

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER LAND: THE  
CASE OF ZIMBABWE

BY

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It was not until the 1970s that the importance of improving the status of women through access to land began to be viewed as an integral part of the solution to the problems of less developed countries. This recognition was brought about by a number of factors. There was a greater appreciation of the crucial links between the food crisis and the increasing marginalisation of women, who comprised the majority of the subsistence food producers in sub-Saharan Africa. Social science research contributed significantly towards the raising of awareness of the importance of women's contributions to the labour intensive and low technology farming systems of sub-Saharan Africa. Most development agents have now come to accept that the role of African women in food crop production is an important structural fact and cannot be easily changed. They therefore believe that any attempts to find solutions to the twin problems of low levels of agricultural productivity and increasing food deficits in sub-Saharan Africa have to take into consideration the importance of women's contributions. This fact has been demonstrated by the growing interest shown by governments and international agencies in the integration of women in the process of development. The conscious efforts by governments to integrate women in the national plan programmes should not go unnoticed. Similarly, international agencies are doing their share of work in raising the consciousness levels of the international community and the rural women themselves through both research work and supporting women's development programmes. It is in this context that this study sets out to analyse the status of African women, vis-a-vis one of their major factors of production, i.e. land. It attempts to analyse the nature and extent of women's access to and control over land, and the implications for food crop production. In addition, the study will assess the implications of women's relationship to land, on their access to agricultural support services, on family nutritional levels, food security and the status of women within the household, in terms of participation in decision making.

In recent years, the issue of women's status, vis-a-vis land, has been of primary concern to those rural development agents who have become aware of the vital role women play in agricultural development. Several principal arguments demonstrating the effect that this lack of access has on agricultural development have emerged. Some studies have argued that women's lack of access to and control over land has contributed to a decline in food production (Truscott, 1984). In this argument, lack of access is the absence of title to usufruct or ownership rights, which excludes women from controlling land utilisation through the decision-making processes. According to this argument, the decline in food production has been due to the fact that men, who have the controlling land rights, are not necessarily responsible for food security. Thus they make allocational decisions which disadvantage food production. In many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, non-food cash crops are theoretically produced by men. However, women provide a significant proportion of the labour. When these crops are introduced, men make the decision to divert some of the agricultural land to these crops. It is argued that in most cases it is the best or most productive land that is usually set aside for cash crop production. In addition, cash crops are allotted more labour time than food crops. This implies that men's increased land and labour demands for the production of cash crops restrict the land and labour available to women to meet their household food requirements (Bryson, 1981:41).

These processes tend to have an adverse effect on family nutritional levels. As the area under food production is reduced in size and quality, women tend to concentrate their efforts on meeting their basic staple cereal requirements. They reduce the production of supplementary nutritious crops such as groundnuts, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, beans, cucumber and green leaf vegetables. Even though men might be earning cash from the sale of their crops, they normally would not spend it on maintaining a well-balanced diet (FAO, 1985). In fact, it is unusual for rural families to use this cash to purchase such products as groundnuts, beans or pumpkins. The cash is frequently used for the purchase of non-food luxury items such as radios, bicycles, watches, etc. It is important to note the single chain of causation from

cropping patterns, through access to productive land, to the nutritional impact on households.

Another argument that has emerged, concerning the issue of women's lack of access to land, is that the absence of control over the means of production tends to work as a disincentive for women farmers. In fact, this stems from the general argument that the insecurity resulting from absence of land rights hinders farmers' effective participation in agricultural development. Due to a general reluctance on the part of the farmer to invest in land that he or she does not own, progress is hindered. Furthermore, in the absence of land rights, the necessary support services such as credit, extension, marketing, etc., are less forthcoming. In the case of women, their situation is exacerbated by the lack of resource allocational decision-making power.

Another principal argument dealing with one of the most critical areas of concern is that women's lack of access to and control over land contributes, to a very large extent, to their lack of control over the cash proceeds from the sales of their agricultural products. It has been argued that men who are generally responsible for the marketing activities have control over the disposal of the proceeds. In many cases, the male head of household, who is the registered custodian of the household rights on behalf of the family, is given easier access to agricultural support services such as marketing facilities. This means that most, if not all, payments for the marketed produce are made out to him and not to the wife or household. Because of such factors, women tend to be economically dependent on men although they work harder than men both in the fields and around the home. This lack of access to the cash income is a very crucial factor which requires close examination. Since the end product, to a large extent, motivates producers to invest, the lack of access to this end product is likely to have an influence on the performance of women in agricultural production. However, to the extent

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that it relates to the issue of access to land, the question of the control over proceeds will be given the important position that it deserves. After all it is ultimately what we are basically concerned about when we address ourselves to the question of the unfavourable status of women. Although a variety of issues are identified as being crucial to the improvement of the status of women, the key factor is the control of cash proceeds or returns to their labour. This control hopefully brings them economic power or independence which in turn enables them to participate more effectively in the political, cultural, economic and social activities within their societies.

The above arguments all stress that lack of control over land has negative effects on the welfare of the family, and in particular on women themselves. The linkages between women's land rights and the factors identified above are complex and they take different forms in various situations. This study will analyse some of these arguments in an attempt to determine the extent to which women's status, vis-a-vis land, has influenced subsistence food production and family nutritional levels. As will be shown later, this study finds the argument relating to control over returns from women's labour most persuasive.

Based on the data collected from rural areas in Zimbabwe, the study will first briefly examine the role of women in agriculture, highlighting the importance of access to and control over productive land. It will then present evidence showing that although women are central to subsistence food production in sub-Saharan Africa, they lack access to and control over land. As has already been stated, most governments and development agents have come to recognise the importance of women's access to land and are making special efforts to pay more attention to the issue. We shall examine the most common methods that have been used to redistribute land to those that have lacked access. These are land reform, resettlement, registration, redistribution, collectivisation and the broader agrarian reform. An analysis of

these distributive instruments, will highlight some of their shortcomings and inadequacies in dealing with the problems of women. For an empirical analysis of some of the important issues, the study will focus on Zimbabwe, paying particular attention to communal areas and resettlement schemes. Drawing from both the empirical and theoretical analysis, the report will draw up suggestions for the improvement of the situation of rural women, vis-a-vis, land, and other factors lying within their domain of responsibility.

### The Role of Women in Agriculture

Research focusing on the role of women in agriculture has effectively demonstrated their important contributions, particularly in the form of labour. There exists a large body of theoretical and empirical literature confirming the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa, women's labour contribution is central to subsistence food production. In Boserup's classical study, more women than men were engaged in agricultural labour. In some areas, African women were found to contribute 70 per cent or more of the total agricultural labour (Boserup, 1970:22). Subsequent studies have confirmed Boserup's findings and show that they represent a general phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa, where the cultivation systems are extensive (Bryson, Muchena, Good and Buckley).

A number of factors account for women's high rate of participation in subsistence food production. Women have long been responsible for the production of subsistence food crops. In fact this is now widely viewed as their traditional role. Women's dominance in this area has been partly due to the fact that men dominate the production of non-food cash crops, and that male labour migration to cities has left them with this responsibility. In some cases it has been observed that men lack commitment of subsistence food production because they feel that it is not their responsibility.

In the subsistence sectors of sub-Saharan Africa where women are a key factor in the production processes, the production of food is the backbone of that economy. In fact, it is generally argued that this sector is the backbone of national economies because this is where most of the labour is reproduced, a responsibility that has been left to rural women. This means that women have to ensure that they produce enough food to meet their family requirements. Their labour input is a crucial factor. An equally important factor is their management abilities. In the production processes, those women responsible for food production should make the right decisions in forms of the subprocesses in the labour process such as land preparation, when to plant, weed, harvest and sell the surplus. Of crucial importance is the ability to make decisions on the utilisation of the other major factor of production: land. However, despite its importance, there are problems with the allocation of land for this purpose, especially in situations where non-food cash crops have been introduced. With little regard for the importance of the basic needs of food, land is allocated to these cash crops. In the absence of reliable data on decision-making processes in a peasant household, it is generally believed that the allocation of land to cash crop production takes precedence over subsistence food production. Although a vast number of researchers have stated that men make these decisions without the endorsement from their wives, the paucity of existing quantitative and qualitative data relating to this allegation makes it difficult to make such a broad generalisation. It assumes that, unlike the rest of the population groups in the society, peasant households do not have harmonious relationships which allow for consultation. This study does not necessarily endorse this assumption. In fact, it subscribes to the theory that peasant households, as economic and social units, make rational decisions based on their reality. These decisions may or may not maximise their profits. However, it may be that when they do make these decisions, they discuss them, think them through and then agree to take a particular course of action.

The field study carried out in Zimbabwe throws some light on some of the decision-making processes within households.

It is important to point out at this juncture that the allocation of land to non-food cash crop production may not be left entirely to the peasant household. It has been shown that governments, through their departments, exert different forms of pressure on peasants to produce export crops which should bring foreign exchange. Some countries have been known to place a ban on the cutting down of coffee crops by peasants in an attempt to make room for food production. In other instances, agricultural support services have only been made available to those producing cash crops. This mechanism has been used more frequently than the former. We would, therefore, be committing an error if we disregarded these factors in our analysis of the land allocational decision-making processes.

What is clear from this is that although women are the backbone of the subsistence agricultural sector, their access to and control over the means of production is limited by a number of complex factors. It appears that the major involvement of women in agriculture is in the form of labour contribution; not only in subsistence food production but also in cash crop production. In theory men are the cash crop producers. This is only true to the extent that services such as extension, credit and marketing facilities are extended to male heads of households. Beyond that the situation is not very different from the subsistence food production. The processes of sexual division of labour are still operational. Women continue to perform their traditional tasks of planting, weeding and harvesting. In cash crop production the use of technologies such as fertilisers and insecticides increases the burden on women. The application of fertilisers and insecticides is labour intensive and is in many cases carried out by women. The absence of mechanised applicators for fertilisers and insecticides, and the fact that fertilisers not only improve the growth rate of crops but also that of weeds, implies



a doubling or tripling of labour requirements. Of course in this sector the use of hired labour is rare. It is the use of women's labour that is common. We should not lose sight of the fact that while the cash crops make such high demands on women's labour, subsistence food production still has to be taken care of; possibly under more difficult conditions. Since the most productive land is set aside for cash crops, and very little, if any, of the new technology is used on subsistence crops, this means that to maintain the same level of output required to meet the household needs, more labour has to be expended. Without the adequate replenishment of soil nutrients, soil fertility deteriorates and it becomes increasingly difficult for women to produce enough food.

In situations where the male heads of households have migrated to urban sectors, the situation is just as gloomy for women. On the one hand, they have to take over the tasks that were traditionally carried out by men, e.g. land preparation and all other tasks that they normally share. On the other hand, if they get involved in cash crop production, it means an additional workload. Note that it is not unusual for women whose husbands are away in labour employment to engage in cash crop production. The incidence of such women farmers was found to be quite high one area in Zimbabwe. In Ruwambwe area, Zimbabwe, women in this position were found to be better placed in their ability to purchase the required technology, with the initial financial assistance from remittances from their spouses (Chimedza, 1982). Contrary to the belief that women whose husbands were migrants in wage employment had more decision-making power and control over the land they tilled, the study in Ruwambwe demonstrated that men in wage employment could still exert a lot of influence on the allocation of land for cash crop and food crop production. This was partly due to the fact that even in their absence men were the recognised custodians of the usufruct rights. Secondly, their financial input into agriculture drew them deeper into the minor details of the production processes which included allocation processes.

Finally, not uncommon is a situation in which women are burdened with agricultural production with very little input from men. In this case, women provide almost all the labour with the help of their children. Men only get involved in making decisions relating to the allocation of resources, i.e. what is to be planted where and what inputs are to be used. They also play a decisive role in the disposal of the proceeds. Although men may not participate actively in the production processes, they tend to regard household resources as their own and not those of the household. As White and Young rightly point out,

- men tell their lives as a series of self-conscious acts using the 'I' form while women as keepers of the family memory talk about 'we'  
(IDS Bulletin, 1984)

The extent of this self-consciousness is crucial in making decisions on allocation of resources. If a man separates himself from the majority of production processes because he views himself as owner of the means of production, he is unlikely to consult part of his 'labour force' when he makes decisions that affect production. In most cases his decisions are based on his own interests. If therefore he finds that producing cotton will swell his pockets faster than the production of maize, he is likely to allocate the most productive resources to cotton.

Such a hypothetical scenario may be difficult to test objectively because of the complexities of the decision-making processes in a peasant household, which are strongly influenced by the processes of socialisation and by the existing material conditions. However, some studies have demonstrated that this is not an entirely uncommon phenomenon. In her research on the situation of women in Zimbabwe, Muchena confirms that such problems actually do exist, although may be not on a large scale. She points out that women do not control land use and income from crops even though they make the largest contribution in terms of labour. According to her,

It has been said that a producer who has no control of her produce is a producer without incentive. Research team members came across several instances to illustrate this statement. Some husbands who had hardly contributed anything in the production of the bumper crop had registered or taken out Grain Marketing Board cards in their names, received the cheque for the sale of maize and went off to squander the money, leaving nothing as a token amount for the wife. In one case cited during a group interview in Sanyatia, the money from the sweat of the wife and children was used to marry a second wife without even consulting the first wife as is traditionally done.

(Muchena, 1982:28-29)

Muchena's study provides a very good case for arguing in favour of those land rights for women which explicitly give them easier access to such services as marketing facilities. Her study is an example of a situation where absence of land rights and lack of access to support, and services can work as a disincentive to produce a surplus.

It is clear that the issue of women's access to and control over land has received recognition from governments and other relevant institutions. Recent policies have clearly stated governments' intentions to give producers access to and control over land. In Ethiopia, the Land Reform Proclamation made great strides in affording women access to land. With particular reference to women it stated that,

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Without differentiation of the sexes, any person who is willing to personally cultivate land shall be allotted land.

(Taken from Tadesse, ed., Beneria, 1982:212)

In Zimbabwe, the Majority Age Act passed in 1982 gave women equal access to resources. In Mozambique the revolutionary government gave both men and women access to agricultural land. According to Tarp, (1984):

The new law of land passed in 1979 provides for access to land as a basic right for any Mozambican citizen who may live on his land and keep the crops grown there.

Tanzania, partly through the Ujamaa programme also gave women access to agricultural land. Many other African governments have followed suit in their efforts to alleviate the deteriorating food situation. However, it appears that these efforts have not produced the desired results. Most rural women have not been able to exercise these rights for a number of reasons, such

as women's lack of awareness of their rights; the absence of or inadequacy of legal mechanisms to enforce these rights; the absence of political commitment and lack of co-ordination with other relevant social, economic and political institutions, and the inability of governments to involve the rural households in the design and implementation of the programmes.

The next section examines some of the mechanisms that are commonly used in distributing land to those who lack access and control over it.

### Mechanisms Used For Land Redistribution

For many people, reference to access to land readily brings to mind questions of land tenure, land registration, resettlement, land reform and agrarian reform. It is true that these issues have to do with access to land. For example, according to Dorner (1972):

The land tenure system embodies those legal and contractual customary arrangements whereby people in farming gain access to productive opportunities on land.

Land registration involves '... making and keeping of records relating to land and land transactions' (ed. Acquaye and Crocombe, 1984), and is frequently viewed as an aid to land reform, a dynamic and continuous process which aims at changing the existing tenure systems, ownership and control over land and water. Within a Land Reform programme, resettlement occurs. It involves settling people from over populated or unproductive areas or landless people on more productive land. In simple terms, land resettlement involves giving the disadvantaged groups physical access to productive land. Agrarian reform, according to some definitions, is more comprehensive than land reform. There does not appear to be consensus on the distinction between land reform and agrarian reform. Brown and Thiesenhusen (1983) make the distinction between the two:

... Therefore it may be useful to keep in mind a distinction between two terms which are sometimes used synonymously, land reform which implies the distribution of ownership to achieve more equitable access to land, and water, and agrarian reform, which covers land reform and supporting measures designed to make the reformed sector more productive.

8 Their definition of agrarian reform does not differ much from King and Dorner's definition of land reform. For the sake of simplicity, this study uses land reform as defined by King and Dorner.

The above mechanisms have all been used to achieve different objectives. In this study, we are concerned about the effect these instruments have had on women's access to and control over land. We are particularly interested in those that have been used as a response to demand for greater equality and social justice. Land reform, which tends to encompass all the above instruments, has been used more widely. Land reform involves change of tenure, land registration and even settlement in a different area. It is important to note that although land reform encompasses all, it does not necessarily follow that any one of them taken in isolation achieves the same goal. In fact, they could be used to achieve the reverse. Land registration might be used to legitimise landholding by a small minority as was done in Zimbabwe during the era of colonisation. On the other hand, resettlement, as was used in colonial Zimbabwe, again, can be used to move people from their land to make room for the settlement of foreign occupiers. Thus, it is important to make the distinction between instruments used to bring about equality and social justice. The question of women's access to and control over land calls for equality and social justice. What it requires is the alteration of the patterns of allocation and redistribution of property rights and consequently the power structures and status within the household and hence society. All these desired changes depend to a large extent on political decisions and radical changes in the processes of socialisation. This partly explains why lack of political commitment has been listed as one of those factors responsible for the failure of programmes to bring about the desired change in the status of women, vis-a-vis, land. Political decisions would allow for changes in the legal and contractual arrangements that can give women access to and meaningful control over land. Of course, the importance of

changing attitudes and traditional practices should not be underestimated.

As Hahn (1983:9) points out:

... one must also deal with attitudinal barriers, cultural stereotypes and long-established opinions about women's place and responsibilities.

This is an important point which comes up in the empirical analysis. Some of the responses given by Zimbabwean women demonstrate the need for dealing with the attitudinal barriers. In fact, the presence of these barriers can determine how successful a certain solution will be. A good example of this is in the area of land registration which has been identified by some social scientists as an important part of the answer to women's control over land.

A number of studies have suggested that registering women as landholders will go a long way in giving them control over land and incentive to increase agricultural productivity. Land registration largely benefits farmers in that it improves security in tenure and allows for expeditious, cheap and safe facilities for dealing in land. However, because of the societal position of women, this is only true to a limited extent. It is important to bear in mind that land registration can only prove title but does not necessarily alter the nature of land use nor does it change attitudes or practices of the farmers or the households involved. Land registration does not guarantee changes in the power structures within the household. The power structures are basically determined by the processes of sexual division of labour. Despite possible benefits which could accrue, if women are registered as co-owners or independently, without due consideration of the cultural or traditional practices, a number of complications arise. Most men would see the registration of women as a threat to their status, therefore might resist the efforts at equality. This attitude may have negative effects on the social structures and cause the disintegration of the farming family. Of more importance, it is questionable whether such a programme would have the full support of the intended beneficiaries, the women.

To effect any meaningful change, it is essential to change people's attitudes and help them become aware of the benefits that might accrue to

to them. A mere introduction of a piece of paper stating one's rights may not be sufficient to change people's attitudes.

Resettlement, too, has its limitations. Moving families to larger pieces of land does not necessarily mean that women will have greater access to and control over land. It does not alter the nature of decision-making and production processes. It is true that the scarcity of productive land further disadvantages women who lose their traditional rights to crops for their special crops or vegetables. Hahn (1983:11) makes this point when she states that

There is a tendency for women's further marginalization with decreasing access to resources, of which land is a most important one.

It would be erroneous to assume that in situations of land abundance, women exercise complete control over some pieces of land. Even under the situation of land abundance, made possible by land resettlement programmes, there still exists a certain degree of uncertainty because such is not necessarily a permanent arrangement. In fact, in some situations decisions to allocate some of the land for the production of the so-called women's crops are made on an annual basis and the actual location may vary. This is true of many communal areas in Zimbabwe where this practice continues to exist. Providing additional land to families, therefore, does not necessarily give women the desired access and control.

Unfortunately, resettlement and programmes giving peasant farmers access to more land have tended to place women in a more unfavourable situation rather than help them. Zimbabwe is a prime example of a country where the resettlement programme has had a profound effect on the situation of rural women, particularly married women. In many resettlement schemes, the separation of those who control land and those who have only their labour to contribute to the process of production is primarily felt between men and women. As will be shown later, the resettlement programme in Zimbabwe clearly illustrates this point. Other schemes elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, e.g. Kenya, Zambia, and Malawi, that have introduced land registration or

adjudication on tenure systems based on communal type of ownership have produced similar results. This confirms the point that land registration and resettlement alone are not sufficient to give women access to and control over land. As shown in the above examples, any meaningful attempts at providing women access to land should be accompanied by the necessary changes in the structure of the support system. They should aim at changing a whole range of institutional arrangements: social, political, economic and cultural, which have perpetuated a system that excludes women from having access to and control over land. Land reform programmes which are carefully designed to deal more effectively with these institutional factors may be the answer to women's problems.

In recent times, many governments of developing countries have launched different forms of land reform programmes. Some of these governments have made special reference to women, to ensure their integration into the development process. Ethiopia is a case in point. Its land reform proclamation included clauses that represented women's special interests. However, available data suggests that the programme has not succeeded in facilitating the transformation of the subordinate status of women (Tadesse, 1982:204). The same can be said for other programmes such as Ujamaa in Tanzania and the resettlement programme in Zimbabwe. In both these situations there is legislation providing equal access to land but this has not produced the expected result. Legislation alone, or documentation of rights, has proved inadequate in bringing about changes. This fact was observed in the FAO report on Development Strategies. The report notes that,

However, even with legislative and drastic tenure changes, women continue to be placed in a disadvantaged position in agrarian transformation which is intended to modernize the agricultural sector and provide for more equitable access to resources.

(FAO, 1984:30)

Governments that have implemented programmes that were intended to benefit women have realised that legislation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for change. One reason for this has been lack of enforcement of the



laws. Governments have a wide range of instruments at their disposal that can facilitate the transformation of women's unfavourable position. What is required is their total unwavering commitment or political will in implementing programmes. In the absence of commitment it is easy to document rules and regulations which appeal to the disadvantaged, but not to enforce them. The FAO (1984:31) report again made an important observation when it noted that

In most statutory codes, it is difficult to assess any discrimination within the laws per se. The constraint remains more in the interpretation and implementation of the laws, women's lack of empowerment in knowing the legislation and utilizing law as a development tool.

There are two important issues raised here; interpretation and implementation of the laws; and women's lack of empowerment in knowing the legislation and how to utilise the law. These two are closely linked and play a critical role in governments attempts at integrating women in the development process through the provision of access to land.

The interpretation and implementation raises very serious problems for the target groups of land reform programmes, mainly because they are superimposed on the same institutions that supported the systems which denied the majority of the subsistence food producers access to the productive resources. Clearly these institutions are not designed to achieve the goal of equity and social justice. It is not surprising, therefore, that although there exist legislations and laws giving women land rights, they are hardly ever exercised. Krishna (1982:251) makes a similar criticism of land reform programmes.

If and where land reform is undertaken it is critical for its success that its implementation is not left to institutions dominated by the old oligarchy, or a bureaucracy linked with it. It should be entrusted to local committees, with at least 50 per cent direct representation of the beneficiaries or the intelligentsia sympathetic to them.

Here Krishna is advocating active involvement of the beneficiaries, who in our case are the women producers. David King is of the same opinion.

In his study on Land Reform, he states that,

...It is important that the rural poor do not only share in the distribution of the benefits of development but that they also share in creating these benefits.

(King, 1973)

He does not only recommend the participation of beneficiaries in the implementation of the Land Reform programmes, but in the planning processes.

This approach allows for the incorporation of other institutional arrangements that are not covered in the instruments that are at the disposal of governments. A very critical area that could be included would be conscientisation processes intended to break the barriers set by the processes of socialisation. King (1973) suggests that

If the extended family or the household is the unit for organization both the economy and the society, it may be well that the formalization and depersonalization of customary institutional arrangements into a system of rules sanctioned by the nation state should be based on one of these collective organizations.

King believes that it is important to build on, generalising and transforming, the customary working rules and institutional arrangements when a new system of land ownership is to be established. A counter argument to the effect that since it is these customary rules and collective organisations or extended families that have helped perpetuate the subordination of women, using them as a basis for effecting change will not produce the expected results. Depending on the extent to which these traditional institutional arrangements have contributed to the exclusion of women from access to land, the counter argument to King's approach may not have a strong basis. There are conflicting opinions on these issues. Hahn (1983:1), for instance, believes that there are benefits in building on the customary rules and

A transfer from customary to Western legislation in many developing countries is an example whereby women's rights have oftentime been lessened - particularly their independent access to resources and supports enabling them to continue their complementary positions. Western codes and legislation, frequently seen as progressive, tend not to consider the importance of customs, the benefits of interactional and positive codes, especially the equity which often existed between men and women for land ownership, inheritance and possession of goods.

Taking Hahn's approach, for example, the traditional practices in many of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, of allotting women plots for the

production of their own crops might be a good starting point in the conscientisation processes. It could effectively be used to demonstrate the importance of women's access to land for the production of important food crops such as groundnuts, green leaf vegetables, beans, pumpkins, etc., which have a high nutritional value. SEcondly, it can also be used to make both men and women aware that women's access to land should not be seen as a struggle between sexes or as part of the disintegration of the social structures, but should be seen as part of the development process which benefits the family and hence society.

The critical point King raises is that it is important to analyse the nature and functions of traditional sex roles and structures that support them. These are the institutional arrangements upon which the processes of socialisation are based. Existing Land Reform programmes seem to have ignored this important feature. This largely explains the problems with interpretation and implementation of the law which is developed outside the system within which it is to be implemented. When governments try to implement a programme and interpret the law that supports it, there tends to be some resistance on the part of the intended beneficiaries. In addition, the implementors are not well equipped to operate in the special circumstances. The only way that governments can overcome this problem is by involving the beneficiaries from the beginning and let them initiate the changes.

Despite changes in the political systems, which would help women, the real problem in some governments efforts at land reform to improve the status of women is lack of political commitment to doing so. The majority of these governments have only paid lip service to women. This lack of commitment is reflected in the lack of programmes' clear-cut objectives with reference to women who are a special group. Furthermore, most land reform programmes that have been implemented lack specific criteria for land taking or land

snaring procedures. The absence of the latter from most land reform programmes raises the question of whether the issue has been given serious thought or the proclamations are just rhetoric. Few research studies have attempted to deal with this issue. As stated earlier, a sizeable proportion has recommended a redistribution of ownership between sexes, but they do not provide clear guidelines for the implementation of such a programme. Palmer (1977:107) makes this suggestion but unfortunately does not go into the mechanics of effecting such a programme. However, she does add that such a move alone does not help women. She notes that

The redistribution of land ownership (or even of usufruct) between sexes might help women, but if the sex-typing of housework and the responsibility of food providing to the family persists, even this will not provide equitable economic opportunities for women.

What Palmer is basically saying is that as long as the existing processes of sexual division of labour persist, the subordination of women will continue to exist. However, this does not tell us how the redistribution of land between sexes might be carried out. One assumes that the recommendation implies that women be allotted separate plots which may or may not be physically located in the same area as that of their male kin. If this course of action is to be followed, it is necessary to build up supporting institutions, both social, economic and cultural, that will maintain or perpetuate the new system. It would also be desirable to ensure that if this course of action is taken, further fragmentation of land will not negatively affect agricultural production. Although it is important to view land reform as a social and political process, it is equally important not to lose sight of its economic and environmental objectives. Thus, women's independent access to land needs careful planning which again calls for commitment on both the part of government and beneficiaries.

Even with the above stated rights, it is important to ensure that women exercise them. It is this need to interpret legislation which turns our attention to the question of women's lack of empowerment in knowing legislation and utilising the law.

Women's lack of awareness of the law is largely a reflection of their exclusion from the planning process. When programmes are planned and legislation is drafted, there is minimal consultation with the intended beneficiaries, resulting in information gaps. Ingrid Palmer attributes this oversight to a combination of,

... ideological bias, lack of information, and a desire to expediency among planners and administrators (78, 79).

With few exceptional cases, these information gaps hurt the intended beneficiaries. It means that they cannot utilise the powerful tool - the law - to bring about the desired changes.

Information gaps on the side of the programme designers have had a profound effect on women. For instance, vast number of programmes designed without the participation of the target group have been based on wrong assumptions. For example, as Tadesse notes, the land reform proclamation in Ethiopia was based on the assumption of monogamous families when in reality polygamy existed. The proclamation therefore only made provision for the registration of one wife leaving others with no access to land (Tadesse, 1982:214). This is not a unique occurrence. As we shall see in the study of Zimbabwe's resettlement programme, the problem is widespread and it appears that there does not exist adequate legislation to deal with it. Although governments in sub-Saharan Africa have not abolished polygamy, most of their laws and legislations tend to side step the issue. This could either be a deliberate course of action or lack of awareness, which can be corrected by consulting the people involved.

This section of the paper has examined some of the most widely used land distributive instruments. It has focused on land reform because of its dynamic nature which allows it to accommodate special circumstances such as those of women. The study in this section has attempt to address itself to some of the problems that are encountered in attempts to give the deprived (disadvantaged people) access to and control over land. Drawing from research carried out on land reform programmes in general, and in particular the situation of women

in these programmes, the study has attempted to highlight some of the important practical problems that arise in implementing these programmes. For instance, the question of information gaps on the side of women, the barriers set up by the processes of socialisation and the lack of adequate planning, i.e. not clearly stating the objectives and the mechanisms for effecting the change, are some of the issues raised.

The next section provides an empirical analysis of some of the major issues raised, using data collected from the rural areas of Zimbabwe. The bulk of the analysis focuses on the communal areas and resettlement schemes where the majority of the population is based. In these areas, households enjoy usufruct rights. However, as will be noted later, there are differences in the sources of these rights and in the security that goes with them.

#### Some Special Considerations

Before embarking on the empirical analysis, the study wishes to draw attention to special features that have to be taken into account for a better grasp of the situation of women, vis-a-vis agricultural land in Zimbabwe. Some of these considerations may be unique to Zimbabwe or common to developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Whatever the case may be, these considerations are meant to improve our understanding of women's lack of access to and control over land.

One important factor that needs to be borne in mind that the government of Zimbabwe has pledged its commitment to giving women equal access to productive resources. It demonstrated this by passing the Majority Age Act in 1982. This act gave majority status to all Zimbabweans over the age of eighteen years. This act had far-reaching effects on the legal status of women, who, under traditional law and in particular the African Marriages Act, were perpetual minors. The African Marriages Act governed most rural women in Zimbabwe. It is an act passed by colonial governments, recognising traditional marriages

and legitimising certain restrictions on women. The most important restriction was that it relegated women to the position of minors. In addition, it legalised polygamy. Before the passing the Majority Age Act, women could only exercise limited rights through their male kin. They had no property rights, no rights to enter into legal contracts such as obtaining loans, no rights to custody over their children, no right to the products of their labour, etc. In short, women exercised no rights in matters that affected their day to day lives. Even in agriculture's subsystem sector, where they were the workers, they had no rights to resources. In theory, the Majority Age Act redressed this situation and gave women all the rights enjoyed by male adults. The passing of this act was accompanied by efforts to disseminate the facts, in terms of the new status that women in Zimbabwe had acquired. However, the availability of this legal information was not sufficient to allow women to exercise their rights. There still existed many obstacles. Most rural women, married under the African Marriages Act continued to be governed by this law. Although the Majority Age Act was supposed to supersede other laws, the legal system had not been modified to deal with women married under the African Marriages Act which gave them a minority status. Further to this, other socioeconomic institutions were not changed so that they could make the Act a reality. A case in point is that of land rights. Male heads of households continued to be registered as the custodians for usufruct rights. Even in the resettlement schemes being established, it was male heads of households who had the registered land rights. On these schemes where men did not exercise traditional rights, it would have been possible to co-register husband and wife (wives) without incurring too much resistance. This was not done because there did not exist the legal framework needed for the implementation of such radical changes.

One factor for special consideration is that during the war for liberation the traditional sex roles were disrupted. The politicisation programme implemented by the liberation army laid emphasis on equality and social justice

between races and sexes. For example, because security risks for men in rural areas were greater than those of women, there were significant shifts in responsibilities or performing tasks. The task of taking livestock to the dipping tank, which had been dominated by men, was passed on to the women whose lives were not as seriously threatened by the so-called security forces as those of men. Furthermore, women played a very active role as fighters, demonstrating that talk of equality was not just rhetoric. In other words, the experiences of the war of liberation alerted the Zimbabwean population to the practicability of radical changes where political will existed. The process of politicisation, along with other factors, was shown to be an effective tool for initiating change.

On the issue of access to and control over land, all Zimbabweans who participated in the liberation war in one form or another, were agreed on its central role in Zimbabwe's future development. The designing of the land re-settlement programme was an inevitable fact in post-independence Zimbabwe. However, most other developmental issues had taken account of women's interests in one way or the other, at an official level, the question of women's access to and control over land has not been addressed in a specific manner. Land access for widows, divorcees and single mothers has been discussed and granted but not access for married women. These biases are blurred in policy documents by such terms as 'all citizens of Zimbabwe' or 'everyone above the age of eighteen'.

Some important features of Zimbabwe's rural areas, in terms of this study, are that as the introduction of major cash crops did not affect food production in many areas to the extent that it has done in other African countries. This was so because the major cash crop introduced to peasant farmers was maize, the country's most widely consumed staple cereal. In fact, in most areas where cash cropping was introduced, it involved the introduction of new improved technologies to increase maize production. The common practice was that the



farmers did not make the final decisions relating to the marketing until after the harvest. Before the harvest was sent to market, household requirements for the year would be set aside and then the remaining produce would be marketed. This means that maize could only become a cash crop when there was a surplus after household needs were met.

In areas where non-food cash crops such as cotton, tobacco and sunflower\* were introduced, maize continued to play an important role as a food and cash crop. There are very few instances where peasant farmers grow non-food cash crops alone. Maize and cereals such as millets and rice are always grown as food crops first and then cash crops when there is a surplus.

The above account is meant to point to the weakness of the debate on cash crops displacing food crops in the case of Zimbabwe. However, it does not completely eliminate it. There are some important food crops that have been displaced because of participation in the cash economy. Groundnuts and most of the traditional cereals, millets, have been gradually displaced. The cases for these two types of crops are different. Traditional cereals are displaced partly because their market is uncertain and mainly because of the changes in consumer tastes. Most traditional cereals are considered inferior to maize and therefore where these are grown, it is done so on a smaller scale, and for reasons such as that they are more drought-resistant than maize and they are required for use in beer brewing and for performance or certain traditional rituals.

While traditional cereals are being displaced because of preference for substitutes, there has been a notable decline in the output of groundnuts, but not because of shifts in consumer tastes. During the mid-seventies, groundnut deliveries to the Grain Marketing Board were between 20,000 and 56,000 tonnes per annum. By 1982, the deliveries had reached the level of 9,500 tonnes, and a further drop in 1983 to an estimated 5,000 (Stanning 1983:7). The bulk of

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\* Sunflower is classified as a non-food crop because it is not consumed in the household.

the deliveries originated from communal areas, where groundnuts are almost entirely produced by women. According to Collett (1983:7):

Small-scale farmers in Zimbabwe have traditionally produced 80% to 90% of all groundnuts sold to the Grain Marketing Board.

The above statement was only true up to about 1980 when commercial farmers overtook small-scale farmers in groundnut production. This was not due to any significant increase in commercial farmer groundnut production. As the table below illustrates, there was a significant expansion in output from 1976 through to 1983 with a gradual decline in 1982 and 1983 (Stanning 1983:7). But what is more significant is the drastic decline in output from communal areas. Between 1972 and 1976 total deliveries from communal areas were reduced by about 55%. Between 1976 and 1983 they were further reduced by 84%.

Although the decline in communal area groundnuts output was largely due to a shift to the production of other crops, other factors contributed. The drought in 1982 and 1983; and shortage of groundnut seeds account for some of the decline. They do, however, account for a very small proportion of the decline.

Harvest Year	Deliveries Communal	Deliveries Commercial	Total Deliveries
1966	19,000	3,000	22,300
1972	54,000	1,600	56,000
1976	24,000	5,400	31,100
1981	4,800	9,900	15,300
1982	1,500	8,000	9,500
1983	600	5,000	5,600

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NB: Total deliveries may not equate with the sum of communal and commercial deliveries as small farm commercial sector is excluded.

The statistics are estimated by the Agricultural Marketing Authority.

The above statistics are alarming both from the point of view of family nutritional levels and women's independent income earning capacity. It is difficult to assess accurately the impact of this decline in groundnut output on nutritional levels because, as has been stated, most peasant households will only market surplus. This is very true of cereals, but groundnuts are

slightly different. Although they are (as peanut butter) a very important part of the diet, they are not seen to be as essential as maize. It is therefore not surprising to find women making distress sales in order to meet their immediate financial obligations. However, some of them find that they have to buy groundnuts again later in lean periods. Since groundnuts have been women's major source of personal income, they find they have to continue to draw from this source at the cost of deteriorating nutritional levels. Sometimes women are left with no options especially when they have to raise money for their children's school books and uniforms. It would therefore not be too presumptuous to assume that family nutritional levels are affected by the decline in the output levels of groundnuts in communal areas.

The implications on women's incomes are obvious. As stated above, groundnuts have traditionally been one of women's major sources of personal income for whose use they did not have to account. This income has been used for the purchase of supplementary foods and other household items such as cooking oil, salt, sugar, candles, matches, soap, etc. Income from groundnuts enabled them to exercise a certain level of economic independence. Absence of this income implies greater dependence on men.

Concern about the decline in groundnut production has only been expressed in passing at the government level. In fact, it was not until the country started to experience spurts of cooking oil shortages from 1982 that government began to publicly express concern about the decline in groundnut production. It is during this period that groundnuts became a controlled crop, i.e. government set and announced the prices of groundnuts at the beginning of the season before planting. This is common practice with the major cash crops, and frequently new prices announced each year are meant to work as incentives for farmers to produce more.

Although groundnuts became a controlled crop, the pricing policy was definitely biased against this crop, which is primarily produced by women.

Prices for groundnuts were set so low that the profit margins were minimal.

According to Stanning, 1983:7)

In 1982, before devaluation, groundnuts was the only commodity which was realising greater than the combined costs of: purchase from producer, GMB costs, transport and export charges.

This statement clearly demonstrates that the production of groundnuts was not very lucrative. Considering its high labour intensity, its pricing policy discouraged households from investing much time in it. Other cash crops, such as maize and cotton, offered more favourable prices and communal area farmers became more price-responsive in terms of these two crops. In 1980 communal area farmers contributed approximately 20% of the marketed maize. By 1984, their share of the maize and cotton markets had risen to 40% (The Economist, 66, 12-18 Jan. 1985). During the last harvest (1985), communal areas contributed 50% of the marketed maize and cotton. For the current season, 1985/86, it is estimated that maize output will go up by 130% on the previous year, and cotton will set a new record level of 295,000 ton, about 20% more than last year's 245,000 tonnes (The Guardian, 17.4.86:17). Most of the expansion in these crops has taken place in the communal areas and resettlement schemes.

The above statistics are presented to demonstrate a number of points. First they show that the decline in groundnut deliveries does not mean that the subsistence sector as a whole is suffering. It only means that farmers do not find the production of groundnuts as economic as other crops. They therefore respond to price incentives and change the cropping patterns accordingly. Women, too, have in some cases been found to respond to these price incentives. As will be shown in the next section, some women who were interviewed admitted that they had planted maize or cotton on the plots allocated to them by their families.

Secondly, the statistics demonstrate the power of prices in influencing land allocational patterns in the agricultural season. Earlier on the study criticised some of the assumptions made on the decision-making processes within households. A lot of studies have accused men of making allocational decisions.

that affect women negatively. This argument, however, fails to take into account economic factors. The above statistics suggest that some allocational decisions are based purely on economic considerations. It is possible, therefore, that women are part of the decision-making processes that are displacing groundnuts in the communal areas.

Finally, in debating the question of women's access to and control over land in Zimbabwe, it may not be very convincing to argue that women's lack of access partly explains the decline in food production. This is not the case in Zimbabwe because despite adverse weather conditions, food production has been steadily increasing in the last few years and the increase has been attributed to the sector that is dominated by women. This study will underplay this argument and attempt to highlight problems with family nutritional levels and the case of equality and social justice.

The next section examines the empirical evidence from some of the rural areas of Zimbabwe. It will start by giving a brief account of the methodology used in collecting the data and then analyse the empirical evidence.

### Methodology

Data collection involved both literature search and collection of empirical data through interviews and dialogues with various groups of people. The literature search involved a study of official documents such as National Plans, Policies and Procedures for resettlement, reports relating to the situation of women, archival documents and others relating to the issue of access to land. For a complete bibliography see the reference page. The literature search was supplemented with interviews with government officials involved in policy development and implementation, and researchers and development agents who have worked in related areas.

The selection of areas was largely based on previous knowledge of the conditions. It was a purposive selection process. The areas selected included

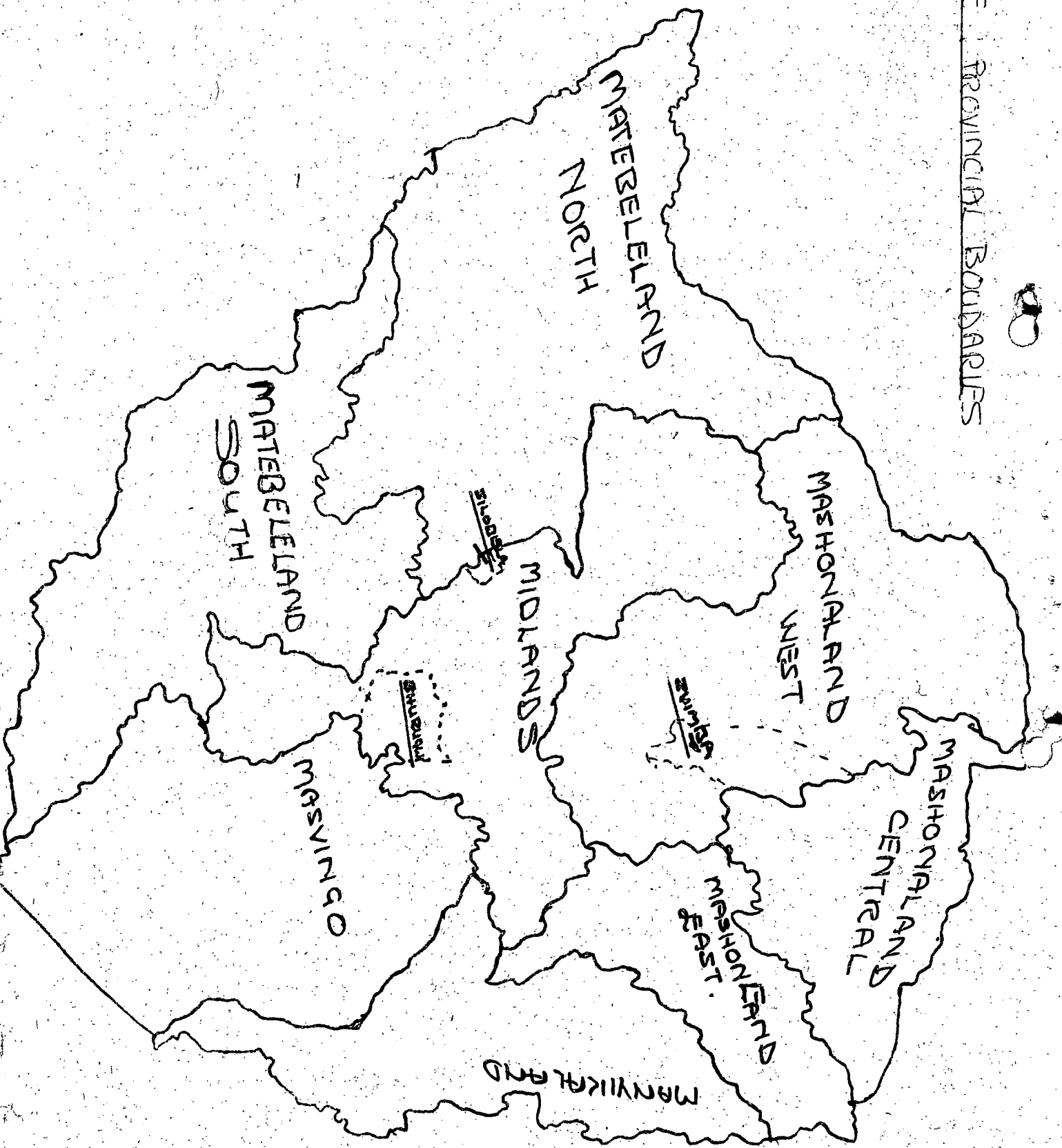
resettlement schemes, and communal areas. In addition to this, the study attempted to include areas that might have been experiencing unique problems relating to the land issue. Zwimba communal area was selected because the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Resettlement was implementing a development project which involved the demarcation of occupied land. The project was establishing paddocks for improved livestock grazing. Since the area was already settled, it meant that some people had to be moved to new areas, and in most cases against their wishes. This presented an interesting case for the study.

The other area selected was Silobela. As shown on the map on page 30, Silobela is located in the north-western part of the Midlands province, towards the Matebeleland province border. This area was selected because its population is made up of the two major ethnic groups of Zimbabwe, the Shona and Ndebele. The deliberate choice of studying an area with such a population mix aimed at bringing out any differences that might be due to their different cultural practices. As we shall see later, as far as the question of women's access to and control over land was concerned, there appeared to be no major differences.

The third area, Shurugwi which lies on the south-eastern part of the Midlands, was a typical communal area with problems of population pressure on land. The main reason for the selection of this area was to bring out any possible differences that might result from demographic pressures.

Empirical data was collected through interviews and dialogues with farming families and government field officers, either individually or as part of a group. Men and women were also interviewed individually, in single sex groups and in mixed groups. All the interviews were informal, guided by an open-ended questionnaire which was used more as a checklist. The dialogues, which in most cases were in the form of story-telling, gave more insight into some processes that were difficult to explain when specific questions were posed. While the

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discussions were informal the researcher tried to ensure the inclusion of the important questions that had been identified prior to the field visit, by referring to the questionnaire every now and again.

The selection of interviewees was based on the technique of stratified random sampling. The strata included married women whose husbands were present, those whose husbands were away in wage employment, single, widowed and divorced women. Some men were also included in the sample.

An important feature about the large-scale commercial farmers involved was that quite a considerable proportion of them were not entirely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. They were part-time farmers. Almost half this group was comprised of women whose families had recently purchased large-scale commercial farms since they were made available to indigenous people just before the country's independence in 1980. These families were frequently engaged in other forms of business in which women had participated for longer periods, such as shopkeepers or book-keepers. The other half from this group was made up of those who had previously farmed on small-scale commercial farms, and had therefore been involved in agricultural work most of their lives.

Below is a table showing the different groups of farmers involved in the study. The income figures are average estimates calculated from data collected in the field.

A total of thirty communal area farmers, twenty-five farmers from resettlement schemes, twenty small-scale commercial farmers and ten large-scale farmers were interviewed. These interviews provided information on household composition, tasks performed by household members, the size of arable land, crop types, output, inputs used, cash income, cash flows and assets.

The third column of the following table shows cash income from marketed produce. For the two types of commercial farmers, the figures do not mean very much because they represent only sales from major crops and do not reflect income from other crops nor costs of production. In most cases this information



Type of Farmer	Average Size of Farm (Acres)	Average Annual Cash Income in Z\$
Communal Area	5	\$ 500
Resettlement	12	\$ 850
Small-Scale Commercial	250	\$15,000
Large-Scale Commercial	2,000	\$30,000

was not readily available partly because of poor farm management practices, often because farmers were not willing to make all the information available. Most figures were calculations by the researcher, based on output statistics provided by the farmers, who tended to be sensitive about divulging the money figures but not the quantities of their produce. Since unit prices of the produce are set by government it was easy to make some rough estimates of their cash earnings.

Figures from communal areas and resettlement schemes tended to be more accurate, partly because farmers tended to be more willing to share the information. In addition, the sizes of their enterprises made it easier to make better estimates. The cash income carried by these groups during the 1985 season was higher than their previous earnings. As stated earlier, this was due to the fact that, in general, the harvest for that year was good. Furthermore, the market prices were quite favourable.

Analysis of the quantitative data was carried out essentially by the researcher with the use of a pocket calculator. The bulk of the data was qualitative and its analysis was, for the most part, carried out together with the people that had provided the information. It was an ongoing process throughout the project. The final part of the analysis was, however, carried out by the researcher, who drew a lot from the ideas put forward by the group that took part in the research project.

### The Zimbabwean Experiences

This section analyses the empirical evidence from rural areas in Zimbabwe. It focuses on communal areas and resettlement schemes mainly because they

carry the majority of the country's population. In addition, the problems of women in these areas are more relevant to the issues raised in this study. Brief reference will however be made to the position of women in the commercial farming areas. Figures provided in the previous section give an indication of the different farm sizes between the commercial farming sector and the communal and resettlement areas. They also bring out the differences between the two groups of commercial farmers.

For the micro-analysis, i.e. the analysis of the household or farming family, the study will focus on the data obtained from communal areas. This does not totally exclude households in resettlement areas. A great deal of generalities can be made for households from both areas because of similarities in their household, agricultural and social processes. With the exception of a few factors, which will be pointed out, one can draw general conclusions about households in these two areas. The focus of the micro-analysis on communal areas is partly for ease of the organisation of the presentation and mainly to avoid repetition.

The analysis of the resettlement schemes focuses on the macro issues as they affect farming households in general, and women in particular. The decision to focus on policy issues with regards resettlement schemes is due to the fact that this is the largest rural sector, in terms of population, where government policy exercises a great deal of influence on the lives of farming families. With respect to women's access to and control over land, this is an area of significant importance because it is in this area that government can introduce and effect changes with respect to men and women's relationship with land. The Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Resettlement is the overall custodian and has the power to enforce the law which can give women access to land.

Before commencing the field research, the study had hypothesised that women's lack of access to and control over land had a negative effect on food production and consequently on family nutritional levels. It had further

hypothesised that the lack of control over this factor of production excluded women from effectively participating in the decision-making processes.

Data collected did not support the above hypotheses conclusively. As shown in an earlier section, food production in the subsistence sector has been steadily increasing since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, and the areas where field evidence was collected were no exception. These increases in food production cannot be attributed to any improvements in land distributional patterns because the tenure systems in communal areas have not been altered, nor has the position of women with regard to land. Households still enjoy usufruct rights with the male head of the household as the recognised custodian of these rights. Women have access to this land only through their husbands and any threat of taking away the access, either from the husband, other members of his family or outsiders. Obviously, this is an unfavourable position for women in communal areas, considering that they provide most of the agricultural labour. The fact that their access to land in which they invest their time and energy depends primarily on their relationship with their husbands is cause for concern, for if the relationship breaks the woman immediately loses the right to the land. Her best alternative is to return to her natal home where she can be allotted a plot to cultivate, through another male kin. In some cases, where the divorced woman has children, the husband's family may allow her to stay on the land. There are very few cases in communal areas where women are granted access to land independent of male relatives. This rare occurrence can only apply to single, divorced or widowed women who have children to raise.

An additional problem is that in the event of divorce a woman loses not only her access to land, but access to family assets as well. In numerous cases, women make a major contribution towards the accumulation of these assets because it is the income from agricultural products that is used to purchase them. The idea that formal access to factors is the remedy may not be the

answer to the problem. It may be that informal access through decision making could improve women's situation. Data from the field lends support to the proposition that effective participation in the decision-making processes improves the position of women with respect to family assets.

In individual marriages or households, it was found that the extent of women's access to and control over land varied. Numerous factors explaining this variation were identified but a few were found to be more significant. These were the wife's age, whether it was a polygamous situation or not, age difference between husband and wife, and the number and ages of sons the wife had. This list of factors is neither definitive nor exhaustive, but it gives an idea of some of the behavioural determinants in this area where the field research was undertaken.

TABLE I:

	<u>BREAKDOWN BY AGE</u>		
	<u>AGE (YEARS)</u>		
	Under 25	26-45	Over 45
NUMBER OF WOMEN	11	11	8

TABLE II:

<u>AGE GROUP (YEARS)</u>	<u>LOCATION OF HUSBAND</u>		
	HUSBAND PRESENT	HUSBAND AWAY	NO HUSBAND
Under 25	3	7	1
26-45	5	5	1
Over 45	5	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>

TABLE III:

<u>AGE GROUP (YEARS)</u>	<u>TYPE OF MARRIAGE</u>	
	<u>CUSTOMARY (NUMBER)</u>	<u>CIVIL (REGISTERED) (NUMBER)</u>
Under 25	8	2
26-45	9	1
Over 45	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>

Table III confirms the statement that most rural women are governed by the African Marriages Act, which renders them minors. Despite the passing of the Majority Age Act, most of these women are still existing as minors in real

terms. Very few, if any, have access to credit on an individual basis. They are required to have male representation for any contractual transactions they may get into. There does not exist a legal and socioeconomic framework for women to benefit from their majority status.

In Table II, quite a large proportion of young women were staying on their own most of the time because their husbands were away in wage employment. These young women had the major responsibility of providing the agricultural labour. Out of the seven, five, or 71%, admitted that their husbands purchased most of the inputs such as fertiliser, certified seed and pesticides. The other two said that they raised money for inputs from several income-earning activities they were engaged in.

From the discussions that went on it appeared that those men who purchased inputs were more involved in some of the production processes, which included decision making and actually contributing labour. Some visited their homes about twice a month for weekends, during which time they would make their labour contributions. Three of the women interviewed stated that their husbands always tried to take their annual leave from work during periods of highest male labour demand, i.e. during land preparation.

When questioned on the nature of decision-making power they exercised, those whose husbands participated more stated that in most cases they made their decisions jointly. Their husbands informed them or consulted them on issues such as quantities of inputs to be purchased, types of crop seeds and the nature of transport to be used. In addition, they also consulted each other on the disposal of their proceeds or income. It is, however, not very clear how much weight the opinions of women carried. This question of decision-making processes was very difficult to clarify. A thorough investigation of the way decisions are taken and the identification of the objectives which appear to motivate these decisions will go a long way in improving the understanding of the problems of women's subordination in general. It is important to understand what decision making entails in order to comprehend the behaviour

of farming families. For instance, it helps to understand whether the one who initiates an idea or one who endorses an idea is the decision maker. In formulating solutions for land allocational decision making, such information could be useful. In this study, however, it was difficult to obtain the correct information because women tended to attribute most things to men even where it was clear that men were not involved at all. Furthermore, as White and Young correctly observe, women have a tendency to view themselves within the context of the family and are thus not self-conscious. They always talk in terms of 'we', meaning the family, and not 'I'. This raises problems when we attempt to analyse women as individual actors.

This study incurred the difficulty of not being able to separate the decision making power exercised by women from that exercised by men. Without this knowledge it became difficult to assess the extent of women's access to and control over land. This was more difficult where the age differences between husbands and wives were small. Of the five young women in monogamous marriages with husbands in wage employment, two were in the same age group as their husbands and the other three were younger than their husbands by between eight and seventeen years. What emerged during the interviews was that those with minor age differences made their statements more confidently, and gave the impression of greater access and control over the factors of production. The greater the age difference the less confidence was displayed. This attitude or behaviour led to the conclusion that in terms of decision making, the greater the age difference between husband and wife the less influential the wife appears. This conclusion is open to criticism as this study cannot prove it scientifically or quantitatively. However, the study will assume that there is some truth in it.

Similar observations were made in cases where the husbands were present. In fact, in these cases the researcher was able to make a few observations relating to such things as communication processes within the household and

between the households and the researcher. These observations threw some light on how consultations on issues were made and what kind of interactions existed between household members and development agents, including the researcher and extension worker. In the majority of cases the young women did not contribute as much as their husbands did to the discussions. They only opened up a little when they were being interviewed on an individual basis. However, they still referred to their husbands on some of the issues, particularly those that had to do with income and expenditure, or cash flows in general.

The younger women in polygamous situations appeared to be further constrained by the presence of the older wives who tended to take the leading role during discussions. In households where husbands were away in wage employment, the older women were effectively the heads of households. Their relationship with the younger wives was almost similar to that of older sisters and young sisters. Although there might have been some friction in some of these relationships, these feelings were not allowed to surface in the presence of outsiders. The younger wives accepted the requests or orders issued by the older wives during the interview periods. According to this group, most production decisions were made between the older wives and the husbands. Whatever decisions they agreed upon would normally be transmitted to the junior wife by the senior wife. These households tended to follow definite communication channels which placed the junior wives at the bottom of the ladder, and excluded them from most decision-making processes.

This was the general picture presented by this sample. In other situations this pattern does not continue. For example, it has been observed elsewhere that the junior wives are more favoured and tend to communicate more with their husbands. This is particularly true of situations where the husband is in wage employment and the junior wife spends the off-peak season with him in the urban area while the senior wife is left in the rural area keeping an eye on the home. In this case it is the junior wife who transmits the decisions which are made frequently by the husband.

With few exceptions, it is clear that the younger a married woman is, with respect to her husband, the less power she exercises in the household. Evidence from the next group of women aged between 25 and 45 years gave support to this conclusion, which was also drawn for the first group of younger women. In this group, 50% of the husbands were in wage employment. With respect to purchase of inputs, only 30% of those whose husbands were away stated that they depended on remittances for the purchase of inputs; 45% of this group said that they would only request supplementary funds from their husbands when they were not able to raise sufficient money. This was most common during drought years. The remaining 25% did not get any financial contribution to agriculture from their working husbands.

Unlike the first group of the younger women, this second group was less dependent on men for financial contributions in general. A number of factors accounted for this. First, and perhaps the most significant factor, was that those women above the age of 25 years were established in agricultural production for a longer period and their enterprises, on average, were more productive than those of the younger women. Secondly, some of them had older children who contributed labour and thus making it possible for them to plant larger areas where land was available. The combination of more experience, accumulation of capital over the years and availability of child labour contributed to their ability to cope better with little assistance from men. This is however not to suggest that the men did not contribute towards the upkeep of their families. Some of them did but in different forms. For instance, some husbands send household supplies such as sugar, teas, candles, matches, etc. regularly. Some of them made frequent visits back home at weekends and public holidays, and on all these visits they brought some household items with them.

In monogamous cases, the overall picture the study got was that in making decisions concerning production processes there was a greater degree of consultation between husband and wife. One of the reasons accounting for this



was that husbands had grown to respect the knowledge and experience their wives had gained over the years. The fact that wives had proved themselves capable by producing the desired results, gained them a lot of respect and trust. Another factor was that the presence of older sons gave husbands the feeling that there was a man or were men around the home. Although most sons were not experienced enough to make decisions, their presence was reassuring to the husbands. This fact was echoed by most if not all of the women in this situation. They were not resentful. Even though they knew that their own entrepreneurship was the key factor in the success, they were still proud when some of the credit was given to their sons. They viewed this as an important achievement in their role in the reproduction process.

Women in this age group whose husbands were present were in a slightly different situation. They tended to let their sons, under the wings of their husbands, get more involved in the decision-making processes. In other words, they relinquished some of their power to their sons. They allowed their sons to learn more from their fathers. The concept of role models was most evident in these households. However, according to the women when it came to major decisions they were involved.

The third group, that of women over 45 years of age, further confirmed the positive correlation between age and level of involvement in decision-making processes. With few exceptions, even those in polygamous marriages tended to gain status with age.

Single or unmarried women have frequently been said to wield more decision-making power and exercise more control over the means of production. If we accept the assumption that men frequently make the wrong decisions and that they do not consult their wives, it would be correct to conclude that single or unmarried women (including widows and divorcees) are in an advantageous position. However, the women in the study did not see it that way. They felt that they needed the opinions of other people in their decision making. They

believed that this was also true of single men. They did not accept the assumption that men generally do not consult women when they make decisions. The group of unmarried women in the sample pointed out that they frequently turned to their male kin for advice on certain issues. In fact they claimed that they actually involved their male relatives in decision making almost as much as married women did. However, the difference was that they had the flexibility of taking advice from more than one person. Note that they also consulted other women, particularly relatives and friends.

With regard to allocation of land, single women who had families, i.e. children, were not viewed exactly in the same light as male heads of households. Theirs were viewed as lesser households and therefore did not have access to the same quantity and quality of land. They were frequently allotted land that was just sufficient for subsistence food production with very little room for expansion and diversification. Since they often obtained access to land through their male kin they often were assigned pieces of land that the male kin found to be less productive.

Because single women tended to be marginalised with respect to land allocation, they did not get high returns to labour and therefore did not have large proceeds to control. The single women did, however, have much greater control over their proceeds. This is one major single advantage they had over married women.

As found in the other groups of women in the sample, age did have a positive relationship with the status of women. In this case, older single women enjoyed a better and more equal consultative relationship with their male relatives.

The above account which shows a relationship that was found to exist between a woman's age and her degree of participation in the decision-making processes, is meant to improve our understanding of some of the important factors influencing women's access to and control over land. Numerous studies

have understated the fact that it is these decision-making processes that determine women's access to and control over resources. Admittedly, at the base of the problems women are the processes of sexual division of labour. It is, however, these other subprocesses, i.e. decision making, which are the instruments of these processes of sexual division of labour. This study found that women were denied access to and control over land primarily through the decision-making processes which occurred within a particular socioeconomic context.

In raising the issue of women's access to and control over land within the context of communal areas, what is essentially in question is the control over returns to labour. The allocational patterns that are biased against women's interests such as food security and special income earning crops are influential in providing women access to and control over proceeds. The question of control of proceeds is the central issue in the problems of women's subordination. The link between this issue and women's access to and control over land has not been thoroughly investigated. A clearer understanding of this link will not only improve the understanding of why social scientists believe that giving women access to and control over land will help improve their position and motivate them to produce more, but it will also contribute towards the development of relevant solutions to the problem. The analysis of the empirical evidence attempts to bring out this important link.

First, let us examine the land allocational patterns in the households involved. The major distinction made was between land set aside for household crops and that set aside for women's crops. The major household crops were generally maize and in some cases cotton, tobacco or sunflower. All households interviewed grew maize as the major crop annually. The other crops varied. Crops grown on women's plots varied. Traditionally, groundnuts were their major crop, but recently there have been some shifts to other more profitable crops.

One reason is due to adverse demographic factors on land. Another factor contributing to this change may be that households prefer to utilise these plots for cash crops. There possibly are other reasons but the fact remains that, as the table below illustrates, not every woman has access to land for her personal crops.

TABLE IV:

ALLOTMENT OF PLOTS FOR WOMEN'S CROPS

AGE GROUP	NUMBER WITH PLOTS FOR PERSONAL CROPS	%	NUMBER WITHOUT PLOTS	%
Under 25	3	16	7	70
26-45	9	47	2	20
Over 45	7	37	1	10
	<u>19</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>100</u>

It is clear from the above figures that the younger women were once again at a disadvantage. Seventy per cent of them did not have plots for their personal crops. In this group those whose husbands were away in wage employment and were sending remittance regularly did not feel the need for a plot for special crops whose proceeds they would have complete control over. The others, whose husbands were present, responded by stating that the question of setting aside a plot for special use had never been raised. Asked whether they would be interested, the women doubted their ability to cope since they were actively involved in savings clubs whose activities placed extra demands on their time. The rest of the women who were in polygamous marriages pointed out that they were supposed to be sharing the plots allotted to senior wives, but they had no desire to do so. They preferred to spend more time on savings clubs activities.

Clearly in this group of women there is a wide range of reasons for the absence of plots. Quite a considerable proportion of them were deliberate or voluntary decisions on the part of women. However, it is important to note

\* For a detailed description of savings clubs, see Chimedza in 'Rural Development and Women: Lessons from the Field', ed. By Shimwayi Muntamba Vol I, ILO, Geneva, 1985.

that in all cases, such decisions are made owing to the fact that they have access to cash or other forms of generating cash are preferred. This attitude led the researcher to conclude that younger women viewed the allotment of plots more from an economic point rather than from the viewpoint of the nutritional status of the households. Thus they opted for what appeared to be better alternatives, not only in terms of money but also in terms of socialising. We will return to this point later.

The younger women who had personal plots stated that when their husbands allotted the plots to them, they saw it as an opportunity for raising money to purchase such items as sewing machines, knitting machines and wool. These items would eventually enable them to generate larger sums of money for the various kinds of developments they had planned for their homes. All the women in this group were active members of savings clubs and involved in other forms of income earning activities.

Figures showing the number of older women with plots for personal crops confirm the existence of a positive correlation between age and cultivation of special crops, particularly groundnuts. A number of factors were found to contribute to this pattern. The most significant one was that because of their higher degree of involvement in the decision-making processes, the women were able to represent their interests more effectively. Secondly, their age group tended to be more traditional in their practices. They wished to preserve some of the traditional practices which they found beneficial, not only in economic terms. This group appeared to be more conscious of the household in nutritional needs. From the interviews it was, however, not clear whether this was the case or whether they were more cautious in terms of their important role in ensuring food security. When questioned, some responded by saying that they continued to grow their special crops because their household members enjoyed certain dishes prepared, for instance, with peanut butter. Others stated that during the dry season groundnuts became an important part of the

diet in the form of peanut butter, which improved the taste of dried vegetables, meat and other forms of relish. Some pointed out the economic and nutritional advantages they derived from the continued cultivation of personal crops. Although these women did not highlight the economic advantages they continually surfaced indirectly. They frequently referred to the fact that they wanted to avoid asking their husbands to provide the supplementary foods and other small items. The table below gives a breakdown of the crops grown by women on their plots. Clearly, the older women stuck to tradition and continued to grow groundnuts while the younger women responded to the market forces. They explained that they preferred to grow maize or cotton because these crops gave them favourable cash returns.

TABLE V:

AGE GROUP	TYPE CROPS GROWN ON PERSONAL PLOTS		
	NUMBER GROWING GROUNDNUTS	NUMBER GROWING MAIZE	NUMBER GROWING COTTON
Under 25	1	0	2
26-45	4	3	2
Over 45	7	0	0

Secondly, younger women felt that groundnuts were too labour intensive, and they would rather expend their energies in other activities which rewarded them more quickly.

The allotment of plots, it was found, was done on an annual basis. Before land preparation activities, decisions on cropping would be taken so that the family would know which fields needed special attention. As already stated, plots allocated to women varied. In fact, in some cases, it appeared to the researcher as if the practice was being used to complement a crop rotation system. According to those women who had plots, they did not expect to get a plot every year. Sometimes the household might decide to expand the maize or cotton crop and this meant that there might not be any land left for women's crops. In some cases, if one member of the extended family, for instance the husband's divorced sister, was found to need agricultural land, it was the

women's plots that had to go first. There were no guarantees given to women when plots were allotted to them.

The significant feature of these plots was that any proceeds from marketed commodities belonged to the women. They did not have to account for them to anyone. This was one of the few areas in which they had complete control. Although they used most of the money to purchase household items, they also had the option, and did use this option, to purchase personal items such as clothes and presents for relatives in their natal families.

This ability to control the disposal of proceeds is basically what women are concerned with when they address the issue of lack of access to and control over land. The majority of them categorically stated that they were not interested in land registration or co-ownership as long as they could not have control over their proceeds. In fact, all the older women expressed this opinion. Among the younger women it was those who were in polygamous situations who felt that some kind of registration would help them. It was however found that they felt they needed protection from their co-wives rather than from their husbands. In their opinion, if registration ensured that after their husbands died they would continue to have access to the land, they would welcome it.

The study attempted to examine the possible existence of a correlation between the lack of control over productive resources and motivation to invest in terms of labour and capital. It found that there was no evidence to show that investment is hindered by lack of access to and control over land. In fact, it was difficult to establish any relationship partly because the women did not admit to having no access to land. It was the control of the proceeds they were concerned with more than anything else. Some admitted to having no decision-making power, and thus not being able to influence the allocation of resources as much as they would have wished. Since motivation is not something that one can easily quantify, it was not easy to determine how much

influence it had on women's participation in agricultural production, in the absence of control of resources. The responses from interviews seem to suggest that women's motivation would not be hampered by their lack of access to and control over land. After all, they accepted the fact that men were the custodians of usufructs rights which households were granted. The processes of socialisation made them accept a subservient role without raising many objections. As long as women felt secure in their marriages their motivation to produce food for the household was high. It was only in situations where women felt insecure in their relationships that their motivation was affected negatively. There was one particular case of a woman in the 25-45 years age group whose husband had just married an eighteen-year-old girl. This woman was in a situation where she was seriously considering leaving her husband. In a confidential interview she admitted that her motivation had been dampened and she was already beginning to make arrangements with her brothers for her to return to her natal home. This was just one case in which a woman lost her motivation to work, and it had little to do with her lack of access to land but had more to do with the uncertainty in the relationship with her husband. In this case, motivation was linked to security and not access to land.

While there was evidence showing a phenomenal increase in food production in the subsistence sector which was dominated by women, it was difficult to convincingly point to lack of access to and control over land as hindering progress. However, it is possible to identify some institutional factors that could improve conditions for women. Access to support services such as credit, extension and marketing has always been associated with access to land. Numerous lending institutions use land as collateral, and it is only those holding the title that can use it. In some cases credit and marketing are linked and, therefore, access to one grants access to the other. For example, in Zimbabwe repayments of loans from the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) are made through the marketing boards. The AFC uses the stop-order system for



short-term loans and some medium-term loans. Amounts owed are deducted from proceeds of crop sales before payments are made to the farmers. This means that a farmer gets a cheque for the value of his commodities minus the loan amounts. This practice has in the past excluded women from credit partly because it was men who were primarily involved in the marketing and also because the AFC had not created the legal framework for lending to women who were previously regarded as minors. It is important to note that in communal areas land has not been used as collateral. This partly explains why AFC, a government parastatal extends over 90% of the agricultural loans that go to communal area farmers.

However, while access to land appears to be a problem, the study shows that it is not significantly important to women's access to support services. Means to provide women easier access to services have been devised. The most common are such receiving systems as co-operatives, Master Farmers' Clubs, saving clubs and various other organisations. These allow groups of women easier access. While access to individual women is still slow, taken as a whole women are gaining access more rapidly through their affiliation with these organised groups. For individuals, there are barriers such as attitudes of development agents, processes of socialisation and illiteracy. Government policy, with the aid of such tools as the Majority Age Act, gives producers access to services.

All the women interviewed maintained regular contact with extension workers, either on an individual basis or through their clubs. Due to lack of adequate personnel, to cover large areas, extension workers prefer to work through these existing receiving systems which allow them to reach more farmers than they would if they worked with individuals. Furthermore, these systems encouraged the adoption of improved technologies and thus they created income-earning opportunities for members to enable them to purchase this technology. This was an attraction for extension workers who found it easier to implement their programmes among people who were able to obtain the required inputs. Because

of the activities of these groups, women had equal access to extension services with men. One of the extension workers said that he found it more rewarding to work with women's groups, such as savings clubs, because they displayed a higher level of commitment towards the goal of increasing agricultural production. They were more willing to invest resources into the development of their agriculture. Regardless of the fact that they did not have direct control over productive resources, women were not discouraged from spending some of their earnings from club activities on purchasing agricultural inputs and implements.

Group activities gave women easier access to credit. When they borrowed money as a group it did not seem to bother either the credit institutions or their husbands. In fact, government policy encouraged group lending. As regards husbands, they did not feel directly threatened as heads of households when women got access to facilities through group activities as opposed to individual efforts.

An important feature of these group activities is that in a few cases it gave women access to land outside land that traditionally belonged to their families. Some local (traditional) leaders allotted women's groups plots for their activities. They grew crops primarily for marketing purposes, and the proceeds were shared among members. On these plots, women experimented with the new technologies they acquired through their extension agents. They tried out crops that they did not normally cultivate. These were almost entirely commercial enterprises that earned them income on which they exercised a great deal of control. This partly explains why the younger women in the group interviewed did not concern themselves too much with the allotment of plots for their personal crops. They preferred to earn their income through group activities where they not only learned about new technologies and new crops but they also socialised with other women in the process. According to the women, when they were working on these group plots it did not seem like work.

There was not the drudgery they experienced when they worked in the family fields. Group work seemed more like entertainment. They sang and told stories while they worked, which made the tasks much more enjoyable. This aspect of group activities attracted a lot of members who were always happy to get away from their homes and spend some time among other women with whom they had a lot in common. The table below gives a breakdown of rates of participation in group activities by age.

TABLE VI:

PARTICIPATION IN GROUP ACTIVITIES

AGE GROUP	MEMBERS OF GROUP	%	NON-MEMBERS	%
Under 25	11	50	0	0
26-45	8	36	3	38
Over 45	3	14	5	62
	<u>22</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>100</u>

Note that the rate of participation among younger women was higher. This was partly explained by the fact that older women devoted most of their spare time on their personal plots. Secondly, older women tended to stay at home looking after children, either their grandchildren or sometimes the junior wife's children. They did not have as much physical mobility as the younger ones in terms of community or group activities.

The experience of Zimbabwean women offers an alternative to the land distributive instruments that were discussed earlier in the study. There are four points to note. First, access to land through already existing receiving systems was initiated by the beneficiaries themselves. It was only after they were well organised and they had set out their objectives that they approached the local leaders for productive land. Secondly, they continued to be solely responsible for choosing their executive committees for the day-to-day running of their affairs. Thirdly, there was a high degree of flexibility in their organisation which enabled them to continue with their household responsibility with little interference. Lastly, no single member could claim any special rights to the land. These are some of the ingredients that

produced a smooth transfer of productive resources to women. As long as the resources were acquired by a group and not individuals it was acceptable to the society in general and to the men in particular, and thus, there was no resistance.

This approach could be used as a basis for a land redistribution programme. With careful planning more women could be given access to and control over land through group activities. However, there are some constraining factors; the most important being the availability of productive land. This kind of programme would definitely require more land than is available in most communal areas of Zimbabwe. Another constraint would be the provision of adequate support services. As it is, these groups are on the priority list of extension workers. They have easier access to technical and advisory assistance than most farmers. Should such a programme be implemented on a larger scale, it would require an expansion of these limited services. However, this approach presents a sound alternative.

Data from communal areas clearly did not confirm the allegation that women's lack of access to and control over land had an adverse effect on food production. When questions directly relating to their lack of access to and control over land were posed to women, their responses gave little indication that it was an issue they had seriously thought about. Most older women held the view that they had access to the land that belonged to their households. Their main concern with regards land was that of expanding the size of arable land available to them. They believed this would go a long way in solving their problems. This group pointed out that their major problems had to do with the size of arable land and the deteriorating soils. It was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain the desired levels of soil fertility. They had to use larger quantities of inputs.

On the question of whether women thought that co-ownership or joint registration would improve their position, more than 70% did not. They pointed

out that women's problems did not arise merely because their names were not on the register. One of them gave an example of a woman who was working as a teacher but still had to hand over her salary to her husband at the end of the month. The fact that it was the wife's name that was on the salary did not hinder the husband from taking control of it. Such examples led some of the women to believe that registration or co-ownership would not change the situation. The problem lay in the power structures and the decision-making processes within the household. The conclusion by most women was that if households were allotted adequate land, there would be more flexibility in resource allocation, which would probably enable women to cater for the nutritional needs of their families more effectively and at the same time meet some of their cash needs.

A unique feature in this group was that the women were preoccupied with the issue of ensuring that the family traditional rights with regards land be strengthened. This came about because the improved grazing schemes that were being introduced in many communal areas threatened the situation of the entire families. Although men were the custodians of the usufruct rights, the introduction of the grazing schemes was not going to give them any special options. Where it was found necessary, whole families were moved to different locations. They had no legal rights to resist the move. This experience made both men and women realise that they did not have as much control over the productive resources as they had always assumed. At the time of this study in Zwimba area, this programme was under way. It appeared that this experience made men and women more supportive of each other. They were at that time fighting a common cause.

It would be erroneous to leave the reader with the impression that the grazing programme was not welcomed by everybody. That certainly was not the case. Quite a sizeable part of the population in the area were aware of the benefits they would accrue from this programme. They realised that it was

necessary to demarcate grazing areas to avoid further damage to the countryside that results from overgrazing. Furthermore, those families that were being moved were not left to find new homes for themselves, as it will be shown to be the case with evicted families on resettlement schemes. They were moved to neighbouring resettlement schemes where each family had access to twelve acres of land. In addition, they were compensated for their buildings which had to be pulled down.

We now focus our attention on the resettlement schemes, paying special attention to policy issues and practices of government agents.

There are a number of similarities and differences between resettlement schemes and communal areas. With respect to rights, in both cases farmers had cultivation rights and not legal ownership. The difference, however, was that in resettlement areas the overall custodian is the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Rural Resettlement. For the Model A schemes, which we are primarily concerned with, land is occupied and utilised on the basis of permits issued by the Ministry. Basically there are three types of permits issued under these family holdings. They are the permits to reside, to cultivate and to depasture stock. With respect to women, these can be issued to widowed or divorced persons who have dependents. Up to the time of the research, about 7% of the permits had been issued to this category of women.

With regards married settlers, permits are issued in the name of the husband, who thereby becomes the holder. Although, according to Section 6 of the Rural Land Act, the legal framework for issuing the permit in the name of both or all spouses exists, there hardly exist any cases of joint or co-registration. It appears that the Ministry does not encourage such a practice. In the Ministry's policy document entitled 'Department of Rural Development: Intensive Resettlement Policies and Procedures' there is no reference as to whom the permits are issued. However,

Departmental practice is to issue the permit in the sole name of the husband, to whom all consequent rights and obligations accrue (Ministry of Lands, 1985).

Because women involved lack empowerment in knowing the legislation and utilising law to gain access to land, this practice has not yet been seriously challenged even in situations where women's security is threatened.

This practice of excluding married women from obtaining permits has created a lot of difficulties for women on resettlement schemes. Because

In the case of eviction on the grounds of contravention of the permits the whole family is evicted as the wife is classified as a dependent (Ministry of Lands, 1985)

What this implies is that the Ministry of Lands has effectively reversed the status that women acquired with the passing of the Majority Age Act. As pointed out earlier, as minors women lose such rights as entering into contractual arrangements, therefore excluding them from active participation in commercial activities outside their homes. In fact such services as credit, which come as part of a package in the resettlement programme, do not exist for married women. In a situation where one of the main objectives of the programme is full integration into the money economy, this practice marginalises women and further places them at its periphery.

A serious immediate effect of this practice relates to the question of eviction in the event of the contravention of the permits. It appears, in reality, that grounds for eviction go beyond the contravention of permits. It has been noted that some personality clashes between settlers and people of higher authority within government or political parties have been manipulated to look like contravention of permits. Whatever the reasons are, women have been victimised unnecessarily in the process. They pay dearly for the crimes or undesirable acts committed by their husbands. Their own lack of involvement is completely ignored since they are regarded as dependents. The fact that when the family moved to resettlement schemes it had to give up its cultivation rights in communal areas, is not taken into account. In other words, it is not clear what the Ministry of Lands expects such families to do. In fact, one wonders whether communal areas will become dumping grounds for undesirable elements.

No such cases existed on the resettlement schemes included in this field study, but an interview with one of the Ministry officials revealed that in the region she was responsible for, the Ministry had evicted about sixty families from resettlement schemes. The reasons for eviction were primarily theft of building materials, fencing, pipes and borehole engines that were government property to be used for the development of facilities for the schemes. Two evictions resulted from rape or sexual assaults by male heads of households. With few notable exceptions, men were completely responsible for committing these felonies. However, when the evictions took effect they totally disregarded the rest of the families, particularly women who were dealt a double blow. The knowledge of their husband's crimes in itself was sufficient punishment. Coupled with the expulsion, it was an emotional and physical blow.

To those who were concerned and sympathetic, such cases demonstrated some of the serious social implications of denying women access to and control over land. The uncertain situation of women led to the suffering of the rest of the family, i.e. children. If women had land rights, the eviction of their husbands would have not affected them and their children as badly as it did here. These cases contradicted all of government's efforts at improving the position of women by giving them majority status. This situation represents one of the highest forms of social injustices, i.e. stripping citizens of their productive resources without good cause. Such policies definitely put women in a more unfavourable position than they were before moving to resettlement schemes.

Coupled with these biased policies were other factors which exacerbated the already unfavourable position of women. The fact that most of the settler families had been uprooted from their lineage homes where they were surrounded by their families, implied the loss of help that women frequently sought from their relatives. For instance, they could no longer leave the children with their parents or grandparents while they carried out such tasks as fetching



firewood. They missed the counselling that the older members of the extended family gave them in the event of marital problems. On the schemes there was little labour exchange between families during peak seasons. On the whole, the resettlement schemes were more oriented towards individualism. Further to this, government objectives were to develop these schemes into a more commercially viable sector than the communal areas. With the amount of land and all the other support services provided, the labour demands on the families were high. This was exacerbated by the fact that there was very little child labour available. Most of the settlers, because of the selection process of the resettlement programme, were under the age of 45 years, and had children of school going age. This left just the husband and wife to do most of the agricultural work on the twelve acres. Women continued to carry out their household responsibilities. It is important, however, to point out that on these resettlement schemes, male labour input was found to be equal to, and in numerous cases more than that of women. In some cases, men went out to work in the fields while women stayed behind preparing food and getting the children ready for school. After the children left the women would join their husbands and work side by side for the rest of the morning. They would break off early afternoon when women took care of other tasks around the home. Late in the afternoon when it was cool they returned to the fields and worked until it got dark. Sometimes women left earlier than the men to go and prepare the evening meal. This was the general picture in these resettlement areas. It seems to destroy the credibility of the assumption that women contribute more labour to agriculture than men. In actual fact, this may not be quite accurate. There are some significant features accounting for this pattern. First of all, as stated above, there is greater emphasis on the commercial aspect of agriculture. Secondly, officially, male labour migration does not exist. No man is allowed to be both a settler and a wage earner. Being on a resettlement scheme is regarded as full-time occupation. Finally, the ratio of extension

workers to farmer is relatively low so that there is closer supervision and a reminder to the fact that if their work is not up to standard, eviction could become a reality.

It would be an error for this study to leave the impression that on all resettlement schemes male labour input is high. Some schemes are different depending on the origin of settlers. For example, those schemes that are predominantly comprised of former farm labourers have produced unfavourable results relative to those schemes consisting of former communal area farmers who are more commercially orientated. This study interviewed the latter group which explains the favourable report.

As regards land allocational patterns, there appeared to be greater flexibility partly because of its availability. The majority of women had plots for their special crops. Even co-wives were able to have each one separately. Groundnuts were most popular and according to the women involved, the bulk of the produce was retained at home and not delivered to the Marketing Board. The reason was that they found it was more profitable to market it in its processed form, i.e. peanut butter. This particular group was fortunate in that there was a ready market for their produce. The teachers at the local schools, nurses and orderlies manning the health centres, the field staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Rural Development, officers from other services ministries and the police at the local police station provided a ready market. Processing the peanut butter was an additional burden but they were willing to make the sacrifice as long as it brought in extra cash on which they had the final say. In addition to groundnuts, women also interplanted pumpkins, beans, sweet potatoes, cucumber and sweet corn. The bulk of these other crops was consumed by the household. Most of it was used for packed lunches for school children. In times of surplus, however, some of these commodities were marketed locally. This was also true of the communal areas.

An important point to make here is that supplementary crops such as pumpkins, beans, sweet potatoes, cucumber and sweet corn were not significantly affected by land allocational patterns, where maize was the only or the major crop. They frequently were interplanted in any of the fields, including women's special plots. Although these were often viewed as women's crops, whether women were allotted special plots or not, did not mean that they could or could not be grown. However, where such crops as tobacco and cotton were grown there was very little if any interplanting. This raises the question as to whether women's access to and control over land has significantly affected family nutritional levels under such circumstances.

The question of nutritional conditions in both communal and resettlement areas was one on which different interest groups came up with a variety of conclusions. A survey conducted by the FAO in 1983, reported that in Zimbabwe chronic malnutrition among children under five years of age was evident in about 32% of this population group. This confirmed the results from the 1980 Ministry of Health's arm circumference surveys which indicated that 29% of under fives were suffering from chronic malnutrition (FAO 1983:9). Both surveys seemed to indicate that higher proportions of affected children were in rural areas. The figures are alarming. Considering the fact that the country's food production sector has been performing favourably, it leads one to suspect that there does not exist such a strong relationship between the nutritional levels and increased food production.

According to the FAO consultant report, the immediate causes of Zimbabwe's malnutrition are defective food intakes and infectious diseases which cause food consumed not to be properly used by the body (FAO, 1983:10). Some of the 1980 cases of malnutrition were reported to be directly linked with loss of animals and crops in the war. For 1983, the increase in the cases of malnutrition was attributed to the loss of crops and animals during the drought. In addition, some other studies have suggested that lack of adequate knowledge

about the nutritional values of the different foods was one of the major causes of malnutrition.

What emerged from interviews with field nutritionists was that a lot of the women were not aware of the fact that most of the foods they regarded as inferior were of high nutritional value. For instance, brown rice prepared with peanut butter was often regarded as inferior to plain white rice. Preference for 'Cocacola' and 'Fanta' was shown over fresh milk and homemade fruit and cereal drinks. In fact some women marketed their nutritious foods so that they could raise cash to purchase food of less nutritional value. The nutritionists generally believed that a rigorous nutrition education programme could cut down the problem of malnutrition by more than 50%.

In view of the fact that there was a marked increase in the output of food, except for groundnuts, the conclusion reached by nutritionists seemed to be valid. Data from this study failed to support the assumption that women's lack of access to and control over land has had adverse effects on food production and hence family nutritional levels.

#### Commercial Farming Area

Women in the commercial farming sector appeared to play a less active role. This was particularly true for those whose families were involved in large-scale commercial agriculture. In this farming sector, where farmers had legal ownership, the high levels of mechanisation and the use of wage labour contributed towards the exclusion of women from production processes. On the large commercial farms women hardly engage in agricultural activities other than bookkeeping, purchasing inputs and paying farm labourers. They are almost completely left out of production decisions. With regards control over proceeds, a significant proportion of the women in this group obtained and controlled personal income from the sale of poultry produce and vegetables. In addition to this, some husbands gave their wives monthly allowances for housekeeping.

The situation on small-scale commercial farms was different from that on large-scale farms, mainly because of the lower level of mechanisation and limited use of wage labour. Women on the small-scale commercial farms showed greater involvement in agricultural production. They spent many hours working in the fields performing such tasks as planting, weeding and harvesting. In some cases, tasks such as planting and weeding were performed by men with the use of draught power and planters and cultivators. However, although there was this transition to mechanisation, women's workload was still heavy because this incomplete transformation in the mode of production increased the workload in those activities that continued to be carried out by hand. In addition, most women in the small-scale commercial farming area continued with the practice of cultivating their personal crops on small plots. In this case, land was not a constraint. Labour was the major constraint to the cultivation of personal crops.

On all the commercial farms studied, both large-scale and small-scale, the male heads of households were the registered owners. There was not even a single case of joint registration. This was an issue of concern for most wives in this group, who were afraid of losing everything to their husband's families in the event of their husband's death. Women felt very insecure about their rights to family assets and expressed a wish for some legal protection. They found the idea of joint registration desirable. Although women on large-scale commercial farms were not actively involved in agricultural production, they believed that if they knew that they might one day be called upon to take over the overall responsibility of managing the farm, they might take an interest in the farm matters and involve themselves in the production processes.

Women on small-scale commercial farms also felt the need for security in ownership. They argued that since they were already engaged in the production processes, obtaining legal rights to land would benefit the whole family because it would guarantee continuity in the event of their husband's dying or being incapacitated.

On the whole, women in the commercial farming areas were concerned about having legal access to land. This concern, however, was a result of their lack of confidence in the legal system that should protect their interests in family assets in the event of being widowed or divorced.

### CONCLUSIONS

Both field data and official statistics have failed to demonstrate any strong relationship between women's lack of access to and control over land and the levels of agricultural output. Similarly, the link between household nutritional levels and women's lack of access to and control over land was not clearly demonstrated. However, other problems associated with women's lack of access to and control over land were identified. What emerged was that in the situation of Zimbabwe, any attempts to solve the problem of land with respect to women, should have its main goal as equity and social justice rather than increasing production. Correct specification of the objective should lead to more relevant solutions. The case of the resettlement schemes is a prime example of the importance of correct specification of problems and objectives.

A number of factors were found to influence women's access to resources. The most striking was the woman's age. There existed a positive correlation between the woman's age and her access to and influence over productive resources. This was clearly demonstrated by the data on the allotment of special plots for women. This bias was linked to older women's higher level of participation in decision-making processes.

As regards decision-making processes, this study found them to be the key instruments of the processes of sexual division of labour. Again, a positive correlation was found to be present between the level of participation in decision-making processes and access to and control over productive resources. The question of decision-making processes is certainly a key issue which deserves considerable attention. Although this study did not have adequate

techniques for the investigation of decision-making processes, it was able to establish the importance of being a participant especially when it came to control of resources.

Women in the study had not paid much attention to the question of access to and control over land because what they identified as their major concern was their lack of control of their proceeds. Women wanted the flexibility of using their earnings in the way they felt was best, and in most cases it was in the best interests of the family. They therefore wanted to increase their cash earning capacities outside the family enterprises. In other words, they wished to expand that economic territory which was not invaded by men in any way. This is what made the cultivation of special plots and participation in organised groups so important. Furthermore, this is what explained the shifts in crops that women grew on their plots.

The association between family nutritional levels and food production was not as strong as had been suspected. This is not to suggest that it does not exist at all. The intention rather is to show that availability of food is important but equally important is knowledge about the nutritional value of the different foods. This lack of knowledge was prevalent among the rural women and was found to be one of the major factors responsible for malnutrition.

An important factor that emerged related to the use of existing receiving systems such as savings clubs and co-operatives that could be used in redistributing productive resources. The allocation of plots for group activities confirmed the possibility of using this approach effectively. A word of caution, however; the objectives have to be identified and clearly stated before implementing the idea.

The study in general has attempted to show the complexity of the issue of women's lack of access and control over land. The empirical analysis, hopefully, brought out some of the critical issues that have interlinked to perpetuate women's unfavourable situation. The analysis of the situation in

communal areas deliberately focused more on the processes within the households while that of resettlement schemes attempted to highlight policy issues. It is hoped that the study has been successful in showing that in any attempts to change the unfavourable situation of women, it is essential to

- a) take time to understanding the attitudes and practices of the society.
- b) take into account these attitudes and practices when making policy recommendations.
- c) correctly spell out the objectives and relate the instruments to these objectives.
- d) identify suitable existing systems that can facilitate the change.
- e) ensure the participation of the target group in the whole process.



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