

Land cover changes in rural communities of Zimbabwe pre and post land reform era; a case of Shurugwi South constituency

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Abstract

The study assessed land cover changes in rural communities of Zimbabwe pre and post land reform era (1980 - 2020). A mixed methods research design was adopted with the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Remote sensing, questionnaires, interviews and observations were used for data collection. Microsoft Excel and ArcMap 10.5 software were adopted for data analysis. Results indicated that clearance of land for agriculture especially crop production, wood abstraction for domestic use and selling, establishment of settlements were the major drivers of change in Shurugwi South. Between 2000 and 2020, results showed that water bodies, shrub land and dense woodlands declined whilst grassland and cultivated/bare land increased. Findings indicated that the rates of increase in cultivated/bare lands and grassland were faster between 2000 and 2020. More so, generally water bodies and shrub land decreased during the 2000–2020 period. These changes indicated that land reform program and associated land reallocation in 2000 influenced the rates and pattern of land cover changes. The changes in land ownership and use rights following the land reforms affected land use patterns between 2000 and 2020. Naturally vegetated land is depleting hence the need for land resource conservation.

Keywords: Land use, land tenure, land reform, remote sensing, land cover changes