

Inventory of surveyed farms distributed and used for resettlement purposes in Namibia

Report by

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Introduction

This report accompanies sets of data compiled for the Ministry of Lands & Resettlement (MLR) as an inventory of farms acquired or allocated for purposes of resettlement. The need for such an inventory became clear as a result of uncertainty on exactly what farms were available for the government's resettlement programme. While varied information is available on farms specially acquired for resettlement since independence in 1990, little appears known of other farms that have been used or available for resettlement. Many of the latter farms were purchased by the pre-independence administration, either for purposes of settling disadvantaged farmers or for other reasons. The work reported here was commissioned by the Rural Poverty Reduction Programme of the MLR.

Methods

Two approaches were followed in attempting to compile the inventory. The first was to obtain lists of farms acquired since 1990 for resettlement. Four lists were obtained from different offices and people in the MLR, as follows:

1. Land Use Planning and Acquisition (LUPA)
2. Resettlement and Regional Offices (DRO)
3. GTZ Audit on resettlement infrastructure
4. Oshakati Regional Office of the MLR

Considerable discrepancies were found between the lists.

The second approach was to identify all farm land now owned by the government, and then to find which of these farms are used or allocated for resettlement. Two lists of government-owned farms were used: one from the Directorate of Valuation and Estate Management in MLR and one from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry GIS (geographic information system) database. Many discrepancies were found between the lists.

The great majority of time spent on this project was devoted to comparing the various lists, both to find information on which the lists agreed and on obtaining correct information to resolve the discrepancies. In order to resolve discrepancies, the Deeds Register at the Deeds Office was consulted as well as the Deeds of Sale held at LUPA. An attempt was made to obtain the following information for each farm:

1. Name of farm, which sometimes included the number of the remainder or portion
2. Farm number, to which was sometimes appended the number of the portion or remainder
3. Registration division and region
4. Boundaries as a polygon
5. Year of transfer
6. Major use of the land
7. Number of families living on the farm

Tables and maps of preliminary lists of farms were sent to the Regional Offices of the MLR in Keetmanshoop, Otjiwarongo and Oshakati with the request that the information be checked, and additional, missing data be provided.

Two sets of GIS farm boundary data sets were available to us. The first, from the MAWF, covers the whole country and was compiled several years ago. The second was compiled by the DSM much more recently, but this only covers the area of Namibia lying south of 25°.

Results

The main product of this work is an Excel file of all land identified as being for resettlement purposes, and a set of GIS data to which most of these farms can be linked. The fields used in the Excel file and attribute component of the GIS data are described in the Appendix, as well as on a worksheet in the Excel file.

A total of 352 farms were identified as being used or allocated or resettlement. Of these:

- 256 were acquired after independence in 1990
- 46 were inherited from pre-independence administration
- 50 had uncertain origins

While the list compiled as by this project is much more reliable than any list previously available, the quality of information remains mixed. Thus, information for

- 204 farms is considered complete and reliable
- 71 have information of reasonable quality, but some details remain in doubt
- 77 farms have information for which many discrepancies remain.

Considering all farms owned by government, the following allocations and uses were determined:

- 352 are allocated for resettlement
- 53 farms belong to Namwater
- 40 are within national parks
- 40 are allocated to townlands,
- 13 are railway or road reserves
- 12 are around airports
- 7 are used by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry
- 4 are allocated to the Namibian Defence Force
- 201 farms are of unknown allocation and use.

It should be noted that all these figures do **not** include surveyed farms in the communal areas. A substantial number of these farms have arguably been set aside for resettlement purposes of one kind or another. These include farms allocated in the 1960's, 1970s and 1980s, consisting of 106 farms in the Mangetti block of Oshikoto, 44 in the Kavango Mangetti block, 56 farms near Okamatapati, and 91 farms in the Rietfontein block. The number of new farms established or planned during the last few years includes about 450 in Kavango, 80 farms in Caprivi, about 150 in Oshikoto and Omusati, and perhaps another 100 farms in eastern Otjozondjupa and Omaheke. All of these are large, covering 2,500 hectares or more.

As mentioned above, there were many discrepancies between the lists of farms. The inconsistencies were of various types, for example: which farms were listed and which were not, and there were variations in the names used, the farm code numbers, reported sizes, dates of acquisition and ownership.

The set of farm boundary polygons compiled during this project also suffer from problems, notably because inaccuracies were found in both sets of GIS farm data.

Discussion and recommendations

1. The many discrepancies are an obvious problem, but it is more useful to ask why so many errors were found. One reason is that no single office or officer in the MLR has been mandated to be the custodian of all information on resettlement farms. As a result, different people, working under different circumstances compiled separate lists for different purposes. Moreover, few lists had a 'date stamp' or an equivalent annotation to indicate when they were compiled. Users could therefore not judge how up-to-date they might be. Compilers of the lists evidently also used different sources of information. Insufficient attention was paid to detail when the lists were typed and this, for example, led to different spellings of farm names. In summary, the diversity of authors and sources led to a diversity of information in these sets of data.
2. An important recommendation leading from this is that the MLR assign the clear duty to one office to maintain and keep updated all information on resettlement land. It is suggested that this office be called the Resettlement Registry. Clarity, consistency and reliability would be further enhanced if the following procedures were adopted by the Registry. No person, other than the responsible official, should be allowed to change, add or delete information from the database of resettlement farms. The name, address and responsibilities of the official for the Resettlement Registry should be widely known in the MLR to ensure that everyone requiring relevant information is directed to this single, reliable source. Each farm should be referenced by the unique farm number given to the each surveyed farm area. Of course, names are important and widely used, but they need to be applied with caution. All sections of the MLR dealing with resettlement must immediately provide any new and amended information to the Registry, for example on any new farms acquired for resettlement and changes in land allocation.

3. It is recommended that the Excel file compiled for this project be used as a basis for the proposed Registry database of information on resettlement farms. However, it would be very useful if the Registry also maintained a paper filing system, with one file for each farm. That file would include copies of the noting plans and farm diagrams, the deed of sale, lists of families resettled, and all reports and correspondence concerning the farm.
4. This Excel file contains some discrepancies that could not be resolved on the basis of information available to us. These problems should be followed up and solved by the MLR, and more specifically by the Resettlement Registry.
5. The same kind of custodianship is required for all records of all government land. The MLR has the clear and obvious responsibility to ensure that all government land is accounted for, and that its allocation and uses by other ministries or parastatals are known. This service needs to be rendered for the government on behalf of public interest and assets. It is therefore recommended that the MLR establish a Government Land Registry. The same protocols and practices should be adopted as those recommended for the Resettlement Registry.
6. It was expected that all discrepancies concerning ownership could have been resolved by consulting the title deeds in the Deeds Office. However, this was often not possible because the Deeds Register was not up-to-date. It is also regrettable that the Deeds information is not available digitally in a database. Every effort should be made to rectify this.
7. The GIS data set assembled during this project made use of the MAWF farm polygons. It is understood that the DSM will shortly complete compilation of a new set of GIS data for farms. This is expected to be accurate and up-to-date because it is being based on survey diagrams and noting plans. The Resettlement Registry should then use this new set of data for purposes of mapping all the resettlement farms. The same should be done by the proposed Government Land Registry.
8. Finally, we recommend that more be done to improve communication within the MLR. Many of the discrepancies and, indeed, duplications of effort in compiling different sets of data, would not have occurred if efforts were better coordinated.

Appendix

KEY TO COLUMN HEADINGS

ID	Unique ID that links the individual farm to its shape file in ArcView
REGION	Region in which the farm is located
REG. DIV.	Registration Division in which the farm is located
FARM. NO.	Farm Number
CATEGORY	Broad category of land use: Townland, Resettlement, Railway etc. "Other GRN" indicates that specific information on what the farm is being used for is not known.
FARM NAME	Farm Name and portion
AREA OF SHAPE FILE	Area of the shape file in ArcView (hectares)
AREA OF FARM	Area of the farm (hectares)
LAND USE	Specific information on what the land is being used for, if known
YEAR ACQUIRED	Year the farm was acquired by the government.
FAMILIES RESETTLED	Number of families that have been resettled on the land, in the case of resettlement farms
CERTAINTY	Estimate of the accuracy of the data on the individual farm. High (H) indicates consistency between data sources, Medium (M) indicates some inconsistency between sources, that was largely resolved, and Low (L) indicates large discrepancy between sources or discrepancy that was not satisfactorily resolved). Note that a degree of certainty is only assigned to resettlement farms. The data on all other government farms comes largely from a single source and is therefore of Low certainty.
UNCERTAINTY	Indicates the nature of the uncertainty, in cases of Low certainty.