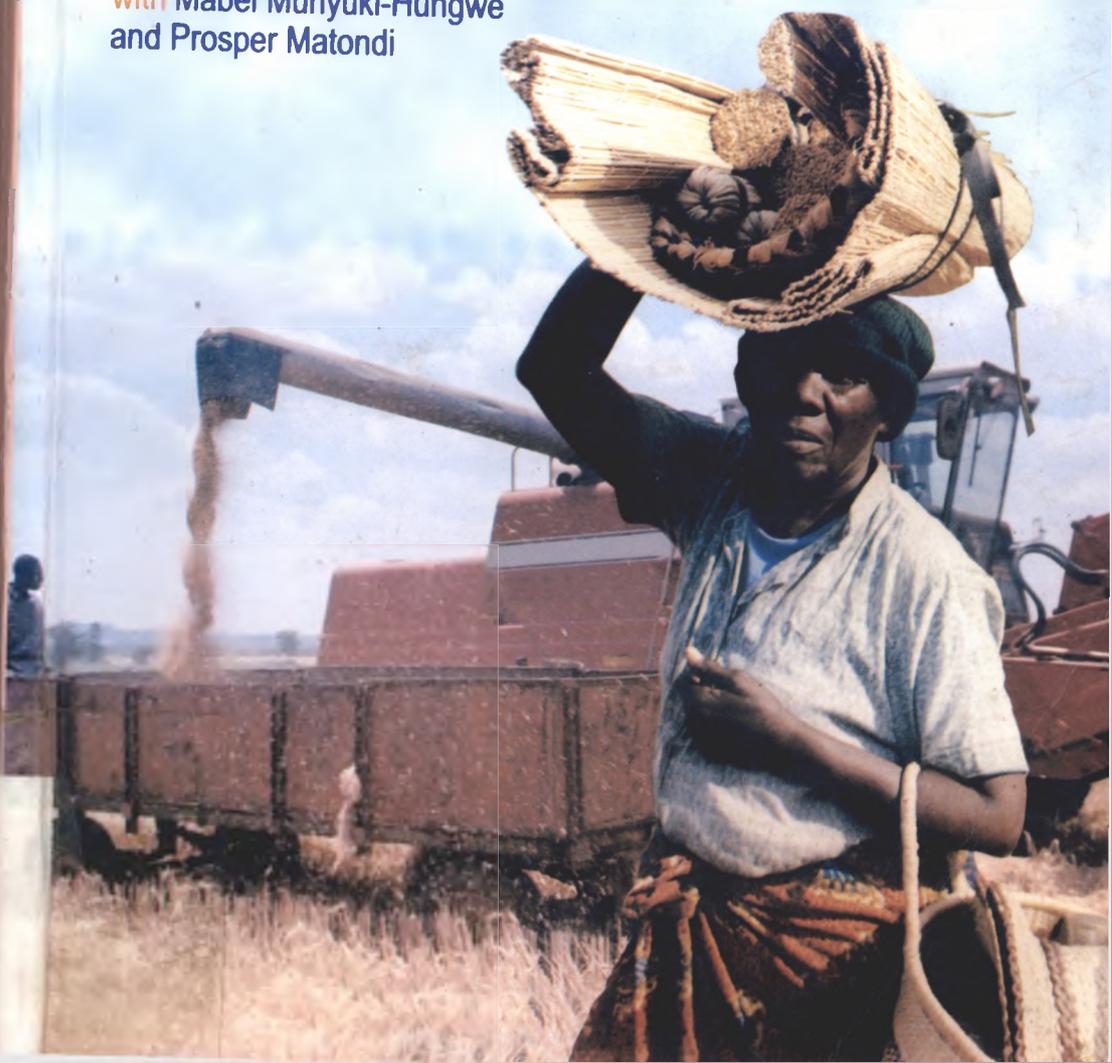


ZIMBABWE'S AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION REVISITED

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with Mabel Munyuki-Hungwe
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Women play a key role in agriculture and development

Women and agriculture

*Martha J. Chinyemba, Olivia N. Muchena
and Marcus B. K. Hakutangwi*

'Among the Shona, surplus was mainly produced through the agricultural labour of women...women carried out most of the regular agricultural work and so produced the largest component of the food' (Weinrich, 1979:13).

The Zimbabwe government regards agricultural development as of paramount importance to the nation's existence and future. For that reason, the government supports agricultural development at all levels from subsistence farmers to small-scale and large-scale commercial farmers. In Zimbabwean society, women play multiple roles in the agricultural sector, particularly in the communal land and small-scale commercial farming sectors. A number of studies on the role of women in economic development have touched on sensitive and deeply entrenched traditional beliefs, sometimes drawing controversial comments from decision makers, policy makers, researchers and extension agents.²²⁹

Throughout the 1990s the state realized the key role that women played in agriculture and development and sought to address the legal inequities that hindered them from exercising their full rights as citizens.²³⁰ However, many of the gains women had made were eroded by the conflicts that emerged as a

²²⁹ For detailed discussion of gender issues in literature, Gaidzanwa (1992) shows how women have been marginalized in land and resources control and that women and daughters derive their land use rights from patrilineages. Chimedza (1989) shows that irrigation land is normally allocated to married couples. Goebel (1999) shows how women after working the land are unable to make decisions on how the income is used. Goebel (1998) and Chenaux-Repond (1994) review the old resettlement schemes and argue that cosmology is used as a basis for entrenching male domination. Men use religion as a basis for polygamy, control of land and household resources, mobilization of labour, and so on. Whilst there are similarities with customary laws used in communal areas, Christianity emerged as a 'modern' form of entrenching gender discrimination. This is contrary to Moyo (1995) who argues that there was need to differentiate the impact of rural resettlement on women. In general it is the single women (never married, divorced, widowed) who really suffer from lack of land rights.

²³⁰ Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, (now section 15 of the General Law Amendment Act), the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1985 (Chapter 5:13), the inclusion of 'gender' as one of the grounds upon which discrimination is prohibited through Constitutional Amendment No. 14 of 1996 and the Administration of Estates (Amendment) Act of 1997 which reformed inequitable customary inheritance laws.

result of the land reform programme. In spite of the government demonstrating its commitment to women's rights by ratifying several international human rights instruments, the gains have been modest.²³¹ It should be noted that women constitute about 55 per cent of Zimbabwe's population of which 86 per cent live in rural areas. About 70 per cent of the farmers in the communal and resettled areas are women (Chidzonga and Chigudu, 1991; Zimbabwe Farmers' Union, 1998). Women are not only housewives, mothers and agricultural labourers, they are also farm managers. In Zimbabwe, when husband and wife are both farmers, women still perform more than 50 per cent of the agricultural tasks on all major crops grown in the communal and resettlement areas. In addition, they have to carry out household chores such as fetching fuel and water, processing food, cooking, herding cattle, and caring for children, the sick and the elderly.

This chapter builds on the chapter on women and agriculture in the first edition of *Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution*. Many changes have taken place since the smallholder-led agricultural revolution. The question is whether or not women have gained or lost position in the agricultural development of the country in the last decade. The chapter discusses the common assumptions about women and agriculture and recaps the historical process of women's participation in agriculture. It critically examines the evolution of customary laws, the role of the state and some of the anti-gender practices that became entrenched in the whole edifice of women's socio-economic status in Zimbabwe's agricultural development. Gender has been acknowledged as critical in development programmes and in particular in agriculture. A host of development agencies, including government, have mainstreamed gender in their policies, programmes and plans. The key issue of concern is the actual gender practices in agriculture in the face of increasing feminization of poverty and weakening gender rights. The fast track land reform programme implemented by the government has left a deep mark on Zimbabwe's agrarian landscape. This chapter probes how gender has been represented or misrepresented both within the fast track land reform programme and in the accompanying processes of agrarian reform.²³² Finally, the chapter concludes by looking at the prospects in the next decade.

²³¹ The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of 1981 and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979 which came into force in 1981.

²³² Land reform refers to the transfer of land from large land owners to the majority blacks. Two processes are key: acquisition of land and land allocation. The question is how many women have benefited, on which land and of what size? Agrarian reform is the accompanying policy support to ensure agricultural production. This involves financing of agriculture, input-support (seed, fertilizers, chemicals, and so on), market access and extension. The question is to what extent are women actually benefiting?

Common assumptions about women and agriculture

Women were the backbone of the second agricultural revolution. In the small-holder sector, women had the heaviest workloads, especially where households were female-headed because female-headed households tend to hire little outside labour. Data in the 1990s indicate that the agricultural sector employed 35 per cent women and 25 per cent men (JICA, 2003). This meant that in the agricultural sector women provided the bulk of the labour force in communal, resettlement and large-scale commercial agriculture. The question is whether this role translated into adequate and sustainable incomes for women.

The role of women in agriculture first needs to be considered in relation to the position of women within the household, the community and within the nation state. Women cannot be treated as homogeneous because there are different classes, for example, land owning, landless or tenants. However, more importantly, the social position of women in contexts such as polygamy, followed by the marriage order – whether female-headed or part of a joint or male-headed household – and household composition are critical variables. In the nuclear family or extended family model in Zimbabwe, women are constantly under the surveillance and control of the husband or his relations, buttressing further dependence (table 30.1). Understanding the evolution of agriculture will therefore necessitate an analysis of class and power relationships mastered by men.

Many studies show that plots of land controlled by women have lower yields than those controlled by men and that these lower yields are usually the result of the use of less labour and fertilizers per acre rather than inefficiency (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996). On the other hand, a reduction of male labour can lead to a shift in production towards less nutritious crops and a decline in yields and output, or an increase in women's reliance on child labour. Households that are too poor to hire labour resort to this practice and often withdraw their children from school. In most cases the girl child falls victim. In looking at the agricultural sector attributes (table 30.2) there are several factors that constrain women in production relations.

Growing evidence suggests that women could increase agricultural outputs if they had greater access to inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, credit and extension information. Despite their important role in agricultural development, women face legal, social and institutional barriers. Female-headed households are concentrated among the poorer strata of society and often have lower incomes than male-headed households in the agricultural and other sectors. In 1991 there were about 40 per cent female-headed households in the resettlement areas (Chidzonga and Chigudu, 1991). There are two different types of female-headed households; one in which the husband is absent by death, divorce or separation (*de jure*) and the other in which the husband has migrated in search of employment and income opportunities (*de facto*). The

Table 30.1 Discrimination of women and the agricultural dimension

Category	Source of discrimination	Agricultural dimension	Impact
Never married women	Customary systems that only allocate land to a family with the male being head of the family	They cannot be allocated land and may invest on borrowed land which can be withdrawn	May engage in prostitution for a living at the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS
Married women	Men's control of land Men's administration of land	Men who work and live in urban areas have control of agricultural produce produced by their wives and children who live in the rural areas. In some cases the men abuse the income derived from the sale of this produce.	Numerous incidences of suicide, especially in the farming region of Gokwe, when agricultural income is spent by men
Single	When the head of the household dies, single young women are not considered in inheritance	They cannot make a choice on what to do for their own livelihoods. All decisions are made for them with the assumption that they will eventually be married	At times they are forced into unions which do not last, creating livelihood problems
Divorced (or returnee daughters)*	When divorced the woman has to go back to her maiden home.	All investment she made in agricultural land such as conservation works are lost	They normally lose out both ways. They may not be accepted back by their own family
Widowed	On the death of a man, the widow may have her land forfeited to a person appointed to 'look after' the family	The only source of livelihood for her and her family may be withdrawn. Some agricultural implements may also be taken away	Their situation is better if they have children who are able to defend them
Women in polygamous families	Based on seniority. The first wife may be neglected as the husband pleases the younger wives	Allocation of agricultural income when all women have jointly worked the land creates conflicts	Conflicts, accusations of witchcraft are rife in such unions. There is competition for agricultural income
Women cohabiting	Land rights are non-existent	May lose any investment that they have put into the land	Societal pressure may force them to escape from cohabiting but with loss of any investment

Notes: * Returnee daughters may come along with their siblings who would also require support. In the absence of land their livelihood is compromised

most vulnerable are the female-headed households where the husbands are totally absent from the village or resettlement farm because these households have to sometimes rely on borrowing or begging.

Table 30.2 Key gender assumptions in agriculture

Agricultural attributes	Gender assumptions
Access to land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are denied access to land in the land reform programmes • Inheritance laws are unfair to women • Unmarried women are denied access to land, which is given to a 'household' (men) and not to women in their own right or jointly as spouses with equal claims
Land tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have tenure insecurity based on cultural practices • Land allocated is usually in the name of the man as the head of the household
Extension and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension is male-centred • Extension is biased towards male enterprises
Appropriate technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most technologies are based on masculinity hence women cannot easily use them in agriculture
Household labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and children do most of the field work such as ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting • Most women work as casual labourers on other people's plots
Use of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are less destructive to natural resources as compared to men • Women use natural resources for the household, whereas men commercialize leading to their destruction
Agricultural finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most agricultural finance is provided on the basis of collateral which is usually held by men
Access to water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of irrigable land to men or household head. Control of land translates into control of water resources for agriculture
Access to markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men participate in the market while women are confined to household and farm level chores
Household income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have no decision-making role with respect to income jointly obtained with the men • Men tend to spend the proceeds from agriculture, whilst women make investments (including agriculture-related) for the benefit of the family
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local administrative posts are held by men who are insensitive to the rights of women • Government emphasize gender mainstreaming in policy but in practice at all levels women lack decision-making power

Historical perspective

Sub-Saharan Africa has been described as a region of female farming *par excellence* (Boserup, 1970). An examination of the anthropological and economic history of the colonial period reveals that women were major food providers and a key labour force within the communal mode of production (Alvord, 1929; Holleman, 1952; Arrighi, 1967). According to Weinrich (1979), women produced the largest share of the family food supply. The extent of women's involvement varied by agricultural task, variety of crops grown and labour re-

Table 30.3 Zimbabwe: Characteristics of women in agriculture by historical period

Characteristics	Pre-colonial	Colonial	Post-1980 (to 1999)	From 2000
Perception of women's role in agriculture	Food producer	Invisible subsistence producers	Limited official recognition of women as food producers	Recognition of women as producers
Nature of involvement	Labour force	<i>De facto</i> farm manager and labour force	<i>De facto</i> farm manager and labour force	<i>De facto</i> farm manager and labour force
Access to land	Indirect (usufruct rights)	Indirect	Indirect except for widows and heads of households in resettlement areas	Indirect except for women in old resettlement schemes and in new A1 and A2 schemes
Access to farm inputs	Indirect	Indirect	Limited direct access	Direct access through government input packs, direct access on government loans
Relation with officials	Indirect	Marginal	Limited involvement	Limited involvement.
Development agenda (locally or internationally influenced)	None	Non-agricultural oriented (homecraft clubs)	Increase in extension activities; income-generating projects (mostly non-agricultural)	Income-generating projects (conditional funding by development agencies to prioritize gender in project proposals)

Source: Adapted from Muchena (1994)

quirements. The household as a production and consumption unit within shifting cultivation systems had a functional role differentiation based on the division of labour between women and men (table 30.3). The men's roles were to clear new fields and hunt, while women performed most of the routine tasks of the production process such as planting, weeding and harvesting as well as food processing and preparation.

Among the Ndebele, a more highly stratified society, women were the main food producers with the help of the lower-caste men (Arrighi, 1970). Alvord (1929) classified foods from grass crops, legumes, wild plants and fruits and found that the 'native' planted and consumed more varieties of foods than the whites. Although cereals were grown in the main household field, every Shona married woman was entitled to a portion of the field for her crops.²³³ Although women had no usufruct rights in the husband's village, the household field was usually referred to as hers since she did most of the cultivation.²³⁴ The Shona women of pre-colonial society derived socio-economic status through their food production and reproductive roles. The two constituted her self-image, and the latter seems to have provided the motivation for her activities in agriculture. Her efforts in agriculture could therefore be interpreted in terms of her productive role because farming was geared to home consumption rather than the market. Communal agriculture in the former tribal trust lands was characterized by low fertility, fragmented landholdings, subsistence-oriented production and population pressure.²³⁵ Knowledge of this system provides a basis of understanding and interpreting the role of women in agriculture.

Empirical studies show that women and children produced most of the food during the colonial period. The most frequent contributors to food production were the rural housewives aged between 20 and 45 years whose husbands were working in town, school leavers between 15 and 20 years (especially girls who, like their male counterparts, could not go to the city to look for employment), widows and the elderly.²³⁶ The two most significant factors affecting the role of African women in agriculture were male migration and the introduction of cash crops. Male migration may not have significantly altered the role of the African woman in food production but it is important to establish

²³³ Women's crops were used as supplementary nutritious foods and included groundnuts, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, beans and other vegetables.

²³⁴ Women's participation in agriculture as food producers, the attendant values of hard work and the status derived from the production and reproductive roles all constituted an integrated Shona belief system (perceptions, recognition, knowledge, practices and relationships).

²³⁵ Under these conditions, a high percentage of subsistence farmers had to find jobs in towns, mines and commercial farms.

²³⁶ Younger women and rural youth, however, carried out the major share of production because the children went to school and the elderly were physically incapable of contributing, especially to heavy tasks.

whether or not traditional roles were attenuated by the addition of these tasks, previously done by men, to women. One would think that as distance and duration of migration increased, women would make more of the decisions, especially those vital to the production process. However, Chavunduka (1970) found that migrant workers maintained constant contact with their rural families.²³⁷ Men's absence at peak periods, women's limited decision-making power and their lack of access to credit facilities and extension services led to a decrease in food production during the colonial era.

In general, customary laws were based on a complex set of overlapping, reciprocal and elastic rights to land. Social relations based on position in kinship relations, gender, age and life-cycle position were key determinants of the role of women in agriculture. These were the defining principles on which colonial land policies were formulated based on a Eurocentric ideology of outright or allodial male ownership, privatization and exclusive rights (Muchena, 1994; Goebel, 1998; Gaidzanwa, 1994). The new form of land tenure recognized the head of the household as male and, therefore, as the sole owner and bearer of land and the means of production. This bias failed to recognize the complex, gendered and reciprocal rights to land, and the responsibilities and obligations under customary law, thereby exaggerating male authority and power, as well as privileging allocative rights over use rights. Women's rights to land became invisible within this western-based legal order. Customary land tenure was transformed and men's power within the household was further entrenched.

Women and agriculture since independence

At independence in 1980, the government embarked on a programme to increase food and agricultural production, particularly in communal lands, through an expansion of input supply and marketing structure, increasing the availability and access to credit and extension services and increasing producer prices. As a result, smallholder maize production doubled between 1979 and 1985. By 1985 smallholders accounted for more than one-third of the maize deliveries to the Grain Marketing Board (World Bank, 1989). Women in communal agriculture contributed to this success because of their roles as *de facto* farm managers and members of the rural labour force. The former Department of Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services shifted its emphasis from working with individual farmers to group extension approaches. As members of extension groups, women in communal lands directly benefited from extension education but

²³⁷ Weekly visits, short holidays, annual leave as well as messages through visiting relatives were used to supervise and direct farm activities.

access to credit facilities²³⁸ still required approval of a male authority. The husbands, in the case of married women, or male relatives, for widows and unmarried women, provided the authority. Incidentally, women constituted the majority of membership in extension groups (Muchena, 1982).

The passing of the Legal Age of the Majority Act in 1982 made it easier for women to have direct access to the market through the personal possession of a Grain Marketing Board card. In a study of women's land rights in independent Zimbabwe, Chimedza (1988) found that only the heads of households had registered land rights. Married women's usufruct rights still operated through the husband as in the communal lands tenure system. The problem areas identified by the women included co-registration of spouse, inheritance rights and a rise in polygamy as registered male heads of households sought to increase the family labour supply in order to manage the 12 acres allocated (ILO, 1989: 7).

In 1990, the government of Zimbabwe embarked on an economic structural adjustment programme. The removal of price controls on basic commodities and agricultural inputs, and the closure of collection and marketing points in many rural areas resulted in a sharp increase in costs of production, including inputs, such as fertilizer, and marketing costs. Women as the main providers of household food security, especially among the poorest socio-economic groups, were in many respects more negatively affected than men by structural adjustment policies (Chisvo, 2001). The scaling down of government services, such as grain depots in marginal areas, resulted in increased food insecurity and poverty of the disadvantaged groups who were mostly women and children. Liberalization measures did, however, achieve some positive results but mainly for farmers with resources. According to Chisvo (1993), many smallholder farmers could not afford chemical fertilizers because the cost had risen by 200 to 300 per cent. As a result, many farmers used organic manure but they could not afford to purchase high-yielding hybrid seed.

Women and rural livelihoods

Women have historically been 'excluded' from land ownership through a combination of traditional and colonial patriarchal systems (Jacobs, 1986; Pankhurst, 1988; Jirira, 1991). The lack of ownership of land as the key means of production impacts on women's ability and will to work the land. Women also lack collateral and land permits which prevent them from accessing credit or services in their own names (Chidzonga, 1991). Consequently, access to credit is more difficult for women than men.

²³⁸ Rural women have difficulty getting credit because they are unable to put up the collateral that the lending institutions require (Mbewe-Mbozi, 2000).

Zimbabwean women realized that as individuals they had little chance of improving their situation. Hence, cooperatives in both rural and urban areas were developed to make women economically self-reliant and to give them the self-confidence they needed to insist on full and equal rights in every sphere of life (Weinrich, 1985). Local and internationally-based non-governmental organizations have sought to improve the economic position of women in rural areas through income-generating projects. These projects have tended to be predominantly non-agricultural, such as uniform making, soap making or bakeries. Some of these projects, however, such as peanut butter manufacturing, use agricultural produce and others are outrightly agricultural based, such as poultry and vegetable gardening. Income-generating projects are often an addition to rather than a substitute for women's agricultural activities and because they are by and large externally induced in origin and funding, they tend to be short-lived (Muchena, 1985; Muchena and Maramba, 1991).

Income-generating projects, even when they are based on agriculture, have not always been successful. Most of the projects are designed and implemented without feasibility studies or market research to identify the key drivers for success. As a result, many of the projects produce goods and services with limited market prospects which leads to their collapse. Consequently, the economic viability of women's project-based activities in rural areas tends to be weak. In this case strategies that can potentially economically empower families and particularly women will need to be explored in a practical manner in future.

Using a sustainable livelihood approach would allow for a responsive strategy based on women's own interpretation and prioritization. But farming rarely provides a sufficient means of survival in rural areas. Local and internationally-based non-governmental organizations have sought to improve the economic situation of poorer groups with a significant bias towards women. They have sought to achieve this by supporting a diversity of activities and income-generating projects, mainly crop and livestock production, roadside trading of wild fruits, ornamentals, artwork, firewood, uniform making, small bakeries and soap making, to name but a few. Roadside trading is seasonal and usually dominated by young women, boys and girls.

Women and the fast track land reform programme

Without question, the fast track land reform programme has had a far reaching impact on women. Clearly if women fail to gain a stake at the initial stages of the programme, then some anti-gender tendencies will be built into the foundation of the programme. There is no doubt that women need a strong voice for gender to be represented in the land reform policy discourse. Utete (2003) noted that gender issues should be reconsidered within the fast track land reform programme. With significant numbers of households headed by women and

even children as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, there is a need to empower women economically to deal with the impact of the disease. However, the feminization of poverty among women-headed households requires more than just policy prescriptions, it needs action on the ground. In order to clearly understand the gender dimension of the fast track land reform programme, there is need to analyze the extent to which women have benefited from land reform.

Table 30.4 shows that the number of women who were allocated land under the fast track programme was very low (Utete, 2003). Under the A1 model only 18 per cent of households that received land were women-headed and under the A2 model, only 12 per cent were women-headed. Matabeleland South had the highest allocation for women of 21 per cent in the A2 model. This is not surprising given that many men in this province work in neighbouring countries. In the A1 model, Mashonaland East had the highest percentage of land allocation (24 per cent) for women. Midlands, Manicaland and Masvingo had lower than 10 per cent land allocation for women in the A2 schemes while Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland South had lower land allocations for the A1 model.

In general women were free to apply for land under models A1 or A2. For the A1 model, interested women applied through traditional leadership if they lived in communal areas or through councillors if they lived in other areas. Yet traditional leaders have been accused of not being gender-sensitive in their roles in customary systems and decisions they make. Patriarchal tendencies have hindered women from applying for land in their own right with most of

Table 30.4 Allocation patterns by gender and province

Province	Model A1				Model A2			
	No. of males	%	No. of females	%	No. of males	%	No. of females	%
Midlands	14 800	82	3 198	18	338	95	17	5
Masvingo	19 026	84	3 644	16	709	92	64	8
Mash. Central	12 986	88	1 770	12	1 469	87	215	13
Mash. West	21 782	81	5 270	19	1 777	89	226	11
Mash. East	12 967	76	3 992	24	*	*	*	*
Mat. South	7 754	87	1 169	13	215	79	56	21
Mat. North	7 919	84	1 490	16	574	83	121	17
Manicaland	9 572	82	2 190	18	961	91	97	9
Total	106 986	82	22 723	18	6 043	88	796	12

Source: Utete, (2003)

them preferring to let their husbands apply. The disadvantage of this approach is that the permit is issued in the name of the husband. In such a situation, the women could only live on the land and carry on agricultural activities with their husband's permission or approval. Under the A2 model, the selection criteria for land are restrictive for women.

The recipients of land were required to have resources (human and material) for the use of the land. The government designed a fairly good system for selecting beneficiaries of the A2 model and gender was a key priority. However, the system was never strictly adhered to and since most women lacked resources and training, they were disqualified from the model A2 schemes. The authority to allocate land rested with men who tended to view men as the heads of households. The role of traditional leadership, like village heads, headmen and chiefs, needs to be critically examined. Some traditional leaders have been known to oppose women's rights in general, particularly those that challenge patriarchy, such as the rights legislated in the Legal Age of Majority Act.²³⁹ Given these attitudes it is difficult to envisage such leaders being sympathetic to women who wish to be allocated farms under the A1 model in their own right. Although many statutory provisions guarantee women equal rights with regard to land, women frequently cannot enforce their modern rights as they are caught in personal situations which do not allow them to go against customary law, even if it contradicts statutory law. Often women are not represented in village or state decision-making bodies which disadvantages them when key decisions are being made. The entire social security network of women depends on peace and harmony within the family and village. In some cases such inability to evoke modern statutory law means effectively that women may even lose the land they obtained in the land reform programmes to men again.

Issues for consideration in the next decade

Flexible and responsive national gender policy for Zimbabwe

Agricultural programmes and policies in most African countries have not adequately addressed the needs of women farmers. Many failures in development policies and programmes are due to the assumptions that large groups of people are homogenous rather than viewing men, women, boys and girls in various social groups with different needs, interests and social roles. Often it has been assumed that policies suited to men would suit women. In practice this is not the case. It is important that the specific target groups for policies are identified and that policies and programmes are designed to reach them. Sustainable agricultural production requires that those who are directly involved

²³⁹ This is now section 15 of the General Law Amendment Act, Chapter 8:07.

are taken into consideration when policies are designed. Many women are highly motivated to achieve food security and to improve their own incomes.

Important impediments to incorporating gender issues into food and agricultural development policies and strategies have been the lack of mindset change and an improper framework for incorporating gender issues and acknowledging the nature and role of women's contributions to food and agricultural production. In Zimbabwe, for example, although government policy states that both women and men qualify for settlement permits in their own rights, in practice women seem to have secondary access to land which means that women do not own or control outputs from the land (Ministry of Gender, Youth Development and Employment Creation, 2000). According to Muchena (1992), national policy goals to achieve food security and to make rural areas economically viable should include gender variables as an integral aspect of the planning process. The national gender policy of Zimbabwe calls for the elimination of all discriminatory practices and greater gender sensitivity, equality and equity in all matters relating to land and agricultural issues.

Increasing women's agricultural productivity and efficiency

Since independence, the government has made an effort to address the grievances of women in relation to agriculture in various ways. These include ensuring parity in extension services for men and women, making credit and marketing structures available to women, and ensuring that widows and divorced women access equal rights to land in resettlement schemes (FAO, 1987). In addition, affirmative action programmes for women have been designed within agricultural-related ministries and universities. Many factors are critical in increasing women's productivity. These factors include resources such as land,²⁴⁰ credit,²⁴¹ extension services,²⁴² labour²⁴³ and appropriate, gender-sensitive tech-

²⁴⁰ Although the 'Programme of action' and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women called for measures to improve women's legal status in land and agrarian reform, women in Zimbabwe have not been the focus of agrarian reform (Ministry of Gender, Youth Development and Employment Creation, 2000). Where land reform entails the division of land into separate family holdings, only heads of households have been the direct beneficiaries.

²⁴¹ Analysis of credit schemes in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia found that by and large women had received less than 10 per cent of the total agricultural credit directed to smallholders (Mbewe-Mbozi, 2000).

²⁴² In 1990 a baseline survey showed that agricultural extension was only reaching 44 per cent of the women farmers (Hakutangwi, 1992). In 1993 government began focusing on the constraints on women's participation in an attempt to develop a more appropriate package to reach women farmers. In 1991 government employed 311 women extension workers out of a total of 2,895. Currently, women extension personnel constitute about 13 per cent.

²⁴³ In some subsistence economies, men controlled all the household labour including that of women (Mbewe-Mbozi, 2000). The women can make use of their own and other family members' labour only after the men's labour requirements have been met.

nologies. Some of the issues that need attention in order to enhance productivity among women farmers are gender awareness training, gender analysis and planning among all who deal with farmers in agricultural activities.

Muchena (1994) discusses case studies demonstrating the need to focus on increasing efficiency and productivity of women's agricultural activities, rather than attempting to replace their agricultural roles with non-profitable off-farm activities. The latter activities tend to increase the demand on women's time and possibly negatively impact on food production. Some evidence suggests that food security does not necessarily increase even in circumstances highly favourable to (male-directed) peasant agriculture. In Zimbabwe peasant-based production has grown partly through intensification of women's labour. National policy goals to achieve food security and make rural areas economically viable should include gender variables as an integral part of the planning process. Whether this viability is to be achieved through land reforms or by promoting rural, small-scale industry, women are an essential part of the rural and agricultural development agenda.

Research and training in gender analysis and gender-sensitive planning

The need for research and training in gender analysis is underscored by the paucity of gender-disaggregated data and the continued misperception of the tasks of women in rural areas. Intelligent and informed decision-making requires up-to-date information on gender relationships in different land tenure systems – the proportion and resources of women's contribution to household incomes, studies on how women and men allocate their time by roles, seasons and other considerations. Time allocation studies could sharpen official awareness of the living and working conditions of people in rural areas, refute stereotypes and become a tool for directing development and research. Such an up-to-date and comprehensive research project is needed in Zimbabwe's dynamic agricultural sector.

Thus the elements in gender analysis include: identification of gender division of labour using activity profiles; resource access and control profiles; context profiles; and practical and strategic needs analysis. Gender analysis ensures that planning is based on accurate information about roles, resources, needs and priorities as defined by the men and women. Information is not adequate for planning purposes if it is not disaggregated by gender.

Gender and agrarian reform

There is a need to strike a gender balance in the agricultural sector for women to benefit both within and outside the scope of the family. The recommendations of Utete (2003) need to be implemented to ensure equity in the agrarian reform programme (table 30.5). Agrarian policy measures will need to be followed up with firm programmes that ensure benefits to women. There are nu-

Table 30.5 Mainstreaming gender in agrarian reforms

Dimension	Gender aspect
Tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land leases should be registered in the names of the husband and wife. • In cases of widowhood, the surviving spouses should have first option to take over the lease provided they can work the land productively. The lease should also take account of the situation of polygamous relationships where applicable. • Upon the dissolution of a marital union, the spouse who leaves the farm should be fairly compensated. This measure will encourage commitment to the land.
Land allocation	<p>A quota of at least 40 per cent of the land allocations should be made to women especially in A1 areas where elderly women take care of sick, orphaned and indigent people, often without adequate resources.</p>
Agricultural support	<p>Women's significant participation in all farming systems should be consolidated through a quota of 40 per cent of funding reserved for women and other new farmers, for credit and other purposes</p>
Public infrastructure	<p>Public infrastructure investment and development in new farming areas should be rationalized so that women, men and children can live together, share work loads and concentrate investment in one household.</p>
Farm technology	<p>The development of farm technology that can be used by elderly women, men and children should be prioritized in view of the high mortality rate of young and middle-aged men and women in rural households.</p>
Farmer training and extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmer training should be community-based in order to endow new farmers, particularly women with children, with farming skills without prejudicing farm operations at their inception. This helps to mitigate farmer absenteeism from the land. • There is need for the reorientation of existing and new extension workers to make them appreciative of and sensitive to gender, age and other considerations of the new farmers.
Tillage services	<p>Tillage services should be provided, especially to children and women farmers and the elderly, to facilitate productive land use in A1 areas.</p>
Farm labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The certification of farmworker skills is critical to allow new farmers access to a skills database. • Zimbabwe should implement the ILO convention that forbids child labour.

Source: Utete, (2003)

merous programmes through which women could improve their agricultural livelihoods. Development programmes such as livestock development, irrigation rehabilitation, crop packs and agricultural machinery could address gender imbalances by allocating a percentage of resources to women.

At a minimum, access to land with greater security and with greater decision-making powers for married women, would mean greater chances of food security for women, children and also for many men. Women's enterprises and incomes are often more explicitly oriented to food security than men's enterprises. Accompanying changes which may benefit women might range from the legal to the practical, for example, provision of infrastructure and services to support land reform such as access to credit, tillage services, farm extension, training and public infrastructural support.

Conclusion

The emerging picture from the historical statistics of women's role as food producers reveals that women have been and still are key players in food production. But this role was officially ignored during the colonial era and it has been given little recognition since independence. As an analytical tool, the gender approach reveals social differentiation between women's and men's agricultural activities, which are often clouded by a women-only or farm-family approach. It is argued that gender disaggregated data provides a more accurate base for policy planning and implementation to achieve economic viability for rural populations in general and women in particular. Research to provide up-to-date data for gender-sensitive agricultural sector planning is currently needed in Zimbabwe. Women food producers continue to operate under inherent social and institutional constraints within the household and in society. There is an apparent need for a paradigm shift to conceptualize women's agricultural activities within the gender relationships framework.

The situation of women's research is changing as the role of women changes in the national economy. Many studies in recent years have promoted an increased awareness of the role of women in development. More of these studies will enrich future approaches to gender planning and will reduce the prevailing social, political, cultural and technical constraints experienced by women. In addition, government has developed a gender policy which aims to enhance the status of women in all sectors of the country's economy.

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