

The Third Chimurenga in Zimbabwe: Articulating the Achievements Attained and Challenges Faced by Female Beneficiaries of A1 Farms in Selected Districts of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

From a gender perspective, this study was interested in establishing the achievements attained and challenges faced by female beneficiaries of A1 Farms in Selected Districts of Midlands Province Zimbabwe and the Social Relations Approach helped the study unpack gendered realities as they manifest in access and control of productive resources. The study population was made up of 8 districts in Midlands Region (100 female farmers and 30 extension workers), from these, a sample of three districts, 60 female farmers and 15 extension workers participated in the study which employed the mixed method design and data was gathered using questionnaires, interviews, document reviews and extensive literature review. Findings from the study indicated that among other things, female farmers achieved ownership of land, improved food security and bought additional farming equipment; and the challenges they face emanated from patriarchal bias in the dual nature of the Zimbabwe legal parameters and gender. The study recommends more affirmative approaches from funding organisations and from government which can help A1 and other females interested in farming to empower them for an all round increased participation in the agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Fast Track Land Reform Programme, Zimbabwe, Social Relations Approach, Gender.

Background to the Study

From a gender perspective, this study was interested in establishing the achievements attained and challenges faced by female beneficiaries of A1 Farms in Selected Districts of Midlands Province Zimbabwe and the Social Relations Approach helped the study unpack gendered realities as they manifest in access and control of productive resources. The study population was made up of 8 districts in Midlands Region (100 female farmers and 30 extension workers), from these, a sample of three districts, 60 female farmers and 15 extension workers participated in the study which employed the mixed method design and data was gathered using questionnaires, interviews, document reviews and extensive literature review. Findings from the study indicated that among other things, female farmers achieved ownership of land, improved food security and bought additional farming equipment; and the challenges they face emanated from patriarchal bias in the dual nature of the Zimbabwe legal parameters and gender. The study recommends more affirmative approaches from funding organisations and from government which can help A1 and other females interested in farming to empower them for an all round increased participation in the agrarian reforms in Zimbabwe.

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme was based on compelling economic and social imperatives of poverty eradication and foster economic development in a newly independent state. Situated in developing nation context and a highly patriarchal environment only a handful of women managed to get land under the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). In the aftermath of the highly politicized programme some women benefitted and were resettled in A1 farms. The land issue has been central to the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. The first land reform programme started in September 1980 soon after independence and it aimed at redistributing land, developing rural areas through the provision of infrastructure and other socio-economic services as to ameliorate the plight of the people negatively affected during the war of liberation Zuwarimwe,(1999) in (Masiwa, 2004). Under the Lancaster House Constitutional Provisions land was supposed to be bought on the “willing buyer willing seller” approach (Utete, 2003). This approach proved to be too slow and relaxed for the Zimbabwean masses. In the 2000 referendum elections guided by the motto “Land is the economy and economy is the land” motivated the masses and politicians to gear up for grabbing land from the minority white farmers. Despite losing the referendum in 2000 the government launched the FTLPP (Third Chimurenga) in June 2008 guided by the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme Phase II (Centre for Public Impact, 2017). In the process of getting the land a lot of incidences happened which include introduction of new land policies and laws, deaths, abuses of various kinds, corruption and violence. By 2015 it was stated that 7 million hectares of land had been redistributed since 2000 and it was justified as compensation for colonialism and 4 500 white farmers were disposed and a million black Zimbabweans settled on their land (Centre for Public Impact, 2017).

In the fight for equality between men and women many African nations have adopted new land laws in order to strengthen rural women’s land ownership rights (FAO 2017). Being a signatory of a number of conventions and declarations on gender equality Zimbabwe was also obligated to address inequalities of gender even in accessing and controlling of this key resource. The Zimbabwe National Gender Policy revised in 2017 places strong emphasis on gender equality and equity for the achievement of a gender just society in which men and women enjoy equity and benefit as equal partners in the development of the country. Globally rural women form the backbone of rural and national economies for they comprise about 40-43% of the world’s agricultural labour force. In Africa 80% of agricultural production comes from small scale farmers who are mostly rural women (World Bank 1991, Mugege 2018, Longwe 2012). In the wake of the FTLRP MAMID (Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanization and Irrigation Development) made a deliberate effort to have 50% of extension workers as female as a way of encouraging female farmers to attend extension meetings and training workshops on agricultural business practices. MAMID also introduce gender mainstreaming through gender responsive budgeting and advocated for support from Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) such as the Gender Wing of the Zimbabwe Farmers’ Union, Women’s Coalition and Land, Jekesa Pfungwa, Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau and Zimbabwe Women Research Centre and Network (ZWRCN) in empowering women to take up leadership positions, own land and be economically empowered (FAO, 2017).

In the FTLRP it was agreed that women will be allocated 20% of the land (Utete, 2003). However women who benefitted under the Model A1 constituted 18% and women beneficiaries under A2 were only 12% (Utete, 2003). Despite the negative publicity that this program received a study by Scoones Marongwe; Mavedzenge; Murimbarimba; Mahenehene and Sukume (2010) indicated that there were certain achievements that were realised in the process. In the same vein this study focused on achievements attained and challenges faced by women beneficiaries of the A1 farms in the FTLRP. The following table illustrates land allocation by gender.

Table 1.1 Allocation patterns by gender per province

Province	Model A1				Model A2			
	No. of males	%	No. of females	%	No. of males	%	No. of females	%
Midlands	14800	82	3198	18	338	95	17	5
Masvingo	19026	84	3644	16	709	92	64	8
Mash Central	12982	88	1770	12	1469	87	215	13
Mash West	21782	81	5270	19	1777	89	226	11
Mash East	12967	76	3992	24	*	*	*	*
Mat South	7754	87	1169	13	215	79	56	21
Mat North	7919	84	1490	16	574	83	121	17
Manicaland	9572	82	2190	18	961	91	97	9
Total	106986	82	22723	18	6043	88	796	12

Source: (Utete 2003 p.40)

Aims, Theoretical Framework, and Methodology

The study aimed at articulating the achievements attained and challenges faced by female beneficiaries of A1 Farms in Selected Districts of Midlands Province Zimbabwe. And the theoretical framework and methodology was guided by the social relations approach (SRA) by Nail Kabeer (1994). This approach looks at inequalities in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and the contribution of power relations in those social setups. This approach enables the collection of information for designing policies and programmes which enable women to be agents of their own development (March, Smyth, Mukhopadhyay 1999). The approach perceives gender relations as part of social relations. The SRA states that there are systematic and structural causes of gender inequality and the root causes have to be redressed. Arguing against the Women in Development (WID) approach the SRA emphasizes not on women to be integrated into development but the social structures, processes and relations which give rise to women's disadvantaged positions need to be transformed. The premise of the SRA is that ending women's subordination goes beyond allocating economic resources but involves a redistribution of power (Miles 2016, Kabeer 1994).

In the FTLRP the economic resource (land) was given to deserving applicants with women included but do these women have 'power' in the agricultural revolution to influence, decide, participate and influence their and other people's lives. The SRA gives the ultimate goal of any development initiative as the wellbeing of human beings. Sen (1981) defines human well being as characterized by survival, security and autonomy. Sen (1981) and Kabeer (1994) both assert that economic growth and increased productivity in the absence of human well being are meaningless. Gender social relations determine people's roles, rights, responsibilities and claims over others. It is from the dictates of gender social relations that women face a number of challenges in developmental initiatives and agricultural farming is included.

Sample and Sampling Strategies

The choice of the sample was based on selections made for participation at Midlands Agricultural Show in the year 2011-2012. Three districts that are Shurugwi, Kwekwe and Zvishavane were conveniently selected for their proximity to the researchers. Female farmers who were participating at the agricultural show were purposively selected for participation in the study. The assumption was that their participation meant they have realized some gains from the agricultural revolution. For those who failed to attend agricultural shows the study purposively identified female farmers at district agricultural meetings that were held at Chachacha Growth Point (Shurugwi), Zibagwe Rural district offices (Kwekwe) and Shurugwi rural district offices to select participants. Male participants participated on behalf of the female farmers who could not participate due to illiteracy or had other commitments elsewhere. The study sample had 9 men and 51 female farmers participating, giving a total of 60 participants.

Instruments

The study used structured questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were used to cater for some respondents who were not literate enough to answer questionnaires. Through interviews there was room to use vernacular so that richer and more complex data was collected. The interview also allowed respondents to express their opinions, concerns and views as freely as possible. The atmosphere created by interviews allowed participants to introduce and discuss issues considered as relevant especially when they were discussed in the mother tongue. The mother tongue also enabled participants to feel comfortable to disclose challenges and attainments. At the Midlands show ground interviews were held in secluded places for ease of soliciting all the necessary data, where necessary interviews were conducted at the participants' homestead. Participants indicated their preferences on venues for the interviews. Questionnaires were also used in the study and these enabled the study to gather data from more participants in a shorter space of time when compared to interviews. Responses to questionnaires were obtained from the show sessions or from district agricultural meetings. Extensive literature review and review of documents was done to establish trends since 2001. Collected data was transcribed as verbatim from field notes and descriptive statistics used for data analysis.

Discussion of Research Findings

Gender is a key variable which affects how people relate in society. As culture is dynamic so is gender. In this study demographic details were collected in order to ascertain the nature of gender social relations. Male respondents participated in the study on behalf of female farmers who had other commitments.

Table 1.1 Sex of respondent's and household head
(N=60)

	Male	%	Female	%
Sex of respondent	9	15,25%	50	84.75%
Sex of household head	35	58.33%	25	41.67%

Farm ownership (N=60)

	male	Female
Male	40	66,67%
Female	15	25.%
None of the above	5	8.33%

More females participated in the study which does not mean that they own the farm. In the hectic FTLRP the potential female farmers relied on their own political or social connections for them to be part of the beneficiaries of the land revolution. While Scoones et al., (2011) observed that those who had assets, hard work and interest benefitted A1 or A2 farms underlying political and social connections cannot be totally ignored. Most of the respondents indicated that they moved from living in areas with poor soils and erratic rainfall. In Shurugwi people moved from the communal areas to the south, west and north of the mining town of Shurugwi. In Kwekwe, people were moved from Zhombe and Silobela to the farms surrounding the town. Most of the farmers are satisfied with the land they were allocated in terms of size with some opting for more land in order to expand their activities.

Achievements and Challenges

Living in a patriarchal society Zimbabwean women has been historically disadvantaged in terms of land ownership. At least 18% of the A1 farms allocated in the Midlands Province are owned by females. This was a key achievement for single women and widows. Unlike the cultural approach to land dictated by the communal Lands Act, A1 female farmers do have full control of the land allocated to them. Ownership of land comes with survival, security and autonomy thereby reducing inequality and increasing their wellbeing.

Another achievement attained by the female farmers is that they acquired additional farming equipment such as cultivators, ridgers and scotch carts. This is just basic equipments which is normally owned by men. Social relations at family level imply that women have limited access and control of this equipment. When women have access to limited resources it affects the quality and quantity of their agricultural output. It can also fuel inequality as women will depend on men for practical gender needs. Some of the female farmers were afforded opportunities to enroll for Master Farmer training programmes and agricultural development workshops were they were awarded certificates. The professional training enabled them to join farmer organizations where they became active and benefitted by membership.

From the variety of crops grown in the A1 farms, the farmers realised improved food security. The land redistribution exercise made it possible for women to get access to food in the resettled farms women had more liberty to deal with the farm produce as they wished. With limited interference from in-laws and other cultural restraints farmers had the liberty of using farm produce for entrepreneurial activities. This enabled the female farmers to send their children to school as the general welfare of household members improved.

Despite the achievements that these farmers realised there were also challenges that they faced. The allocation of a mere 20% of land in the FTLRP which translated to 18% in reality imply that women continue to be under represented in the agrarian reforms. They participate less in decision making because of their limited representation.

The unequal proportions of men and women in the agrarian reform imply that more men will continue to enjoy the benefit which reinforces unequal power relations between the sexes. Limited access to loans for the expansion of farming activities has kept female farmers as enlarged subsistence farmers. On the other hand events such as the economic crisis and successive droughts affected women farmers more than it did to male farmers. The multiple roles of women also pinned women farmers to the farm even when nothing much was happening. Issues of nepotism and political status sidelined women in accessing cheap implements supplied by government. Age and gender are other challenges that affected the activities of these farmers. Indications were that as they grow older female farmers are not really interested in farming they are just keeping the farm for their sons whom they expect to take over after them.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite a number of challenges that women in agriculture face there is need to celebrate the few women who have made it into the A1 farms through the FTLRP. Despite challenges these farmers have improved their general wellbeing and that of their families. The study therefore recommends that there is need for more affirmative approaches from funding organization and government which can help A1 female farmers and other females interested in farming to have increased participation in the A1 and A2 farming in Zimbabwe. Through the implementation and promotion of women agricultural organisations the government and other stake holders can promote agricultural services tailor made for women. The monitoring and evaluation of agricultural policies and programs must be guided by a gender equality perspective. However a lot still has to be done on improving gender social relations that limit the agricultural advancement of women farmers in Zimbabwe. Further research can be done using the capabilities approach to establish the extent to which the FTLFP has empowered women for enhancement of their agricultural capabilities.

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