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Women and the Emergence of Grassroots Institutions on Post-Fast Track Farms in Zimbabwe

Manase Kudzai Chiweshe

Department of Development Studies, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe

Abstract

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme in Zimbabwe led to the emergence of new communities on formerly white-owned land. The Zimbabwean government initiated two schemes: A1 (smallholder farming units of an average six hectares, each geared mainly toward household consumption) and A2 (large land sizes, at times over 400 hectares, geared toward commercial agriculture). This paper focuses on communities on A1 farms in Mazowe. These communities were born out of a chaotic and often violent process that precipitated economic and political crises. The new farmers found themselves faced with a myriad of social and service problems on the farms with a government that did not have the capacity to meet their needs. The farmers used various forms of social organization and farm-level grassroots organization to meet these challenges. This paper provides a gendered analysis of these organizational formations. It highlights that whilst social capital is important in building new farming communities, it can also lead to exclusion along gender lines. The paper thus focuses on the inclusion and exclusion of women from key productive institutions at the farm level. Findings also show that women act as active agents by forming their own groups (which, however, are not necessarily involved in governance on the farms). Through the use of qualitative methodologies on six purposively-sampled farming schemes in Mazowe, the paper argues that male domination of organizations affects women's (particularly female heads of households) livelihoods. Women are largely excluded from decision-making in key productive institutions, which in most cases affects their access to communal productive assets. The paper concludes that romanticizing social capital hides how it can lead to gender-based exclusion.

Keywords: *Women; Fast Track Land Reform Programme; Zimbabwe; Grassroots Institutions.*

Introduction

The year 2000 heralded a revolutionary change in Zimbabwe's rural landscape. From the land occupations popularly known as *jambanja* (chaos/violence) to the government-initiated Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), Zimbabwe's commercial farming areas saw the emergence of new communities, new farmers, and new social relations. This process was initiated by a destructive process of land occupations across Zimbabwe which involved violence and the destruction of productive assets by both occupiers and the white farmers who were being forced out. Coupled with the widespread political violence that followed during the 2002 presidential elections, Zimbabwe spiralled into a political and economic crisis characterised by high inflation, widespread unemployment, food shortages, cash and fuel shortages, and the general suffering of ordinary people. New farmers on the

land were thus faced with serious structural concerns from the onset, especially among A1 smallholder producers. A1 farms in Mazowe took a villagize model: A farm that used to belong to one person is subdivided into 6 hectares farms, with houses built in a village format. Due to the constraints initiated by the crisis, the government of Zimbabwe could not afford to offer basic services and support for new farmers. The farmers thus largely depended on social organization and networks to survive. Chiweshe (2011) characterizes these social formations as farm level institutions (FLIs), which are an important form of farmer agency.

The major argument in this paper is that women are involved in complex and contested ways in grassroots organizations and in emergent forms of social networks at the farm level. These complex interactions with grassroots organization influence women's exclusion from productive spaces but also form spaces of agency for women via self organization. The paper investigates how women are involved in decision-making within these institutional formations and how this impacts their access to resources. Women's lack of access to decision-making affects their access to communal productive resources such as irrigation pipes, boreholes, and farm equipment, which in turn affects their productive capacity and food security. Post-fast track farms in Zimbabwe are highly gendered, as roles between men and women are based on patriachial values. Such values determine where women are located within social systems and what assets they have at their disposal. Governance of resources at the farm level remains male-dominated, leaving women (especially single women) with little access to productive resources. This marginalization of women is disturbing, given that they constitute more than 52 percent of Zimbabwe's total population (Government of Zimbabwe National Gender Policy of Zimbabwe, 2004) and more than 60 percent of the women in Zimbabwe depend on farming (Matondi, 2008).

Background on Gender and Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme

The first land reforms in the 1980s mainly excluded women thanks to patriachial language contained in the planning documents. For example, Mazhawizha and Manjengwa (2009) show that government policy stated that a settler had to be either married or widowed, thereby discriminating against single unmarried women. This was discriminatory to many single women who wanted land in their own names. For married women, permits were issued in the name of the husband (Moyo, 1995). Dekker (2004) argues that by 1984, only 4 percent of the newly resettled farmers were female heads of households (and all of those were widows). Data from 1997 reveals that less than 5 percent of women had land registered in their names (Chingarande, 2008). Under the FTLRP, women were involved in the land occupations that spread across Zimbabwe in early 2000. Women were at the forefront of the process and with continued lobbying from groups such as the Women's Land Lobby Group, there was a twenty percent quota set aside for women. However the quota was not reached as according to the Utete Report (Utete, 2003) only 18 percent of beneficiaries were women (A1 women got 18 percent and A2 women only 12 percent). Chingarande (2010) shows how in the Nyabemba area, married women who gained access to land in their own right had their names removed from the offer letters by their husbands at the Lands Offices. The practice also reinforced patrilineal control of land and hence distanced women from the possibility of controlling land in their own right. Space for

women in the newly resettled areas is thus limited and their influence is minimal in terms of decision-making.

The resettlement program opened a sanctuary for a class of women who had found it difficult to survive and possess land in their own right. Chaumba *et al.* (2003) note that it is quite common for widows and divorcees to be accused of witchcraft and causing the death of husbands (particularly in AIDS cases), and they are sometimes even chased away by their in-laws. Resettlement provides an opportunity to start anew. Though in Mazowe such stories are rare, there are women who not only partook in the initial land invasions but have carved out a niche for themselves. Selby Farm in Ward 21 offers examples of women who have benefited from the land reform program. The farm committee is made up of women who were all part of the land invasions, and they have over the years worked very hard to ensure that women have equal access to inputs. However, the patrilineal mode of organization is now being implemented in the newly resettled areas. In this regard, the control, administration, and management of land by men are vital ways of controlling women. Land, tradition, and culture are used as important bases in the construction and reinforcement of masculine domination. Hence, as Goebel (2005) notes, “the tenuousness of women’s relationship to resettlement land must be understood through the lens of culture and ritual, particularly through the ways in which tradition is deployed in the resettlement context ... [where] ... aspects of traditional culture such as family ancestor appeasement and bringing home the dead (*kurova guva*) are commonly practised.” These practices enact and express a cosmology that understands the environs as populated by and under the care of ancestral spirits. The practices also reinforce patrilineal control of land and hence distance women from the possibility of controlling land in their own right. Space for women in the newly resettled areas is thus limited and their influence is minimal in terms of decision-making.

Theoretical framing

Gendered Dimensions of Social Capital

New resettlement areas in Zimbabwe are highly gendered, as roles between men and women are based on patriarchal values. To understand how women interact with farm level institutions, this paper provides an analysis of how social capital is gendered. The concept of social capital used here borrows from Bourdieu (1986), who conceives of social capital as one of four key forms of capital (along with economic, cultural, and symbolic). The author defines social capital as, “[t]he aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social capital demonstrates how power and privilege become manifested in social organization at the farm level. Social capital has been viewed as a concept formed for the benefit of everyone in a community (Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988). Hence, Putnam (1995) argues that the productive activity of social capital is manifest in its capacity to “facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. This paper, however, questions any such inherent link, especially in heterogeneous communities such

as the newly resettled areas. In fact, in examining the co-construction of the variety of capitals and the interrelations between them, Bourdieu (1986) argues that social capital is not always mutually beneficial; privilege and disadvantage are covertly reproduced as well (Butler and Robson, 2001).

To better focus this conceptualization of social capital, this paper borrows from an increasingly popular gendered critique of social capital. This critique is based on gender analysis that provides an understanding of how social networks can be both inclusive and exclusive. Bebbington (2007) and Molyneux (2002) allude to the gendered silence of social capital. Feminist authors emphasize that social capital is not innocent, neither in its place in development discourse nor in its existing forms as social networks (Bebbington, 2002). The term is not gender-blind, but is rather laden with gendered connotations. One of these is that social capital is a form of capital for the poor and in particular capital for poor women. In this regard, women are assumed to have the time to engage in associational life and microfinance programs (Molyneux, 2002). In Bebbington's (2007) words, "the tendency to essentialize poor people's predispositions to organize thus seems even greater when poor women are the implicit subjects of social capital maintenance." These essentializations prosper because social capital debates have ignored intra-household gender and age dynamics. Social capital—as viewed by scholars using Putnam's and Coleman's ideas—is seen as a household, community, or even regional asset without regularly considering the varying forms and levels of social capital that different members within the unit (for example, the household) possess. Following Bourdieu's definition of social capital, to understand "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to [women's] possession of a durable network", one must also understand the ideologies that influence how much other household members are able to make claims on the resources made available through these networks (Bebbington, 2007).

In Cameroon, women's lack of income is not directly due to their deficient social capital; rather, it is a result of discriminatory practices and institutions sustained through men's social capital and which limit women's access to markets, assets, and institutional spheres (Mayoux, 2001). The nascent body of work on gender and social capital shows not only that this lacuna leads to distorted analyses, but also to dangerous policy prescriptions that can all too easily lend themselves to the reproduction of forms of social capital that are already part of the maintenance of gendered norms and structures. The existence of gendered social capital requires understanding distinct forms of social capital in their social (often patriarchal) context (in which hierarchy and difference are embedded). For Bebbington (2007), this means always highlighting in one's analysis the relationships between forms of social capital and the ideologies that underlie, normalize, and help reproduce difference, domination, and inequity. Mayoux (2001) notes that there is a need for more serious consideration of the ways in which gender inequalities in resources, power, and rights structure the nature of the rules, norms, and forms of association among women and between women and men. Silvey and Elmhirst (2003) therefore call for a more complete picture of social capital, specifically one that includes attention to the gendered and intergenerational conflicts and hierarchies within social networks and the broader contexts of gender difference within which social networks are forged. Such a re-conceptualization might lead to an understanding of social capital that is more analytically attuned to issues of

equity and inclusion (Bebbington, 2007). This is what the paper intends to do by focusing on how social capital impacts and is impacted upon by gender.

What are Farm Level Institutions?

Farm level institutions in this paper include all institutional forms that emerged in the communities that grew out of the fast track land reform. Various farm level institutions emerged as a response to a multiplicity of challenges faced by the new class of farmers. For example, fast track land reform was criticized both locally and internationally for its chaotic character and dire economic effects. Such criticism—especially from Western donors—brought with it sanctions, suspension of balance of payments supports, a reduction in direct foreign investment, and a decrease in humanitarian aid. This—combined with falls in agricultural productivity and subsequent industrial production in downstream industries—led to a rapidly devaluating Zimbabwean dollar, enormous inflation, and high unemployment figures (Masiwa, 2005). This economic crisis has heavily impacted new farmers, who find it increasingly difficult to afford inputs and access loans. Unlike in the communal areas, most new farmers cannot depend on kinship ties for help; thus they have formed other networks to respond to these challenges, including farm committees, irrigation committees, and health committees.

Methodological approach

This study is based on a qualitative design and focuses on six A1 schemes in Mazowe District in Zimbabwe. Each of the six schemes selected (the Hariana, Hamilton, Davaar, Visa, Usk and Blightly farms, described in Table 1 below) has one or more of the following: Irrigation equipment, schools, and clinics, as well as proximity to A2 schemes (to ensure that a wide range of farm level institutions are covered). The characteristics of the schemes are outlined in Table 1.

A total of five focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with women living and working on the fast track farms. The groups were purposively selected to ensure inclusion of all groups of women living on the farms, such as plot holders, female-headed households, youths, community leaders and farm workers. The FGDs focused on all facets of social life on the fast track farms, with a special emphasis on institutional issues and social networks. 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with a variety of men and women of different ages and backgrounds.

The respondents were drawn from women on the six farms, committee members, youth, and female farm workers. Interviews detailed the life story of these people before and after settlement, focusing on experiences of everyday life on the fast track farms. Key informant interviews were also conducted with female extension officers and women on farms outside of the six. Some evidence was gathered through observation and in informal settings (such as club houses, field days, and training sessions for farmers). The example is adequate for an exploratory qualitative study which does not seek to generalize findings to the whole population.

Table 1: A1 Schemes covered in the study

Ward	Farm	Model	Hectarage of original farm	No. of Beneficiaries	Farm level institutions studied
14	Hamilton	A1	516.3091	41	Irrigation Committee, Committee of Seven, Revolving fund group
14	Davaar	A1	1468.75	33	Health Committee, Electricity Committee, Irrigation Committee, Committee of Seven, Revolving fund group
18	Usk	A1	919.9003	59	Committee of Seven, Farm Development Committee, Irrigation Committee, Revolving fund group, Women's club, ZANU PF party cells
27	Blightly	A1	888.21	42	Committee of Seven, Revolving fund group, Irrigation, Committee Home Based Care, Youth Club, Electricity Committee
25	Visa	A1	571.33	20	Committee of Seven, Irrigation Committee, Burial groups
26	Hariana	A1	5069.048	88	Committee of Seven, Irrigation Committee, Revolving fund group, Burial groups, School development committee

Mazowe lies in an agro ecological zone that supports agriculture, with fertile soils, good rainfall, and is located near the capital city of Harare (less than 60 kilometers west). The district is located in Mashonaland Central Province, which is dominated by Shona-speaking people. It has a total surface area of almost 453,892 hectares. Mazowe District has a diverse agrarian structure, which emerged out of the FTLRP. Besides a few remaining white-owned commercial farms, there are A2 and A1 resettlement farms, communal areas, and state farms of various sizes and involved in various enterprises (crop production, horticulture, citrus, wildlife, seed production, and dairy). Mazowe District has the following agrarian characteristics: Proximity to vibrant markets in Harare (which is also a gateway to international markets), new land tenure arrangements that are highly contested, significant differences in land use and agricultural production, and rapid pace of land acquisition and redistribution.

Findings

Governance and Farm Level Institutions on A1 farms

The mobilization behind farm level associations—as well as memberships of (for instance) burial societies and religious fraternities in Mazowe—are often based on claims of common identity, and the organizations' everyday activities become expressed in terms of this identity. These identities are not only based on kinship or blood relations but also on class, gender, geographical space, and same life experiences. These are potent markers that bring people together to form a collective conscience. For example, fast track farmers might face similar productive challenges. To combat this challenge they organize into commodity associations or production units. On the new farms, particularly the A1 farms, new

governance structures emerged, such as Committees of Seven at each scheme (see below for description). The roles of these committees included listening to the people's grievances, addressing problems, and leading communities. Matondi (2007) argues that an additional role was entirely political; they monitored movements in their area of operation. Some of these committees have been criticized for being political tools and for perpetrating violence (Human Rights Watch, 2004). A1 farmers in Mazowe consist of people from diverse backgrounds in terms of age, wealth, status, profession, gender, and educational and farming qualifications. New farmers are mostly from the nearby Chiweshe communal areas, but a significant number are from urban centers, especially Harare. These farmers face serious agrarian problems in terms of production and marketing as well as social issues such as theft and illness. They try to address these challenges through informal institutions such as development committees, burial societies, school development committees, and farmer groups/clusters (Table 2).

Table 2: Type of farm level institutions

Type	Brief description
Committee of Seven	This committee is responsible for governance on A1 schemes and makes important decisions that determine access to communal farm assets. <i>Sabhuku</i> (headman) heads this committee, but the other members are democratically chosen by the plotters on the farm.
Irrigation Committee	Present at farms with irrigation and usually chosen by only those involved with irrigation.
Development Committee	Present at some farms and works independently of the Committee of Seven. However, at other farms the Committee of Seven becomes the ad hoc development committee.
Farm Committee	Present at some farms and works in the same manner as the development committee, but differs in that it has more responsibility over other non-developmental issues (such as social conflicts).
ZESA/Electricity Committee	Usually tasked with issues that relate to payment of bills, fixing faults, and, in some cases, spearheading applications for connection.
Health Committee	Like most locally-initiated committees, this is chosen by the settlers and is responsible for health issues, including HIV and AIDS. There are also Home Based Care Committees initiated by Tariro Clinic at Howard Hospital.
School Development Committee	Operates in schools in the newly resettled areas.
Women's clubs	Women come together once or twice a week to discuss issues that affect them.
Youth's clubs	Mainly organized along sports or church lines.
Revolving savings clubs	Small groups based on trust in which people pool resources.
Burial societies	Arrangements at scheme level to offer assistance in case of death.

Farm level institutions in Mazowe embody a particular and important form of structural social capital. In many ways they constitute an important asset in farmers' livelihood strategies, and thus are essential to service provision, agricultural development, and poverty reduction. These institutional formations vary greatly in scale, size, effectiveness, democratic content, activities, and degree of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Such diversity makes it neither possible nor desirable to invoke unitary conceptions of social capital among

fast track farmers. It also cautions us against romanticizing the existence and work of rural organizations. Whilst organizing into institutions allows greater interaction and promotes togetherness among farm dwellers as they work for the collective good it can also lead to exclusion along gender and class lines. Within institutions rules, norms, mores and regulations are affirmed, shared, and policed through various institutional forms that ensure that, despite personal differences, conflicts remain manageable.

Women and Farm Level Institutions: Experiences from Mazowe

Women on A1 fast track farms in Mazowe are a mixture of plot holders (married, single, widowed), “small houses” (women who are in extramarital affairs with farmers and live on the farm while the wife of the plot holder is resident elsewhere- the practice is rampant among A2 farmers but does exist among A1 farmers), daughters and relatives of plot holders, and new and old farm workers. These women are of various ages with different educational, class, religious, ethnic, and even national backgrounds. Their interests and their experiences are so diverse that it is neither possible nor desirable to talk of women as a single, homogenous unit. These diverse characteristics in many ways shape the relationships established by women on the fast track farms. Gender is an important associational category which often separates men and women into different groups and positions. There are roles and positions that are generally considered to be within the male domain. For example, there are very few female *sabhuku* (headman) or treasurers in the Committees of Seven. Overall, the gendered division of labour relegates women from the public sphere to the private sphere. One participant noted that “it is not proper for a woman to lead where there are men. We feel that women should give men their proper place and let them lead” (Interview, Mazowe 3 March 2010). Women thus largely defer to men in the public sphere because of cultural gender roles.

It is important to note that women’s interests are never considered in meetings at the farm level. As one woman at Blightly Farm noted, “*tinongouya kuma meeting asi zvichemo zvedu hazvinzwike. Ukada kutaurisa unonoona moto kumba nababa*” (“We just come to meetings but our issues are never considered. If we talk our husbands will be angry with us,” Interview, Mazowe 15 March 2010). Culturally among the Shona, women are not entitled to talk when men are around. It is men who are the leaders and fathers who make welfare decisions for everyone. Fieldwork focus groups were separated by gender in order to allow women to speak freely. In the focus group discussions, women indicated that sometimes they had better ideas than men but there was no space for them to express them. They also complained that women do most of the agricultural work (including both economic production and social reproduction) but have little control over the proceeds from that work. Agendas at meetings never raise specific issues pertinent to women, even on the few farms that have women as *sabhuku* (headman). According to a female *sabhuku* (headman), “the meetings are rarely about what women want because they are for all farmers. Men speak mostly and issues that men propose carry the day, even if I am the *sabhuku* (headman) there is very little you can do when men dominate meetings” (Interview, Mazowe 6 March 2010). This highlights how even when women have positions of power men still use their cultural power to dominate public spaces.

The institution of *sabhuku* (headman) in its traditional sense is known as a hereditary position through the patriliney. In the case of the new resettlement areas (where the institution has been adopted and modified), it has created an opportunity for women to be part and parcel of “new traditionalism”. Traditional chiefs, as the vanguard of Shona patriarchal customs, were at the forefront in Mazowe in appointing women to positions that had been previously male-dominated. The number of female *sabhuku* (headman) remains very low when compared to their male counterparts, and having women who are *sabhuku* (headman) has not translated into more (let alone equal) attention at farm level to issues that concern women. Meetings and decisions are made in a gender-blind manner without any regard for the specific challenges facing women. One female *sabhuku* (headman) at Kia Ora farm complained that some farmers were disrespecting her because she was a woman. The selection of women appears as a progressive move that increases the inclusion of women in key governance structures in rural Zimbabwe, yet in essence the system still promotes male interest.

In the Committee of Seven, which is the biggest decision-making body at the farm level, women are mostly absent. On the six farms in this study, there was only one woman on each committee (women were responsible strictly for women’s affairs). The presence of this female member is a mere window-dressing ploy to make it appear as if women’s issues are important. One participant at Davaar noted that, “we have a woman’s representative on the committee. She is supposed to ensure our interests are heard but one woman against six men is difficult” (Interview, Mazowe 4 March 2010). There are, however, examples in Mazowe of women gaining influential positions in farm level institutions. One notable example is the all-female Committee of Seven at Selby Farm (which however was not part of the case study). At Blightly Farm the chairperson of the electricity committee is a woman who was chosen by all the plot holders, largely because of her good organizational skills. In male focus groups the participants highlighted that most committees required people who had the time and skills to call for meetings, visit different government/council offices, and command respect. They noted that in their opinion, most women did not have such skills and that most men did not want their wives leaving families behind in order to work on committees. Women are thus excluded from productive and decision-making institutions at the farm level. The general picture is that in most institutions women are only present when a women’s representative is required. This means that the interests of women—especially single women—are rarely represented and that these women generally find it difficult to get feedback about the meetings.

However, women do establish and operate their own forms of association. There are institution types which are exclusively organized according to gender or age. Gender-based groups include women’s clubs (which exist on most farms in the district). Women in Mazowe have negotiated their own spaces to meet, organize, share, and discuss. These forums are not only gendered (women only) but also class-based. For example, at Blightly Farm there is a women’s club at the scheme *Budiriro Kumaruwa* which was planning to embark on a horticultural project. This club excludes farm workers who are viewed as outsiders. A woman at the farm argued that, “farm workers are not part of us. They were left in the compound homes but they are not farmers” (17 March 2010). There is a plethora of women’s clubs on A1 farms in Mazowe. Some (such as at Komani Farm) are organised by the ZANU-PF (the main political party in Zimbabwe) Women’s League. Such clubs, while

politically-based, nevertheless organize women into clubs for sewing, cooking, and other activities. Among the important issues discussed at women's clubs are sexual education, condom use, maternal health, and HIV. Discussions of condom use and sex education can be quite problematic for social relations in rural spaces, yet the discussions rarely challenge the status quo. All of these issues are manifestations of patriarchal definitions of what women are supposed to be doing. These organizations do not question gender relations as they mutate within the fast track farms. Rather, they concentrate on improving the "wife" by enhancing her household skills. Gender relations are rarely contested, and women have found ways to carve out spaces without necessarily upsetting the prevailing patriarchal system.

At Usk Farm there are two groups of women involved in savings. One group is made up of four women and the other has six. Two of these women are plot holders, four are wives of plot holders, and the rest are relatives of plot holders. There are no farm workers involved, mainly because they rarely interact with A1 farmers at a level that can allow trust to develop. Social class is also important, as farm workers might be perceived as unable to afford membership in the groups (membership requires a regular source of income every month to meet the membership fees). This type of group is thus highly exclusive and depends not only on trust but also on access to resources. Another female savings group at Hariana indicated that during 2007, when there was a problem with accessing money in Zimbabwe because of inflation, they resorted to using household utensils or groceries bought from neighboring countries as modes of exchange. Women in patriarchal societies—such as the Shona—are mainly relegated to the private domain and men are the ones involved in public transactions involving money. These saving groups challenge this status quo and give women access to positions in which they amass considerable resources. The question nevertheless is whether these women ultimately have control at the household level of the resources they have acquired.

Discussion

Social Capital and Gender: Politics of Belonging on Fast Track Farms

Identity is at the heart of belonging and an important marker of "who is" and "who is not" a farmer, Zimbabwean, or ZANU-PF supporter on the fast track farms. As such, the restructuring of gender and class configurations are important to understanding how various social actors relate and interact at the farm level. Everyday interaction on fast track farms is shaped by identities that are always under negotiation. Such identities define inclusivity and exclusivity when it comes to group formation and the definition of a "farmer". For example, former farm workers resident in most farm compounds in Mazowe are seen as non-citizens with no rights and are thus excluded from most forms of associational life. Many instances were given of how institutions do not allow farm worker representatives or women's clubs that are not open to female farm workers.

Class and gender interact to delineate who belongs. When trying to understand the situation and experiences of women on fast track farms, we should be careful not to generalize them broadly as farm workers, farmers, wives, or children. These women are classed, aged, ethnicized and nationalized. The intersectionality of experiences is thus

necessary to understanding how women within the newly resettled areas are positioned in different social locations. The patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society has ensured that women remain outside influential decision-making positions. Even as their numbers expand significantly, women representatives cannot automatically be expected to be representative of women. A feminine presence in politics is not the same as a feminist one. Getting more women into decision-making is a worthy project from the point of view of democratic justice, but the real challenge is in institutionalizing gender equity vis-à-vis government policy. The former project—increasing the number of women in politics—is the easiest, and is often mistaken for the latter. This results in the confusion of numerical and strategic representation for women. Women in decision-making positions have in most ways neglected to focus on women's issues. They become representatives of the same system which has placed women at the periphery of all important decisions. Hence, a mere increase in female representation in farm level institutions is not the answer; rather, a systematic way has to be found to place their interests on policy agendas.

Analysis of social capital shows that the concept, while gender blind, can offer an understanding of how institutions produce and reproduce gender inequalities. As Bebbington (2002) notes, the persistent theme of feminist authors is that social capital is not innocent; neither in terms of its place in development discourse nor in its operational forms as networks. Women in Mazowe appear deficient of social capital as a result of discriminatory practices and institutions sustained through men's social capital. Women's organizations are often not recognized as anything but pastimes. They are not regarded as important elements of associational life; most men interviewed criticized them for being "gossip groups". Gender inequalities in resources, power, and rights structure the character of the rules and norms of association between women and between women and men. Structural inequalities are thus enforced via associational forms that promote male dominance in the public sphere and relegate women to the domestic realm. The issue, however, is not a simple dichotomy between male oppressors and oppressed women, but rather entails a multi-layered relationship in which different women and men at different times and in different classes have varying power, control, and status. Women have agency, and there are some who have revolted against the gender order and forced their way into influential positions at the local level. Due to their class, some women on A2 farms are accessing more resources and better services than A1 men. Gender alone cannot explain the variation in people's experiences of resettlement.

The Impact of Exclusion on Women's Food Security

Agriculture is the mainstay of rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Food security in rural spaces is thus based on the ability to produce. Production requires access to key productive resources, which include labor, machinery, and water. The exclusion of women from institutional structures at the farm level ultimately affects farms' productive capacities. A1 farmers in Zimbabwe operate in a resource-challenged context in which grassroots institutions become an important asset for survival. The Government of Zimbabwe is not in a position to provide support to A1 farms, meaning these farms have largely depended on their own social and economic resources to build their communities. On most A1 farms, the new farmers inherited farm equipment and buildings, including houses, barns, irrigation equipment, boreholes, grinding mills, and tractors. Access and use of these assets is

managed and controlled by various male-controlled committees. Women (especially in female-headed households) have limited access to these productive assets. They are usually last in line to use farm equipment, which affects production and harvests. Social institutions can thus be discriminatory via formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices that restrict, limit, or exclude women, and these institutions play a critical role in defining and mediating gender relations (and consequently influence rural women's economic and social opportunities). The continued lack of governmental support for A1 farmers has meant the increased importance of social organizing at the farm level. On farms, livelihoods are based on the ability to access inputs, and inputs are mainly accessed through groups. Social capital can thus be exclusionary along gender lines.

Conclusion

Smallholder farmers in newly resettled areas in Zimbabwe are responding to everyday challenges through various forms of novel institutions. This paper has shown how women interact within and without these institutional formations. Using the gendered dimensions of social capital, it provides an analysis of how grassroots organizations in patriarchal settings tend to exclude women. This paper also highlights how age, class, and gender intersect to exclude women from specific productive and decision-making spaces. Women in newly resettled areas are located in different social strata; hence it is important to avoid generalizing them as a monolithic class. It is however clear men dominate social and public lives on the new farms. Women find it difficult to be involved in these institutional formations and thus are excluded from key decision-making processes. This has consequences, specifically for female-headed households' access to communal resources. Access to these resources has a direct bearing on production (and, hence, food security). This paper concludes that, rather than romanticize grassroots organizing, we need to understand how they lead to exclusion and inequality, especially along gender lines. Gender organization is a critical indicator in understanding the power relations involved in community-building and institutional formation. The dominance of men in land possession mirrors their dominance in the social and political spheres of newly resettled areas. Rural leadership and its patriarchal grounding reproduce the male dominance of rural association leadership. Women in most rural institutions are given token positions that are either secretarial in nature or are solely responsible for gender issues. Women-based institutions tend to coalesce at the margins of mainstream rural economic and political systems; they are rarely autonomous and do not espouse any feminist or empowerment ideology.

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