Abstract

Prescient observers of land reform have remarked that the full effects of such programs take a full generation to become evident. Yet very few land reform programs have ever been studied for such a length of time.

The presentation reports on one land reform program that has been studied longer than any other — Zimbabwe’s original program that began immediately after independence in 1980. Based upon a panel of some 500 families studied for more than 30 years, the presentation will address a wide range of outcomes that followed upon land redistribution.

Land reform encompasses multiple issues of interest to both development theorists and practitioners. Although seldom addressed explicitly, the political payoff to governing regimes is an underlying motivation for most reforms. Of course, for there to be such a payoff there need to be positive outcomes in at least certain dimensions. Most notably, these include incomes and welfare.

The presentation will focus on these two outcomes. The income issue will be examined through an inspection of the ability of agrarian households to earn enhanced revenues following land reform. Welfare, of course, has multiple attributes. The underlying study has examined long-term household dynamics, so the presentation will also present evidence on transformations in many different spheres; these include, among others, health and nutrition, migration and demographics, changes in labor patterns, gender and kinship relationships, social innovation, and the institutional environment. The presentation will conclude with observations on the challenges of longitudinal research and a brief comparison between Fast Track Land Reform and the original program.

Selected publications


