advertisements in local newspapers announcing successful beneficiaries was said to have ended in 2002. A public argument ensued between the Regional Governor and the MLR spokesperson over whose responsibility it was to make such announcements. The Governor stated that Regional Councils played only an advisory role since decentralisation in land administration had not been fully implemented. Although activities in certain areas were co-ordinated “through a process of mutual co-operation we ... have no power to make anything more than recommendations. Who are we in this process?” (*New Era*, 28.9.2007)

The regional office of the MLR was also accused of abusing its powers in relation to land allocations in Omaheke. When the village council of Drimiopsis decided that farmers who had cattle within the village boundaries had to remove them, some, including the Regional Councillor for that constituency and the Deputy Minister of Fisheries, were resettled on other government land. Other people seemingly were not so lucky. Two brothers who had gradually built up their livestock numbers since starting from very small beginnings at Drimiopsis in 1997 were not given that option and were told instead to leave under threat of arrest. After the Deputy Director of Resettlement intervened, they were offered settlement on a piece of land which had been allocated to the head of the MLR regional office. After some time, the latter wanted to evict them again but they refused to leave. During the course of this dispute it was alleged that the head of the regional office was also renting out portions of his land to a white commercial farmer (*New Era*, 28.3.2007).

To compound matters, Regional Councillors in Omaheke have allocated land to individuals without the approval of the RRC. This practice was facilitated by the existence of a number of government farms where large numbers of people had been settled temporarily. Although many of these people had been living on these farms for several years, officially they were ‘temporary settlers’ and hence had not been allocated defined portions of land. This presented opportunities for regional politicians with farms to accommodate people who had lost their employment on commercial farms or elsewhere. This happened at, for example, Du Plessis in Omaheke. In a very real sense these farms became reservoirs for people who had nowhere else to go.

Government has also come in for some criticism regarding land allocation in Hardap Region. In the first half of 2008, a group of farmers who had been evicted from a government farm

in Hardap criticised government for allocating land to well-known SWAPO party members without advertising the land as required by law. At least one MLR official was mentioned by name as a beneficiary (*The Namibian*, 7.5.2008).⁸

In an attempt to address some of the perceived shortcomings of the selection criteria as set out in official policy documents, the Hardap RRC developed its own criteria. According to an official of the MLR in Mariental, the criteria for selecting resettlement beneficiaries were based on the National Resettlement Policy until 2006, and in 2007 it was decided that additional criteria were required for Hardap in connection with the following:

- (a) “Constituency balance” – ensuring that applicants from different constituencies receive equal consideration during the selection process.
- (b) “Gender equality” – ensuring an equitable gender balance in the selection process.
- (c) “People with disabilities” – ensuring that these people are prioritised when applying for resettlement (this being in line with the target groups specified for prioritisation in the National Resettlement Policy).
- (d) “Carrying capacity” – ensuring that the number of livestock owned by an applicant does not exceed the number determined by the carrying capacity of the farm unit applied for, but that they do own at least the equivalent of 75% of the carrying capacity of the land applied for.
- (e) “Good financial standing” – a criterion apparently applying for applicants being considered for allocation of a main homestead or farmhouse, which requires sufficient income to cover maintenance costs and settle Nampower electricity accounts. (An income of N\$4000 per month was required, but N\$8000 was preferred. Beneficiaries were expected to become self-reliant rather than be a “burden” for the Ministry.)

The weighting of these criteria in considering applications was not clear. The last criterion, however, suggests that poor people – those with little or no income, for example – did not stand much chance of being considered for resettlement.

The Minister of Lands and Resettlement acknowledged the skewed allocation of land in favour of better-off individuals and the fact that officials may not have followed procedures properly. In the MLR budget debate in 2009, the Ministry was criticised for allocating land to government officials, the rich and the “greedy”, instead of to the poor and needy. The Minister responded that such allocations may have been the result of “mistakes” made by MLR officials, but that the legal and policy frameworks were clear and had to be followed (*Die Republikein*, 5.5.2009).

The MLR has responded to these criticisms and concerns by reviewing the selection criteria for beneficiaries and the implementation of the land reform programme. The MLR’s “Draft Resettlement Manual” is currently under discussion in the Ministry and promises to solve many of the issues raised by members of the public and politicians.

⁸ The research team was unsuccessful in its attempts to include him in the survey sample.

2.8 Land acquisition and allocation

Land acquisition in Namibia is ‘proactive’ in the sense that the MLR buys freehold land for subdivision and redistribution to people in need of land. The state has committed itself to the “willing seller, willing buyer” (WSWB) principle for acquiring freehold land. It has been argued that this principle protects the interests of landowners in so far as it neither compels them to sell against their will, nor forces them to sell at a price with which they are not fully satisfied (Lahiff 2005: 2).

In some government and public circles the WSWB principle has been singled out as the root cause of the slow acquisition of commercial farmland for resettlement purposes (Gurirab 2004). As a result, the government announced plans in February 2004 to implement an expropriation option for commercial agricultural land to speed up its efforts to buy more land for the resettlement programme.

The government blamed commercial farmers for the slow pace of land reform, arguing that they only offered to sell small, uneconomical plots for resettlement under the WSWB option. In his farewell speech as Minister of Lands and Resettlement, Namibia’s President Pohamba stated that “those who have land to sell [should sell] a little land to the Government at fair prices so that we [the Government] have land to give to the landless people” in order to avoid a situation where “Namibia could be made ungovernable” if the “‘have-nots’ patience with the current slow process of land reform runs out” (*The Namibian*, 22.3.2005).

It has been argued that much more land has been available for purchase than the government has been able to purchase. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), an independent research organisation in Namibia, has stated that the slow process of land reform should be attributed to “leaden-footed bureaucracy, rather than commercial farmers dragging their heels” (quoted in De Villiers 2003: 38). Despite government’s intention to speed up the land reform process with the introduction of the expropriation principle in 2004, in addition to the WSWB principle, land reform continues to proceed at a slow pace. In 2008 the MLR acquired only 3 out of approximately 70 commercial farms which exchanged hands in that year (*Die Republikein*, 5.5.2009).

Namibian land policy and legislation provides for a preferent right of land acquisition by the state and a land tax. In terms of the ACLRA, the state enjoys a right of first refusal on all freehold land that is offered for sale in the market. Once the MLR has indicated its non-interest in obtaining a particular farm, it issues a waiver which entitles the seller to look for a private buyer.

A land tax was introduced in 2004 with expectations that it would bring more land onto the market (Sherbourne 2009: 6). Information gleaned from MLR *Annual Reports* does not suggest that this has happened. The data suggests that the number of farms offered to the MLR reached a peak of 344 in the year preceding the introduction of the land tax and then decreased. Revenues from the land tax swelled the coffers of the Land Acquisition and Development Fund established to pay for purchasing land and developing the land purchased.



A farm in Hardap – enforcing private property ownership.

Despite these measures, the amount of suitable land for resettlement offered to the MLR has gradually decreased over the last few years, while waivers to sell on the open market have increased. Several factors are responsible for this situation.

One is that ‘affirmative action buyers’ are competing with the MLR for quality land. As the AALS is regarded as a component of the effort to address the inequality in freehold land ownership, the MLR took a policy decision to exempt landowners wishing to sell their land to AALS buyers from obtaining a waiver. Many prospective landowners prefer to sell their land to AALS buyers rather than government because this gives them an opportunity to negotiate a price with the prospective buyer without fear of being unable to withdraw their offer to sell. The success of such a transaction depends on seller and buyer negotiating a price acceptable to both parties, and the buyer mobilising the purchase capital through an AALS loan and his/her own resources.

The result of this process is that AALS buyers buy the best farmland before the MLR has a chance to assess such land for the resettlement programme. Consequently, the MLR claims that much of the land offered to it is of inferior quality and often unsuitable for resettlement. The Ministry blames the slow pace of land acquisition on this state of affairs.

The escalation of farm prices has been another serious bottleneck. The WSWB principle is based on “market value”, but neither the ACLRA nor the National Land Policy defines this term. In discussing the right to expropriate private property, Namibia’s Constitution refers to “just compensation” (Article 16). “Just compensation” is not necessarily limited to market value but could also refer to a farm’s production value – a criterion that many financial institutions use.

In view of these bottlenecks, and in order to speed up redistribution, the state has made limited use of expropriation of commercial farms for resettlement purposes. Since 2004 when the intention to employ this strategy was formally announced in the National Assembly, only three farms have been expropriated against compensation. The MLR does intend making more use of this strategy during the NDP3 period to redistribute more land (RoN 2008).

The pace of land redistribution in Namibia is not driven by the demand for land, but rather by what is available to government on the open market or by way of expropriation. The land redistribution programme does not give small-scale farmers an option to buy portions of commercial farms with financial support from government. Instead, potential land reform beneficiaries have to apply to the MLR for resettlement in response to advertisements of farms available for resettlement. This places illiterate people at a major disadvantage. Suzman raised the problem of widespread illiteracy in the resettlement application process, especially for San people who have little experience in dealing with bureaucratic procedures (Suzman 2001: 89).

Land is allocated to individual beneficiaries. The ACLRA provides for beneficiaries to obtain long-term lease agreements, but to date not a single lease agreement has been registered in the Deeds Office. A recent press release stated that the MLR was about to start issuing lease agreements for 190 farming units on 54 farms across the country. These units had been surveyed and valued. Fifty-two farming units are located in Omaheke Region, and two of these, Drimiopsis and Grootrooibult, fall within the current study area (*Die Republikein*, 18.5.2009).

Advertisements for allocation of subdivided farms are placed once the Division of Land Use Planning in the MLR has assessed farms and prepared allotment plans. The mandate of the Division is to be “the national systematic assessor of the natural resources potential, which makes alternatives for land use, economic and social conditions in order to select the best land use options” (MLR 2006: 11).

Farm subdivisions in the study area have been based on farm development plans prepared by the Department of Agricultural Technical Services in the early 1970s under the provisions of the Soil Conservation Act of 1969. In terms of this Act, farmers were able to obtain subsidies for internal fencing provided that an agricultural extension officer had drawn up a farm plan. The aim was to encourage more sustainable utilisation of freehold farms by enabling farmers to increase the number of internal camps to facilitate rotational grazing.

One problem with this approach of the MLR is that land use planners did not always verify whether the internal fences proposed in the farm plans were ever erected. On some of the farms visited, specific camps without perimeter fencing had been allocated to beneficiaries. The implication was that many beneficiaries could not clearly identify the land allocated to them due to the absence of boundary fences. In other cases they were allocated a number of proposed camps which were indicated on the farm map but were not fenced. Where boundary fences between beneficiaries' allocations do not exist, pastures are utilised on a communal basis.

The process from land acquisition to final settlement is prescribed in the ACLRA and has been criticised as cumbersome and time-consuming. Altogether 45 administrative actions have to be taken by MLR staff in every case. It takes up to 441 days to complete the entire process from accepting an offer of land to resettlement. One big problem with this long timespan is that of widespread vandalism on farms acquired by the MLR which lie idle while their allocation is being considered, which leaves the beneficiaries with ruined infrastructure (Meliczek 2008: 23, 21). Technicians in the MLR are required to do the technical work and make recommendations to the LRAC, which in turn advises the Minister on which course of action to take. The process is briefly summed up in the box below.

SUMMARY OF THE LAND DELIVERY PROCESS

At the technical level, the MLR sends staff members to a farm that is offered to assess the farm's suitability for resettlement. If it is found to be suitable, valuers value the property. Finally, land allocation and subdivision maps are prepared by different MLR staff members who undertake separate field trips to the farm.

Regional Resettlement Committees (RRCs) are responsible for selecting suitable applicants for resettlement from their respective regions. Each RRC proposes one applicant to the Land Reform Advisory Commission (LRAC). The LRAC reviews the nominations from each region, selects one candidate and recommends him/her to the Minister of Lands for approval.

The whole process of land acquisition and allocation is slow and cumbersome, taking at least 411 days. The LRAC activities take up to 25% of the total timespan. Documents referring to the resettlement of one particular farm are submitted six times to the LRAC and four times to the Minister.

Source: Meliczek 2008: 13

Typical farm demarcation notes submitted to the LRAC convey the particulars of the farm, the price at which it is offered and the existing infrastructure. Development planners make a recommendation on how the farm should be subdivided and propose a specific land use. It is not surprising that in an agro-ecological region which is suitable for extensive livestock farming primarily, this is the most frequent recommendation. Evidence suggests that little work goes into exploring possibilities for diversifying existing land use patterns.

The type of land use accepted by the LRAC is entered as a condition of lease in the lease agreement between the government and the beneficiaries. This document carries the official title of "Lease Agreement", but does not satisfy the legal requirements for registration as such in the Deeds Office. This state of affairs has sown confusion among many resettlement farmers interviewed in this LaLR study, who believed that the document they received from the MLR is indeed a leasehold agreement with the government. By law, any proposed deviation from the land use stipulated in the 'lease agreement' requires the prior approval of the Minister.

The whole process of farm assessment, valuation and planning for allocation is highly centralised in the MLR. Suzman argued in 2001 that government's approach to resettlement was top-down, particularly with regard to San settlers:

Settlers have no officially mandated say in determining the direction of the development of resettlement facilities: their participation in decision-making processes is restricted to the extent that MLRR officials with the power to make decisions choose to consult them or heed their advice, if ever they do (Suzman 2001: 91).

In effect the MLR placed the onus on settlers to conform to the process rather than adapting the process to fit the needs of settlers (Maclean 1998: 86, cited in *ibid.*).

2.9 Unauthorised land occupations

Unauthorised land occupations have not been frequent. Where they have occurred, some of the people involved ascribed their actions to the slowness of the land-delivery process. There have been reports of cases in which people occupied state land that had been lying idle for considerable periods. Although such invasions have been the exception, every case was met by the full force of the law.

The only unauthorised occupation reported in Omaheke Region took place in mid 1998 when 56 Herero-speaking families occupied 10 farms located in Omaheke and neighbouring Otjozondjupa Region which the MLRR had purchased for redistribution. Having failed to persuade the families to leave the farms they had occupied illegally over a period of five months, the Ministry obtained a court order to evict them.

Among those illegally occupying these farms were senior civil servants in the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) and the Office of the Speaker. The Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation stated that the police did not investigate the complaints laid by the MLRR regarding the illegal occupation, apparently on instruction from the Minister of Home Affairs. (The latter became the Minister of Lands and Resettlement in 2005.) The MLRR subsequently laid criminal charges against some of the farmers for trespassing in terms of the Trespass Ordinance No. 3 of 1962.

The Minister of Lands interpreted these illegal occupations as a possible attempt by certain individuals and groups to challenge the government. She further stated that the majority of those who occupied state farms were not poor people but rather senior civil servants, and alleged that many of them had fenced off large tracts of communal land.

In fighting back, the "56 Landless Namibian Farmers" organisation said that they would be forced to occupy private land to reclaim their ancestral land rights. They claimed to have linked up with some trade unions in Namibia as well as "pioneers" in Zimbabwe. While the 56 NLF promised to abide by the Court's decision to have them evicted, they threatened to occupy the Roman Catholic Church's farm and mission station, Epukiro, as well as private farms surrounding the 10 state farms.

Herero traditional leaders ascribed the evictions to “apartheid and tribalism”, and viewed them as politically motivated. However, the majority (30 out of 56) of the people concerned were SWAPO supporters who vacated the farms without a demonstration, saying that as SWAPO supporters they did not want to fight their own government. Herero Chief Riruako, on the other hand, said that SWAPO members had never lost land and yet were the first to benefit from land redistribution (Werner 2003: 15-16).

Subsequent threats made by trade union leaders and regional politicians in Omaheke to grab commercial farmland and carry out Zimbabwe-style invasions of commercial farms have not materialised (ibid.: 20). However, the SWAPO Chief Whip recently argued that the WSWB concept is not working and that government needs to make another plan, “even if we grab land Zimbabwe style” (*Die Republikein*, 5.5.2009).

2.10 Institutional framework governing resettlement

The ACLRA stipulates that the functions of land appraisal, land use planning, demarcation, selection of beneficiaries and land allocation will be carried out by the MLA, and to date the whole process of land delivery has been highly centralised. However, the National Resettlement Policy of 2001 identifies a range of line ministries and NGOs which are expected to support land redistribution in their respective areas of responsibility. The Ministries include: Agriculture, Water and Forestry; Environment and Tourism; Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development; Education; and Health and Social Services. The contributions of these Ministries to the land reform process have ranged from non-existent to reasonably good. Co-operation and co-ordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry remains elusive. The National Resettlement Policy reiterates policy statements in an earlier version (1997) that it is vital to involve Regional Councils in the planning and implementation phases of the National Resettlement Programme (NRP). The policy of 2001 states that resettlement schemes, once established by MLR headquarters, should be one of the responsibilities of the Regional Councils (MLR 2001a: 12).

This is in line with Namibia’s Decentralisation Policy which identifies resettlement as one of the functions to be decentralised. To comply with this policy, the MLR has identified the activities and resources to be decentralised to Regional Councils, and has prepared a draft schedule of activities and a timetable for the implementation of its Decentralisation Action Plan.⁹ At the time of writing, the MLR was still busy finalising its decentralisation of functions, and a number of Regional Councils were reported to be ready to accept some of the decentralised responsibilities.

In 1999 the MLR identified the need to establish bodies at regional and local level “to identify regional needs and to undertake selection to assist with the allocation (sic)” (*The Land*, 2(2), 1999: 4). These bodies, i.e. the Regional Resettlement Committees (RRCs), are expected to

⁹ See http://www.decentralisation.gov.na/roleplayers/1_nat_gov/Ministry_of_Lands.html (accessed 23.4.2009).

give regional and traditional leaders an opportunity to provide inputs into the resettlement process (ibid.).

In terms of the “Draft Resettlement Manual”, the RRCs consist of 13 members each, with each chaired by the Regional Governor. The Regional Deputy Director of the MLR serves as Vice-Chairperson, and the other members of each RRC are: 2 representatives of the MAWF; 1 Regional Health Officer; 1 Regional Education Officer; 2 Regional Councillors; 1 traditional leader; 1 representative of youth; 1 representative of women’s organisations; 1 representative of NGOs; and 1 representative of farmers’ unions (RoN n.d.: 3).

The functions of the RRCs as described in the “Draft Resettlement Manual” (ibid.) are:

- identification of regional resettlement needs;
- help to select farms in the region;
- receiving and processing of resettlement application forms;
- recommendation of resettlement beneficiaries; and
- monitoring of regional resettlement projects and promoting development.

Despite this catalogue of functions, the role of the RRCs continues to be limited to assisting in the selection of beneficiaries. They convene only when the need arises, i.e. when farms in their respective regions have been advertised. Applications to be settled on an advertised farm are directed to the office of the MLR in the region in which the farm is located. This office collates the applications and then calls a meeting of the RRC to discuss them.

In the past, the RRCs discussed shortlisted applicants and made recommendations to the National Resettlement Committee (NRC). Like the RRCs, the NRC is not required by law. Its existence was first made known in the revised National Resettlement Policy of 2001 (RoN 2001: 12). In terms of this policy, the NRC is an interministerial committee composed of all line ministries involved in the land reform process as well as Agribank and the Namibia Development Corporation (NDC) – 12 institutions in total. The NRC’s functions are not described in any detail in the policy, except to say that, like the Land Acquisition Committee, it seeks to bring together and utilise as broad a range of expertise as possible for the “identification, planning, implementation and evaluation” of resettlement projects (ibid.: 9).

The NRC was not obliged to accept the RRC recommendations. Once the NRC had reviewed the regional recommendations, it forwarded them to the LRAC which in turn made final recommendations to the Minister. With the Minister’s approval of these recommendations, letters were sent to the beneficiaries to inform them that their applications were successful.

In recent years, however, RRCs have sent their recommendations directly to the LRAC, cutting out the NRC.

Table 5 lists the institutions involved in the land reform process and sums up their main tasks.

Table 5: Institutions involved in land reform and resettlement, and their roles

INSTITUTION	ROLE IN RESETTLEMENT
Ministry of Lands and Resettlement	
i) Directorate of Resettlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and co-ordination of resettlement programmes • Implementation of projects • Supervision of resettlement projects • Monitoring and evaluation of projects
ii) Directorate of Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of leases • Resource surveys and planning of proposed resettlement areas • Development of planning guidelines and training of planners
iii) Office of the Surveyor-General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of mapping and photography at appropriate scales
iv) Registrar of Deeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of leases and other real rights
v) Directorate of General Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial control • Planning and evaluation
Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of veterinary services • Assistance in evaluating farms • Provision of agricultural extension and training • Provision of credit facilities • Provision of water • Collection of grazing fees • Survey, installation and maintenance of water points • Support of co-operative schemes • Market development
Ministry of Environment and Tourism Department of Environmental Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting in planning of wildlife-based resettlement schemes • Ensuring environmental soundness of plans
Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing and Rural Development	Proclamation of resettlement areas when essential
Ministry of Works and Transport	Provision of infrastructure in resettlement areas
Ministry of Education	Provision of education, teachers and relevant materials
Ministry of Health and Social Services	Provision of health services
National Planning Commission	Advising on project planning issues and funding
Namibia Development Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of credit to aspiring small-scale farmers • Assisting in planning of schemes and training of beneficiaries in relevant situations
Agricultural Bank of Namibia (Agribank)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provisions of credit loans • Assistance in evaluating application forms
Non-governmental organisations	Planning, extension services, materials input and training where relevant
Land Tribunal – established by the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 of 1995	Recommendations to the Minister in terms of the Act
Land Reform Advisory Commission – established by the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act 6 of 1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations to the Minister on applications for resettlement compensation for expropriated farms and other issues as outlined by the Act

Source: Harring and Odendaal 2002

2.11 Frameworks for interaction between the state and civil society

Civil society organisations in the land reform sector are either non-existent or very weak. The point has been made that there are no advocacy groups lobbying government for a pro-poor land reform programme. But an official framework for such co-operation has been developed. In 2005, government released a policy document on civic organisations and partnership (NPC 2005). This policy was developed in recognition of the prominent role that civic organisations have played in the development of Namibia generally. It seeks to define the sector as well as establish a framework for partnerships between government and civil society that is transparent and characterised by accountability (*ibid.*: 1).

Research suggests that SWAPO has had a complex relationship with civil society organisations, which undoubtedly was shaped by the demands of the armed struggle. SWAPO's mobilisation strategy during the struggle did not provide much support to local community-based organisations. According to Dobell (1995: 172), the focus on mobilising the international community meant that little mobilisation was undertaken inside the country. This was so because SWAPO was opposed to any form of community-based development work inside the country on the grounds that it might "divert energy and resources away from the political struggle for Independence". Grassroots development projects, even though initiated by members of SWAPO and/or allied institutions, were thought to "obscure the roots of oppression and poverty, encourage reformism and diminish revolutionary fervour" (Steenkamp 1995: 107). In addition, SWAPO feared that community-based development projects might strengthen other civil society organisations and institutions relative to SWAPO, thereby "loosening its control and perhaps challenging its status as sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people" (*ibid.*: 108). In the field of labour, Tapscott (1995: 158) suggested that SWAPO's interest in organised labour was instrumental largely in so far as it was aimed at generating support for the liberation struggle rather than fighting for workplace demands to be met.

Pressure on SWAPO to agree to the provision of external aid and to support community-based development organisations' efforts to mobilise and support local communities increased. This pressure came from its internal wing and the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) which was closely aligned with SWAPO. Finally SWAPO agreed to such aid being provided, subject to stringent conditions. These included that all foreign aid had to be channelled through the CCN and had to be used for educational rather than socio-economic projects. "The CCN [thus] became the conduit for SWAPO patronage" (Steenkamp 1995: 108).

Roughly coinciding with this change in policy, the early 1980s witnessed an upsurge in the formation of community-based organisations (CBOs). This was partially due to a growing cynicism that Independence would not come within months or even years, which fuelled scepticism about the ability of external diplomacy alone to bring about Independence. Progressive activists also exploited the political space that opened up on account of SWAPO's

reluctant agreement to allow civil society organisations to become active in communities (Strauss 1990: 225). By the mid 1980s there were more than 50 and seemingly close to 100 CBOs and NGOs active in such fields as literacy promotion, legal advice and representation, housing, community media, education, agriculture and culture (ibid.: 229-230).

However, the colonial government regarded these organisations and their respective development projects as a threat. Projects run by CBOs sympathetic to SWAPO were likely to compete with government's own 'hearts and minds' campaigns designed to win over the black population (ibid.: 224). South African occupation forces effectively prevented the growth of independent community-based NGOs in the northern regions of the country, "in the belief that they could be mobilised towards resistance by forces sympathetic to SWAPO" (ibid.: 225). Together with "SWAPO's own penchant for authoritarianism" and autocratic traditional authority structures, Tapscott concluded that it was not possible for mass-based organisations to emerge (Tapscott 2001: 322).

Immediately after Independence, in 1991, government mobilised civil society organisations across the country to participate in the National Conference on Land Reform and the Land Question. The aim of the conference was to achieve consensus on how the land question in Namibia should be tackled with maximum popular participation. Five hundred people from several hundred NGOs debated for five days. At the end of these deliberations, 24 consensus resolutions were passed which were not binding on government but were supposed to guide government in policy development.

Although this conference was widely regarded as a major departure from SWAPO's pre-Independence practice of not including the general population in policy debates, this approach was not sustained in later policy development. On the basis of resolutions of the conference and the recommendations of the Technical Committee on Commercial Farmland, the development of legislation¹⁰ on land reform was left to technocrats with little if any input from civil society organisations.

NGOs criticised government for not consulting civil society on the drafting of land reform legislation and dragging its feet. The Namibian Non-Governmental Organisations Forum (NANGOF), an NGO umbrella organisation, organised a conference in 1994 to discuss the land question and put forward recommendations to government on land policy and legislation. Invitations issued by the NGO Working Committee on Land Reform to senior ministers to address the conference were declined, and the Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation tabled draft legislation on land redistribution in the National Assembly while NGOs were discussing the land question (NGO-WCLR 1994).

Government also came under fire from its own allies for its lack of consultation. In 1999 the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), a trade union federation allied to SWAPO, launched a stinging attack on government for failing to consult people about land. It stated: "Yes, people are consulted during the process of policy formulation. However, it is the

¹⁰ The Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act was passed in 1995, three years before the National Land Policy was approved.

conviction of the majority [of Namibians] that consultation only serves as a public relations exercise. The input of people is not always taken into account.” (*The Namibian*, 2.7.1999) Similarly, the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) representing communal farmers alleged that its policy recommendations were not taken seriously by government. Against this, the Minister of Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation stated that her Ministry held regular consultations with the NNFU (*Die Republikein*, 10.9.1999).

NANGOF all but ceased to exist after organising the 1994 alternative land conference as the umbrella body of NGOs involved in land reform. The handful of NGOs which were active in aspects of land reform carried on with their work very much on their own. Most of these activities consisted of supporting capacity building in the MLR, in Communal Land Boards and for land reform beneficiaries, and supporting livelihood support programmes for San beneficiaries in group resettlement projects as well as work on legal aspects of land reform and the management of natural resources.

Only one NGO, the LAC, is directly involved in policy advocacy work. It regularly publishes reports on different aspects of land reform, usually with clear policy recommendations.

The fact that the poor and landless are not organised allows government to ignore – with one or two exceptions – the inputs of civil society organisations. The exception to this is the Namibia Agricultural Union (NAU), the body representing commercial farmers. The NAU has regular meetings with the Minister of Lands and Resettlement, and over the years has developed a number of documents reflecting its views on different aspects of land reform, such as expropriation and minimum farm sizes, with recommendations on how the policy framework should be changed. It is a strong proponent of negotiated land reform, an idea that has resonated at the highest level of government. The recommendations of the PTT which Cabinet approved in April 2006 included that the MLR, “together with land owners’ representatives (i.e. the Namibia Agriculture [sic] Union) could negotiate a solution to the short- and medium-term acquisition of land” (Katoma 2006: 1). In April 2009 the Minister of Lands and Resettlement announced that a land reform forum would be established, in which all stakeholders would be represented.

Apart from policy work, the NAU in association with the Namibia National Farmers Union (NNFU) has developed and is implementing a programme to support emerging commercial farmers. These are primarily beneficiaries of the AALS but increasingly also of the NRP.

Despite these NGO activities in support of land reform, civil society is not very well developed in the land reform sector. A lot more needs to be done to satisfy the aim of the National Resettlement Policy to invite NGOs “to become involved in the provision of planning, training, extension services, material inputs and outsourcing of projects” (MLR 2001a: 12). The MLR’s *Strategic Plan 2006-2010* foresees assessing the mandates, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, including NGOs, to improve co-ordination with such organisations (MLR 2007: 9).

A glimmer of hope may be the fact that at the end of May 2009, NANGOF was officially re-launched as the main umbrella body for civil society organisations in the Namibia.

3 REGIONAL CONTEXTS

3.1 Hardap

Spanning an area of 109 659 km², Hardap Region covers approximately 13% of Namibia's total land surface. Approximately 75% of the land in Hardap is owned under freehold title, predominantly by white farm owners. Communal areas occupy about 10% of the region, while the remaining 15%, in the west of the region, has been proclaimed as a national park (NPC 2006b: 17). No recent data exists on average farm sizes, but in 1991 the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development estimated the average sizes in Maltahöhe and Mariental Districts to be 14 042 ha and 8 835 ha respectively (RoN 1991: 131).

Due to low annual rainfall combined with high inter-seasonal variations in precipitation, Hardap is an arid region. According to the *Atlas of Namibia*, the median annual rainfall in most of Maltahöhe District ranges from 100 mm to 150 mm, while Mariental District is slightly more fortunate with a median of 150 mm to 200 mm per annum (Mendelsohn et al. 2002: 85). Rainfall variability ranges between 40% and 80% across these two districts (ibid.: 86). Drought occurs frequently in this region. Much of Maltahöhe District receives less than 50 mm every 14 years and Mariental District less than 100 mm (ibid.: 90).

Population density in the region is very low at 0.6 people per km². Almost three quarters of the population are classified as “rural”, living as wage labourers on commercial farms or on communal land (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003: 7). Only 9% of all households identified

Bernafey group resettlement scheme after a period of higher rainfall.



farming as their main source of household income in 2001, compared to 61% for whom wages or salaries were the main source (ibid.).

Economic data disaggregated by region does not exist in Namibia. It is therefore not possible to say what the relative economic contributions of different sectors to the regional economy are. A brief description of Hardap in the Second National Development Plan (NDP2) states:

[The Hardap] economy is essentially driven by a large non-tradable sector supported by servicing and production sectors. Trade and industry activities are largely concentrated in the agricultural sector, mainly small-stock (RoN n.d. [2001]: 40).

Extensive livestock farming is the main land-based economic activity in Hardap, and there is also limited crop production. Mendelsohn et al. (2002: 147) estimated that approximately 4 000 ha of land had been cleared for crop production. It is not clear how much of this land was under cultivation at the time of this LaLR study, and how much is irrigation land. About 2 000 ha are being irrigated at Hardap Dam, by water from the dam. Further east, just over 600 ha are being irrigated in the Auob-Stampriet area which has rich artesian water (NWRMR 2000: 11; Lange et al. 1997: 33).

Since the late 1980s, an increasing number of commercial farmers have diversified out of agriculture into commercial hunting and tourism. Among the factors that contributed to this was the collapse of the international market for karakul pelts, which massively curtailed the previously lucrative commercial activity of karakul pelt production in southern Namibia. Some farmers replaced karakul farming with mutton production by raising dorper sheep and goats instead of karakul sheep. In 2002, dorper sheep and goats outnumbered karakul by 4 to 1. The change from karakul pelt to mutton production had serious environmental and economic ramifications for the farming sector in the south. Grazing practices and needs of sheep bred for meat differed markedly from those of karakul. The intake of pasturage of sheep bred for meat is generally greater than that of karakul (Mendelsohn 2006: 54). Many existing farms became too small to accommodate enough 'mutton sheep' to compensate for the loss of revenue resulting from the collapse of the pelt market. The economic impact of this transformation has not been documented, but it was devastating for the applicable farmers, many of whom reportedly went bankrupt. The negative economic effects of this agricultural transformation may also explain why the MLRR found ready sellers of land in both Maltahöhe and Mariental Districts in the early 1990s.

Despite agriculture being the main economic sector in Hardap, in 2002 it employed only about 31% of the 18 364 people employed in the region, compared to nearly 50% employed by the private/public sectors (NPC 2006b: 23). Evidence suggests that agricultural employment opportunities are decreasing rapidly. Regular surveys on agricultural wages conducted by the Agricultural Employers' Association¹¹ have shown that agricultural employment in

¹¹ The sample for these surveys is drawn from members of the Namibia Agricultural Union which represents approximately 50% of all commercial farmers. The picture that these surveys paint must be regarded as more positive than the average situation, as those volunteering information are probably among the better-off commercial farmers.

Namibia as a whole has declined steadily since 1998. From 2002 to 2004 alone, it declined by 39% overall. Significantly, the highest decline of 80% was in the category of temporary employment (Agricultural Employers' Association 2004: 7). In the absence of regionally disaggregated data, it has to be assumed that Hardap was no exception vis-à-vis the downward trend in agricultural employment. The decline of karakul farming has certainly contributed to the gradual decline in temporary employment opportunities in this region (NPC 2006b: 58).

General insecurity among commercial farmers was cited as the main reason for farmers' reluctance to fill vacancies on their farms. "Militant labour unrest", "unrealistic demands" made by the Namibian Farm Workers' Union, minimum wages and land tax were some of the specific reasons cited (ibid.).

In addition to receiving cash wages and remuneration in kind, some farm workers have been permitted to keep a limited number of livestock on commercial farms. The Wage Survey of 2004 suggests that 29% of permanent farm workers kept livestock on commercial farms where they worked. On average they kept 23 small stock, 5 large stock and 3 horses/mules/donkeys (Agricultural Employers' Association 2004: 17). One respondent in this LaLR survey stated that workers on the farm Haribes were allowed to keep a maximum of 25 goats at cattle posts. Goats in excess of this limit either had to be sold or taken to the communal area to be looked after by relatives (see also NPC 2006a: 77). Alternatively, people applied for resettlement, as is discussed below.

The very first farms acquired by government after Independence were in Hardap Region. It is not entirely clear why this was so, but it seems reasonable to assume that the financial situation of many farmers made more land available in the southern regions (Hardap and Karas) than elsewhere in the country.

3.1.1 Land redistribution

By August 2007, the MLR had purchased 28 farms or portions of farms totalling 164 972 ha in Hardap (MLR to LAC, 13.8.2007). If it is assumed that 75% (8.2 million ha) of the region's total area is utilised for commercial farming, this represents 2% of all freehold farmland in the region. The MLR claims to have settled 155 families on this freehold land, giving each family an average of 1 064 ha. This average stands in contrast to the finding of the PTT that beneficiaries in the south were allocated 2 138 ha on average, and is substantially less than the recommendation of the LRAC that land allocations in the southern regions should not be smaller than 3 000 ha per beneficiary household (PTT 2005b: 52). It is not possible from the current survey to calculate the average allocation per beneficiary, as many beneficiaries did not know how much land they were allocated.

Twenty per cent of FURS beneficiaries interviewed in the current survey were farming on a part-time basis. Forty-five per cent of these had kept livestock on a commercial farm before moving onto resettlement land, while 25% had previously farmed on communal land.

A list provided by Agribank in October 2007 showed that 23 commercial farms had been bought under the AALS in Mariental District and 24 in Maltahöhe District. Forty per cent of the AALS farmers interviewed were part-time farmers. Half of these had farmed on communal land before buying a farm, while 30% had kept livestock on commercial farms.

3.2 Omaheke

Omaheke Region is located in eastern Namibia, bordering Botswana. Spanning an area of 8 461 200 ha, it is the fifth largest region of Namibia. Almost 50% or 3 543 044 ha of land in Omaheke is registered under freehold title, and the remainder is communal land. In 2001 the freehold area consisted of approximately 800 commercial farms (MAWF 2001).

The agro-ecological zones in which Omaheke and Hardap Regions fall are very different. Omaheke is in a summer rainfall area. Average annual rainfall decreases in a north-south direction, ranging from as low as 250 mm per annum in the extreme south of the region (Aminuis Constituency) to between 350 mm and 400 mm in the areas north of Gobabis (the region's municipal centre, located roughly in the middle of the region). Rainfall is confined to the months of December to April, the remaining seven months being dry (NPC 2006a: 1).

Omaheke is predominantly a savannah environment in which *Terminalia combretum* and *Acacia* savannahs are the dominant types of vegetation. Forest and woodland savannahs of the northern Kalahari, camel thorn savannahs of the central Kalahari and mixed shrub vegetation of the southern Kalahari are the region's dominant vegetation zones (ibid.: 5).

Approximately 90% of Omaheke is characterised as “Kalahari Sands Plateau, stabilised sand drift with few pans [and an] average growing period of 61-90 days”, but a very short dependable growing period of 6 days (Coetzee 1999: 42).¹² Therefore Omaheke as a whole is regarded as having low suitability for crop cultivation (Mendelsohn 2006: 29). Consequently, rainfed agriculture is very risky whereas extensive cattle ranching predominates in terms of land use. Omaheke has some of the best grazing areas in the country. Inhabitants refer to their region as “cattle country” and claim to produce the best beef in Namibia. Carrying capacities range from 15 to 30 kg live mass per hectare or 12 to 24 ha per LSU. In the area selected for this LaLR study, the carrying capacity is 12 ha per LSU (ibid.).

In recent years, many commercial farmers have diversified out of agriculture into game farming, hunting and tourism activities such as running guest farms and lodges. No figures are available for Omaheke to quantify the extent of this process, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the increase in non-agricultural economic activities has been substantial in the freehold farming sector. These non-agricultural activities complement incomes derived from cattle farming.

¹² “In general, the growing period is the time during a growing season when both air temperature and soil moisture permit crop growth. The length of a growing period is formally defined as the number of days during which precipitation exceeds half the potential evapotranspiration, plus the number of days to evapotranspire an assumed 100mm ... of water from excess precipitation.” (de Pauw and Coetzee 1999: 27)



Plowing for crop cultivation at Skoonheid group resettlement scheme, Omaheke.

3.2.1 Land redistribution

The most recent data suggests that a total of 192 farms amounting to 872 230 ha of freehold land previously owned by white commercial farmers has been transferred to previously disadvantaged Namibians in Omaheke since Independence.¹³ Only 37% or 71 of these farms, amounting to 356 357 ha, have been acquired by the MLR for resettlement or small-scale commercial farming. Sixteen of the 71 were transferred to the MLR from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development,¹⁴ while 55 were bought under the WSWB principle as from 1991. The remaining 121 farms, covering 515 873 ha in total, have been bought by previously disadvantaged Namibians under the AALS. In all, approximately one quarter of all the freehold land in Omaheke has been transferred to previously disadvantaged Namibians since Independence.

The minimum farm size for land reform beneficiaries in Omaheke has been set at 1 000 ha. However, only 20% of the approximately 531 official beneficiaries in the region have access to more than 1 000 ha, as Table 6 below shows.

¹³ Reliable data on the NRP is notoriously difficult to obtain. Unless otherwise indicated, data used in this section is based on the NAU database on land acquisitions of 2008 and the MLR's "Masterlist of Resettlement Beneficiaries for Omaheke Region, 2008".

¹⁴ Renamed as the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry in 2005.

Table 6: Average land allocations in Omaheke, 2008

Hectares	# Beneficiaries in category	% Beneficiaries in category	Cumulative %
< 500	277	52	80
500 to 1 000	146	27	
1 000 to 1 500	79	15	15
1 500 to 2 000	28	5	5
10 000 >	1	0	–
Total	531	100	100

Sources: NAU database 2008; MLR Masterlist Omaheke 2008

The lowest average allocation is 50 ha for the 84 beneficiaries on the farm Vasdraai. This is followed by the allocation of 4 102 ha or 91 ha per beneficiary on the farm Du Plessis where 45 beneficiaries have been settled temporarily since 1999. On the farms Gemsbokfontein, Kalahari Pragt and Blouberg, the average allocations are respectively 121 ha, 162 ha and 188 ha per beneficiary.

An ongoing bone of contention among people in both Omaheke and Hardap is the principle of maintaining a regional balance in land allocations. This principle has given rise to a perception that land which traditionally belongs to the Nama and Herero communities is being allocated to other people from other regions. For many this remains a sore point, particularly against the background of government's decision in 1991 not to entertain any claims to ancestral land rights. The "Herero Royal Leadership", having described the 1991 Land Conference resolution underlying this decision as "an abortion", called on government to restore ancestral land and holy places to the Herero community (*Die Republikein*, 27.8.1991). Although government has no intention of changing its policy on ancestral land, the issue of ancestral land claims is still alive. Notions that Namibian land is there for all Namibians to share are not shared equally by all Namibians. A person in Hardap was reported to have commented that government was overlooking "the real owners" of the land in allocating land in that region, and further:

History is repeating itself. We are again colonised through the guise of a soft law. We were evicted from our ancestral land to benefit landless people from the North¹⁵ (*The Namibian*, 7.5.2008).

¹⁵ A metaphor for Oshiwambo-speaking people.