

# **Communal Land and Belonging Among Foreign Former Farmworkers in Zimbabwe**

Patience Chadambuka & Kirk Helliker

## **Abstract**

In the year 2000, the nation-wide land occupations and the ensuing Fast Track Land Reform Programme displaced tens of thousands of farm labourers from white commercial farms in Zimbabwe. Many of these farm labourers were of foreign origin, including from Malawi and Mozambique, though they had lived in Zimbabwe for extended periods. While farm labourers with Zimbabwean ancestry found it relatively easy, but not without problems in many cases, to move into communal areas subsequent to displacement, foreign farm labourers typically failed to do so because of their alien status. Nevertheless, some ex-farm labourers of foreign status did move into communal lands successfully, and sought to construct a project of belonging in doing so. Based on semi-ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Shamva District's Bushu communal areas in Mashonaland Central Province, this article examines the many challenges faced by Africans of foreign origin in accessing communal land and how their 'foreign' identity continues to limit their tenure security while living alongside indigenous communal villagers.

**Keywords:** land, Zimbabwe, belonging, foreign farmworkers, communal areas, Shamva