



**Understanding social and solidarity
economy in emergent
communities: Lessons from post
fast track land reform farms in
Mazowe, Zimbabwe**

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Paper Overview

- This paper concerns itself with the emergent and evolving forms of social organisation that emerged on farms post Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe.
- It highlights how these institutional formations show the emergence of a social and solidarity economy in which self help and grassroots organisations surface as a viable alternative to state or capitalist interventions.
- In 2000 Zimbabwe experienced a major shift in its rural landscape when land occupations and the government-initiated land reform saw the emergence of new communities of black farmers on formerly white owned farms.
- The government of Zimbabwe neither had funds nor the capacity to provide social amenities when the fast track programme started.
- The paper shows how small scale farmer communities ensured service provision through their own initiatives.
- The government did not have the resources to monitor let alone enforce people into functional communities.
- It is through informal institutions built up through interaction and negotiation, and built on trust, reciprocity and unity of purpose, that these communities have sustained their existence.
- These farm level institutions are part of an emerging social and solidarity economy based on trust, reciprocity and communality.

Background

- In 2000 Zimbabwe experienced a major shift in its rural landscape when land occupations and the government-initiated Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) saw the emergence of new communities of black farmers.
- The FTLRP in Zimbabwe – code-named Third *Chimurenga* (war of liberation) or *jambanja* (violence) – was characterised by chaotic and violent land invasions which led to the destruction of property, sabotage, beatings and in some cases murder
- Fast Track Land Reform Programme was criticised 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, reduction in direct foreign investment and decreases in humanitarian aid.
- This, combined with declines in agricultural productivity and subsequent industrial production in downstream industries, led to a rapidly devaluating Zimbabwean dollar, enormous inflation and high unemployment figures.
- This economic crisis has impacted heavily on new farmers who found it increasingly difficult to afford inputs and access loans.
- Unlike in the communal areas, most new farmers (in resettlement areas) cannot depend on kinship ties for help: thus they have formed other social networks to respond to these challenges, taking the form of institutions such as farm committees, irrigation committees and health committees.

Study Area and Methodology

- Mazowe District is located in Mashonaland Central Province and is divided into twenty-nine wards, of which thirteen wards are in Chiweshe communal areas and the rest in new resettlement areas.
- Mazowe has three administrative centres (Concession, Glendale and Mvurwi) and it has a total surface area of almost 453,892 hectares.
- The study uses six case studies from small-scale 'A1 farmers' in Mazowe District which is in Mashonaland Central Province.
- It employs qualitative methodologies to enable a nuanced understanding of associational life in the new communities.
- Through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, narratives, key informant interviews and institutional mapping the study outlines the formation, taxonomy, activities, roles, internal dynamics and social organisation of farm level institutions.
- Zimbabwe's land reform had two types of schemes namely A1 and A2. A1 schemes are small holder scheme with an average 6 hectares mainly geared towards household consumption. A2 farms are larger land holdings concentrating on commercial agriculture.

New communities and new institutions

- **One of the greatest legacies of the land reform programme in Zimbabwe is how communities were created seemingly overnight.**
- **In Mazowe the A1 farmers have been grouped into villages on every scheme, leading to the creation of what Baar (2004:1753) terms 'stranger neighbouring households.'**
- **These new communities were created by chance and include households that have never met before.**
- **Given that 39% of A1 settlers in Mazowe are from Chiweshe communal areas, many people have a starting point with which to relate to each other.**
- **This is because they are coming from a similar cultural and social background.**
- **However 26% of members of these A1 communities come from a different cultural setting to the one in Chiweshe.**
- **These new citizens were forced to learn and assimilate the many norms prevalent in Mazowe.**

Formation and taxonomy of informal institutions in the newly resettled areas

- **The formation of farm level institutions is an enterprise fraught with contestation, negotiation and sometimes domination.**
- **In this chapter diverse processes involved in the formation of institutional forms at farm level are discussed, including the involvement of charismatic leaders, external agents, everyday interaction, coercion and even negotiation.**
- **Processes of formation are highly complex and, at times, it is difficult to delineate the different factors involved in influencing farmers to organise.**
- **Under fast track reform, each A1 farm became a community on its own – defined and delimited by the farm boundaries.**
- **Farm level institutions are thus any groupings that emerge and evolve within this bounded geographic area serving the needs of some or all the people.**
- **These institutions are however fluid and expand in some cases to operate and influence beyond the physical borders of the farm.**

Taxonomy of institutions in new resettlement areas

Type	Brief description
<i>Sabhuku</i> /village head	Unlike traditional <i>sabhuku</i> in communal areas who inherit the position, in the new resettlement areas they are chosen by the traditional chief.
Committee of Seven	<i>Sabhuku</i> heads this committee but the other members are democratically chosen by the plot holders on the farm.
Irrigation Committee	Present at farms with irrigation and usually chosen by only those involved in 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.
ZESA/Electricity committee	Usually tasked with issues that relate to payment of bills, fixing faults and in cases spearheading applications for connection.
Health committee	This committee, like most locally-initiated committees, 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 at 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 where people pool resources together and share.
Burial societies	Arrangements at scheme level to offer assistance in case of death.

Mutual support groups and multi-purpose farm organisations

- Small-scale mutual support groups do not extend beyond the farm (Rahmato 1991).
- They are usually informal and involve a small number of members.
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- At Usk farm, there are various groupings of farmers involved in rotating saving clubs (*maround*).
- At the time of the research there were four such groups operating at the farm.
- They were made up of three to six members who contributed money on a monthly basis which was given to one member monthly.
- Money dispersed ranged from twenty to fifty American dollars.
- In 2007, at the height of the Zimbabwean economic crisis and before the introduction of the American dollar, there were no revolving clubs operating at Usk due to the inflationary environment that made it impossible to save with the local currency.
- At other farms such as Kia Ora, farmers during this period used groceries, kitchen utensils and inputs as a form of barter exchange.

Production and marketing: social networks and pooling together

- **Another critical activity of FLIs has been the provision of assistance in productive activities.**
- **The general characteristic of A1 farmers not only in Mazowe but in the whole country is that they are resource poor.**
- **Farming is an enterprise which requires considerable resources and most farmers coming from poor backgrounds find it difficult to obtain productive assets.**
- **Most farmers depend on help from others in their productive activities.**
- **Production and marketing of agricultural produce is the major economic activity that ensures that farmers associate together**

Labour Pooling

- **A1 farmers in Mazowe generally lack mechanisation thus they have serious problems with tillage.**
- **This lack of mechanisation makes it necessary to develop cooperative arrangements to find enough labour for ploughing.**
- **With only 34.4% of farmers owning cattle, draught power becomes a major challenge for those without cattle.**
- **Labour pooling takes various forms which include borrowing draught power, reciprocal help in ploughing, and drawing resources as a farm to hire a tractor.**
- **Reciprocal help is when farmers give each other a hand in their fields on alternate days.**
- **This takes the form of three or four households who agree to all work on a particular A1 plot for a day or two and rotate between plots.**
- **This type of arrangement resonates with the traditional system of *nhimbe* where a farmer will brew beer, prepare food and invite people to come help him/her in the fields.**
- **The other form of labour pooling is the putting together of money to hire tractors when and where they are available. Tractors are often hired from A2 farmers or government through the District Development Fund (DDF).**

Combating marketing constraints as a group

- **Finding transportation for their produce remains a big challenge to farmers.**
- **Bad roads, long distances to depots and high transport costs are all serious challenges with which farmers have to grapple.**
- **An example is of tobacco farmers who sell at the auction floors in Harare which is approximately eighty kilometres away.**
- **Transporting a few bales on your own is very expensive as you have to pay for the whole truck alone.**
- **Tobacco farmers have resorted to transporting all their tobacco at once to reduce costs.**
- **Transport owners only bring their lorry if the amount of tobacco available is enough to fill their lorry so that they realise the maximum benefit.**
- **Filling a lorry means that many farmers are forced to market together as a way of securing transport to the market.**

Concluding remarks

- **Farmers in Mazowe are involved in various processes such as school development associations and health committees to meet actual needs through coming together and contributing to their own well being.**
- **Scoones et al. (2010) note that the creative solutions generated by the necessity of solidarity, organisation and building a sense of community have emerged on the margins of state action and practice.**
- **Social isolation from kin that comes with moving into the fast track farms leaves farmers vulnerable and without a safety net.**
- **There is need for them to have multiple identities through different institutions that offer a promise of security in times of trouble.**
- **Fast track farms were new frontiers fraught with uncertainties especially for farmers in the A1 schemes.**
- **The new farmers had to devise manifold strategies to survive an unfamiliar environment without support of kin.**
- **A single farm has a plethora of institutions, all catering for different needs.**