

Land Corruption, Gender and Rural Land Governance in Zimbabwe

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By

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

After two decades of experimenting with the market-based willing-buyer willing-seller approach to land reform, Zimbabwe embarked on a Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) from the year 2000 whose aim was to re-indigenise and empower the previously marginalised agrarian black Zimbabweans, particularly women. Implementation of the FTLRP was also meant to decongest the over-populated communal areas created during the colonial era and to resolve tenure-related issues that surrounded the land question following the country's independence from colonial rule in 1980 (Mutopo, 2014). The notable outcome of the FTLRP has been a shift from dual to a tri-modal agrarian structure comprising of communal, newly resettled and large-scale commercial farming areas under different tenure arrangements. However, within the FTLRP, the gender question of the land reform and the discourse around it have revolved mainly around women's access to land without necessarily going further to interrogate empowerment issues and the role that land corruption has played in facilitating or hindering beneficiation outcomes. The aspect of women participation in land governance structures has not been adequately explored. Active participation in land governance structures by women is hypothesized to have positive implications for beneficiation outcomes at the household level, particularly with regards to food and nutrition security and poverty alleviation, in general (Mutopo, 2015; 2014; WLZ, 2009; ZWCRN, 2009).

Mukonza (2013) notes that it is the desire of governments all over the world to deliver public goods and services to citizens in an efficient and effective manner. This is particularly important at the local level of governance, where administrative responsibilities are in close proximity to the citizens. However, the author notes that efforts to develop communities are often hampered by various forms of corruption which militate against the realization of these aspirations. This is particularly true given the economic scarcity factor, whereby governments are always faced with the need to satisfy people's unlimited wants in the context of scarce resources (Ibid). Thus, any resource that gets misused or misappropriated may result in the government failing to fully discharge its mandate and fulfil promises to its citizenry resulting in discontent among the citizens. It is therefore imperative for all spheres of the government to uphold and implement anti-corruption policies and mechanisms since corruption, if unabated, can have devastating effects. This is particularly so at the local sphere where the government is often expected to respond better to local needs of communities and households.

Thus, this study seeks to interrogate the influence of corruption in the agricultural and rural setting with particular emphasis on women's beneficiation from land and agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. To what extent has land-related corruption influenced women's beneficiation from land and agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe?
- ii. What are the consequences of land-related corruption in Zimbabwe?
- iii. What are the challenges faced in tackling land-related corruption in Zimbabwe?
- iv. How effective are the existing anti-corruption mechanisms in tackling land related corruption?

This analysis provides a context and framework through which the participation of women in rural land governance and their beneficiation therefrom can be enhanced. The paper reviews their (women's) prevailing situation with regards to means through which they access this key productive resource (land) at the local level.

1.1 Problem statement

In Zimbabwe, where primary agricultural production (farming) is still the dominant economic activity for the majority of the population, land remains the most important resource for rural livelihoods, economic empowerment and poverty alleviation (Mutondoro et al., 2016; Kurebwa, 2015). To a greater extent, access to and control over land determines the struggle for gender equality and equity for women since unequal land rights are perceived to entrench gender inequality and perpetuate poverty in rural areas (Kurebwa, 2015). Although women constitute the majority of agricultural producers in rural areas of Zimbabwe, their access to and control over proceeds from the land is still very limited (Hove and Nyamandi, 2016). Recent studies conducted by women's advocacy and lobby groups in rural areas of Zimbabwe have revealed that the continued lagging behind of women with regards to land access could be linked to the governance structure for land and related natural resources which influence beneficiation outcomes (WLZ, 2009; AAIZ, 2009; ZWCRN, 2009).

The existing land governance system in Zimbabwe is perceived to subject vulnerable groups such as women to what Chiweshe et al (2016) describes as 'land corruption'. The concept of 'land corruption' is still relatively new and is said to entrench the already existing gendered land inequalities and has tendency to create further inequalities, particularly in rural areas (Mutondoro et al, 2016). Its newness can be attributed to scant empirical evidence on the relationship between rural land governance systems and gender inequalities. Chiweshe et al. (2016) suggest that land corruption is an operational concept that refers to 'illicit acts and the abuses of power' committed by those in positions of authority when discharging their land governance-related mandates. However, limited empirical evidence with regards to the nature and extent of land corruption and its relationship with women's participation in land governance structures has prompted this study. This is particularly so in the context of the fast-track land reform program (FTLRP) embarked on by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) since the year 2000 and other emerging large-scale land deals.

1.2 Methodology

This study relies on secondary data for much of the analyses and discussions made in this paper. It is basically a desk study which makes better use of literature around the subject to support certain arguments. Media and online reports have been extensively reviewed to gather as much evidence on the research subject mainly because there is still scant data and information to constitute substantial empirical evidence that could be extensively reviewed. It is not the intention of this paper to provide a detailed historical context or analysis of land and agrarian reforms or corruption in Zimbabwe *per se*, but rather to selectively target few instances of land-related corruption in the post-FTLRP

period. However, verifications have been made with various sources to ensure reliability of the data and information used.

2.0 CONCEPTULISATION OF CORRUPTION

Corruption is said to be a global phenomenon that manifests in various forms and cuts across both public and private sectors (Mukonza 2013). Although there appears to be no common definition for corruption, there appears to be consensus that it is a governance issue that manifests in cases where some individuals or institutions are allowed to have monopoly of power over a good or service, characterized by discretion over decision making in the context of limited or no accountability (Ibid). Common forms of corruption are those involving the public sector and range from clear cases of abuse and diversion of financial resources meant for public projects for private benefit by government officials to cases where citizens are left with no option but to pay bribes in order to access certain goods and services due to failure of a government system. The misuse and abuse of public office for private gain denotes public corruption and must not be confused with gift-giving (Word Bank, 1997). Thus, there needs to be a clear distinction between corruption and gift-giving because the latter is often transparent (and not secret), does not violate public rights and the scale is modest (as opposed to life changing). The type as well as the quantity involved often determines the nature of corruption. According to Mukonza (2013), common types of corruption in Zimbabwe are administrative corruption and political corruption, which tend to alter the implementation of public policies, particularly with regards to who should qualify to access government programs and public goods and services. With administrative corruption, corrupt public officials can allow certain people who do not qualify to benefit in exchange for some favours or deny access to some would be beneficiaries if they fail to provide some favours. However, with political corruption, certain policies, laws and institutions are formulated and/or influenced to generate certain outcomes that are not of the public interest but politically biased.

In terms of magnitude, corruption can also be conceptualized in terms of the volumes or quantities involved. There is grand corruption, which refers to circumstances where the amounts or quantities involved are substantial and then there is petty corruption is where small amounts or volumes are involved. In grand corruption there is normally the involvement of high level officials while in petty corruption it is the junior and low ranking officials that are often involved (Mukonza, 2013). As noted by Andvig et al (2001), corruption is often a very complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has multiple causes and effects, and can take on various forms and functions depending on the context. Mukonza (2013) notes that in most cases, it is difficult to come up with a clear distinction and identify the exact type of corruption since overlaps and intersections between these two types normally exist. Other sector-specific definitions of corruption are also found in literature. However, of interest to this study is land-related corruption in rural agro-based (farming) communities.

3.0 NATURE OF CORRUPTION IN RURAL LAND GOVERNANCE

According to Mukonza (2013), government interventions in the economy through controls and regulation often diminishes space for free-market operations, causes inefficiencies and breeds corrupt activities. This is particularly true in cases of overregulation, where the regulatory procedures and costs of compliance are perceived to be high, complicated and non-transparent. Such procedures normally leave the processes at the discretion of public officials and in some cases this makes it difficult to even detect acts of corruption. It is mainly as a result of inefficiencies in the public administrative systems that creates an environment that is conducive for corruption.

3.1 Land Corruption

Land-related corruption is an act of abuse of power and authority for personal gain by those in charge of land administration (Mutondoro et al., 2016b; Mutondoro and Ncube, 2013). In the land sector, corruption often manifests in two forms, which are political and bureaucratic. While the former entails manipulation of public institutions by politicians as a way of facilitating resource allocation in a manner that sustains the power and wealth of political elites, the latter, which is also referred to as administrative corruption, takes place in government ministries, departments and state-owned enterprises (Mutondoro et al., 2016b). Opportunities for corruption are mainly created through land reforms, land sales and development projects. Examples of opportunities for land corruption include such reforms as when state-owned lands are leased or privatized, large-scale land acquisitions by investors are negotiated and land is expropriated for nationalization or state (or government-related) projects (Aban et al., 2016; Mutondoro et al., 2016b). It is argued that political corruption in the land sector is often hard to document as it normally takes place at the interface between political and economic elites resulting in widespread abuse of public resources and self-enrichment by individuals with close links to the government. Administrative (or bureaucratic) corruption manifests in the form of small bribes that need to be paid to official in lands ministry, departments and local councils to access land related administrative services, for instance, when citizens want to be allocated land for residential, farming or other purposes.

Land-related corruption has manifested in different forms and at different levels in Zimbabwe. For instance, Scoones et al (2010) expressed concern over the prevalence of political and bureaucratic corruption in the agrarian sector during implementation of the FTLRP. The fact that land administration in Zimbabwe has historically lacked transparency and accountability is well documented (Moyo 1995, Rukuni et al. 1994). The institutional framework for administration of agricultural land is fragmented, with poor coordination and overlapping responsibilities (Chiweshe, 2017). Anecdotal evidence on the manifestation of land corruption includes large-scale land deals, multiple farm ownership under the FTLRP and dispossession of poor households in direct violation of the one-man one-farm policy. A report presented at the 2018 Zanu PF National People's Conference by the ruling party's Land Reform Department, highlighted the prevalence of "double allocation" of farms across the country (Mpofu, 2018). The report indicated that the party had recently received more than 200 complaints from aggrieved parties and it apportioned blame on "corrupt" officials in the Ministry of Lands for the problems. Chief among these cases was the dispossession of smallholder farming communities in Mazowe by the former First Family (Grace Mugabe), which left several

peasant households homeless. As a recommendation, the report advised the ruling party to institute some mechanisms 'to resolve the numerous problems emanating from the way the land reform programme was implemented, particularly taking into cognizance the corrupt and vindictive practices by officials in the Ministry of Lands, including some former ministers'.

Empirical evidence suggests that political power is at the heart of land-related corruption in Zimbabwe, with the major actors in subverting laid down procedures being politicians (Chiweshe, 2017; Mutondoro et al., 2016; Ncube et al., 2016). Thus, land corruption is largely a function of political power for a nation that has faced prolonged political instability, which has exacerbated corruption (Sagaser, no date). Recent patterns of corruption involving communal lands have been documented in the research works of Chiweshe (2017), Mutondoro et al. (2016a; b), Aban et al. (2016), Mutopo et al. (2015); Mutopo and Chiweshe (2014) and Mutondoro and Ncube, 2013). See Box 1 for a detailed case study. The empirical evidence indicates an increasing pattern of abuse of power by politicians, traditional leaders (village heads and chiefs) and rural district councils through illegal land allocation and sales. This is despite the fact that the land belongs to the State and it is illegal to sell land in communal areas under the laws of the country, which only give traditional leaders custody or stewardship over communal lands. According to Chiweshe (2017), Domboshava and Seke are the two most affected communal areas, due to their proximity to the Capital City, Harare.

Under the FTLRP, it seems that land was given along political party lines, especially in the A2 resettlement scheme, with members of the opposition party being sidelined in the process. With about 35% of the acquired land having been allocated to A2 beneficiaries, it is common knowledge that the beneficiaries are almost entirely elites aligned to the ruling party, Zanu PF. Chiweshe (2017) remarks that the spoils of the FTLRP disproportionately benefited members and supporters of the regime, with virtually all senior party officials as well as army, police and Central Intelligence chiefs having secured at least an A2 farm.

Box 1: Case study of large-scale land deal in Zimbabwe (Green Fuels Chisumbanje Ethanol Project)

Since 2009, a public-private partnership joint venture company, Green Fuels (Pvt) Ltd, has attracted widespread attention as a landmark large-scale land deal of the 21st century in Zimbabwe. The Green Fuels project affected two adjacent communal areas (Chisumbanje and Chinyamukwakwa) in Chipinge district of Manicaland province. It has a target to grow sugarcane on a large scale basis (up to 50,000 hectares) for ethanol production. Construction of a US\$600 million ethanol distillery plant has been completed, which has a capacity of 35,000 to 40,000 litres per day (Gain Report, 2010). It is believed that the GoZ, through its state owned enterprise, the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA), entered into a secret 20-year land deal in 2007 in which it signed a build-operate-transfer (BOT) agreement with two private companies (Ratings Investments and Macdom Investments) to form a joint venture company called Green Fuels. The deal was shrouded in a lot of secrecy from the beginning to the extent that the surrounding communities were never consulted. It only emerged later that the deal was tilted in favour of the investor (70% shareholding) in violation of the country's Indigenization Policy, which required the local partner to own at least 51%. The deal was signed on the pretext that ARDA would provide 40,000 hectares of land for the project, but it later emerged that it had only 5,112 hectares, hence the project's decision to immediately "acquire" additional land from the adjacent communal areas to make up for the deficit (Mutondoro et al., 2016b). In the process, the project displaced thousands (1,754) of households (Chiweshe, 2017).

The BOT agreement between GoZ and Green Fuels is for a period of 20 years, from March 2009 to February 2029. It is highly skewed in favour of the private investor in that the investor is merely obliged to remit to ARDA the agreed 8% of its annual gross revenue realised from only crop volumes produced and not proceeds from value added products (e.g. ethanol). The country could benefit more from its resources through renegotiating the BOTA to be extended to encompass both field operations and further value addition processes. Another flaw in the agreement emanates from the fact that the veracity of the claim that US\$600 million has been invested has not been substantiated, including the source of the funds. Anecdotal evidence suggests that only US\$135 million has been invested in establishment of the ethanol plant instead of the claimed US\$600 million. This falsification and inflation of investment figures could provide a serious threat and conduit of illicit financial flows (IFFs).

The main funder of the project is a controversial businessman, who is under EU and US targeted sanctions for alleged human rights abuse because of his close links with the ruling party ZANU-PF (Chiweshe, 2017). In 2014, it emerged through allegations that the said businessman had "...bought a house for the ARDA Chairperson and provided brown envelopes to several politicians..." in order to secure the land for the project. However, these allegations could not be verified and could easily be dismissed as political infighting (Ibid).

3.2 Gender and land corruption in Zimbabwe

Land remains an important productive asset that has direct links to societal livelihoods, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women. According to Mutondoro et al. (2016a), land corruption entrenches the already existing gendered land inequalities and creates new inequalities. Ownership of and control over land in Zimbabwe has traditionally been a privilege for males, with women having historically found it difficult to own and control land in their own right. The common privilege for women is often realized through having mere usufruct rights to land mostly through partnership in marriage. The inheritance of land, which has largely been a preserve for male heirs, tend to discriminate against

daughters and wives when it comes to land ownership (Mutondoro et al., 2016b). These already contested gender inequalities in relation to land ownership are further complicated by land corruption, which refers to improper acts and abuses of power by those mandated with responsibilities over land governance issues.

Some women in rural areas are eking out a living in difficult circumstances, mainly through subordination to those with access to land. A case study by Mutondoro et al (2016a) on the intersection of women, land and corruption in Zimbabwe found that the Chisumbanje bio-fuel project had negatively impacted rural women's livelihoods. This is largely because the project resulted in widespread land dispossession of rural people, who lost land for crop cultivation and livestock grazing. It resulted in women losing their land-based livelihoods and their future was shattered immediately because of the unscrupulous nature of this large-scale land deal for bio-fuel production, which fuel they cannot meaningfully benefit from. The situation was worsened by lack of adequate compensation, where the victims of the land dispossessions could not be fully and immediately compensated as had been promised. Thus, only a few households received some compensation in the form of 0,5 hectare pieces of irrigable land on which they were to grow sugarcane as outgrowers for the company. However, due to prevalence of polygamous marriages in the area, the majority of the beneficiaries of the compensation were men. The women emerged as the biggest losers of the land deal since they could only access land through the marital system under the traditional norms followed in the area and the men, upon whom they rely, were only compensated with 0.5 hectares (Mutopo and Chiweshe, 2012). According to Mutondoro et al. (2016) most vulnerable women had to succumb to sexual exploitation as a form of bribery (corruption) to access the small pieces of land that were being parcelled out to the villagers. An Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the then Deputy Prime Minister (Professor Arthur Mutambara) in 2012 established that the small 0.5 hectare plots that a few community members received only benefited men. Of the combined 1,754 households that lost their land to the project, only about a third (516 households) had received the compensation.

A baseline survey conducted by Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) in 2016 revealed that 40% and 60% respectively of rural and women considered their land as vulnerable to dispossession (Debere et al., 2016). The main culprits (agents of land dispossessions) were identified as public officials (35%) and private investors (23%). In terms of bribery, 16% of women compared to 21% of men indicated to having been asked to pay a bribe in relation to land access at least once in the past 12 months preceding the survey. Interestingly, 60% of rural women compared to 15% of urban women reported to having been asked to pay a bribe by a community leader.

3.3 Sexual extortion and exploitation as a form of land corruption

According to the TIZ, corruption takes place in many forms but usually requires financial resources for bribery¹, which most women often lack unlike men (Aban et al., 2016). It is believed that men are the ones who often use money to pay bribes compared to women, the reason being that in most cases men have the financial muscle to facilitate the corrupt transaction. By virtue of being able to pay bribes financially, men often have more and

¹ Bribery can be defined as a process of offering, promising, or giving gifts or soliciting for an advantage as an inducement for an action that is illegal, unethical or a breach of trust (Mutondoro et al., 2016b).

easier access to key productive resources such as land than women. For women, if they decide to use bribery, it is normatively expected that they would use sex or sexual favours, failure of which they are denied access to key economic resources. Thus, this is normally the context through which sexual exploitation manifests as a form of land corruption in rural Zimbabwe. The local media has been instrumental in highlighting and exposing cases of land corruption, with such terminology as “sexploitation” and “sextortion” for land emerging from their reports.

These concepts of “sextortion: and “sexploitation” have also been documented well in Mutondoro et al (2016)’s research on the impact of large-scale land deals on women’s livelihoods. The concepts involve the demand for sexual favours by those in positions of authority in order to facilitate access to a certain good or service. In the conduct of their research, the authors found that it is mostly male traditional leaders who abuse their powers by demanding sexual favours from vulnerable women (mainly divorced, single and widowed women) to facilitate access to land. Failure to comply with the demands would result in the women failing to get allocated land. They concluded that “sextortion” and “sexploitation” often remain part of the hidden and untold stories of large-scale land deals and land grabs. Besides losing their landholdings to these large-scale land deals, women in rural areas are often left vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment by men in positions of influence as they seek alternative spaces for livelihoods. Thus, sexual extortion and exploitation have reportedly become a growing form of corruption that is least reported due to fear of condemnation, segregation, marriage breakdown or expulsion from the community (Chiweshe, 2017’ Aban et al., 2016, Mutondoro et al., 2016a, b).

3.4 Consequences of land corruption

Corruption creates a wide range of socio-economic ills such as escalation of poverty, marital problems such as gender-based violence and divorces, forced migration, human trafficking, children dropping out of school, early child marriages, hunger, diseases, illiteracy and results in citizens getting disillusioned by the failures of government (Mukonza, 2013). Aban et al. (2016) sums the consequences that accompany corrupt activities in that ‘they are diverse in nature, but mostly manifest through inefficiencies and negligence in the delivery of public goods and services’. Because of corruption, resources are inefficiently allocated and end up benefiting unintended beneficiaries, mainly those that have the means and/or are willing to pay bribes. Corruption is also synonymous with negligence since it deprives the needy in society from accessing public resource and significantly reduces the quality of public goods and services. Since women are more dependent on public services than men they are more likely to be affected by corruption than men (Ibid). Due to their inferior financial position in society, women often fail to pay bribes in monetary terms resulting in other forms of extortion or corruption arising, such as sexual extortion.

The other devastating effect of corruption, according to Mukonza (2013), is that ‘it erodes the social and moral fibre of society, whereby the dishonest and corrupt members are rewarded with good life while the honest and hardworking remain marginalized’. This situation creates a wrong impression for the youths in society since the corrupt are

portrayed as role models of success and prosperity thus upholding such malpractices at the expense of integral virtues such as honesty, diligence and excellence.

Land corruption is said to erode livelihoods and impact negatively on the poor, who suffer the brunt of its consequences as those are corrupt and occupying powerful positions accumulate primitively (Chiweshe, 2017). Within the land sector, the negative consequences of corruption are more pronounced on women, who without land, may not be able to sustain any form of meaningful livelihood. There is general consensus among researchers that corruption was part of the land allocation process under the FTLRP, they only differ on the scale and importance attached to the impact of such corruption (Chiweshe, 2017, Scoones et al., 2010).

3.5 Mechanisms for combating land corruption

The policy, legal and institutional framework for combatting corruption is provided for under the national objective of good governance in the Zimbabwean constitution. The Constitution states that

“The state must adopt and implement policies and legislation to develop efficiency, competence, transparency, accountability, personal integrity, and financial probity in all institutions and agencies of government at every level and in every public institution, and in particular measures must be taken to expose, combat and eradicate all forms of corruption”.

In terms of safeguarding agricultural land against corrupt activities, the Constitution provides for institution of a land commission to provide oversight on all matters related to agricultural land. The Zimbabwe Land Commission (ZLC) was consummated in 2015 in line with Section 296 of the Constitution after the GoZ amended the Land Acquisition Act (Chapter 20:10) and repealed the Agricultural Land Settlement Act (Chapter 20:01) and the Rural Land Act (Chapter 20:18) to pass a Land Commission Bill. The ZLC is now the land administration statutory body mandated with the proper and orderly acquisition, alienation, subdivision, allocation and settlement of state land for agricultural purposes. The Commission is therefore expected to have control over the subdivision and leasing of land for farming or other purposes and to exercise powers over the number of pieces of land that may be owned by any individual, including the sizes of such land. It is yet to be seen whether the coming into existence of the ZLC will bring about a decline in land-related corruption cases. Already the Commission is being accused of failing to conduct a comprehensive land audit, which is expected to address anomalies and bring sanity in the land sector.

In response, the ZLC has since embarked on a National Agricultural Land Audit since October 2018. It conducted first phase of the audit in 10 sample districts between October and November 2018, which covered only about 18,000 farms (6% of the targeted land). The exercise revealed cases of *“fraudulent land allocations and other gross irregularities, with some farmers having sold the farms while others have leased them without government approval”.*

In the report, whose full details have not been made public, the Commission recommended for *“... a thorough clean up exercise to ensure that land is utilized accordingly unlike today in which thousands of farmers are failing to till the land due to lack of financial resources, poor planning and multiple farm ownership....”* (Dube, 2019).

The Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) is the overall statutory body that is mandated with the fight against corruption in the country. It derives its powers from the Constitution and discharges its mandate through enforcing the Prevention of Corruption Act (Chapter 9:16) that seeks to *‘provide for the prevention of corruption and the investigation of claims arising from dishonesty or corruption and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto’*. Although the Act was instituted in 1985, it has been criticized for resulting in very little impact because it has failed to prosecute high-level cases of corruption (Chiweshe, 2017). The Act is only said to have been applied on a few cases against petty corruption committed by low-ranking public officials. Other anti-corruption mechanisms include relevant Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) units such as the Fraud Squad. The police plays a very crucial role through investigation of reported cases of corruption. The Judiciary Services Commission (JSC) is also important for adjudication in cases of corruption. All these bodies have not handled any notable case of corruption involving agricultural land but merely urban land-related matters.

3.6 Effectiveness of anti-corruption policies and mechanisms in Zimbabwe

Although the country has fully functional anti-corruption institutional mechanisms in place in the form of ZACC, ZLC, ZRP and JSC, their effectiveness and objectivity have often been questioned. For instance, Chiweshe (2017) bemoans the lack of political will to effectively respond to corruption, highlighting that this paralyses service delivery in the country. He posits that *‘institutions created to combat corruption remain toothless and without capacity to be effective’*. The effectiveness of the ZACC has been undermined by the fact that it lacks a legal mandate to effect arrests and prosecute cases. As such, the political elite has remained untouchable and continue to manipulate the anti-corruption institutional mechanism. There has generally been lack of political will to ensure transparency and accountability across all sectors. For instance, numerous unfulfilled promises have been made to the effect that the GoZ will take land from those with multiple farms, sub-divide large farms exceeding 1,000 hectares and parcelled out land to landless families. Given this lack of seriousness in tackling land-related corruption, it remains unclear whether appropriate action will be taken and mechanisms put in place to effectively deal with the kind of corruption that affect vulnerable groups such as women and men, who are smallholders and peasant plying their trade in communal areas.

3.7 Challenges in tackling land corruption

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that Zimbabwe has the requisite legislation and mechanisms to fight corruption at local government level. This implies that there must be some challenges in the implementation of these legislation and mechanisms. The paper has attempted to untangle some of these challenges that are faced in implementing the various legislations at the local government level. It is clear that, in its current form,

the institutional mechanism put in place to combat corruption is not effective. The existing anti-corruption bodies need to assert their objectivity, impartiality and independence from political manipulation. The fight against corruption in Zimbabwe is complicated by the fact that the same bureaucrats are also politicians who constitute the ruling elite, whose actions are often meant to further certain political interests. As noted by Chiweshe (2017), combatting corruption in Zimbabwe is difficult given the high-profile nature of the perpetrators. Thus, since land-related corruption is mostly a political problem, its resolution requires a political intervention and not a technical one. This is so because anti-corruption institutional mechanisms crafted at technical levels may not be effective in an environment devoid of political will (Ibid).

4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, it has been revealed in this paper that Zimbabwe has witnessed various forms of corruption in general and land corruption, in particular. This is despite the country having the requisite policy, legal and institutional framework as well as other mechanisms to curb the scourge of corruption in general and land corruption in particular. Although the existing anti-corruption mechanisms are intact and fully functional, it is the effectiveness of the institutional setup that continues to be questioned, particularly with regards to objectivity in policy implementation as well as execution and enforcement of anti-corruption mandates. The implementation of the policies and enforcement of legislation leave a lot to be desired. Furthermore, political interference and biases have also continued to negatively impact the fight against corruption, including land corruption.

Inasmuch as the concept of land corruption still remains a new phenomenon within the academic and policy discourses, its gendered implications should never be trivialised. The study has highlighted some instances of women being discriminated, mistreated and 'sexploited' by local land administration authorities in rural areas. The discussion of the paper has brought to the fore anecdotal evidence suggesting that as a result of land corruption involving powerful actors, women tend to suffer the most through loss of access to land and land-based livelihoods as well as sexual exploitation. Again, in land corruption involving land grabbing and displacements by large-scale investors, women rarely get compensated.

The study therefore recommends the following:

- Civil Society Organizations like TIZ have a critical role to play in fighting land corruption. They should document on-going malpractices in land administrative processes, particularly to highlight the endemic power asymmetries, expose the role of politics and corruption in both rural and urban land governance. This can be achieved through organizing participatory and all inclusive stakeholder policy dialogues at grassroots levels to strengthen community voices and encourage active and broad-based participation in land governance matters. The aim should be to eliminate or neutralise the dominant role of politics in land governance, empower citizens to challenge the status quo and influence the development of local level anti-corruption mechanisms to guard against continued abuse of the land administration and governance systems in the country.

- Deregulation or minimizing the role of the state in the economic affairs of the country has potential to minimize the discretionary powers of officials in public institutions and reduce or completely remove incentives for individuals to want to bribe public officials to access public goods or services.
- All institutions that are mandated to fight corruption should strive to assert some form of independence, objectivity and impartiality in dealing with cases of corruption, including land-related corruption. To achieve that, the legislature needs to guarantee their independence and ensure that their operations are free from political meddling and manipulation by powerful individuals.
- There is need for the judiciary to expedite all cases of corruption and to impose stiffer penalties on perpetrators of land related corruption, particularly involving sexual extortion and exploitation of women. Such a move will send a clear deterrent message to all would be perpetrators of corrupt activities.

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