RESEARCH REPORT

The social, political and economic transformative impact of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme on the lives of women farmers in Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru Districts of Zimbabwe
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The social, political and economic transformative impact of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme on the lives of women farmers in Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru Districts of Zimbabwe

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For the
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Introduction

This is the field work report for a project which is being implemented in Zimbabwe under the regional project ‘Securing Women’s Access to Land: Linking Research and Action’ which aims to learn from women and their lived-experiences at the grass roots, and to respond to their needs through action research. The Zimbabwean project is being implemented by the Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust, in collaboration with the University of Zimbabwe. The main purpose of the research is to generate knowledge about the linkages between access, rights, and security, and barriers to access land and productivity faced by women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme so as to identify opportunities arising for economic, social and political empowerment of women farmers, and to draw conclusions that can contribute to the wider dialogue on securing women’s access and rights to land.

Women constitute the majority of agricultural workers, yet they are marginalized when it comes to land allocation and access to land and land related resources. Women constitute about 65% of the rural population yet they accessed less than 18% of the land that was distributed during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. This project through action research with women farmers in two Districts of Zimbabwe, namely Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru, examines problems encountered by women when accessing and securing land. The project looks at barriers to and opportunities for using the land productively so as to transform their lives. The project will attempt to fill some of the gaps in knowledge around women’s access and utilization of land by learning from the women themselves, and promote ways in which women can benefit more from the land and other natural resources, thereby improving their own and their families livelihoods. The project will build capacity amongst the women farmers and provide a platform for dialogue with relevant stakeholders, including policy makers and the private sector. A number of recommendations are suggested to improve the social, political and economic transformative impact of land reform in Zimbabwe.
1. Background to the research

This project is looking at women’s access and security of tenure to land in the context of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is a land-locked country with a land area of 390,757 square kilometres, situated in southern Africa. Zimbabwe has a subtropical climate that is strongly influenced by altitude. Rainfall is unimodal usually between mid-November to April. However, the length of the rainy season is variable and with a coefficient of variation of 29% Zimbabwe’s rainfall has one of the highest degrees of variability in the world (World Bank, 1994). Since 1980, there have been six severe droughts in all or most parts of the country. In 1999-2000 however, Cyclone Eline caused heavy flooding that not only destroyed crops but also houses and infrastructure as well. This high degree of variability in rainfall constitutes a high level of production risk for Zimbabwean farmers and consequently wide fluctuations in agricultural production (Chenje et al, 1998).

The country has been classified into five natural or agro-ecological regions on the basis of land potential for agriculture (Vincent and Thomas, 1961). Rainfall and agricultural productivity decreases from region one to five. The vegetation for the most part of Zimbabwe is characteristically savannah woodland interspersed with open grassed drainage lines or dambos (wetlands) (GOZ, 1987). Zimbabwe has abundant and diverse tropical fauna, including large mammals (GOZ, 1992). Although surface water contributes over 90% to the country’s water supply, Zimbabwe has no natural lakes and few perennial rivers. Dams have been constructed to store water for agricultural, industrial and domestic purposes. High siltation rates are a major problem that considerably reduces the life span of small dams (ENDA-ZERO, 1992).

Zimbabwe, a former British colony, Rhodesia, attained independence in 1980 after a protracted liberation war. Currently the population is about 12.1 million. In 1980 Zimbabwe was among the top four industrialised economies of Sub-Saharan Africa and had one of the most diversified economies with a well-developed manufacturing industry, and a diversified agricultural sector. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy and provides employment and livelihood for about 70% of the population (Nhira et al, 1998).

During the 1980s, there were considerable investments in social development and the economy grew. Despite the new government’s economic strategy of ‘growth with equity’ released in 1981, ten years later, because population growth outstripped economic growth in the 1980s, the average Zimbabwean was worse off (Rukuni and Eicher, 1994). This economic failure was countered by a series of economic reforms, trade liberalisation and the adoption of the Internal Monetary Fund-promoted Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. Under ESAP Zimbabwe moved towards a market-oriented economy, encouraging local and foreign private investment, privatising of government para-statals and reducing government expenditure and the size of the bureaucracy. However, the design and implementation of ESAP were unsuccessful and regarded as being flawed from the beginning (Addison and Laakso, 2003).

Since 1997, Zimbabwe has been experiencing an economic and political crisis characterized by high inflation and uncertain markets for its key exports such as tobacco, cotton and horticultural products. This has been exacerbated by a decrease in tobacco exports following farm invasions in 2000, increased fiscal deficit, and the loss of investor confidence arising from uncertainty about domestic policies. According to the 1995 and 2003 National Poverty Assessment Study Surveys (GOZ, 1997; GOZ, 2006), poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity have become generalised in Zimbabwe in both urban and rural areas. In 2003, about one half of Zimbabwe’s population were poor and food insecure with a striking increase from 20% in 1995 to 48% in 2003. Inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient increased from 0.57 in 1995 to 0.64 in 2003 showing that the income distribution worsened as a minority became richer while the majority became poorer. Life expectancy dropped from 61 years in 1990 to an estimated at 39 years in 2003. This drop is attributed primarily...
to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, although in recent years the rate of HIV/AIDS has declined.

Between 1999 and 2005, the economy shrunk cumulatively by more than 40%. Real economic growth deteriorated from an average annual rate of 4.6% during the period 1986-90 to a negative of - 4.1% in 2005. Inflation soared to a runaway three hundred million % by December 2008, the highest in the world. The deterioration was also reflected in the agricultural sector. Across most commodities, there was a more than 60% drop in production between 2000 and 2006 (Matshe, 2007). This was more pronounced in the food crops as the country was unable to feed its own people. During this period of political and economic crisis food production was negatively affected by adverse weather conditions. The situation is compounded by price controls, which together with high input costs act as a disincentive to farmers. Agricultural policy does not adequately measure the costs and benefits of producing various commodities, nor does it adequately prioritize policy objectives and production support in ways that would yield an optimal balance between food security and foreign exchange earnings (Moyo et al, 2004). Furthermore, macro-economic and industrial decline, inflation and retrenchments have worsened access to food.

Land reform in Zimbabwe

Colonial land policies, such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969, alienated indigenous people from much of the land into the marginal areas of the country, imposing a racially differentiated land tenure system, where white commercial farm land was held under freehold tenure while Tribal Trust Lands (now Communal Areas) were held under customary tenure. Under customary tenure land belongs to the state with individual usufructual rights originally assigned by hereditary chiefs, and since independence, by District Councils as the local authorities. Small-scale farmers in these areas have the right of use of the land but never get legal title to it. The individual landholder is given the right to build a house, cultivate the land, graze livestock, exploit timber for house construction and for firewood and use water. The Land Apportionment Act of 1969, which amended the 1930 Act, further guided the racial division of land resulting in the movement of yet more indigenous people out of white designated areas (Moyo, 1986). The need for land inspired the liberation struggle and land, both as a livelihood resource base and a symbol of dispossession was arguably the single most important reason leading to Zimbabwe’s liberation war. At Independence, 1980, expectations of land reform were high. Women, an estimated 86% of whom work the land, also took part in the liberation struggle. However, so far they have not benefited significantly from land redistribution and have been marginalized when it comes to land allocation and access to land and land related resources.

In Zimbabwe, the land reform policy discourse is often understood exclusively in terms of resettlement. The emphasis is on redistribution with little or no reference to formal rights. The scramble for access to land has clearly taken precedence over discussions of long-term tenure security.

At independence in 1980, Zimbabwe embarked on a Land Reform Programme to address the historical inequities of land distribution. The new government had come up with a socialist-oriented development programme that emphasised equity and social justice of which relocation of the masses into more productive land was the focus.

Subject to availability of finance, the Zimbabwean government had originally planned to resettle 162 000 small-scale farming families over a three-year period on land purchased from large-scale commercial farmers on a ‘willing buyer–willing seller’ basis, with the government of Zimbabwe being the buyer. Although the resettlement process was initially quite rapid, this momentum was not maintained – by 1997 resettlement was well below the original target (Table 1). Components and benefits of this programme included implementation of sound land use plans, establishment of woodlots, water supply, communication and roads, agricultural credit facilities, improved sanitation, provision of schools, clinics and extension services (Moyo et al, 1991).

1 Tenure is understood as the terms on which land (and sometimes land as property) is held, the rights and obligations of the holder(s) of the land and the relationships this way of holding land creates between people.
Surveys indicate that resettlement had an impact on alleviating poverty (Deininger et al. 2000). Kinsey (2000) found that resettled households have higher and more evenly distributed income than their communal land counterparts. However, some problems arose with the implementation of the first phase of resettlement. The resettlement programme, while being applauded as a positive step to address the problem of over-crowding in communal areas, was seen as replicating the environmental conditions in the communal areas (Moyo et al. 1991). The relative slowness of the first phase of land reform was attributed to financial constraints; the fragmented nature of the land that was offered to the government for the programme; and poor location of the resettlement land in terms of the agro-ecological quality (Wekwete 1991). Generally, the land was of marginal agricultural value and mainly in arid or semi-arid natural regions with minimal infrastructure. Much of the land was not suitable for intensive arable farming purposes (Mutepfa and Cohen 2000). Funds for land acquisition were limited, with the government paying market prices for land (Government of Zimbabwe 2001).

The second phase of the land reform programme began with a donor’s conference in September 1998 that intended to enlist more international participation and support. Out of the conference came a proposal for a donor-supported acquisition of about four million hectares of land. This was for resettlement of farms that had already been designated and gazetted for acquisition for the next two years. However, this was not very successful as only 4,697 families had been resettled on 200,000 hectares of land by June 2000 (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of resettlement in Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Families resettled</th>
<th>Hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Total commercial farming area</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>15,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–1997</td>
<td>First phase of resettlement</td>
<td>71,000</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998–June 2000</td>
<td>Inception phase of the second phase of resettlement</td>
<td>4,697</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2000–2003</td>
<td>‘Fast Track’</td>
<td>127,192 (under A1 scheme)</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7,260 (under A2 scheme)</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14,286 (informally settled)</td>
<td>416,808</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Government of Zimbabwe 2001; Government of Zimbabwe 2003)

The slowness of this cautious approach, compounded by increasing poverty, and the worsening political scenario precipitated the ‘Fast Track’ phase of the Land Reform Programme, the ultimate objective of which was to accelerate both land acquisition and land redistribution. The Fast Track, launched in July 2000, had been immediately preceded by jambanja (havoc), or spontaneous farm invasions. These ‘demonstrations’ were symbolic occupations not intended as permanent allocations but to draw attention to the land issue generally (Chaumba et al, 2003).

Farm occupations of various land tenure categories are not unique to jambanja and the Fast Track, but have been part of Zimbabwe’s pre- and post-independence history (Alexander, 1994). Immediately after independence occupation of abandoned commercial farms and vacant state land often resulted into formal resettlement of communities. From the mid-1980s onwards, landless small-scale farmers also began to occupy and use land that belonged to politicians and the black elite. Reiterating colonial discourses, these people were labelled ‘squatters’ by government and were forcibly removed (Willems, 2004).

In the second phase of land reform, spontaneous invasions started with isolated invasions in 1998, particularly in Svose and Goromonzi commercial farming areas. By early 2000 the invasions, primarily by frustrated small-scale farmers, war veterans and youth had become country wide. These land invasions were mobilised at the local level. Murphree (2004:8) says that: ‘for all its negative components, fast track
resettlement seems to have found a lever for devolution’ and the ‘foot soldiers of resettlement (during jambanja) have seized the initiative and shifted the balance of innovation in the centre/periphery power equation’. The process dramatically altered the physical and political landscape in rural Zimbabwe and changed the dynamics of local government.

Chiefs and traditional leaders played a leading role in mobilising for land occupations, often in the context of repossession of ancestral lands (Murisa, 2007). For example, people in Chiweshe communal area, Mazowe District, organised themselves into different groups such as the Hwata and Mbari clans who laid specific claims to particular farms on the basis of restitution, on the basis that they had been removed from such farms in the past (Matondi, 2005).

The nature of jambanja was rapid, often violent, with no legal framework, and characterised by uncertainty. Occupations by disgruntled and frustrated small-scale farmers and war veterans who had failed to acquire land during the 20 years of independence were decentralised and localised, assuming a horizontal form as the hierarchical structure of party (ZANU-PF) was abandoned (Sadomba, 2008). Movement onto the farms was perceived as risky and there was no guarantee that the lack of intervention by the authorities would continue. People with assets to lose were cautious about moving too many of them on to the newly occupied areas. Organisational structures and committees were established in the occupied farms.

The illicit situation became normalised by the Fast Track Land Reform Programme launched by the government in July 2000. The jambanja invasions experience forced the government to adopt an approach to resettlement that greatly speeded up the pace of land acquisition and resettlement by the immediate identification for compulsory acquisition of not less than five million hectares for resettlement (See Table 1).

Since April 2000 the legal framework governing land acquisition has been significantly revised to take account of changes in government policy. The Land Acquisition Act was amended in May and November 2000, to clarify and streamline various procedural aspects of the acquisition process and to prescribe new compensation rules in accordance with the Constitution (Rugube et al. 2003). The 16th Amendment to the Constitution of 2000 made land acquisition possible without payment by the government for designated farms. Under the 17th Constitutional Amendment of August 2005, all commercial farmland in Zimbabwe was nationalised.

**Access to land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme**

Under the Fast Track Land Reform programme there are two different models for resettlement: A1 villagisation and A2 commercial. The A1 Model aimed to resettle the rural landless and decongest the overcrowded communal areas. Under the A1 Model each household is allocated residential and arable land. Common land such as grazing land, woodlots and water points are shared by the resettlement group. In some regions, such as in Midlands province, there are ‘self contained’ A1 plots. The A2 Model scheme was meant to indigenise commercial farming through providing opportunities for previously disadvantaged black people. Under the Model A2 commercial farm settlement scheme each household was resettled on individual farms, or subdivisions.

Application procedures for the two models were different. A1 Model applicants were selected by District Administrators from lists made available by traditional leaders. In the A2 model scheme, the Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement placed advertisements in newspapers inviting people to apply for the scheme. Land was then allocated through the office of the Provincial Governor with an offer letter provided by the Minister of Lands Ministry of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement to the successful applicants. The application form states that: ‘Applicants who provide proof of availability and/or ability to mobilise adequate resources to support the proposed farming programme will have an added advantage’ and therefore it was expected that qualifying applicants had their own resources for farming with minimum government support.

The current implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) continues to privilege men as primary recipients of resettlement land, and the emerging role of traditional authorities in the land reform process continues
to marginalize women (Goebel, 2005). The land reform programme focussed on racial imbalances of highly skewed land holdings and discriminatory land tenure systems while failing to mainstream the interests of women. Women generally failed to access land and those who did are failing to utilise it productively. Patterns of ownership under the Fast Track and other direct land rights such as tenancy, resettlement permits and leases show that very few women have independent rights of ownership or control of land. For married couples, only the husband’s name was written. Furthermore, this exclusion extends to other resources such as inputs and finance for agriculture. Women face a number of problems emanating from legal plurality, customary laws, patriarchal culture and tradition and general societal attitudes towards the empowerment of women.

Current tenure arrangements in Zimbabwe

All land in Zimbabwe can be divided into customary and statutory received land tenure. In customary lands, which include family homesteads, fields and commons such as grazing lands are vested in community leaders and the State through the President. Statutory received lands include freehold, leaseholds, permits and State Land (either alienated or non-alienated) vested in individuals or institutions.

Table 2: Specific characteristics of current land tenure in Zimbabwe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues</th>
<th>Freehold</th>
<th>Leasehold</th>
<th>Permits</th>
<th>Customary</th>
<th>State land</th>
<th>Illegal Squatters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal basis (laws)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Adverse possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned</td>
<td>Few (&lt;10000)</td>
<td>Expanded due to A2 resettlement (20000)</td>
<td>Expanded due to old and new A1 resettlements (250000)</td>
<td>1.2 million families</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Perpetual</td>
<td>25 – 99 years</td>
<td>Perpetual</td>
<td>Perpetual</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records (survey/registration)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Few (116) registered or surveyed</td>
<td>Not yet</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Few not recorded</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use as collateral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactable (sale)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes on Minister’s approval</td>
<td>Informally</td>
<td>Informally</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inheritable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (customary)</td>
<td>Yes (customary)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (spouse right)</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Right registrable</td>
<td>Spouse right registrable</td>
<td>Customary practice</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ironically, Fast Track Land Reform events in Zimbabwe illustrate that freehold property is perhaps the weakest form of tenure security, while the customary tenure remains strong.
2. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for the research in this project engages a feminist ideological orientation and a political economy approach that recognises that power is continuously shifting and being contested and negotiated between the various actors at all levels from the international to the household, including power relationships between men and women. A feminist perspective presumes the importance of gender in human relationships and orients the study in that direction (Guerrero, 1999). Importance is placed on gender as one domain difference, as it intersects with other domains such as class, age, life-cycle positioning and marital status (Verma, 2007). The project focuses on women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and explores the inherent gender barriers to women’s access, rights, security, control and utilization of land and identifies strategies used by women to retain the land given the hostile environment which characterise the FTLRP. A feminist approach looks at how women’s perspectives are manifested in the land reform discourse and includes a sense of connectedness and equality between researchers and researched. In this project, the lead agency is a women farmers’ Trust and the research assistants are women farmers. The project acknowledges and values ‘women’s ways of knowing’ including integrating reason, emotion, intuition, experience and analytic thought. In advocating for the development and enactment of policy frameworks that promote fairer access and stronger tenure rights to land and land related resources by women the project hopes to go beyond knowledge generation to engage in using knowledge for change, especially as Guerrero (1999: 16-17) points out ‘knowledge about women that will contribute to women’s liberation and emancipation’.

The research approach also recognises non-linear dynamics and searches for the underlying order, if any, of a disorderly phenomenon, namely the land reform process in Zimbabwe during a time of political and economic crisis. There are multiple variables, actors, influencing factors and centres of power existing on all levels, and the rules of the game are constantly changing. A complex system can give rise to turbulence and coherence at the same time. For example, Chaumba et al. (2003: 17) point out that even during the most violent and chaotic farm invasions during the time of jambanja there was ‘order beneath ostensible disorder’. Non-linear dynamics have been likened to a maze whose walls rearrange themselves with every step you take (Gleick 1987). The land reform process in Zimbabwe is shaped not only by the need to address historical political inequalities and repression, but is also driven by economic and environmental concerns. Changes in these social, political and ecological conditions appear to be accelerating. The Fast Track Land Reform is occurring in largely ‘uncharted waters’. Old and new actors are negotiating the path, producing trade-offs, as the process unfolds. Women are seemingly peripheral to this process, but nevertheless, have roles to play and can influence the ‘rearranging of the walls’. One of the challenges of this research is to deal with the unpredictability and indeterminism of human behaviour. Chambers (1997) describes an evolving paradigm of development of people as people, where local, complex, diverse, dynamic and unpredictable conditions are difficult to measure and require judgement. Struggles over land produce an entangled landscape in which multiple spatialities, temporalities and power relations combine, resulting in an inextricable ensaring interweave (Moore 2005). The research approach used is that of action research carried out with participant non-neutral women farmers where knowledge is generated by the very actors who will contribute to reshaping the walls. These research findings are for engaged actors whose knowledge and position in struggle shapes the research agenda, the methodologies used and how the research findings are interpreted and used.
The importance of land reform in southern Africa

A central agrarian discourse in southern African countries is that of the repossession of land occupied by European settlers that has not been adequately addressed – despite liberation rhetoric (Adams 2000). Although not itself a guarantee of economic development, land reform in southern Africa is a necessary condition for a more economically, politically and socially secure and balanced society. Political equality cannot exist without economic equality (Gramsci 1971). The demand for land redistribution in terms of redressing historical inequities has been a consistent feature of southern African politics and policymaking (Adams et al. 1999; Moyo 2005a). Land policy formulation is a complex and dynamic process characterised by multiple actors and an intricate web of relationships (Drimie and Mbaya 2001). Development of policy is not usually a linear process as policy comes from many directions. Implementation of policy can be as much about agenda-setting, decision-making, and negotiation and bargaining between multiple actors over time, as about execution of decisions (Keeley and Scoones 2003). Issues of power, political goals and technocratic practices influence the policy process. Moyo (2005a) identifies two main land reform experiences, namely the radical-cum-socialist redistributive land reforms, such as in Mozambique and Angola, and liberal approaches that were a result of negotiated settlements that left the land questions relatively unsolved, as in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

Throughout southern Africa, land holdings have remained significantly skewed between rich and poor, with discriminatory land tenure systems reflecting the land and agricultural policies adopted in colonial times and after independence (Fortin 2005; Moyo 2005b). Moyo (2000) indicates that, for countries in the southern African region, the land problem is characterised by contradictory tendencies towards irrational land use patterns through both over-utilisation in communal lands, and under-utilisation of land in commercial farming areas. Governance of land use is one of the most important political and economic issues in most southern African countries and land remains the basic source of livelihood for the majority (Kloeck-Jenson 1998), as well as the basis for agro-industrial development. Land reform processes in southern Africa tend to focus on land administration rather than land management. Land reform is currently a significant process throughout southern Africa that is unfolding rapidly on continuously shifting ground. Land reform is a long-term process that aims to enhance agricultural production. However, to be successful, land use options within land reform programmes should incorporate not only economic viability, but social and environmental sustainability as well. The challenge for land reform programmes is therefore to redistribute land and reform tenure rights ensuring productivity and ecological sustainability of the rural economy. Land tenure security contributes to food security and can in some cases allow for use of land as collateral to access credit for income generating activities. It further has cultural and spiritual value and is central to people’s identity, their social status and relations (Verma, 2007). In order to be successful, land reform strategies must include not only productivity issues, but also issues of sustainability and social justice. However, in practice, land reform programmes have revealed processes of exclusion, deepening social divisions and class formation (Chigarande, 2008).

There is currently a great deal of serious conflict over land throughout southern Africa, but nowhere has it attracted more attention than recent events of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe. The occurrence of accelerated land reform in resettlement areas in Zimbabwe has undoubtedly affected land reform processes in other southern African countries. This project, which is being implemented in Zimbabwe, provides an analysis of the land reform process in the form of redistribution and resettlement during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme.
The impact of the Fast Track on agricultural production

The impact of fast track land reform on agricultural production and food security is a contested issue and there are indications that the impact of the take-over of large-scale commercial farms has no major impact on overall maize production (Marongwe, 2007). Comprehensive agricultural production and environmental audits or livelihoods and demographic surveys of the impact of Fast Track resettlement had not been completed at the time of writing. Research by Sukume (2004) indicated that agricultural production fell by 22% in 2002 compared to an average annual growth of rate of 4.7% between 1990 and 2000. Crop production was also affected by drought during this period. Furthermore, there are no clear indications as yet that resettlement has significantly decongested communal areas or reduced environmental problems resulting from overcrowding and over use.

A varied picture of food production is shown by Jowah (2006) in Table 3 which reflects not only the disruptions of the transition period, but droughts and the weak economic situation of the country as well.

### Table 3: Zimbabwe agricultural crop production 1998 to 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Tonnes (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>1,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Jowah, 2006; Central Statistical Office, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development)

Apart from the initial period of adapting to new ecological conditions, the main reasons advanced for poor performance have mainly related to lack of financial and technical support systems for resettled farmers (Marongwe, 2007).

The government embarked upon ‘Operation Maguta’, in 2007-8, where farmers were assisted with inputs and fuel. The allocation of good agricultural land is not a sine qua non for high agricultural productivity. More research is required on the overall trends of the ten-year period since 2000 to determine production after the initial upheaval and adaptation of resettled farmers, as there are indications that production on fast track resettled farms is gradually increasing. Research by Matondi et al. (2009) shows that the area put under crop has generally increased because of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, although this has not always translated to increased crop productivity. During the period 1999 to 2007 there was an increase in average area put under maize, wheat, soyabeans, rapoko, seed cotton and groundnuts compared with the period 1980 to 1998. Area put under soyabeans increased by 48% between these two periods (Matondi et al., 2009). However, there was an overall 3% reduction in cattle between the two periods which is attributed to decrease in the commercial farm sector due to farm acquisition and farmers auctioning their livestock (Matondi et al., 2009).

One of the consequences of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme on agricultural production and food security is land tenure insecurity. In some instances, unclear tenure created ‘open access’ conditions on the large-scale commercial farms paving the way for the unsustainable utilization of natural resources (Marongwe, 2007). For the initial stages, some new settlers turned to the environment for survival through the sale of firewood, gold panning and poaching of wildlife. Insecure tenure also resulted in conflicts over land allocations, particularly in cases of double allocation and corruption.
Women’s access to land in the land reform process

Most land reform programmes in southern Africa have focused on racial and ethnic imbalances, while failing to mainstream the interests of women. This has resulted in gender gaps in land ownership, control, management and productivity. Paradoxically, women constitute the majority of farmers and contribute significantly to the agricultural labour force, yet rarely control land for agriculture. Gender inequality is rooted in socio-cultural, political power relations that are continuously being negotiated, contested and resisted at various levels, shaping and being shaped by broader political, economic and socio-cultural relations. The historical marginalisation of women in general and in the land reform process in particular, illustrates threads of the double marginalisation experienced by women which become intertwined, often reinforcing each other.

The first phase of the land reform, from 1980 to 1998 perpetuated patriarchal land policies that favoured men over women. In the early stages of land reform, government policy was that a settler had to be either married or widowed, thereby discriminating against single unmarried women (Ruswa 2007). However, this did provide strategic spaces for some women, especially widows, to improve their access to arable land. For married women, permits were issued in the name of the husband in terms of policy and practice reflecting customary norms. The majority of resettlement permits were issued to men as heads of households, while only between two and 15% at most were issued to female-headed households. This compares unfavourably with an estimated 25% of female headed households outside resettlement areas, indicating that land reform marginalises women even more and reduces their commitment to agriculture (Gaidzanwa 1991).

The role of women in the jambanja invasions

Although jambanja was male dominated, some women were involved, both as invaders and also in supporting the men. In Chiredzi District farm invasions for example, Chaumba et al. (2003) noted that at night men and women were segregated and also that some settlers were visited regularly by their wives who brought food and did their laundry. However, little is known or documented about women’s role in jambanja and even less is known about what happened afterwards to the women who joined in the land invasions.

Jirira and Halimana (2008) point out that, as a policy thrust, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme is problematic because there is an absence of an enabling environment to redress gender imbalances when it comes to land redistribution issues. There is no legal and policy framework that incorporates inheritance issues, especially pertaining to widows and this is problematic, resulting in ad hoc practices based on prevailing customs. The legal and constitutional provisions do not provide a guideline or framework for equity in terms of land redistribution. However, it is slightly easier for women to access land under the A1 Model than under the A2 Model because of the existence of the dual legal system where both customary law and statutory law in issues of inheritance and marriage are relevant. The contradictions in these dual laws have resulted in women’s discrimination in terms of accessing land in their own right or as equal citizens, thus violating the constitution in terms of discrimination on the basis of gender.

Allocation of land to women under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

At a donors’ conference held in September 1998, which intended to enlist international participation and support for the Land Reform Programme, a quota of 20% for women was adopted. However, although gender concerns were articulated, this quota did not become formal policy and was not included in the Inception Phase Framework Plan 1999-2000 and has not been put into statute. To date, there has been no sound mechanism to ensure that women are indeed benefiting from the land-reform process. Although women’s groups, notably Women and Land Zimbabwe (WLZ), lobbied for a better deal for women and in particular the 20% quota for women, there was no follow up by women’s agency to facilitate women’s access to land in the Fast Track Land Reform Programme.
The actual number of women beneficiaries fell short of the 20% quota. Women-headed households who benefited under the A1 model constituted 18% of the total, while less than 12% of the beneficiaries under A2 were women. The major reason given for this was that most women could not qualify because of limited resources. These national average figures masked regional variations (Table 4). For example, Jirira and Halimana (2008) in their study of Makoni District, Manicaland Province, found female headed households in a number of A1 villagised resettlement schemes ranged from 19.4% to 23%. However, while this may appear to be a sign of gender empowerment, in reality the increase was not through a deliberate policy, but rather through inheritance. Matondi (2005) found that in Mazowe District, an area of prime agricultural land, in the A1 resettlement model, only 13% of the beneficiaries were women while 11% of the A2 beneficiaries were women. Women fared better in Zvimba District as research by Murisa (2007) found that 25% of the A1 beneficiaries were women, while 22% of A2 beneficiaries were women. These figures are actually higher than those found by the Presidential Land Review Committee (GOZ, 2003). It is hard to determine women’s access to land as exact figures are not known due to the dynamic nature of the process which is still on-going, through uncharted waters.

Official quotas of beneficiaries often mask reality on the ground. Even when allocated, women do not always remain in control of the land. Jirira and Halimana (2008) noted that in some cases sons were heads of households where in fact the plots had been allocated to women, thus reflecting the continued pervasiveness of patriarchy. In the family context, women access land through their husbands or fathers, but only to use and work on while the men retain control and most decision making.

### Table 4: Land allocation under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme by gender and Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>A 1 Model</th>
<th>A 2 Model</th>
<th>A 1 Model</th>
<th>A 2 Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male Beneficiaries (%)</td>
<td>Female beneficiaries (%)</td>
<td>Male Beneficiaries (%)</td>
<td>Female beneficiaries (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masvingo</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashonaland Central</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashonaland West</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mashonaland East</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matebeleland South</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matebeleland North</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manicaland</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: GOZ, 2003)
Constraints experienced by women under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

The reality of land allocation to women under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme is in contradiction of the government’s commitment to a 20% quota reserved for women. The sources of this gendered land tenure inequity relates to a number of constraints faced by women in applying for land, including bureaucratic constraints, gender biases among the selection structures, which comprise mainly of men, the lack of information on the process and poor mobilization of women’s activist organizations around the issue of applications (Moyo, 2007). Even though the government selection procedure for A2 applicants gives more score points to women at the starting line, the proportion of access for women did not adequately increase. The Utete Commission noted that the marginalization of women during implementation of land reform is related to the preponderance of men in decision making structures (GOZ, 2003).

Allocation of A1 model farms is by a User Permit which is issued by the District Administrator on recommendation from the village head and the headman or the local councillor. In most cases these people are men who are the custodians of culture and tradition, which unfortunately does not subscribe to women’s ownership of land, but that they should only have access not ownership and control. Most of the resettled farmers moved from their family homes and have resettled on new land where they do not have the support of family members and social networks which provided social supports (GOZ, 2003).

Regarding the A2 farmers, allocation of land was through an application process which required the applicant to have proof that they had the capacity to utilize the land in terms of finance, collateral, agricultural knowledge or capacity to employ a qualified farm manager. This again worked against many women who did not meet the requirements. Lack of a ‘production record’ and lack of basic assets and savings were important barriers to women’s access of A2 land. Within the family, assets and savings are generally in the name and possession of men.

Instances of sexual harassment of women in their attempts to get on the redistribution list have also been recorded (Jirira and Halimana, 2008).

Utilisation of land

Research carried out by Women and Land in Zimbabwe (WLZ), an nongovernmental organisation that seeks to promote and support women’s economic empowerment through equitable access to and control of land, found that most of the land was being used for production of food crops for household food consumption with very few women producing for trade on urban food markets or contributing to national food security and export market (WLZ, 2006). Only 10% of the land that was allocated to women was being utilized productively. The research found that the main challenges facing both A1 and A2 women farmers were access to resources and inputs such as finance, seed, fertilizer, labour, extension services and farming equipment (WLZ, 2006). This was particularly true for the A2 women beneficiaries, as the 12% who have managed to be allocated land are not able to fully utilize it because they cannot access resources such as finance from financial institutions which demand collateral in the form of a house or shares, which most women do not have. Research in different southern African countries also shows that women are unable to get credit either because they do not have collateral or because the banks will not authorise their loans without their husbands’ signature (ECA, 2003). Studies carried out in Zimbabwe by WLZ (2006) showed that most of the resettled women lack social support, access to information and confidence. Women farmers have to compete with their male counterparts who already own properties and can access finance and other resources more easily because of the existence of social and economic networks to support them (WLZ, 2006).
Mismatch between policy rhetoric and practice on the ground

There are numerous policy statements that recognise the need for gender equality when embarking upon land reform and that articulate the need for women to have fair access to land and for the land reform process to be gender sensitive. These range from international conventions to which Zimbabwe is party, to the recent statement by the ‘unity government’ in September 2008, which recognises the need for women to access and have control over land in their own right as equal citizens.

Section 23, sub-section 3, of the 17th Constitutional Amendment states that

‘...in implementing any programme of land reform the Government shall treat men and women on an equal basis with respect to the allocation or distribution of land or any right or interest therein under that programme.’

However, the various policy frameworks on land reform fall short of mainstreaming gender, and, despite policy rhetoric, implementation and practice is weak, and women, particularly in rural areas, have few legal rights to the land they work. Men, even if they are absent, are usually the decision makers and control agricultural activities and produce. Furthermore, women are often disadvantaged in accessing more or better land. This mismatch between policy and practice is an issue that needs further research to determine the current situation on the ground.

Customary versus statutory tenure

Many countries in southern Africa, including Zimbabwe, have dual laws consisting of customary laws and statutory laws co-existing side by side. Customary law, which is still prevalent, tends to discriminate against women when it comes to access, ownership and control of land as often women only have usufruct rights (Jirira and Halimana, 2008). Even if women are guaranteed control over land under statutory law and the constitution, their land rights may not be guaranteed under customary law and cultural practices. Patriarchal norms currently dominate the interpretation of customary laws and practices so that in the name of ‘usage and custom’ gender concerns may not be considered or may not be based on the notion of gender equality (Verma, 2007). Furthermore, most statutory laws were imposed by patriarchal colonial powers. In fact, statutory laws as well as customary laws and practices can undermine land reform processes. Ignorance and lack of awareness of the law and administration together with economic hardships that make it difficult for women to pursue their legal rights contribute towards women’s lack of access to and control of land. Despite the predominance of male biases, there are nevertheless some windows of opportunity that can favour women in the application of customary law.

Women beneficiaries of land reform

There is no doubt that government policy has attempted to address some of the historical grievances raised by women regarding access and security of tenure in newly resettled areas. Nevertheless, women are still under represented and continue to be marginalised in the land reform process. The predominant criteria for allocation of land assume that households would centre on a married couple, or that women would seek land within the family context. The socio-economic pattern of land allocation is embedded within wider socio-cultural relationships and the succession and inheritance laws of Zimbabwe. This has resulted in the perpetuation of the marginalised rights for women in land allocation and their insecurity of tenure. It is doubtful that without an affirmative action policy, which clearly stipulates and is backed by legal force, women will have fair chances of access to resettlement land.
3. Methodology

The research approach

The aim of this research is to generate knowledge about the linkages between access, rights and security, and barriers to access land and productivity faced by women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe in an attempt to identify opportunities arising for economic, social and political empowerment of women farmers, and to draw conclusions that can contribute to the wider dialogue on securing women’s access and rights to land. As mentioned in the conceptual framework above, a feminist orientation to research is taken and our research tools and understandings are affected by a gendered lens.

The predominant research method used in this project is action research carried out with the women farmers themselves, with the research team as facilitators. Action research is an iterative inquiry process that balances problem solving actions implemented in a collaborative context with data-driven collaborative analysis or research to understand underlying causes enabling future predictions about personal and organisational change (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). Such an approach helps to facilitate the solving of practical problems being faced by the women farmers who are in a disadvantageous situation as compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, the women farmers are vulnerable and have to cope with a number of stressors such as the socio-economic crisis, erratic weather patterns and HIV and AIDS, all of which are impacting negatively on farming. The research focuses on women’s experiences, supporting and facilitating women’s agency, giving women a voice to raise their concerns. Through opportunities for dialogue, people come together, participate, learn from each other and act.

An interpretive approach was used to build up the story of women’s access, rights, and security, including barriers to access land and productivity faced by women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe and the various coping strategies used to overcome these difficulties, by examining the experiences and perceptions of the women and relevant stakeholders. It involved asking ‘what happened’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ types of questions which can be investigated by using qualitative techniques, particularly semi-structured interviews, observation, case studies, and secondary data (Woodhouse, 1998). An interpretive approach entails interacting with and listening to people, recording exactly what people say about what happened, and analysing what can be learned from people’s subjective experiences as well as from ‘objective’ facts.

Quality dimensions require description of what outcomes actually mean to the respondents as the same event or outcome may mean different things to different people, for example a borehole may be of more significance to women and children than men as they are responsible for carrying water.

While the grey material (programme documents, reports, evaluations, minutes) provide the ‘official’ view of what happened, in-depth interviews with women beneficiaries of land reform revealed experiences and impacts from their point of view. This unravelling of what actually happened and search for major patterns and nuances, which characterised the Fast Track Land Reform Programme provided a multiplicity of perspectives and ‘truths’ about the programme from different stakeholders.
Establishing boundaries and site selection

The project transcends several levels, ranging from the national policy and decision-makers, the Provincial and District officers to farmers and traditional leaders at the local level. The focus of the research is at the local level with women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. There are several boundaries that provide the overall conceptual framework within which the investigation takes place. The broadest boundary is that of the concept of women’s access and security to land, particularly in southern Africa. Another conceptual boundary is that of land reform processes, in the case of this project, accelerated land reform in Zimbabwe. This is then narrowed to focus on the role of women beneficiaries of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. The study was narrowed down geographically in two sites, Vungu-Gweru District in Midlands Province and Goromonzi District in Mashonaland East Province. Originally, it had been envisaged that the research would be done in Shurugwi District, but due to logistical considerations the adjacent District of Vungu-Gweru was selected.

Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust operates throughout the country and is already operating in Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru Districts. The Districts have differences in rainfall patterns, different agricultural potential, different Fast Track resettlement patterns and different levels of agricultural productivity. Furthermore looking at the resettlement statistics Goromonzi has the highest number of A2 women farmers who are farming for profit. Vungu-Gweru has more women farmers resettled on A1 who are farming mostly for household food consumption. The choice of two districts was not meant to be for a comparative analysis framework, but rather to enhance our knowledge and understanding of how women have fared under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme where patterns of access and utilization are markedly varied across the country.

The guiding principle for the methodology was to employ within limits and time available, the best and most powerful methods appropriate to answer the research questions. This involved more than one method for obtaining different types of information and also for triangulation purposes. Techniques used were studying secondary sources, interviewing and observation. Literature was studied, including grey material such as records and reports, providing contextual and conceptual information relevant to this study. Literature also provided information about other research done in this area, providing insights and identifying gaps in knowledge.

Overview of schedule of activities

The project is led by Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust providing the research team with access to mobilized women farmers. After this research project, the women’s agency will continue with implementing the results and recommendations. The mandate for the Trust is to ensure women farmers’ contribution to national food security for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of women through land use. The Trust has three areas of interventions namely capacity building; lobbying and advocacy; facilitation of women’s access to farming resources such as equipment, irrigation and inputs.

Mobilization of communities was undertaken in Goromonzi, through the District Administrator’s Office, and in Vungu-Gweru area through the Midlands Provincial Governor’s Office. The field work started with a baseline study and interviews, which covered 20 plus women farmers, community leaders and state actors in each of the two sites. A farmer field day was held at a woman’s farm in Vungu-Gweru with women farmers from all Districts in the Province. The mid-term evaluation visits were held in farms at the two sites and ended with a mid-term evaluation workshop with all the research team at the Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe. The research team joined other research teams of the ‘Securing Women’s Access to Land: Linking Research and Action’ regional project for a mini-data analysis workshop in Victoria Falls at the beginning of August 2009. The peer to peer exchange visit was held in Maputo Mozambique in May 2009 which was preceded by a regional workshop on decentralization.
Interviews

Although in practice there was a continuum of structure in the interviews, semi-structured interviews were the predominant research instrument used in this research to address the first two objectives:

- To explore the inherent gender barriers to women’s access, rights, security, control and utilization of land
- To identify strategies used by women to retain the land given the hostile environment which characterise the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

Some interviews provided straightforward answers to questions, for example when bio-data was being collected, whilst other interviews had more freedom, resulting in monologue narratives. Apart from the formal interviews, information was also obtained from informal, opportunistic unstructured interviews and conversations, using a mental checklist.

The questions, probes, and prompts were written in the form of a flexible interview guide. An interview guide was compiled that contained a number of headings of main areas each with a comprehensive series of standard, but open ended questions on sub-topics which formed a framework for the interviews. Not all questions were used in each interview; rather the numerous questions provided a pool from which relevant ones could be extracted for the interviews as appropriate.

In-depth semi-structured and unstructured interviews were held with more than 40 women farmers, semi-randomly selected in the two sites. A number of repeat interviews were held with six women to build up their narratives. Personal narratives reveal events and patterns through the lens of individual experiences. Narratives can be interpreted to help us more fully understand the process of land reform, women’s access to land, what problems women faced, how women were marginalised and what coping strategies they used to overcome the barriers.

A number of key informants, including both state actors and traditional and community leaders were also interviewed. Goetz and Le Compte (1984) describe key informants as individuals who possess special knowledge, status or communication skills, who are willing to share their knowledge, and skills with the researcher, and who have access to perspectives or observations denied the researcher through other means. Key informants interviewed were:

- The Minister of Lands, Hon Herbert Murerwa
- The Provincial Governor for Midlands
- The Provincial Land Officers
- The District Administrative Officers for Goromoni and Vungu-Gweru Districts
- District Lands Officers for Goromoni and Vungu-Gweru Districts
- District Irrigation Officers, Ministry of Water
- District Development Fund (DDF) officer
- District (Agricultural Research and Extension) AREX Officers
- Ward Councillors
- Village Headmen
- Members of the Resettlement Committees of seven

The interviews varied in length and were not tape recorded as it was felt it would be inappropriate and intrusive. Instead notes were taken.

Group interviews

Group interviews have the advantage of access to a larger body of knowledge and mutual checking and information can be gathered rapidly. Individual interviews with some of the participants carried out separately proved to be useful, as some participants did not wish to express their views at a public meeting and were more candid in individual interviews. These interviews also provided an opportunity to elaborate on issues brought up in the group interview and to triangulate.
A number of Focused Group Discussions were held with:

- men and women farmers
- women farmers: married women, widows, single women, divorced women, ex-commercial farm workers, ex-combatant women, professional women and women with disabilities
- local leaders
- state actors.

In Gweru a focus group discussion was carried out with the Governor of the Midlands Province, the Provincial Administrator, the District Administrator, a councillor, the Provincial Lands Officer and Agriculture officers. The discussion was on women’s access to land and land related resources, security of tenure and the 99-year lease. A number of one-on-one interviews were carried out after the group discussion, including with the Provincial Administrator who is a woman. She gave her views on women farmers needing security of tenure and networking with other women farmers in other countries. Another one-on-one interview was carried out with the Provincial Lands Officer where he gave an insight on how the 99-year lease is acquired, the requirements and its use. The Provincial Lands Officer also gave the research team information on the role of the Lands Committee. Focus group discussions were carried out with women farmers at Derbyshire farm various categories married, single, divorced and widowed.

In Goromonzi a focus group discussion was held with Assistant District Administrator and other state actors. Two group discussions were carried out with two women Lands officers, an Agricultural officer and District Development Fund officer on their role as women in government employment and as women farmers. Group interviews were carried out under trees with women farmers on their farms.

**Observations**

In the research process, observation was a vital tool for triangulation, and in verifying if what the reports and people say is actually what happened on the ground. Observations helped to explain the complexities of the situation, permitting experiences of the programme setting and thus allowing more detail and depth of information.

**Issues of rigour**

Having chosen predominantly qualitative techniques for the research we were particularly concerned about maintaining rigour. Several methods were used that facilitated triangulation, as triangulation is the main principle that confers rigour to qualitative research and validates findings. Findings were cross-checked and the same information sought in different ways. The semi-structured interviews formed part of an iterative cycle of interview, analysis, evaluation and design for the next interview.

Thorough and accurate records and documentation, transcribing and recording what the informants said, endowed further rigour. Every step was meticulously documented, and analytical and reflective journals maintained. It was important that the process of enquiry was open and critical, and we kept an eye open for the tendency to simply find evidence for what we already believed. While recognising that it is not possible to be completely objective when carrying out any category of research as although personal biases may be limited, they can never be wholly expunged from the way events are recounted (Porter et al, 1991) the research team tried to be self-reflexive of its own positions and baggage.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations were taken into account when designing the research. The approach is based on respect and bestowing ownership on the community. This was spearheaded through the first meeting which was organised on the basis that the lead organisation, Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust is working in the area and has the trust of the community. Informed consent was gained before any research took place or data gathered and anonymity if required was respected. In order not to have a biased sample of women farmers, data was also collected from women...
who were not associated with the Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust.

In accordance with research ethics it was necessary for the research team to establish the purpose of the research with the informants before the interview. Also, it was important to establish the informants’ perceptions of our identities, namely members of the Women Farmers Land and Agriculture Trust and University of Zimbabwe lecturers. A disadvantage was that people probably had preconceived ideas about us; for example, thinking that we had come to bring donor money or farming inputs. It was important for the research team to be clear from the beginning on the purpose of the research and not raise false expectations.

It was found that informants at all levels were open and forth-coming in volunteering information, despite the highly politicised and polarised situation. The situation in Zimbabwe has been described as volatile and uncertain where sporadic and spontaneous outbursts and riots were likely (Addison and Laakso, 2003).

### Analysis of data

Transcribing the interviews was time-consuming as every detail was recorded, and analytical notes were made as appropriate. There was no clear point where data collection stopped and analysis began; rather there was a gradual fading out of one and fading in of the other. Principles and trends that underlie the material emerged and were sorted into themes and categories that were coded manually.

By means of coding, the data was broken down into labelled, meaningful pieces, which were then clustered. The clusters were then further analysed themselves and in relation to each other. The themes and sub-themes were explored and elaborated, capturing the finer nuances of meaning not captured in the original coding system. This process was assisted by information obtained from secondary sources.

The final stage of this inductive process was to enunciate the interpretation of the phenomenon studied. However, this was not the end, as the interpretation was scrutinised for weak points, contradictions, and any over-interpretation, which were rectified. It is not possible to be completely objective. Personal biases may be limited, but can never be wholly expunged from the way events are recounted (Porter et al, 1991) and no fact, idea or thought can ever be free from cultural bias (Clark, 1989, cited in Latham, 2001).
4. Research findings

Introduction

This section presents the research findings. For purposes of anonymity the names of the women interviewed have been changed. The section looks at the characteristics of the two research sites, the characteristics of the women farmers who participated in the study, how the women accessed land, issues of security of tenure, land utilisation, constraints to production and gender bias against women farmers in access to and utilisation of land.

The research sites

Goromonzi, lies in Natural or Agro-ecological Region II which is characterised by moderately high rainfall and normally enjoys reliable climatic conditions, making it suitable for specialised and diversified farming including pasture production. This Region is consequently responsible for approximately 90% of the nation’s crop production including the country’s staple food, maize, as well as important cash crops, tobacco, soya and cotton.

The study site in Vungu-Gweru District lies in Natural or Agro-ecological Region III which is characterised by medium rainfall that is subject to periodic seasonal droughts and prolonged dry spells during the rainy season. The Region is suitable for semi-intensive farming and livestock production. Vungu-Gweru District is ethnically mixed, made up of people of different cultural practices, a factor which may influence women’s participation in land use.

Table 5: Site characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Natural or Agro-ecological Region</th>
<th>Rainfall mm/yr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vungu-Gweru</td>
<td>Midlands</td>
<td>6 224</td>
<td>225 335</td>
<td>III and IV</td>
<td>500 – 750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goromonzi</td>
<td>Mashonaland East</td>
<td>2 459</td>
<td>178 227</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>750 – 1 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both sites research by WLZ (2006) showed that production levels of women farmers are generally lower than their male counterparts.
Resettlement farms and plots

In Goromonzi District women farmers were purposely sampled at eight farms, the majority of which have sandy soils suitable for tobacco. Three farms have relatively fertile red/black soils. None of the farms has a dam and only one has a functioning irrigation system.

In Vungu-Gweru, women farmers were also interviewed from eight farms.

The number of farmers and plots on each resettled farm varies depending on the agro-ecological region and type of resettlement. In one A1 resettlement scheme in Vungu-Gweru for example, there are 27 plots with 27 households. Regarding women in this resettlement scheme: 21 women are married and stay at the farm with their husbands, in whose names the farms are registered; 3 married women stay at the farm alone, but the farm is in their husband’s name; and 3 women have farms registered in their own names. Of the 27 people on the resettlement, 16 are ex-combatants, 5 of which are women.

Characteristics of the women farmers

This section looks at characteristics such as age, marital status, levels of education and socio-economic aspects of the women who participated in the research.

The sample size was 40 women farmers: 20 from Vungu-Gweru and 20 from Goromonzi. We targeted all women in the resettlements, but randomly selected 20 women per District. We had originally planned to have 10 A1 and 10 A2s from each District, but there were not enough A2 beneficiaries in the sample area, hence the sample had more A1 women farmers.

Table 6: Age of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from Table 6, the average age of the women farmers interviewed was between 40 and 50 years, with more than one quarter being over 50.
The majority of the women were married, but the data in Table 7 shows that there are a significant number of widows who accessed land. Some of these women were widowed after their husbands had accessed land. The single women tended to be older, either divorced or never married.

Table 8 shows that a relatively high percentage of women farmers, 52.5%, had at least two years of secondary education. This reflects the generally high educational levels across the country, rather than suggest that better educated women were able to access the land reform programme.
Table 9: Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic characteristics</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-communal farmer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil servants (Teacher, nurse, land or AREX officer)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupation (eg dressmaker)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-combatant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-commercial farm worker</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some women are categorised in more than one category, for example an ex-combatant can also be an ex-communal farmer or a teacher. As can be seen from Table 9, the majority of women came from Communal Areas.

Regarding ethnicity, Goromonzi was homogeneous as all the women were Shona. However, Vungu-Gweru was more mixed with Shona, Ndebele, Kalanga and Korekore.

On the majority of the farm plots the settlers have built mud and pole thatched huts, although a few have invested in brick houses. Generally, services are non-existent with little access to water and no sanitation facilities. This has serious implications for general health and more specifically child mortality and HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, there are no clinics or health service centres and very few schools on the resettlements. There are few roads which negatively impacts on transportation and marketing of produce.

Small gardens are common, both individual and community owned. However, water is a limiting factor and these gardens are only for household consumption. The women expressed a desire to have irrigated gardens so that they could do market gardening. One of the A1 resettlement schemes had a borehole but with no pump.

How women accessed land

This section looks at how women in the study accessed land, highlighting the various problems they faced. It begins with the jambanja period of farm invasions, as the research shows that women took an active part in the invasions. Some women went on to access land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and their experiences are recorded below. Ester’s narrative illustrates the experiences of jambanja.

The research indicates that a significant number of women who took part in the jambanja did not access land and although the research focuses on those women who did access land under the Fast Track, it is acknowledged that this is a matter of concern and needs further research. The pattern of access to land by women who participated in jambanja varies greatly throughout the country and reasons for failure to access land under the subsequent Land Reform Programme are many and complex. Although there are cases where everyone who participated in jambanja were resettled, as illustrated by Ester’s story in Box 1, literature and the research indicates that this was not always the case.

The next part of this section of how women accessed land concentrates on access under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme where beneficiaries formally applied for land and were allocated plots of land by the authorities, either through the District Administrator or the Ministry of Lands,
depending on the type of resettlement. This section looks at the allocating processes and authorities, followed by resettlement patterns of the women in the study, under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, including details of the resettlement model, land size, and date of access to the land. Several women’s narratives are used to illustrate the process of access which was difficult, characterised by perseverance, determination and often conflict.

This section on women’s access to land ends with the case study of Susan, which illustrates the on-going and dynamic nature of access, together with its associated problems of insecurity of tenure and conflict. It also illustrates the interconnectedness between informal jambanja and the official process of resettlement.

**Jambanja land invasions**

In Goromonzi District, those who invaded commercial farms consisted of small scale subsistence farmers from adjacent Communal Areas and ex-combatants. Initially, more women invaded the farms while their husbands stayed at home. However, as things got tougher and conditions more difficult, most of the women who participated at first gave up. About 90% of these jambanja invaders were allocated land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Those resettled were predominantly men with only approximately 10% of them women.

The women noted several instances in Goromonzi District where married couples successfully fought together for the land, but after they divorced, the woman lost her access to the plot. In such circumstances, most women gave up but a few did fight and some were able to get their own plots.

In one farm in Vungu-Gweru, the settlers invaded the farm in 2000 and divided the land up amongst themselves. The white farmer, who had five farms in the District tried to chase them away and went to court to try and get them removed. Eventually he was given another one of his farms to stay on. In 2001 the new plots on this farm were officially pegged by the Ministry of Lands and each new farmer got 25 hectares of arable land which has been described as the one of the best soils in the District.

The narrative in Box 1 illustrates the successful jambanja experiences of Ester, which resulted in her being resettled on an A2 farm.

**Box 1: Jambanja experiences of Ester**

‘I participated in jambanja and was resettled on an A2 farm plot under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. At the beginning of 2000, together with about 25 others, more women than men, we invaded a farm and occupied it for between three and four months. The objective was to frustrate the white farmer until he could no longer operate effectively and left, by such annoying activities as drumming, singing, whistling, dancing and lighting cooking fires in odd places like in front of the farmhouse. Eventually the commercial farmer left and the farm was divided into plots for resettlement. In our case, all of the invaders were allocated land, but not necessarily on the invaded farm. Everybody had to go through the resettlement application process, filling in forms, and some were allocated A2 plots like myself, whilst others preferred the A1 resettlement plots’.

‘Jambanja was well coordinated with organisational structures, dominated by war veterans, both men and women and all were treated as equals. Most, but not all, of the participating women were war veterans and chimbwidos (girls who helped during the war). Our group made sure that all the invaders got some land and we were antagonistic towards ‘outsiders’ who had not participated in jambanja but who were now undeservingly trying to jump on the band wagon and benefit from other’s struggles’.

The social, political and economic transformative impact of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme on the lives of women farmers in Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru Districts of Zimbabwe | page 23
The Fast Track Land Reform Programme application and allocation process

With the launch of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, designated commercial farm land was distributed to land resettlement applicants. The application process differs depending on whether it is for land under the A1 model, or A2 model.

For A1 allocation, predominantly communal farmers applied through the local leadership at the District Administrators Office. For A2 allocation, applications were in response to adverts in the local media. Forms were completed and applications submitted to the Provincial Offices. Before these were submitted to the Minister of Lands, District Land Committees also had to give approval in order for offer letters to be processed.

The District Land Committee
The District Land Committee is responsible for administration of demarcation of land and its allocation. The Committee is made up of District heads or representatives of: departments of Local Government, Lands, Agriculture, Rural Development, Environmental Management, Youth, Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development, War Veterans, political detainees, the District Development Committee and political parties. The Ministry of Lands is the Secretariat. The composition of the Committee is gender blind although, at the moment, in the case of Vungu-Gweru, there is a predominance of women heads of various departments.

The role of the Land Committee is to approve and process land applications for A1 model resettlements and recommend vacant A2 farms to the Ministry of Lands. The Committee also identifies potential A2 beneficiaries and makes recommendations to the Provincial Land Committee to the Minister of Lands. The Land Committee is also tasked with solving land disputes and inheritance issues.

Resettlement under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme
Under the A1 Model scheme there were two types of resettlement plots: villagised and self contained. Our research found that A1 plots in Vungu-Gweru were all self contained large plots of about 25 hectares, with land for individual grazing as well as cultivation, while in Goromonzi the plots were smaller, 6 hectares, with a communal grazing area. The different size A1 plots reflect rainfall and agricultural potential of the two Districts. Vungu-Gweru has lower rainfall and is more suitable for livestock.

Table 10: Land category of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land category</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 self contained</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1 villagized</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women’s Land Rights
Table 11: Land size of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Size (hectors)</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 ha</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>51-100</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>101-200</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Date of resettlement land of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date on land</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 shows that the majority of women accessed land in 2000 and 2001 at the beginning of the Fast Track. However, in intervening years land was still being accessed, mainly by A2 farmers. Our interviews also indicate that the procedures for applying for land also changed over time, usually associated with new allocations to ‘outsiders’, illustrating the varied and dynamic nature of the Fast Track.
The narratives of Chipo, Mary and Tendai below are stories of women professional women who accessed A2 farms under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme.

Box 2: Chipo’s experience of perseverance and pushing through

‘I am married, with one child, and work in a District government office. I have a three year certificate in Agriculture, a two year Diploma in Agriculture and a Degree in Agriculture.

I first applied for land in 2000 when the advert appeared in the national newspapers. It took me nearly four years to acquire land in which time I had gone to the Ministry of Lands almost every months to remind them about my application. I attribute my eventual success to the assistance of the Provincial Chief Lands Officer, who was a woman. The Provincial Chief Lands Officer helped me because I am a woman, and she also helped other women to get land.

‘It depends on who you know in the offices and you have to practice a lot of patience!’

Box 3: Mary’s experience of ‘knowing the system’

‘I am a single mother, with one child. I am a District Agronomist in the Ministry of Agriculture and have a Certificate, Diploma and Degree in Agriculture.

In 2002 I was allocated a small-scale 29 hectare A2 farm, 15 hectares of which is arable, while the rest is hilly. The soil is sandy. I attribute my allocation of land to the fact that at the time I was involved in the planning of A2 farms, together with senior politicians in the District who had influence. Because of my job, I knew the system and that without this knowledge and interaction I probably would not have got the farm. However, the access was not always easy as previously I had been in Chivu District and although I had applied for land in 2000, I got nothing. It was only after being transferred to Goromonzi and being involved with the land demarcation process that I was successful.

Box 4: Tendai’s determination to get land

‘I am a civil servant working in Harare, and had no problem with the application process. The forms were readily available and I submitted them to the Provincial Land Office. This process was made easier by the presence of another women war veteran who was in the Provincial Land Committee. A farm plan and cash flow were required, but it is not clear how much these were scrutinised as many people copied and pasted’ from a main source, adding individual details as necessary...

I exaggerated as I actually had nothing, but am very capable and was determined to get some land to farm on. Life is very challenging with lots of problems and I needed to supplement my income. My father and grandfather had small African purchase farms in a dry, infertile area. They used to produce cotton and maize.

I was allocated a 34 hectare plot of land, all arable, in an area of high agricultural potential on a farm that was divided into a number of smaller plots’.

Chipo, Mary and Tendai, all A2 beneficiaries, were in advantageous positions in that they had sound agricultural or technical backgrounds, were working in government departments and had access to more information than most other women who attempted to access land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. Nevertheless they still encountered problems, particularly delays in allocation, and even the so-called elite professional women and civil servants had to persevere and push themselves forward in a hostile, predominantly male system that was generally unsympathetic to women.

Jane, in Box 5, was so desperate for land that she identified and occupied a plot of land and started farming on it without an offer letter.
Box 5: Jane’s desperation for land made her settle without an offer letter

‘I am a widow, with one daughter and work in a District office. I have not received my offer letter yet, although I settled on the farm three years ago and am ploughing. The A2 farm is 69ha, most of it hilly, with 20 ha arable. The soil is red and fertile. As I don’t have an offer letter, I feel insecure. The District Council claimed that the land belonged to the Council, but apparently the issue has been now sorted out by the Head Office of the Ministry of Lands and I expect to get an offer letter soon’.

Jane’s story highlights the importance of working the land (similar to Alice’s case below) in order to improve security of tenure. Although Jane says she does not feel secure, she is obviously secure enough to make some investments (ploughing, time, inputs). Her position in the District Office gives her confidence and obviously puts her in a better position to be informed of the various power politics over land allocation.

An interesting theme that emerged was that women were helped by other women in authority, for example in the cases of Tendai and Chipo related above. Although this is anecdotal evidence, it suggests that women experience empathy between themselves in issues of land reform. At one of the stakeholder meetings between women farmers and state actors, the women requested a ‘gender desk’ at the Lands Office so that their cases would be heard sympathetically. The Provincial Land Officer who was present at the meeting agreed to initiate this.

Overall, 20% of the women interviewed were ex-combatants, indicating that there is a correlation between women’s access to land and participation in the liberation war, which ended 30 years ago. This is corroborated by information above about the women farmers’ ages, which shows that 27.5% were over 50.

In the case of A1 allocations, men and women were allocated the same size and land and soil quality. The farm house and farm buildings are communal property and used for meetings and administration. A2 farms are either complete former commercial farms or more usually sub-divisions of large former commercial farms. For example, a 500 hectare farm would be divided into five 100 hectare A2 farms. If the hub with the farm house and agricultural infrastructure was not retained by the former white farm owner, this was the most preferred and often fought over plot by the resettled A2 farmers. In some cases, the farm would have a number of houses and usually structures such as tobacco barns were shared. However, women beneficiaries of A2 farms that we interviewed complained that the subdivision allocated to men usually had the farm house and other farm infrastructure. For example, one women A2 beneficiary in Vungu-Gweru was allocated virgin land with no infrastructure, whilst her neighbour, a man, got the plot with the house and barns. She has since built a small house, kitchen and barn herself.

Most of the A1 beneficiaries are residing at the new settlement and they originate from nearby communal areas. The driving force was that their communal area home was too congested and they wanted more and better land to farm.

Susan’s story in Box 6 illustrates that the process of accessing and securing land was complex, fraught with uncertainties and difficulties. Through her determination and hard work she managed to overcome these problems.
Box 6: Susan’s story of determination, hard work and conflict

I am a 60 year old farmer. I have an A1 farm and the user permit is in my name. On June 15, 2002 as group we invaded a farm and on June 20, 2002 government orders were read and orders were given for us to be allocated land. We were made to pick pieces of paper from a hat. The papers had numbers on them. The number that one picked was the number of the plot we would be allocated. That same day we selected our Committee of Seven and the development committee. I took an axe that day and went and built a shelter from tree branches (kutema musasa) on my plot. I went back home and brought a pot and a blanket, from that day I have never left the farm. Sometimes the white farmer would come and threaten us to leave the farm. The white farmer was conniving with the then District Administrator who, in some way which we did not understand, gave the land back to the white farmer. The District Administrator told us if we did not want to leave we were going to be arrested. I was so angry that day I messed my pants. The white farmer did not stop there as he would let his cattle destroy our maize crops. I thought enough was enough and I confronted the farmer and told him I wanted my maize that his cattle had eaten. The white farmers ended up buying me 10kgs of fertilizer and 10kgs of maize seed as compensation.’

Security of tenure

Three tenure types prevailed on the Fast Track land reform farms: user permits were issued for A1 plots, and offer letters on A2 allocations. In principle, 99 year leases were also an option but none of the respondents in the research had secured this type of tenure. Characteristics of these tenure arrangements are described in Table 2.

Initially the offer letter or permit was only in the name of the applicant irrespective of marital status or gender. Since most applicants were men this became problematic for the woman on death of the husband or divorce. As a result of women’s interventions this has now been regularised. Now the official policy is that the offer letter will, for married couples, reflect both the husband and wife’s names and if one passes away the other spouse remains as owner of the farm. However, there are still a number of problems such as those who already have permits and offer letters need to have them formally revised. The research revealed several conflicts arising over inheritance issues, including the impact of customary practices.

On the whole, women felt that the offer letter is not enough security of tenure and they would like to have 99-year leases. They said, however, that they do not have any information about how to apply. During the stakeholder meeting, the Provincial Lands Officer explained the procedure to the women farmers. He explained that no 99 year leases were being processed at the moment due to lack of qualified surveyors who could sub-divide the farms.
Table 13: Land ownership (user permit, offer letter or lease)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Goromonzi</th>
<th>Vungu-Gweru</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g renting, squatting etc)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Land tenure of respondents

Source: WLAF & CASS, 2011
Cultural practices

Most of the married women’s husbands have user permits or offer letters. A few married women have permits or offer letters in their own names, such as Rutendo who, in 2006, was allocated a small-scale 20 hectare A2 farm with fertile arable land. ‘The offer letter is in my name, although my husband who is a retired teacher supports me and helps on the farm’. However, this is unusual as the majority of married women, even when they were the partner who made the initiative to acquire land, ended up having the offer letter written in their husband’s name, or both names. Chenai, a senior civil servant easily obtained land in her own name through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme application process. She attributed this to her position in government. Unfortunately, cultural practices had a negative influence upon Chenai’s initiative, as related below:

‘There was no peace in the home and my husband complained all the time about me having land in my own name and even threatened to divorce me. In our culture, when a woman dies her property goes back to her family. So in this case, my husband was bitter that my allocation would go to my brothers and not to him or our children. So in the end, for the sake of peace and my marriage, I gave in and put the land in the name of my son’.

It was observed that some of the married women who accessed land in their own right were actually wives in a polygamous marriage, and as such had more independence.

According to the married women, the single women are better off. Married women complain that their husbands control the land, making all the decisions and selling the produce, even though it is the women who work on the land. There was a case of a married woman whose husband was allocated a farm on which she farmed together with her husband. When they got divorced, the husband remained on that farm, but the ex-wife was allocated land elsewhere, as the Land Committee were sympathetic and recognised that she was the one who was doing most of the farming.

In the case of a husband dying, on both A1 and A2 resettlement schemes, even though the permit or offer letter is in the name of the man, the general practice in both Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru Districts is that the widow is allowed to stay on the farm. In such cases, the permit or offer letter is transferred into the widow’s name (See Rudo’s narrative in Box 7). This policy was reiterated by the Provincial Lands Officer and the District Administrators. The research found that the District and Provincial Land Committees have discretionary powers in solving land disputes and inheritance issues, and in the cases of Goromonzi and Vungu-Gweru these offices were gender sensitive. However, more empirical research is needed to determine whether it is a nation-wide occurrence.

Box 7: A widow’s story – keeping it in the family

‘My name is Rudo, and I am now a widow. My husband and I settled on this farm in 2001 during jambanja period. We were later that year allocated an A1 plot on this farm and it was unfortunate that my husband passed away that same year. I managed to register the plot in my own name. It was a difficult time for me with the hostile environment that characterised the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and having to run around looking for inputs and other farming resources. As a woman farmer I think I have done well for myself because I managed to build a homestead, I own a few goats and road runners (chickens). This farming season 2008/09 I planted tobacco, barley and maize. My sons are busy steaming tobacco using the traditional method of a drum and wood and we are expecting 10 bales. I am honoured to be a woman land owner and it has helped to look after my family after my husband passed away’.

Women’s Land Rights
Gender inequalities

Most of the women felt that an offer letter does not provide sufficient security of tenure. They feel that the letter can be withdrawn at any time, particularly if a ‘chief’ with clout, power and money is interested and wants the land. The research revealed a number of cases where women who had accessed land were elbowed out by men, as in the Chiedza’s case in Box 8.

**Box 8: Battle lost**

*My name is Chiedza and I was allocated an A2 farm and started agricultural activities. However, a very senior army officer wanted the farm and manoeuvred to get it, even though I had an offer letter and had been on the farm since 2002. Because I am an ex-combatant, I fought and persevered, and was allocated another farm in 2007, actually larger than the original one.*

Although men and women are both exposed to their land being ‘grabbed’ by powerful people, women feel more vulnerable. In the case of Chiedza, she challenged the status quo – but what about others who could not?

A female senior government official actor described instances of ‘victimization of women, sexual harassment and name-calling, creation of artificial scandals and rumours done to make women leave their pieces of land. Women are at the mercy of the Land Committees to assist them and this depends who is leading whether they would assist or not’. She advised that there is need for a ‘secure’ tenure form for women so that their rights are not derived or secured by the presence of a husband. The practice as well as policy should be enough to protect women’s rights.

**Box 9: Rumbie’s experience of double allocation**

*I am a 48 year old farmer and my husband is in town working to supplement the family income. We invaded a farm (jambanja) together in 2000 and were allocated land and were given an offer letter. When we went to the plot someone else came with an offer letter saying the land was his. We only slept one night at the plot and the villagers had already told us someone else owned that land. Our offer letter was taken and given to the Land Committee who told us to come on a certain date to resolve the matter. Unfortunately, the composition of the Land Committee was changed before our given date so when we went back we were told that the committee had changed and that the new committee did not know anything about our issue and therefore could not assist us. The other owners of the plot are still at the plot. My husband and I went back to the District Administrator who told us that we are supposed to get land and that we are on the waiting list. I still have hope and will go back to the lands office until we get land. This time the offer letter should have both mine and my husband’s name. In the meantime, we have settled and farm on a plot belonging to someone who lives in town and does not want to live on the plot*.  

Box 9 describes the plight of a couple who experienced double allocation of a resettlement plot.
Land utilisation

Production records
Although the research did not involve a production survey, some indication of production levels amongst the women farmers was obtained, illustrated in Box 10. In all cases, there is a gradual, but marked increase with time, but also all are not utilising the land optimally.

Box 10: Farm production in Goromonzi

Chipo plants mainly maize and her production record indicates that there has been a gradual increase in both area planted and production of maize over the three years of resettlement. Apart from maize, Chipo also planted 0.5 ha of sugar beans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area planted with maize (ha)</th>
<th>Yield (tonnes)</th>
<th>Ton/Ha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0 (clearing and land preparation)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18-30 (expected yield)</td>
<td>3 – 5 (estimated)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mary has a 29 ha A2 farm, 15 ha of which is arable. Her production record for the previous season (2008/9) indicates that the majority of arable land is being utilized. Mary’s yield per ha varies, and the highest yield that she has attained so far is 3 tonnes/ha for maize and 1.7 tonnes/ha for tobacco. Her average tobacco yield is 800 kg per hectare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Area planted (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jane is currently cultivating 10 ha out of 20 ha of arable land. Last year, 2008, she cultivated 3ha. She grows maize and winter wheat and also does some horticulture. Last year she grew peas under a contract with company called Exhort, but she has not yet been paid by them for the produce. She has also cultivated 1 ha of potatoes and made a profit.
Alice’s narrative in Box 11 illustrates how a women farmer progressed from a small plot to a larger one mainly due to her production record in a region of relatively low agricultural potential. She has become a role model inspiring and assisting other women farmers in the area.

Box 11: An achiever

‘My name is Alice, I am a single lady and the farm is in my name. The 2008/09 season was successful, I made people realize that poverty can be alleviated through farming and their standards of living can improve through hard work and practice of good farming methods. I produced 55 tonnes of maize sold to the Grain Marketing Board, 10 tonnes for household food security, 4 tonnes ground nuts, 2 tonnes round nuts, 6 bags rapoko, 6 bags sugar beans and plenty sweet potatoes’.

It was in February 2000 when I went to jambanja (farm invasions); I stayed at the farm for two years until demarcation started in 2002 and I was allocated an A1, 50 hectare plot. That year I planted 5 ha of maize with seed procured from a government programme that was meant to assist resettled farmers in the form of a loan where repayment was to be done after harvest during 2002/03 season. I produced 7 tonnes maize, 5 bags sugar beans, 10 bags ground nuts and managed to pay back the loan.

During the 2004/05 season I ploughed 10 ha maize and I produced higher yields than before with 15 tonnes of maize and 5 tonnes of small grain. In the 2005/06 season I produced 25 tonnes of maize and sold 20 tonnes to the Grain Marketing Board. This gave me confidence to apply for an A2 farm. The Land Committee considered my application after seeing the Grain Marketing Board receipts which were attached to my application. In December 2006 I was allocated an A2 farm of 150 hectares, a sub-division of a former commercial farm.

The farm was virgin land so I had to start from scratch; I sold my house in town to pay for clearing the land in preparation of the rainy season. Unfortunately the 2006/07 season was not favourable and the rainfall was erratic. However I managed to produce 10 tonnes of maize and 5 tonnes was sold to the Grain Marketing Board. I exchanged 2.5 tonnes with 4 heifers, 2 goats and 10 road runners (chickens).

Since the farm had no infrastructure I had to make arrangements with my neighbour, a male farmer who had a borehole, to take water from his borehole. In 2008 my neighbour changed his mind and refused me to take water from his borehole. This made me work hard to raise funds for drilling my own borehole. The borehole was drilled without any donations. Due to scarcity of funds I have been unable to buy an engine/pump or head cylinder rods and pipes for the borehole to function.

A common thread running through most of the women’s narratives is that of determination and commitment in acquiring and utilising land. Women like Alice are able to made investments and she is increasing her yields. Nevertheless, she also experiences the lack of water as a major setback.

Constraints to production

The majority of the women farmers are experiencing viability problems. In Zimbabwe, commercial farmers in areas of sufficient rainfall and with adequate inputs using high yielding hybrid seed, fertiliser, mechanisation and efficient management can obtain between 8-12 tonnes a hectare. The informal ‘Ten Tonne Club’ is comprised of such farmers. Farmers in Communal Areas where the soil is exhausted, rainfall erratic, no rotation of crops, lack of draught power and mechanisation and without adequate inputs obtain yields of between 1-2 tonnes per hectare. Yields on resettlement farms are variable depending on the level of mechanisation and inputs. Some newly resettled A2 farmers now belong to the Ten Tonne Club, but the majority are currently obtaining yields of 4-5 tonnes per hectare. These sub-optimal yields are due to partial mechanisation, delayed planting times, and incomplete inputs particularly fertiliser. Very few of the women A2 farmers interviewed in both Districts were commercially viable, with an exception of the case of Alice (Box 11). Few, if any, realised profits. At most the farms enhanced food security for their families. Viability problems were given as the main reason why the land is not being fully utilised. Some of the problems encountered are listed below:
5. Lack of water for irrigation
Rainfall patterns are erratic, even in Goromonzi with relatively higher rainfall. Vungu-Gweru is in an Agro-ecological region deemed unsuitable for rain-fed agriculture. All women farmers in the study relied on rain-fed agriculture. None had working irrigation. Some had irrigation equipment that was not functional, or boreholes without pumps.

6. Lack of traction to plough
None of the women had tractors and had to rely on ox or donkey drawn ploughs. Some women hired tractors, either from the District Development Fund as was the case in Goromonzi, or privately from other farmers.

In 2007 the Government of Zimbabwe embarked on a mechanisation project which was managed by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe where farm equipment, including tractors, harrows, planters, hoes and other equipment were to be distributed to newly resettled farmers. The programme was ad hoc hence distribution was not systematic and the criteria for entitlement were not clear. As a result most women did not get anything and this negatively impacted upon their productivity.

Several women indicated that a tractor would make a significant difference to increasing production. One woman pointed out that ‘it takes five days to plough (with an animal-drawn plough) a field which would take only a few hours with a tractor. The donkeys that we have are slow and very stubborn; this is a major challenge to our farming activities’.

Asked why the women did not get anything, the women pointed out that they were not financially empowered to give kickbacks. Furthermore, the women believe that they did not benefit from the mechanisation programme as they were ‘segregated because of gender’. A2 women farmers from Vungu-Gweru lobbied the Provincial authority but with no success. They lamented ‘we are not recognised as women farmer; they do not take us seriously’.

7. Lack of inputs: seeds and fertiliser
In the last few years, both seed and fertiliser have been difficult to procure. Often they were not available, and when they were prices were often prohibitive. In particular, the women complained that fertiliser is very expensive. They had compared the cost in Zimbabwe with other countries and found that the cost of one bag was almost five times more than in neighbouring countries. The women pointed out that it was actually cheaper to buy maize from South Africa than to grow it in Zimbabwe.

8. Problems with labour
Labour is in short supply or expensive. Ex-commercial farm workers are employed on a temporary basis. Weeding is the most labour-intensive farming activity.

9. Problems with marketing
The women farmers in Goromonzi lamented that the marketing of their crops was very frustrating as prices for produce were low, while inputs were expensive. The money received from the produce is less than the cost of inputs. They cited that in the current situation, 4 tonnes of maize were needed to buy inputs for 1 ha, which is absurd as their yield per ha is well below 4 tonnes, instead more like 1-1.5 tonnes.

A passion for farming
When asked then why they do farm, given all the problems, the women said that they have a passion for farming, and hope that one day it will get better. For most of them, this is theoretical, because the research indicates that few women have been economically empowered so far. They all agreed that at the household level, having a farm improved the families’ food security and nutrition. The women explained that it is the responsibly of women to provide food for the family.

Given the numerous limitations, including lack of adequate resources and equipment the women farmers were not reaching their potential as they could not afford to plant all the land that they had been allocated. Under these circumstances, they did not require more land as they were not fully utilising the land they had. However, all the women were univocal in that if they had equipment and the required resources they would like to farm more land, and those women who were employed indicated that they would prefer to take up
farming on a full-time basis, as at present, they still need to work to survive.

Gender bias against women farmers in access to and utilization of land

Although the women farmers faced the same problems as men, such as bureaucracy and delays in allocation, for women these problems were magnified. Men tended to have fewer problems because their problems were heard more easily. People do not tend to take women farmers seriously, and they have to prove themselves. Despite the fact that women participated in *jambanja* alongside their male counterparts, the women were marginalised by the system which was not gender sensitive. Some felt that their male neighbours looked down on them. They cited the case of poaching their workers. One of the women had recently had her farm manager taken by her male neighbour.

‘You have to be aggressive and strong – you have to act like a man and not give up’.

Woman’s positionality and status also affects attitudes towards them. Usually single women are not taken as seriously as married women. Furthermore, age appears to be a determining factor. For example, an older widow would get help, while a young one would not.

Although the women farmers did not have fields in the Communal Lands, their parents farmed in Communal Lands and they were proud of their daughters having land under the Land Reform and Resettlement scheme. The parents and families are generally supportive and come to help their daughters working on the new farms.

The women also thought that they were prejudiced against regarding assistance with irrigation facilities from the Ministry of Water. The Irrigation Departments provides a full set of equipment to selected new farmers. However, although all the women had applied, only men were assisted. The perception of the women is that the male beneficiaries bribed the officers responsible with money and beasts. ‘It’s a matter of who you know’. The women felt bitter about the general discrimination against women when it comes to support, equipment and inputs for farming and the corruption involved. They gave another example of the Heifer Scheme, where out of 33 heifers; only 4 were allocated to women. In fact, in the end, only 3 went to women, because one of the women had no transport to collect the animal, which was then reallocated (to a man).

When asked if anyone is championing women farmers, one woman replied ‘only God! People are out for themselves only’. Regarding the Ministry responsible for women’s affairs, the women said ‘they are there but are non-existent’. This indicates that there is obviously a vacuum here that needs to be addressed by women’s agency.
10. Lessons learnt: Coping strategies, overcoming the barriers

There were a number of identified coping strategies that women farm beneficiaries use. When the women were resettled they lost the support of the extended family and social networks. The research found that the A1 resettlements had a relatively high degree of cohesiveness and the farmers had formed strong social support networks within the resettlement schemes. On the other hand, the A2 farmers are more individual and scattered.

There were several instances of ‘women helping other women’, in particular with allocation and access, farming equipment, sourcing of inputs and marketing. Through these co-operative support networks, women have been able to get mobilise agricultural extension workers to provide them with technical knowledge and information.

Although perceptions of tenure security are not strong, some of the women had shown that this could be strengthened by working hard and having a good production record. It is harder to remove a productive farmer than one who is not productive. This sentiment was also expressed by the Provincial Governor and other state actors. Therefore it is important that women farmers are provided with the means to produce as this will enhance their security on the land and protect their rights to land.

It is now widely acknowledged that the reality on the ground is that it is women farmers who produce most of the food in Africa (The Guardian Weekly editorial, 7 August 2009). Women can be the agents of food security and development in the future but only if they are given training, resources, support systems and decent prices for their products.
11. Recommendations

In light of these research findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Capacity building: More training for women farmers, in various aspects of farm management such as planting regimes, crop rotations, storage facilities, costing and pricing, equipment maintenance, labour management, product marketing. The research indicates that women farmers have a relatively high level of education with 52.5% having secondary level education, and all having primary level education. This education will make it easier for women to be trained to be more productive.

2. Security of tenure: Make available inputs and farm equipment and machinery to women farmers not only to enhance their production, but to increase their security of tenure. Although an improved legal framework is needed, our research shows that there are other factors – rather more unconventional that determine security of tenure in a fluid, unpredictable situation such that exists in Zimbabwe today. Furthermore, in Zimbabwe there is no definite security of tenure – the Fast Track Land Reform Programme illustrates that freehold is actually one of the weakest forms of tenure while customary is perhaps the strongest at the moment. Therefore, our analysis is that besides legal instruments, other issues, such as productivity are important for improving security of tenure.

3. Agricultural resources: There is need to look for specific agricultural support for women, such as financial packages, information and education, extension services, subsidised infrastructure and mechanisation.

4. Policy framework: Develop a policy framework that privileges women as a result of their simultaneous marginalisation and dominant role in crop production, particularly when it comes to inputs and other related farming resources. Establish a ‘gender desk’ in government offices to give effect to this privileging.

5. Women’s agency: Build rural women’s organisations so that they can act as their own agents of change with respect to farming and food security.

6. Further research: More research to find out if the finding from the small sample is representative of a wider picture. The findings indicate that although state rhetoric is generally progressive and gender sensitive, the situation on the ground is more complex and different women under different conditions continue to be losers, marginalised and victims of patriarchal attitudes. More investigation into what happened to those women who did not access land and reasons why women did not take up the land or left land that they had been given are needed.
12. Next steps

There is need to keep up the momentum and build on the gains that have been realised from the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. These windows of opportunity have to be recognised and maximised.

The role of women’s agency is seen as:

- Creating new spaces for women’s organisations: there is need for a powerful collective women’s voice which represents interests of the women farmers instead of continuing to work in those spaces which are dominated by men.

- Capacitating the existing collective action of women into a formidable force that champions the interests and causes of women farmers in order to leverage benefits from both the public and private support.

- Enhancing security of tenure for women by lobbying for, initiating and participating in the process of the upcoming land audit in order to ensure that women’s issues are heard and planned for.

- Ensuring that Government and International NGO’s farmer support programmes are gender sensitive and benefit women farmers.

- Creating new spaces for women to negotiate access resources and assets outside of state and custom, which have systematically disadvantaged them for a long-time.
References


Our Mission
A global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

Our Vision
Secure and equitable access to and control over land reduces poverty and contributes to identity, dignity and inclusion.

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Its overarching aim was to learn from women and respond to their needs through action-oriented research. The purpose of the research carried out under this project was not only to provide an evidence-base for advocacy on women’s rights, but also to strengthen the research and advocacy capacity of civil society organizations, and to build a platform to advocate for a transformative agenda that supports rural poor women to improve their access to and control over land and other natural resources, including the building of linkages with the wider advocacy relationships and programmes of the ILC.

This report is part of a wider initiative on Women’s Land Rights (WLR). If you would like further information on the initiative and the collaborating partners, please feel free to contact the International Land Coalition.