



# NATIONAL UNION OF NAMIBIAN WORKERS

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## 1. Background

As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, the land issue formed the most fundamental basis for Namibia's liberation struggle, is the current basis for the majority's economic struggles and will continue to be until carefully addressed.

Pre-independence, through successive unjust colonial laws and crony capitalism, land was confiscated without compensation and "lawfully" granted to the colonizers whilst the erstwhile owners were left hopeless with no means of survival for over a century. The liberation of our country brought relief and freedom from the brutality of apartheid, but the land issue remains largely unresolved.

The Land conference brings an opportunity to take stock in a transparent manner of what has happened both pre and post-independence to the emotive issue, identify the injustices and mistakes made and take concrete steps to redress imbalances in a socio-economic and environmentally responsible manner.

As a workers' federation whose ranks are those most disenfranchised, a sustainable resolution of the land issue is top most of our priorities. 27 years after independence equal land distribution remains elusive. The South Africa oppressors, the German exterminators and colonizers as well as an emerging equally oppressive, corrupt clique of urban land barons continue to own and enjoy the best land, oblivious of the desperate needs of the ever so squeezed majority.

This land conference must come up with structured and transparent, widely consulted land distribution process and procedure resolutions which will be crafted into the streamlined Land Act.

The Willing seller, Willing buyer Policy has not been effective in improving the living conditions of the majority of Namibians owing to various reasons including:

- 1.1.the land made available being largely unproductive or infertile;
- 1.2.the land not being given to appropriately qualified and experienced Previously Disadvantaged Individuals; and
- 1.3.failure to address the needs of the urban poor who continue to spend a disproportionate amount of their earnings on unjustifiably high rentals with absolutely no access to their own land and largely relegated to the fringes where

they spend equally disproportionate amounts of their earnings and time on long commutes to economic centers and to access government services.

We are confident this Land Conference will bring a solution to these long-standing land problems, that will contribute towards economic growth and poverty eradication in an environmentally sustainable manner.

First how did we get here? We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the work done by the NSA in compiling the factual information to inform this Land Conference.

Year	Freehold		Communal		State		Total	
	km2	%	km2	%	km2	%	km2	%
<b>1902</b>	48,100	6	249,100	30	526,800	64	824,000	100
<b>2001</b>	356,600	43	317,400	39	150,000	18	824,000	100

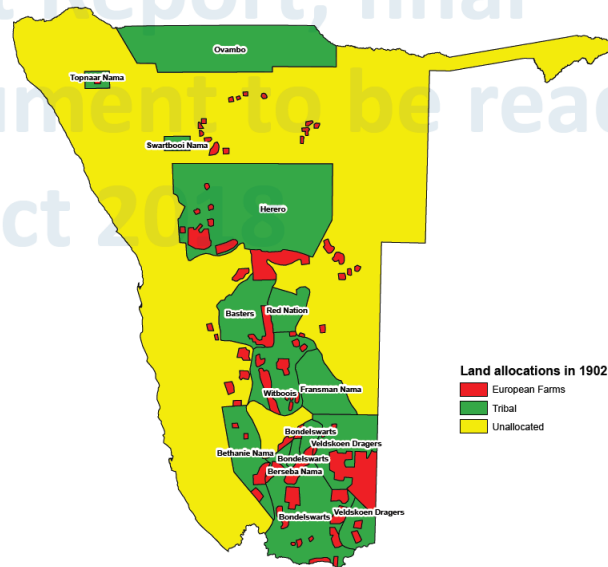
Over a century the land owned commercially has increased by a staggering 717% whilst decimating state ownership 356% from 64% in 1902 to 2001 whilst communal land has increased a paltry 30% in the same period.

It should also be noted that the 18% state ownership is actually a misnomer as the 94% (or 17%) of this land constitute game reserves, neighbouring commercial land which by extension tends to benefit commercial land owners disproportionately to communal inhabitants whose only benefit are paltry wages for menial labour. Only 1% of state land is in municipal areas for the benefit of all but a new menace has been unleashed in these areas as well where corruption has concentrated the ownership of prime urban land in the hands of the few at the expense of the workers who cannot afford the exorbitant prices charged by unscrupulous middlemen for no or marginal value added.

Even worse these communities are at the mess of wild life whose habitat is also being squeezed out by unbridled commercial interests.

A century ago there was a balance in land ownership, with the majority owning the bulk of the land colonialists a fair share of farms.

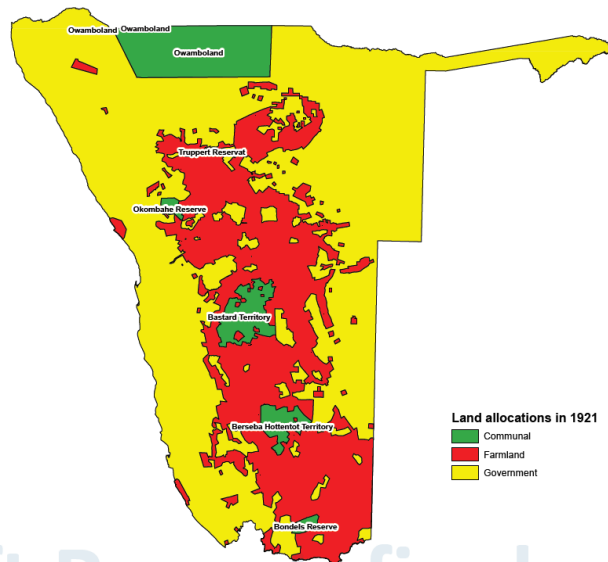
Figure 5: Map showing Land Allocation in Namibia in 1902



Source: Mendelsohn J, Jarvis A, Roberts C and Robertson T. 2002. *Atlas of Namibia: A portrait of the land and its people*. David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, South Africa.

Then greed and dispossession were unleashed by commercial interest against the communities and the state.

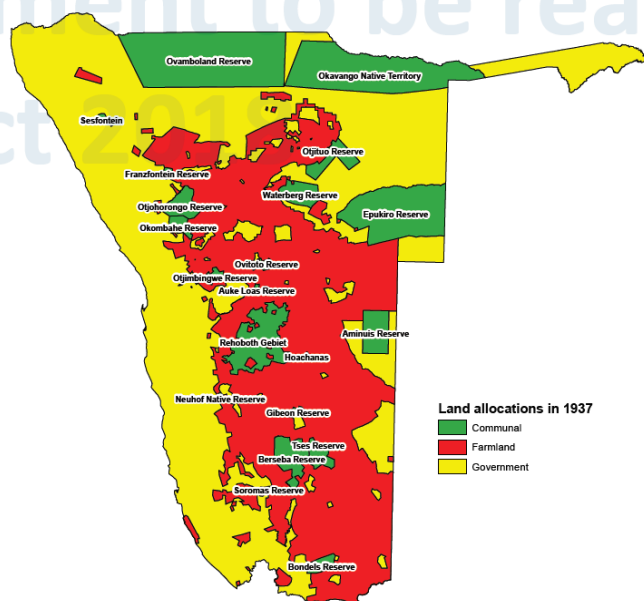
Figure 6: Map showing Land Allocation in Namibia in 1921



Source: Mendelsohn J, Jarvis A, Roberts C and Robertson T. 2002. *Atlas of Namibia: A portrait of the land and its people*. David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, South Africa.

And the feeding frenzy continued against the hapless disenfranchised communities.

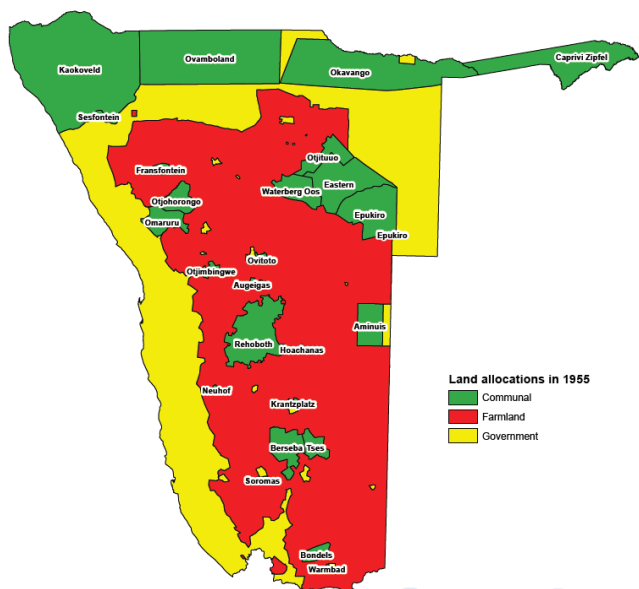
Figure 7: Map showing Land Allocation in Namibia in 1937



Source: Mendelsohn J, Jarvis A, Roberts C and Robertson T. 2002. *Atlas of Namibia: A portrait of the land and its people*. David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, South Africa

And continued, unabated squeezing the majority to the fringes whilst the minority consolidated their grip on prime land.

Figure 8: Map showing Land Allocation in Namibia in 1955



Source: Mendelsohn J, Jarvis A, Roberts C and Robertson T. 2002. *Atlas of Namibia: A portrait of the land and its people*. David Philip Publishers, Cape Town, South Africa.

And finally, the status quo, a bloodbath



Resettlement policy needs to be more transparent with timely and seasonal statistics of land acquired, beneficiaries' qualifications and experience as well as productivity numbers.

Namibia's ecosystems are very delicate and therefore those identified for resettlement should have requisite skills in the management of rangeland and water resources, and the system should be extended to weeding out those who fail to farm productively and replace them with more capable farmers.

### 2.3. Absentee Landlords

Productivity matrices based on economic output should be computed for all land within its category carrying capacity, and all land falling below the average should be taxed on an annual basis to incentivize the owners to be productive. Any land that continuously fall below average should be taxed at a higher rate and ultimately expropriated and made available for resettlement purposes.

### 2.4. Multiple Land Ownership

Multiple ownership of land is the height of greedy. It prohibits the utilization of land by most Namibians and is fraught with the risk of instability when the disenfranchised see no option but to stand up and disobey laws.

We should not ignore the landless Namibians who ask for land. We should not look for temporary solutions on land as it will always interfere with development of Namibia. Let's share those that own multiple land, give us a best lasting solution.

Land ownership should be limited based on the carrying capacity of the land and excess land should be sold, and if it finds no takers within a reasonable time, expropriated for resettlement.

### 3. Communal land

The majority of our rural population eke out a living on this ever-increasingly over-populated land resulting in more and more urban drift to peri-urban areas seeking “greener pastures”

The inconsistent use of land reform policy is also contributing to land crisis. There is a lack of strong commitment on the land allocation by the boards and political influence on land boards.

There is a need to integrate land reform policies into land tenure reforms, resettlement programs and meaningful land use policies for all land (rural and urban land, and non-Agricultural land). Land reform in communal areas has become a complex process as there are no standard policies and coordinated procedures. The absence of development strategies on land, will cause land reform to fail. The absence of proper administration of land in communal areas will inevitably bring conflicts.

Traditional leadership role in the allocation of the land is a good approach but must be guided by standard and transparent policies and procedures of law. An inventory of under-utilized, unutilized and non-productive land under the care of traditional authorities should always be kept.

#### 3.1. Ancestral Land or Traditional Territory

This land was home of ethnic groups where they have been residing and farming for a living. This land was confiscated together with their animals and off course those who suffered during that time and their rights to properties was ignored. Therefore, their culture and socio-economic well-being on ancestral was destroyed.

This land belongs to Namibians and not to the colonizers. Today we need to consider peace and development in Namibia. Ancestral land claims might bring conflicts that are tribal and provoke unwanted situations in the country. This is a hot potato in the hands of all Namibians. Those who benefited in the colonial land-grab must lead the process of land reform.

#### 4. Urban Land

Urban land has become very problematic as the cities and towns become overclouded due to the scarcity of jobs at rural areas. Urban land has also become centers of political patronage. There is always a huge demand for services and housing. Cost of plots has become too high that average Namibian workers cannot afford, fueled by underhand speculative deals at most local authorities.

Local authorities have largely abrogated the servicing of land to crony capitalists who get sweetheart land deals often without even paying for the land before poorly servicing land and selling it for massive profits and sharing the spoils with corrupt officials. As a result, Local Authorities' technical departments have been decimated and municipal masterplans no longer followed setting the country for an impending catastrophe when water, sewer, storm water, electrical and road systems will fail putting thousands in danger.

This lack of fair allocation of urban land can bring economic crisis, as those that have access to buy land continue to exploit the poor, by making massive profits.

There is no excuse for the poor handling of urban by councilors. Government should rid local authorities of corruption and patronage. Arrest excessive rental through equal opportunity to free land for housing for the low wage earners and the poor.

Namibia currently has approximately 2.4m inhabitants averaging 3.9 persons per household or 615,000 households. The estimated urban population is 48% or 300,000 households.

These masses, largely workers and their family continue to languish in poverty on the fringes of urban sprawl watching the rich getting richer.

Recent interventions such as the Mass Housing Scheme have largely not had any positive effect on the workers. These programs whilst well intended tend to be hijacked and abused to serve the narrow self-enrichment commercial interests.

A new radical approach is needed if we are to lift the majority out of debilitating poverty and increase productivity.

In the same way government acquire farms for the **FREE** resettlement of Previously Disadvantaged Individuals, the urban poor who currently pay a disproportionately high percentage of their hard-earned wages to rentals and transport should be resettled for free on urban erven.

Assuming an average of 500m<sup>2</sup> per erf, to meet current demand at most only 15,000ha will be required countrywide distributed according to the various local



authorities' residents' requirements or 130,000ha (approximately 0.4% of commercial land) over the next 100 years at 2.2% population growth.

Servicing 300,000 erven will require approximately N\$30billion which can be funded in various ways over the next 20 years.

Our challenge as the NUNW is two-fold:

1. To commercial land-owners, set up a mechanism and donate a 130,000ha (0.4% what is currently owned) proportionately next to all local authorities throughout Namibia.
2. To government, enact laws that preclude local authorities from selling residential land to first time home owners, and set up a system to systematically alienate the acquired land directly to homeowners at no additional cost other than the cost of servicing for those who can afford (unemployed and under-employed) should have the servicing subsidized by government. Through the enacted laws, Property Developers should also not be allowed to sell urban land above gazetted prices and be regulated to make profits on the value added in the form of improvements.

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**All Official correspondence must be addressed to the Secretary General**