



Livelihoods after Land Reform in Zimbabwe

Working Paper 10

Farmer Groups, Collective Action and Production
Constraints: Cases from A1 Settlements in
Goromonzi and Zvimba

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June 2010

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Working Paper Series

The land reform that has unfolded in Zimbabwe since 2000 has resulted in a major reconfiguration of land use and economy. Over 7 million hectares of land has been transferred to both small-scale farm units (the A1 model) and larger scale farms (the A2 model). The land reform has had diverse consequences, and there is no single story of what happened and its implications.

The Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK), the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, South Africa), the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS, Harare), the Centre for Applied Social Sciences Trust (CASS Trust, Harare) and the Ruzivo Trust (Harare) came together to support a small grant competition aimed at generating new case study insights based on original and recent field research by young Zimbabwean scholars. The aim was to bring together solid, empirical evidence from recent research in the field. There were over 70 applicants, and 15 small grants were offered. The result is this Working Paper series. All papers have been reviewed and they have been lightly edited. In all cases however they remain work-in-progress.

Today policymakers are grappling with the question of ‘what next’? How can a new agrarian structure be supported, and a vibrant rural economy be developed? Yet such discussions are often taking place in a vacuum, with limited empirical data from the ground and overshadowed by misperceptions and inappropriate assumptions. We hope this series – together with the wider research work being undertaken by our organisations and partners – will help to enhance policy making through a solid evidence base.

As these papers clearly show, there have been highly varied impacts of the post-2000 land reform: on rural livelihoods, on agricultural production, on markets and the economy, on farm workers and employment, on the environment and on institutions and governance arrangements, for example. And these impacts have played out in very different ways in different places. These papers cover a range of themes and offer insights from across the country.

They add up to a complex picture, but one that offers key pointers for the way forward. They counter the excessively pessimistic picture often painted about Zimbabwe’s land reform, yet highlight important failings and future challenges. We very much hope that they are widely read and shared, with the insights made use of as Zimbabwe charts its way forward.

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The small grant competition was coordinated through the Livelihoods after Land Reform research programme (www.larl.org.za).

Summary

Fast track land reform led to the restructuring of agrarian relations in Zimbabwe. This paper explores the emerging forms of local agency on selected A1 farms in Goromonzi and Zvimba. It analyses how A1 beneficiaries have formed local farmer groups (LFGs) and the extent to which these have contributed towards relieving farm production challenges that include the unavailability of productive assets, limited household labour and unavailability of inputs. Through case studies of local farmer groups this paper manages to examine the internal dynamics of local agency, the nature of participation and the extent to which these formations actually provide a relief to members and provide the first line of defence of the newly found land rights. The findings provide important clues regarding social organisation and agency in a context where lineage forms of organisation do not exist and in most cases 'strangers' from different places have been resettled next to each other.

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Acronyms

AIAS	African Institute for Agrarian Studies
AREX	Department of Agricultural Research and Extension
DDF	District Development Fund
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
LFGs	Local Farmer Groups
LSCF	Large Scale Commercial Farming
PLRC	Presidential Land Review Committee
SSCF	Small Scale Commercial Farming
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front Party
ZFU	Zimbabwe Farmers’ Union
ZDLIC	Zvimba District Land Identification Committee

Introduction

The fast track land reform programme brought about a fundamental reorganisation of rural relations in Zimbabwe, changing the landscape in an irreversible way, with land beneficiaries, who were mostly strangers from each other and from diverse backgrounds, converging on former white owned farms. This paper tells the story of how the newly resettled land beneficiaries are organising themselves in a context of inadequate access to farm inputs, insufficient productive assets per beneficiary household and insecure land rights characterised by threats of eviction by neighbouring A2 farmers. The paper analyses the complex ways in which A1 land beneficiaries have established local farmer groups (LFGs) as response to the austere economic environment and the attendant shortages. Through brief but comprehensive case studies from Goromonzi and Zvimba, the discussion analyses the emergence of local farmer groups operating at village level. The local farmer groups (LFGs) under study are usually,

...associations of persons who have voluntarily joined together to achieve a common objective through the formation of a democratically controlled organisation, making equitable contribution to the capital required and accepting a fair share of the risks and benefits of the undertaking (Hussi et al. 1993:13)

The discussion that follows will, through four case studies, demonstrate how the newly formed local farmer groups are contributing towards the improved access to farm inputs and how they are providing a framework for the joint utilisation of productive infrastructure found on the former large scale farms. As part of a response to a decline in farm inputs and inadequate food supplies, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) in 2004 introduced the inputs subsidy programme. However the programme was poorly implemented and in most cases A1 farmers were excluded from the subsidies. The few that managed to access inputs under the programme highlighted the fact that the inputs were mostly inadequate, covering an average of 0.5 to 1 hectare per farmer. Besides the limited quantities the inputs have rarely been delivered on time. The case studies reveal the tenuous nature of relations with neighbouring A2 farmers and how local farmer associations are mobilising against the threats of evictions by the former.

The attempts by the land beneficiaries to establish associational forms is part of the initial steps towards addressing broader issues of distribution and long term economic sustainability. Their emergence provides important insights into emerging social relations of production and this is critical for any external interventions to consider as an initial entry point into nurturing farm production and other livelihood enhancing strategies. Although these groups are at a nascent stage, it would be an equally barren methodology that fails to appreciate their significance and the clues their formations provide to understanding how social organisation and collective action are evolving in the newly resettled areas. The paper analyses whether the emergence of LFGs has contributed towards improved social reproduction amongst those involved.

Background

Broader context of resettlement

The FTLRP coincided with and to a certain extent fuelled Zimbabwe's worst economic performance crisis. It was characterised by a 40 percent decline in GDP (World Bank 2006), a rate of inflation that had

been rising since 2000 and reached its highest at more than 1500 percent in 2008 (CSO 2008) and acute foreign currency shortages. The economic meltdown has also been associated with the shrinking of industrial activity, through the closure of many manufacturing concerns and downsizing of some, and consequent high unemployment rates (estimated to be in the range of 70 percent of the total labour force). The economic decline has affected the social reproduction capacities of both urban and rural households. Formal sector urban employment shrunk from 3.6 million in 2003 to 480 000 in 2008 (*Mail and Guardian, 18 January 2009*) and even those who have managed to retain their jobs are in most cases receiving wages that are below the poverty datum line, mostly eroded by the hyperinflationary environment.

The newly resettled households face farm production constraints that range from draught power shortages to unavailability and non-affordability of agricultural production inputs, such as seeds, fertilisers and agrochemicals. Prior to fast track, Zimbabwe was self-sufficient in terms of hybrid seed and fertiliser production. In fact it was the only country in Sub Saharan Africa besides South Africa which had the capacity to produce treated seeds and fertilisers adequate for domestic use and exports. However, the post- 2000 shortages of foreign currency, compulsory acquisition of seed producing farms and price controls on agro-inputs contributed to a near collapse of the agro-inputs industry. For instance production figures from the Zimbabwe Fertiliser Producers Association show that the industry in 1999 produced a total of 504,614 metric tonnes of fertiliser but by 2007 total output had been reduced to 166,238 metric tonnes (Murisa and Mujeyi 2008:12). In response to the deficit the GoZ has since 2004 been importing from neighbouring South Africa and direct injections of foreign currency into the local industry to boost production have been limited (ibid: 3). Furthermore, following the inception of the FTLRP in 2000 the proportion of commercial bank loans to the agricultural sector declined from a peak of 71 percent (of total loans issued by the banks) in 1999 to 14 percent in 2003 (ibid: 17). Prior to the FTLRP, the irrigated area per farm averaged 100ha in the large scale commercial farmers (LSCF) sub-sector while in the smallholder sub-sector it ranged between 0.1 and 2 ha. In the aftermath of the fast track programme the area under operational irrigation declined significantly by 35 percent (Makadho et al. 2006).

The context described above provides a compelling research agenda to understand how the newly resettled A1 beneficiaries are able to defend their livelihoods under such austere circumstances. Moreso in a context where previous knowledge on the cooperativism and welfarism embedded within the lineage framework does not necessarily apply given that most instances of resettlement were characterised by the allocation of land to people with no previous autochthonous linkages.

Recent studies by Murisa (2007; 2009) and Masuko (2009) have found that associationalism within farmer groups is one of the defensive strategies being adopted by land beneficiaries. Even though beneficiary selection did not emphasise lineage links, the newly resettled beneficiaries have set about establishing networks of cooperation that include structured local farmer groups in the few years of being settled together (Murisa 2009:194). A household survey carried out by the AIAS in 2006-07 found that approximately 40 percent of the resettled households (both A1 and A2) belong to such farmer groups (see Table 1 below)

Table 1: Membership of a Local Group

Membership	Goromonzi				Zvimba				Total	
	A1		A2		A1		A2			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Belongs to a local group	206	40.5	31	37.4	81	40.3	33	35.1	351	39.7
Does not belong to a group	302	59.5	52	62.6	120	59.7	61	64.9	535	60.3
Total	508		83		201		94		886	

Source: AIAS (2005/06) Zvimba and Goromonzi District Household Surveys

*117 Respondents did not answer the question

The LFGs under discussion consist of formations that include all the resettled members settled on a former large scale farm and multiple smaller farmer groups operating within one former large scale farm. As part of an effort at formalisation the groups under study have come up with their own constitutions which spell out the objectives of the group, its activities, conditions of membership and the different roles of office bearers. Membership levels vary from as low as ten (Goromonzi) to as high as 75 (Zvimba).

These groups serve a variety of purposes ranging from lobbying for improved distribution of inputs, mobilisation of savings amongst members, joint use of infrastructure and defending the newly acquired land rights. The most common activities carried out by the groups include mobilisation of resources such as savings, advancing loans, labour and asset pooling for production, and marketing of farm products (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Activity and Number of Groups Involved

Activities*	Goromonzi		Zvimba		Total	
	No. (19)	%	No. (14)	%	No. (33)	%
Savings	6	31.5	7	50.0	13	39.3
Accessing loans from institutions	9	47.4	5	35.7	14	42.4
Infrastructure sharing	3	15.8	4	28.6	7	21.2
Production (labour and asset mobilisation)	8	42.1	8	57.1	16	48.5
Extension (technical advisory services)	2	10.5	3	21.4	5	15.2
Social work group	3	15.8	3	21.4	6	18.2
Marketing of Agricultural Commodities	5	26.3	6	42.8	11	33.3

Source: AIAS (2005/6) Household Survey, Goromonzi and Zvimba Districts N=886

*multiple response analysis

The AIAS Goromonzi and Zvimba household survey provided the initial evidence of the existence of these localised groups and the basis for the selection of groups for further and deeper study. The survey identified fourteen groups in Zvimba and nineteen in Goromonzi (Murisa 2007:42). The farmer groups selected for further case study analysis provide an opportunity for a more indepth understanding of the different circumstances that lead to their formation, their activities, levels of membership and the different criteria used for membership selection. The following section discusses the emergence of local farmer groups on four former large scale farms in Goromonzi and Zvimba ever since their conversion into A1 schemes through the fast track resettlement process.

Goromonzi and Zvimba in brief

Goromonzi is 32km south east of the country's capital, Harare. The total population of Goromonzi district is estimated to be 200 000 (CSO Census 2000). The district is further divided into 25 smaller administrative units called 'wards' or 'intensive conservation areas' (ICAs) and Bromley is one of the ICAs. The total land size of Bromley is 40 000 ha and it straddles NR IIa and IIb¹. There are approximately 1 602 households in Bromley with an average membership of four (CSO 2000). The area normally enjoys reliable rainfall conditions and rarely experiences severe dry spells in summer (Jiri 2007). The region is suitable for intensive systems of farming based on crop or livestock production. Bromley is traditionally a crop growing area; the common crops include maize, soya beans, sugar beans, ground nuts, potatoes, tobacco and wheat. Prior to land reform, limited animal husbandry existed, mostly for dairy purposes. The introduction of economic reforms in the 1990s saw some large scale commercial farmers introducing horticulture as a new land use pattern in conformity with the export led growth focus of the prevailing economic dogma. Moyo (2000:68) found that the majority of the farmers in Bromley made the switch to horticultural production and they were producing vegetables and flowers for the export market. The switch to horticulture and the attendant technological and infrastructural developments led to an actual decrease in the amount of land devoted to crop production. Prior to the redistribution under the fast track reform, there were 38 large scale commercial farms and there had been no other land redistribution in the area since independence. Currently there are 1 382 A1 units and 2 319 A2 units in the area, making a total of 21 625 beneficiaries (Goromonzi AREX Office 2008). There are no customary tenure areas within Bromley (PLRC 2003). Two former large scale farms in the Bromley area were identified for study.

Banket is an ICA within the Zvimba district which is part of Mashonaland West Province. The population of Zvimba is estimated to be 220 000 (CSO Census 2000) and the district lies in natural region IIa. Before the resettlement programme land use patterns included staple cereals such as maize amongst both the LSCF, small scale commercial farm (SSCF) and communal areas. Livestock production for both the beef and dairy industry was common across sectors but dairy production was more prevalent amongst the LSCF. Other LSCF land use patterns included flue cured tobacco, wheat and soya beans (Muir 1994). Similarly land use patterns changed towards horticultural production during adjustment years. Prior to fast track resettlement there were 41 large scale farms in Banket ward; 16 of these have been subdivided into A1 farm units and 25 into A2 farms. Land use patterns have not changed significantly since resettlement but there has been a production decline in crops such as tobacco, wheat and maize.

Cases

Small local farmer groups at Dunstan Farm

Origins

Dunstan farm in Goromonzi district was converted into an A1 settlement of 115 households in 2001. Initially one local farmer group called Budiro was established at Dunstan farm with 64 members (based on interviews with Extension Officer, September 2008 and focus group discussions held at Dunstan

¹ Zimbabwe is divided into five natural regions or agro-ecological zones. The first three (I-III) are suitable for intensive agriculture, while the other two (IV-V) are only suitable for limited extensive agriculture (heavily reliant on irrigation) and livestock and game ranching.

Farm, September and October 2008). The group faced challenges in convening meetings and even in agreeing within the group on the actual objective of association². Based on advice from the extension officer the group was split into smaller units, on the basis of preferred land use to enable easier organisation, extension support and financing arrangements³. In 2004 the group was subdivided and four groups for those interested in growing maize, Budiro (Shona for development/progress), Muswiti (named after the river that passes by the farm), Dunstan and Shingai (Shona for resilience) were eventually formed. Table 3 (below) provides a summary of the groups that exist at Dunstan. Out of the 115 official beneficiaries, 71 (61 percent) belong to such associational forms. Four out of five local groups were initially established to enhance maize production capacity.

Table 3: Local Farmer Groups at Dunstan Farm

Name	Land Use	Year of Formation	Total in Group	Number Interviewed
Budiro	Maize	2003	10	10
Muswiti	Maize	2004	15	15
Salt-Lakes	Tobacco	2005	16	16
Dunstan	Maize	2004	10	0
Shingai	Maize	2004	16	0
Gutsaruzhinji	Tobacco	2006	14	0
Total			81	41

Source: Author (2008) Goromonzi and Zvimba, LFG Households Survey

Only seven households have consistently grown tobacco since 2002 and these pioneered the establishment of Salt-Lakes⁴ local farmer group in 2005. The group has sixteen members and on average each member devotes 2 hectares of their plot to growing tobacco. There were others who ventured into tobacco growing late and could not enter Salt-Lakes because of the binding agreement that had been made with the multinational tobacco company on the number of farmers to be within the group and the amount of inputs to be supplied. These households formed Gutsaruzhinji in 2006 which also focuses on tobacco growing but without the same contract farming relationship that the members of the Salt-Lakes group currently have.

The formation of the local farmer groups in Goromonzi is mostly in response to the interventions of the local extension officer except for Salt-Lakes whose origins derive from the contract farming model established by the multinational company of the same name. The initial impetus for association in Salt-Lakes' local farmer group came from the Salt-Lakes Ltd multinational's local representative and one of the current leaders pioneered the initiative of setting up the group. Another pull factor for associational activity and growing of tobacco was the promised improvement in access to tobacco inputs and the reduced burden of marketing the crop. Under the agreement all the tobacco produced by the members is sold to the multinational on the basis of prevailing tobacco auction floor prices.⁵

² Dunstan focus group discussion notes 01/08, September 2008

³ Interviews with Bromley area Extension Officer and Budiro Maize Group Chairperson, June 2009.

⁴ Salt Lakes is a multinational tobacco company that entered into an agreement with a consortium of mainly A2 farmers growing tobacco. Within the consortium one of the leading A2 farmers also acts as an agent for A1 farmers interested in growing tobacco.

⁵ Interview with Chairperson of Salt-Lakes LFG, September 2008

Activities of the local farmer groups at Dunstan

The majority of the local farmer groups at Dunstan have been established in order to improve the accessibility of farm inputs. Salt-Lakes' farmer group is the only group that is focused on ensuring that members get fair prices for their product. Since their formation, all the groups have managed to register formally with the local extension office based at the Goromonzi service centre, which also acts as the centre for the distribution of inputs within the district. The groups submitted their constitutions and lists of members as part of the registration process⁶. The groups have managed to secure limited quantities of inputs for their members.

Beyond the acquisition of farm inputs, all the groups based at Dunstan have introduced joint savings as a core activity of the group. They have opened joint savings accounts with the local branch of Agri-Bank. Since 2005, the local Agri-Bank branch has been issuing short term micro-credit loans for the purchase of inputs under the Strategic Grain Reserve Facility to local farmer groups that maintain savings accounts⁷. The leadership of the groups was tasked with ensuring 100 percent repayment of the loan to the bank. Muswiti and Salt-Lakes farmer groups were among the first recipients of the loans. In December 2006 Muswiti farmer group was issued with a loan of ZW\$5,040,000.00 (approximately US\$ 1,000.00) for the purchase of inputs which was to be repaid by September 2007.⁸ According to the leader of the Muswiti local farmer group, the amount was not given as cash but the bank assisted them in obtaining seed maize and fertilisers. Each member of the group received two 50kg bags of seed maize and two 25kg bags of fertiliser. The group managed to repay the loan by the end of June 2006 when the members had sold their maize to the GMB and a private milling company.⁹

The relationship between Agri-Bank and local farmer groups thrived from 2005 until the end of 2007. During this period other groups such as Salt-Lakes also managed to acquire loans to purchase farm inputs for two consecutive seasons but during the 2007/08 farming season the bank could not issue any loans. The reasons for the discontinuation of the loan facility were not properly explained to the leaders of the farmer groups who still think that it was due to the fact that the bank lost confidence in them¹⁰. In actual fact the bank was also a victim of inflation. It failed to maintain the Strategic Grain Reserve Facility as a revolving fund because even though it tried to adjust interest rates the measures were not a sufficient response to the hyperinflation¹¹.

Furthermore the maintenance of savings accounts by the groups was also negatively affected by the hyperinflation that characterised Zimbabwe up to late 2008. On two occasions' members of Budiro and Muswiti lost all their funds because they left the money in the bank for too long.¹² The groups still maintain a savings account but as of 2008 Budiro and Muswiti had moved towards rotating savings (colloquially referred to as *stokvels* in South Africa and *kukandirana* in Zimbabwe), where the agreed amount for saving in each month is given to one member on a rotating basis. Funds from these

⁶ Interview with Goromonzi District Extension Officer, August 2008

⁷ Interview with Agri-Bank Branch Manager, November 2008.

⁸ Agri-Bank 2006, Loan Agreement Form with Muswiti LFG

⁹ At the time of repaying the loan the actual amount owed had been reduced substantially due to hyperinflation and according to the leader of Muswiti the amount was equivalent to one tonne of maize, which was at the time valued at US\$ 100.00 on informal markets.

¹⁰ Dunstan focus group discussion notes, September 2008.

¹¹ Interviews with Mr. Hlophe, Agri-Bank Branch Manager, September, 2008

¹² Interviews with Budiro and Muswiti chairpersons, September 2008

initiatives have been deployed towards a number of social functions and farm investments. Social uses for the funds realised from the rotating savings include travelling to attend a relative's funeral in the customary areas, purchase of groceries, and purchase of chickens and feed for a small chicken project¹³. Two members of Muswiti managed to take advantage of the savings generated from *kukandirana* and purchased a small water pump which they use jointly for the irrigation of their vegetable gardens¹⁴.

Salt-Lakes local farmer group goes beyond joint mobilisation of savings and inputs to include activities such as the pooling of labour and group marketing of tobacco. The uniqueness of Salt-Lakes from other farmer groups at Dunstan derives from its formalised relationship with a private sector company for the supply of inputs where others mostly rely on state agencies. Furthermore, tobacco growing requires specialised skills which were depleted during the process of occupation and acquisition of the farm. As part of an attempt to reduce the effect of this constraint, Salt-Lakes organises the joint hiring and group utilisation of specialised labour. This kind of labour pooling is different from the more common *nhimbe* (labour pools) in that it involves the joint hiring of special skills for activities such as the treatment and transfer of seedlings and the curing of tobacco. The group is also engaged in the joint use of productive assets, making use of the inherited tobacco curing barns and grading sheds that were left behind by the previous owner. Since its formation in 2005 the members of the group have received tobacco inputs and chemicals sufficient to cover 2 hectares per member from the contracting Salt-Lakes limited. In the first year the contracting company sent in an extension officer to help the contractee farmers in the growing of tobacco. As part of the agreement the group is expected to jointly sell all its tobacco to the contractor. Average yields since 2005 based on marketed output show that each member has been able to deliver at least 3 tonnes of tobacco (based on records of tobacco deliveries from 2005 to 2007).

Associationalism around inherited infrastructure at Lot 3 of Buena Vista

In 2004 beneficiaries resettled on A1 plots within what used to be Lot 3 of Buena Vista established an irrigation cooperative, to take advantage of existing irrigation potential. The project was ambitious in the sense that it sought to bring together all the land beneficiaries from different backgrounds but resettled on the same former large scale farm to jointly produce and market their commodities. The main driver for the establishment of the cooperative was the former leader of the occupations on the farm, a veteran of the liberation struggle, a soldier trained in the former Soviet Union and worked on agricultural collectives there as part of his training (interview with Extension Officer, September, 2008). The functional irrigation system that existed prior to land reform had the capacity to irrigate 350ha.

In early 2005 the group formally established the Tagarika Irrigation Scheme Cooperative which included all A1 beneficiaries resettled on Lot 3A of Buena Vista with the adoption of a constitution and the election of an executive committee which was led by the former Base Commander. According to the constitution the purpose of the cooperative is; "to improve the lives of the members and to increase production at the farm through the resuscitation of the irrigation system on the farm and to venture into crop, horticulture and market gardening under irrigation" (Tagarika Constitution 2005:2). The current leader and founder of the group also used to belong to a local farmer group in customary tenure areas prior to being resettled. He took the lead in mobilising for the establishment of the group. One of the initial motivators for the formation of the group was the need to ensure that there is equitable

¹³ Budiro, Muswiti, focus group discussions, September 2008.

¹⁴ Muswiti, 01/08 focus group discussion notes, September 2008.

access to irrigation equipment among the members. The group has also established a small sub-committee to maintain the irrigation equipment.

The constitution of the group states that its mandate is “to improve the lives of the members” and this is a recurrent theme even within focus group discussions (Tagarika Constitution 2005:2). The Constitution lists fishing, resuscitation of irrigation of equipment, venturing into market gardening and horticulture as some of the activities that the group engages in. The group has however faced a number of challenges in terms of translating the objectives stated in the Constitution into reality. It has struggled to revive the irrigation system to its full capacity besides having appealed successfully to the GoZ in 2005 for the replacement of the missing water pumps. When the group was formed it put together a smaller sub-committee to approach the Ministry of Agriculture’s department of mechanisation (prior to the latter’s conversion into a fully fledged Ministry in late 2007) and was provided with two 125 horse power water pumps. However there were still other parts missing. In 2006 the members of the group contributed 50kgs of maize each for resale and the proceeds were to purchase the outstanding valves and sprinklers¹⁵. However only less than half of the required valves and sprinklers had were purchased from the proceeds of the sale¹⁶.

In 2005 the group opened a savings account with the Agricultural Bank (Agri-Bank) and was able to secure a loan for the 2005/06 agricultural season to purchase farm inputs for members. One of the group’s objectives is to organise farm production and the marketing of commodities on a collective basis. Since resettlement, members of the group have been producing individually except for the joint production of wheat in 2005 and 2006. The most visible intervention of the group has been through securing inputs and repairs to irrigation equipment. The group has created three sub-committees; one responsible for marketing and production, another for property and security; and finally welfare and health. The marketing and production sub-committee is responsible for research into innovations taking place in terms of agricultural production and markets (Tagarika Constitution 2005:3). The sub-committee is expected to play a leading role in advising land beneficiaries on what to grow and where to sell. However during focus group discussions very few members were aware of the responsibilities of this sub-committee¹⁷.

The sub-committee for property and security is responsible for the maintenance of all the assets owned by the group, maintains a register of assets and regulates the use of the limited irrigation infrastructure that is currently working. Despite the fact that there is a large dam that could irrigate up to 350 hectares, the beneficiaries have not yet actualised the irrigation potential that it provides. The land beneficiaries have only managed to irrigate approximately 18 hectares of land in the area close to the dam for joint wheat production.

The sub-committee for property also determines access to jointly owned equipment for individual use. It is also responsible for the hiring of tillage services. The joint hiring of tillage services has not been implemented in a uniform manner since the group was formed. In the 2005/06 and 2006/07 agricultural seasons the group secured the services of DDF to prepare 3ha for each member but in 2007/08 only a private contractor was invited to prepare an average of 5ha per member but the service only covered

¹⁵ Interview with Tagarika Chairperson, September 2008

¹⁶ Interview with Tagarika Chairperson, September 2008.

¹⁷ Tagarika Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

fourteen members including the entire executive committee¹⁸. Explanations for such a discrepancy differ; according to a member of the sub-committee those who were excluded had not paid for the services, while participants in the focus group discussion argue that they had been made to understand that the 50kgs of maize they had provided in the previous season would cover the cost of hiring the tillage services.¹⁹ The welfare and health sub-committee has been tasked with monitoring any possibilities of outbreak of disease but in essence it remains non-functional and participants in the focus group discussion held at the farm were not aware of the existence of such a sub-committee.

The leadership has mostly focused on resuscitating the irrigation equipment. To date they have managed to use members' subscriptions to purchase the outstanding parts required for the underground irrigation system to cover the whole farm. They are yet to acquire adequate sprinkler heads and mainline underground hydrant taps and caps²⁰. The group has pursued a number of options for purchasing the required equipment. In early 2008, they applied to the GoZ for a loan to finish installing the irrigation equipment. An assessment team led by the acting Engineer for Goromonzi district came up with an inconclusive appraisal which stated that the,

...nature of the [irrigation] project is so massive and the options for financing include: (i) resettled farmers mobilise funds to buy the outstanding equipment and the local council will provide electricians to fit the equipment or (ii) the Ministry of Mechanisation to assist in buying the remaining equipment and farmers pay for it through agricultural commodities. (Acting Engineer Goromonzi, RDC 2008:p1).

By the end of 2008, the GoZ was yet to commit itself to supporting the venture beyond the water pumps that they had already provided and the chairman of the group conceded that it was proving difficult to continue asking members to contribute financially and with grain given the manner in which the prices kept changing.

In 2007, the GoZ through the Reserve Bank and the Ministry of Mechanisation introduced the agricultural mechanisation programme, in which some land beneficiaries were issued with brand new tractors, ploughs, ridgers and harrows. The Tagarika leadership applied for a tractor to be issued to the cooperative but they were advised that the tractors were for land beneficiaries with more than 50ha of arable land, in essence excluding all A1 farmers²¹.

In 2006, fifteen of the land beneficiaries at Lot 3 of Buena Vista were facing eviction. A local politician from ZANU (PF) resettled on a neighbouring A2 plot without irrigation equipment approached the group's leadership to devise means by which they could share the use of the dam. The members agreed but later on the A2 farmer came back with an offer letter for a portion of Lot 3 adjoining to his farm. He argued that he was better positioned to utilise the dam on the farm²². The leadership of the group approached the provincial offices for clarification on the offer letter and demanded to know where the affected fifteen households were to be resettled and why the farm was being further subdivided. They

¹⁸ Tagarika Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

¹⁹ Tagarika Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008.

²⁰ Interview with Tagarika Chairman, September 2008

²¹ Interview with Tagarika Chairman, September 2008

²² Interview with Bromley Ward 21-22 Extension Officer, June 2009

also threatened the A2 farmer that they would occupy his allocated plot if he pursued his claim²³. It was only after the intervention of the Provincial Administrator that the claim to Lot 3 by the A2 farmer was withdrawn.

There is a discrepancy between the stated objectives of the group as detailed in its Constitution and practice on the ground. The group has not managed to organise collective fishing on the dam located within the farm, thereby missing out on potential revenue from the fish sales. The group's sub-committee on security has been at the forefront of ensuring that no fishing takes place on the dam to the extent that land beneficiaries based on the farm have also been treated as illegal and those caught have been fined.

Local farmer group and autochthonous ties: The case of Chidziva

Background: The Manjinjiwa claim to land

According to oral evidence presented by one of the remaining elders, the Manjinjiwa lineage group under the headship of the Matibiri-Magaramombe chieftainship was forcibly moved from the area now converted into Dalkeith and Noordt Gate farms. In 1994, the spirit medium and lineage elders again renewed efforts to return to the alienated territory and engaged Chief Matibiri of Zvimba on the possibility of facilitating resettlement of the lineage within Zvimba. But the chief did not have adequate land to resettle members of the Manjinjiwa lineage group. When the GoZ publicly announced the acquisition of large scale farms in 1997, the leadership of the clan made claims for some of the farms including Dalkeith farm. However most of the farms they claimed were not on the list for resettlement and their claims were not acted upon by the responsible government officials. In the same year, a small group comprising the lineage elders and the spirit medium approached the owner of Dalkeith farm (which is known to the lineage group as Chirorodzi) to try to gain access to their shrines and sacred places to offer 'muumba' (traditional snuff put in a gourd) and traditional beer to appease the spirit medium in preparation for their homecoming²⁴. Mr Ian Barrett refused to have the ceremony conducted at the farm.

When land occupations began across the whole country in February 2000, the Manjinjiwa spirit medium is said to have gone into a trance and directed their lineage members to occupy the farm. The leadership of the clan negotiated with the farm owner for a portion of the farm which they considered sacred and he acquiesced to their demands and also offered them accommodation within the farm worker compound.

In August 2000 the farm owner was served with a Section 8 notice that informed him that the farm had been designated for compulsory acquisition, and he was required to vacate the property within two months and was not permitted to remove any property from the farm. The owner contested compulsory acquisition through the courts but was not successful.

Cooperation within the local farmer group

Starting in 2001, land beneficiaries at Dalkeith entered into a collective arrangement for growing wheat in the winter under irrigation. However the process of growing the winter crop was marred by tensions.

²³ Tagarika, Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

²⁴ Interview with Village Head, August 2009

Members of the lineage group felt that the allocation of tasks had unfairly burdened some of the households. It was thereafter felt that there was a need for a committee to facilitate the joint production of wheat. Initially the village head wanted a smaller sub-committee to be established and to operate within the confines of the VIDCO but some of the younger members advocated for a more fully fledged association that would focus on farm production²⁵. They also argued that the new association would focus on securing farm inputs which difficult to obtain at that time. The village head was approached to approve the idea of the Chidziva Farmers Association. In late 2002 one of the lineage members, a son of the spirit medium, was tasked by the lineage elders to pioneer the group based on his previous agricultural experience and modest education. Local extension officers were invited to provide assistance in the establishment of structures of the group. Two common resources were initially used to justify mobilisation into a group; the common lineage background and the existence of a water source that could be used jointly for irrigation purposes²⁶.

Initially the group focused on growing and marketing of the winter wheat crop through securing inputs, and coordination of household and hired labour. In late 2003, the leadership of the farmer association began to agitate for the eviction of the former farm owner from the use of the tea tree plantation and the extraction plant. They allegedly convinced the village head that they could continue with the running of the extraction process and the marketing of the oil to the benefit of all the members²⁷. The former owner was eventually denied access to the tea tree plantation and plant. The process of decision making within the various structures is discussed in detail below. Suffice to mention here that the expulsion of the former owner was carried out without the knowledge of other members of the VIDCO or the village members.²⁸ The leadership of the farmer association kept the same labour pool that was working in the plantation and the plant. However they struggled to find a market for the oil and in 2006 made the decision to cut down the tea trees. The other motivation for the formation of the group was the realisation that it could be beneficial to seek subsidies jointly from the state for items such as farm inputs²⁹.

Activities of the Chidziva Farmers' Association

According to the founding Constitution the Chidziva Farmers Association was established to, "improve the farming capacities of the members and to contribute towards better lives through collectively seeking for farm inputs, markets and introducing other income generating projects" (Chidziva Farmers' Association, Constitution 2004:1). Since its inception the group has been involved in securing farm inputs for all the members and also organising the joint production of wheat. The inputs have mostly been secured through registration of the group and the number of members with the government's local extension office. In the 2006/07 agricultural season, the leadership of the group attempted to break away from dependence on government subsidised inputs by entering into an agreement with a maize seed company called Pannar Seeds, to grow seed maize on its behalf. The company provided the group with inputs comprising of seeds and fertiliser. However the group's leadership also expected the company to provide them with tillage support but the company insisted that they could only supply

²⁵ Interviews with Dalkeith Farm VIDCO Treasurer, August 2009

²⁶ Based on interviews with Gibson Manjinjiwa, Chairman of Chidziva Farmer's Group and Mr Kapembeza, Acting Agritex Extension Officer for the Banket area, November 2008

²⁷ Interviews with Dalkeith Farm VIDCO Treasurer, August 2009

²⁸ Chidziva Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

²⁹ Interview with Chidziva LFG Chairperson, September 2008

farm inputs. The inputs provided were inadequate and could only cover approximately 40 of the members³⁰.

Although not clearly mentioned in the Constitution, the association seemed to be a potential collective cooperative due its unique advantage of mobilisation on the basis of a common lineage identity and the availability of irrigation capacity. It was assumed that the common identity would reduce the burden of building group ties and trust³¹. Possibilities for organising joint farm production have been constrained by the non-functional irrigation equipment and the refusal by some of the members to cede their fields for collective production. The leadership of the group successfully requested assistance from the GoZ after the co-existence deal with the former farm owner had collapsed. The government issued them with two brand new 125 horse power water pumps and some of the pipes required for irrigation. The process of installing the new irrigation was handled by a private contractor and took approximately one and half years from the end of 2004 until 2005. Government insisted that the group should produce wheat for resale to the GMB. However by 2008, the group members were yet to use the new equipment due to the non-availability of electricity.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the deal with the former large scale farm owner regarding the tea tree plantation, the crocodile rearing the leadership of the group approached one of the neighbouring A2 farmers to help them in looking after the crocodiles. The agreement between the A2 farmer and the leadership of the group was never written down and disagreements arose over the distribution of proceeds³². The leadership of the group also alleges that the A2 farm owner was behind the attempts by the Zvimba District Land Identification Committee (ZDLIC) to remove them. In 2006 officials from the Ministry of Lands informed the leadership at Dalkeith that the farm had been re-zoned into an A2 farm.³³The Chidziva leadership lodged their appeal against eviction to the Minister of Local Government (who was also the MP of the area) and threatened that if the matter were not resolved they would approach the President.

In terms of external alliances, the leadership at Chidziva has established relations with the local extension office and the fact that the central bank governor visited them as a success story continues to count in their favour when it comes to input distribution. Beyond the cordial relations with state functionaries the leadership of the group has made attempts to attain membership of the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union (ZFU). In 2006 the Chidziva leadership approached the ZFU and was given forms to complete. When they submitted the forms to the national ZFU office they assumed that their membership was confirmed³⁴. The promised benefits of membership of the ZFU include access to fertiliser and treated seeds at a discount from specific agro-dealers such as Windmill. However the leadership mentioned that they are yet to realise these benefits because they do not have documentation confirming their membership. In fact when I checked with the ZFU national office they did not records of any application from local farmer groups in newly resettled areas and they clarified that they were yet to establish structures in the newly resettled areas.

³⁰ Interviews with Chidziva Chairperson, September 2008.

³¹ Interview with Chidziva Chairperson, August 2009

³² Interview with Chidziva Farmers' Association Treasurer, August 2009

³³ Interview with Chidziva Farmer Group, Chairperson, September 2008.

³⁴ Interview with Chidziva Chairperson, June 2009.

Collective agriculture at Whynhill Farm: The case of Zhizha Cooperative

Origins

Whynhill farm located in the Banket area within Zvimba district was officially converted into an A1 settlement in 2001. Initially there were 53 A1 beneficiaries but the number was reduced to 45 when 380 hectares of the farm was offered to a former ZANU-PF councillor as an A2 plot. In 2003, the A1 beneficiaries at Whynhill came together to form the Zhizha (fresh harvest) Farmers Cooperative. The extension officer responsible for the greater Banket area was part of the team that demarcated A1 plots and during further visits he made suggestions for all land beneficiaries to come together and form a production cooperative that would utilise the dam on the farm and available irrigation equipment. The same group would also be registered as a beneficiary of government farm inputs³⁵. The extension officer and the members of the VIDCO were instrumental in mobilising all the households to commit to the idea of the group. Initially the group comprised all the of the 45 A1 households, until 2007 when twelve of the members split off to form the Whynhill Farmers Association. The original group was formed mainly to ensure equitable and optimum usage of inherited irrigation equipment through joint production and marketing of wheat³⁶.

Activities of Zhizha Farmers' Group

The group is a proto-type of a collective cooperative during the winter season. In the winter, the group takes on a collective approach towards the production of wheat; members combine their 6ha plots of land, obtain wheat inputs as a group and use the available irrigation capacity to water the crop. At the end of the season the group is responsible for the marketing of wheat and shares the returns equally among the members.

One of the first activities of the group was to follow up on a request for irrigation equipment that had been made by the VIDCO in late 2002. In 2003 the GoZ hired a contractor to install three new water pumps and to repair available irrigation equipment. Since 2003 the group has been utilising the donated irrigation equipment jointly to grow wheat during winter. In the first three years they managed to grow wheat on 40ha. The inputs for wheat were obtained by the leadership from the local extension office in Banket. The first three years of winter production were quite lucrative for the group and marketed output averaged 60t per year³⁷.

However the joint growing of wheat has been on the decline since 2007. In 2007, the group managed to plant wheat on 16ha and in 2008 this was reduced to 3ha. A number of reasons are behind the fall in production. Firstly the A2 farmer settled within Whynhill farm has in the past few years encroached into the irrigable area and some of the A1 plots that were once part of the pool of fields combined for winter production now belong to the A2 farmer. Secondly when the group split in 2007 it lost some land in the process. Thirdly the group did not receive payment for the previous crop on time and they were not given subsidised inputs in the following year. Fourthly the actual irrigation capacity of the group has been reduced, when other group members split they demanded one of the water pumps and some of the pipes and the A2 farmer resident on the farm had managed to connive with the first chairperson of the group to appropriate a water pump for her own use.

³⁵ Interviews with Extension Officer, September 2008

³⁶ Interview with Zhizha Secretary, Whynhill Farm, August 2008.

³⁷ AREG, 2008, Whynhill Farm Wheat Deliveries Records

During the summer agricultural season (November to March) Zhizha focuses on sourcing of inputs for group members who revert to individual production. The group takes over the responsibility of ensuring that members receive subsidised inputs. Leaders of groups are required to submit the names of members, their plot sizes and input requirements three months before the commencement of the summer agricultural season. Since the formation of the group they have only been able to secure inputs for members twice, in the 2004/05 and 2007/08 farming seasons. Concerning the 2006/07 input allocations, the extension officers responsible for input allocation alleged that the group did not submit their application on time and were therefore not included in the request sent to head office³⁸. The leadership however alleges that inputs intended for the group members were allocated to the A2 farmer.³⁹

Although Zhizha looks like a successful prototype of a cooperative, it faces many internal problems which arise out of weak leadership. In 2005 the Zhizha Chairperson was approached by the neighbouring A2 farmer about the possibility of sharing irrigation equipment and the Chairperson apparently agreed without consulting the rest of the executive committee members⁴⁰. When the groups learnt of this, approximately 36 percent of the members resigned to form a rival group. The remaining members tried for more than two years to remove their chairperson from the post because of lack of consultation with the executive committee and the irrigation sub-committee when entering into asset sharing arrangements with the neighbouring A2 farmer. Initially they could not remove him because of his perceived good relations with the local extension officers as the latter were seen as instrumental in ensuring timely access to inputs. Even when he was eventually deposed the group still failed to extricate itself from the agreement on sharing irrigation equipment with the A2 farmer and the latter has been refusing to surrender some of the irrigation equipment she got from the group claiming that she had paid for it⁴¹.

Construction of farm based livelihoods through LFGs

The rationale for formation

The cases discussed in section 3 demonstrate the survival imperative behind the formation of the LFGs and also the variations in terms of origin, size and scope of activities. The numbers involved in these local groups range from as low as ten to over 100. Most often these formations seek to maximise on group synergies such as the improved ability to mobilise finances for travel to the local government offices to request assistance. All the groups existing on the four former large scale farms studied were formed as part of an effort to improve the means by which inputs are obtained from government agencies. There have also been moments of opportunism in the formation of some of these groups and the availability of irrigation equipment on the former large scale farm has provided a justification for the establishment of groups at Lot 3 of Buena Vista, Dalkeith and Whyhill farms.

³⁸ Interview with Extension Officer, August 2009

³⁹ Interview with Zhizha Secretary, August 2008

⁴⁰ Zhizha Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

⁴¹ Interviews with Zhizha Secretary, September 2008

One of the major tasks of this paper is to understand these groups in their own right and what happens within them because they have emerged as the most common formation within the A1 settlements and their actions have an effect upon the livelihoods of the members. The household survey carried out by the AIAS in Goromonzi and Zvimba demonstrated that the majority of the resettled households do not possess adequate capacity in terms of productive assets and labour to effectively utilise the arable 6ha they were allocated. The local associational forms promise to respond to some of the daily livelihood constraints that resettled households face through the mobilisation of collective capacity in the form of labour, productive assets and representation for input support.

In analysing the rationale for these LFGs, one takes into consideration the context of economic decline which has negatively affected the supply of critical farm inputs and the ways in which the hyperinflationary environment has also militated against possibilities of accumulation of assets. The LFGs have been formed as part of a response to the challenges within the macro environment and the lack of adequate productive assets and limited capabilities to secure farm inputs. In such a context, the overarching concern within the local farmer groups has been the need to improve livelihood by focusing on strategies of enhancing the farm production capacities of the members.

Nature of cooperation within local farmer groups

The groups that have been studied combine a survivalist outlook with a more long term approach to organising themselves in varying degrees. On the one hand, these formations seem to be an opportunistic and survivalist response to the immediate macroeconomic meltdown that has affected the whole of Zimbabwe. Within this line of thinking they arise out of a need to improve their access to inputs provided by the state. Survivalist tactics include obtaining inputs from local agents of the state and other forms of subsidies such as tillage support. These attempts at survival include activities aimed at enhancing farm production, such as approaching the DDF for land preparation support. On the other hand, there are a number of local farmer groups that have also managed to combine a survivalist approach with more strategic initiatives. Some of these initiatives include; the mobilisation of savings, the pooling of their own productive assets and labour, and entering into innovative agricultural financing arrangements. This has been as part of a response to internal capacity constraints and a weak agricultural financing policy framework. Groups in Goromonzi, such as Budiro, Muswiti and Salt Lakes, have a more long-term strategic outlook than the groups in Zvimba whose logic of collective action seems to be based on extracting benefits from the state.

Beyond the stated activities and tactics of the local farmer groups (discussed below) there are several discrete actions that the leadership and the membership have to undertake to ensure success. The leadership in most of the groups has to devote attention to the building of solidarity within the group by improving social relations among the members. Strategies for establishing solidarity vary between the groups but mostly entail finding ways of spending time together at social events. The approach is more common in the smaller formations occurring at Dunstan farm. In these groups the leadership has arranged for members to gather and share in the festivities of the new harvest. This has however been very difficult to do in the larger groups such as Tagarika and Zhizha. At Chidziva the group takes advantage of the already existing autochthonous ties among the members. Most of the local farmer groups have developed songs and slogans about their groups. The most apt slogan being the one used by Budiro which states “Budiro yedu tose!” (We develop together). Slogans such as these are slowly contributing to the creation of a sense of common identity and solidarity. The building of local solidarity is critical especially for groups involved in the pooling of labour through the *nhimbe*, more so in a

context where current challenges of effectively organising such cooperation are partly explained by the lack of strong relations. The subsections below assess the different forms of cooperation within the groups.

Local farmer groups and sourcing of inputs

The sourcing of actual inputs, such as seed and fertilisers, from the state is a fairly recent phenomenon. Prior to the fast track resettlement the state through its own agricultural financing parastatals mostly ensured that farmers had access to agricultural financing which they would use to purchase inputs on the open market. Even then the smallholder sector was never a major beneficiary of such financing arrangements and mostly depended on self financing through savings and remittances. The more vulnerable households in the smallholder sector relied upon non-state agents such as NGOs for the supply of farm inputs.

The local farmer groups have in the majority of cases contributed to improving the accessibility of inputs and also reduced the cost of individuals visiting the local distribution centres. The synergies derived from collective action have made it easier for those who otherwise would not have afforded the numerous visits to such centres. Members indicated that belonging within a group has lessened the burden of individually obtaining inputs although they still face delays in terms of access to the inputs.

Rather than depend on the state based input subsidy programme and in response to the incentive offered by the local Agri-Bank branch, groups in Goromonzi are involved in the mobilisation of their own savings to purchase inputs. The mobilisation of savings has contributed towards nurturing a philosophy of independence from the state's free subsidies and this is a critical aspect of local cooperativism. The ability to mobilise savings is critical for accumulation of on-farm assets, ensuring the ability to pay for other social services and as a safety net in case of drought or any other phenomena that might negatively affect production. However the hyperinflation that has characterised Zimbabwe has not spared these groups. The introduction of savings has not made a significant dent on the dependence upon state subsidies. Most of the savings were very low (in 2007 members of the groups based at Dunstan farm in Goromonzi were contributing less than US\$4.00 per month in Zimbabwean dollars) and the groups engaged in this activity are very small (an average of twelve) so that the amounts saved do not represent a significant comparative advantage. Furthermore the bank was not necessarily helpful in terms of technical advice; rather than advise the groups to convert their money into foreign currency (a common practice among informal traders at the time) which would have at least maintained the value and buttressed them against inflation, Agri-Bank continued to receive savings even though it had no capacity to maintain the value of the money.

The groups that were studied in Zvimba are still struggling with establishing mechanisms of transparency especially in the allocation of the scarce resources attained by the group. There have been instances in which inputs received under the GoZ inputs subsidy programme were not adequate to cover all the members and the leadership had to use its discretion as to who would be allocated the inputs. The lack of a clear criterion of resource allocation has contributed to accusations of gender bias against the leadership by the members and complaints that the leaders prioritise themselves.

Furthermore, the inputs subsidy programme has fallen victim to the local bureaucracy and the patronage of local state agencies. The process of acquiring inputs requires that groups register their requirements with the district extension office three months before the beginning of the planting season and in between the formal application and the actual receipt of inputs the groups engage in a

variety of, at times costly, discrete lobbying activities to be prioritised in the allocation of the inputs. Some of these activities entail regular visits to the distribution centres just to maintain steady relations with the responsible officers. The fact that the whole experience in forming local farmer groups has been one of mobilising members around a government built core of services has two unfortunate effects. It is doing anything but foster an attitude of self reliance and related to the preceding is the fact that it has created the impression that local farmer groups are solely created for deriving benefits from the state.

Joint production and marketing

Collective farming and marketing of wheat was opportunistically introduced within Zhizha at Whyhill farm in order to take advantage of existing irrigation equipment and an irrigation rehabilitation programme being undertaken by the GoZ. None of the members had any prior experience of joint production nor were they given an opportunity for training on this new form of social organisation. Most of the land beneficiaries are from the Chirau and Kasanze customary lands where they had practiced individual farming until their resettlement. The challenge that the leadership faced and still faces is how to get members sufficiently involved in a new form of social organisation for production. This point might seem mundane but one should consider the fact that smallholder enterprises are run along established routines which no longer need much thought, but the same mode of decision making is not applicable to a large scale enterprise especially in its early stages. It is not surprising that Zhizha faces the most challenges compared to any of the groups studied, including the failure to utilise available irrigation equipment adequately and lack of capacity to mobilise labour effectively among the membership. The split in the group that occurred in 2007 is partly a manifestation of the failure by the leadership to resolve some of the internal problems afflicting the group.

Among the case studies, Salt Lakes is another group that approximates a marketing cooperative. Production remains individually organised among the Salt Lakes' membership and the group intervenes only through the mobilisation of specialised skills for the preparation of seed beds, handling of seedlings and their transfer, and the curing of tobacco. The Salt Lakes approach is more successful than the one being used by Zhizha as it nurtures individual enterprise and accountability, by contrast to Zhizha where those who have not made equal contributions of labour are still equally rewarded.

Furthermore, the approach used by Salt Lakes encourages members to acquire productive assets. Through this gradual accumulation of assets a modest pool of small productive assets inclusive of spraying cans, hoes, wheelbarrows, water pumps and pipes are now available for use by members of the group. The deliberate discussion around purchasing productive assets has contributed to an understanding of the necessity of such accumulation among the members of the group.

Farmer groups and labour pooling

The pooling of labour is a very common rural practice especially in customary tenure areas but has mostly been organised within the framework of the lineage group. Currently there is only one out of four groups in Goromonzi involved in the pooling together of labour, while in Zvimba both groups list the labour pooling as one of their stated activities. Labour and asset pooling is the most involving in terms of time. It is the only activity in which members are expected to avail themselves for a specified period of time as part of the labour force and it has a tendency to create conflict. Currently these activities remain poorly managed and the complaints that have emerged suggest gender based

perceptions of labour exploitation; female members especially at Chidziva and Zhizha see themselves as contributing more labour than their male counterparts⁴². The failure to coordinate this activity effectively has caused rifts in the groups and loss of production capacity. At Zhizha the failure of the leadership to mobilise adequate labour capacity has necessitated the hiring of labour which has negatively affected the profit margins on the marketed wheat.

However despite the obvious advantages of cooperation within local groups, the process is not without its own challenges. The section below discusses the constraints of internal and external participation. The discussion on internal participation is focused on analysing dynamics of decision making within the groups and the final subsection focuses on how the isolation of local farmer groups from broader networks of civil society especially the national farmers' unions militates against the effectiveness of these associational forms.

Challenges to cooperation

Limited participation and gender inequality within the groups

The discussion in this sub-section pays particular attention to the extent to which the local farmer groups represent the interests of the members and the manner in which the latter participate in decision making and other activities of the group. Groups with more than thirty members (Chidziva, Tagarika, and Whyhill) were found to be more closed in terms of allowing decision making and most of the decisions, including the name, activities and frequency of meetings of the group, had been taken by the leadership. There are longer intervals between meetings in groups with more than thirty members than in the smaller groups at Dunstan farm.

However the high frequency of meetings and increased number of attendance of these meetings does not necessarily suggest that members have internalised the goals of the group and identify emotionally with it. There have been instances even in these groups in which key decisions concerning the group were made by the leadership without consultation with the membership. Despite these weaknesses the levels of participation in the groups based at Dunstan is better than that prevailing in the other groups. Frequent face to face contact and some sort of a common commitment make it easier for members to trust each other and to reach a common understanding.

The bigger the local farmer group is, the more difficult it is for the members to achieve a common sense of purpose. In the bigger groups such as Chidziva, Tagarika and Zhizha, the leadership was overwhelmed by the task of organising activities in which so many members had to participate. Most of the meetings are poorly attended. One of the reasons for this low member participation in group activities is that there are no prior social relations within the groups and also that the majority of those belonging to such formations did not belong to any form of association before being resettled. The lack of prior experience with such formations means that members do not understand why they should attend meetings and the most common practice that has emerged within the groups is that they elect anybody who claims to have experience of such issues as the leader and agree with the decisions made without seeking explanations.

⁴² Chidziva and Zhizha Focus Group Discussion Notes, September 2008

In terms of gender relations only two of the groups under study (Muswiti and Salt-Lakes) are dominated by women in leadership and in general membership (see Table 4 below). At Muswiti the Chairperson, Secretary and one of the committee members are female. The chairperson of Muswiti used to be the Political Commissar for the ZANU (PF) branch in Epworth and is now the Chairperson for the new ZANU (PF) branch which covers A1 settlements at Dunstan, Xanadu and Lots 2 and 3 of Buena Vista. At Salt-Lakes the Chairperson, Treasurer and one of the committee members are women.

Table 4: Structure and Gender Composition of Farmer Group Leadership

Farm	Name of Group	Position			
		Chair	Sec	Treasurer	Comm. Members
Dalkeith	Chidziva	Male	Male	Male	Male & Male
Dunstan	Budiriro	Male	Female	Male	Female and male
	Muswiti	Female	Female	Male	Female and male
	Salt-Lakes	Female	Female	Male	Female and male
Lot 3 of Buena Vista	Tagarika	Male	Male	Male	Male and Female
Whyhill	Zhizha	Male	Male	Female	Male and Male

Source: Author (2008) Goromonzi, LFG Households Survey

The Chairperson of Salt-Lakes is a widow who owns a house and runs a shop in Epworth. She is usually based in Epworth when the tobacco growing and marketing seasons are over. Women dominated the leadership of the local farmer groups at Dunstan farm whilst the other groups are dominated by males. Budiriro is led by a male but also includes women leaders whilst at Chidziva the whole structure is dominated by males. The leadership committee at Zhizha is dominated by males with the treasurer being the only female officer. Women members of Chidziva and Zhizha feel that in most cases they are only needed when the leadership requires a labour pool but are marginalised from making important decisions such as who should lead the group⁴³.

Isolation of 'fast track' areas

Up until the middle of 2009 fast track resettlement areas remained isolated from the national smallholders' union (ZFU) and networks of civil society comprising a complex web of networks involving local and international actors such as NGOs, unions and donors. The local farmer groups operate outside the parameters of civil society-they sit uneasily in both the civil society and as subordinate agents of the state as they help their members to undertake productive and economic activities, a role associated with the state. They remain shunned and isolated by other civil society based networks despite the fact that they bear the same characteristic of organic associationalism with their counterparts in customary areas.

The continued exclusion of fast track resettlement areas from the networks characterising civil society has contributed towards the stunted growth of these associational forms- they have not managed to mobilise beyond their local villages due to a number of constraints which include among other things the absence of cohering framework of an alternative agrarian vision. The fact that fast track resettlement areas are isolated from receiving support from development and relief NGOs is convenient

⁴³ Chid 02/08, focus group discussion notes, September 2008

for both civil society and the state. It simplifies a very complex problem where, civil society by choosing not to engage with the land beneficiaries can continue to dismiss the land reform process as largely benefiting politically connected elites. In the meantime the ZANU (PF) dominated state remains the only active external agent in providing support. In the absence of partnerships with civil society, the local farmer groups in newly resettled areas have entered into relationships of survival with the state. This is convenient for the ZANU (PF) dominated government for two reasons. Firstly, the state and the party remain the only players active in responding to the challenges these communities face and this dependence entrenches clientelist relations. Secondly the GoZ uses the isolation of the newly resettled areas from any outside help to strengthen their case of sanctions. The rules of engagement with the state have been mostly welfare and production oriented to an extent that the politics of local farmer groups remains very underdeveloped.

Conclusion

The central question in this paper is to understand how people from diverse backgrounds with limited farm production capabilities due to their limited ownership of productive assets in a context of economic decline are socially organising themselves for farm production. Economic decline is associated with a shortage of critical farm inputs such as hybrid seeds, fertilisers and fuel for tractors. Field studies show that associationalism within groups ranging from as low as ten to as high as 75 is pervasive in the selected districts.

The sudden emergence of such local associational forms is partly related to the survival imperative among most of the newly resettled households who typically have limited ownership of productive assets to prepare the land and lack resources to hire these from service providers individually. The striking feature that the study notes is the prevalence of local associational formations and the commonality of issues that they are attempting to address. The motivation for the formation of the groups includes prior experience of formalised associational activity, perceived benefits of working within a group and also in some cases external agents such as lending institutions having shown a preference towards dealing with small groups rather than individuals.

Entering into collective action within the local farmer groups has been one of the ways of overcoming the productive asset challenges that many A1 households face. The intervention of local farmer groups is potentially one of the positive developments in the A1 settlements under study. A number of interviewed members of local farmer groups associate their ability to expand their actual hectareage of cropped area to the intervention of the groups. On average, since joining the groups, more than 60 percent of the members have been able to expand their cropped area from an average of two hectares to about four to five hectares⁴⁴. According to the members, the local farmer groups have contributed to improved access to inputs. Furthermore two of the groups, Chidziva and Tagarika, have managed to resist threats of eviction by neighbouring A2 farmers. However members of Zhizha seem not to be prepared to confront the A2 farmer settled on the same farm but have attempted lobbying Ministry of Land officials and this has not worked to date.

These groups face other challenges; the slightly larger ones such as Chidziva, Tagarika and Zhizha have not managed to provide space for the adequate participation of members especially women in decision

⁴⁴ Based on Focus Group Discussions held with Chidziva and Zhizha members, September 2008.

making. The failure to open up spaces has already contributed to a split within Zhizha. The impact of smaller groups based at Dunstan on farm production remains limited due to the fact that they have not ventured into other critical activities such as labour and asset pooling except for Salt-Lakes. Furthermore these groups remain without a link with both the national and global networks of rural producers' associations and unions such as the Zimbabwe Farmers' Union, that are at the forefront of mobilising for national agrarian policy changes and against the negative effects of globalisation especially the removal of subsidies to smallholder farmers⁴⁵. Their continued isolation has partially contributed towards their entire dependency on state based subsidies and their fragmented nature. Their emergence however provides important clues on how external interventions can be tailored to strengthen these formations by engaging them as partners and conduits of development into the newly resettled areas.

⁴⁵ See Murisa (2009) for a critique of the ZFU's strategy regarding the newly resettled farmers.

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