Women Farm Workers in Zimbabwe: The Social Policy Outcomes Two Decades after the Transformative Fast Track Land Reform

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Abstract

Women farm workers have so far received limited scholarly attention in Zimbabwe's agrarian and labour policy literature. This is in a context where a conscious understanding of land reform as a social policy instrument is paltry. Taking women farm workers as the prime focus and using an empirical case study, the paper addresses these lacunae by exploring the redistributive, protective and reproductive outcomes of the fast track land reform. Twenty-two years after the formalisation of the land reform, nuanced evidence shows that even though female farm workers are agentive and engage in diverse livelihood pathways, they experience multiple challenges. Due to the politics of exclusion and inclusion, normalised gender hierarchies and compartmentalisation, as well as policy vacuity, they are embroiled in precarious livelihoods, poverty, inequality, and marginalisation, and are worse off than they were in the superseded land tenure regime. Accordingly, the question of women farm workers is yet to be resolved. The Government of Zimbabwe and other relevant stakeholders should address this question primarily and urgently by placing it on the policy agenda.

Keywords: women farm workers; gender hierarchies; gender compartmentalisation; fast track land reform; social policy outcomes; Zimbabwe

Introduction

Since the 1990s, sub-Saharan African countries have been actively engaging in land reforms, particularly land tenure reform, altering the institutions regarding

land (Takeuchi, 2021). In this context, Zimbabwe's land reform, particularly the fast track land reform, has been radically different in terms of character, scope, and impact compared to the earlier phases of land reform (Moyo, 2011a; Mkodzongi and Lawrence, 2019; Helliker *et al.*, 2021). A little over two decades after the formalisation of the fast track land reform, the focus has shifted from its histories, geographies, and controversies to exploring pathways for leveraging its outcomes to enhance social policy impact and development (Tekwa and Adesina, 2018; Chipenda, 2019, 2020). Yet, an underlying argument is that the processes and outcomes of the fast track land reform cannot be dissociated from the shifting national and global geopolitical configurations of power (Moyo, 2011b, c; Chamunogwa, 2019).

Farm labour is fundamental to the outcomes of agrarian reform, agriculture, and agro-based development. In this regard, a focus on farm labour, especially if disaggregated by gender, is fundamental to understanding labour issues in agrarian contexts from a gender standpoint, and in developing transformative policy options to improve the lives of the workers. Benya (2017) explores the inclusion of women in underground mining in South Africa, the associated masculine culture of mining, and the implications for gender equality in mining and women's empowerment. Similarly, Agarwal et al. (2021) interrogate inter- and intra-gender inequalities in land ownership in India, noting asymmetrical land ownership by women compared to men, and argue that land ownership is an essential vector for measuring women's empowerment and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. In another context, Tsikata and Amanor-Wilks (2009) acknowledge the importance of land and labour rights to women in sub-Saharan Africa particularly due to the largely agrarian nature of livelihood activities and low technological base that makes labour a critical factor. Furthermore, outside the remit of agriculture, land organises livelihoods and influences social and political power, and determines resource control. Overall, scholars working on African women workers in diverse contexts (see Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003; Tsikata, 2009; Darkwah and Tsikata, 2021; Tsikata and Eweh, 2021), and particularly those working on women's land ownership and agricultural labour (see Apusigah, 2009; Bhaumik et al., 2016; Fischer, 2021) highlight the importance of women's labour and expose the enduring gender inequalities in resource ownership and labour markets.

Zimbabwe's land reform has gone through phases influenced by the centrality of addressing land tenure imbalances created and sustained by colonialism and neo-colonialism manoeuvrings, the expansionist approach adopted by the post-colonial government led by the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), and land movements mainly by the peasants. The land question in Zimbabwe is often situated in colonial accumulation by dispossession which started in 1890, challenges to land repossession after independence in 1980 (Moyo, 2011a; Ruswa, 2007), and new land questions post land repossession (Chipenda, 2020). From 1890 when the British colonised Zimbabwe, the colonial administration engaged in widespread accumulation by dispossession and alienation of the Black majority from governance and development (Gundani, 2003). The land dispossessions and alienations were facilitated by supportive social and economic policies – economic regulations and taxes – specifically intended to benefit the British colonialists. The Black population had to be severed from the land which was their main source of livelihood and prosperity. This called for the application of laws that were oppressive and led to alienation. These included the Rudd Concession, Native Reserve Order in Council of 1898, Native Reserve Areas of 1915, Land Apportionment Act of 1930, Maize Control Act of 1931, Cattle Levy Act, Land Acquisition Scheme, Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and Land Tenure Act of 1969 (Mukanya, 1994; Utete, 2003). State-supported unequal and repressive agrarian relations between Blacks and whites were sustained by these legislations (Moyo, 2011a; Moyo and Chambati, 2013). Land dispossession, coupled with extra-economic regulations and taxes, turned Zimbabwe into a labour reserve economy, which repressed the peasantry, and small-scale rural industry and commerce, without creating full-scale proletarianisation (Bush and Cliffe, 1984; Yeros, 2002).

Due to colonial overt and covert land dispossession, at independence in 1980 there was acute racial skewness in landholding – 6,000 white farmers held 15,5 million hectares located mainly in the best agro-ecological regions while 8,500 Black farmers held 1,4 million hectares and 4,500 communal farmers held 16,4 million hectares (Sachikonye, 2003a: 227; Utete, 2003: 14). To address the land question created by colonialism, at independence the government engaged in land acquisition and resettlement. The first phase was from September 1980 to 1998. Despite the transformative ambition, in this phase the government merely

acquired 3,498,444 hectares of land and resettled 71,000 families (Waeterloos and Rutherford 2004: 538). This number was far below the official target of 162,000 families (Moyo, 2013: 32). Based on lessons learnt in the first phase, the second phase of the land acquisition and resettlement programme was launched in September 1998. The government was only able to resettle 4,697 families on 145,000 hectares against a set target of acquiring 8,5 million hectares and resettling 91,000 families (Sarimana, 2005: 68). Spontaneous and radical occupation of large-scale commercial farms, mainly dominated by peasants, emerged due to the government's failure to solve the land question and flagging macroeconomic performance. The government's efforts were constrained by the willing seller-willing buyer provision of the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979 and major resource constraints in a context of high expectations from the Black majority who, for almost a century, were marginalised from their land and other development opportunities. The *Jambanja* or Third *Chimurenga*, as this land movement is known (Sadomba, 2013), became the Fast Track Land Reform Programme upon formalisation in 2000.

Compared to the preceding land reform, the fast track is the most topical due to its scope and impact. It resulted in the resettlement of 180,000 households on 13 million hectares (Chipenda, 2018: 2) – 170,000 in the A1 model (Moyo, 2011c: 496) and 10,000 in the A2 model respectively (Moyo, 2013). Land beneficiaries of the A1 model were allocated smaller portions of land. For example, the prescribed arable land per beneficiary in agroecological regions 1 and 2 is five hectares, and ten hectares for regions 3, 4 and 5. The A1 was planned as an intensive decongestion model aimed at relieving land pressure in over-populated communal areas and benefitting landless peasants. The model was aimed at eliminating squatting and disorderly settlements in both urban and rural areas as well as extending and improving the agricultural capacity of the peasant farming sector (Utete, 2003: 20). This model is also referred to as the villagised scheme because it resembles the village set-up of the areas under customary tenure. The A2 was set aside for commercial farming and was to be administered by the Minister of Lands, Land Reform and Resettlement in terms of the Agricultural Land Settlement Act Chapter 20:01. This model was aimed at increasing the participation of Black farmers in commercial farming (to promote the indigenisation of the commercial farming sector) by giving them

easier access to land and infrastructure (Sarimana, 2005: 74). A2 land sizes are bigger and although not applied to all beneficiaries, access to this scheme had to be based on proof of capital for undertaking commercial farming with minimum government support. Moreover, any assistance provided by the government had to be recovered fully. Allocations depended on agroecological zones and type of farm (small-scale, medium-scale, large-scale, or peri-urban) (Sukume *et al.*, 2004). In the case study used, most A1 land beneficiaries were allocated five hectares while the A2 land beneficiaries got between 60 and 120 hectares.

Concerning processes, impact, and outcomes, the fast track has been interrogated from multiple ideological and epistemological standpoints: neopatrimonialism, livelihoods, political economy, human rights and, more recently, social policy. Controversy surrounds its outcomes. Notwithstanding the various phases of land reform, the "land" question is yet to be fully resolved and 'new' land questions are increasingly becoming apparent. The "farm workers" question is a central example – what were the outcomes of the fast track land reform in relation to farm workers? Centring on farm workers, while there is no consensus, the fast track eroded broader access to work, tenure security, income, and other livelihoods of the approximately 20,000 farm workers of the white commercial farmers (Sachikonye, 2003a). During the *Jambanja*, their human rights were violated (physical and psychological) along with those of the white commercial farmers because they were considered to be supporters of the old land regime (Sachikonye and Zishiri, 1999). Their situation is more precarious in the new land tenure system carved out by the fast track (Chambati, 2017). Most do not own land in their own right; they have to rent land to produce food for the household, are job insecure, are engaged occasionally or are out of employment, are mostly paid in kind, are paid low wages, and are in arrears; overtime is rarely recognised, they rarely get food rations, and are not prioritised in other social protection measures (Chiweshe and Chabata, 2019).

In Zimbabwe, there is a large body of work on farm workers in the aftermath of the land reform, and their contribution to agriculture (Amanor-Wilks, 1995, 1996, 2001; Chambati, 2011, 2017, 2022; Scoones and Murimbarimba, 2020; Scoones *et al.*, 2018; Chiweshe and Chabata, 2019). There are also organisations that focus on farm workers (see Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, 2002). In addition, studies on women and land in both resettlement areas (Ras)

and areas under customary tenure (also known as communal areas, CAs) are remarkable (Gaidzanwa, 1994, 2011; Chingarande, 2008; Chingarande *et al.*, 2012; Chiweshe *et al.*, 2014; Mutopo, 2014; Mutopo *et al.*, 2014; Chiweshe, 2015; Bhatasara and Chiweshe, 2017). Yet, the discourse on farm workers has not kept up with the times, sometimes fails to grasp the current and changing realities of the farm workers, and may not pay particular attention to women farm workers.

This paper complements the existing corpus of literature by interrogating central debates – the persistent gender inequalities in land ownership before and after the land reform, how such inequalities shape livelihoods and social relations, and the vacuity of scholarly focus on social policy outcomes among farm workers particularly relating to women farm labour. In this context, the paper broadens the remit of knowledge on farm labour and the well-being of women farm workers in four ways. First, it avoids the bunching together of farm workers by focusing specifically on women farm workers. Secondly, it prioritises the current women farm workers, their diverse lived experiences, and agency in a context of challenges and precarious livelihoods. Thirdly, the paper is grounded in a Transformative Social Policy (TSP) approach. Accordingly, it is crystallised around selected tasks of social policy – redistribution, protection, and reproduction – a thrust that is still largely scanty, principally in relation to agrarian literature. In this regard, it explores the extent to which the land reform policy has transformed the experiences of women farm workers. Finally, the empirical basis of the paper informs farm labour policy and seeks to improve the well-being of women farm workers, particularly based on nuanced evidence drawn from the farms. Thus, the paper has both intellectual and activist research underpinnings. The limits of a micro study, single district focus, and interpretivism acknowledged, the paper provides focal insights on women farm workers and how their conditions can be transformed. The paper is organised into three parts – TSP (the evaluative conceptual underpinnings), discussion (prioritising redistribution, protection, and reproduction), and conclusion.

Methods and Materials

The paper is informed by a primary study carried out in the Zvimba district in 2021 and 2022, and ongoing engagement with the beneficiaries of the fast track and earlier phases of land reform that span from 2014 to 2022. The district is located in northern central Zimbabwe in Mashonaland West Province and is composed of 35 wards (Chipenda and Tom, 2022: 187). It had 718 large-scale commercial farms (LSCFs) and about 150,000 households under customary tenure before the fast track (Murisa, 2009: 21). Banket ward, lying approximately 95 kilometres to the north-west of Zimbabwe's capital (Harare), was the epicentre of the study where the two main study sites – Dalkeith and Whynhill farms – and the accompanying St. Lucia and Wannock Glen farms were drawn. Before the fast track, Banket ward had 41 LSCFs. Of these, 16 were converted to A1 plots and 26 into A2 plots (Chipenda and Tom, 2022: 187). The white commercial farmer of Dalkeith used to employ about 200 permanent farm workers while casual labour was not specified and depended on the season (Murisa, 2009: 247). At Whynhill farm, in the 1990s, 70 full-time employees were engaged. However, during peak seasons more manual labour was required and the number of farm workers increased threefold (Murisa, 2009: 261).

The sample was drawn from a cross-section of individuals, groups and organisations. These are 40 women farm workers; ten male farm workers; 30 plot owners; two village heads; 15 farmers from the areas under customary tenure proximate to the farms (Chirau, Kasanze and Murombedzi); one Agritex officer; one lands officer; two senior government officials from the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement, and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare respectively; one district coordinator, and one woman labour expert. Overall, the participants were selected from the groups of people most relevant to the focus of the study. A review of scholarly literature about farm labour in the Zvimba and other districts in Zimbabwe and studies in other countries complemented the primary research.

Exploring the lived situation of women farm workers in the farms borne out of the fast track and the associated current social policy outcomes demanded the application of interpretivism with its qualitative-dominant methods. The essence of interpretivism in feminist research is notable in literature (see for example,

Chingarande, 2010; Benya, 2017; Martignoni, 2021). Data collection methods included less structured key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Exploration of life histories and informal interaction and questioning were associated with the data collection methods. The merits and demerits of these methods and techniques are acknowledged (Neuman, 2011; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Some of the merits include flexibility, enhanced capability to engage with the context and subjectivities, encouraging exploration, ability to capture the lived experiences and situated meanings, and broadening research and responses to social problems beyond statistics. However, these methods and techniques are weak where statistical representation and analysis are required, they consume more time and labour, are subjective, and results cannot be replicated. Merits and demerits acknowledged, the choice of methods depends on the problem, objective(s) and research question(s).

Transformative Social Policy: The Heuristic Underpinnings

In Zimbabwe, the exploration of gender issues relating to land reform and farm work has mainly been approached from the lens of African feminists who work on the agrarian sector – particularly their insights on land questions, land reform and agrarian change. Broadly, African feminism interrogates diverse aspects: gender difference, gender inequality, and gender oppression in African contexts. Despite the diversity, African feminisms, like other variants of feminism, converge on a woman/women-centred focus in questioning social life and human experience, and pursuing change (Maponya, 2021). It is a philosophical, political, activist, and emancipatory tradition grounded in the lived experiences of African women (Ossome, 2020; Bakare-Yusuf and Dosekun, 2021; Okoli, 2021). African feminists who focus on the agrarian sector bring to the fore four core dimensions. They take the situations and experiences of women as the starting point of enquiry; describe the social world, particularly from the standpoint of African women; are activist and change-oriented for the benefit of women; and delve beyond women and aim to emancipate all other disadvantaged groups.

To address issues in the agrarian sector, they answer four questions: What about women? Why is all this as it is? How can the social world be changed and

improved to make society a more just place for women and all people? What about the differences between and among African women? These questions are fundamental in the various scholarly contributions on Zimbabwe's land reform (Gaidzanwa, 1994; Chingarande, 2008; Chingarande *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Mutopo, 2011; Mutopo *et al.*, 2014; Bhatasara and Chiweshe, 2017; Chambati and Mazwi, 2020). Overall, they acknowledge the heterogeneity, complexity, and fluidity of women's situations in agrarian contexts. However, African feminists in general and African agrarian scholars who adopt a gender lens do not explain the social policy dimensions of land reform pertaining to women farm workers, hence the emphasis on this dimension in this paper.

This article weaves TSP into the analysis of the social policy outcomes of land reform relating to women farm workers in a post land reform context. TSP is a product of monumental research under the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), and later contributions by individual scholars (Mkandawire, 2007; Adesina, 2010, 2021; Yi, 2015). TSP seeks to address the weaknesses of earlier social policies that were applied in Africa and other parts of the Global South, including but not limited to the Social Dimensions of Adjustment, Social Risk Management and Transformative Social Protection. These approaches were based on a neoliberal philosophy, are narrow, emphasised targeting of the "deserving poor" and application of safety nets to improve their situation; they restrict social policy to social protection in the anti-poverty agenda. They do not question and address the structural causes of inequality, marginalisation, and poverty. Furthermore, available evidence shows that these approaches have failed to lead to developmental transformation and broader well-being.

TSP emphasises the centrality of a better society for all, social solidarity and equity norms, shared goals and active participation of the hitherto disadvantaged groups, and the importance of an encompassing social policy. It is immersed in norms of parity and social cohesion, and in providing collective membership and coverage. Consequently, social policy is about achieving a collective good and holistic well-being. In this context, reducing poverty levels requires a return to the wider vision of development and social policy. This calls for connecting normative (ideational/basis goals), multiple tasks (functions) and the assortment of policy instruments, and development outcomes (see Adesina,

2011). In this regard, TSP has productive, protective, reproductive, redistributive, and social cohesion/nation-building tasks. These multiple tasks are linked to various instruments and feed into social, economic, and political development. In this context, social policy and economic policy are intertwined, a characteristic that is acknowledged in earlier regimes of social policy (see Adesina, 2009 for the Bismarckian, Beveridgean, Nordic and Nationalist models). The understanding that land and agrarian reform is among the core instruments of social policy that can generate and sustain people's well-being is the basis for analysing the situation of women farm workers in post land reform Zimbabwe.

While acknowledging the appropriateness of the TSP approach particularly in a context where it is largely limited in agrarian literature and policy, it is crucial to understand that this approach does not address all the challenges to the outcomes of land and agrarian reform. TSP is one among several useful approaches to analysing the outcomes of land and agrarian reform. This approach addresses, though not immensely, other critical aspects including political economy, (neo)patrimonialism, human rights, and livelihoods. The approach is not a "silver bullet" to solve all the problems associated with land reform as a transformative instrument. Closely linked to the central focus of this article, TSP is not solely a gender analysis approach, yet it can be applied smoothly to interrogate and develop transformative pathways relating to gender dimensions of redistribution, production, protection, reproduction, and social cohesion. Moreover, the transformative agenda, for example, transforming socioeconomic well-being, is not solely determined by an approach to social policy but largely by macro aspects including the economy, politics, governance and so forth. Accordingly, in relation to the focus of this paper, the TSP approach is applied to aspects that are within its remit and where it has comparative merits. Moreover, its complementary role to other approaches is acknowledged. Through the broader view of social policy, multiple instruments and manifold social policy tasks – redistributive, productive, protective, reproductive, and social compact – TSP not only fills lacunae in African feminist analysis but complements certain aspects of it as well.

The Social Policy Outcomes Among Women Farm Workers

In this section, three themes are pertinent but not exhaustive. These are the redistributive outcomes, protective outcomes, and reproductive outcomes of the fast track. Women farm workers are the primary focus of enquiry in the three themes.

Redistributive Outcomes

Redistribution in and beyond the farms may relate to various aspects. However, in this section, particular focus is on two points. First, and concerning land reform, the focus is on land redistribution. Land is a core resource in Africa (Moyo, 2011a) without which one may, depending on circumstances, be more vulnerable to poverty (Mafeje, 2003). Then, land reform is understood as a TSP pathway with the potential to achieve redistributive outcomes, along with production, protection, reproduction, and social cohesion/compact. Several scholars are advancing transformative social and development policies for Africa (Mkandawire, 2015; Adesina, 2021). In relation to social policy, the level of redistribution resulting from a policy (land reform in this paper) is an essential consideration in evaluating social and development policies.

The number of farm workers before the fast track is contested. For example, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and Justice for Agriculture (2007: 29) estimated that there were more than 600,000 farm workers before the fast track. Approximately 70% of the farm workers – which is about 420,000 – lost their jobs by 2003 (Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and Justice for Agriculture, 2007: 29). However, official statistics (see Central Statistics Office, 2002a: 128) indicate that there were between 320,000 and 350,000 farm workers. This range was corroborated by field-based studies by various scholars (Moyo *et al.,* 2000: 182; Kanyenze, 2001: 106; Sachikonye, 2003b: 5). Some of the farm workers had known no other home than the LSCFs on which they lived and worked (Chambati, 2017: 80). What then are the diversities, complexities, and dynamics of redistributive outcomes among women farm workers, and the manner in which they are shaped by structural factors including culture, gender segregation, and segmentation? The redistribution of agricultural land to farm workers informally and formally has been a thorny issue in the Zvimba

district and other parts of Zimbabwe. The original farm workers (both men and women) reported that from 1999 to 2000, before formalisation, broadly, the land invaders viewed farm workers in the LSCFs as puppets of the white commercial farmers. Accordingly, most were marginalised in land occupations. The reports are confirmed by literature (see Goebel, 2005; Mutopo *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, at the time of fieldwork, the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water and Rural Resettlement (the then Ministry of Lands) was not clear about how many farm workers were allocated land, and how many women farm workers got land in their own right at district and national levels (interviews with a senior official from the Ministry and the District Coordinator (DC). Scholarly literature also reveals these gaps.

How was the situation of farm workers in the Zvimba district and what are the dynamics 21 years on? Despite the vagueness of statistics relating to macro levels, the DC and land officer availed information on the core study sites. Mainly, peasants from the CAs initially occupied Whynhill farm informally in 2001. On formalisation, 54 A1 beneficiaries (45 male-headed, nine female-headed) and one A2 beneficiary were allocated land at the farm. Yet, none of the 70 full-time farm workers (sex not provided) was allocated land at the farm. The farm workers either moved to CAs or other farms including St. Lucia and Wannock Glen. Dalkeith farm was officially subdivided in the year 2000, an exercise led by the Department of Extension and the Ministry of Lands. Before the fast track, it was a 600-hectare farm. The farm was subdivided into 79 A1 plots. Eight were allocated to female-headed households of a central lineage – the Manjinjiwa. Notable at Dalkeith is the allocation of 0,3 hectares each to 56 farm workers (a total of 16,8 hectares out of 600 hectares) who remained on the farm. However, five crucial issues can be noted. First, the farm workers were not a priority in land allocations. Secondly, based on information gathered using informal interactions and life histories, only four women farm workers were reported to have been formally allocated land using social networks and capital to enforce their claims. Being a descendant of a powerful lineage (as in the Manjinjiwa) and having a consanguineal relationship or close social ties with the village head, chiefs, politicians, and businesspersons linked to ZANU PF constituted pivotal sources of social networks and capital for these women. Thirdly, the plots allocated were smaller in size than the official A1 plot size (five hectares of arable land)

prescribed by the Ministry of Lands. Fourthly, 22 years later, nothing has been done to formally redress the injustices and inequalities pertaining to farm workers in general and women farm workers in particular created during the fast track.

The fifth issue is male dominance in land ownership and agriculture. Scholars that focus on Zimbabwe's agrarian sector explore multiple gender issues in land access before and after the fast track (see Bhatasara and Chiweshe, 2017; Chambati and Mazwi, 2020, Tekwa this issue). Topical in their contributions are minor improvements in women's land ownership due to land reform, the continued dominance of women as farm labour, multi-faceted inequalities in access to land and agrarian support by women, and how such inequalities perpetually bedevil their socioeconomic well-being. To improve the situation of women, Chambati and Mazwi (2020) argue for a gender-sensitive national land policy that tackles historical and emerging land ownership inequalities. Furthermore, women's land access across the African continent is problematic (see Tsikata, 2016; Boone, 2019; Prügl *et al.*, 2021; Ajefu *et al.*, 2022). Regardless of the African country under focus, while acknowledging both diversity and change, women are in a disempowered situation with regard to both land access and agriculture. Bearing on Zimbabwe's fast track land reform, despite conscious efforts to address land tenure issues, the land reform had failed woefully at the task in relation to gender equality. For example, only four women out of 56 farm workers at Dalkeith had been allocated land but the land sizes were small and the land had been bequeathed to their sons, not daughters. The sons control the plots, produce and income. Accordingly, despite the much-heralded redistributive outcomes of the fast track, broader land ownership by women is still a myth. This is a dominant story across most land beneficiary households in and beyond the Zvimba district (Murisa, 2009; Mutopo *et al.*, 2014; Chiweshe and Bhatasara, 2022). Yet land ownership in fast track farms defies a mono and overgeneralised explanation. Some (women) farm workers have access to additional portions through social networks, land leasing arrangements or using plots of "absentee" landowners or unutilised portions of both resident and non-resident beneficiaries.

Protective Outcomes

Twenty-two years after the formalisation of the fast track land reform, we investigate the impact of land reform on social protection among female farm workers. Social protection refers to the various formal and informal ways meant to protect people from life cycle risks including sickness and old age, negative effects of economic policies, market shocks, unemployment, and other socioeconomic vagaries (Mkandawire, 2007). The focus on social protection mainly pertains to farm wages and rations but can also be linked to land use for the female farm workers who own land and are renting or utilising "excess" portions of land owned by others (see Mudimu *et al*,. 2021). Insights from the Zvimba district show that the situation of women farm workers, and the farm workers in general, where social protection is concerned is complex, diverse, and changing. The agrarian structure resulting from the fast track is dominated by the peasantry (A1 beneficiaries) and is marked by changing forms of wage labour. The peasants mainly make use of unpaid family labour and they employ informal wage labour dominated by women. The conditions of employment and labour relations vary highly from those of both permanent and casual labourers in the previous land tenure regime.

While the current trimodal agrarian structure is credited for extensive land redistribution (Moyo, 2011a; Chipenda, 2019), in Zvimba the protective function of land is ailing due to various issues. To begin with, farm workers are highly exploited as shown by unregulated working hours, low wages for full and part-time workers, and unfavourable living conditions for resident labour in farm compounds. Voices of the women farm workers based in Dalkeith, Whynhill and surrounding farms, while not glorifying the past, showed that unlike in the superseded land tenure regime where farm workers worked for eight hours from Monday to Friday, five to six hours on Saturday and most rested on Sunday, work days and hours are no longer clear. They are expected to work every day. Saturday and Sunday are no longer recognised as off days. On average, they are now working up to 12 hours a day or more and overtime is often unpaid. Whereas in the old regime, wages and food rations were known and provided as scheduled, in the new regime, "agreements" are not followed. Some farm workers reported recurrent payments in arrears, receiving US$5 to US$10 per month as well as payment in kind that is not commensurate with the agreed wage.

The lived experiences of the women farm workers reveal super-exploitation and neglect and negation of farm workers' rights. Moreover, most farm compounds are now dilapidated and not maintained, and the living conditions are harsh. Shortage of land, and in some cases landlessness, is higher among farm workers than any other group (evidence from the study sites confirmed by research in other districts). An excerpt from an interview with a woman farm worker sums up the issues raised by the 40 women farm workers (and crosscutting issues reported by the ten male workers):

> We are the poorest group in this community. Most female farm workers were excluded from land allocations due to both politics of the land reform and patriarchy. There is no stipulated wage. Even if you informally agree on a wage with the farmers, it is not binding. We go for months without a wage, which is often paid in arrears and mostly in kind. We do not get assistance from donors. Most of our income diversification strategies are unreliable. Some are not even affording necessities. We are therefore vulnerable to poverty and our children will inherit poverty.

The Government of Zimbabwe does not seem committed to formulating farm labour laws. The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare official interviewed as part of this project emphasised that this has been problematic in the white settler land regime (see GAPWUZ, 1997). The woman labour expert (Ms. Winnie Madziwanzira) also explored farm labour law and labour relations in both the pre and post fast track contexts and argued that although these were problematic before the fast track and the old land tenure regime cannot be presented as a golden era, the current situation reveals the vacuity of state regulation, absence of recognised farm worker organisation and representation, gross loss of rights, heightening precarity, and extreme vulnerability to exploitation. There are no prospects for formal recognition of farm workers in the near future. Moreover, as pointed out by the Agritex officer we interviewed, social provisioning by the government is low, as is agrarian support. Some women farm workers reported experiencing food insecurity – seasonal or recurrent. Food security post fast track land reform is explored from a gender perspective by other scholars. For example, using a gender lens, Tekwa (2022) explores how the fast track land reform led to between 12% and 18% of women accessing land in their own right. While food security and employment have improved for some women, a

significant number are still embroiled in food insecurity and unemployment. Furthermore, liberalisation has radically reduced peasant maize production and constrained the dual role of peasant households, resulting in gender-differentiated knock-on effects for household food security. Women bear the major brunt of food insecurity. Accordingly, the state should play a crucial role in ensuring household and national food sufficiency (Tekwa and Tekwa, 2022). NGOs are "not permitted" to provide social assistance in the fast track farms due to the political nature of these areas. In this context, social protection among female farm workers continues to be militated by the absence of legislation, state failure, and despotism. However, the women farm workers are agentive, and sometimes engage in alternative livelihoods, no matter how precarious. They are engaging in both farm and off-farm activities to broaden income generation for various uses: agricultural activities on rented portions (land leasing is high as confirmed by the land beneficiaries); freely provided land (through social networks) and formally allocated land (the few who were allocated below prescribed portions); gold panning; vending; and use of remittances in the case of those with children and relatives that are remitting. Other scholars (Sachikonye and Zishiri, 1999; Magaramombe, 2010; Shonhe *et al.*, 2021) acknowledge the complexity and diversity of the situation of farm workers.

Reproductive Outcomes

Reproduction is broader than reconciling the burden of family and childcare (Mkandawire and UNRISD, 2006), and includes the various ways in which society sustains and improves its well-being. In addition to biological reproduction (see Maponya, 2021), sources of food and income, capital formation and accumulation, farm labour and improvements in agriculture are also focal. Regardless of diversity on the remit of social reproduction, land access and control as well as labour are central resources for individual, household, and community reproduction, particularly in the Global South (Rao, 2014; Naidu and Ossome, 2016; Chipenda, 2021). In this section of the article, we focus on how the women farm workers are reproducing themselves and their households, and how sustainable the reproductive outcomes are. The main issues relating to landlessness, smaller pieces of land access which is largely affected by long-standing institutionalised gender compartmentalisation, use of non-land-based

livelihoods, and providing labour to both A1 and A2 farmers were explored under social protection outcomes. These also affect the usefulness and sustainability of social reproduction. Also important, with regard to reproductive outcomes, is the division of reproductive labour (see Tekwa this issue), as well as the conception of family that underpins the fast track reforms as they relate to women farm workers. The division of labour is gender-based with most women farm labourers (and women in general) engaging in unpaid activities such as breastfeeding and caring for the children. They also mostly produce food crops for household consumption and reproduction. At face value, the plot may be presented as owned by the whole family yet patriarchy is still dominant, although not uniformly, across families and fast track farms in general. The situation is worse for female-headed and child-headed farmworker families that bear the burden of social reproduction and land access challenges.

In response, some female farm workers are selling labour to the peasants in CAs or engaging in off-farm activities for survival including harvesting wild fruits and collecting firewood for sale. Artisanal gold mining and vending of various wares are the main alternative ways of social reproduction. Out of the 40 women farm workers, 34 reported that they are selling foodstuffs, second-hand clothes (commonly referred to as *mabhero* in Zimbabwe) and household utensils. They sell the wares on the farms, in areas under customary tenure, where the majority came from, and in artisanal gold mining areas (known as *kumakorokoza* in the study sites and most other parts of Zimbabwe). The artisanal gold mining areas are not only for trading wares – 31 women farm workers also trade their labour for money (fetching water, cooking, and washing for the miners, and crushing/grinding the ore). These areas are also arenas for sex work. Reports from a cross-section of the participants showed that vending and artisanal gold mining are also practised by some landholders, particularly the A1 land beneficiaries, and that some sections of the plots are now used for artisanal gold mining. Yet, given the high contribution of women to family and childcare roles and financial requirements, the women farm workers may fail to exploit some alternatives. For example, vending may demand moving within and beyond the farms, and to nearby CAs and towns, given the inter-linkages (see Scoones and Murimbarimba, 2021). Gold panning in rivers (dominated by women) or providing support services to the male panners who practice underground

extraction requires the women to spend a substantial amount of time away from home, but doing so reduces the time for family and household care. Other scholars (Mkodzongi and Spiegel, 2018) explore the dynamics among artisanal gold mining, livelihoods and labour in fast track farms. They argue that the linkage should be understood beyond competition for labour between artisanal gold mining and farming, and the deagrarianisation thesis, but in a nuanced and multi-faceted way that captures both opportunities and challenges. Women anchor the well-being of most households. The problems they experience will also affect their children. Cumulatively, the challenges bedevilling female farm workers militate against capital formation and accumulation, livelihood sustainability and social reproduction.

Conclusion

Using a TSP lens, the paper explored the situation of women farm workers over two decades post the fast track land reform. Fully acknowledging the limits of basing the article on a single district case study and selected issues, the article gives primacy to three outcomes: redistribution, social protection, and social reproduction. The land reform programme was supposed to be transformative. Overall, however, while land reform has proven capacity to transform the socioeconomic well-being of the beneficiaries (see Tekwa and Adesina, 2018; Chipenda, 2018, 2019, 2021, Tekwa this issue), among women farm workers, the outcomes are principally limited. This is mainly due to landlessness, limited access to agricultural land due to patriarchy, access to small portions of land, limited access to agrarian support or exclusion from agrarian support schemes, as well as exploitative labour regimes. These realities are detached from the goal of the fast track – that of transforming the socioeconomic well-being of the Black majority who were marginalised from the land through British colonialism. Consequently, 22 years later, the fast track land reform has not fully resolved the land question and has, in some cases, created new land and well-being questions. In relation to this article, two questions are paramount – those about land access by women farm workers, and legislation on farm workers' conditions of service. Female farm workers and farm workers, in general, were not a priority in both informal and formal allocations. The female farm workers were further

marginalised through gender inequality engrained in the culture. Their current conditions of service do not enhance social protection and reproduction or other aspects of socioeconomic transformation. While acknowledging diversity, their lives are marked by precarity, exploitation, inequality, marginalisation, and poverty.

What policy options can be adopted to improve the situation of women farm workers? Land as a core resource should be equitably distributed. The recently gazetted new farm size regulations and the land audit are opportunities for considering women farm workers in land redistribution. Allocating land to this often-excluded group should be followed up with agrarian support particularly in the initial phases because most of them have so far failed to accumulate capital essential in enhancing land use. Broadening access to key resources and support guarantees socio-economic transformation. Land and agrarian reform should be understood as a social policy pathway consciously meant to affect and effect the well-being of various groups. The Government of Zimbabwe, through the relevant ministries, should seriously and urgently implement a farm worker policy that particularly addresses work conditions and remuneration issues. This was an issue in the white-dominated agrarian structure and cannot remain unresolved in post-independence and post land reform Zimbabwe. The importance of state leadership in addressing structural issues as we argue is a point emphasised by other scholars (see Gaidzanwa, 2015; Chambati and Mazwi, 2020). Feminists and pressure groups should engage the government to eliminate the vacuity of legislation for protecting the well-being of farm workers through state-regulated labour relations and practices. Female farm workers matter in agricultural and national development; therefore, they should be prioritised in social and development policy.

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