

# Land: An Empowerment Asset for Africa

The Human Factor Perspective



Edited by  
**Claude G. Mararike**

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## The Human Factor Perspective

Edited by  
Claude G. Mararike



University of  
Zimbabwe

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## Chapter Seven

# Land as the Nexus in Youth, Female Unemployment and Poverty Reduction

Zororo Muranda, Rangarirai Frank and Fanny Saruchera

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### Introduction

Land is regarded as the primary natural capital for both economic development and poverty reduction. In its unexploited form, land can only generate limited rent as a natural resource. As an asset, the economic value of land is an imputed value. However, for the youth, the poor and other vulnerable groups, the social value of land carries the hope of uplifting them from poverty. Globally, unemployment among the youth has brought forth the debate on how land can play a central role in mitigating one of the most intractable problems of modern society. Zimbabwe's land reform has not only addressed landlessness and cramped settlement, but has raised hopes for poverty reduction among the unemployed youth and women. For the youth, the land reform in Zimbabwe had limited direct benefit at individual level. It mainly benefitted, among others, the age groups that actively participated in the liberation war and the politically active. The land reform resulted in the resettlement of well over 260 000 individuals and families. The reform process did not, however, prioritise allocation of land to vulnerable groups such as the youth and poor. Long spells of unemployment among the youth, both male and female, have brought forth the debate on the role of agriculture in addressing youth unemployment. In developing countries, youth unemployment and poverty are covariate with landlessness. Access to land by the youth and women remains an unexplored territory with the potential to address the problems of unemployment and poverty. Although traditionally the youth become of age on marriage and in rural areas it opens up access to a piece of land for subsistence farming, there has been very little consideration of extending those 'rights' in accessing larger pieces of land for agriculture.

Until recently, youth have been defined differently across nations and cultures. However, there is convergence that is emerging particularly in regional and international groupings, which is also influencing national

definitions. The United Nations defines youth as an individual aged between 15 and 24 years. The African Youth Charter classifies youth as persons aged 15 and 35 years (African Youth Charter, 2006). In Zimbabwe, the country's Constitution defines youth as people within the age range of 15-34 years. The definition was adopted for purposes of synchronisation with the African Youth Charter. In this chapter, the operational definition of youth shall be generalised to assume the meaning in law and policy in the country of reference. For example, South Africa and Ghana use the age range of 15-35 years, Botswana 12-29 years, Zambia 15-25 years, and Malawi 14-25 years yet reports from these countries point to similar problems of youth unemployment albeit at different levels of severity.

It is against this background that this chapter interrogates and recommends innovative strategies and policies that address youth unemployment and poverty in Africa, using land as the instrument and resource for intervention.

The purposes of this chapter are to:

- i. analyse youth employment and poverty;
- ii. investigate the dynamics in land allocation as it relates to the youth and women;
- iii. establish how youth and women unemployment and poverty can be effectively addressed through land allocation; and
- iv. propose other interventions to unemployment and poverty in addition to the land allocation.

This chapter is informed by a combination of data collection methods. First, data for the chapter were derived from comprehensive desk research. The process involved content review of existing literature on youth and women employment, poverty and the allocation land policy. The second step involved in-depth expert opinion interviews with policy practitioners in relevant government departments. Their views were collected through an open-ended- question schedule designed to probe past and present policy practices.

## **Global Youth Demographics and Unemployment**

The global youth population is currently estimated at 1.2 billion. It is projected that within the next 10 years, a further one billion youth will move into the working age. In Africa, as a result of the growing population, the World Bank projects that the continent will need to create 100 million more jobs by 2020 in order to maintain the current levels of employment. During the decade 2010-2020 the youth bulge will continue. The number

of youth is projected to grow by 42.5 million. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its 2010 Global Employment Trends for Youth publication, reports that 620 million youth aged between 15-24 are economically active. At the end of 2010, the United Nations estimated that the rate of youth unemployment was 12.6 percent, in comparison to that of the adult population which stood at 4.8 percent. In 2013, 75 million of these youth were unemployed (ILO, 2011). Youth are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. As a result of lack of resources and experience, the youth are confronted with greater barriers than older counterparts (Schoof, 2006). Age is now playing a major role as a determinant of unemployment ahead of factors such as geographical location, the level of education and gender (ILO/IMF, 2010). The United Nations estimates that about 152 million young workers live in households that are below the poverty line of \$1.25 per day, this comprising 24 percent of the total working poor. There are gender disparities in unemployment. In 2010, 56.3 percent of young males actively participated in the labour force compared to 40.8 percent of young females. During the same period the global unemployment for young females was 12.9 percent, in comparison with 12.5 percent for young males.

## **Youth Demographics and Unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The youth constitute 40 percent of the African population (African Youth Charter 2006). It is estimated that there are approximately 200 million African youth in the age range 15-24 (Awogbenle and Iwuamadi, 2010). Youth unemployment has now developed into a major challenge for Sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is severe given that the youth make up 60 percent of the unemployed population. The African Development Bank (ADB) predicates that the youth population is expected to double by 2045, while Africa's economy has been shrinking by 3 percent, according to the global competitive report. This trend has to be juxtaposed against Africa's working age population which grew at 2.7 percent per year during the period 2000 and 2008 (World Bank, 2011a). Almost half of the continent's population is under age of 14 which will exacerbate the unemployment problem. The youth are also the most impoverished globally (ILO, 2010). A high incidence in youth unemployment has resulted in abject poverty, with an average of 72 percent of African youth living on less than \$2 a day (Africa Development Bank, 2013). According to the World Bank (2009), the incidence of poverty among the youth in countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Zambia and Burundi is over 80 percent. The observation is common in the rural areas.

Although the youth in Africa are seriously affected by unemployment, they are getting better educated. It is projected that by 2030, 59 percent will have attained secondary education. Compounding the challenge is that Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of working poverty, people employed but earning less than US\$2/day. A large number of young people in Africa are also under-employed, mainly occupied in the informal sector where the pay is very low. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are notable differences in youth unemployment with regards to the gender and geographical dimensions (Salami, 2011). Poverty by the unemployed youth is most prevalent in rural areas and young women remain the most affected. As reported by the World Bank (2008), youth unemployment is generally higher in the urban areas than in rural areas and this trend is more severe for young females. In a 2013 report, the World Bank portrayed youth unemployment as social exclusion. It underplays the role of the youth in society and development relegating them to perpetual poverty.

### **Zimbabwe Youth Demographics and Unemployment**

In the case of Zimbabwe, youth (15-34 years) unemployment, as with general unemployment, is quite high. The country went through one of the worst economic meltdowns to visit any country in Sub-Saharan Africa in recent times during the period 2000-2008. During this period inflation reached 230 million per cent and production capacity and productivity drastically collapsed. Youth unemployment, which accelerated to very high levels, in tandem with the economic crisis, has not receded in the post-crisis period.

Zimbabwe has a youthful population, with the 15-34 years age group constituting 38.2 percent of the population. Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat, 2011), reported that the median age of the country's population was 18.6 years. In most African countries, the median age is 20 years or less, making African populations very young and susceptible to long-term youth unemployment. During the 2012 national census, a 1.1 percent growth rate in the population was recorded (ZimStat, 2013). It is projected that the population will continue to bulge at the bottom of the pyramid, increasing the number of youth entering the labour market. The Zimbabwean economy suffered a cumulative decline which is estimated at 50.3 percent between 2000 and 2010 (Mid-Term Policy, 2010). As a result, four out of five jobs became informalised resulting in youth underemployment (Chingarande and Guduza, 2011; CSO, 2008). Resultantly, unemployment has affected the whole spectrum of youth in Zimbabwe, comprising both the lowly educated as well as college and university graduates.



The ZimStat Labour Force Survey (2011), using the broad definition of unemployment, has pegged the rate of youth unemployment at approximately 15 percent. Split on the basis of gender, unemployment is 20 percent for females and 9 percent for males. In the urban areas, youth unemployment is as high as 34 percent. Unemployed youths have resorted to working in the informal sector, where they constitute 60.8 percent of those working in the informal sector. With increasing school enrolment, youth unemployment is likely to persist. In Zimbabwe, various youth entrepreneurship programmes have been instituted by the government as one form of intervention. The Small, Micro and Medium Enterprise Policy and Strategic Framework have championed small business start-up. The government has also instituted the Integrated Skills Outreach Programmes, among others, in an attempt to enhance skills for self-employment. In addition to promoting entrepreneurship, there are policy propositions to incorporate and strengthen the informal sector as intervention to youth unemployment. The youth are to also anchor public works infrastructure and works programmes.

### **Causes of Youth Unemployment in Zimbabwe**

The youth unemployment problem is multifaceted and it has been attributed to some of the following causes:

- i. Mismatch between the skills possessed by the unemployed youth and labour market demands;
- ii. Poor economic performance (demand deficient unemployment) for a decade and half;
- iii. Increasing population growth;
- iv. Financial and social exclusion that reduce self employment opportunities; and
- v. Legal rigidities in labour laws.

### **Youth Unemployment and Poverty Reduction**

Regardless of the varied definitions, there are more youth in the world today than ever before (*idid*). This makes it imperative that employment policies have a specific objective of addressing poverty reduction. The World Youth Report (2005) reports that more than 500 million young people worldwide live in poverty. Most of these are in developing economies.

Youth unemployment remains a hurdle to Africa's development. The majority of Africa's population, inclusive of the youth, are employed in

agricultural and informal sectors. Both sectors are marred by the prevalence of high rates of underemployment (Kanyenze, Mhone & Sparreboom, 2000). Although the active adult population also suffers unemployment and poverty, the severity is higher among the youth.

The following are some of the common strategies for curbing youth unemployment and poverty:

### **Critical Skills Development**

National education systems are not adequately providing the youth with the skills base necessary for a livelihood grounded in self-employment. Without the basic skills or “the specific ones that match the demands of the labour market, many youth are unable to find employment” (Clifton & Hervish, 2013). Transferrable skills are also necessary and these include analytical skills, problem-solving, creativity, as well as leadership skills, those that could be transferred and adapted to diverse operational environments. Technical and vocational skills are also required in areas such as agriculture, carpentry, computers, etc, and these can be obtained by means of work-related-learning placement programs or through apprenticeships (UNESCO, 2012).

### **Occupational Certification Systems**

Vocational training often teaches skills that are very specific to an occupation. This is imperative because an apprentice has to master a specific skills area in order to be certified. However, occupational borders are blurring as a result of technological developments and occupations are becoming broader in terms of the tasks they entail. The youth may need different and much broader skills today than in the past. Rigid occupational certification systems need to be revised, taking into account contemporary epistemological developments. The concern is to prevent skills mismatch, a major cause of youth unemployment. In order to maximise beneficiation from land allocation, training centres have to blend land use skills with entrepreneurship training.

### **Youth Land Allocation for Poverty Reduction**

A policy directed land allocation to youth and women has potential to create jobs, thus improving their livelihoods. The policy would also involve introducing programme that target specific youth sub-populations such as disadvantaged women, the physically challenged, both male and female, to boost skills and employability. To enhance productivity, the youth will be organised to run small to large cooperative farming and production could be enhanced through contract farming.

## **Land Allocation Patterns in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, land reform was meant to redress historical land dispossession by the colonialists as well as the class-based agrarian inequalities which the minority rule promoted. Land reforms were also instituted after independence with the intent of altering exploitive social relations of production and reproduction, through broadening access to land and promoting peasant productivity (Moyo, 2013). The implementation of the land reform policy in Zimbabwe was done in three different phases which were marked by critical shifts in economic policy and performance and also by developments in the political environment. From 1980 to 1989, the reforms on land were based on state-led purchases of land on the market and its allocation to selected beneficiaries, who included the middle class who were agitating for access to land (Moyo, 1995). This was done within the context of socialist oriented economic policies, which were characterised by increased public spending on social services and peasant agriculture.

However, the adoption of neoliberal policies in 1990 led to limitations in terms of state interventions in the market and a decline in social service spending. Resultantly, land redistributions declined tremendously, despite the enactment of land acquisition legislation during the same period. The land policy was aligned towards supporting export oriented agricultural growth, based mainly on large-scale farming (Moyo, 2000), while the building of domestic grain reserves for food security was discouraged (Moyo, 2011d). Illegal efforts to occupy land were reversed by the state. The third phase took a different dimension as it occurred when the country was moving towards an escalating social crisis, leading to political polarisation by 1997. In this phase, the land reform shifted its focus towards land expropriation, leading to extensive land redistribution and increased state interventions in the economy, alongside bitterly contested elections. According to the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) (1998), land policy during this period was influenced by the political demands to de-racialise large scale commercial farming and accord equitable commercial opportunity, and instil political stability.

The year 2000 marked the fast track land reform programme which was characterised by violent occupations led by war veterans although there were negotiations to allow for black farmers to co-exist with the white farmers. In 2001, the government enacted the legislation which sought to authorise the compulsory acquisition of land for resettlement purposes. District land committees were created which finally gave the state the leverage over the control of the land reform processes, such that formal

allocations were being made from late 2000, to those who had applied for land (Moyo, 2005). The state, by 2004, had approved two land reform programmes, namely, A1 and A2 farming models. The government also sought to rationalise the fast track land reform process by initiating two land audits and embarking on an exercise to correct the excesses of the reform process (Buka, 2002; Utete, 2003).

According to the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), (2001), the A2 maximum farm size policy was adjusted to cater for three categories of A2 beneficiaries, namely, the small-scale (on average 50 hectares in natural regions 1 and 2), medium-scale (200 to 600 hectares in natural region 3) and large-scale A2 farms (averaging 1 000 hectares in natural regions 4 and 5). Consequently, the majority of farmers ended up getting an allocation of less than 100 hectares each and not exceeding the maximum allocation limits due to a surge in demand for the land. Ninety nine year leases were also issued out from 2006 onwards to new farmers as legal documents which provided a guarantee of rights to the land. However, the land allocations had gone down by 2008, with only remaining land being issued out despite a rising demand for land by the middle class as the economic crisis reached the peak. Hence, a few of the middle class land seekers were accommodated during the land reform exercise.

According to Moyo (2013), the land reform process was also riddled with corruption, especially in the allocation of A2 farming land, with particular regards to acquiring land with better irrigation facilities, getting larger size plots and multiple farms. Furthermore, some political elite, state officials and other well-connected citizens gained free and temporary access to unallocated state land, whilst others grabbed immovable property left by white farmers. As a matter of fact, land bidding was determined by broad dimensions which include political connectivity to the ruling party authorities and the bureaucracy responsible for land allocations as well as affiliation to professional networks, clan or familial membership and also social association membership (Scoones *et al*, 2010). For the A2 scheme, the allocation of land was, to a greater extent, determined by authorities responsible for land (bureaucracy) than by party structures, whilst broader consultations were made with locality leadership in the allocation of A1 farming allocations (Moyo, 2013).

Despite contentious issues being raised in the allocation of land, the land reform programme has been fairly successful in improving lives of those who benefitted from the reform process. Moyo (2013) posits that increased access to land and other natural resources has contributed to the transformation of wider social relations through the enhancement and

acknowledgment of the socio-political aspirations of various classes and social groupings in both material and symbolic terms by reorganising the national and local political landscape and diversifying access to a wider rural economy. This was in line with the government's adoption of the principle of equity that created the provision for the allocation of land to excluded groups such as women and the youth.

## **Youth Access to Land in Zimbabwe**

Land is a critical asset for poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and food security. The demand for land has increased tremendously beyond what the government can offer. The situation has been exacerbated by the shrinking economy, low industry capacity utilisation, company closures and high unemployment levels. High rates of youth unemployment are associated with high levels of landlessness, thus suggesting a close correlation between youth poverty and access to land (Paul, 2007). The youth form a critical group that was not catered for during the land allocation process and remain a deprived group. As Sait, Pedersen and Solberg (2013) observe, the youth are disenfranchised when it comes to the ownership and management of critical assets in agricultural production, especially land. Land tenure issues continue to impede the youth from engaging in agriculture, with the majority of them using land without exclusive ownership rights. Very few young people have the capacity to acquire land on the market. They remain marginalised because they did not benefit from the youth farming programmes despite of the widely pronounced youth in agriculture programmes. The youth who got land through the land reform programme have not made a major impact in agricultural production. This is attributed the country's school and college curricula which continues to produce graduates whose skills are far removed from the national realities such as the need for skills in agriculture. They face serious challenges accessing farm credit facilities from the financial institutions. They are regarded as a high-risk category due to lack of collateral. The lack of credit as well as general lack of financial resources go against the desires of the youth who aspire to be involved in agriculture. Yet access to credit, extension services and social capital are critical factors for effective agricultural transformation.

Various barriers seem to discourage youth from consistently pursuing the avenue of getting land for mitigating unemployment and poverty. Obtaining a land title through youth targeted government programmes is a difficult task (Dalla Valle, 2012). The hostile legal environment, as well as the cumbersome bureaucratic procedures involved in the land application, tends to discourage the youth from tendering applications.

The youth complain of lack of transparency as well as non-response to their applications. Due to lack of transparency in land allocation, the Minister of Lands and Rural Resettlement has recently stopped further land allocations in order to address inadequacies in the processes and various procedures.

Most youth feel intimidated by the requirement to demonstrate capacity to operate a farm productively, through submitting detailed cashflow statements, as well as providing documentary evidence which attests to their ability and capacity to fully utilise land. The dominance by adults in the land allocation processes also place the youth at a disadvantage. The social value placed on land in Zimbabwe has almost rendered land an adult issue that excludes the youth in making determinations in land matters. As has been noted, the difficulty in accessing land is not the primary constraint but rather the prejudices and social attitudes towards youth (Dalla Valle, 2012). The prevailing attitude is that the youth are supposed to access land through adults or wait for adulthood to access land. Accessing land through inheritance, as is most common in communal areas, presents an obstacle to the youth who wish to acquire land early in life. Dalla Valle (2012) confirms that inheritance is still the most common system to acquire land in most developing countries. In communal areas, land is usually passed on from father to son. However, increase in life expectancy implies lengthy period without independent access to the land.

The youth lack the capacity to organise themselves into a formidable force that can lobby and bargain for improved access to land as well as other complementary services like credit as well forming farming cooperatives. It has also been observed that the youth in Zimbabwe have a very limited influence on policy formulation in the agriculture sector. This has been due to the very strict top-down approach utilised by the government, their own lack of institutional organisation and the differentiated nature of agricultural production in the country (Omoti, 2012). There are three general means for obtaining rights to land in Zimbabwe, that is, through social and kinship relations at the local level, at land market and/ or from the state (Marongwe, 2007). These means are rooted in institutions that create, mediate and control the land tenure systems, namely, socio-cultural institutions, state institutions and the market. This is despite the fact that the 2006 African Youth Charter (AYC) calls for providing grants of land to youth and youth organisations for socio-economic development purposes (Article 14:2). This was followed up in 2009 by the African Union, through the adoption of the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa, which commits to ensuring that

land laws provide for equitable access to land by the landless, women, youth, displaced persons and other vulnerable groups. Inter-generational aspects of land rights, including inheritance and guardianship as well as gender dimensions, still hamper the appropriate implementation of the AYC.

Achieving equitable land access is integral to the protection and enforcement of land rights for marginal groups. Without legally protected rights to land, vulnerable low-income households are unable to defend land claims and positively engage in disputes over land tenure. Failure to administer rights granted to secure land access has been a prime factor in rising land insecurity for the rural poor. Informal land rights, or inherited land with no appropriate titles, are easily grabbed with little prospect of compensation. Greater security of tenure is expected to strengthen income growth and asset status for the poor and ensure livelihoods resilience whilst strengthening the ability to access credit and compete in domestic and global markets (FAO 2006). Priorities and aspirations of the youth in agriculture are still low in policy debates. Facilitating entrance into the sector should strengthen sustainability of the sector while reducing unemployment.

Land reforms do not normally benefit the youth in the short term as land tends to be invariably distributed among adult investors. The effort to strengthen youth access to land covers socio-cultural, legal, political and administrative issues and measures to be taken across the social spectrum. At their level, most youth seem not to comprehend the significance of land until it is too late.

### **The Youth and Land Allocation**

The youth constitute a significant proportion of the Zimbabwean population. They constitute one of the vulnerable groups in the Zimbabwean society because of their lack of access to economic resources and exposure to poverty. As earlier noted, many are unemployed and have no means of sustaining their livelihoods. Poverty reduction is one among many factors that defined the driving agenda during the land reform. The Zimbabwean Independent Institute (2007), in a study conducted in five provinces in Zimbabwe, found the land reform process disproportionately benefitted people who are neither unemployed nor theoretically fit to be categorised as landless and poor. As a matter of fact, the fast track land reform programme was never fully levied on potential A2 farmers, who pleaded poverty.

By 2010, the A2 farmers had been allocated close to 40 per cent of the redistributed land, with over 20 000 having benefited compared to over

150 000 A1 beneficiaries (GoZ MLRR 2010). A critique of the land reform was to insist on allocating land to individuals who would prove that they have adequate financial resources for agriculture purposes. For this and other reasons, the youth got systematically excluded from accessing the land. However, Moyo (2013) puts forward the argument that some civic society organisations are advocating more land to be redistributed to excluded groups like the youth and former farm workers. This has prompted the government to start a land audit which, as one of its objectives, seeks to widen inclusion of these categories and other politically excluded persons.

Chambati (2011) concurs that although land reform in Zimbabwe has made strides in promoting equitable redistribution of resources, the process has not fully reversed all the regressive social relations, such bias against the youth in terms of access to land. According to the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) (2011), the role of the youth in the land sector remains uncertain, despite their improved visibility in the sustainable development and the urbanisation discourse. Although property rights and economic opportunities are growing for the youth, land is largely envisaged as an adult privilege. The social construction of youths as problematical, transitional and ill-defined group has partly contributed to their exclusion from accessing land, as dominant attitudes to wait until their adulthood before they can assert for their land rights. GLTN (2011) further argues that youth are generally expected to access land through adults or to bid for land in the skewed markets. UNHABITAT and GLTN (2013) concur that in most cases, youth are not recognised as equal stakeholders as inequalities and discrimination are inherent in most land systems.

Marongwe (2007) identifies the need for improved land access by youth in rural and urban areas as well as the need to make better the land formalisation process to enable youth to own land which is bankable. Furthermore, availing better credit facilities, along with the formulation of youth farmer cooperatives, would go a long way towards empowering youths with better and sustainable livelihoods. There is certainly a huge demand for land among younger people living in the communal areas. Some have inherited vanishingly small plots from their parents, and find it difficult to make a living, while many are reliant on parents, only having a hectare or less to farm. Their situation is hopeless as they have limited potential for a stable future as well as establishing families. Hence youth land access and ownership needs to be understood within a cross generational framework, where family and wider kinship norms are influential (Sait *et al*, 2013).



Perhaps it is in this context of a reconfigured pattern of economic growth that in the long term, 'youth' will make the greatest contribution. For, even if they do not own land, they can engage in a revitalised agricultural economy that is not controlled by large farms and enterprises and where value chains exist and new entrepreneurs with new skills can enter. To make this happen, not only must investment in economic planning and growth occur at territory level, but education and support systems for youth must be fundamentally re-gearred. Furthermore, a full appreciation of the needs, experiences and perspectives of youth in relation to land is a precondition to strengthening youth and land interventions. Ahaibwe *et al* (2012) ascertain that there is a positive and significant relationship between agricultural involvement by the youth and agricultural income. This implies that giving the youth access to productive land could enhance their contribution to production and productivity in agriculture. Agriculture is remunerative and rewarding in terms of incomes and profitability for an appropriate investment attracted to the sector. This opens a window of opportunity for most unemployed youth to be meaningfully engaged, thus reducing their vulnerability to poverty. Therefore, restrained access to land limits the ability of this landless group to graduate from poverty through agricultural productivity growth (Jayne *et al*, 2005).

### **Gender Dimension in Access to Land**

Women's access to land, as in the case of the youth, has been constrained by both social, cultural and "bureaucratic" beliefs, yet there exists a robust relationship between the woman and the land in the social relations of farming (Sachs, 1996). Such social relations determine a woman's access to productive resources, including land (Davison, 1988). The omission of women from land-ownership has always been known to keep them in the poverty trap. The patriarchal system prevalent in Zimbabwe has also been known to deprive women with regards to the control and ownership of resources, including land. During the land reform programme, women who applied for land, experienced bureaucracy associated with the dominance of males in the process. Furthermore, many women did not have adequate information on the proper procedures to be followed when applying for land (Midzi and Gowa, 2007), which proved to be a major setback for aspiring female land-owners. Maguranyanga and Moyo (2006) citing Moyo (2003) have argued that women are marginalised, as individuals, in land allocations because of the predominant criteria that assume households centre on a married couple or that women should

seek land within the family context. They proceed to argue that the 'gender blindness' in land policy perpetuates the marginal rights of women in land allocation and their insecurity of tenure. The socio-economic pattern of land allocation post-2005 tends to be embedded within the wider socio-cultural relationships. To illustrate the disequilibrium in allocations, Table 1 shows land allocations in terms of gender distribution by 2004/2005, that is, at the most critical point when most allocations had or were taking place. The years 2004/2005 have been selected for demonstration because they depict the trends and pattern assumed by the allocations at the most critical moment of Zimbabwe's land reform.

**Table 1: Percent Ownership of Land by Farming Sector and Sex, 2004 and 2005**

Sector	2004			2005		
	Male	Femal	Total Persons	Male	Female	Total Persons
A1 Farms	79.5	20.5	134 521	80.1	19.9	105 476
A2 Farms	89.3	10.7	4 887	89.0	11.0	5 953
Large-scale Commercial Farms	79.5	20.5	6 264	86.6	13.4	3 252
Small-scale Commercial Farms	71.8	28.2	61 271	—	—	—
Communal Lands	57.3	42.7	1 084 085	58.3	41.7	1 105 213
Old Schemes	71.5	28.5	97 511	67.7	32.3	68 501

**Source:** Central Statistical Office (2005), Agriculture and Livestock Survey

As can be observed from Table 1, the allocation to women applicants remained way below the male applicants. In 2004, the average allocations for A1, A2 and large-scale commercial farms was 17.33 percent. In 2005 the allocation to women applicants in the three new schemes averaged 14.77 percent.

Table 2, which analyses allocations by 2006 in one Zimbabwe's most agriculturally productive provinces, Mashonaland West Province, reinforces the point of disparities in allocations across gender.

**Table 2: Land Allocations in Mashonaland West Province at 2006**

	Total	Male	%	Female	%
Beneficiaries below 40 years	998	881	88.28	117	11.72
Beneficiaries with offer letters	2 333	2022	86.67	311	13.33
Beneficiaries without offer letters	1 433	1292	90.16	141	9.84
No. of highly productive farmers	137	125	91.24	12	8.76

**Source:** Mashonaland West Province A2 Land Audit Annexure by the Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement (May 2006).

Both Table 1 and Table 2, which depict the national distribution and a provincial distribution respectively, vividly illustrate the gender disparity in land allocations. Table 2 also demonstrates the disparity in the allocation of land *vis-a-vis*, the youth. As Table 2 shows, allocations to applicants below the age of 40 constituted 20.9 percent of both beneficiaries with and without offer letters at the time of the audit. The 40 and below age group mainly constitute the youth using the current Constitution definition, which defines the youth as 15-35 year category. The unwritten rule in land allocations has been, the lower the age group the fewer the allocations, discounting age groups below age of majority. As Buka (2002) and Utete (2003) separately observed, a proportion of black women between 12 and 18 per cent now own land in their own right, compared to the four per cent of white women who owned large-scale commercial farms (Rugube *et al*, 2003) and the five per cent of black women who controlled land in previous resettlement areas and communal lands. Other studies suggest that women land-owners range between 10 and 28 per cent of the total recipients (Women and Land in Zimbabwe [WLZ], 2007).

New land arrangements enhance land tenure rights and security particularly to women. The A1 permits are based on the assumption that men would not be able to dispose of the land use rights or exclude women without their consent in case of separation or divorce, or on the incidence of death of the husband. As for the A2 scheme, the official selection system scores women higher at the starting line, although this has not adequately increased their access (Moyo, 2013). WLZ (2007) reported a tendency by women to use names of their husbands when applying for land which, in the end, empowers the husband.

The new Constitution mandates the government to ensure that women have equal opportunities in accessing resources. This is expressed by section 17 (1C) of the recently adopted Constitution which states that the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level.

must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men. Furthermore, section 17 (2) mandates the state to take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances resulting from past practices and policies. Arguably, the relatively redistributive gender outcome of the reform process has prevailed despite resistance from some dominant patriarchy within some state structures, customary and also lineage household leadership. In this regard, making statutory requirements which promote equal access to women inherently challenge the continued existence of discriminatory customary laws and practices. This also presents progressive opportunities for women, particularly young women to claim their right to own land.

While more women secured their own land than in previous reforms, husbands still dominate agrarian transactions (WLZ 2007; Moyo 2011a). Gender relations of land tenure generally entail repressive customary practices. The majority of the 'offer letters' (in A2 schemes) and A1 permits have been issued in the names of the male spouses while others reversed joint land offers to accommodate their husbands. Besides individual allocations, the government has provisions for joint applications for land as this safeguards interests of all parties to the application. In this regard, some women have been emancipated from the customary rules that prevail in the communal areas, where sons inherit land from parents and then pass it on to their own male children (WFLA, 2009).

However, the redistributive land reform programme did not completely reverse the fundamental inequities that were established by patriarchal power relations. Land access biases against women and the exploitation of female labour through male control of products are still prevalent. Although more women secured their own land than in previous reforms, husbands still dominate agrarian transactions (WLZ 2007; Moyo, 2011a). Moyo (2007) attributes the continued existence of inequalities in land tenure to the predominant need to redress racial inequalities with regards to land-ownership by the state and the dominance of the discourse on race politically have also tended to overshadow the debate on gender inequalities.

### **Gender and the Female Youth Access to Land**

In Zimbabwe, land rights are acquired through social and kinship relations at the local level, on the land market and or from the state (Marongwe, 2007). These means are rooted in institutions that create, modify and control land tenure systems, namely, socio-cultural institutions, state

institutions and market economy. Furthermore, improved land access and ownership represents social, cultural and emblematic progress towards social and structural transformation in Zimbabwe, although unequal power relations still persist with regards to land access due to continued bias against certain segments of society, with young women being the most vulnerable. As a matter of fact, youths are not considered as “equal” stakeholders by conventional land systems that are embedded in inequalities and discrimination. Consequently, the majority of youth are handicapped from acquiring land on the market due to shortage of financial resources and limited access to credit facilities. Female youth are even more incapacitated to mobilise resources necessary to procure land from the market.

In addition, female youth, just like male youth, have not benefitted much from land allocations that were being done by the state during the land reform programme. Only a few benefitted as compared to older persons. Socio-cultural institutions in Zimbabwe tend to promote practices which discriminate against women from owning land. Female youth face greater exclusion from land issues due to inheritance laws that have traditionally and sometimes implicitly favoured male children. Female youth stand little or no chance of inheriting land from their parents/guardian, a situation which is different for their male counterparts.

Young women are at a particular disadvantage in finding jobs, as they usually have less access to quality education compared to their male peers. This tends to limit their capacity to acquire land from the market or through the state. Female youths are a seriously affected group in terms of access and ownership and they bear the brunt of gender inequalities that affect women in general. Intervention for this group means release from both the unemployment and poverty traps as with the male youth.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

For Zimbabwe, land is central to economic development and poverty reduction. However, the youth and women remain marginalised in accessing and owning land. With low capacity utilisation in industry, persistent retrenchments and an economy failing to create employment, the bulging youth population can be deployed into agriculture to reduce unemployment and poverty. Acquiring land has, however, proven an uphill task for the youth due to lack of economic means and clout to influence the state. The challenge is compounded by customs and practices that do not recognise youth as equal stakeholders in land-ownership matters unless they have passed through rites such as marriage or inherit from

the parents or some other relative. Female youth have severely suffered exclusion from land-ownership as they fall victim to discriminatory gender practices and poverty and limited capacity to acquire land on the market. Youth have, therefore, generally failed to navigate through the complex bureaucratic processes associated with land application and allocation.

Studies on Zimbabwe's land reform have demonstrated that although the land reform programme has had its own limitations and controversies, it has transformed and economically empowered more than a quarter of a million people. It has renewed hope for improved livelihoods and prosperity for people who were allocated land under the reform programme. Access and ownership of land gives youth and women an opportunity for self-employment, poverty reduction and a transformed livelihood.

The chapter recommends the following:

- i. ***Improving access to land by youths and women:*** The government should proclaim a policy to increase land access and ownership to the youth who are interested in agriculture. The land should have security of tenure to attract funding from financial institutions. Female youth have to receive attention through a gender biased programme to correct the existing imbalance.
- ii. ***Capacity-building for youth in agriculture and agribusiness through active involvement in the value chains:*** Young farmers have to be fully integrated in the value chain in agricultural sectors in which they are invested. That calls for capacity-building in agricultural as well as agribusiness management skills to enable the young farmers to realise the entrepreneurial value in farming. Focus in skills development should, among others, include the following: farming as entrepreneurship, agricultural financial management, risk management, innovation, adoption of information technologies and produce marketing. Extension services can strengthen production and productivity through customising a programme for the farming youth.
- iii. ***Enhancing young farmers' access to financial resources for agricultural production:*** Setting up a revolving youth fund for agricultural projects in which banks participate as a syndicate in order to share risk. To increase attracting potential investors and funders for their agricultural initiatives, the young farmers can be organised into group such as farming clubs and farmers' cooperatives. Ahaibwe *et al* (2103) has reported that the use of farmer groups remains essential to the agricultural transformation process.

- iv. ***Involving youth in land committees:*** The government needs to promote the active involvement of youths in committees on land issues particularly in their communities. This is important for the development of belongingness in the youth and for historical consciousness.

### **Lessons from Allocations to Date**

- i. ***Policy practice remains gender insensitive on matters of land.*** The process of land allocation (which we can freeze for moment and analyse as an event) will define a moment in the history of the country when we could have achieved a correction to a major social imbalance in our society and, at the same time, lay the foundation for a future economy in which women are a strong participant. Land allocations with a futuristic dimension are important for addressing future poverty of the womenfolk.
- ii. ***Policy practice remains uninformed on long-term solutions to youth unemployment and poverty.*** The future of addressing youth and women unemployment and poverty in the short term is unlikely to lie in a sudden resuscitation of industry. Committing the youth to the land, would go a long way in absorbing the unemployment and reduce poverty. The nature of jobs and industry in the modern economy are changing. The country has, therefore, to transform as it shifts into new industry models which may not necessarily generate large numbers of jobs at a time. The modern economy is highly dependent on technology which does not require large numbers of workers at a single factory operation. For a developing economy, suffering deindustrialisation land lies at the heart of addressing unemployment and poverty. The youth and women should, therefore, be mainstreamed into access and ownership of land.

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