



**Confirmations, Coffins and Corn:
Kinship, Social Networks and Remittances
from South Africa to Zimbabwe**

**Vupenyu Dzingirai, Patience Mutopo
and Loren B. Landau**

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Migrating out of Poverty
University of Sussex, Arts B
Brighton BN1 9QN, United Kingdom
Email: migrationrpc@sussex.ac.uk
Web: <http://migratingoutofpoverty.org>
Twitter: @MigrationRPC
Facebook: /migratingoutofpoverty
Blogger: migratingoutofpoverty.blogspot.co.uk

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Abstract

Despite much optimism about migrant remittances' power to combat poverty, we know too little about their long-term consequences in sending communities. Through an intensive qualitative study of three districts in Zimbabwe – Chivi, Gwanda, and Hurungwe – this paper explains why significant resource flows from migrants to South Africa have done little to eliminate chronic poverty. Part of the explanation stems from the districts' political economy: where remittances help generate income, this largely replaces streams lost through the country's overall economic decline. Further investments are often discouraged by poor physical infrastructure, the shortage of inputs, and market precarity. While other studies identify such material factors, this work draws particular attention to how the moral economy of remittances also directs resources away from income generation and towards 'social' and 'god taxes': paying for neighbours' immediate needs, investing in events and infrastructure intended to boost one's social status, or donating large sums to the church. Underlying this is a paradox: where networks are weak, as in the case of the communities with more recently formed mobility patterns, there are few pressures on migrants to remit. Yet, while social networks are critical for extracting resources from migrants, local expectations within sending communities often mean that moneys are spent on maintaining a social safety net and social status rather than directed into financially productive investments. However, this is not irrational spending but rather an investment in social standing and safety: selfishness and self-enrichment in an environment of generalised poverty can result in social isolation and occasionally threats to property and lives. Such findings have important implications for understanding how remittances are directed and our expectations regarding their potential effects at promoting social protection and poverty alleviation.

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Summary

After a period of considerable optimism about the possibility of combatting poverty through migrant remittances (World Bank 2005), there is now an increasing recognition that remittances may do little to lift countries out of poverty. Individual migrants and their families may well benefit from migration (Abella in Ellerman 2005) but the precise impacts of such resource flows are mediated by a range of social and political structures (New Economics Foundation 2006). As experience from Mexican migration into the United States demonstrates, socially embedded institutions such as churches and home town associations are powerful actors that help maintain contacts with migrants and channel resources into collective enterprises (Orozco 2004). Work on African migrants in the broader diaspora has reached similar conclusions (see Mercer *et al.* 2008). However, these networks and associations are not without their potential perils. As Kankonde (2010) notes, failure to sustain social connections or respond to expectations back home can lead to ostracism and disgrace, a process he describes as 'social death.' Given the extraordinary needs of people left in sending countries, this moral economy can have a severe toll on migrants.

Using new qualitative data from three Zimbabwean sending communities, this report explores the tensions inherent in the moral economy of remittances. In the Chivi district, migration is increasingly dominated by women. In Gwanda, shared language is the basis for long term migration to South Africa. In Hurungwe, it was the economic downturn of the early 2000s that instigated migration to South Africa. Such variations in place and migration histories helps to reveal the spatial specifics of migration processes and the degree to which social and material relations are embedded in history.

In relation to the question whether migration moves people out of poverty, we observe that this happens to a remarkably limited extent. In all of our case studies, there were instances of migrants and their families who started small businesses and of women who, as a result of migration, were now able to be involved in economic activity. However, in the context of massive deprivation, such business opportunities often served as replacements for failed income generating activities, particularly agriculture. What is perhaps most remarkable, however, is how little of the money was invested in income generating enterprises. There are two primary reasons why this is the case. First, there are considerable objective constraints which discourage investment. While the areas may have once supported small scale or market-oriented agriculture, the rising costs of inputs and the inability to reach domestic markets have often limited those options. Land scarcity, environmental risks, and limited infrastructure further limit the desire to invest. Second, and more interestingly, the same social networks that facilitated the extraction of migrant remittances also serve to curtail investments. Migrants and their families invest in social events, including festivals (holiday break parties), customary obligations (ostentatious burials and buildings) and in practices for *zita rakanaka*, which means preserving a good reputation.

On the one hand, our findings reflect those of Kankonde (2010), indicating that migrants must continue to 'feed' existing social networks in order to maintain familial and community legitimacy. Where networks are weak, however, as in the case of the communities with more recently formed mobility patterns, there are few pressures on migrants to remit. The research also reveals the importance of social networks, status and pressures within the receiving community, which are all factors that help determine how moneys are spent once migrants arrive. While perceived and real economic opportunities have a strong influence on the possibility of using remittances to counter poverty, social networks play an important and generally under-recognised role in shaping decisions. In this regard, we too see a tension: while social networks are critical for extracting resources from migrants, local expectations within sending communities often mean that moneys are spent on maintaining a social safety net and social status rather than directed into financially productive investments. This may be seen as an investment in a social safety net for it is the proximate other that may help you out when times are tough. It may also be seen as an investment in social standing and safety: selfishness and self-enrichment in an environment of generalised poverty can result in social isolation and occasionally threats to property and lives.

In this regard, the report confirms conclusions by Geschiere (1997), who speaks about the functional role of stigma and isolation in maintaining African communities. Indeed, our findings suggest that migration and remittance behaviour often build on histories of migration at local scales, that migration processes are fundamentally organised around kinship and social networks, which provide character to the remittance flows, and that migration is essentially a social process. As communities are threatened by long-standing deprivation and economic crises – a condition that describes many in Zimbabwe since the early 2000s (see Hammar *et al*, 2010) –the difficulties of reaping rewards from individual investments combined with the pressure to maintain social safety nets mean that remittances may do little to alleviate poverty. They may, however, provide the resources necessary for social cohesion that can preserve community resilience in periods of acute shortages.

The puzzle and contradictions outlined above raise important challenges for policymakers seeking to mobilise the diaspora for developmental purposes. The data demonstrate that extensive social networks embedded in people's consciousness and value systems are critical to extracting remittances from out-migrants. This alone raises two primary concerns. First, in instances where such networks are not already present, there may be little space for external or policy interventions in promoting resource flows into sending communities. While improving opportunities for investment in sending communities may help shift people's incentives (to send and to invest), there may be few political incentives to implement such policy proposals. Second, the same networks needed to mobilise resource flows may also direct those resources to social maintenance rather than to economical investment and enhanced income generation. That said, it is important to recognise that the maintenance of local status and social cohesion – a function for which many of the remittances are dedicated – may well be critical for sustaining communities during periods of crises and enabling more comprehensive collective investment when conditions become more favourable.

Introduction and Background

Once an African success story, Zimbabwe is only now beginning to rebound from an unprecedented crisis with roots in policies and political choices made in the late 1990s. From the early 2000s, radical land reform and indigenisation programmes all but destroyed commercial agriculture, while foreign investment and trading opportunities dissipated and disappeared. With little investor faith in the economy and few foreign reserves to secure necessities, rampant inflation became endemic, reaching 231,000,000 percent in 2008 (Sachikonye and Bracking 2010). Only pre-World War II Weimer Republic has ever achieved such a remarkable high. An environment of massive scarcity ensued, affecting farm inputs, basic food and water supplies, energy and building supplies. For public sector employees, once modest salaries became almost worthless, if they were paid at all.

Before 2000, donors and NGOs had worked closely with the Zimbabwean government to help build service infrastructure, provide training and services. Some of the global NGOs – World Vision, Plan International and Save the Children– accompanied smaller international or national ones in all three of the rural areas included in this study: Gwanda, Chivi and Hurungwe. A nervous and paranoid state eventually began harassing these bodies, maintaining a close eye on them and at some point persecuting them for alleged sympathy with the dissenting views of commercial farmers, the labour movement, farmworkers and foreign governments (many of these interests eventually coalesced into the Movement for Democratic Change or MDC). During this period there was a deep informalisation of the economy and a collapse of small scale agriculture and many rural livelihoods (Sachikonye and Bracking2010). Thousands of small scale farmers and agricultural workers subsequently moved from rural areas into the cities where they helped swell the ranks of agitated and restless urbanites, many unemployed and reverting to petty trade, smuggling or other illegal or quasi-legal activities. This political ‘multitude’ was increasingly restless and threatening to the prevailing political powers, namely Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF. In response, the ruling party initiated what has become an infamous state clean-up operation, known as *Murambitsvina*. The operation flushed over 700,000 people out of informal urban dwellings and economy (see Potts 2008). Some fled to what Scott (2009: 40-41) labels ‘non state places’, unreachable and concealed areas on the margins of the country. Many chose to seek profit and protection beyond the country’s borders.

The first to forge the new crisis diaspora – hundreds of thousands of Zimbabweans were already working outside the borders – were those endowed with the right combination of skills, resources and connections. At first it was dominated by professionals (Raftopolous 2011) and later complemented by people from across the economic spectrum (SADC 2009). During this period, remittances of cash and goods from Europe, North America and especially the nearby regions, became increasingly central to meeting many Zimbabweans’ most basic needs, particularly for those without access to foreign earnings from professional activity (Raftopolous 201).By 2006,at least 60 per cent of Zimbabwean households were surviving primarily on remittances (Tevera and Chikanda 2009). Most of these arrived in the form of cash, but as

consumer goods became more difficult to secure within the country, cash was complemented by material goods ranging from mechanical parts to cooking oil and soap (Bracking and Sachikonye2010). During this phase, there was little investment in the country from either domestic or international sources. Indeed, many of the international companies and organisations that had dedicated resources or services pulled out or were pushed out.

The most acute phase of the crisis ended with the economic stabilisation programme of 2009, marked most notably by the switch to a peculiar multi-foreign currency regime. Under the new system, trading in the Zimbabwean dollar was completely suspended and all transactions – from street trading to infrastructure projects – took place in freely trade currencies: the US dollar, the South African Rand, the Euro, the Botswana Pula and even the Chinese RMB. With the introduction of hard currencies, inflation was largely brought under control although prices remained relatively high given the scarcity of goods and foreign currency earnings.

Despite these promising developments, overall economic prospects remain uncertain given delayed political transition and weakened opposition. A number of particular challenges continue to characterise the areas included in this study, such as:

- Limited reinvestment in small scale agriculture.
- Unaffordable agricultural inputs. Those available are imported without subsidy and are consequently beyond small-scale farmers' reach.
- High unemployment across the economic spectrum. Although the government advocates claim an unemployment rate of 11 per cent, other estimates put the figure closer to 80 per cent. What is certain is that opportunities for 'decent work' and upward mobility are still severely limited (Mutopo 2014).
- Limited public free services. While the civil service and public services have partially recovered as donor money returns and salaries are stabilised, service delivery has not recovered to pre-crisis standards. Moreover, new or re-opened clinics and schools now often demand 'user fees', a requirement that hits hard those struggling to climb out of poverty.

Although the issues raised above vary per region, the generalised prospects for poverty alleviation remain relatively poor. Given this scenario, the Zimbabwean diaspora remains critical to families' survival and, potentially, investments in common goods or income generating enterprises. Some estimate that the diaspora is contributing over a billion on an annual basis (*The Newsday* 2014). While this number is undoubtedly inflated, the actual figure is almost certainly higher than that for foreign direct investment. The contribution is unlikely to decrease in the immediate future given (a) the continued movements to the UK, South Africa and Australia; (b) migrants' continued desire to 'buy' a stake in sending communities (Sana 2005:231); and (c) the continued needs in light of a state largely unable to meet its social welfare obligations (Amuedo-Doantes and Pozo 2006; Duany 2010: 211; Ulku 2011;). Even if the total investments decrease over time, in the short term they will be a critical component of local survival and micro-level economic resilience.

Building on a History of Migration

The diasporic patterns and behaviours outlined above build on an extended history of short and long-distance migration from Zimbabwe. As with much of the international migration in the region, movements out of Zimbabwe (Southern Rhodesia until 1980) were largely structured by and oriented towards the South African economy. The first historical migration to South Africa was labour-based and driven by that country's growing mining and agriculture industry. This migration was for the most part highly structured and controlled through bi-lateral agreements (at least until 1980 when Zimbabwe became independent). As a result, movements were dominated by men and kept explicitly temporary with limited possibilities for permanent settlement in South Africa. To control labour and discourage settlement, men often stayed in single-sex hostels or out of city dormitories, where social interaction with South Africans – particularly South African women – was limited. There were exceptions, but self-settlement and 'local integration' was both difficult and dangerous.

A second phase of migration began in the wake of Zimbabwe's independence in 1980s. During this time, the new government led by Robert Mugabe sought to reform or abandon the organised labour regime that had been forged by the South African state and Southern Rhodesia's Smith Government. Moreover, the decline of the highly restrictive group areas act in South Africa created opportunities for more spontaneous settlement of 'African' populations outside of homeland areas. Due to the factors described above, from the 1980s, petty traders also began moving to South Africa and Botswana. Such movements accelerated during the stringent Economic Structural Adjustment Programme which created unemployment and goods shortages in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Peberdy 2007). But unlike the early migration which selected young men, the post-independence wave began to see the increased participation of women, either moving to accompany men or, more importantly, on their own (Muzvidziwa 1998). These women sold crafts in South African tourism destinations, bringing with them popular items for resale in Zimbabwe. It was also dominated by religious sects, specialising in baskets and related crafts, and in the reselling of goods in demand in Harare. With closely connected bases in various South African towns and beaches, these apostolic faith traders became notorious for smuggling goods under their iconic white clothes (Peberdy 2007). These various movements resulted in the formation of extensive networks based on kinship and religion, which would serve as sources of migration information, advice, and some direct assistance to migrants *en route* and upon arrival in the country of destination (Deumert *et al.* 2005).

Whether legal or illicit, these various phases of migration have become enmeshed in local cultures, expectations and household economies. To some young men in southern Zimbabwe, the risky and dangerous movement became something of a rite of passage. For others, the journeys of relatives helped shaped expectations and perceived options for future lives (Crush and Tevera 2010). Indeed, the networks shaped during this extended migration history has to some extent been self-perpetuating and has continued to influence people's decisions to move, as well as the outcomes of such moves. Migrant churches can provide social support, with pastors in destination areas praying or offering to new migrants, advice or material assistance

for a viable migration. One religious network, the Zion Christian Church, seems to specialise in migration, facilitating settlement into South Africa for any of their members who has the 'godly passport' (the religious badge worn by all members). For potential migrants, sporting that green ribbon and silver star can be a far more effective travel document than the green Zimbabwe passport.

Influencing the Impacts and Consequences of Mobility

While Lo (2008) argues that large scale migration may lead to labour shortages among sending and receiving communities, many scholars and development agencies see widespread movements as useful in helping people move out of poverty. Daleen and Groenewold (2005) show how declining direct foreign investment in the developing world can be countered by remittances. Under some circumstances at least, these inflows directly to families and individuals can have a multiplier effect, energising agricultural production and small businesses. Examples from Latin America and the Caribbean show how churches and other trust based organisations mobilise resources from the diaspora to develop local economies (Tilly 2007). Sabates-Wheeler, *et al*, (2008) point to the role of remittances in wealth accumulation among the poor in Ghana and Egypt.

Although individual migrants and their families may well benefit from migration (see Abella in Ellerman 2005), the precise impacts of such resource flows are mediated by a range of social and political structures (New Economics Foundation 2006). As experience from Mexican migration into the United States demonstrates, socially embedded institutions such as churches and home town associations are powerful actors that help maintain contacts with migrants and channel resources into collective enterprises (Orozco 2004). Work on African migrants in the broader diaspora has reached similar conclusions (see Mercer *et al*. 2008). However, these networks and associations are not without their potential perils. As Kankonde (2010) notes, failure to sustain social connections or respond to expectations back home can lead to ostracism and disgrace, a process he describes as 'social death'. Given the extraordinary needs of people left in sending countries, this moral economy can take a severe toll on migrants.

Objectives and Primary Findings

This study was designed to contribute to the debates discussed above. By using three different cases from within Zimbabwe, we are able to make at least two critical contributions to the discussion on remittances. First, our study questions the role of remittances in periods of crisis or in environments in which general economic conditions may obstruct income generating initiatives. As such, it points to the importance of broader structural and infrastructural conditions, which must be in place for remittances to have any impact in terms of consumption or survival. Second, and more importantly, it complicates the role of new and historically constituted social networks in facilitating the flow of remittances. Whereas the importance of social capital in extracting remittances is well recognised, this study goes further by pointing

out how locally constituted moral economies in sending communities also structure the use of migrant remittances.

Our main argument is that migration and remittances are embedded in social networks, social values and contexts. These networks are critical in ensuring remittances; migrants are motivated by and use these networks to repatriate money to sending communities. But just as they make remittances possible, social networks and values can also work against the investment of remittances in poverty reduction initiatives. The quest for social recognition among migrants and remittance recipients, customary obligation and family reputation can be strong enough to divert available savings. To achieve or maintain status, or to command respect and support (material and social) from neighbours, migrants and remittance recipients feel enormous pressure to dedicate scarce material resources to acts of social significance: lavish festivals, buildings or flashy home improvements, and burials.

Limited opportunities for 'productive' investments make such investments in social recognition all the more likely, but we observe such patterns even where moneys might be 'better' invested in agriculture or other income generation schemes. There is an underlying recognition among migrants and recipients that this tendency to invest in the social is a mix of the rational and irrational. While some spending is undoubtedly aimed at stroking egos, the maintenance or enhancement of status and networks is critical for preserving or expanding individual and family opportunities. By building social cohesion and increasing a families' position within the community, they may be better able to call on collective resources or goodwill in the future. Moreover, the failure to feed popular expectations or invest in collective ceremonies or needs can lead individuals and families to be socially marginalised. In close corporate communities, the loss of good will among neighbours and elders can be detrimental to one's short and long term prospects. Under severe circumstances it can even lead to violence against a person or property.

The puzzle and contradictions outlined above raise important challenges for policymakers seeking to mobilise the diaspora for developmental purposes. The data demonstrate that extensive social networks embedded in people's consciousness and value systems are critical to extracting remittances from out-migrants. This alone raises two primary concerns. First, in instances where such networks are not already present, there may be little space for external or policy interventions in promoting resource flows into sending communities. While improving opportunities for investment in sending communities may help shift people's incentives (to send and to invest), there may be few political incentives to implement such policy proposals. Second, the same networks needed to mobilise resource flows may also direct those resources to social maintenance rather than economical investment and enhanced income generation. That said, it is important to recognise that the maintenance of local status and social cohesion – a function for which many of the remittances are dedicated—may well be critical for sustaining communities during periods of crisis and enabling more comprehensive collective investment when conditions become more favourable.

Research Methods

The research had two main research questions. First, to clarify the drivers of remittances, particularly those of sociological kind. Second, to understand the impact of remittances at local scales, particularly on poverty alleviation.

Case Selection

To answer these questions, three case study areas were selected in rural Zimbabwe: Hurungwe, Chivi and Gwanda. These areas have a considerable geographical spread: Gwanda is close to the border with the Republic of South Africa; Chivi is somewhat further away from South Africa but well within reach; and Hurungwe is far removed in the north, nearly a 1000km journey from the South African border. Socially, the areas are also very diverse: Chivi and Hurungwe are Shona speaking while Gwanda's residents are primary Ndebele speakers, a language that is closely connected to a number of South African Nguni languages. In terms of ethnicity, the areas are divided between Ndebele (Gwanda), Karanga (Chivi) and Korekore (Hurungwe). It is worth noting that for historical reasons, the Ndebele of Gwanda (and elsewhere) have felt themselves as a political and to some extent ethnic minority within in Zimbabwe and in recent years have aligned themselves more closely with opposition parties. In contrast, Chivi and Hurungwe are ZANU-PF strongholds and have received significantly more attention in terms of public investment and food aid during the recent economic crisis (Mutopo 2014; Rutherford 2001).

The three areas also vary in terms of their economic profiles. The livelihood in Gwanda centres predominantly on livestock. Hurungwe specialises in tobacco and cotton farming and has little livestock activity (livestock was historically prohibited due to tsetse and other animal related diseases). Residents of Chivi pursue a mixed strategy with some livestock and a more diverse agricultural base, providing both cash and subsistence crops (e.g., cotton, sorghum and maize).

Perhaps most critically for our study, the three areas fall along a broad continuum of migration histories, particularly with regard to movements into the Republic of South Africa. Due to its location, Hurungwe has had only limited international migrants. Instead, people who moved from the area tended to do so to farms and mines within Zimbabwe (Rutherford 2001). Chivi has a long history of movement across urban areas, with people alternating between Bulawayo and Harare to take up clerical and administrative jobs. Gwanda has a long history of migration into South Africa, where people worked in the diamond and gold mines in Johannesburg.

In terms of state presence, the areas all have institutions and interventions. But while there are clinics and schools, these have never been able to fully meet the needs of the population. As the crisis continued and public institutions weakened, the gap between service provision and need only grew. This is especially the case for Hurungwe, which has a history of

underdevelopment and continues to combat animal and human disease. There is, however, a strong presence of NGOs (such as World Vision), regional development associations and community organisation groups (including churches) in all three areas (Parliament Research Department 2011), which is particularly important for our study on social networks.

Data Collection

The data derives from various weeks of participatory fieldwork in territories where researchers have (a) long term engagement, (b) detailed comprehension and (c) social networks and easy access. In terms of data collection and analysis strategy, the process was team-based and was led by Vupenyu Dzingirai and Patience Mutopo. The team included three additional post-graduate researchers. The focus was mainly on qualitative data collected through interviews with returned migrants, non-migrants and migrant sending households. In addition, the team ran a mini-survey designed to gather basic quantitative data on remittances levels, migration processes and some of the broader more visible impacts of migration. It is worth noting that large portions of the fieldwork were conducted in the period leading up to and immediately after the 2013 national elections. While we do not expect that the elections had a direct effect on our findings, it is possible that people were somewhat less forthcoming with information given the general level of uncertainty. It is expected that the data from this study will serve as the basis for a more elaborate quantitative study to be conducted in the near future.

Ethics

There was voluntary participation of respondents, and those who participated were not rewarded in any way. Tribal authorities sanctioned the research and in some cases helped with enumeration: in Hurungwe, the chief volunteered his own relatives to help interview people on remittances and migration. To maintain anonymity and protect the informants' identities, all names used in this report are pseudonyms.

Limitations

Given the financial resources and time constraints, there are recognisable limits to this study. First, the research was space bound, thus focuses on limited cases. Our consolation is that although the cases are limited, they reflect a wide variation based on geography, political authority and ethnicity. Second, we recognise that it only captures a particular slice of life during the 'mid-reconstruction' phase. As such, it cannot reflect on life before the crisis or adequately predict the course of development in the coming months. We also note that people's recollections of the past are often tinged by a kind of nostalgia for a more stable age, which may shroud the hardships they faced in the pre-crisis period. Without a pre-crisis baseline, it is next to impossible to demonstrate the exact patterns of change. Given the enormous uncertainty and numbers of variables at play during this period, it is also remarkably difficult to determine direct causal relationships between any factors. Third, there are questions of generalizability and comparison to other cases and countries. Zimbabwe has been regarded as an abnormal state, with a huge migration experience arising from economic collapse, a multi-currency regime and generally poor government. While one or more of these factors may be shared with other countries, the combination of them suggests that Zimbabwe's

experience may be quite distinct. However, given the number of states in crisis throughout the developing world, there may be important lessons yet to be learned. Fourth, the work is not longitudinal and does not track generational shifts in migrant priorities and interests as quasi-crisis continues. Nor can it seek to understand whether the impacts of African immigration and labour 'reforms' – including foreign limits on business and land ownership, securitisation of the border, and prohibitions on trade – may shift opportunity structures within South Africa in the near future.

Thematic Research Findings

There are effectively two questions here. The explanation of remittance behaviour and the explanation of the impacts of remittances once they are sent. In both cases, the findings are closely connected to where people are positioned within social networks.

Remittance Behaviour

Our findings confirm assertions that remittance behaviour should be understood as a complex set of interrelated variables that help explain why some households do and others do not receive income and goods from people who are away, as well as the economic and social extent of the benefits that remittances bring (see Bracking and Sachikonye 2010). Two core factors appear to influence remittance behaviour most: position in extended social networks (extending from the sending to the receiving community and vice versa) and investment opportunities in communities of origin. It is here that we most visibly witness the importance of the moral economy of migration working together with more purely economic rationalities. While migrant earnings are an important factor in the amount of money an individual *can* send home, previous research suggests that this is by no means the determining factor (Duany 2010). Our research confirms this. Rather, decisions to invest socially or materially in sending communities hinges on trans-local networks formed through social and kin connections.

Across the three cases studies, we observed that almost everyone remits monetary or non-monetary resources to Zimbabwe. In Chivi and Gwanda, older migrants sent money ranging from ZAR 2,000-6,000 monthly while younger migrants tended to remit amounts of ZAR 500 to 3,000, but on a much more *ad hoc* basis. Often this was only two or three times a year. Monetary remittances to Hurungwe were low compared to Chivi and Gwanda, although we found similar variations based on gender: older migrants remitted ZAR 2,000- 4,000 per month while younger ones would send lower amounts (ZAR 300-2500) on an *ad hoc* basis. The age variation is explained by long-standing social commitments to families in sending areas established over years of migration, according to one Gwanda migrant:

We send money to our original homes because we are considered as the mature men of the community and we cannot afford to miss any opportunity to send money home since this will be equated with being childish and negating your responsibilities towards your community which can invite bad omens (Moyo, Gwanda, 2/8/2013).

What we see here is that even within communities there is considerable variation in the degree to which people are embedded in social networks, which can determine behaviour and encourage remittances.

For newer or younger migrants, there was also a sense of despair with long-term prospects in Zimbabwe. Instead aiming to build a life and status 'back home', those who began migrating during the crisis and recovery period see the need to invest elsewhere, as a way to prepare for a future life in South Africa or to hedge their bets. This is evident in this quote from a Chivi migrant:

I will not invest in Zimbabwe because home for me right now is here in South Africa, so that is where my energy and finances are focussed on (Murambi, Chivi, 12/8/2013).

This serves as evidence of the changing nature of what ought to be understood as the psychomotives behind investment decisions in Zimbabwe and how they youths value their present location as the place for investment. For some of the younger migrants there was also a sense of dislocation from family and communities of origin, as their parents had died or they had relocated with their families to South Africa. One respondent pointed out that 'life is lived once and so the life we are living in South Africa can never be revisited and relived so that it why any of my investments are in South Africa and not at home because currently home is South Africa'.

The period away from 'home' also proved an important variable in explaining remitting behaviour. Somewhat unsurprisingly, those spending longer periods in South Africa tend to establish stronger social connections within South Africa, which diverts attention and resources from the community of origin. Even with today's technology (mobile phones, text messaging, Facebook, WhatsApp and Skype), which allows strong social connections and networks to survive across space and time, geographic distance nonetheless tends to create social distance. Those who had spent more than five years in South Africa tended to remit considerably less. This pattern was particularly pronounced among younger populations who had less established networks and connections. These patterns reflect similar observations made about the Indian Diaspora (Deumert, *et al.* 2005). Chidiya, a young migrant who was on holiday 'back home' when we spoke to him, reported that:

When I first went to South Africa I would send one thousand rands every month, but after two years this changed. I believe I now have a life that is established in South Africa and I am married to a South African. This brings more demands on my money and hence my investment is now towards the new community that I am part of and I now do not send money frequently to Zimbabwe, except during Christmas holidays or when there I have extra income (Chidiya, Chivi, 13/8/2013).

Although one's position in social networks stand out as the determining factor in remittance behaviour, the frequency and amount of remittances also depends on migrants' perceptions of investment opportunities in Zimbabwean home communities. Some unmarried youth from

Chivi, Gwanda and Hurungwe argued that it was not important to send money to Zimbabwe, where the political and economic environment was uncertain and hostile. One respondent argued:

We are not comfortable sending money to Zimbabwe because during the 2008 crisis we lost money in banks. The Zimbabwean banking system cannot be trusted and so there is no point in investing in a country where you can easily lose the whole income you have worked for years and there is no compensation (Dube, Gwanda, 1/9/2013).

In line with the above, interviewees recounted the financial shock of 2009, when the conversion to a multi-currency regime meant that people lost their cash savings without compensation. One person painfully recounted this experience:

We had saved our money, and hid it in banks. We thought our money was safe from thieves in the villages. But we were surprised that year when our own government stole our money. You woke up with nothing in the bank. Who in this world can trust remittances are safe in Zimbabwe? If there is such a person I can give her my daughter for a wife (Nyika, Chivi, 12/9/2013).

Other migrants felt that resources sent home were not being invested in tangible or productive assets that could lead to improved livelihoods for kin. In Chivi it was common to hear migrants complaining of wives who wasted earnings on plates. In Gwanda, migrants said their relatives often foolishly used money on expensive clothes. Such migrants felt their hard earned resources deserved better usage.

Again, reflecting the importance of social networks and investment environments, the research revealed important variations in sending behaviour linked to communities of origin. Migrants from Chivi and Gwanda tended to remit more than those from Hurungwe. Such differences are attributable to the translocal social networks that extended periods of migration from Chivi and Gwanda have engendered. With regular movements dating back to the 1920s, when the South African mines and farming plantations were first established (Crush and Tevera 2010; Raftopolous 2011), there are established formal and non-formal channels of sending goods as well as social connections that keep an eye on migrants away from home. This was confirmed by discussions with community members:

Our children exist as part of communities through relationships and networks that resonate within our villages. These networks play a crucial role when they remit goods or money back home and we encourage them to continue investing in such relationships (Moyo, Gwanda, 2/8/2013).

Perhaps equally important, this extended history of migration has established expectations on behalf of those left behind that those who move away should send money home. This moral economy of migrant remittance is critical to sending behaviours and, as we discuss below, the use of moneys received.

Although it may well appear as if physical proximity to the South African border is a determining factor in remittance behaviour, a closer look reveals that it is the moral economy of migration that matters more. While goods are certainly easier to transport to those sites closer to the border, what seems to matter most in this case is that Hurungwe has a short migration history to South Africa. This means that the migrants heading south now tend to be less successful (and less able to generate surplus to send) and, more importantly, that the social networks that extract resources from migrants are less developed. These networks are less developed in Hurungwe even before the economic collapse of commercial agriculture and farm work within Zimbabwe. Apart from the social pressures associated with these networks, translocal connections from Gwanda and Chivi to South Africa also create channels of sending cash and goods from South Africa. In Hurungwe, these smuggling and transferring mechanisms are poorly developed, due to the low levels of the development of the migration of the inhabitants to South Africa.

Even in Chivi and Gwanda, translocal networks have weakened with the decline of Zimbabwean commercial agriculture. It is also possible that over time they may extend to South Africa, but as of yet they remain largely local. To some extent, the delicacy of these networks is tied to space. Until recently, migration from Hurungwe was mainly directed towards Zambia (in particular the Copperbelt Province with its mineral resources) and not to South Africa, which was considered too far away to be profitable. One male respondent, Thomas, noted the following:

The copper mines in Zambia exist but we still feel that we would rather stay here because there have also been economic challenges in Zambia during the 1990s. It is better to be deep rooted in our own society that we understand than uproot ourselves and go to work in Zambian mines. You should realise that as you age you will also not fit into your own social space so we feel it is important to maintain our roots practising farming in Hurungwe (Thomas, Hurungwe 12/8/2013).

The effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes did little to create opportunities for the poor. While it destroyed many opportunities, it left large scale agriculture and many substantial industries in the hands of the (largely white) economic elite. Even so, local employment remained an option for some. In this context, the decision to migrate to South Africa was not very appealing for the people of Hurungwe. Many argued against migration, as this man pointed out:

We are custodians of the tobacco crop so we could rather invest in farming than migrating to South Africa. Even if the Zimbabwean economy is not performing well with the closure of industries since 1990 until today, we still believe in using the land for investing in our lives than leaving for Zambia or South Africa (Masauka, Hurungwe, 4/9/2013).

Gender Patterns

Further reflecting the importance of the moral economy of migration, the three case studies reveal that women were more consistent than their male counterparts in sending groceries, clothes and medication. However, male migrants would send more money than their female counterparts, a finding that possibly reflects their higher earning potential but also the importance women place on direct family support. Their remittance patterns capitalise on price differences (in the 'home' and 'host' country) of necessary goods. Furthermore, goods are less fungible and more guaranteed to be used for immediate family welfare (i.e. not for the brothers to go to parties with girlfriends or marry numerous wives). Women also tended to send cell phones, which facilitate communication with friends and relatives and also act as a modality for expressing prestige and success within the village. Women's high remitting capacity can be explained by the fact that women are often deeply embedded in social networks, as opposed to men who do not appear to have this tendency, which could partly explain the low remitting volumes of men. Women would remit more frequently because they had children who were being looked after by the family back in Zimbabwe, which brought about a sentiment of 'moral obligation' to contribute to the household consumption basket as well as to meet the cultural responsibilities of being a mother.

It is worth noting that while women definitively remit more goods than men, they also invested in other small business enterprises such as shops for clothing or other merchandise. This was particularly evident in Gwanda and in Hurungwe. In Chivi, women invested more in buying livestock and setting up clothing *spaza* shops (small, often informal kiosks). Any surplus tended to be sold or supported the creation of small businesses in sending communities. This has a longer term income generation potential, but in the short term relies on continued transfer of goods. However, women appear to invest in small businesses as part of a long-term livelihood strategy, rather than rely on employment in South Africa alone. This was in part because they recognised their precarity of both their employment in South Africa and their inability to earn at the same rate as men. Establishing small businesses acted as a risk aversion measure in times of economic deprivation in South Africa. It also reflects a more concerted and persistent connection to communities of origin.

The gender dynamics of remittance transfers play an important role, not only in terms of men vs. women, but also amongst women themselves. Women tend to shape their households' accumulation strategies by investing more, in order to avoid social castigation by other women. Mutopo (2014) notes that women migrants tend to be more bound by familial obligations and therefore establish regularised remittance sending patterns whilst men tend to be more oriented toward financial accumulation and individual objectives. For them, success is based on accumulation of immovable properties such as houses or investing in livestock. These sentiments were echoed by one older female in Chivi:

I have observed that the sending patterns of men and women are influenced by the social obligations that society places on them. Women are more organised and send

food and clothes regularly. My son does not remit any goods during the year; he sends us money and groceries during the Christmas holiday as he argues that life is also difficult for him. I have interpreted this behaviour as rather being irresponsible and forgetting his African roots (Macheka, Chivi 1/8/2013).

One of the female migrants emphasised that social networks were also crucial in facilitating one's access to jobs. For instance in the male dominated construction industry, if one migrant already worked for a particular company they could also find employment for their kith and kin. In terms of the jobs that women migrants undertook, networks were important as they enabled the people of Chivi and Gwanda to be taught domestic chores by the women already working as housemaids, as well as the use of electric gadgets such as vacuum cleaners and microwaves. Hence, networks were central in these activities because jobs in South Africa depended on whom you were connected to as well as on the levels of trust that those already working in South Africa had in the people they called to come over from Chivi, Gwanda and Hurungwe.,

Mechanisms of Maintaining Social Proximity

As illustrated above, remittance behaviour is closely determined by the moral economy of migration and aspects of social distance. The greater the distance, the less frequent remittances are. In many ways this conforms to the literature on social networks. For the purposes of this study it should be noted, however, that this is not a strict one way causality but rather an elective affinity, as money can be categorised as a tax that maintains social life just as social life extracts money. The established social networks evident in the study are the *omalaitostas*, the channels that migrants use to send money and groceries, the churches, the family based and community based networks. The non-established social networks include the different kinds of friendships that migrants build in order to deal with their quotidian needs in South Africa.

The strength and importance of social networks in the three case studies was based on the kinship and family connections. The functioning of the social networks in terms of remittance transfer was based on trust that the people created by living together. The sense of obligation one has upon the family back home is strengthened by the establishment of migrant networks and familial connections in South Africa that also have roots in Chivi and Gwanda. This was particularly evident with migrants from Gwanda, who create what we term 'pseudo-Gwanda villages'. In Rustenburg, people from the same villages in Gwanda in Zimbabwe live in close proximity, are in constant contact with other 'homeboys', and live together under a shared authority with strong connections to the sending community.¹ As one migrant from Gwanda pointed out:

¹This is dramatically different from how people live and configure livelihoods within the larger cities, where such community structures are less able to discipline their constituency (Madhavan and Landau 2011).

In Rustenburg we are known as the young men from Gwanda and our community here is shaped in the way our homes are shaped, thus following the nuclear settlement mode. This is important because we can share information on jobs, we can hear about events happening at home and also it helps when we want to invest at home because we have clear information about the events happening at home (Mate, Gwanda, 14/8/2013).

This helped when remitting money or other goods to Gwanda district, because the migrants lived as a family and had high levels of trust. The respondents emphatically pointed out that

[t]he village systems established here in South Africa based on our original positioning at home helps us in sending goods and money home. We trust our communities and we have not heard cases of people losing their goods or cash if it is sent by one person from the villages unlike with omalaithstas who sometimes lose the goods or the cash is not delivered in some circumstances (Masuku, Gwanda, 12/6/2013).

In our view, this reflects on how neighbourhood based networks proved effective in settling in South Africa, acquiring jobs, as well as building a network of a stronger Gwanda entity in South Africa. This was also evident amongst the migrants from the Chivi district, who preferred to live in towns such as Pretoria, Polokwane, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, where they could share houses and resources with others from their home villages. The networks were also central when it came to remitting cash or goods home. This knit formation of this kin related networks were crucial in the transmission of information on the goods and cash sent.

Church based networks proved to be important both in Chivi and Gwanda (although they seemed to be stronger in Chivi). Reflecting the religious heterogeneity of Southern Africa, migrants belonged to a range of religious institutions including established mainline churches (Catholic, Episcopal), 'African Christian' churches (e.g. the Zion Christian Church), more evangelical bodies (e.g., Apostolic Faith Mission Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church), and an ever expanding range of local and internationally supported Pentecostal or charismatic churches. These bodies proved critical in extracting resources through surveillance and discipline. Even where populations live in diverse settings, migrants would be collected on weekends or for special events. The church leadership tended to remind people of their obligation to send remittances home and pay their 'god tax', popularly known as 'monthly tithes'. One's conformity to the norms enabled one to realise that he or she was guaranteed of spiritual support and advice in exchange for money.

Belonging to a church network facilitated access to jobs, through information, referrals, and even training. Migrants who continued to be seen as church goers and strong, contributing community members, would ensure social respectability and raise their status as people who adhere to the norms and values of their communities. Those conforming to church values mostly avoided 'social death' at home and hence had a raised profile that everyone in the village emulated (cf. Kankonde 2010: 2).

The powerful role of the churches in the moral economy of migration was bolstered by their presence in sending and receiving locations. In South Africa, Zimbabwean migrants would initiate cognate churches or attend South African versions together with people from their rural villages. Those from the same church would help each other remit goods home and share information. The church based networks also facilitated the development of communities, since the migrants were supposed to pay their tithes in Zimbabwe and in South Africa, as well as helped during periods of bereavement such as funerals, or celebratory functions such as weddings. Migrants belonging to a particular church would always inform church mates in South Africa about their plans to travel home to Zimbabwe. These migrants would carry goods together with tithes for Zimbabwean churches. Migrants reported that most people preferred the church members' remittances channel because it proved to be a safe mechanism, as people who pray together would not steal or abuse each other's material positions. This was not the case in Hurungwe, where, due to the infancy of the migration process, there were no established church networks yet like the ones in Chivi and Gwanda.

The church played a critical role in enabling people to help each other in settling, finding jobs and connecting to other migrants from their communities. Respondents who emphasised the role of the church argued that their children, through other church members, could find people to travel with to South Africa and help them with the different border modalities to South Africa. Our discussions with different community members brought out these sentiments, as expressed by this former migrant to South Africa:

Belonging to a church is important because it is the safeguard of your life in South Africa. The pastors and church members have really helped our children through prayer that they acquire jobs, they send money home and also they are encouraged to invest here at home. The church also helps them in South Africa when they are bedevilled with problems such as tragedies like deaths were the church members in South Africa always provide the moral and financial support(Madembo, Chivi, 6/8/2013).

Some respondents argued that, although they were church members, they were not helped by the church in the migration process itself, for example through finances to travel to South Africa or any other form of assistance with the journey or the acquirement of passports. Rather, the church helped indirectly through offering prayers, constantly checking on their status when they arrived in South Africa, and by connecting them to other church members who would help them. Katsaura's (2013) study of religious formations and spiritual symbolism among Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa illustrates how spiritualism and religious symbolism from a Christian perspective has emerged as a coping mechanism for these migrants. The church became a conduit that facilitated the social lives of the people and also created a circle of trust. This reflects evidence from Mexico, where members of the same church would help each other through sending money or other investment ideas, which, for example, resulted in the construction of schools in Mexico that were built through migrant remittances (Orozco with Lapointe 2004). In our work in Chivi, Gwanda and Hurungwe, some of the migrants also argued that there was the possibility of investing in land or cattle markets based on information flows from other migrants.

Remittances and Poverty

Having illustrated the degree to which the moral economy of migration helps to explain remittance patterns, we now turn to factors influencing how those in sending communities use those remittances. Here too we see the power of social position. Stated bluntly, across the three case studies only a limited portion of the moneys and resources sent home were used for poverty reduction as defined by the sustainable generation of material income and opportunity. There was investment in business, particularly among women who had previously left income generation schemes to men (in Chivi women were increasingly visible in retail while in Gwanda they were more involved with micro-lending.) However, such income generating investments were relatively uncommon among both men and women. Instead, moneys tended to be spent on basic consumption and forms of social reproduction and status gaining activities: funerals, ceremonies, and tithes among others. Two factors explain this. The first is the more obvious: an investment environment that provides few prospects for income generation. The second is more interesting and possibly more significant: the moral economy of migration manifested in the importance of investing in social cohesion and the social safety net. As discussed below, these factors mutually reinforce one another.

The Investment Environment

Whether in Gwanda, Chivi or Hurungwe, migrants consistently reflected scepticism about the rationality and returns of investing in Zimbabwe. With its long history of foreign exchange dealing, people from Gwanda have long used the Rand as a medium of exchange. For them the fear is that government will re-introduce the Zimbabwean dollar, which is not traceable regionally and will potentially destroy their Rand investments. In Chivi, there is the fear of a return to the economic crisis period of the mid-2000s and the hyper-inflation that ensued. Migrants from Hurungwe and those now living there feared that the government might institute price controls on their cash crops, including tobacco, which is the mainstay in the area. Should this happen, the possibility of earning profits from agriculture would be severely limited. While these perceptions often reflect an inflated sense of risk, they nonetheless inform the decisions that people make in respect of how remittances should be used.

Across the board, the economic explanation for non-investment tended to centre around three areas:

1. *Limited opportunities in agriculture.*

Few will dispute the limited opportunities for agricultural investment, even where migrants might wish to invest. In Chivi, land is almost entirely unavailable due to the population densities resulting from colonial settlement schemes. In Hurungwe, its history of animal diseases has largely prevented large scale human settlement in the past. But while land is widely available, the question is one of land tenure. In this area,

there is customary tenure which discourages long term investment and development of land. Migrants said they could not fence their land or have big tobacco plantations out of fear that they might be evicted. There are reasons for such fears given that hardly a decade has passed since the 1950s without the state – which is the effective land owner in communal lands – shuffling people according to its interest (Moyo 2005; Sachikonye and Bracking 2010). For Gwanda, there is competition for appropriate land, again due to high population densities. Thus, for reasons relating to land and tenure, migrants find no motive to invest in agriculture. In fact many people are afraid to invest their money in such setting of shortage and ambiguity of tenure.

2. *Environmental constraints*

The areas also face environmental constraints that prevent migrants from investing there. In Chivi, migrants complained of drought and, at the time of research, the district was going through one of the worst periods of drought in its history. In Hurungwe, persisting wildlife problems cause considerable crop damage. Although there have been attempts to protect people from wildlife and compensate them for any ensuing damage, resource shortfalls mean these initiatives have had minimal effects. Hurungwe also experiences occasional floods which destroy the sensitive tobacco crop. In Gwanda, limited rainfall has led to a concentration on livestock production. Yet, here there are issues of animal disease which, farmers said, can wipe family holdings in a single season. People in Gwanda have unsuccessfully tried to control these diseases on their own and the government has failed to provide chemicals needed to fight infection.

3. *Infrastructural Constraints.*

This is a serious problem that affects all three areas and regularly appeared in the migrants' narratives. In Hurungwe, the problem is the absence of marketing depots, particularly for tobacco production. The nearest auction floor is in Harare, a day's journey. In Gwanda, they lack cattle marketing pens, which means farmers depend on middlemen who reap most of the profits from cattle sales. As for Chivi, there is no irrigation scheme to support those interested in commercial agriculture.

By way of summary, there are perceptions among migrants, all rooted in history and contemporary factors, that lead to beliefs that the time is not right to invest in sending areas. However, as noted below, the explanation does not rest entirely – or even primarily – with these economic factors.

The Moral Economy of Investing

When we look at how remitted moneys are spent by those in sending communities, we see a far greater investment in social rather than material welfare. These are manifested by spending on people, processes and institutions that bolster individual and family status or strengthen social connections with neighbours. To an outsider expecting moneys to be spent on survival or economic investments, these patterns may seem irrational or senseless. However, when viewed from the perspective of communities facing ongoing crisis, investment in prestige and social connection reflects a reasonable investment in a social safety net. Moreover, the local

moral economy of mutual support and reciprocations means that violating others' expectations through perceived selfishness can lead to social ostracism or, in extreme cases, violence against people or property.

The most notable activities across the three sites are those designed to demonstrate or dramatise one's status in the neighbourhood. While the specifics differed, the central tenets were similar, with the most obvious centring on death. In Chivi, migrants invested heavily in what are incongruously lavish funerals given the area's prevailing poverty. Migrants – and their families – tended to buy expensive coffins even when they were struggling financially. Priced up to US\$2,000, these coffins are often painted in flashy colours and made by reputable artisans outside the village. In Gwanda, we observed no expenditure on expensive coffins, but rather on expensive transnational corpse repatriation. Rather than burying bodies in South Africa, corpses were carried 'home' in expensive trailers towed by four-wheel drive vehicles. Given the relatively good road network in South Africa and Zimbabwe, such spending on large, specially hired vehicles was largely unnecessary from a purely functional standpoint. That the corpse was often accompanied by other top-range vehicles, which would blow horns and accelerate loudly on approaching the homestead, further illustrated the social significance of the event, one intended to draw attention to the return of 'big men.' In Hurungwe, moneys went to expensive meals for mourners; one migrant provided an expensive three course meal to the poor crowd that gathered to mourn his parent. To create further awe and respect, migrants gave remaining food as 'take away' for the mourners, who continue to be pleasantly fascinated by the deed.

Deaths and funerals are not the only prestige arena among migrants. Even ordinary life is punctuated by events designed to instil respect and reverence from neighbours. In Hurungwe, migrants used money to provide expensive wedding gifts such as fridges and stoves. In Chivi, migrants used the money to throw parties to remember and commemorate the dead. In Gwanda, migrants used their money to throw flashy holiday parties on returning from South Africa. In this district as well, hardly a family went without a party during the Christmas break when the *njivhas* (cool migrants) returned. All these parties – whether in Chivi or Gwanda – were marked by conspicuous consumption accompanied by music blasted from expensive, generator-powered systems.

For migrants, these events are seen as part of creating opportunities and securing social position. It is part of creating a network of possible supporters:

Our life is not an easy one, it is a risky journey. You have ups and downs. One time you are blessed with wives and children. Another time you lose children – my neighbour lost two in one accident on way to South Africa. Sometimes you are abandoned, and you meet one trial after another. So one must try to have good neighbours. If you do not have a network of supporters, your misery is worse, and you may commit suicide. I will give my goods to my neighbours because I need a future without trouble (Batamoto, Hurungwe, 12/2013).

Clearly, those revelling in the festivities, those who stand in awe next huge stocks of food, or those ululating as the expensive coffins are lowered in deep graves, have effectively been incorporated into a social network. By building systems of patronage and respect, migrants have ensured future allies, support and physical safety for themselves and their families.

Investment in Customary Obligations

We see similar patterns in migrants' support of less flashy, but no less significant, social investments in the form of what might be termed 'customary obligations'. These obligations are culturally-based payments or responsibilities expected of one in relationship to other kin. Migrants report that people can lose all their wealth if they fail their kin-based obligations. They may even have misfortunes touching on their health. In Chivi and Hurungwe, mental illness and squalor are all presented as consequences of defaulting customary obligation. During fieldwork in Chivi, the team was shown a mentally challenged person, and everybody believed he had '*mamhepo*', a curse from the 'aggrieved' dead. Thus as part of their obligation and as part of insurance against curses from the dead, migrants provide shelter to their parents, particularly as they progress in years. In Chivi, migrants build big houses to their parents: the bigger the house, the better the fortunes for the living migrant. In Gwanda, money is used to support kin members intending to migrate to South Africa. Paying for travel documents, covering travelling expenses and providing subsistence in the early months of settlement were some of the huge costs incurred by migrants in Gwanda as part of buying their future health and fortunes. In Hurungwe, many migrants dedicate money to settling historical debts incurred by their parents or kin. These commonly include *mombe yeumai*, bridal payments which are incurred by marrying kin members. Traditionally these payments were nominal, but more recently they have become inflated and nearly impossible to pay without moneys from elsewhere. In Chivi, bridal payments were reported to exceed US\$10,000 in some cases. Before spending money on a business or income generating opportunities, these matters must be settled, as one Chivi migrant remarked:

A car is good, and a house is better also. But a cultural debt is even more important. I have seen many people getting insane because they ignored settling payments to in-laws, especially bridal payments. Even in our midst, here in this village, one migrant has been losing all he has, and his children are not faring well in South Africa, all because he is ignoring to pay bridal payments on behalf of his father. As for me I am pleased, because I settled my debt, and my children have all settled their marital payments. None of my children are sick or insane as happens to those who do ignore the matters (Munemo, Chivi, 12/8/2013).

Not all customary obligations are individual. So even if a migrant can settle his or her own debts, they will be expected to assist fellow kinsmen in underwriting cultural debts, whatever their nature. The migrant effectively has no choice. Failure to meet this obligation means they will surrender any good will or cooperation in the future. A Chivi migrant in Pretoria was isolated and denied assistance by kin members because they felt he did not want to work with others and would not pay debts for others. When he died – he was found floating mysteriously in a dam – few people contributed towards his burial. In fear for their own lives and to secure

mutual aid from kin, migrants suppress any entrepreneurial interests in favour of meeting social demands.

Investment in 'a Good Name' and Social Status.

Closely related to the processes described above, migrants from all of the research sites were concerned with activities designed to create *zita rakanaka* ('a good name'). For migrants and their people, a good name is a reputation of honour. A family with a good name is one that is honoured and spoken of everywhere, at public events and outside. To earn this reputation, the family must embark on a range of activities and services that are in high demand in the neighbourhood. In Gwanda, migrants traditionally buy scotch carts. Such two wheeled vehicles are typically towed by horses or cattle and decorated or inscribed with long totemic names. Importantly, *mutupo* cannot be hired to neighbours on a profit or cost recovery basis. The equipment is given for free to anyone who may want to use them. One traditional leader in Gwanda said it was shameful to hire out a cart to a neighbour:

In my area of control, it is a shame to hire out carts. In Bulawayo you could hire out those little carts used to ferry things from bus terminals to the townships. Here you can't do it, I can't do it. One person had this shameful habit until people stopped interacting with him. That man was miserable but now he has learnt his lesson. Now he calls me to come and use his cart, even when I do not want to use it. That is good behaviour (Ncube, Gwanda, 11/9/2013).

In Chivi, migrants saved their money for community loans. It is important to emphasise that these migrants did not lend the money for interest. Rather the money was given to any person who needed it, the only condition being that the loan be returned in full at some point. Such diffuse reciprocity is critical in maintaining webs of mutual obligation and social security. In Hurungwe, there was no 'macro-lending' but people with small businesses occasionally offered free goods to community members.

Again it is important to note that these services or supports were not only offered to the poor. In search of a good name, migrants 'sold' their generosity even to those who were relatively well off. Indeed, to help build patronage networks, it was often expected that a kind of tax would be paid to the wealthy or well-positioned within the community. One migrant family in Chivi spent almost all its money on gifts to rich people in the neighbourhood. In Hurungwe, general dealers offered goods to both widows and teachers. Clearly it is as if everyone in the village is a migrant client.

As noted, these are not irrational investments but rather moneys spent to build social cohesion and reciprocal relationships. Should a patron develop a need in future, then those who have been helped in the past must chip in with assistance. People say that is the order of life, which is evident from the remark by a migrant from Hurungwe:

If you give others, you are making a future of yourself. As we say, one good turn deserves another. If you do not give, then you have no network of people to stand by

your side when you need assistance. It is like seeding. You throw seeds everywhere in the land so that you can harvest in future. The one who does not sow seed cannot expect to harvest, except if he is a thief (Mudawo, Chivi 12/8/2013).

In local politics, clients who enjoyed favours from 'big men' were expected to support the latter's faction or raise money to support an election campaign. A councillor in Hurungwe was alleged to have risen to power on account of the support he received from beneficiaries of his 'good name' activities. If clients default in reciprocity and do not acknowledge in kind the 'acts of good name', they were stigmatised and shamed in public for treachery.

Clearly, social values give direction and sequence to investment. Viewed from the perspective of a development economist interested in poverty reduction, the money spent on social events seems to be 'wasted'. This is perhaps most evident when people essentially 'bury their money' by spending lavishly on funerals. Viewed from within the perspective of those allocating the resources, these expenditures are effectively 'social' and 'god' taxes. Maintaining social networks and one's position in them is critical to social life, status and, indeed, resilience (who else will help in times of trouble?). Moreover, failure to meet community or church expectations can heighten social, spiritual and even physical precarity (the latter due to overt hostility and the breakdown of reciprocity). Perhaps oddly, human capital may work *against* productive investment. Educated people (e.g., teachers) may believe they need to live in a bigger house, something akin to their status. This means money is spent on housing, not productive investment.

Conclusions

Migration, remittances and investments are social embedded in local values and networks that are variably spread over space. Poverty reduction impacts of remittances and transfers are limited by two sets of factors. First, real and perceived limits on productive investment, including land, infrastructure markets and environment. Second, the need to maintain or promote social status and networks. This is not an irrational decision, *per se*, in that failure to invest in family, church or community can result in social isolation, spiritual uncertainty and loss of economic security or opportunities. However, it is unlikely to have long-term benefits in terms of individual or collective efforts to reduce poverty. At best it is a risk aversion strategy.

Because 'successful' migration depends on deep social networks, history matters. Migration from new areas – areas without a history of established migration to a specific destination – are less likely to be successful in terms of generating employment, remittances or positive benefits for sending communities. This amounts to high entry costs for individuals or communities without links to translocal social networks. Opportunities for interventions are limited as these are primarily not migration issues. Successful interventions – discussed in the next section – must complement, not contradict, social formations and 'taxes'.

Policy Recommendations

The puzzles and contradictions outlined in the previous pages raise important challenges for policymakers and advocates seeking to mobilise the diaspora for developmental purposes. The data demonstrate that extensive social networks embedded in people's consciousness and value systems are critical to extracting remittances from out-migrants. This alone raises two primary concerns. First, in instances where such networks are not already present, there may be little space for interventions of any kind that can promote resource flows into sending communities. While improving opportunities for investment in sending communities may help shift people's incentives (to send and to invest), there may be few political incentives to implement such policy proposals. Second, the same networks needed to mobilise resource flows may also direct those resources to social maintenance rather than to economical investment and enhanced income generation. That said, it is important to recognise that the maintenance of local status and social cohesion – a function for which many of the remittances are dedicated – may well be critical for sustaining communities during periods of crises and enabling more comprehensive collective investment when conditions become more favourable.

This leaves policymakers in a somewhat ambiguous position. At one level, any effort to manipulate the social values that lead to non-productive investments may also close the tap on remittances. Indeed, interventions that disrupt social networks which are key to adaptation may result in more money spent on productive investment, but potentially less dedicated to sending communities. This could put families presently served by these social arrangements at economic and social risk. As such, the most effective policy interventions are unlikely to be at the family or micro level, but rather should be oriented towards two goals: easing and encouraging the flow of remittances so that potential surpluses might be redirected towards sustainably improved livelihoods, and creating incentives for investments. At present, much of the money directed 'home' is used for the socially important functions described above or lost to the costs of moving money across borders. While the social expenses may be relatively inelastic, policy interventions may be able to lower the costs of transfers. However, present conditions are such that there are few investment opportunities, should surplus material resources be available. Creating a more favourable investment environment might not only encourage people to redirect more of their earnings towards sending communities – where this is an option for struggling migrants – but also incentivise investment. Even in the absence of remittances, creating more favourable investment opportunities through improving infrastructure, the availability and affordability of agricultural inputs and improved financial and trading services would likely improve conditions for people living in the research sites. The challenge remains in realising such transformations. In light of the above, the following recommendations may prove useful in improving the investment climate and encouraging more money to be sent 'home' at lower costs.

Creating Investment Friendly Environments in Sending Communities

As noted in the previous pages, there are few viable livelihoods options in many sending communities due to shortfalls of affordable inputs, financial services, and accessible markets.

Addressing these structural problems is necessary for community members to build sustainable livelihoods in the presence or absence of remittances. Remittances may, however, open broader paths out of poverty for some individuals and families. The ultimate success of these initiatives will depend on national economic fortunes, but improving investment conditions can facilitate a more even recovery if and when one occurs. Towards these ends, it is possible to identify a series of concrete priority areas.

Improved agricultural conditions:

- Exploring varied forms of land exchange may enable the expansion of food and cash crops for people empowered through flows of migrant remittances. With land markets currently ossified, even those interested and able to expand production are often frustrated in doing so. While open markets may be an option in some areas, purely commodified land is likely to favour only the wealthy and potential investors from outside sending communities. As such, other forms of communal or non-titled land exchange may ultimately prove more suitable (Lasterria-Cornheil 1997).
- Improving infrastructure for trade and local trading depots. Given the degree to which sending communities are isolated from exchanges for crops and livestock, there is clear value in creating mechanisms to improve exchange opportunities and lower the costs of bringing goods to market.
- Improving irrigation and water management issues to promote and protect crops. The development of public or communally organised water management can improve the use and desirability of land for income generation. At present, only those who can afford to drill their own boreholes or who are fortunate enough to receive municipal water are effectively able to irrigate.

Investment training and assistance:

- In the pre-crisis era, households were heavily supported by public investments or relied largely on small-scale agricultural production to meet household needs. During the current stagnant recover and in the post-crisis period, it is unlikely that state investments in public goods and infrastructure will return to pre-crisis levels. As such, it is increasingly important that individuals, households and communities are empowered to make investment decisions. In addition to improving the financial institutions available to the poor and marginalised (especially women), efforts should be made to improve general financial literacy and awareness of financial risks, opportunities and strategies. Financial institutions that allow families and individuals to 'shelter' their resources from social demand may also help to protect some portion of remittances and other income streams to be used for income generation.

Facilitating Cross-Border Movements

On the migration side, facilitating the movements of people and visitation across borders could help people maintain social connections, which are key to resource transfer. Although those

who live outside the country for extended periods may nonetheless become more distant and remit less (Deumert, *et al.* 2005), decreasing the obstacles to movement may help maintain social connection, allow people to better monitor material investments in sending communities, and ease the transfer of material resources. At the most immediate level this means creating legal frameworks within South Africa that would guarantee Zimbabweans legal protection and the right to live and work in the country. Should an appropriate legislative framework be realised, there will then be important work to do in terms of documenting Zimbabweans at home and improving border management systems.

Ease Money Flows to Lower Costs and Create Surplus

Zimbabweans sending money home do so at considerable risk and great expense. Even without increasing earnings in South Africa, easing the flows of material resources by lowering the direct and indirect costs of transfers can help to create surpluses in sending communities. Together with an improved investment environment (see below), lowered costs may help encourage further investments in sustainable livelihoods. This will require shifts in a number of areas to counter what are relatively high costs (see DFID 2007:7). Again, the first port of call is South Africa's foreign exchange controls, which requires an incredible amount of paper work to send a cash transfer. Given the degree to which the South African Rand is legal currency within Zimbabwe, bi-lateral negotiations between Zimbabwe and South Africa may help to remove some of these restrictions for Zimbabweans remitting below a certain amount. With the relaxing of currency controls, private corporations may be encouraged to expand cell-phone based 'm-pesa' or 'eco-cash' type systems, which would make electronic cash transfers instant and almost costless. Advocates might also consider working with banks and financial regulators to encourage transnational banks to allow easy access to accounts in South Africa and Zimbabwe. This has proved effective in the United States, where Mexican banks have opened ATMs that allow migrants to deposit money directly into an account accessible by people in sending communities (Orozco 2004).

Research Directions

The work conducted for this report raises almost as many questions as it answers. If nothing else, the research demonstrates the importance of disaggregated social and spatial analysis. There is no universal pattern of remittances nor are their predetermined outcomes in terms of investments in sustainable livelihoods. This points to a generalised issue of scale in future research: the need to consider highly localised conditions within broader national and regional economic and policy contexts. It also calls for a more deeply socialised form of analysis that situates economic opportunities and resource flows within individual, household and community value systems. This moral economy of investment suggests the need for a more interdisciplinary approach to the study of migrant and remittances than those currently dominating work within the development space. Beyond these generalised observations and directions, the research points to five concerns that warrant further investigation.

- Perhaps most importantly, there is a need for additional research on the short and long-term consequences of remittances on sending communities, in Zimbabwe or other crisis-affected regions. In addition to providing basic survival resources, we need to better understand the conditions that can help such communities move out of endemic or perpetual poverty. This research could complement work conducted in Somalia (Lindley2011) by including the context of non-violent conflict and crisis. Subsidiary questions might focus on the possibility that remittances are fostering conflict with regards to gender, class, ethnicity, political affiliation or religion. In this regard, attention should be paid to the role of witchcraft and other socially embedded sanctioning mechanisms that may maintain social cohesion and the cost of economic investment.
- *The Role of Religious Institutions in Facilitating Remittances and Investment.* Churches' role in encouraging migrant remittances and public investments has been well documented elsewhere in the world. Within Zimbabwe (and across Africa), churches – particularly a new wave of Pentecostal churches – have proved an effective means of fostering varied forms of social discipline linked to resource extraction from sending communities and migrants). However, as these churches are run on models closer to private businesses than public service organisations, their positive developmental potential remains to be fully understood. Indeed, they embody the tensions framing this report: they are firm in ensuring moneys are sent home, but they may also encourage spending on socially significant or flashy ceremonies including 'burying money' in the form of expensive coffins and funerals. Beyond understanding their current role, it is worth considering the degree to which these and other churches can be encouraged to promote a more developmental agenda.
- *The potential generational effects on remitting and investment behaviour.* The extended histories of migration to the locations in which current migrants work are closely linked to a propensity to remit. The social networks developed during multiple generations of circular migration have helped raise expectations in sending communities and the social networks necessary to 'discipline' migrants into sending money home. However, as the crisis continues and economic prospects in sending communities persist these networks may well begin to dissolve or dissipate. Conversely, in areas with a new migration history, these networks may begin to evolve in ways that encourage future investment.
- *The power of ICTs to Monitor Migrants and Investments.* Although not linked to the specificities of the cases discussed here, it is evident that ICTs – particularly cell-phones – have become a critical means of maintaining contact between migrants and household members in sending communities. Regular contacts may have dual disciplining functions: encouraging migrants to send money and allowing migrants to better monitor the use of resources sent home. To date, these relationships are

poorly understood in Southern Africa, although work elsewhere is beginning to paint an instrumental picture (Sander2005; Siegel and Fransen 2012).

- *The possibilities for creating 'fertile' grounds for remittance investments.* The recommendations included above work on the presumption that a more investment friendly environment in sending countries will encourage both additional remittances and greater investment in income generating initiatives. This fundamental premise remains to be tested as do the specific mechanisms able to bring about an increase in remittances and investment. Studies in this area might include research into variable forms of land-markets, financial institutions, financial education, and public investments in marketing technology and infrastructure. Such research should draw on, and contribute to, the already extensive literature on improving rural livelihoods (Mutopo 2014; Mutangadura, 2005).

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About the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium

Migrating out of Poverty is a research programme consortium (RPC) funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It focuses on the relationship between migration and poverty – especially migration within countries and regions - and is located in five regions across Asia and Africa. The main goal of **Migrating out of Poverty** is to provide robust evidence on the drivers and impacts of migration in order to contribute to improving policies affecting the lives and well-being of impoverished migrants, their communities and countries, through a programme of innovative research, capacity building and policy engagement. The RPC will also conduct analysis in order to understand the migration policy process in developing regions and will supplement the world renowned migration databases at the University of Sussex with data on internal migration.

The **Migrating out of Poverty** consortium is coordinated by the University of Sussex, and led by CEO Professor L. Alan Winters with Dr Priya Deshingkar as the Research Director. Core partners are: the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in Bangladesh; the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana; the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore; the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa; and the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Kenya.

Migrating out of Poverty
University of Sussex, Arts B
Brighton BN1 9QN, United Kingdom
Email: migrationrpc@sussex.ac.uk
Web: <http://migratingoutofpoverty.org>
Twitter: @MigrationRPC
Facebook: /migratingoutofpoverty
Blogger: migratingoutofpoverty.blogspot.co.uk

