

**Fast Track Land Reform in Matepatepa Commercial Farming Area,  
Bindura District: Effects on Farm Workers, 2000 – 2010.**

**By**

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**THIS THESIS HAS BEEN SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the effects of Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) on farm workers from 2000 to 2010. It looks at how farm workers fared during and after the process and how they dealt with the new conditions that ensued. It examines the nature of their relationships with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of such changes on their livelihoods. The thesis also surveys the conditions of farm workers who took up other sources of livelihood after the land reform programme. It uses a case study of Matepatepa Commercial Farming area as a window to investigate the impact of the land reform exercise on farm workers in Zimbabwe. Matepatepa is located about 22 kms north of Bindura, Mashonaland Central's provincial capital. The thesis mainly utilises narratives from farm workers in Matepatepa to explain the nature of their participation in the land reform programme and examines their relationship with some of the players who were central to the process, for example, war veterans, the government and other peasant farmers. In order to obtain a clearer understanding of the effects of the reform on farm workers' livelihoods, the study also focuses on their conditions before the land reform and how they nurtured and developed their relations with their employers. It investigates the impact of the FTLRP in the context of the wider nature of Zimbabwe's political and economic environment and assesses the impact of Zimbabwe's political economy in shaping farm workers' reactions to the changes brought about by the land reform exercise. The study acknowledges the fraught political background within which the land reform programme was carried out and consequently investigates the effect of such a background in determining the parameters within which farm workers could manoeuvre.

Keywords: land reform, violence, labour, livelihoods, farm workers

## **Opsomming**

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die uitwerking van Zimbabwe se Versnelde Grondhervormingsprogram (Fast Track Land Reform Programme – FTLRP) op plaaswerkers tussen 2000 en 2010. Daar word gekyk hoe plaaswerkers gedurende en na afloop van die proses gevaar het, en hoe hulle die nuwe toestande wat daaruit voorgespruit het, hanteer het. Die aard van hul verhouding met hul nuwe werkgewers, veranderinge in hul indiensnemingstoestande, en die impak hiervan op hul lewensbestaan word ondersoek. Die verhandeling kyk ook na die toestande van plaaswerkers wat ná die grondhervormingsprogram 'n ander bestaan opgeneem het. 'n Gevallestudie van Matepatepa Kommersiële Landbouarea word as toegangspunt gebruik om die uitwerking van grondhervorming op plaaswerkers in Zimbabwe te ondersoek. Matepatepa is ongeveer 22 km wes van Bindura, Mashonaland Sentraal se provinsiale hoofstad, geleë. Die verhandeling maak hoofsaaklik van die vertellings van plaaswerkers in Matepatepa gebruik om die aard van hul deelname aan die grondhervormingsprogram te verduidelik, en ondersoek ook hul verhouding tot hoofrolspelers in dié proses, byvoorbeeld oorlogsveterane, die regering en ander kleinboere. Ten einde 'n duideliker begrip van die hervormings se uitwerkings op plaaswerkers se bestaan te verkry, fokus hierdie studie ook op hul toestande vóór die grondhervormings en hoe hulle hul betrekkinge tot hul werkgewers gekoester en ontwikkel het. Die impak van die FTLRP binne die breër konteks van Zimbabwe se politieke en ekonomiese omgewing word ondersoek, en die manier waarop Zimbabwe se politieke ekonomie plaaswerkers se reaksies op die veranderinge meegebring deur grondhervorming gevorm het, word beoordeel. Hierdie navorsing gee erkenning aan die gespanne agtergrond waarteen die grondhervormingsprogram uitgevoer is, en ondersoek daarom die rol wat hierdie agtergrond gespeel het om plaaswerkers se speelruimte te bepaal.

Sleutelwoorde: grondhervorming, geweld, arbeid, lewensbestaan, plaaswerkers

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their unwavering care and support. God bless you.



## Acronyms

ALB - Agricultural Labour Bureau

APWU - Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union.

BEAM – Basic Education Assistance Model

CAA - Citizenship Amendment Act

CFU - Commercial Farmers Union

ESAP - Economic Structural Adjustment Programme

FCTZ - Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe

FDL - Food Poverty Line

FTLRP - Fast Track Land Reform Programme

GAPWZ - General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union.

GoZ – Government of Zimbabwe

IMF - International Monetary Fund

JAG - Justice for Agriculture

LAA - Land Apportionment Act

LRA - Labour Relations Act

LSCF- Large Scale Commercial Farms

MDC – Movement for Democratic Change.

NAC - National Aids Council

NEC - National Employment Council

NGOs - Non-Governmental Organisations

NLHA - Native Land Husbandry Act

PDL - Poverty Datum Line

RDC - Rural District Councils

RNFU - Rhodesia National Farmers Union

RNLB - Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau

ZANU PF - Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

ZCTU - Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions

## Chapter One: Introduction and Background

This study seeks to explore the effects of Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) on farm workers from 2000 to 2010.<sup>1</sup> It begins in 2000 because this was when the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) embarked on the controversial "land reform" which resettled a significant number of people.<sup>2</sup> Farm labourers were greatly affected by this programme. The stated aim of the FTLRP was to take land from "rich white commercial farmers for redistribution to poor and middle-income landless black Zimbabweans."<sup>3</sup> Scholars such as Sachikonye, Moyo and Pillosof have observed that prior to land reform, about 4 500 white commercial farmers employed an estimated 320 000 to 350 000 farm workers with dependants numbering between 1. 8 and 2 million, nearly 25 per cent of the country's population. About 11 percent were of Malawian descent, 12 percent were Mozambican origin and 5 percent were Zambian.<sup>4</sup> Overall, about 500 000 to 900 000 people were displaced by the FTLR. This study seeks to investigate how the "FTLR" affected their livelihoods and exposed them to displacement.<sup>5</sup> It aims to explore how the reform process changed the positions of farm workers given their already vulnerable position in Zimbabwe's socio-economic landscape. The study will endeavour to assess the nature of participation of farm workers in the land reform programme and examine their relationship with some of the players who were central to the process, for example, war veterans, the government and other peasant farmers.

The thesis also aims to investigate the impact of the FTLRP in the context of the wider nature of Zimbabwe's political and economic environment. It will assess the impact of Zimbabwe's political economy in shaping how farm workers reacted to the changing agriculture landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> The starting point of FTLRP is rather obscure. Before 2000, there were some land invasions represented by the Svosve people and others in 1997 and 1998. But 2000 marked the intensification of the programme with direct government participation.

<sup>2</sup> The term government and ZANU PF are used interchangeably because after 2000 the operations of the government and party became blurred and it is difficult to separate the two.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/zimbabwe/index.htm>: accessed 29 August 2015.

<sup>4</sup> L. M. Sachikonye, "The Situation of Commercial Farmer Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe", A Report prepared for the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, Harare: FCTZ, 2003; S. Moyo and W. Chambati, *Impacts of Land Reform on Farm Workers and Farm Labour Processes*, Harare: African Institute of Agrarian Studies, 2004; R. Pillosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> The term FTLR sometimes is going to appear in quotes because of the controversy attached to the programme.

The study acknowledges the effect of political and economic forces in determining the direction that the reform took and it will evaluate the impact of such forces in affecting farm workers' livelihoods. It also acknowledges the very political background within which the land reform programme was carried out and thus will investigate how such a background shaped the "rules of engagement" and determined the parameters within which farm workers could manoeuvre.

### **Locating Matepetepa in the Study**

Matepetepa provides an interesting case of studying the impact of land reform on farm workers in Zimbabwe. It is located about 22 kms north of Bindura, Mashonaland Central's provincial capital. Matepetepa Commercial Farming area is located in the Highveld, with altitudes ranging from 3 800 to 4 000 metres.<sup>6</sup> It falls under ecological region 2A, receiving between 750mm and 900mm annual rainfall. The area is characterised by clay, sandy- loamy and lime soils.<sup>7</sup> Considerations of climate and soils makes this area well suited for tobacco production and the production of other food crops. Since it became a prime tobacco growing area and because tobacco is a labour intensive crop, it meant that a huge number of farm workers were affected by the FTLRP. Many of these workers were absorbed by the newly resettled farmers but they found themselves in drastically changed circumstances. Of the sixteen farms which were once owned by white commercial farmers, there were only five white farmers left in 2012. The eleven other farms were taken up by new black occupants. Of the eleven, six were subdivided among A2 farmers and five amongst A1 farmers.<sup>8</sup> On average,

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<sup>6</sup> Tobacco Marketing Board, *Zimbabwe Tobacco Year Book*, Harare: Tobacco Marketing Board Publications, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> This region is located in the north of the country. Rainfall is fairly reliable, falling from November to March/April. Because of the reliable rainfall and generally good soils, the region is suitable for intensive cropping and livestock production. It accounts for 75-80 percent of the area planted to crops in Zimbabwe. The cropping systems are based on flue-cured tobacco, maize, cotton, wheat, soybeans, sorghum, groundnuts, seed maize and burley tobacco grown under dryland production as well as with supplementary irrigation in the wet months. Irrigated crops include wheat and barley grown in the colder and drier months (May-September). Natural region 2A is suitable for intensive livestock production based on pastures and pen-fattening utilizing crop residues and grain. The main livestock production systems include beef, dairy, pig and poultry. Prior to 2000, the region was dominated by the large-scale farming subsector characterized by highly mechanized farms of 1 000-2 000 ha under freehold title and owner-operated. Following the agrarian and land reform programme, a large proportion of the farms were subdivided into smaller units and allocated to new farmers under the A1 and A2 small-scale farming system. See; <http://www.fao.org/docrep/009/a0395e/a0395e06.htm> , accessed 21 August, 2015.

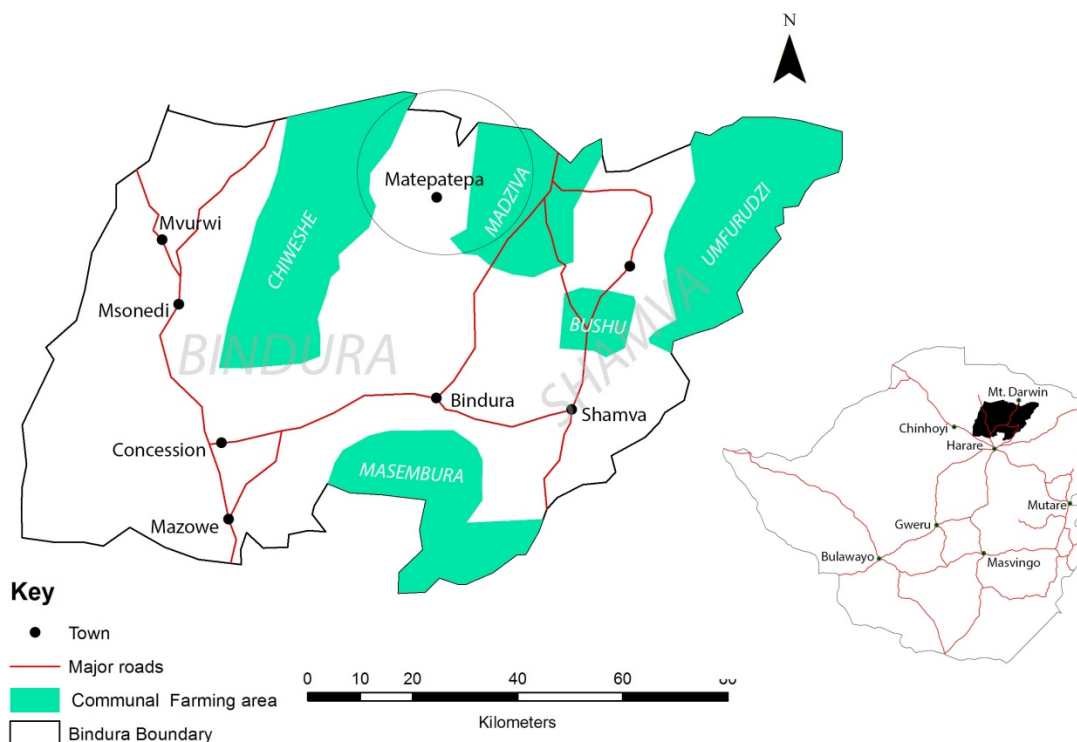
<sup>8</sup> Officially the land was divided into small-holder production, so called A1 schemes and commercial farms, called A2 schemes. There is however much overlap between the two categories. There are two models for resettlement

those farms divided up as A2 farms have an average of ten farmers. This means that, there are close to 60 A2 farmers in the area. Elsewhere, there are more than 40 A1 farmers per farm making a total of more than 200 A1 farmers in the area. In total, there are more than 260 farmers in the case study area. Unfortunately numbers of farm workers still present in Matepatepa could not be accurately ascertained due to a number of factors that include displacement, lack of accurate data from the provincial office, National Employment Council (NEC) and farmers. But from field work observations farm workers (including dependence) can be around 8 000.

It is also important to note that the impact of the FTLR on farm workers is not uniform but differs depending on the scale of farming agricultural activities, vicinity to urban or communal areas and economic dynamics. For example, Matepatepa commercial area is close to Mazowe River, meaning that some people are cushioned by earnings from gold panning. On the other hand, part of this commercial farming area is close to Madziwa and Chiweshe communal area so after the programme had happened, most of the indigenous farm workers who originally came from this communal area returned to their homes. Only subsequently did they come back to the commercial farms looking for piece work. From the field work I carried out on farms in this commercial farming area, a sizeable number who were interviewed were of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian origin. For all these reasons, Matepatepa Commercial Farming area provides a window to the broader national picture concerning the plight of farm workers after the FTLRP.

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under the fast track programme: model A1, "the decongestion model for the generality of landless people with a villagized and a self-contained variant," which was meant to benefit 160,000 beneficiaries from among the poor; and model A2, which was aimed at creating a force of 51,000 small- to medium-scale black indigenous commercial farmers. See, I. Scoones (etal), *Zimbabwe's Land Reform Myths and Realities*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2010, p. 2.



**Figure 1: Map showing the position of Matepatapa**

## Literature Review

There is a substantial body of literature on the land question in Zimbabwe. Prominent among such works is Robin Palmer's *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia* which chronicles the different ways in which African land was allocated to whites and the resultant pattern of land alienation.<sup>9</sup> A number of scholars have also written about farm workers in colonial Zimbabwe. Steve Rubert's book, *A Most Promising Weed*, gives a detailed social history of farm workers, specifically on tobacco farms in the colonial period.<sup>10</sup> Beginning with a brief history of tobacco growing in Zimbabwe, Rubert's study focuses on the organisation of workers' compounds and on the paid and unpaid labour performed by both women and children. Duncan Clarke's *Agriculture and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia* is a landmark study which provides an analysis of daily experiences of farm workers during the colonial period, looking at issues such as low

<sup>9</sup> R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, London: Heinemann, 1977.

<sup>10</sup> S. Rubert, *A Most Promising Weed: A History of Tobacco Farming and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1945*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998.

wage rates, the disadvantaged position which women and juveniles occupied and the dreadful living conditions in the farm compounds.<sup>11</sup> Ian Phimister's article; "A Note on Labour Relations in Southern Rhodesia Agriculture Before 1939" discusses the poor working and living conditions of agricultural labour force during the colonial period. He argues that if conditions in the mines were as bad as Van Onselen's *Chibaro* describes, then those on the farms must clearly have been abominable.<sup>12</sup> Arrighi also illustrates the exploitation of black farm labour in his works.<sup>13</sup>

Exploitation of farm workers persisted after independence in 1980. Rene Loewenson discussed plantation agriculture in Asia and some parts of Africa, Central and South America and shows how agribusiness in developing countries prospered at the expense of workers.<sup>14</sup> She convincingly demonstrated that the technological and social development stimulated by farm surpluses coexisted with extreme social and material poverty among the actual producers. Dede Amanor- Wilks also raised fundamental points regarding the working and living conditions of agricultural workers especially in the face of Economic Structural Adjustment (ESAP), which removed forms of protection which workers had gained or were entitled to during the first decade of independence.<sup>15</sup> Amanor- Wilks also pointed to the vulnerable position of female workers within the commercial farm work force. Blair Rutherford 2001 publication, gave a detailed analysis of farm workers in post-independence Zimbabwe.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere, Rutherford documented what he termed "the uneasy fit of commercial farm workers within the politics and development of Zimbabwe."<sup>17</sup> He analysed how farm workers have been represented by the various public actors during the land

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<sup>11</sup> D. G. Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia: A Report on Conditions of Labour and Subsistence*, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977.

<sup>12</sup> I. R. Phimister, "A note on Labour Relations in Sothern Rhodesia Agriculture Before 1939", *South African Labour Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 5, 1977, p. 95. For further discussion see, C. Van Onselen, *Chibaro; African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*, London: Pluto Press, 1976.

<sup>13</sup> G. Arrighi, "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective, A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia", *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1970, pp. 197 – 234.

<sup>14</sup> R. Loeweson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Corporate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> D. Amanor- Wilks, *In Search of hope for Zimbabwe's Farm Workers*, London: Panos, 1999, p. 61.

<sup>16</sup> B. Rutherford, *Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> B. Rutherford, "Commercial Farm Workers and the Politics of (Dis) placement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, Liberation and Democracy", *Journal of Agrarian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, p. 626.

occupations and the ways in which some farm workers responded to the occupations.<sup>18</sup> Walter Chambati, Sam Moyo and Godfrey Magaramombe debated on the impact of the FTLR on farm workers. They emphasized on the effects of the FTLR on the conditions of farm workers and the changing agrarian labour relations after the land reform programme. Their main argument portray a sad situation created by FTLR that led to job losses, homelessness displacements and evictions.<sup>19</sup> Lloyd Sachikonye has also written about the situation of commercial farm workers after the land reform programme.<sup>20</sup> His report analysed the impact of the decline in food security on farm workers, the effects of the HIV-AIDS epidemic on their livelihoods and family structure, the evolving relationships between farm workers, small farmers and commercial farmers and the immediate and long-term needs of farm workers.

Blair Rutherford, Sam Moyo and Dede Amanor-Wilks' article, assessed the problem of extending social, political and land rights to farm workers in the commercial farming sector in the context of current debates and protests about land redistribution there.<sup>21</sup> They contrast the traditional indifference to workers with more recent attempts to address their needs, exploring the difficulties which land redistribution has presented for farm workers especially where their interests were not made part of the agenda of change. Wilbert Sadomba has also written on farm workers in Zimbabwe but focussing on their relations with civil society. His article provides "thick descriptions' of the agency of farm workers and civil society in the context of land reform in contemporary Zimbabwe" and "examines a land-based social movement (and the role of farm workers within it) and the involvement of a particular non-governmental organisation in farm worker livelihoods."<sup>22</sup> Evert Waterloos and Rutherford's *Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities for Poverty Reduction among Commercial Farm Workers*, is a general survey of the impact of the displacements on farm

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> W. Chambati, "Land and Changing Agrarian Labour Processes in Zimbabwe", MM Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 2013; W. Chambati, and G. Magaramombe, "The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers", in S. Moyo (eds), *Contested Terrain: Land Reform and Civil Society in Contemporary Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: S & S Publishers, 2008; V. Mabvurira ( et al.) " A Situational Analysis of Former Commercial Farm Workers in Zimbabwe, a Decade after "Jambanja", *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2012, pp. 221- 228.

<sup>20</sup> Sachikonye, "The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe."

<sup>21</sup> S .Moyo, B. Rutherford and D. Amanor-Wilks, "Land reform & Changing Social Relations for Farm workers in Zimbabwe", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 27, No. 84, 2000, pp. 181- 202.

<sup>22</sup> W. Sadomba, "Transcending Objectifications and Dualisms: Farm Workers and Civil Society in Contemporary Zimbabwe", *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2, 2010, pp. 209- 225.

workers. It is mostly a quantitative survey of this impact on farm workers and concludes that the farm workers in Zimbabwe were largely excluded from the agrarian reform and were subject to a lot of violence and neglect.<sup>23</sup> They have also highlighted on possible avenues that the government could follow to reduce poverty amongst farm workers in Zimbabwe.<sup>24</sup>

Andrew Hartnack's work has examined the impact of displacement on farm workers following the FTLR. Taking a case study approach of a farm located in the outskirts of Zimbabwe capital city, he concludes that the impact of these displacements were varied and not a uniform process.<sup>25</sup> Another article by Hartnack, provides a chronicle of the "everyday lives of internally displaced" farm workers.<sup>26</sup> Ian Scoones, Joseph Hanlon and Prosper Matondi have discussed the FTLR as a successful endeavour by the government.<sup>27</sup> Magaramombe's, *Rural poverty: Commercial farm Workers and Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, provided a policy analysis of the land reform and farm workers and the political realities facing and hindering the farm workers in their endeavours to carve out livelihoods for themselves.<sup>28</sup> Moyo and Chambati concluded that the impact of FTLR on farm workers was diverse and complex. Their major argument was that, there have been both positive and negative effects of the land reform programme on farm workers. They maintained that, studies have cited a 50 percent job loss of farm workers but ignore new forms of re-employment in the same sector.<sup>29</sup> A common sentiment amongst those who wrote about farm workers is that, this social group is the most neglected, their situation having deteriorated significantly because of the land reform programme.

Few of these scholars, however, provide a detailed, in depth and qualitative analysis of the livelihood of farm workers. Some works are policy focussed and do not provide any detail of

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<sup>23</sup> E. Waterloos and B. Rutherford, "Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities for Poverty Reduction among Farm Workers", *World Development*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2003, pp. 537- 553.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> A. Hartnack, " 'My Life got Lost': Farm workers and displacement in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2006, pp. 173- 192.

<sup>26</sup> A. Hartnack, "Transcending Global and National (Mis) representations through Local Responses to Displacement: The Case of Zimbabwean (ex) Farm Workers", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2009, pp. 351- 377.

<sup>27</sup> Scoones, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Challenging the myths*, Hanlon (etal), *Zimbabwe takes back its Land* and P. Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, London: Zed books, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> G. Magaramombe, "Rural poverty: Commercial farm Workers and Land Reform in Zimbabwe", Paper Presented at the SARPN conference on Land Reform and Poverty Alleviation in Southern Africa, Pretoria, April 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Moyo and Chambati, *Impacts of Land Reform on Farm Workers and Farm Labour Processes*, pp. 137- 140.



the conditions of farm workers. Farm workers' voices are rarely heard and most scholars focus on providing solutions for improving the lives of farm workers. Yet there are very few detailed analysis of the impact of the land reform programme on the day to day lives of these workers. The politics of the FTLR, with regards to farm workers is also largely absent from this discourse. By contrast this study, therefore, intends to "get into the homes and lives" of the farm workers before and after the land reform, in order to assess impact on their livelihoods. Hopefully the narratives of these farm workers will be a window to the general situation prevailing in the lives of farm workers in Zimbabwe.

### **Historical aspects of the land question**

The land imbalance that existed at independence was created by the deliberate dislocation of Africans from fertile land into marginal areas by the use of force and legislation imposed by the colonial government. For example among others, the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930 and Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951 created land for whites while blacks were pauperised.<sup>30</sup> The allocation of Africans to marginal zones and other discriminatory policies were meant to protect European farmers; what Palmer called the squeezing out process.<sup>31</sup> This control of land subsequently became the key mechanism for ensuring European political and economic dominance over Africans. Africans did not take the appropriation of land lightly and land was a key grievance of the second *Chimurenga/Zvimurenga*.<sup>32</sup> The war ended in 1980 with the signing of the Lancaster agreement and land was central during the negotiations. But the clauses of Lancaster House Constitution (LHC) failed to redress colonial land inequalities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The LAA remained the cornerstone of colonial land policy. It banned African land ownership outside the reserves except in prescribed areas. As a result there was serious land shortages, land degradation and deterioration of African agricultural productivity. It was amended several times. In trying to deal with the effects of LAA the NHA was passed, which reduced the number of cattle owned and land utilized according to carrying capacity. For more on this see, for example; D. S. Moore, *Suffering for Territory; Race, Place and Power in Zimbabwe*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005 and I. Phimister, "Rethinking the Reserves: Southern Rhodesia's Land Husbandry Act Reviewed", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1993, pp. 225- 239.

<sup>31</sup> Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> To appreciate the part played by land alienation in the liberation struggle see variously, Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe*, London: James Currey, 1985 and H.V. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984.

<sup>33</sup> For a further discussion of the Lancaster House Negotiations see, J. Davidow, *Peace in Southern Africa: The Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia*, 1979, London: Westview, 1984.

The Lancaster house constitution protected property rights, prescribing land reform within a market oriented governance framework.<sup>34</sup> By 1983, 6 700 white farmers still controlled 47 percent of all agricultural land compared to 70 000 black farmers who held marginal lands.<sup>35</sup> In 1989 commercial farmers still owned 11. 7 million hectares and land reform had stalled.<sup>36</sup> Despite the need to redress land inequalities, the GoZ was severely tied by the constitution which stipulated that all land was to be attained through a willing seller, willing buyer arrangement. This meant that the government could not acquire land to resettle the majority because the land offered was infertile and farmers were either unwilling to sell or sold their land at exorbitant prices which the government could not afford given that it was funding other welfare projects. But while the Lancaster constitution was a major constrain, there was also a complex interaction of factors which contributed to the nature and pace of land distribution. These ranged from bureaucratic, financial and economic constraints, political weight of Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) to lack of political will to deliver land as promised and a lack of organisational expertise.<sup>37</sup> Due to these constraints, by 1997, only about 70 000 families were resettled on 3. 6 million hectares, far short of the targeted 162 000 families.<sup>38</sup> Soon after 1996 presidential election the government shifted from electoral rhetoric to radical policy thus, in 1997 in line with the provisions of the 1992 Land Acquisition Act (LAA) the government published a list of farms earmarked for compulsory redistribution.<sup>39</sup> In 1998 at Donor conference the funding for resettlement was not forthcoming and this led to the Inception Phase Frame Work Plan of the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme 2 (1998-99), then government announced compulsory redistribution in 2000 under the theme “Fast Track Land Reform.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> S. Moyo, “Land Policy, Poverty Reduction and Public Action in Zimbabwe”, in A. Haroon Akram *etal* (eds), *Land Poverty and Livelihoods in an Era of Globalisation: Perspectives from developing and Transition countries*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 349.

<sup>35</sup> Moyo, *The Land Question*, Harare, Sapes Books, 1995, p. 48.

<sup>36</sup> Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of being*, p. 28.

<sup>37</sup> For a further critique of land policy in the 1980s see S.Moyo, “Land Question in Zimbabwe”, in I. Mandaza (ed), *The Political Economy of Transition 1980 -1986*, Dakar: Codesria, 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Sachikonye, “The Promised Land: From expropriation to reconciliation and Jambanja”, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> According to the principles of LAA, the government sought to facilitate the acquisition of land for resettlement process and amending the Section 16 of the LHC. See, S. Coldham, “The Land Acquisition Act”, 1992 of Zimbabwe, *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 1993, pp. 82- 88; *Parliamentary Debates*, 12 March 1992, Col. 4405, Kumbirai Kangai.

<sup>40</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, *Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Implementation Plan: “Fast Track”*, Harare: Government Printers, 2000.

Proponents of the programme argued that, the violent acquisition of land during the colonial period was one of the justifications for compulsory acquisition of land for redistribution. This resettlement was done in an accelerated manner with minimal resources. The land question was heavily politicised by the government following events which proved that the ruling party could be easily ousted by the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) which had gained political momentum. The government's failure in all aspects of governance had made it unpopular, so the land question was addressed in such a way so that Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) could gain the mass appeal against the opposition party MDC. Raftopoulos argued that, Mugabe narrated the land struggle as part of a longer and broader history of anti-imperialist and pan Africanist struggles, casting the opposition and civil society groups as Western surrogates.<sup>41</sup> Minister of Finance, Patrick Chinamasa, was also quoted in *The Herald* saying that; "the Fast Track Land Reform is a continuation of the war of liberation, Rhodesians, black collaborators ,the British and anyone who supports white farmers, farm workers and the opposition party and in short anyone who disagrees with ZANU PF."<sup>42</sup>

### **Farm workers during the colonial period**

From the period dominated by what Palmer describes as "white agriculture" policy in 1908, policies were instituted to support white farming in Southern Rhodesia. It is important to trace some of them because they influenced the development of farm labour. The British South Africa Company (BSAC) called for farmers of the "right stamp" to start farming but most of them were undercapitalized.<sup>43</sup> This under capitalization, among other factors such as competition for labour from the mining sector and from African producers emphasized the need to exploit Africans in the form of cheap labour so that maximum profits could be reaped. The plight of farm workers in Zimbabwe has a long history which stretches back in the colonial

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<sup>41</sup> B. Raftopoulos, "The Crisis in Zimbabwe, 1998-2008", in B. Raftopoulos and A. S. Mlambo (eds), *Becoming Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2009, p. 213.

<sup>42</sup> *The Herald*, 3 August 2001; ZANU PF, *The People's Manifesto: The Third Chimurenga: Land for economic empowerment*, Harare, 2001.

<sup>43</sup> V. E. M. Mashingaidze, "The development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with Special Reference to the Role of State, 1908-1939", Phd Thesis ,London School of Oriental and African Studies, 1980, p. 22.

period. Farm labour came to be associated with low wages and poor working conditions. In brief, farm labour meant long working hours, ill-treatment by farmers which included physical means of discipline, poor accommodation, inadequate rations and outbreak of diseases like cholera and dysentery. According to the Labour Officer for Nyasaland, a very great number of Southern Rhodesia farmers in the 1930s gave little or no attention to feeding, housing and medical attention of their employees.<sup>44</sup> It was because of these poor working conditions that local people were reluctant to work in the farms.

It was against this background that concerted efforts were made by the colonial authorities, to recruit labour from Nyasaland, Mozambique and Northern Rhodesia. This saw the emergence of labour bodies like Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) and labour agreements like the Tete Agreement and the Tripartite Migrant Labour Agreement.<sup>45</sup> Arrighi argued that the relationship between farm workers and their employers developed from a historical process structured around land alienation and property during the colonial conquest.<sup>46</sup> It was due to such historical experience that the farm worker virtually became the property of the employer. Farm workers fell under the ambit of the Masters and Servants Act of 1901 whereby freedom of organisation, association, the right to strike were banned, workers were governed under what Rutherford called “domestic government.”<sup>47</sup> Farmers used the Masters Servant Act for their own advantage, by either threatening to bring, or actually filing charges against labourers for practically any infraction of the Act.<sup>48</sup> The Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union (APWU), formed in 1964, was never acknowledged by an industrial council for collective bargaining purposes.<sup>49</sup> The union faced a lot of opposition and eventually the Rhodesia National Farmers Union (RNFU) which was dominated by tobacco growers refused its recognition.

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<sup>44</sup> Phimister, “A Note on Labour Relations in Southern Rhodesia”, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed description of these labour agreements and their implications see D. Johnson, “Settlers and Coerced African Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1936- 46”, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1992, pp. 111- 128.

<sup>46</sup> Arrighi, “Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective”, pp. 199.

<sup>47</sup> For full discussion on this, see Rutherford, *Working on the Margins*, pp. 235- 240.

<sup>48</sup> For further discussion on how farmers instil labour discipline and how they secure labour supply through, patronage, physical violence, Masters and Servant Act, and use of “boss boys” see Rubert, *A Most Promising Weed: A History of Tobacco Farming and Labour in Colonial Zimbabwe*.

<sup>49</sup> International Labour Organisation, *Labour conditions and discrimination in Southern Rhodesia*, Geneva; International Labour Organisations, 1978, p. 74.

The RNFU was a powerful lobby which had great political influence and in 1960 it managed to reject proposals to implement minimum wage legislation for farm workers.<sup>50</sup> It is valid to argue that politics played and still play a pivotal role on labour conditions and legislation. African farm workers had no organisation to advance their interest. Even now, despite the existence of labour movements like General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union Zimbabwe (GAPWUZ) and other unions representing the rights and interests of farm workers, farm workers are still disadvantaged. The paternalistic relationship they had with their employers made them more vulnerable. In what Clarke called “quasi feudal labour relations,”<sup>51</sup> farm workers’ links with the employer were not simply economic but also involved a high degree of socio-political subordination and dependence. The low proportion of cash payments in kind reflected this client patron pattern in labour policy.<sup>52</sup> Employees relied extensively on employer initiated welfare policies which often reinforce dependency links such as the provision of education, the supply of rudimentary medical aid, the hope of “retainer status” after retirement and the prospect of obtaining internment cash loans.<sup>53</sup> Farm workers were always vulnerable because farmers were not merely employers. They were holders of power over every facet of their workers’ lives. Farm workers were and still are in a state of subordination, socially and economically. In a large measure, the compound system consolidated these paternalistic relations because the system afforded the farm owners to monitor and control the movement of their workers.<sup>54</sup> Even up to now the compound persisted as an institution tying residents to employment.

Farming communities are often isolated physically and geographically. Palmer explained the historical situation of farm workers in Southern Africa. For him, they were isolated and vulnerable with little access to either education or health facilities, relatively powerless and very hard to reach, let alone to organize or mobilize.<sup>55</sup> Moreover their position was quite complex because there were not recognized as peasants or were not integrated in the

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<sup>50</sup> D.G. Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia*, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1997, p. 61.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

<sup>52</sup> Phimister, “A Note on Labour Relations in Southern Rhodesia”, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 51.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the compound system, see Van Onselen, *African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia*.

<sup>55</sup> R. Palmer, “Off the Map – Farm workers in Southern Africa: Some Partly Historical thoughts on their invisibility”, Paper presented at Southern Africa Regional Conference on Farm Workers, 10 September 2009, Harare, p. 2.

working class. This caused policy makers to neglect them because they did not fit easily into development programmes. Being outside urban areas farm workers were seen to be outside the sphere of “modernization” and in the eyes of colonial officials they were viewed as “still raw.”<sup>56</sup> This misconception was a major constraint on the developmental potential of farm workers. Scholars like Tandon viewed farm workers as victims of a pathological economic order, poverty among them does not just exist but was created.<sup>57</sup>

The position of female farm workers was worse than males during the colonial period. Sachikonye notes that, women on the farms received much lower wages than men because employers and colonial authorities claimed that females only played a secondary role with their husbands being the primary bread winners.<sup>58</sup> On tobacco plantations, managers viewed women primarily as “wives” who constituted a pool of resident labour which could be drawn on when required.<sup>59</sup> Women were, relied upon as seasonal workers during peak periods. Because women were not treated as workers in their own right they were denied other rights like food rations. Even up to the present day such gender inequalities still exist. Poor working conditions are not limited to Matepatepa commercial farming area but the overall trend everywhere else is seemingly that of squalor, dilapidation and poverty. Todaro and Smith argue that these impoverished people suffer from under nutrition, poor health, have little political voice, are socially excluded and attempt to earn meager living on small and marginal farms as day labourers.<sup>60</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

This study uses Matepatepa commercial farming area in the Mashonaland province of Zimbabwe as a case study. It carries out a qualitative analysis of the impact of FTLRP on farm workers. It uses narratives of farm workers on different farms in Matepatepa in order to present their experiences of the FTLR. The intention is to have a qualitative rather than a

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<sup>56</sup> Rutherford, *Working on the Margins*, p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> Y. Tandon, “Trade Unions and Labour in the Agricultural sector in Zimbabwe”, in B. Raftopoulos and L. Sachikonye (ed), *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and The Post-Colonial State 1980-2000*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2001, p. 46.

<sup>58</sup> L. M. Sachikonye, *Female workers in Agribusiness in Zimbabwe*, Addis Ababa: OSSREA, 1997, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> M. P. Todaro and C. S. Smith, *Economic Development*, New York: Pearson Educational Limited, 2011, p. 11.

quantitative analysis of the impact and a focus on selected farms ensures the depth intended so that more time is spent on analysing the before and after picture of the impact on their experiences. This study traces the experience of farm workers from when they were workers under their old “masters” and through to their present situation. In the same vein, the study assesses the farm workers coping strategies during and after the land reform programme. The assessment covers both social and economic aspects of their life. In essence, the study will evaluate how farm workers were caught up in the “politics of survival” by ZANU PF and how such politics impacted on their livelihoods.

Oral sources were heavily used during research, once I had obtained ethical clearance from the University and adhered to all ethical clearance considerations in the process of conducting the interviews. In-depth individual interviews with semi structured questions which were sufficiently flexible to explore further relevant information raised by the informant as opposed to focus group interviews were predominantly used. This was because they give the researcher access to “people’s ideas, thoughts and memories in their own world.”<sup>61</sup> Oral interviews gave me a chance to explore more information concerning the plight of farm workers. However the major challenge was that, given the political sensitivity of the study, some farm workers were unwilling to divulge information for the fear of victimization and even some of the new farmers were not cooperative. This lack of support stemmed, in part from the fact that these farmers are not willing to improve the conditions of farm workers. The value of interviews was enhanced by physical visits to different farms under investigation. Close observation helped me to minimize problems associated with selective memory and exaggerations. Interviews together with physical visits helped me to have a better account of facts concerning the situation of farm workers in the post 2000 era. This is, however, not discounting the inherent weaknesses of interviews especially for an emotionally charged work like this. I, therefore, tried to seek corroborative evidence to support a lot of the claims and statements made by the interviewees either by comparing evidence of one interview against the other, and where possible, using other sources like newspapers.

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<sup>61</sup> H. Biber and P. Leavy, *The practice of Qualitative Research*, Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011, p. 29.

Media sources especially *The Herald*, *Sunday Mail* and *The Daily News*, were also consulted. They helped me to have a clear picture of events at a particular time since they contain daily, weekly and monthly events. However the major weakness of these newspapers is, given political interference in media sources in Zimbabwe mainstream newspapers are biased and sometimes misrepresent issues. "In the media discourse all news is socially constructed, newspapers decides which event is important to report and by choice information is both excluded or included."<sup>62</sup> For example the national paper, *The Herald* serves the interest of the ruling party. Independent newspapers were useful but they tended to concentrate on national issues and influential figures in society, neglecting issues that have to do with the most marginalized farmworkers.

My research also used reports done by non-governmental organisations like the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe (FCTZ), Justice for Agriculture (JAG) and GAPWUZ. Unfortunately due to bureaucratic challenges the researcher could not access CFU reports. The civil organisation reports covered research work done with these organisations. Some of the reports were informative and cover a wide range of issues relating to the situation of farm workers after the programme and other reports gave me in-depth accounts of how farm workers suffered violations during the land reform programme. They also gave me an insight into strategies utilized by these organisations in trying to cushion them from the effects of the programme. However the reports are written by political activists who may have something to prove. There was thus a need to use them cautiously. The analysis attained from these reports helped to complement the information collected from the interviews.

Parliamentary debates were also used in this study. They helped me to reveal how the parliamentarians have addressed the plight of farm workers. However given the sensitivity of the topic in Zimbabwe it was not easy to have access to *Hansards* in the parliamentary library. Photographs from different media houses and non-governmental organisations were also used. Pictures can dramatize issues under investigation, but they are easily misrepresented depending on the motive for taking that photo. Generally they are shallow and limiting because there are unforeseen factors which cannot be easily depicted in photographs but

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<sup>62</sup> W. Willems, "Peasant Demonstrators, Violent Invaders, Representations of Land in Zimbabwe Press," *World Development*, Vol. 32, No. 10, 2004, p. 1767.



when combined with other sources, were very useful to my study. Archival material pertaining agriculture labour in the post 2000 is not yet available to the public.

### **Structure of Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter forms the introduction and the background. The second chapter looks at general conditions of farm workers in post-colonial Zimbabwe. It focuses on the conditions of the farm workers in Matepatepa before the land reform and how they nurtured and developed their relations with their employers. Chapter three examines the conditions of farm workers during the land reform. This chapter will examine the plight of farm workers during the FTLR. It will look at how farm workers fared during the process and how they dealt with the new conditions that were being introduced to them.

Chapter Four evaluates farm workers' situation after the FTLR. It examines the nature of their relationships with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of such changes on their livelihoods. The chapter surveys the conditions of farm workers who took up other sources of livelihood after the land reform programme. A number of these workers lost their jobs in the land reform programme and went into informal ways of earning a living such as gold panning. Others also benefitted from the land reform programme and own pieces of land and another group went into "sharecropping" arrangements with the new land owners. Chapter five is the conclusion. It reconciles the thesis' findings against its intended goals. It also positions this study in the historiography on land, agriculture and labour in Zimbabwe.

## **Chapter Two: Conditions of Farm Workers in Post-colonial Zimbabwe before the Land Reform**

### **Introduction**

This chapter looks at the general conditions of farm workers before the FTLRP and in the post-colonial period. It attempts to account for the farm workers' living conditions, housing, working hours, safety conditions, wages and recreational facilities. The chapter will look at how farm workers nurtured and developed their relations with their employers. The post-independence period provides an interesting era to analyse general labour conditions in Zimbabwe because for the greater part of its life in the post-colonial period, the labour movement was not only weak and divided but was also subordinated to the state. Its autonomy, as constituted in the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), was extremely limited, its capacity to set out and implement its own independent programmes was greatly reduced, and this remained the case for much of the 1980s. The breakthrough, as Raftopoulos argues, only came in the 1990s when the state was finally forced by external pressures not only to liberalise the economy but also to relax some of the laws inhibiting the growth of independent organisations.<sup>1</sup> It is in this context that this chapter analyses the conditions of farm labour in the immediate post-colonial period. It contrasts the expectations of farm labour with those of farm owners and how the two groups' expectation fared in a new political dispensation characterised by promises of a socialist driven form of government.

#### **1. "Our wages were little but at least they came." Collective Bargaining and Farm Worker Wages in the Post-Colonial Period.**

With the advent of independence, expectations among the agricultural workers were high. Under a government advocating Marxism – Leninism and professing loyalty to the working class, agricultural workers, like workers in other sectors, expected transformation of their working and living conditions.<sup>2</sup> The right to organise and the right to strike and demonstrate

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<sup>1</sup> B. Raftopoulos and L. Sachikonye (eds.) *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-colonial State in Zimbabwe, 1980-2000*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2001, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the interviewees who were farm labourers before independence and continued to be after independence, expressed these expectations.

had been some of the key elements in the ZANU PF pre-election speeches and this heightened the expectations of the Zimbabwean working class.<sup>3</sup> However, the government's socialist experiment was more rhetoric than real, but at least at the beginning it set out to take seriously its social obligations to previously deprived sections of society, including farm workers. The coming to power of the new government, therefore, saw the introduction of legislations meant to alleviate the plight of labourers.<sup>4</sup> However, by and large, the conditions of farm workers in the immediate post-colonial period remained largely unchanged and very much the same as the conditions that had existed in the colonial period. In farm owner remained the law. The new government, however, attempted to make changes as far as the conditions of services of labour and this saw the introduction of a minimum wage. On top of the minimum wage the government also initiated structural changes in other areas of labour. For example, besides the Minimum Wages and Employment Act of 1980, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) of 1985 improved employment conditions and negotiating structures while workers committees were required to be established at all work places.<sup>5</sup> It also stipulated sick and maternity leave allowances for permanent employees, leaving the details of occupational and other related provisions such as working and living conditions to collective bargaining.<sup>6</sup>

The Masters and Servants Act was abolished and a minimum wage for agricultural and plantation workers was set at \$30 per month. The then Minister of Labour, Kumbirai Kangai, argued that the introduction of a minimum wage had been essential to raise "the then pathetic standard of living of the poor sector."<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, workers could not be discharged without the permission of the Ministry of Labour and social services.<sup>8</sup> In 1980 agriculture workers were legally recognised as workers and the LRA consolidated a number of rights in 1985, including the right to unionise and the right to freedom from discrimination and unfair labour practises.<sup>9</sup> The Ministry of Labour initiated labour regulations and set

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<sup>3</sup> ZANU PF, *1980 Election Manifesto*, Harare, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of such legislations include the Minimum Wages and Employment Act of 1980 and the Labour Relations Act of 1985.

<sup>5</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Corporate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *The Herald*, 20 May 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Tandon, "Trade unions and Labour in the agricultural sector In Zimbabwe", p. 228.

<sup>9</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture, Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 88.

minimum wages more or less annually for farms, occasionally in consultation with the Agricultural Labour Bureau (ALB), the agricultural employers negotiating body and the industrial board for the agricultural industry.<sup>10</sup> One of the major burdens of agricultural work during the colonial period was lack of a well-defined day but with the advent of independence, working hours in the agricultural industry were now covered by statutory provisions. Under the statutory instrument 323 of 1993 section 7, Clauses 1 and 2 for example, working hours for herdsman, watchmen, boiler men, guards and pump attendants were reduced.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, there was a contradiction between rights on paper and practise. There were marked continuities with the colonial order in both living and working conditions. In this context it is appropriate to quote one of the farm workers who started working at Rotchford farm in 1982: “During the tobacco planting period which was from September to November, we used to start work as early as 5 o’clock in the morning and got very short breaks at nine and then again for lunch, then it was only darkness that would send us home.”<sup>12</sup> The national government not only included farm workers under minimum wage legislation, with women now receiving the same wages as men but politicians told farmers they were no longer to provide rations.<sup>13</sup> This had serious repercussions because borrowing from farm stores increased remarkably.<sup>14</sup> This perpetuated a form of debt patronage and further increased the control of farmers on their workers.

It is, however, important to note that both the CFU and the Zimbabwe Tobacco Association were opposed to the 1980 minimum wage increase as they argued that such a rise would seriously affect the viability of the agricultural industry, especially tobacco.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in spite of the introduction of such legislation, farm owners devised ways and methods to avert paying their workers the stipulated minimum wage and most of the workers thus continued to languish in poverty. In fact, after the introduction of the minimum wage, it was reported that thousands of farm workers were fired. Official employment levels declined in agriculture from

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<sup>10</sup> B. Rutherford, “Farm workers and Trade Unions in Hurungwe District in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe”, in Raftopoulos and Sachikonye (eds.), *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and The Post-Colonial State 1980-2000*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2001, p. 207.

<sup>11</sup> *Statutory Instrument 323 of 1993*, Collective Bargaining Agreement: National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry, Harare: Government Printers.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Trust Simau, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>13</sup> *The Herald*, 23 December 1981.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Amon Chauke, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>15</sup> *The Herald*, 4 August 1980.

327 000 in 1980 to 263 000 in 1983.<sup>16</sup> In 1981 the then secretary general for GAPWUZ, Dixon Ndawana reported that some employers countrywide reacted to this new legislation by firing hundreds of workers at random pretending that they could not afford to pay the minimum wage of \$30.<sup>17</sup> The ZANU PF office in Bindura reported complaints of dismissal from farms in Bindura District.<sup>18</sup> Some farmers responded by rapidly reducing the number of their fully employed permanent workers to seasonal, contract and other non-permanent forms of labour, while other employers took advantage of the workers ignorance of the new regulations and continued to pay them well below the stipulated minimum wage.<sup>19</sup> The GAPWUZ Provincial Secretary General for Mashonaland Central described in 1986 how some farmers took advantage of the regional instability such as post-independence Mozambican civil war to engage cheap labour and avoid paying the minimum wage.<sup>20</sup>

Of importance to note, however, is the fact that most of the farm workers acknowledge that the wages they were getting at this time were not enough and the post-colonial government's attempts to have farmers adjust them were, in most cases, not followed up by the farmers. No serious adjustment on the farm workers' wages happened in the post-colonial period despite the stipulations of the Minimum Wages Act. In retrospect, the affected farm workers, however, preferred that little they got then because according to a majority of them especially in the Matepatepa area: "it was little but at least they got it."<sup>21</sup> To note is the fact that, this view was largely presented by farm workers who are presently frustrated by a common situation of non-payment of wages that prevails in most of the farming areas and amongst the new farmers. Most farm workers report going for more than six months without receiving a salary. Their recollection of their situation back in the 1980s is thus influenced, to some extent, by their current position.

Mafios Mpezeni who started working at Thompsons Farm in 1974, even went to the extent of comparing the wages they received as farm workers in the colonial period to those they

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<sup>16</sup> Rutherford, "Farm workers and Trade Unions in Hurungwe District in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe", p. 208.

<sup>17</sup> *The Herald*, 14 November 1981.

<sup>18</sup> *The Herald*, 26 April 1982.

<sup>19</sup> *The Herald*, 14 January 1982.

<sup>20</sup> *The Herald*, 16 January 1986.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Benson Phiri, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

started to receive after independence and the wages they were currently receiving. For Mpezeni, as farm workers they had never been paid “any proper wages since the time of Smith, but at least that time their wages were guaranteed to come.”<sup>22</sup> He describes the immediate post-colonial period when their employers, out of fear of the new government, slightly increased their wages and how every last Friday of the month at “exactly ten in the morning” their employer would line them up to receive their wages.<sup>23</sup> All this was eroded in the post land reform period as they sometimes would go for months without receiving their wages and “we have nowhere to report to because our bosses are the government.”<sup>24</sup> One interesting factor raised by Mpezeni was the guarantee of receiving something at the end of every month, notwithstanding how much it was they got. Thus the inadequacy of their wages during this period became a non-issue in retrospect because the farm workers were now not even guaranteed of “a wage even after spending day and night toiling in the fields.”<sup>25</sup>

As pointed out earlier, the flouting of the Minimum Wages Act was not only limited to established white commercial farmers. As late as 1985 some emergent black commercial farmers in Bindura District were reported to be flouting wage regulations by underpaying their agricultural labourers and not paying at all in some cases.<sup>26</sup> However, in speeches delivered by politicians and party leaders, white farmers were commonly singled out, harshly condemned for their “Rhodie” attitudes and threatened with expropriation if the new laws were disobeyed.<sup>27</sup> Kumbirai Kangai was quoted as saying: “if any farmer does not pay his farm labourers minimum wage, all we have to do is to nationalise the farm, give it to the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development, so that it can be part of the resettlement programme.”<sup>28</sup> It should be noted, however, that these were empty threats from the Minister as the commercial farmers continued to dismiss and underpay their workers. This was especially so given that senior government officials of the new government were among the commercial farmers who were dismissing their workers and underpaying them. Mr Donald Goddard of the Rhodesian Front party reiterated this during the debate session in Parliament

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Mafios Mpezeni, Thompsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *The Herald*, 22 August 1985.

<sup>27</sup> Rutherford, *Working on the Margins*, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> *The Herald*, 23 December 1981.

in August 1980 when he argued that the worst farmer was the Minister without Portfolio, Dr Joshua Nkomo, who paid his labourers half the amount paid by white farmers.<sup>29</sup> The accumulation of land by high ranking civil service and political figures was thus an important factor influencing the leadership towards landowners. Some were alleged to have not paid their farm workers the minimum wage or to be underusing the land, in complete contradiction to the stated principles and objectives of the party they were leading.<sup>30</sup> This showed failure to implement the proclaimed principles of Marxism –Leninism by the post-colonial regime and this had a vivid impact on the socio-economic condition of agricultural workers.

There was also no properly stipulated penalty put on employers for failing to pay the minimum wage. In fact, some farmers successfully applied for exemption from paying the minimum wage. In some instances, farmers preferred women because of this stipulated minimum wage, as women usually were seasonal workers. In *The Herald* of 31 March 1983, the then GAPWUZ National Organising Secretary pointed this out when he reported that, “It is now a common sight to see on any given farm men sitting in their huts doing nothing while their women are at work in the fields .This does not go well for the family and indeed for the country”.<sup>31</sup> Evidence shows that the numbers of female workers on farms increased after independence and this had nothing to do with attempts to emancipate and uplift women but it was all in a bid to avoid the payment of higher wages. Esinath Matope, a female farm worker at Sydney farm in Matepatapa since 1981, narrates how she became a seasonal employee at that farm in 1981 after her husband had lost her job.<sup>32</sup> For her, it was either that or starve to death because her husband had lost his job “after our baas had chased away most of the permanent men working on the farm because he was claiming that the new black government had no idea what it was doing by asking him to pay the workers huge amounts of money he could not afford.”<sup>33</sup> Esinath’s husband had to go and work as a tobacco picker at the next farm, a far cry from his previously held position as a workshop foreman.<sup>34</sup> To make matters

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<sup>29</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 17 August 1980, Col. 668, Donald Goddard.

<sup>30</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Corporate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> *The Herald*, 31 March 1983.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Esinath Matope, Sydney Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

worse, one of her then 12 year old sons had to leave school and join the farm as a seasonal worker in order to augment the family's income.<sup>35</sup> Retrenchment and employment of women was a tactic by farmers to minimise the impact of gazetted legal minimum wage. However Sachikonye argued that the minimum wage scales would not seriously undermine the general prevailing conditions of capitalist productions, reproduction and accumulation.<sup>36</sup> In spite of its limitations, the minimum wage legislation represented a historical departure from agricultural wage policy of the colonial regime where there were no minimum wages.

Another step which was taken towards the democratisation of the work environment was the setting up of workers committees. On farms these committees had to deal with problems such as unlawful dismissal, poor working conditions and low wages.<sup>37</sup> Workers, however, reported that the uncompromising stand of employers always rendered negotiations difficult. Most of the committee members were illiterate and almost always unskilled in labour laws and collective bargain and most importantly, were fearful of losing their jobs if they challenged an employer. Some farmers troubled by the emergence of these committees, attempted to transform them into more docile organs. One worker in a 1986 survey noted that, most of the people who had been holding the chairmanships of the workers committee had been fired from work by the farmer under the pretext that they were organising workers to revolt. Most of the workers were thus reluctant to be elected into these committees because of this risk.<sup>38</sup> In some instances, employers distanced themselves from employee collective bargaining structures by using a foreman to transmit orders and to carry messages, thus effectively avoiding direct negotiations. Workers interviewed in 1985 said the presence of foremen at meetings led to victimisation of workers who openly stated their positions. One of the interviewed workers summarised the problem: "The committees are representative but not effective."<sup>39</sup> The committees were affected so much by the influence of outside elements such as the foremen, who, in most cases, were in direct competition with them and

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> L. Sachikonye, "State, Capital and Trade Unions" in I. Mandaza (ed.), *The Political Economy of Transition 1980-1986*, Dakar: Codesria, 1986, p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 91.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



despised the committees and were more likely to undermine their functions especially given the fact that the foremen had more access to the farmer.

The conditions of farm workers did not change much during the post-colonial period. An element of continuity existed in policies on industrial relations. The introduction of the Minimum Wages Act and other government regulations that were meant to cushion them from continued poverty only made their situation worse. One major fact that contributed to the worsening of conditions for the farm workers was the attitude of the government especially in the immediate post-colonial period. The state was paternalistic and could not tolerate any form of strike and those who were striking were viewed as people with 'unrevolutionary' minds who had not experienced the hardships of the struggle for liberation. Wildcat strikes and other forms of labour militancy were portrayed as disorganised, irresponsible, unpatriotic elements based on economic sabotage.<sup>40</sup> The major reason for the strikes was the "crises of expectation" after the general election and other factors which range from possible agitations and to pure misunderstandings.<sup>41</sup> It was understandable that workers displayed "crises of expectations" in the immediate post-independence period but it is important to take into cognisance that the government was still finding its feet and the economy was still dominated by foreign capital. So, radical transformation was not as easy as anticipated. The figures of strikes from 1980 to 1981 varied but the report of the National Trade Unions Survey Zimbabwe estimated between 180-200 strikes across the country for that period.<sup>42</sup> Raftopoulous has put the number of strikes which took place country wide between 1980 and 1981 at 140.<sup>43</sup> Consequently when workers went on strike on state owned farms and plantations, the state as an employer cracked down on them harder than a private sector employer would. The state had a disempowering effect on workers'.<sup>44</sup> Strike suppression showed sharp contradictions in the new Zimbabwean society. Astrow shared the same sentiment, "The most basic trade union rights have continued to be severely restricted, with the ZANU (PF) government adhering to Smith's old laws. The state of emergency has

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<sup>40</sup> Sachikonye, "State, Capital and Trade Unions", p. 254.

<sup>41</sup> *The Herald*, 23 March 1980.

<sup>42</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, *Labour and Economy: Report of the National Trade Unions Survey*, Vol. 1, Harare: Government Printers, 1985, p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> B. Raftopoulus, "The State and Poverty Reduction policies in Zimbabwe 1980-1997", Paper presented at the Economic History Conference, University of Zimbabwe, 4-7 August, 1997, p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> Tandon, "Trade Unions and Labour in the agricultural sector In Zimbabwe", p. 228.

remained in operation as before, with the inevitable attack on basic democratic rights.”<sup>45</sup> This illustrated a lack of coherent policy towards workers by the government and had a remarkable resemblance to other African countries like Tanzania, where the Nyerere regime depicted collective industrial action as evil.<sup>46</sup> Even the newly created Workers Unions and Committees were not permitted enough space to express the workers grievances. The unions were expected to be the “labour wing” of the ruling party, like the “youth wing” or “women’s league.”<sup>47</sup> The unilateral demands and strikes were considered not only un-revolutionary but against the values of newly founded independence principles. For the government, industrial peace was a prerequisite for productive growth and in reality this reflects that in contemporary Zimbabwe labour relations still favoured the bourgeoisie.

Workers in agro industries such as the sugar plantations who dared join in the strikes that were proliferating in the early 1980s were met with serious resistance especially from the police as “law and order” was the central objective.<sup>48</sup> Thus if policing of farm workers could be effectively carried out on big estates like Triangle and Hippo Valley then, their control was even tighter on small scale commercial areas like Matepatepa. The state was thus paternalistic and had an element of authoritarianism, allowing no dissent within the unions against the state or any “progressive employers.” Like other post –colonial states, Zimbabwe was caught in a serious contradiction within itself.<sup>49</sup> For those farm workers whose bosses gave them salary increases, such increases were never enough to enable the workers to live beyond mere subsistence. A life of poverty for the farm workers was thus embedded within the structure of the economy. Tandon describes, “the poverty of this time as structural poverty which was humanised by the post-independence state.”<sup>50</sup> He further argues that the main reason for the poverty of farm workers in this period was structural, lying in the structure of production by which they were integrated into the national and global economy.<sup>51</sup> The unions, where they existed, were thus compelled to work within the system

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<sup>45</sup> A. Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A Revolution That Lost Its Way?*, London: Pluto, 1983, p. 181.

<sup>46</sup> W. B. L. Kapinga, “State Control of the Working Class through Labour Legislation”, in I. G. Shivji (ed), *The State and Working People in Tanzania*, Dakar: Codesria, 1986, pp. 87- 103.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *The Herald*, 14 May 1980.

<sup>49</sup> I. Mandaza, “The State and Politics in the Post-White Settler, Colonial Situation”, in I. Mandaza (ed), *The Political Economy of Transition 1980-1986*, Dakar: Codesria, 1986, p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> Tandon, “Trade unions and Labour in the agricultural sector In Zimbabwe”, p. 229.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

trying as best as they could, to help the workers to bargain with their employers for better terms. Unfortunately for the farm workers, most of them had neither the comprehension nor the capacity to challenge the system. So the organisational fault line continued to be the main reason for the impoverished condition of farm workers especially in the 1980s.<sup>52</sup>

Moreover the conditions of farm workers were worsened by Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) which the government implemented in the 1990s. This economic reform package eroded the gains that workers had made in the first decade of independence and farm became worse off during this period.<sup>53</sup> Amanor-Wilks argues that these economic reforms driven by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank resulted in an erosion of labour protection hence aggravating the farm workers plight.<sup>54</sup> In the commercial sector the government stopped stipulating the minimum wages, instead it became the responsibility of the NEC to negotiate minimum farm wages through a process of collective bargaining.<sup>55</sup> This takeover of the minimum wage matter by NEC led to the end of three categories of wages introduced by the government in 1985.<sup>56</sup> GAPWUZ official blamed ESAP for the worsening conditions of farm workers. For him, “it brought with it retrenchments and the day to day rise in prices. The present day suffering of farm workers should be traced back to those economic packages.”<sup>57</sup> Indeed the removal of subsidies effected by government following the adoption of ESAP contributed to sharp rises in the prices of basic commodities and the situation was worsened by the 1992- 94 drought which contributed to more retrenchments and shortage of basic commodities.

## **2. Farm Workers’ Local Representation and Impact on the Bargaining Process**

The farm workers inability to exert political pressure on government was one of their biggest draw backs. Although the government had given them the right to vote in parliamentary elections, they could not vote for their local authority because the farms were outside the

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> A. S. Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: A Case of Zimbabwe, 1990-1995*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997, p. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Amanor-Wilks, *In Search of Hope for Zimbabwe’s Farm Workers*, p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with NEC official, Harare, 29 October 2014.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Interview with GAPWUZ official. Harare, 23 October 2014.

political orbit of the rural District councils. Neither were they part of urban wards. Thus farm workers remained peripheral in the local government which had been decentralised in the communal areas but not in commercial farming areas where the rural councils' revenues were primarily used. The developmental structures introduced soon after independence to ensure that the needs of people at grass roots were heard did not extend to the farming areas. A government minister, Calistus Ndlovu expressed his fears that farm workers were to remain "the invisible members of the independent community."<sup>58</sup>

The government had given lodgers the right to vote in elections in urban areas. The structure of rural councils gave farm workers no chance of their voices to be heard. For example, no village or ward development communities were set up.<sup>59</sup> The government never persisted in creating the plan to extend administrative responsibility over farm workers living and working conditions. Various proposals to include farm workers within state forms of administration that were circulated between 1985 and 1988 failed to materialise.<sup>60</sup> In 1984, the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, directed that all Zimbabweans be organised into local government structures as a means of enhancing political democracy. Despite this directive, farm workers were not covered by the programme and continued to have no right to vote for rural councillors as they were not property owners or renters.<sup>61</sup> Loewenson concludes that as far as the administration of farming areas was concerned, the state had "not taken a decisive position and little progress has been made."<sup>62</sup> Until 1997, farm workers were still disfranchised from local government elections. The law enacting the merger of rural and district councils in 1988 continued to deprive them. The village committees on farms had no material or administrative power and they did not link with rural councils. They thus had a weak, domestic role aimed at solving family disputes such as adultery.<sup>63</sup> The Rural District Councils (RDCs) bill was intended to put farm workers and those living on communal land on equal footing but the most needed change, the enfranchisement of farm workers in local

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<sup>58</sup> *The Herald*, 20 August 1980.

<sup>59</sup> D. Auret, *From Bus Stop to Farm Village; The Farm Worker Programme in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Save the Children (UK), 2000, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> Rutherford, "Farm workers and Trade Unions in Hurungwe District in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe", p. 213.

<sup>61</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 94.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

elections was not forthcoming. Little was done since independence to improve the consciousness, political capacities and collective strength of farm workers.

The lack of local representation was thus a major obstacle in the way of development for farm workers and large scale areas remained on the margins of state policy and no clear strategy was put in place to cater for their wellbeing.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, for some time after independence, ZANU PF party structures were regarded by workers as the most effective means of fighting for improvements in their conditions. Party cells and branches were the strongest socio – political structures on farms and in most cases, ZANU PF was called in to prevent retrenchments and non- payment of wages and with some effectiveness. In time, however, ZANU PF began to be less consistent to articulate workers interest, in pursuit of the broad front politics of “national unity.”<sup>65</sup> It opened its membership to land owners and in the interest of “reconciliation” the pre- 1980 anti- farmer slogans slowly disappeared from everyday political discourse. The government increasingly defended employer interest and not those of the workers. Ministers invited to farms soon began to exhort workers to show a greater commitment to work and to raise productivity, with little concrete discussion on changing their conditions.<sup>66</sup> The state’s position of reconciliation and reduction of class conflict thus made it a relatively weak supporter of worker actions especially on the farms.

This, therefore, meant that the power of the workers committees and village committees weakened after the government backed down from disrupting the farm industry. The reduction of government interest in farm workers allowed commercial farmers to counter the few gains made by some farm workers. Many workers in the early 1990s thought farmers had greater authority to terminate their employment than they had in the 1980s.<sup>67</sup> To make matters worse, the existing bureaucratic relations weakened as the Department of Labour lacked funds to settle disputes and had no legal responsibility to inspect working conditions on farms as they did under the Industrial Conciliation Act.<sup>68</sup> In 1985 the ZANU PF election campaign continued to champion the rights of workers and this was mainly because it

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<sup>64</sup> *The Herald*, 30 September 1981.

<sup>65</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 94.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> Rutherford, “Farm Workers and Trade Unions in Hurungwe District in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe”, p. 214.

<sup>68</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture; Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 95.

recognised the importance of this mass support. The party vowed to reinforce its socialist drive and according to *The Sunday Mail* of 7 July 1985, Robert Mugabe promised that the government would give a more “meaningful thrust in the socialist direction through people oriented goals.”<sup>69</sup> In reality these party promises, largely remained rhetoric as many did not materialise. Many farm workers continued to be marginalised under a new black government which had raised their expectations.

### 3. Health and Education among Farm Workers

In the immediate post-independence period, the white commercial farming community came under sharp attack in the House of Assembly on 19 August 1981. Sydney Malunga of ZANU PF, had introduced a motion calling for a review of the structures of the country’s rural councils to remove discriminatory and exploitative practises. In the ensuing debate, issues of health, educational facilities and housing in commercial farms were raised. Interestingly, the farmers were defended by speakers from all sides of the House who argued that the responsibility of housing, medical facilities and education was not the farmers responsibility. They urged either the government or the rural councils themselves to look after the farm workers. Malunga had argued that farmers employed large labour force and made exorbitant profits.<sup>70</sup> Henry Elsworth of the Rhodesia Front and a Member of Parliament in Midlands interjected against Malunga arguing that the burden of taking care of the needs of farm workers should not be a burden for farmers alone as it was too heavy to carry.<sup>71</sup> Such lack of commitment to the responsibility of farm workers’ welfare made their life more precarious.

The advent of political independence opened many educational opportunities for most Zimbabweans through the government policy of “education for all.” Under this, schools were opened in urban and rural areas and education was made free.<sup>72</sup> However for farm workers’ children there were marked continuities with the colonial order in education. Most farmers opposed the education of their workers and many opted to train just a few workers about

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<sup>69</sup> *The Sunday Mail*, 7 July 1985.

<sup>70</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 19 August 1981, Col. 285, Sydney Malunga.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, Henry, Elsworth.

<sup>72</sup> *The Herald*, 19 July 1980.

mechanical and managerial tasks rather than building schools. Education in the commercial farms was grossly neglected and constantly interrupted by farmers employing pupils as cheap labour.<sup>73</sup> Loewenson argued that “child labour does not denote children helping their own family with domestic chores for a relatively brief period in the day, or a brief involvement of children in work to support the learning process during a structured school programme but is premature involvement of children in adult forms of labour, working long hours usually under harsh conditions.”<sup>74</sup>

The then Minister of Education and Culture, Dr Dzingai Mutumbuka complained about this exploitation of children which he described as “morally abhorrent” and negating “entirely our stated goals for the unimpeded development of the children.”<sup>75</sup> He was of the view that colonialism had left Zimbabwe with many unpalatable legacies but one of the worst was the unjust and racially segregated school system. The Minister placed emphasis and direction of education to be adjusted to the curriculum which provided pupils with chances to develop their practical skills necessary for participation in the new society.<sup>76</sup> The schools that were available were of poor quality, as the system was designed to provide “literacy” to the settlers’ future labourers who could take instructions without questioning their employer. It was designed for workers who were loyal and could yell “baas” when called by their masters.<sup>77</sup> The overall impact of the educational policy on farms was to create a reservoir of cheap and docile labour for the farms.<sup>78</sup> Children who dropped out of school, and those who never attended, joined the ranks of workers during peak seasons.<sup>79</sup> This created a vicious circle of poverty on the farms. *The Sunday Gazette* of 16 October 1994, partly read; “Being born to a farm labourer in Zimbabwe is almost to be guaranteed a life of illiteracy and deprivation.”<sup>80</sup> The situation seems to be worse for a girl child on these commercial farms. As Amanor put it across; “girls on the farm in Zimbabwe face a lot of problems from lack of

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<sup>73</sup> *The Herald*, 19 February 1983.

<sup>74</sup> R. Loewenson, “Child labour in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1991, p. 20.

<sup>75</sup> *The Herald*, 19 February 1983.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> *The Sunday Mail*, 7 May 1995.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *The Sunday Gazette*, 16 October 1994.

education to early pregnancy and sometimes early marriage thus limiting their options in life.”<sup>81</sup>

The building of creches on farms has been encouraged by government, GAPWUZ and other NGOs. In 1997 the then Director of the Farm Community Trust, Lynette Mudekunye cited the establishment of pre-schools as a major step towards promoting productivity and assisting working mothers, as some of them took children to work in unsuitable surroundings such as tobacco grading.<sup>82</sup> There were also hundreds of farm workers children who had no schooling available because the government could not simply start building schools on what was privately owned land. Diana Auret in her book *From Bus Stop to Farm Village*, made an observation that two worlds existed in the farms. For her, “both are Zimbabwean, but the inhabitants of one have a predominately Western cultural background, while the people of the other world have had minimal western education.”<sup>83</sup> For her, the social norms and beliefs of this latter group have evolved from a “mixture of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian traditions, a sub culture that is specific to the farms.”<sup>84</sup> Literacy activities, improvement in primary and secondary education, expansion of media and cultural institutions and adult education thus lagged behind in farming communities.

In as much as rural development and the provision of essential services such as health and education to communal areas were extensively supported in the immediate post-independence period, development in the commercial farming areas was largely unexceptional mostly because of the reluctance of the government and donor agencies to provide financial support for private land.<sup>85</sup> Those developments were expected to be spearheaded by farm owners themselves. Only a minority number of these farmers were willing to commit their money towards the provision of these services. Where they did, the commitment was mostly half hearted resulting in rudimentary and poorly put out facilities.

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<sup>81</sup> Amanor - Wilks, *In Search of Hope for Zimbabwe's Farm workers*, p. 29.

<sup>82</sup> Zimbabwe Tobacco, *Journal of Zimbabwe Tobacco industry*, Vol. 6, No. 8, 1997, p. 17.

<sup>83</sup> Auret, *From Bus stop to Farm Village: The Farm Worker Programme in Zimbabwe*, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *The Herald*, 30 September 1981.



The provision of proper Health facilities was also another long neglected area that faced the farm workers in this period. *Planning for Equity in Health* recognised the high levels of morbidity in the farming areas and their administrative isolation from emergent district structures, while the later *Health for All Action Plan* emphasised the need to incorporate agricultural workers in industrial health legislation and facilities.<sup>86</sup> However, without a central policy on social services in the commercial farming areas, resource allocation tended to be directed towards the peasant sector where political demands were strongly voiced and where there was no inherent confrontation with powerful private land owners. In addition, the very existence of private land ownership rendered it extremely difficult to reach workers or to allocate land for social services. There were, therefore, no clinics in many farming areas. The hospitals were long distances away and this prevented the farm workers from taking advantage of the governments' free health care system for people earning less than \$150 a month.<sup>87</sup> Community mobilisation was also difficult in areas where workers had no tenure and because donors were naturally reluctant to contribute to schemes on private property. District health teams also remained relatively uninvolved in farming communities after independence.<sup>88</sup> Studies undertaken in Mashonaland Central in 1981 showed that health among some farm worker communities in that province was amongst the poorest in the country and included high rates of malnutrition and poor access to health facilities.<sup>89</sup>

#### **4. Housing, General Living and Working Conditions**

Loewenson and Amanor have noted that besides the overall trend of poor living conditions faced by farm labourers they had limited access to resources like food, health and sanitation facilities and housing.<sup>90</sup> Surveys and visual evidence of many farm compounds shows that real

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<sup>86</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 109.

<sup>87</sup> *The Herald*, 20 August 1980.

<sup>88</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 109.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*; Amanor, *In search of Hope for Zimbabwe's Farm Worker*.

changes in the workers living environments were not made in post-colonial Zimbabwe.<sup>91</sup> Although there were notable exceptions, the agricultural sector generally lagged behind commerce and industry in providing descent accommodation. It is important to note that housing had its own dynamics on the farms with houses being allocated according to status and in that case best type of accommodation was mainly offered to the managerial employees.

Despite protracted government criticism of housing conditions on commercial farms in the 1980s and early 1990s, nothing much was done with a view to improving these deplorable conditions. Simon Mazorodze, the then Minister of Health, addressing farm workers in Bindura in October 1981 pointed to the fact that “whites occupied splendid homes on a grand scale seldom seen elsewhere, while the farm workers were provided with dingy dark hovels without any consideration given to comfort.”<sup>92</sup> He further observed that basic things like cooking facilities were “either absent or minimal, baths, showers and proper toilet facilities [were] unheard of.” Not only this, but workers had to “live in grossly overcrowded conditions.”<sup>93</sup> Tendai Mutasa recalls how he used to live in a small hut that he had to crawl to get into.<sup>94</sup> The then CFU President, Jim Sinclair, was quoted in *The Herald* of 7 June 1982 arguing that, transport problems, foreign exchange drawbacks, minimum wage increases, poor weather and financial problems made the provision of adequate houses for workers a great and costly task for the individual farmer.<sup>95</sup> In 1986, *The Herald* of 12 September reported government Minister, Moven Mahachi, saying; “government would soon compel commercial farmers to rebuild descent houses for their workers.”<sup>96</sup> As late as 1988, *The Herald* of 11 September reported that farm compounds resembled squatter camps with no sanitary facilities.<sup>97</sup> *The Daily Gazette* of 18 May 1993 reported that, The Zimbabwe Tobacco Association (ZTA) had urged the government to offer tax incentives and long term financing at low interest rates to commercial farmers to build houses for their workers. ZTA President,

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<sup>91</sup> *Tobacco News, Zimbabwe’s Independent Tobacco Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 12, 1997, p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> *The Herald*, 1 October 1981.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Tendai Mutasa, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>95</sup> *The Herald*, 7 June 1982.

<sup>96</sup> *The Herald*, 12 September 1986.

<sup>97</sup> *The Herald*, 11 September 1988.

Ian Alcock, was reported saying that many farmers had accepted a government challenge to provide decent accommodation for workers, but were hampered by financial constraints.<sup>98</sup>

An ALB countrywide study in 1997 noted that this problem of poor housing was more acute in the tobacco industry.<sup>99</sup> This was especially made worse because, unlike other labour conditions at independence, housing remained a subject of employers' paternalism and tobacco employ more people because of their labour intensive operations. Moreover, unlike other labour conditions at independence, housing remained unlegislated for. The minimum standards which were recommended by the Ministry of Health were not widely implemented because most of the farm workers continued to live in poorly ventilated and constructed huts which were generally unfit for decent human habitation.

Workers on most farms lived in shameful shacks as there was just a handful of farmers who tried to provide their workers with proper accommodation. In these slums, many of which were without ablution blocks, farm workers were cramped together with serious disregard of privacy among and between families.<sup>100</sup> Interestingly, farmers continued to get support from politicians in their argument not to provide accommodation for their workers. Mr Kona, a ZANU PF Member of Parliament in Midlands, argued that it was wrong to expect commercial farmers to provide educational and health facilities. For him, farms were the same as factories in urban areas where provision for housing, health care and schooling was provided by the government.<sup>101</sup> Thus, in most farming areas, workers continued to live in squalor in farm compounds while the master was "perched on a hill in his house in absolute luxury."<sup>102</sup> The Department of Labour had no legal responsibility to inspect working conditions on the farms. The issue of protective clothing, social security and health also lagged behind in the agro industry. The Collective Bargaining Agreement of 1992 had a provision of protective clothing to agricultural workers but however it had a glaring loophole because it did not make provision of protective clothing mandatory to seasonal workers. This meant that seasonal workers and children were left unprotected not only by protective clothing but even by

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<sup>98</sup> *The Daily Gazette*, 18 May 1993.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *The Herald*, 20 August 1980.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *The Herald*, 30 October 1994.

legislation. This left workers exposed to all sorts of dangers associated with farm work. The *Sunday Mail* of 1996 reported that, in Mashonaland Central, where mostly crops like tobacco, cotton, paprika, citrus fruits and horticultural products are grown, farm workers suffered from skin diseases, chest pains and miscarriages due to chemicals inhaled while spraying.<sup>103</sup> Workers did their task without any protective clothing like gas masks, except their torn overalls and pairs of gumboots sometimes. Loewenson describes the presence of “emaciated workers, dressed in torn overalls, plagued by parasitic diseases and living in squalid housing”.<sup>104</sup> This did not tally with visible signs of efficient production of that time. For example, before the FTLR, in Matepatepa most farms used to be lined up with precise rows of green tobacco.

The deplorable state of the farm workers prompted some NGOs to take steps to assist the farm workers in the late 1990s. An example of this was a programme coordinated by Save the Children UK, which was aimed at improving the deplorable conditions under which most farm children had been brought up. The programme saw the establishment of pre-schools on farms and the building of conventional houses and low cost Blair toilets for farm workers in Christon Bank, Mvurwi, Concession and Bindura.<sup>105</sup> The whole scheme was aimed at protecting the children from diseases because there were a lot of instances where mothers took their children to the fields where they were exposed to insecticides and dust which were detrimental to their health.<sup>106</sup> However, such programmes were not enough to solve the problems that farm workers generally faced. In fact what is intriguing is, even though the government tried to come up with measures which could change farm workers conditions after 1980 in reality there is nothing to show for it.

As most farms are located outside urban areas, the provision of recreational facilities like football pitches and beer is an important factor in ameliorating the living environments. In the post-colonial period, farmers actively provided the employee with recreational services and facilities. Revi Simango who started working at Thompsons farm in the late 1980s said,

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<sup>103</sup> *The Sunday Mail*, 7 July 1996.

<sup>104</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. ix.

<sup>105</sup> *The Herald*, 30 October 1994.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

“Our boss supported us in sports through the establishment of football pitches, provision of footballs, transport and uniforms”<sup>107</sup> Some also maintained, how the white farmers supported their cultural *nyau* dances and how sometimes he invited *nyau* dancers from other farms for competition.<sup>108</sup> Recreational services were necessary. Clarke argued that, the low income and insulated conditions of life in farm compounds lead to a degree of boredom and alienation among the workers.<sup>109</sup> The provision of beerhalls, which are a prominent feature on farms, helped also in reliving those who could afford to buy beer. The beer hall also provided an important social gathering, where workers could discuss work place issues in the absence of the watchful eye of management.

### **Worker Consciousness**

Despite upheavals in the Agro –industry in the early 1980’s and peaceful demonstrations in 1995 over wage increases, some analysts held the notion that farm workers were a voiceless and passive group. Clearly this was a misconception as the 1997 countrywide strike by farm workers proved.<sup>110</sup> In fact farm workers were not always inactive as they seem to be presented. Sometimes there were some who resisted to oppression and they employed different forms of resistance that ranged from go-slows, thefts, and absenteeism and writing anonymous letters. For instance, it was not easy for farm workers to terminate their contracts, especially in cases where employers did not want to release them so they could simply run away. In Matepatepa, it is difficult to quantify desertions before the FTLR but this form of labour resistance is well known and did occur. Most desertions were motivated by objectionable working and living conditions and sometimes it was due to attraction of better conditions elsewhere. Frank Simao, a farm worker since 1975, said; “In 1983 I ran away from

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<sup>107</sup> Interview with Revi Smango, Thompsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>108</sup> These dances provided a form of entertainment in farms and they also helped to preserve their identity. For an insightful discussion about *nyau* dances see A. Daimon, “Migrant Chewa Identities and their Constructions through *Gule Wamkuku/Nyau* dances in Zimbabwe.” Paper presented at a Conference: Society, State and Identity in African History, Addis Ababa, 22-24 May 2007.

<sup>109</sup> Clarke, *Agricultural and Plantation workers in Rhodesia*, p. 129.

<sup>110</sup> Rutherford, *Working on the Margins* discusses these strikes and calls them wild cat strikes. These strikes can be best appreciated in a wider context of the 1997 strikes that rocked Zimbabwe were a majority of the participants in that strike were at the bottom of the wage ladder. See; Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and Amani Trust, *A consolidated report on the food riots, 19-23 January 1998*, Harare: The Forum and Amani Trust, 1998.

Sydney farm because of unbearable working conditions.”<sup>111</sup> However it is important to note that, desertions did not occur as a group or collective occurrence but occurred on individual basis and sometimes in rare small groups.

Absenteeism was also common mostly pronounced after pay day or sometimes some workers were just not willing to go to work for different reasons. However, absenteeism attracted various forms of reaction from farmers. In some cases it resulted in pay deduction or even dismissal.<sup>112</sup> Besides absenteeism some workers resorted to theft as a form of resistance against the exploitative labour regime. Robert Siweto recalls how he used to steal bags of uncured tobacco for sell in the neighbouring Madziwa rural community because he “wanted to punish the white men for treating [them] badly.”<sup>113</sup> Songs were also sung sometimes to show resentment and anger. While songs were used to boost the morale of workers especially when they were planting, grading and reaping tobacco, they were also used to depict workers suffering. Muchaneta Zhuwawu said; “during Rotchford we used to sing as a way of expressing anger especially when the foremen dismissed us late”.<sup>114</sup> Some workers sometimes wrote anonymous letters to organisations like GAPWUZ in order to voice their grievances because in most cases they had no platform to do so and lived in perpetual fear of victimisation. In some instances farm labourers used passive resistance and non-cooperation as a way of resistance against their employers. As Phimister puts it across, “side by side with ordinary loafing and mindless labour went deliberate wastefulness, slow-downs, feigned illness, self-inflicted injuries, and the well-known abuse of livestock and equipment.”<sup>115</sup> These forms of resistances help to dispel the notion that farm workers were passive victims of labour regime. Even later their participation during the FTLRP as it will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, dispels the notion of helpless victims who lacked agency.

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<sup>111</sup> Interview with Frank Simao, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Interview with Revi Smango, Thompsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Robert Siweto, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Muchaneta Zhuwawu, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>115</sup> I. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe 1890-1948: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle*, London: Longman, 1988, p. 88.

## 5. “Remembering the Good old days.” Narratives from Farm Workers in Matepatepa

Despite the general negative picture, there were some successes where either committees or the farm workers themselves were able to negotiate improvements such as reduction of working hours, the introduction of overtime pay, the allocation of land on which farm workers could grow crops such as maize, better living conditions and access to literacy classes. Pius Mutsvangwa, a farm worker since 1985, narrated how he used to work for eight hours a day from Monday to Saturday and how they were paid overtime money for working on Sunday. As a driver Pius recalls how he used to earn better than other farm workers “but now everyone get the same amount of \$3 a day.” He further reminisces how “the whites used to help us with basic commodities.” He does remember though that the “work was painful but we could get our salaries in return and on time and we could develop our lives.”<sup>116</sup> It should, however, be noted that Pius’s recollection of his working and living conditions, like many of the farm workers used in this study before the FTLR was hugely informed and influenced by the conditions they were now living and working under.

Most of the farm workers tend to compare how they survived then and how they were surviving in the present. Their recollections, therefore, may not necessarily be a true reflection of how they felt about their conditions then but rather a reflection of how they feel about their conditions now. An example of that is Phiri Jerome, who was born in 1935 and of Malawian descent. He was a foreman under his former employer whom he describes in very glowing terms. For Jerome, “the white farmer used to take care of the elderly but our new master doesn’t do anything for us, the only assistance we get is the right to stay on his land and my fear is that one day he will evict us.”<sup>117</sup> For Jerome, his recollection of his living and working standards are hugely influenced by his new conditions under his new master. Jerome cites “a lot of change because during Sydney I was allocated land ( one acre) for subsistence farming but when the black farmers came that land was taken and we have nowhere to plant crops for food consumption.” He describes a relationship with his former boss, which was “good as we used to receive food and salaries on time. We lived in peace and he was so caring.

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Pius Mutsvangwa, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Phiri Jerome, Sydney Farm, 12 September 2014.

Now we don't even know when we get paid."<sup>118</sup> Thus again, in as much as Jerome's description of the conditions and relationship with his former boss is useful in illuminating the conditions that existed during that time, his recollection of them is largely influenced and to some extent tainted by his feelings towards and relationship with his current employer.

Other farmers responded by letting their employees take over the management of beer sales on farms, using the revenue to provide welfare services, for payment of health workers and ambulance services, as well as fund recreational activities. Pedro Samaili, a farm worker of Mozambican descent born in 1972, recalls how the beer hall under his former boss, Crowhill, was run by the workers with the overall management of the finances from it being overseen by the farm manager.<sup>119</sup> The money was used for things like financing the farm football team and netball teams which required transport and refreshment during matches. It was also used for the transportation of sick workers to Bindura hospital.<sup>120</sup>

Three other farm workers also remember their relationship with Rosedale. Munyaradzi Bere has a somewhat love hate recollection of his relationship with him and explains how his former boss; "was good but whites only wanted us to work for them and they did not care about us." For Munyaradzi, what was tolerable about Rosedale was that he "used to pay us our money and sometimes gave us bonuses."<sup>121</sup> Collin Phiri another farm worker who worked for Rosedale for 15 years recalls how before the FTLRP he used to "work for eight hours per day from Monday to Saturday" and "how the whites used to help us with basic commodities."<sup>122</sup> For him, "the whites were so caring than these black people because sometimes we go for 10 months without pay. Sometimes we receive it, but sometimes we don't."<sup>123</sup> Again, Collin's narrative is heavily influenced by his comparison of the old with his new conditions. Like Collin, Isaac Masvosva also remembers how they "used to work for designated hours during Rosedale but now we just work."<sup>124</sup> Isaac remembers Rosedale fondly and recollects how workers had a good relationship with him and how he used to send

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Pedro Samaili, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Munyaradzi Bere, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Collin Phiri, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Isaac Masvosva, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.



workers for training skills courses which they then later used for farm operations. For Isaac, “We used to have a lot of advantages and given an option I would prefer a white master. They are not the same. We used to be given protective clothes, a tour to the hotel and the living standards were much better, we used to get our bonuses.”<sup>125</sup>

Muchaneta Zhuwawu, of Rotchford Farm, who started to work as a farm worker at Crowhill Farm adjacent to Rotchford farm in 1974, narrates how she used to work in the fields because during that time women were not part of the work force. She explains the salary disparities between men and women which were common in the colonial period as the “men earned more than us.”<sup>126</sup> She, however, describes how they were given food items like peanuts, beans and maize on top of the wages. She has fond memories of the old Rotchford farm and describes how they “lived in peace but with our new masters we live in pain because we work for nothing or sometimes we receive it after four months or sometimes we are given small pieces of land for a season as a payment.”<sup>127</sup> Magret Chumbu who was born in 1940 and of Mozambican descent explains why she was not a permanent worker before the land reform because “we worked depending on the work available and sometimes I would help my husband with his task work.”<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, Sylvia who was born at Rotchford farm explains how she became permanently employed at Crowhill farm because the “men were too expensive for baas.”<sup>129</sup> She further explains how they used to be given basic commodities from the white master’s shop but “now even those with tuck shops are not willing to give us on credit because they know we don’t receive payments.”<sup>130</sup>

Beauty Kampali of Malawian descent who works at Helensvale farm which is still under its original white farmer recalls, also recalls how they used to get salary increments and bonuses before the land reform and how their boss stopped all these perks after the reform.<sup>131</sup>

Angeline Bhero also explains how she used to work as a contract worker and how her former employer, Thomsons, was very cruel before independence and how he later changed and

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Muchaneta Zhuwawu, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Magret Chumbu, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Sylvia Mutero, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Beauty Kampali, Helensvale Farm, 18 September 2014.

became better. Most importantly, she recalls how their “new master is worse.” Angeline was never employed as a full time employee for the more than 15 years and she only worked as a contract worker but worked throughout the year as work was always available.<sup>132</sup> Lorraine Tembo started working in 1985, but only usually used to work during the rainy season when the farm was busy. She also recalls how she used to get free seed and fertilizer packs to “grow our own crops, after the harvest we could keep some for food consumption and we used to sell the extra to our white masters. The farmer bought the maize for the same amount offered by Grain Marketing Board (GMB)”<sup>133</sup>

Two important issues emerge from the narratives of these farm workers. The first is the position of women on the farms. Women were used by the farmers as alternative cheap, non-permanent labour when farmers failed to pay what they considered expensive male labour. Traditionally, female and non-permanent labour have held the weakest positions in any collective bargaining situation, and this was the case in independent Zimbabwe where they barely participated in workers committees. Some non-permanent workers also reported feeling actively ostracised by the permanent workers. In general, therefore, the weak negotiating position of non-permanent labour and the lack of legal backing for their demands left them isolated and reduced to drawing on their own individual and meagre resources.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, the recollection by the farm workers of the conditions on farms before the FTLRP was heavily influenced and contaminated by the conditions most of the farm workers presently find themselves in under their new employers. There is always a tendency to compare their conditions then and what their situation is like now. However, this is not to downplay the importance or authenticity of their narratives as they are very useful in as much as they vividly describe the conditions that prevailed on the farms then. Again, physical remains of the comforts that some of the workers describe in their narratives still exist on some of the farms though now either neglected or completely destroyed. Most of the farm still bear the remains of recreational facilities like football and netball fields, beer halls, small shops and schools.

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<sup>132</sup> Interview with Angeline Bhero, Thompsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Lorraine Tembo, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>134</sup> Loewenson, *Modern Plantation Agriculture: Cooperate Wealth and Labour Squalor*, p. 91.

## Conclusion

This chapter established the fact that independence produced some changes in the political status of the poor, including the farm workers. It argued that in as much as certain important rights were guaranteed, such as to vote in parliament and unionise, the right to full employment and a living wage, in general, however, farm workers never benefitted from the assurance of such rights.<sup>135</sup> They continued to suffer from poor living and social conditions. The government, only urged farmers to deal with poor labour relations but they were not required to do so by law.<sup>136</sup> Most of the farm workers committees were not part of the trade unions and this undermined the collective strength of the committees. Many farmers continued to be hostile towards unionisation.<sup>137</sup>

The chapter also revealed how, after independence, farmers still wielded great control over their workers. A good example that demonstrates this dependency is a speech, in 1991, by Mr Don Chipango, a Member of Parliament for Harare West who told parliament that farm workers had not yet benefitted from the independence of the country as they were still wholly depended on the white farmer.<sup>138</sup> The director of Save the Children Fund, Mr Mclvor, was quoted by Auret saying that his extensive experience of working with farm communities had showed him that despite the years that had gone by, farm workers still remained “forgotten people.”<sup>139</sup> Neglected by government and farm owners alike who both saw the social welfare of workers as the other’s responsibility, farm worker communities manifested some of the worst health, education, nutrition, and housing and sanitation statistics in the country.

The chapter traced how, as a result of poverty, farm workers were and still are too poorly organised to understand, let alone defy the rudiments of the system that deprives them.<sup>140</sup> It outlined how little socio-political developments were targeted at this group by either government or the ruling party. It also examines how even though after independence they

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* p. 90.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>138</sup> *The Herald*, 11 May 1991.

<sup>139</sup> Auret, *From bus stop to Farm Village: The Farm Worker Programme in Zimbabwe*, p. 23.

<sup>140</sup> Tandon, “Trade Unions and Labour in the agricultural sector In Zimbabwe”, p. 247.

were now legally recognised as workers and represented by a trade union in a collective bargaining, still the trade unions failed to be part of farm's life. The chapter also highlighted how economic reform impacted negatively on the welfare of the Zimbabwean majority, and how it effectively reversed most of the gains made in the first decade of independence with respect of the majority's access to educational and health services, and how that situation was even worse for farm workers. The chapter argued that most of the reform measures like statutory minimum wage adjustments and others which were aimed at alleviating the most severe forms of oppression of the colonial period were adversely undermined by changes in the political economy of Zimbabwe. It was such conditions, which increased the vulnerability of farm workers during and after the FTLR, issues which will be examined in chapter three and four.

## **Chapter Three: “It was not easy”. Farm Workers during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme**

### **Introduction**

This chapter examines the plight of farm workers during the FTLR. It looks at how the farm workers fared during the process and how they dealt with the new conditions being introduced. The FTLR was a difficult period for a majority of farm workers because of the violence and displacement characteristics associated with it. The chapter thus, analyses the period in the context of its violent and destabilising nature. It argues that nearly all perpetrators of the violence were connected to the state, either directly or indirectly. The chapter is guided by three key issues, namely, violence and farm workers’ role in it, the issue of farm workers’ compensation, their displacement and disruption of farm workers’ livelihoods, all of which were central to the unfolding of the land Reform exercise.

### **Violence and Farm workers: Participants and Victims in the “invasions”**

Violence was a major characteristic of the FTLR and it was directed mostly at farmers and farm workers. In Matepatepa, as elsewhere in Zimbabwe, farm workers were on the receiving end of this violence and most respondents maintained that “war vets” were the main perpetrators of violent acts against them and their employers during *jambanja*.<sup>1</sup> It is also very interesting to note that 15 percent of the farm workers interviewed in the study reported that some farm workers were involved in committing violations against their fellow workers. This minority, often tempted by promises of personal gain, acted violently against their employers and fellow workers.<sup>2</sup> The land occupations and the associated violence not only made farm workers visible in the land reform question, but also placed issues of their identity, interests and capacities at the centre of political debate in Zimbabwe and beyond.<sup>3</sup> Evidence of farm workers opposition to land reform was interpreted to signify that farm workers are

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<sup>1</sup> The term war vet sometimes is going to appear in quotes because within this group they were some who were not and some were even young to be called war veterans but conveniently appropriated use of the term. *Jambanja* is a local street language which means violent chaos and was used to describe the farm occupations.

<sup>2</sup> GAPWUZ, *If something is wrong: The invisible suffering of farm workers due to Land Reform*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2010, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Rutherford, “Commercial Farm workers and the Politics of Displacement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, Liberation and Democracy”, p. 627.

so victimised and oppressed that they cannot think or act for themselves. However, according to research conducted by Rutherford in Hurungwe, farm workers were dissatisfied with the great inequalities between them and farmers in relation to resources and opportunities and surprisingly, there are reports of some farm workers joining war veterans in occupying land and attacking farmers and fellow workers.<sup>4</sup> It has been noted in several NGOs publications and in independent media that farm workers were victims of land occupations, as they lost their jobs or were coerced into the land occupations. Farm workers were useful for the war veterans as they had a good knowledge of both the farms and white farmers and farm workers were not always victims, but were at times willing participants in assisting the land occupiers.<sup>5</sup>

Violence manifested itself in many different forms. One of the most popular forms was when farm workers were forced to join or were coerced to buy ZANU PF cards and to attend ZANU PF political meetings. At these meetings, ominous threats of disappearance were repeatedly given. Some workers received death threats and some were forced to watch beatings of fellow workers who were accused of all sorts of transgressions.<sup>6</sup> At such meetings, farm workers were forced to sing songs in support of ZANU PF, dance, chant slogans and affirm their loyalty to the party. In most instances, failure to attend the meetings would result in severe punishment. Sometimes workers were forced to beat each other to demonstrate their loyalty to ZANU PF. Rape occurred but it was underreported because of the stigma attached to it.<sup>7</sup> The Human Rights Report of 2000 reported six cases of rape of farm labourers' families in Mashonaland Central.<sup>8</sup> Muchaneta Zhuwawu at Rotchford Farm in Matepatepa recalls how war vets used to force them to cook for them and how they could sometimes call them to their bases without their husbands' consent. She recalls how youths "would force us to sleep with them." For Muchaneta, "we couldn't deny them because they were threatening to kill us or our husbands." Unfortunately, for Muchaneta; "after all the abuse my house and property was burnt to ashes because my husband was suspected to be an MDC supporter."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> P. Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, London: Zed books, 2012, p. 28

<sup>6</sup> GAPWUZ, *If something is wrong*, p. 21

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Zimbabwe Human Right NGO Forum, *The Unleashing of Violence: A report on Political Violence in Zimbabwe, Update to 26 May 2000*, Harare: The Forum, 2000, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Muchaneta Zhuwawu, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

A farm worker at Blue Ridge farm in Matepatepa recalls: "During *jambanja* I stopped working till the farm was handed over to the blacks. *Jambanja* was very difficult for us, we were intimidated."<sup>10</sup> Another farm worker remembered sadly that his "house at the farm was burnt" and he had to seek "a place for [his] kids to stay." The farm worker could not do anything because all his "belongings were gutted by fire." This farm worker's crime was "voting for the MDC" and because of this accusation, the farm worker and his colleagues "lost blankets, clothes maize, plates, containers, sunflower seed and peanuts."<sup>11</sup> Peter Choto who during the FTLR was at Byron farm, in Matepatepa, remembers how "the land invaders lived in "bases" and they were intolerable and some workers were assaulted at these bases." He describes how he was "beaten together with the others because they suspected [us] to be sell-outs and [we] were trying to undermine the programme."<sup>12</sup>

One farm worker had his kitchen "burnt and some windows of [his] house were smashed."

The following is a vivid description of his experience:

Several of my items went missing, they were stolen, my sofas and other things which were in the kitchen were burnt, my clothes and my shoes were burnt. They did this because they were saying that we were refusing to vacate the farm so we were supporting the whites. So they decided to burn down our things on fire. In some cases there were quite number of people who were injured because some of them were burnt, those who sleep in the kitchens were burnt. The police were called but they used to come after the perpetrators of violence had already left the scene. Sometimes they used to come after two or three days after a case has been reported to them. They were not of help because they just used to enquire about what had taken place and they would be told that there were houses which were burnt down. They would then enquire about their whereabouts and we would tell them that there were at the base. They would go to the base but we never heard that anything happened to the perpetrators because they would just remain there living at the base.<sup>13</sup>

Other farm workers described how the "war veterans" would make them attend meetings every night were they were made to sing liberation songs. Jacob recalls how; "they would also instruct us not to go to work the next day. They were saying that it was our fault that the whites had not vacated the farms because we were still working for them."<sup>14</sup> Lovemore

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with Mairos Phiri, Blue Ridge Farm, 1 October 2014.

<sup>11</sup> GAPWUZ, *If something is wrong*, p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Peter Choto, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>13</sup> GAPWUZ, *If Something is Wrong*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Jacob Phiri, McMillan Farm, 17 October 2014.

Zimuto who was born in 1946 recalls how they were “threatened and intimidated by youths,” and how the whites could not help them because they “were also victims of violence.”<sup>15</sup>

Shylet Savanhu remembers how life was harsh during “jambanja,” when “the war vets could destroy our gardens with *murungu* cattle. They were saying that it was a punishment for supporting our boss. That was the biggest punishment because we relied on our vegetables for our everyday meals.” She also recalls how they used to sleep in the forest because “war vets” sometimes burnt the houses when we were asleep or sometimes they could come and beat us in the middle of the night.”<sup>16</sup> Charles Chambe, of Malawian descent remembers how during the FTLRP he was beaten together with his wife in front of their three children because they were suspected to be MDC supporters. They were also accused of helping other farm workers to attack war veterans in the neighbouring farm (Crowhill). Interestingly, during the interview with Charles, he agreed that he had indeed participated in the beating of the war veterans because “we wanted to protect him [the farmer], he was a nice man.”<sup>17</sup>

Five Samaita from Crowhill Farm also remembers how life was bitter under *jambanja*. “We used to sleep in the forest because we were afraid of war vets and youths. We lost most of our property because our houses were burnt and some war vets sometimes could take all nice things from us, like my radio which was taken by one of the youths.” He recalls how “some people on this farm were beaten to death in front of everyone; even small children. The invaders were so heartless.”<sup>18</sup> This was so traumatic for small children.

The unfortunate thing about the plight of the farm workers during the FTLR was that, their suffering largely went undocumented save for a few reports from the CFU and *The Farmer* magazine, which unfortunately, at this time were dismissed and discredited as bent on a regime change agenda. They also did not enjoy a sizeable circulation. The International media focused on pictures of white farmers being evicted, attacked or murdered and farm workers were barely mentioned. Thus it is very difficult to try and quantify the number of farm workers

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Lovemore Zimuto, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Shylet Savanhu, Thompsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Charles Chambe, McMillan Farm, 17 September 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Five Samaita, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.



who bore the brunt of the violence of the FTLRP. According to Pilosof, 11 white farmers were killed between 2000 and 2004, but over the same period, hundreds of farm workers were killed by government forces.<sup>19</sup> GAPWUZ, also contends that for every white farmer, there were over a hundred workers who suffered greater violence and loss than their employers did.<sup>20</sup> A high profile GAPWUZ official described the harrowing experiences of farm workers, where they were tortured, beaten assaulted and burnt. He said; “the days were difficult and when we got into the field we were not sure if we could come back home alive. The war veterans and youths were so harsh. I still recall visiting some farm labourers at Parirenyatwa hospital who were in so much pain and had suffered bad injuries which you could not look at twice.”<sup>21</sup> On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2000 in Matepatepa at Condwelani Farm, eight labourers were assaulted and two were hospitalised.<sup>22</sup> Between 11 and 13 April, in Mashonaland, they were four separate reports of assault of workers on commercial farms and two workers were reportedly held hostage.<sup>23</sup> Of importance to note is the fact that most of the human rights violations involving farm labour were restricted to Mashonaland province, where the largest labour force was found.

The plight of farm workers was also much debated in parliament between the MDC and ZANU PF parliamentarians. MDC legislators argued that ZANU PF officials were not sincere in their calls for protection of farm workers against violence since they were the ones responsible for the violence in the first place. Tichaona Munyanyi of Mbare East, and MDC legislator, in response to a motion moved by Webster Shamhu of ZANU PF concerning the plight of farm workers argued that some ZANU PF members and the “so –called war veterans [were] raping kids in the farms.” He claimed that ZANU pf was giving “war veterans’ money to kill and torture farm workers.”<sup>24</sup> Justin Mutendadzamera, of the MDC also claimed that, they were “quite a number of war veterans who are squatting in farms who are intimidating farm workers and preventing the people who want to see their relatives in farms on grounds that

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<sup>19</sup> Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being*, p. 138.

<sup>20</sup> GAPWUZ, *If Something is Wrong*, p. 36; GAPWUZ Reports, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with a GAPWUZ official, Harare, 29 October 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Zimbabwe Human Right NGO Forum, *The Unleashing of Violence: A report on Political Violence in Zimbabwe, Update to 26 May 2000*, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 30 August 2000, Col. 657- 658, Tichaona Munyanyi.

they are MDC people.”<sup>25</sup> Timothy Mukahlera, Tichaona Munyanyi, Tafadzwa Musekiwa and Thokhozani Khupe all of the MDC, emphasised their disappointment about the delay in discussing the plight of farm workers. To quote Khupe: “I am very much surprised to hear an honourable member standing up to raise such concerns as the plight of farm workers at this day and age because these are the same farm workers who have been on those farms for the past 20 years.”<sup>26</sup> Mukanhlera, was of the belief that the whole “thing is a circus” and the reason why it was being raised at that time in parliament was because someone was “trying to get votes from the farm workers.” For him, no one was sympathetic to farm workers because “no one had lifted a finger when their houses were burning.”<sup>27</sup> Michel Theodore Auret, again of the MDC also alleged during the parliamentary session that; “the war veterans were hired to destroy and burn houses, to murder, rape, torture and abduct these farm workers.”<sup>28</sup> Thus almost all the motions moved in 2000 concerning the plight of farm workers were taken with a lot of contempt because to quote Fidelis Mhashu of the MDC, “the motion is problematic because the mover of the motion who happens to be ZANU PF is aware of a re- run of parliamentary, council elections and presidential elections ahead.” For him, “they were trying to capitalise on this so as to get support.” He interpreted this as “a right motion but from a wrong person who [was] presenting himself as a saviour of farm workers when in the first place he was the perpetrator of farm worker’s suffering.”<sup>29</sup> The politicisation of the plight of the farm workers, therefore, meant that not enough attention was given to their situation, farm workers were only needed for political reasons by both parties given their numerical value during elections.

Many more farm workers on commercial farms were victims of violence during land occupations than white farm owners. Dozens of farm workers were killed as farms were used as bases for war veterans and ZANU-PF militia to intimidate suspected opposition supporters in neighbouring communal areas and the farms. In many cases the police failed to take action against the perpetrators of violent crimes and in some cases actively assisted illegal actions.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, col. 661, Justine Mutemadzamera.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, col. 654, Thokhozani Khupe.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, Col. 663, Timothy Mkanhlera.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 21 September 2000, Col. 1843, Michael Auret.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, Col. 1847.

<sup>30</sup> To understand how government security forces like police, CIO and army participated as perpetrators of violence against farm workers see, Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and the Justice for Agriculture Trust

A total of 53,022 people – farmers, farm workers and their families were identified by a survey conducted by JAG as having experienced at least one human rights violation. Many experienced multiple abuses. These abuses included assaults, torture, being held hostage, unlawful detention and death threats.<sup>31</sup>

According to Mugabe, FTLRP was intended to assist the resettlement of landless peasants as promised during the liberation struggle. However, the whole process was controlled by ZANU PF committees and it soon became evident that the main beneficiaries were party officials, war veterans, card carrying members, many of whom had no background in farming.<sup>32</sup> Marongwe and Zamuchiya and Mkodzongi stress the patronage and party political bias on land allocation in different areas.<sup>33</sup> As such, farm workers did not feature in the hierarchy of intended beneficiaries and if they did, they were right at the bottom of it. In some instances where they benefited due to showing loyalty to ZANU PF, they were given small pieces of land at the peripheries of farms where their fields act as a buffer against wild animals like wild pigs.<sup>34</sup> GAPWUZ statistics shows that less than 1 percent of farm workers were allocated land. They lost out on an opportunity to obtain land because they were regarded as sell-outs. Farm workers were treated as similar to their white employers, who were outside the body politic and thus should be denied benefitting from land distribution.<sup>35</sup> However, even though farm

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[JAG] in Zimbabwe *“Adding Insult to injury. A Preliminary Report on Human Rights Violations on Commercial Farms, 2000 to 2005”*, Harare: Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and the Justice for Agriculture Trust [JAG] in Zimbabwe, 2007; Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, *Are They Accountable? Examining alleged violators and their violations pre and post Presidential Election March 2002*, Harare: Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, 2002; Justice for Agriculture Trust [JAG] in Zimbabwe, *Reckless Tragedy: Irreversible? A Survey of Gross Human Rights Violations and Losses Suffered by Commercial Farmers and Farm Workers in Zimbabwe from 2000- 2008*, Harare: Justice for Agriculture Trust [JAG] in Zimbabwe, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum and the Justice for Agriculture Trust [JAG] in Zimbabwe *“Adding Insult to injury. A Preliminary Report on Human Rights Violations on Commercial Farms, 2000 to 2005”*, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> M. Meredith, *Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder and Tyranny in Zimbabwe*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2002, p. 195.

<sup>33</sup> N. Marongwe, *Interrogating Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform and Resettlement Programme: A focus on beneficiary selection*, Phd Thesis, University of Western Cape, 2008; P. Zamuchiya, *A Synopsis of Land and Agrarian Change in Chipinge District Zimbabwe* in L. Cliffe (*et al*) *Outcomes of Post 2000 Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, London: Routledge, 2013; G. Mkodzongi, *“Fast Tracking Land Reform and Rural Livelihoods in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe: Opportunities and Constraints, 2000- 2013.”* Phd Thesis, University Of Edinburgh, 2012; F. Buka, *A Preliminary Audit Report of Land Reform Programme*, Harare: Government Printers, 2002. it should however be noted that there is another school of thought led by Ian Scoones together with other Zimbabwean scholars like Blasio Mavedzenge, Felix Murimbarimba, Jacob Mahenehene and Chrispen Sukume who disagree with this argument.

<sup>34</sup> This is a general feeling expressed by some farm workers who have been beneficiaries of FTLR in Matepatepa.

<sup>35</sup> Amani Trust, *Preliminary report of a survey on internally displaced persons from commercial farms in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Amani Trust, 2002, p. 23.

workers were seen to be outside the favoured ranks as far as benefitting in the land redistribution was concerned, a minority made attempts to be active participants in the process, hoping to receive something in return for their services. Some farm workers deserted their places of employment and joined those invading farm lands. However most workers remained loyal to their jobs and opposed those grabbing the land.

In Matepatepa commercial farming area, only one farm worker benefitted in the A2 scheme at Rosedale farm. Samson Mutero from Mutoko, aged 49 years used to be the senior manager on the farm before the land was taken. He applied for a piece of land and was awarded 147 hectares on that same farm where he used to work.<sup>36</sup> This farm worker was an active ZANU PF member during the FTLR and his house was the “base” where war veterans and youths would come to him for consultation about the activities happening on the farm. He used to submit all the names of people who supported *murungu* or MDC.<sup>37</sup> Kailisha Jerema of Sydney farm recalls how they were “not given pieces of land because they accused us of supporting MDC together with our boss. Moreover we were afraid of our boss because he was still there. In fact we were afraid to betray him.”<sup>38</sup> Henry Chamisa recollects how they were promised land but “were not given anything up to now.” For Henry, “Maybe we were segregated because they thought we were aligned to our white employers. Surprisingly politicians always promised and wrote down our names during elections but after the election they just disappear without giving us any land.”<sup>39</sup> The Farm Workers Action Group highlights an example in Myembi farm in Marondera where only two farm workers out of 28 were allocated land and in Bindura at Retreat Farm, were six farm workers out of 81 benefitted from the programme under A1 scheme. The rest, it claimed were left stranded.<sup>40</sup>

Pedro Samaili, a man of Mozambican descent, remembers how he and the others at “one point assisted youths and war vets in their land grabs but we couldn’t be beneficiaries because

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Samson Mutero, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014. However this is an exceptional case in the area or nationwide because the common phenomena is where farm workers get small acreages which are less than those owned by A1 farmers.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Kailisha Jerome, Sydney Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Henry Chamisa, Jacksons Farm, 24 October 2014.

<sup>40</sup> *The Herald*, 20 August 2000.

we didn't have national identification documents."<sup>41</sup> Workers were experiencing problems in registering under the on-going fast track land redistribution programme because of lack of identification particulars.<sup>42</sup> Most of them were of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian origin and they had lived most of their lives on farms where official documents were never demanded of them. Most of them lost out on any slight opportunity that they may have had of owning a piece of land. Migrant labourers were more vulnerable during the FTLR than other social groups because most of them did not have communal homes to fall back on. Ties with their ancestral homes from which they or their forebears originally came have weakened or become non-existent.<sup>43</sup>

Josphat Kabanga, born in 1935 and of Malawian descent, says that he never attempted to have his own piece of land because he was content with the acre he had under McMillan (his former employer) and he thought that the acre was going to remain his. Unfortunately for Josphat, the acre and the others like him, "during the land reform when the land allocation was done, I and the others were told that we were no longer the owners of those acres but instead those pieces of land were now under the new farmer Mugari."<sup>44</sup> Roberto, from Blue Ridge farm, of Mozambican descent, also says he never attempted to get his own piece of land during "jambanja" because "my one acre which I got from *murungu* was enough."<sup>45</sup> Amon however, suffered the same fate like Josphat above as their "new bosses took [our] small pieces of land." The only thing that Amon was left with was despair because he thought that "land was supposed to be taken from whites not us because we are all blacks."<sup>46</sup> In August, 2000, Ignatius Chombo, the Minister of Local Government, claimed that no one was being discriminated in the resettlement programme and every farm worker was free to be enlisted in the programme with the district council. He gave the assurance that once the farm workers did that they were assured of their own pieces of land.<sup>47</sup> This assurance was, however, not to be fulfilled as a large number of farm workers did not benefit from the programme. During a parliament debate session in August 2000, Trudy Stevenson, of Harare

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Pedro Samaili, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>42</sup> *The Herald*, 29 October 2001.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Josphat Kabanga, McMillan Farm, 17 October 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Roberto Mafigu, Blue Ridge Farm, 1 October 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Amon Chauke, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>47</sup> *The Herald*, 20 August 2000.

North, claimed that she had information that farm workers on seized farms were deliberately not being selected for land allocations.<sup>48</sup>

Sadomba and Helliker have suggested that without the involvement of farm workers the occupations would not have succeeded or at least it would have taken much longer to take over the land.<sup>49</sup> Farm workers, like peasants or war veterans, also organised occupations of other lands.<sup>50</sup> Other participants in the programme disagreed on parcelling land to farm workers because they were of the view that if farm workers got land, there would be not enough for distribution and some viewed workers as a potential source of labour instead of being farmers in their own right. In most cases farm workers did not go to government offices to register their occupation.<sup>51</sup> Some got land unofficially from the war veterans and government did not consider them as legitimate occupiers. Like peasants and war veterans, farm workers during the fast track were also not happy about the final allocation of land. The FTLRP claimed to be facilitating the restructuring of historically based racial inequalities in agrarian formations and relations, but in practise it was highly selective rewarding some and excluding and punishing those perceived to be disloyal to the ruling party.<sup>52</sup> As for Nyamunda, Mugabe's Zimbabwe was parcelled out to Zimbabweans who constitute not a universal but a ZANU PF definition of the term Zimbabweans.<sup>53</sup> Moyo has also argued that the land rights situation of farm workers has been exacerbated by the failure of government since 1980 to recognise them as a special group requiring preferential treatment in land reform programmes. He notes that the FTLRP documents continue to focus on "landless peasants" and "war veterans" as beneficiaries to the exclusion of farm workers.<sup>54</sup> This was not a new

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<sup>48</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 30 August 2000, Col. 1069, Trudy Stevenson.

<sup>49</sup> Sadomba and Helliker, "Transcending Objectifications and Dualisms: Farm Workers and Civil society in Contemporary Zimbabwe", p. 215.

<sup>50</sup> W. Sadomba, "Movements within a Movement: Complexities within the Land Occupations", in S. Moyo, *Contested Terrain: Land Reform and Civil Society in Contemporary Zimbabwe*, Pietermaritzburg: S&S Publishers, 2008, p. 166.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 166 - 167.

<sup>52</sup> A. Hammar, "In the Sovereignty: Displacement and state making in post-independence Zimbabwe", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 2008, pp. 417- 434.

<sup>53</sup> T. Nyamunda, "Did Zimbabweans take Back their Land", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2014, p. 888.

<sup>54</sup> Moyo cited in Chambati and Magaramombe, "The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers", in S. Moyo (etal), *Contested Terrain: Land Reform and Civil Society in Contemporary Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: S&S Publishers, 2008, p. 209.

phenomenon because farm workers have always been neglected from the former land reforms since 1980.

In some instances, farm workers did not get land on the farms as their former employers duped them into believing that the programme would be reversed. In *The Herald* of 18 February 2003, one farm worker was reported as saying: “the farm owners told us not to participate in the land reform exercise saying that the exercise was short lived.”<sup>55</sup> Many farm workers also aligned themselves with, or were mobilised by their employers in order to protect their jobs and future livelihoods. White farmers and their workers clashed with peasants and war veterans as they defended their properties from occupation. The role played by farm workers during occupations to some extent determined how they came to be viewed in local and official discourses.<sup>56</sup> They were labelled as anti-land reform or as MDC supporters. They were seen as a group in society that required ideological reorientation.<sup>57</sup>

Sadomba argues that though some participated in many ways in the nationwide land occupations that exploded in 2000, farm workers remained by far the most disadvantaged group of the land reform outcome. For him, this was due to propaganda and misinformation depicting workers as a homogeneous group who were anti-liberation and anti-reform.<sup>58</sup> Sadomba contends that the claim that farm workers grew so dependent on settler farmers that they could not imagine life after white farmers made them oppose the land occupations and redistribution is a simplistic view of farm workers and does not capture the dynamics and ambiguities of this group during the land reform process.<sup>59</sup> For him, the land movement was a complex phenomenon with various groups competing for space and influence within it. It is, therefore, vital to understand the nature of various actors including farm workers and their agency at given time periods in order to appreciate their contribution and impact on the overall trajectory of the movement.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *The Herald*, 18 February 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Chamabati and Magaramombe, “The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers”, p. 225.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Sadomba and Helliker, “Transcending Objectifications and Dualisms: Farm Workers and Civil society in Contemporary Zimbabwe”, p. 211.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

When analysing the role played by farm workers in land occupations, it is critical to note that Zimbabwe's land occupations were not centrally managed. Because of this, tactics differed from group to group and area to area.<sup>61</sup> In Matepatepa, for example, the land occupiers' tactics differed from one farm to the other and so did their methods of dealing with farm workers. At Rosedale farm, for instance, a farm worker who later became one of the beneficiaries of land in the area, was the one who had the role of coordinating, briefing and organising the land occupiers.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the whole process of taking over the farm was centred on him. He was at the forefront of threatening and victimising fellow workers and the farmer. Crowhill, another farm in Matepatepa, farm workers were mostly at the periphery of activities happening on the farm. A huge division was created between the farm workers and the land occupiers as the occupiers occupied the farm owner's house and the manager's house which were a fair distance from the rest of the farm workers.<sup>63</sup> Communication between the occupiers and the farm workers was through orders and commands issued at night time meetings. Farm workers were punished for any transgression. This happened at the farm house which quickly gained notoriety for such.

Before the FTLRP, workers were mobilised by the white farmers or the MDC against the occupation movement, especially those that had started from 1998 but from mid-2000 there was a general shift to mobilization after land occupiers had failed to penetrate many farms because of resistance from farm workers. As a result, they used education and coercion to mobilise local or resident farm workers to join the occupations. In Mazowe valley and Mvurwi, occupiers were repelled by farm workers and it became clear that they would not win without mobilising agricultural labourers.<sup>64</sup> Pilosof notes that, in some instances the workforce chased away occupiers or settlers, but this tended to take place during the early stages of land occupation as such tactics were abandoned as violence and intimidation against farm workers increased.<sup>65</sup> *The Herald* of 2 September, 2000, reported a case in which 50 farm workers confronted about 25 war veterans who occupied Goulaws Ranch in Nkayi district.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Samson Mutero, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with George Muponda, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>64</sup> Sadomba and Helliker, "Transcending Objectifications and Dualisms: Farm Workers and Civil society in Contemporary Zimbabwe", p. 212.

<sup>65</sup> Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being*, p. 201.



The farm workers and “invading ex-combatants fought a pitched battle for half an hour with knobkerries, axes, hoes and stones.”<sup>66</sup> Another commercial farm in Arcturus (Rudophia farm) was burnt as war vets clashed with farm workers who had been set up by their white employers to “fight the former fighters who are reclaiming their land.”<sup>67</sup> Timson Banda of Harrolds farm recalls how they mobilised themselves as farm workers and took turns to guard the farm at night when they had heard of an impending invasion.<sup>68</sup> This resistance, was however, short-lived especially as some senior government officials who had interests in the area unleashed the full might of the state together with the “war veterans.”<sup>69</sup>

According to Sadomba, war veterans also relied on mobilising local farm workers to occupy farms, but in some cases war veterans saw farm workers as a threat who attempted to protect their jobs by defending the land or property of their employer and were thus anxious to restrain them. This happened sufficiently often to indicate that farm workers had their own competing views about the land occupation movement. Some white owned farms were spared occupation based on recommendations by farmworkers regarding the farm owners’ individual behaviour.<sup>70</sup> Farm workers also used their intimate knowledge of farms to allow war veterans and land occupiers to roam on them unrestrained. Familiarity was important in sustaining the land occupations, backed by collaborating farm workers. Sachikonye argues that farm workers acted as a kind of buffer between the farmer and settlers. At the same time they were hostages of the situation, they may also have wanted land, but they could not agitate for it openly and be seen to be joining the settlers. Some farm workers did join the settlers, not in their own work place but on neighbouring farms.<sup>71</sup>

Amongst the forms of participation in the land reform that Sadomba discusses in his work some were also present in Matepatepa. For example, there were cases when farm workers recommended which farms to occupy and they would give details to occupiers of farm ownership, farmers’ dispositions and behaviour and farm security systems. The occupation of

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<sup>66</sup> *The Herald*, 2 September 2000.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Timson Banda, Harrolds Farm, 22 September 2014.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Sachikonye cited in Matondi, *Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform*, p. 28.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Rosedale Farm, for instance, saw the participation of a major portion of the farm workers from the farm who provided logistical support to occupiers.<sup>72</sup> At Rotchford farm, peasants participated in feeding the occupiers when supplies from the communal lands were depleted.<sup>73</sup> At Thompsons, one of the workers describes how, as a security guard, he was co-opted by the war veterans into their “intelligence” network providing much needed information on the movements of the farmer and his network of security guards who were providing him protection. He describes how effective this was since the farmer was always in the habit of giving them a briefing, as security, on his whereabouts, his plans to counter the war veterans.<sup>74</sup> At one time, the farmer had enlisted the help of fellow farmers but they could not get to his farm after the war veterans blockaded the route using prior knowledge they had gained from the guard of their arrival.<sup>75</sup>

Farm workers were marginalised by the FTLR. Most of them not only failed to get land but lost their only accommodation. Marongwe suggests that farm workers were considered by the government as not willing to become fully fledged farmers in their own right.<sup>76</sup> Marongwe argues that farm workers all over Zimbabwe had specific views on ensuring secure land tenure for themselves but they had no forum to present their views.<sup>77</sup> Arrangements between farm workers and veterans outside official FTLR were widespread. There were cases where farm workers went to District Administrators to question why they were not given land. A group of farm workers from Byron farm approached the Bindura District Administrator to raise their concerns about not getting access to land in 2002.<sup>78</sup> Their situation had been made worse by the fact that one of the new farm owners had dispossessed them of their one acre pieces of land which they had been given by the previous farm owner. This visit was, however, unsuccessful as the workers were advised to submit applications like everybody else. They were also told that the new farm owners had the right to do what they wanted with their land.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with Magret Mutopa, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Sviipe Jackson, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> N. Marongwe, *Fast Track Resettlement and its implications for the wild life land use option: The case for Dahwe Resettlement Scheme*, Harare: ZERO Regional Environment Organisation, 2003, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Benson Phiri, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

The geographical location of Matepatepa also shaped the way the farm workers participated in the land invasions. For Rosedale farm, its close proximity to the neighbouring Madziwa Communal lands meant that most of the farm workers did not live in the farm compound but in their homes in Madziwa. These workers were easily co-opted into the land invasions by peasants from Madziwa. They were at the forefront of providing support for the invasion of the farm. By contrast, another group of farm workers of Malawian descent who stayed permanently on the farm were compelled to side with and protect their employer. Rosedale farm saw clashes between farm workers who stayed outside of the farm who had the support of the war veterans and peasants and those who were permanently stationed at the farm.<sup>80</sup> The situation was different with farms that were far away from the borders of communal lands as these tended to utilise a labour force that was, mostly, permanently stationed on the farm compounds without any alternative accommodation. Such a labour force typically sided with the employers as they had limited links with the land occupiers and thus viewed them as outsiders. Again, most of these farm workers were of either Malawian, Mozambican or Zambian origin and they knew no other home besides the farm compound.

In some instances, war veterans, in full knowledge of the farm workers' participation during the occupations parcelled land to these workers but authorities nullified this allocation.<sup>81</sup> About seven farm workers were given pieces of land on the fringes of Helensvale farm by one of the war veterans who had occupied the farm. They were however removed when the distribution process was properly regularised by the Ministry of Lands officials as their pieces of land became part of the official beneficiaries' plots.<sup>82</sup> Official statistics as of end of March 2002 indicated that only 1 183 farm workers had been resettled. This stands in stark contrast to the estimated 140 000 who had lost their jobs at the same time.<sup>83</sup> Hundreds of thousands farm workers and their families faced starvation and unemployment as their employers abide by the government's Section 8 Order to shut down their operations and vacate their farms in 45 days.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Martias Ruwizhu, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Beauty Kampali, Helensvale Farm, 18 September 2014.

<sup>83</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, 5 January 2004.

<sup>84</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, 29 April 2002.

## Compensation

According to Statutory instrument No. 6 of 2002, all farm workers on compulsorily acquired farms were entitled to a severance and notice pay, cash in lieu of leave, gratuity and service awards based on the period served which is deductible from the farmers compensation for land improvements.<sup>85</sup> Farm workers had difficulties in obtaining these packages because a greater number of farmers did not receive any compensation. By the end of 2003 an estimated 52 percent of the farms gazetted by the government and had been valued for compensation, only 2 percent of the commercial farmers had actually been compensated.<sup>86</sup> Magaramombe and Chambati have argued that there had been disagreements between the government and former white farmers on the valuation methodology for farm improvements and these disagreements spilled into the courts where delays hindered the prospects of getting severance packages.<sup>87</sup> Moreover in an interview with an NEC official, he said; “some white farmers denied compensation from the government because for them acceptance meant that they agreed to the terms of the FTLRP and some even thought that the whole programme was going to be reversed, this had serious repercussions on farm workers, it limited their prospects of getting their packages.”<sup>88</sup>

In Matepatepa, only a few farm workers managed to get their severance packages and most were paid by farmers from their own savings. Some were paid a fraction and a large number were promised their severance packages after the equipment left by their white employers had been sold. However, in most cases the new farmers hijacked all the properties left by the white farmers, the only assets the farm workers could claim after the white farmers had abandoned them.<sup>89</sup> Farm workers interviewed were unhappy that they had worked for long periods of time but received nothing for it. One worker, who had worked at McMillan Farm since 1977, argued that at least he deserved a “thank you for the service rendered for so

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<sup>85</sup> *Statutory Instrument*, No. 6 of 2002, Collective Bargaining Agreement: National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry, Harare: Government Printers.

<sup>86</sup> Chambati and Magaramombe, “The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers”, p. 227.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Interview with National Employment Council official, Harare, 30 October 2014.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Tinei Mutero, McMillan Farm, 17 October 2014.

long.”<sup>90</sup> Hyperinflation also affected the value of their severance packages. Some farmers paid the workers some sort of package, but most insisted that they would pay their workers compensation only after they received compensation from the government. Because of the nature in which the land reform was carried out most farm workers did not receive packages because their employers were evicted whilst some farmers refused to pay.<sup>91</sup>

After receiving packages, some of the respondents interviewed left the farms and only came back after they had run out of money. This represents a mixture of voluntary displacements and a larger portion of forced evictions. GAPWUZ reported cases in which farm workers were forced to give a portion of their package to the invading war veterans and youth militia who had violently coerced farmers into paying out the packages.<sup>92</sup> Many farm workers were left stranded without packages after their ex-employers vacated designated farms during the fast track resettlement exercise.<sup>93</sup> They did not receive anything despite their long service on their respective farms. Some became vulnerable to bogus consultancy firms who were collecting money from them claiming to assist them to get their packages.<sup>94</sup> In parliament they were also calls from Parliamentarians urging government to compensate farm workers. Chegutu Member of Parliament, Webster Shamhu was one such MP who urged government to compensate workers on designated farms. He argued that the workers were entitled to 12 months’ salary as compensation according to the Labour Relations Act. He argued that Section 8 of the Land Acquisition Act had the effect of ruling out compensation where farm workers lose jobs as a result of farms being compulsorily acquired, which was in direct conflict with the LRA Chapter 28: 01.<sup>95</sup> This was political grand-standing to garner support from this constituency because despite the existence of such legal frameworks such as the LRA, only a few were compensated and the plight of the majority was ignored. It is important to note that the issue of severance packages strained relationships between farmers and workers because, in most instances, farm workers were putting pressure on their employers with

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, attempts to get credible statistics for those who were compensated in Matepatepa were not successful.

<sup>92</sup> GAPWUZ, *If Something is Wrong*, p. 58.

<sup>93</sup> *The Herald*, 18 February 2003.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 27 November 2000, Col. 1958, Webster Shamhu.

regards their packages and this was heavily exploited by ZANU PF, to divide the farm owners from their workers.

Of the more than fifty farm workers interviewed for this study, only a handful confirmed that they had received some sort of severance package from their former employers. One such worker was Gibson Phiri of Rosedale farm who confirmed that his boss gave him some money before he left the farm.<sup>96</sup> He was also given a motorcycle and a bed but Gibson attributes this to the nature of relationship he had with his former boss. He described his relationship with his former employer as close to “that of a father and son.” The receipt by Gibson of a severance package should thus be treated as an exception rather than the rule especially in Matepatepa. The same goes for the other recipient, Moleen Zakeyo’s husband who also got a severance package from the same farmer again because of the relationship he had managed to build with his former employer.<sup>97</sup> The fact that of the more than 10 workers employed and interviewed at Rosedale farm, only two confirmed receiving a package is very telling. However it is important to note that, some might not have admitted payments because of how they used them or do not want to be seen as beneficiaries of those severance packages. Another interesting fact is that some of these workers did not expect to receive a package from their employers because they viewed their employers not only as victims but the biggest losers in the whole turn of events. Cosmas Mabiri employed at Helensvale farm puts this line of thinking into proper perspective when he argued the following:

For us to expect any money from our bosses was to expect too much. After all, they had lost way more than us. Our boss lost his equipment, his whole season’s crop and his house. So where was he going to get the money to give us from? These war veterans just came to our farm without warning and looted everything including cattle, goats and chickens so he suffered a huge loss. The only thing we expected to get from the farm was bit and pieces of equipment but the war veterans took that too.<sup>98</sup>

Of importance to note is the role played by the “war veterans” on the farms in influencing the farm workers to demand compensation. The war veterans were reportedly in the habit of telling farm workers at the numerous meetings they held on the farms that they should get compensated by their employers. Getrude Matombe recalls a meeting where they were told

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<sup>96</sup> Interview with Gibson Phiri, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Moleen Zakeyo, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Cosmas Mabiri, Helensvale Farm, 11 September 2014.

by the war veterans that their employer had “received a lot of money from the government for his farm and he should therefore pay them their packages.” She recalls how this news caused a lot of excitement on the farm until they had “to confront [our] boss who told [us] that he had received nothing from government except a funny looking letter instructing him to vacate from his land.”<sup>99</sup>

The FTLR had negative effects on employment of farm workers, especially during the occupation period. The workers not only lost any prospect of receiving compensation but they were also faced with uncertainty about who was going to be their pay master. The white farmers no longer felt any obligation to pay their workers because of the uncertainty that clouded the period. At the same time, the new occupiers did not feel that it was their duty to pay the workers yet because they were still involved in a battle for control of the land. Farm workers consequently no longer had a steady income. In September, 2000, the president of the CFU, Mr Tim Henwood said some that farmers had closed down because the war veterans were threatening them and this left many farm workers stranded on the farms.<sup>100</sup>

### **Farm workers’ Displacement and Disruption of Livelihoods**

Farm workers suffered from serious displacement because of the land reform programme. According to a 2001 FCTZ survey, farm workers were sometimes chased away by the new occupants and “unaffected” farms faced an influx of displaced competitors for work.<sup>101</sup> By 2002, about two-thirds of farm workers (about 200 000) had lost their jobs and access to regular income.<sup>102</sup> However it is important to note that, displacement figures in this case are not easy to quantify and in most cases civil organisations reports exaggerate the quantity but this doesn’t nullify the fact that the displacements were a reality during the programme. Farm workers had no residential alternative and they tended to have low levels of formal education and agricultural training for reemployment opportunities and few personal assets and few

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Getrude Matombe, Jacksons Farm, 24 October 2014.

<sup>100</sup> *The Herald*, 12 September 2000.

<sup>101</sup> Waeterloos and Rutherford, “Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities for Poverty Reduction Among Commercial Farm Workers”, p. 542.

<sup>102</sup> L. M. Sachikonye, “Land Reform for Poverty Reduction? Social Exclusion and Farm Workers in Zimbabwe”, Conference paper, Manchester University, 2003, p. 6.

capabilities to devise an alternative livelihood strategy.<sup>103</sup> About two-thirds were affected by the reform in terms of job losses and diminished access to shelter and basic social services. Most of the farm workers who lost jobs were not absorbed into the land reform programme, less than five percent of them were granted land. The combination of loss of income, jobs, shelter and basic goods made farm workers more vulnerable at the completion of land reform.<sup>104</sup> Farm worker displacement can be likened to Operation Murambatsvina of 2005 which had the same impact on the urban poor who were mostly associated with opposition politics.<sup>105</sup>

According to a survey carried by Hartnack, over 50 percent of farm workers and their dependents were forcibly displaced. Because of declining working opportunities on the farms, others moved into peri-urban illegal settlements or existing settlements, where they lived a precarious existence.<sup>106</sup> Hartnack argued that displacement leads to eight impoverishment risks, namely; unemployment, homelessness, landlessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, loss of access to common property, erosion of health status and social disarticulation.<sup>107</sup> In Matepatepa and elsewhere farm workers were exposed to most of this during the FTLRP. Farm workers were often evicted on the pretext that they supported their white employers. Mostly they carried only the few items they could carry, the old and the sick sometimes failed to carry their belongings. The possessions left behind were usually looted or kept by the invaders. Senior workers who had accumulated a lot of belongings lost most of their property. Women preferred to carry their children rather than belongings. Workers stayed together in the open for a number of days assessing their options.<sup>108</sup> Between 30 000 and 45 000 workers are estimated to have been displaced from the commercial farming areas to communal areas

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<sup>103</sup> Waeterloos and Rutherford, *Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities for Poverty Reduction Among Commercial Farm Workers*, p. 547.

<sup>104</sup> Sachikonye, *Land Reform for Poverty Reduction? Social Exclusion and Farm workers in Zimbabwe*, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> Murambatsvina was a programme carried out by the government which claimed they were cleaning up the city by destroying shacks and other homes of the urban poor which led to the displacement of a huge number of the urban population. This was interpreted by different scholars and other practitioners as an attack by the ZANU PF led government on the urban support base of the opposition MDC. See, D. Moore, "Coercion, Consent, Context: Operation Murambatsvina and ZANU PF's Illusory Quest for Hegemony", in M. Vambe (ed) *The Hidden Dimensions of Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2008, pp. 25 – 39.

<sup>106</sup> Hartnack, *"My Life Got Lost": Farm workers and Displacement in Zimbabwe*, pp. 173-192.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*



and informal settlements.<sup>109</sup> Most of these physical displacements occurred during the early phase of land reform that was characterised by confrontation between land occupiers and farm workers.<sup>110</sup> Some farm workers have been reported to have migrated to neighbouring countries especially in South Africa and Mozambique.<sup>111</sup> Several reports have suggested that some of the migrant workers were moved by authorities to boarder areas in Mashonaland Central province while others were resettled in remote area of Lower Zambezi valley, but there was scarcely any infrastructure and services in this marginal area.<sup>112</sup>

The extent of farm workers' migration is, however, not easy to quantify because of a lack of systematic data. However many farm workers refused to be repatriated because they considered themselves to be citizens of Zimbabwe. Before the passing into law of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2004, a previous amendment to the Citizenship of Zimbabwe argued that those with potential right to foreign citizenship were supposed to renounce their foreign identification by January 2002. This potentially disfranchised an estimated 88 000 farm workers of foreign origin mostly from Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia. Since the majority were born in Zimbabwe and had lost ties with their forefathers, they were faced with a dilemma of going through a complicated procedure of renouncing foreign citizenship.<sup>113</sup> In this event, the proportion of farm workers remained stateless as they had never had citizenship claims in their country of origin and had no registration documents to qualify them as Zimbabweans.<sup>114</sup>

The FLRP also affected the education of the farm workers' children. Schools previously run by white commercial farmers were closed as the situation became more and more chaotic. According to Sachikonye, more than 500 schools were closed "abruptly as invaders besieged farms across the country."<sup>115</sup> In Matepatepa, two of the primary schools in the area, Zvakwana and Foothills primary schools were temporarily non-functional as most of the

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<sup>109</sup> W. Chambati, "Restructuring of Agrarian Labour Relations After Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe", in L. Cliffe (*et al*) (eds), *Outcomes of Post-2000 Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 164.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Sachikonye, *Land Reform for Poverty Reduction? Social Exclusion and Farm Workers in Zimbabwe*, p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> Chambati and Magaramombe, "The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers", p. 228.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *The Standard*, 21 July 2002.

teachers had to flee the violence that accompanied the programme. In some instances, the school buildings were used for impromptu meetings called by the local leadership with total disregard for the schools working hours. Many children stopped attending school as the non-payment of farm workers' salaries also impacted on their ability to pay their children's fees. In worse case scenarios, some children as young as ten years of age, had to go and pan for gold in the nearby Mazowe River in order to augment the now heavily depleted family income.<sup>116</sup>

Farmers who were fearful of their lives were in turn forced to abandon their labourers without money or food. One farm workers interviewed by *Chronicle* on 8 November 2000 said: "We are stranded here as we do not have the money, we are starving. This was a ranch and we only kept cattle so there is nowhere we can get food."<sup>117</sup> Another one, Phetshu Sibanda, describing the situation at one particular farm, said in the same paper that "it was unfortunate that the farmer decided to dump workers who have been loyal to him, with one worker having served the farmer for 48 years."<sup>118</sup> The farm workers were rendered homeless and redundant following the eviction of white commercial farmers. *The Sunday Mirror* also reported that, owners of farms were reported to have fled to the safety of urban areas following the skirmishes, leaving the workers that they had been pushing to fight the invaders "miserable and directionless."<sup>119</sup> This was a typical situation for many farm workers in the country who found themselves between a rock and a hard place because their employers had "short-sightedly decided to use them as political weapons to retain their privileges on land."<sup>120</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has revealed how the competing demands for FTLR by different classes limited the prospects of farm workers to get the land. It also argued that the possibilities of farm workers benefitting from land allocation was also limited by their exclusion from the list of targeted land beneficiaries in the FTLR policy document which emphasised landless peasants

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Peter Nyathi, Harrolds Farm, 22 September 2014.

<sup>117</sup> *The Chronicle*, 8 November 2000.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *The Sunday Mirror*, 21 June 2004.

<sup>120</sup> *The Herald*, 21 April 2002.

as targeted land beneficiaries, followed by other groups in need of land. It also offered a 20 percent quota of all land allocations to war veterans <sup>121</sup> The chapter also agrees with Phimister's observation that commercial farmers and farm workers and their dependences were brutally displaced from land intended for the landless poor but was actually taken over by ZANU PF ministers and their business cronies, as well as members of the judiciary and the armed forces.<sup>122</sup> It also revealed massive job losses as a direct result of land invasions. For example, most seasonal workers lost their jobs because during the programme listed farms had to scale down their production. The failure by the police and other security services to take action against perpetrators of violent crimes, during the FTLRP was also analysed in this chapter and how, in some cases, they actively assisted illegal actions. It concludes that many farm workers experienced at least one human rights violation and many experienced multiple abuses.

The chapter also analysed the nature of farm workers' involvement in the land reform. It showed how some farm workers joined the land occupiers, seeking land and denouncing oppressive and racist whites. It also revealed how others were driving out occupiers and defending themselves against attack and the attack of their white employers. Overall, the chapter argued that the process of land occupations had a huge impact on the position of farm workers and it shaped how farm workers fared after the land reform programme. This forms the focus of the next chapter which examines the nature of the farm workers relationship with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of the changes on their livelihoods and their coping strategies.

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<sup>121</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, *Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Implementation Plan- "Fast Track"*, Harare: Government of Zimbabwe, 2001.

<sup>122</sup> I. Phimister, "Rambai Makashinga (Continue to Endure)": Zimbabwe's Unending Crises, *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 2005, p. 113.

## Chapter Four: Farm Workers after the Land Reform

### Introduction

This chapter examines how farm workers fared after the FTLRP. It surveys the nature of their relationships with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of such changes on their livelihoods. The chapter also evaluates conditions of farm workers who took up other means to make a living in the aftermath of the land reform programme like gold panning and other informal activities. Others also benefitted from the land reform programme and were allocated land. A significant number of farm workers were involved in rather rudimentary forms of “sharecropping” with the new land beneficiaries.

After the FTLRP new patterns of social relations emerged in the commercial farming sector and these had a huge effect on the overall conditions of farm labourers. Central to these social relations was the attitude of the new farm owners towards the farm workers. There is a predominant hostile relationship between the farm workers and new farmers largely as a result of the clashes that occurred during the FTLRP. Farm workers have been largely viewed as opponents of the FTLRP, because of the role they played during farm occupations. As mentioned in the previous chapter relations between the farm workers and the new land occupants during the FTLRP were largely violent and volatile as a majority of the farm workers took sides with their employers against the new occupants whom they largely viewed as invaders. Some workers are still bitter and hoping that the situation will be reversed and the former farmers will come back. On the other hand, the new occupants viewed farm workers as anti-revolutionary and stumbling blocks in their quest to get access to land. Such relations, borne out of the unstable and volatile land occupations, were largely perpetuated in the post land reform programme with reported subjugation and ill-treatment of farm workers by their new employers. Indeed, a report prepared by the FCTZ for the Parliamentary Portfolio

Committee on Land and Agriculture reported of many farm workers who complained that they were not being treated as human beings on the farms.<sup>1</sup>

An important factor to note is the fact that in as much as the FTLRP reversed racial patterns of land ownership and broadened access to land, “it generated new inequalities based on uneven land ownership and control of labour.”<sup>2</sup> Many landless farm labourers find themselves residing insecurely on new landholdings, perpetuating exploitation practises via tenancy and other forms of labour exploitation.<sup>3</sup> A new pattern of unequal land and labour relations have thus been consolidated and the continued presence of unemployed farm workers on the farms has only made the situation more precarious. The relations between land beneficiaries and farm workers are thus fraught with tension and conflict.

To further worsen the situation for the farm workers, a majority of the new farmers also hold them in low social regard. For example some alleged that farm workers are immoral and promiscuous and changed partners every day.<sup>4</sup> They accuse them of anti-social behaviour (theft, tree cutting, poaching, gold panning, and prostitution) and also accuse them of being lazy and greedy.<sup>5</sup> Other social evils like drunkenness and gambling have also been piled upon the farm workers by the new farmers. Such allegations add perspective to the negative local attitudes towards farm workers who are branded as ‘foreigners’. Thus they are considered not capable of being integrated into local cultural and governance systems.<sup>6</sup> It is also important to note that the majority of the farm workers also do not see their new employers in good light. They also accuse the new land owners of being bad employers who pay paltry and infrequent wages.<sup>7</sup> There has been reported endless heated disputes between workers and new farmer especially during the early days of change of landownership.

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<sup>1</sup> Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, *Report of the Workshop on Housing and Tenure Security for Farm Workers in Newly Resettled Areas: For the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Lands and Agriculture*, Nyanga, 2005, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> S. Moyo, “Changing Agrarian relations after redistributive land reform in Zimbabwe”, in L. Cliffe (eds) *Outcomes of Post-2000 Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Matondi, *Zimbabwe’s Fast Track Land Reform*, p. 222.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> W. Chambati and S.Moyo, “The Impact of the Fast Track Land Reform on Former Farm Workers”, in *Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee on the Implementation of Fast Track Land Reform Programme 2000-2002*, Chairman Charles Utete, Harare: Government Printers, 2003, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> W.Chambati and S. Moyo, “Land Reform and the Political Economy of Agricultural Labour in Zimbabwe”, Occasional Research Paper, No. 4, 2007, p. 20.

Another important perspective with regards the impact of the FTLRP on farm workers was provided by an official from the NEC. For him, the major problem is that new farmers do not take farming as business.<sup>8</sup> This is primarily because of the prevailing belief among a majority of blacks that farming is done at subsistence level and most of them have a tendency to take farms as a place to stay after retirement. In comparison, a majority of the previous white owners treated farms as business. New farmers prefer to pursue other business opportunities so many are not investing in farming and this has a negative effect on workers who only have their labour to sell.<sup>9</sup>

It is from such varied perspectives that the impact of the FTLR on farm workers will be analysed. Particular attention will also be given to the general economic conditions in Zimbabwe that accompanied the post land reform programme analysing how such conditions impacted on agriculture productivity in general and the conditions of farm workers in particular. To note, is the fact that the impact of the FTLRP on farm workers is diverse and complex. This depends on a number of factors like the prevailing agricultural activities and levels and intensity of production, the nearness of the farm workers to the communal areas or urban, their origin, gender and expertise. As such, the farm workers should not be treated as a homogeneous entity. For example, in Matepatepa some benefitted from the FTLRP. Others changed “professions” to become full time gold panners along the Mazowe River where the remittances offered are better than what they received as farm workers. There are some who maintained a communal home in adjacent areas like Madziwa, Chiweshe and Nyarukunda and some even used their ties in those communal areas to get land through their chiefs. Then there is a dominant group of farm workers who are of foreign origin who have lost ties with their relatives and even some locals who lost land rights after years of absence from their places of origin. These comprise a greater population who remain in the farm compounds. Thus, because of different economic and other social dynamics these people were affected differently. For some selling labour is the core of their livelihood strategy, for the others farm employment is simply an addition to a range of other activities, often during off season.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with NEC official, Harare, 29 October 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Scoones (etal), *Zimbabwe's Land Reform Myths and Realities*, p. 130.

## Agricultural Production and the Zimbabwean Economy after the FTLRP

To adequately account for the impact of the FTLR on farm workers, it is imperative that a very brief analysis of the impact should be carried out within a wider context of Zimbabwe's political economy. The character and nature of the Zimbabwean economy had a huge impact on agriculture productivity and this also impacted not only on farm workers' livelihood but on their relations with their employers as well. The impact of the economy on labour was not only unique to the agriculture sector. Almost all of the sectors in Zimbabwe were affected during this period and labour witnessed serious upheavals as workers were retrenched, not paid and downgraded.

Adverse economic conditions, especially between 2002 and 2008, induced production constraints, including price controls on some commodities. As such, shortages of agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, agro chemicals, farm machinery and agricultural finance shaped agrarian labour relations. Hyperinflation, which set in around 2006, eroded the average real earnings of both rural and urban workers.<sup>11</sup> The decline in production, increasing shortage of foreign currency for imports and of consumption goods, excessive printing of money, hyperinflation, and sanctions characterised the period after the FTLR.<sup>12</sup> Generally, the wider economic environment in Zimbabwe worsened the situation of Zimbabwean workers in general and farm workers were not spared. They were actually more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the declining Zimbabwean economy because of the chaotic nature of the FTLRP which had left a majority of them in precarious labour relations. For example, during the economic meltdown of 2007, the farm workers had very sad experiences. In that year, Getrude Hambira, former GAPWUZ Secretary General, described how it was a "sorry sight to note that their minimum wage [was] a paltry 3.41 percent of the Poverty Datum Line (PDL) and 12.8 percent of Food Poverty Line (FDL.)"<sup>13</sup> She described how a simple survey far from the technical aspects of the PDL and inflation indicated that farm workers could only afford a

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<sup>11</sup> W. Chambati, "Restructuring of Agrarian Labour Relations after Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe", in L. Cliffe(eds) *Outcomes of Post-2000 Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 155.

<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed description of the economic conditions during this time see, M. Clemens and T. Moss, "Costs and Causes of Zimbabwe's Crisis", Washington D.C: Center for Global Development, 2005; J. L. Jones, " 'Nothing is Straight in Zimbabwe': The Rise of the Kukiya-kiya Economy 2000–2008", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, 20 April 2007.

“bar of laundry soap and perhaps a box of matches.”<sup>14</sup> Some were paid in kind through things like salt, soap and cooking oil.

The output of Zimbabwe’s main agricultural commodities had started declining together with the general accelerated decline of the Zimbabwean economy in 2002, and only selectively began to rise in 2006.<sup>15</sup> One of the factors that caused this general decline in productivity was reduced and uneven access to inputs. This was also accompanied by low and uneven access to farm machinery as most peasants still depend on labour intensive ox-drawn traction and hand weeding.<sup>16</sup> Support programmes such as “operation maguta”<sup>17</sup> were initiated to deal with such challenges. They, however, failed due to economic hardships and corruption and most of these programmes mostly benefited those who were politically connected. Many of the land beneficiaries also lacked sufficient capital to invest meaningfully in agriculture and did not have relevant farming experience and were unable to put the bulk of their land into production for several years.<sup>18</sup> Because of failure to accumulate, they continued to live in poverty, relying on support from relatives and friends. Some have joined labour force on the new farms, leaving their plots in favour of poorly paid employment. Scoones accounts for other farm workers who are straddling across two farms one in the communal area and one in the new resettlement – and not really investing in the new areas, while some are keeping the plots for their sons or relatives or subletting to others.<sup>19</sup> Such example as given by Scoones are common place in Matepatepa.

Agrarian relations among the peasantry continue to be defined mainly by self-employment of family labour towards producing foods for consumption and selling some surpluses. Sachikonye reports that job opportunities in the agriculture sector are now reduced and wage conditions have deteriorated for most workers than prior to FTLRP.<sup>20</sup> Farm wages continued to be inadequate to meet labour’s cost of social reproduction as land beneficiaries pressed

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Moyo, “Changing Agrarian Relations after Redistributive Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> Operation Maguta was a programme run by the Zimbabwe National Army and bankrolled by the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe which distributed agriculture inputs between 2007 and 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Marongwe, “Who was allocated Fast Track Land, and what did they do with it? Selection of A2 farmers in Goromonzi District, Zimbabwe and its impacts on agricultural production”, p. 164.

<sup>19</sup> Scoones, *Zimbabwe’s Land Reform: Challenging the myths*, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Sachikonye, “The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 29.



for low wages in the collective bargaining process in the context of an economic crisis and the fact that they had just started producing.<sup>21</sup> Mberengwa- Zvishavane Senator Richard Hove (ZANUPF) disputed that it was unrealistic to advocate for the minimum wages of farm workers to be indexed in line with PDL because “farmers were developing a nation and they needed time” and for him “developing a nation was not an event but a process.”<sup>22</sup> In Matepatepa like elsewhere in the country, the gazetted farm worker wages which a few new land beneficiaries pay, are well below the PDL. In as much as the 2009 effort at economic stabilisation through ‘dollarization’ and re-liberalisation began to reverse some earlier signs of the economic crisis in general and declines in agriculture especially with crops such as tobacco, the situation of farm workers only showed marginal improvements.<sup>23</sup>

Generally many factors undermined agricultural production for example; unstable, insecure land tenure, the prevailing economic hardships, lack of commitment by both government and new farmers to invest in land and the vandalism of production infrastructure. All these factors had serious repercussions on farm workers and this generated a drastic change in employment patterns. It is such prevailing conditions that characterised the period after the FTLRP that compromised farm workers livelihoods. It limited their negotiating capacity and increased their vulnerability as they found themselves in seriously changed circumstances with little options and space to operate in. The FTLRP thus had a huge impact on the farm workers and the effects ranged from displacement, poor wages and subsequent impoverishment and general loss of bargaining power as the farm workers became more of a lesser “other”.

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<sup>21</sup> Chambati, “Restructuring of agrarian labour relations after Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe” p. 155.

<sup>22</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 15 May 2007, Col. 899-901, Richard Hove.

<sup>23</sup> Facing dramatic economic collapse and political stalemate the economy was liberalised in 2008 and a “power sharing” government was formed through regional mediation. Controls on agricultural markets, the capital account and trade and off-budget subsidies were abandoned and that economy was dollarized. See Global Political Agreement (GPA) between ZANU PF and MDC formations, on Resolving the Challenges facing Zimbabwe, Harare: Government Printers, 2008.

### **“Whiteness is not about skin colour.” *Varungu Vatema* and Farm Worker Relations**

Loftsdottir argues that race is not only about whiteness. For him, whiteness can be constructed, naturalised and normalised within certain social and cultural context.<sup>24</sup> Jones also argues of a context in which “white” generally means that one has access to the psychological and economic privileges of whiteness and being black generally means that one is pegged lower in the socio-economic hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> Such a designation, therefore, means that racial labels are not based solely on skin colour. In the new farming communities that emerged out of the land reform programme, there is also an emergence of such whiteness amongst new black farmers who are generally referred to as *varungu vatema* (*literally translated; blacks who are white*). Findings show that exploitative agrarian labour practises continue despite the change in the colour of the employers in the farming sector. Indeed, the reliance on cheap labour was not abandoned as A2 farms also used labour supplies from landless workers.<sup>26</sup> Farm workers in Matepatepa express their disappointment about the treatment they receive from the new black owners who they had assumed would treat them better because they have the same colour of skin.<sup>27</sup> They, therefore, had expected better treatment because they had racialized the treatment they used to receive from their former white employers.

Julieti Soda, who used to be a permanent worker under a white farmer and was a quality controller in the rose flowers department, describes her displeasure at the new black farmers through the following comparative description of her current black farmer and her former white farmer:

We had a good relationship with our white master, these black masters are selfish and cruel they are only there to enrich themselves without considering the plight of others. On their arrival we thought

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<sup>24</sup> K. Loftsdottir, “Invisible Colour, Landscapes of Whiteness and Racial Identity in International Development”, *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 25, No. 5, 2009, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> T. Jones, “Shades of Brown: The Law of Skin Colour”, *Duke Law Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 6, 2000, p. 1495.

<sup>26</sup> Moyo, “Changing agrarian relations after redistributive land reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately the numbers of the farm workers still present in Matepatepa could not be accurately ascertained due to a number of factors that include displacement, lack of accurate data from provincial office, NEC and farmers. But from my field work observations farm workers (including dependence) can be around 8 000.

our lives are going to change since we are all blacks but it's totally the opposite. We can work for seven months without pay ,when the money comes we are only paid for about three months and the rest *hanzi yadyiwa nestate* .The government should assist us, we are threatened to leave the farm houses if we don't work for them. We are prisoners here, we are no longer allowed to cultivate on our acres so we don't have anything to sell but before Sydney used to provide us with maize seeds and fertilizers for free, then after we take some for consumption he could let us sell our extra portions to him on price offered by GMB. I am surviving on sewing clothes for my fellow workers but still it's not helping me much because people are not paying because they are not paid by their masters. I and other women cannot rely on gardening because these new farmers, if they are facing labour shortages they let their cattle devour our gardens as a way of punishing us.<sup>28</sup>

Another farm worker, Maria Sureenzi, claims that the new black farmers only paid workers seeing *kuti washanda sei ,simba rako rapera here* (how you have worked and after draining all your energy.) She narrates how they are told several times that they “are dogs and brainless. It's painful coming from one of us. I am a widow and it's hard to take care of my children.”<sup>29</sup> She explains how it was not easy to work for black masters, as she and other workers are not given lunch and tea time. She also claims that they are not given a platform to speak out their grievances and the committee which used to represent them is no longer in existence.”<sup>30</sup> Muchaneta Zhuwawu describes how everyone was suffering as they were no longer allowed to fetch firewood or do fishing in the dam. For her, the new bosses “assume that, it's the reason why we are failing to provide labour,” and her candid conclusion was that; “*varungu vatema vanehudzvanyiriri* (the new whites/ bosses are cruel.)”<sup>31</sup>

The working conditions on most of the farms in Matepatepa are also very dismal. Abel Matinyenya, 45, was born and raised at Rotchford farm. He narrated how the new farmers are “so heartless and always want to use us.” He claims that the farm workers work “under inhuman conditions as the farmers treat us as if we are not one of them. Imagine during the grading of tobacco leaves we work from six in the morning to six in the evening whilst tobacco barns doors are shut to avoid heat colouring and smell.” According to him; “air conditioners

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Juliet Soda, Sydney Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Maria Sureenzi, 11 September 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Muchaneta Zhuwawu, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

are there in the grading shed but not for the safety of workers but to keep the leaves soft and avoid breaking.” He explains how very hot steam is also applied for the treatment of the leaves making the sheds extremely hot for the workers. He also explains how some women are forced to breastfeed their children in those conditions.<sup>32</sup> For Abel, this is largely because most of “the pre-schools have been closed since FTLR and the new farmers don’t care about resuscitating them.” He recalls how the previous farmer used to give them “masks gumboots and overalls, whilst these new farmers tell us to buy our own protective clothing.”<sup>33</sup> In an online source a farm worker also maintained that, they are now using bushes to relieve themselves because toilets are filled up, for him at least white farmers used to treat solid human waste with acidic soda so that the toilets would not fill up, but the new farmers are not doing the same and they have just ignored the development of the farm.<sup>34</sup>

Isaac Muti who used to work as a chemical mixer but now does any prescribed job said he preferred to work for the white farmer because he used to offer a lot of incentives. “Imagine now we just work, we don’t have designated hours as workers, before we used to work for 8 hours a day and we used to receive rations, we were given safety clothes.” He narrated the hazard exposed to the workers by farmers who spray their crops from aeroplanes being guided by a flag bearing worker in the fields “who doesn’t have any protective clothing and sprayed in the process.” He attributes the chest pains the majority of the workers suffer to such exposure. Isaac also described how “these new farmers don’t pay us with cash” as most of the workers are given pieces of land to cultivate each and every season as payment for their work. The farmers, however, “always take advantage of us because sometimes we don’t have enough time to work in our fields because the new farmers want us to finish their fields first and by the time they release us, usually it’s too late and no longer raining.”<sup>35</sup> Chirandu Chiumo works as a general hand during the peak season for a new farmer. He maintained that they were forced to go on “unpaid leave when there is no work until we are told to return.”<sup>36</sup> But for her she was fortunate that her child is going to school and being sponsored by BEAM.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Abel Matinyenya, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.newzimbabwe.com>, 30/08/2015: accessed 5 September 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Isaac Muti, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Chirandu Chiumo, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>37</sup> BEAM is a government initiative launched in 2000 to help disadvantaged children with tuition and levies. However in Matepatepa there are just a few beneficiaries of such an initiative.

Fainos Aginera used to work as a clerk under his previous white employer, but now he does all sorts of jobs to make ends meet. He complained of the long working hours which they usually work for months without pay. He reminisced about the good life he had under Rotchford, his previous employer, as compared to the “painful experience: he was now having.”<sup>38</sup> This is because under Rotchford, Fainos “had a lot of benefits,” used to receive his salary on time and he could manage to send his children to school. Unfortunately for Fainos, the new farmer evicted him from his two bedroomed house and he was now staying in a pole and dagga hut. He also explained how he and the other workers no longer have access to clean water and electricity and how the new farmers were not farming but were unwilling to give the farm workers land. Fainos explained that the majority of the workers were “surviving on piece jobs in neighbouring farms like McMillan and Helensvale which are operational and still occupied by whites.”<sup>39</sup>

There are also cases in Matepatepa of white farmers who have not had their whole farms taken away. These farmers have only lost parts of their farms and they provide a new site of struggle with regards labour in the area because most farm workers prefer to work for them. They have, therefore, clashed with the new farmers who accuse them of stealing their workers. These farmers, due to pressure from the new farmers have revised their wage structures so that they will not antagonise the politically powerful new farmers. Beauty Kampali is one such farm worker who has continued to work for a white farmer. She maintains that the white farmer who is still occupying a big part of the farm has cut production and this has lowered job opportunities for farm workers in the area.<sup>40</sup> This is a common phenomenon after FTLR, where white farmers who were left are no longer in full production even though some still have a big acreage, basically because of the fear and uncertainty which cloud the whole programme of the FTLR. Beauty also maintains that the white farmer has changed his attitude towards his employees ever since the FTLRP. Beauty also gives an interesting dimension to the politics of labour in Matepatepa when she argues that the reason why the white farmer was no longer paying the workers consistently and mistreating them was

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Fainos Aginero, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Beauty Kampali, Helensvale Farm, 18 September 2014.

because “he is in fear of new settlers, because he will end up taking up all the labour especially during peak season.”<sup>41</sup> The majority of white farmers who remained with land had to change the way they operated in order to conform to the new order. This was mainly because of their continued sense of vulnerability and the continued threats that emanated from their new black neighbours. They, therefore, had to strike a balance between not antagonising their neighbours and creating conditions that would continue to attract labour to their farms. She also cited cases like the farmer’s closure of a clinic he used to run as one such example of the farmer’s change of attitude towards the workers. The white farmer was also reported to have stopped giving his workers rations, salary increments, back pays and all other benefits. However, despite such changes, she maintained that it was still better to work for him than to work for the other new settlers because at least “he pays, he might not pay every month but when he gets the money he pays his outstanding salaries.”<sup>42</sup>

A huge number of farm workers also alluded to the dreary recreational conditions now existing on the farms. The previous activities like soccer, darts and netball that farm workers used to engage in under the white farmers have largely disappeared from the farming areas. This is mainly because amongst the new farmers no one is willing to take up the responsibility of maintaining the recreational facilities that the farm workers use for such sports. The majority of previous white farmers also used to provide transport for the workers to travel from one farm to another for soccer and *nyau* dances competitions a responsibility which the new farmers are either unwilling or unable to carry out. The beer halls that also thrived under white farmers are now run down and closed.

The weakening position of labour organisations like NEC and GAPWUZ has also compounded the farm workers’ situation. These organisations operate almost entirely from donations and membership subscriptions from workers and the success of its strategies is based on the availability of money raised from members and so the disruption caused by FTLR had an effect on their service delivery as collective bargaining organisation and pressure group for farm workers. For example GAPWUZ before land reform the union had 84 000 members and soon

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

after the programme the number declined to 47 000 and as of 2011 it was 19 000.<sup>43</sup> There are also political challenges affecting their operation. A GAPWUZ official pointed out how difficult it was “to lobby the parliamentarians and the politicians who are the majority of the employers in the A2 farms. Moreover because of our affiliation to the ZCTU, we are labelled as an opposition wing.”<sup>44</sup> NEC also highlighted that it’s failing to maintain its mandate has also been caused by the scattered nature of farm labour after the FTLRP. According to the official, the NEC was failing to “carry out routine labour inspections because before the land reform we used to deal with one farmer but now we have to deal with more than 10 farmers per farm depending on which scheme (either A1 OR A2) and when we do inspections most of the farmers are not there.”<sup>45</sup> Such narratives were common among the farm workers and pressure groups during field work. What is striking about them is the agreed position among the workers that their conditions under the previous white owners were much better. A shared position among the farm workers is their failure to understand why they receive this mistreatment from fellow black farmers who they considered as “theirs.”

A different perspective to understand the emergence of *varungu vatema* can be made from a political standpoint. A majority of the land beneficiaries have political connections and they sometimes use their political muscle besides the access to land to exploit the farm workers. A senior NEC labour official described how it is not easy for the NEC to deal with the new farmers because of their use of political muscle and connections to disregard their recommendations. The NEC official describes how “old farmers used to appreciate the presence of the NEC but now because most beneficiaries are highly politically connected they disobey the statutory regulations.”<sup>46</sup> He describes situations where even when, “they are served with court orders they just ignore and get away with it.” He also mentioned names of very senior government officials who he regarded to be above the law. He argued how it was “not easy to deal with these political moguls” a situation which has had serious repercussions on farm workers.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> GAPWUZ Report, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with a GAPWUZ official, Harare, 23 October 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with NEC official, 29 October 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Thus possession of land was a key element in creating the *varungu vatema* factor. This was further consolidated by the alienation of a majority of the farm workers in the land redistribution exercise which make them more vulnerable to the new land owners who use different methods and means to perpetuate that vulnerability. Access to political office and political connections is a central element in buttressing the *varungu vatema* element in a majority of the farm owners.

**“We have not only been made jobless but homeless as well”: Farm workers and Displacement.**

The displacement of permanent farm workers is estimated at 150 000, while the total population affected is around 300 000 including temporary and non-resident workers.<sup>48</sup> Displacement of farm workers after the FTLRP addresses two groups, those who were physically displaced from the compounds and those displaced *in situ*. The latter are still resident in the compounds but are out of work.<sup>49</sup> Nationally it is estimated that over two thirds of former farm workers remained on the former LSCF land.<sup>50</sup> There are variations in the nature of displacement. For Matepatepa, geography plays a huge role in how the farm workers get displaced. For example, for farms like Rosedale, which are close to communal areas, most farm workers from the nearby communal villages returned to their rural homes. The situation is mostly different for those in farms like Blue Ridge. Because of its distance from the communal areas like Madziwa and Mount Darwin, even those farm workers who came from those communal areas have not found it easy to go back to their rural homes because the distance had alienated them from their rural roots. Other workers especially of foreign origin and those from other provinces had also lost ties with their relatives and had no option but to drift to other places. In Matepatepa, most of the farm workers have, however, chosen to remain, largely because they do not have anywhere else to go. The Repatriation Unit in the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare (MPSL and SW) has not handled any requests from former farm workers who wished to return to their mother

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<sup>48</sup> Chambati, “Restructuring of agrarian labour relations after Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 141; G. Magaramombe, “Displaced in Place’: Agrarian Displacements, Replacements and Resettlement among Farm Workers in Mazowe District”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2010, p. 364.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*



land since the beginning of the FTLRP. This can be attributed to the fact that those former farm workers who wish to be repatriated are not aware of the availability of such facilities from the Government.<sup>51</sup>

Many farm workers were also excluded from land access. Farm workers who benefitted from FTLRP only constitute about 8.1 percent of land beneficiaries. Those who did not gain any land had either to continue to sell their labour or engage in non-farm activities.<sup>52</sup> Thus those who chose the latter had insecure residence in the farm compounds and were sometimes considered as squatting and in many instances had no option than to drift from one farm compound to the other. The farm workers' situation is further compounded by the fact that there is no proper legal frame work concerning the tenure of farm workers. Matondi accounts for this as a result of an expectation that they should work for the new land owners.<sup>53</sup> The then Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in 2007 told the House of Assembly that the ex-farm workers still living in farm compounds ,who are unwilling to work for the new owners ,would be required to leave ,despite a court ruling in 2005 that such evictions were illegal.<sup>54</sup> The major reason for eviction is that they are reluctant to work for the new farmers, citing low wages and poor working conditions.

In response to a national and international outcry over the displacement of commercial farm workers, the GoZ prohibited the mass eviction of farm workers.<sup>55</sup> However this policy stance does not appear to be widely shared among new farmers and local officials. A majority of the farm workers who are not willing to provide labour to new farmers especially those whose plots cover the compound are facing threats of evictions. In some instances, farmers who have plots which cover the compound sometimes prohibit workers to work for other plot holders on the same farm, even if it means the other plot holder pays better.

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<sup>51</sup> Chambati and Moyo, "The Impact of the Fast Track on Former Farm Workers", p. 142.

<sup>52</sup> Chambati, "Restructuring of Agrarian Labour Relations after Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe", p. 147.

<sup>53</sup> Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, p. 222.

<sup>54</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, 24 May 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Rutherford, "Organisation and Demobilization of Farm Workers in Zimbabwe: Reflections on Trade Unions, NGOs and Political Parties", *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2014, p. 231.

Most farm workers who have no other place to turn to, regard their old farm compound houses as theirs and therefore argue that it is their right to live in those houses. Numerous cases have thus found their way to courts. A good example is that of Kailisha Jerome who started working at Sydney farm in 1963 and worked as a foreman. He is of Malawian origin but he said, after all these years he can't go back to Malawi because he has lost ties with his relatives back there. Similar to other old aged people in the farms, the prospects of going back to his ancestral land have become remote. For Kailisha life has been tough as he is aged and incapacitated and "our new farmer Choto doesn't help the aged with anything instead he always threaten to evict me and other old people from his compound because we are useless."<sup>56</sup> Kailisha explains his position and vulnerability: "Yes, I am useless but how can he expect me to work yet I have lost my eyesight like this, I can't see clearly anymore."<sup>57</sup> Thus like other old aged workers in Matepatepa, Kailisha is vulnerable because he is physically incapable of the arduous tasks required of farm labour. Thus he is no longer productive on the farms and new farmers do not like the like of him. For him and other elderly, who still reside at the compound, they explain their winning of the court case with regards their residence on the farm compound to be a result of the fact that they "have a right to occupy the houses because they have been built with their own funds by the white farmer."<sup>58</sup> Kailisha recalls how Sydney used to take care of old people by giving and assigning those light tasks".<sup>59</sup> However 'light tasks' were exploitative because at face value these duties appeared light and easy and lowly remunerated but in real sense they were quite challenging.<sup>60</sup> More than 50 percent of the workers in Matepatepa are threatened with evictions from their places of residency.

In some cases, farm workers found themselves drifting from farm to farm seeking temporary shelter and employment whilst other workers who lost their source of livelihood moved in pursuit of economic opportunities outside farming areas or to other income generating

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Kailisha Jerome, Sydney Farm, 19 September 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> For more details see, J .Chadya and P.Mayavo."The Curse of Old Age": Elderly workers on Zimbabwe's Large Scale Commercial Farms, with Particular Reference to "Foreign" Farm Labourers up to 2000", *Zambezia*, 2002, p. 15.

activities.<sup>61</sup> Those displaced in this manner are often stranded on the outskirts of the farms or they trek to the fast growing 'informal settlements' where social conditions are desperate because access to social services among the farm workers has further deteriorated as a result of the FTLRP, especially among those who have been displaced. A gap has been created since the resource endowed former white farmers contributed substantially to the provision of social services for their workers, and the RDC have been incapacitated by the absence of taxes from the LSCF sector, since new farmers are not yet paying these taxes.<sup>62</sup>

An important measure of the impact of land reform is in terms of the number of jobs lost and incomes lost which has resultantly caused the displacement of a majority of farm workers. Although it is not possible to give exact figures of these, some reasonable estimates can be made on the basis of number of farms that have ceased operations.<sup>63</sup> The same applies to their access to basic services such as health, education, water supplies. In most cases land reform has significantly reduced farm workers access to these.<sup>64</sup> Women especially single mothers or widowed were the most affected by the programme. They thus constitute a majority of the drifters and displaced because with the takeover of farms, access to housing has become insecure. In the process children are also victims of the FTLR. Many are no longer attending school because of lack of fees and some schools are no longer operational and subsequently are getting into marriage earlier. The sad situation is, there is a widespread abuse of child labour by the new farmers. According to the *Daily Mirror* of 11 March 2006, the use of child labour has risen sharply as standards of living continue to deteriorate with over 10 000 children estimated to be working in the agricultural sector.<sup>65</sup> In 2004 a tragedy was reported when a lorry carrying farm workers overturned killing 22 people and some of the survivors were children aged between 13 to 18 years.<sup>66</sup>

### **“How can we be expected to survive on such peanuts?” Wages and Labour Contracts**

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<sup>61</sup> Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform*, p. 222.

<sup>62</sup> Chambati and Moyo, “The Impact of the Fast Track on Former Farm Workers”, p. 141.

<sup>63</sup> Sachikonye, “The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>65</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 11 March 2006.

<sup>66</sup> *Independent Catholic News*, 22 November 2004. This is however against the Children's Act (5: 06) which prohibits child labour and sets out that a child is anyone under the age of 18 years and is only allowed to perform school, technical or vocational work.

It is important to note that the marked decline in wage earnings among farm workers should be understood in the context of macro-economic instability in Zimbabwe that has affected the generality of the citizenry including the urban working classes.<sup>67</sup> However the FTLRP worsened the already contracted economy. In 2005 *The Standard* newspaper reported that most of the new farmers were reportedly failing to pay their workers stipulated wages because of low production. Apart from that, the gazetted monthly wages were pathetically low that most of the farm workers were living in abject poverty.<sup>68</sup> The minimum wage in the agriculture industry is \$65 us per month.<sup>69</sup> The payment of wages below the stipulated minimum wage could be attributed to the low participation of new farmers in the collective bargaining process through the NEC, weak information dissemination by employee (GAPWUZ) and employer representative (ALB) and the limited resources available to farmers. The Deputy Secretary of GAPWUZ, Gift Muti, pointed out that most of the farmers who were struggling to pay their workers were the new farmers who had “invaded prime farm land during the land invasions.”<sup>70</sup> These new farmers generally lacked the financial muscle to improve conditions of their workers.

They are also reported instances of farm owners who just disregard payment of their workers even when their financial situation is not bad. Some of these culprits, according to newspaper reports, include cabinet ministers and prominent government officials. They reported the tendency by many politicians not to pay their workers and the difficulty in solving cases where a politician is involved because of the reported use of political muscle.<sup>71</sup> A high ranking NEC official gave the example of ZANU Pf ministers who have reputation of not paying workers. He intimated that he sometimes even pay his workers with chickens or potatoes when they were entitled to get around 65 United States dollars per month.<sup>72</sup> This is against the law. According to Statutory Instrument 116 of 2014, every employer shall pay wages in cash, to each employee weekly or monthly as the case maybe, within two days of the end of the week

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<sup>67</sup> Chambati and Magaramombe, “The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers”, p. 223.

<sup>68</sup> *The Standard*, 9 October 2005.

<sup>69</sup> GAPWUZ Reports, 2014; *Statutory Instrument 42 of 2013*, Collective Bargaining Agreement: National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry, Harare: Government Printers.

<sup>70</sup> *The Standard*, 9 October 2005.

<sup>71</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 2 November 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with NEC official, Harare, 29 October 2014.

in the case of weekly paid employees and four days of the end of month in the case of monthly paid employees.<sup>73</sup> The *Daily Mirror* of 2 November 2005 described the practice of non-payment of workers as; “shameful, for it reflects a deep seated culture of selfishness.”<sup>74</sup>

A wide ranging debate in Parliament on 15 May 2007, highlights an interesting position with regards the issue of farm worker wages. Senator Ananias (ZANU-PF) maintained that farm worker should at least be paid a living wage. For him, low wages had resulted in farm workers failing to acquire even the most basic needs that include food, medication and school fees.<sup>75</sup> Contributing to the debate, another Senator, Edmund Jacob (ZANU-PF) argued that failure to pay the farm workers realistic wages would result in them engaging in various criminal activities that included vandalism of equipment and looting of inputs.<sup>76</sup> Senator Fanuel Bayayi (MDC) contended that the wages that were being paid to farm workers of \$32 000 were tantamount to a “slave wage.”<sup>77</sup> Mt Darwin Muzarabani Senator echoed this sentiment and argued that people must bear in mind that some of the new farmers were not able to remunerate their workers adequately because of lack of financial resources. She said a number of farmers were struggling to mobilise resources and this had a direct effect on how they pay their workers.<sup>78</sup>

The loss of permanent worker status on farms is also widespread.<sup>79</sup> There is a pronounced trend towards contract or piece work arrangements and this is mainly because the new farmers lack the financial resources and production capacity to absorb the majority of the former permanent workers.<sup>80</sup> This casualization of labour in informal temporary arrangements often has gender dimension, as much of this informal labour is female, reliant on piecework and short term contracts. For example, Muchaneta Zhuwawu, a farm worker since 1974 recalls how women were usually only engaged as part time workers. She works as

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<sup>73</sup> *Statutory Instrument* 116 of 2014, Collective Bargaining Agreement: National Employment Council for the Agriculture Industry, Harare: Government Printers.

<sup>74</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 November 2005.

<sup>75</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, 15 May 2007, Col. 899-901, Ananias Nyathi.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, Edmund Jacob.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, Fanuel Bayayi.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, Alice Chimbudzi.

<sup>79</sup> Sachikonye, “The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*.

a general hand for the new farmer during peak season.<sup>81</sup> The following description by Muchaneta of her life and her opinion of the new farmer captures important elements about wages and the labour contract:

During Rotchford we lived in harmony but with our new masters its bitterness and sorrow, we work for many months more than four months without pay, we are given small pieces of land as payment for our labour. Women are usually responsible for threshing rapoko and millet. We no longer have designated working hours and we are not paid for over time. I and my family we are surviving from a small garden with sugarcane and vegetables.<sup>82</sup>

To also highlight the casualization of labour is a case of Walter Mucheka aged seventy- two from Crowhill farm who used to work as a driver during Crowhill (previous white farmer) time but now no longer has a fixed job and works as a general hand. He remembers that although during Crowhill time the working conditions were hard “after working tirelessly we used to receive our salaries on time.” He also remembers how “the white were so caring than these black people, imagine sometimes we go for 10 months without pay and sometimes you don’t even receive it. They don’t care whether we eat or not. At my age I can’t go for gold panning like these small boys.”<sup>83</sup>

Many farm workers in Matepatepa complain of very low wages. One such worker, Pedro Samaili employed as a guard by a new farmer, Mr Mungofa, he narrated how he is always at loggerheads with his new employer because he doesn’t want to pay. Pedro, however, doesn’t have an option to work for other new farmers who pay better because Mr Mungofa claims that his plot covers the compound so failure to work for him will mean eviction from the compound house. He recalled how before the FTLR they received “overtime and were given higher wages as a guard but now we are receiving a flat fee which is pegged at 30 US dollars per month.”<sup>84</sup> This is way below the already low statutory wage. Thus because of the inconsistent pay, Pedro relies on remittances sent by his son who works as a garden boy in South Africa.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Interview with Muchaneta Zhuwawu, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Interview, Walter Mucheka, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Pedro Samaili, Crowhill Farm, 17 October 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, there are many cases where farm workers are refusing to work for the new farmers because of poor and inconsistent wages offered. Losses in worker wages can also be viewed from two dimensions. Firstly, through economic hardship that is affecting the whole generality of citizens and the reluctance of some farmers to remunerate their workers. The majority of farm workers get a below the PDL wage between 50 to 80 US dollars per month which, unfortunately, is not even paid consistently. What makes their situation more precarious is the fact that a lot of the farm workers did not receive their severance packages. However, even those who received them did not benefit much because of the hyperinflationary environment and some lacked knowledge to invest that money. NEC official admitted that, “there is a quite handful who got their packages through NEC and for some it was a lot of money but they used it to buy things like bicycles, beer, and radios.” For him, “they were supposed to have some form of education before given such a lump sum.”<sup>86</sup> However that was not realistic given the way the “FTLRP” was carried out.

Another major challenge linked to the inconsistent payment of wages has to do with the seasonal nature of farming in Zimbabwe which makes the farm workers susceptible to abuse because they are considered as dormant in the offseason. Indeed, Moud Phiri, a farm worker, argues that the major challenge since the land was given to black farmers is that farm workers are not having jobs especially during off season, and they only work during the raining season.<sup>87</sup> She recalls how under the previous white owner were they had jobs throughout the year and paid every month and overtime but with “these blacks, things have changed, we can go for more than four months without pay.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Moud is failing to send her children to school because she was failing to get the 20 dollars required for school fees. She explains how they were “surviving on selling fruits like oranges and bananas we order at Leeds farm.”<sup>89</sup> Another farm worker, Marble Kembo a contract worker, recalls how they used to have designated working hours throughout the whole year under their previous employer. However, now “we just work especially during raining season and we are not getting paid at all.”<sup>90</sup> She was also financially depended on her son, also a farm worker who turned to gold

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with NEC official, Harare, 29 October 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Interview, Moud Phiri, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Marble Kembo, Blue Ridge Farm, 1 October 2014.

panning. For Marble, “our black masters’ only want us during work time after that they don’t care about us. Hunger and starvation is affecting us. We were banned to cultivate our acres but all this land is idle. These blacks are so cruel.”<sup>91</sup>

Many farm workers are susceptible to very poor wage agreements because they are insecure and are threatened with evictions if they refuse to work for a certain new farmer. Some even complained that, some farmers disconnect electricity and water facilities in their houses if they refuse to sell their labour to them. They have thus resorted to fetching water in the nearby rivers and streams. Thus, because of fear of evictions, water and electricity disconnections, most workers are now forced to work for low wages.<sup>92</sup> There are also differences that exist in the forms of labour hired by small and large farms. Chambati and Magaramombe give an example of the A1 sector, where wage labour hiring is skewed towards casual labour, whilst the majority of the permanent workers are employed in the A2 sector.<sup>93</sup> A majority of the A1 farmers have alluded to the fact that they can’t afford to pay statutory wages because of the general economic hardships faced by Zimbabwe.<sup>94</sup> Peasants who form the majority of beneficiaries in the A1 sector are mostly reliant on family labour and the use of casual wage work or *maricho*. Thus a peasant production systems have been imported from the communal areas where they originated into the new resettlement areas.<sup>95</sup> Consistent payment of wages has also been hampered by the hostility between workers and new farmers because there is still a perception amongst new farmers that the farm workers are saboteurs of the land reform programme and thus undeserving of good treatment.

Hanlon argues that both A1 and A2 farmers receive little support from the government and cannot obtain credit for expenses like wages.<sup>96</sup> So in that case some farmers in Matepatepa are paying their workers in kind through things like cabbages or chicken entrails on a good day. Some group of farmers especially those without resources rely on contract farming which supplies inputs and technical advice. The common arrangement in contract farming is that a

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> This is a common problem shared amongst interviewees in Matepatepa.

<sup>93</sup> Chambati and Magaramombe, “The Abandoned Question: Farm Worker”, p. 220.

<sup>94</sup> Many farmers especially A1 shared the same sentiments during informal talks.

<sup>95</sup> Chambati and Magaramombe, “The Abandoned Question: Farm Workers”, p. 221.

<sup>96</sup> J. Hanlon (etal), *Zimbabwe takes back its land*, Virginia: Kumarian Press, 2013, p. 137.



farmer get into agreement with workers that they would receive their payments after tobacco sale. However in most cases farmers fail to pay their workers because of poor quality tobacco which fails to fetch a higher price on the market or because of the prevalent underpayment of tobacco at the auction floors. Farm workers are usually at the losing end because the contracting company deducts its cost of inputs from the sale price and usually the worst case scenario is that most farmers are left out without extra money to pay for labour. This meant these farm workers work for nine months of tobacco cultivation and harvesting for nothing. One farmer in Matepatepa maintained that they had the desire to pay their workers but “the economic landscape is bad and most of us don’t have money to buy inputs we end up opting contract farming which is very exploitative, even myself as a farmer am not enjoying the fruits of contract farming because all the money is taken at the auction floors.”<sup>97</sup> He maintained that the whites who were displaced during the land reform programme had taken over the role of a merchant and because of;

our desperate situations they are the ones who are coming to lure us into contract farming knowing that they control the prices at the market, so when we go to an auction sale they underpay our tobacco and they make sure that they get the money for their inputs and you are left without any extra money to use for household and family expenses, and the sad part is that at the farm, labourers will be waiting for their money.<sup>98</sup>

In most cases, the employer determines wages and no formal wage negotiation mechanisms exist, particularly for unskilled workers. Determination of wages has mostly been linked to how much the new farmers can afford or are ‘willing to pay’ their farm workers, not to statutory requirements.<sup>99</sup> There is no defined set of benefits for farm workers in new resettlement schemes. Were they exist they differ across farms and are difficult to quantify. In cases where the employer is resident on the farm, workers in most cases are being provided with food and housing together with the employer’s family. The most common type of housing that exists in the resettlement schemes is the pole and dagga type, while brick housing facilities are confined to very few plots in either models A1 or A2. Some employers use these benefits to justify paying their workers less than the statutory requirements.<sup>100</sup> The

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with Tungamirai Moyo, Farm Owner, Rosedale Farm, 27 October 2014.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> W. Chambati and S. Moyo, Land Reform and the Political Economy of Agricultural Labour in Zimbabwe, Occasional Research Paper, No. 4, 2007, p. 28.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

landlord-labour tenant relationship that existed in the former LSCFs under what was termed 'domestic government' has largely been replaced by the new social patronage systems in low paying and less secure jobs. In some cases, newly settled A2 farmers resist mandatory granting of residency rights to former farm workers in their farm compounds, preferring only those workers whom they employ on their farms. Consequently, the farm workers do not have defined and secure rights, or access to residential land.<sup>101</sup> The majority of the farm workers' wages are too low and can't even allow them to save, so even locals are ashamed to go back to their rural homes. This situation is reflected in a statement by Zebedia Mukunga from Mudzi, who is 55 years old. He pointedly admitted that he was ashamed to go to his rural home. "How can I go home empty handed like this? Imagine I don't have anything to show off for these past 30 years that I have been in farms."<sup>102</sup> Overall, with regards to jobs and wages in agriculture, jobs on offer have been reduced. This has sometimes forced workers to use their houses as dormitories while they go searching for employment from farm to farm. This gives a picture of an itinerant, poor and unstable farm workers class, almost destitute and constantly drifting, sometimes into informal settlements.<sup>103</sup>

### **Coping Strategies**

It is unbalanced to present farm workers as passive recipients and victims who are just vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the negative effects of the land reform. In as much as there are a vulnerable group that has been affected in a big way by the process, they also have urgency and have devised methods to cope with their disadvantaged positions. For example, many farm workers have resorted to piece jobs offered on functional farms. Some are involved in informal trading, fishing and gold panning. In Matepatepa, women are involved in income generating projects like selling garden produce, making peanut butter and rearing of chickens. Some are involved in selling of home brewed beer like the illicit *kachasu* and some cane spirits. It is a lucrative business given the lack of formal entertainment on most farms. The beer brewing business is particularly gendered as almost all the brewers are women.

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<sup>101</sup> B. Maguranyanga and S. Moyo "Land Tenure in Post FTLRP Zimbabwe: Key Strategic Policy Development Issues", Prepared on behalf of the African Institute for Agrarian Studies, Harare, 2006, p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Zebedia Mukunga, Blue Ridge Farm, 1 October 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Sachikonye, "The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe", p. 70.

However they are failing to do their brewing business openly because of fear of neighbourhood police.<sup>104</sup>

In Bindura, children of farm workers from Matepatepa are reportedly said to be hunting mice to supplement their meagre food requirements and working on settlers' land for a pittance.<sup>105</sup> Other farm workers are also depended on remittances from family members outside the country.<sup>106</sup> Some workers own tuck shops at the farm compound where they sell and repackage goods into smaller packages popularly known in Shona as *tsona* (accident).<sup>107</sup> Some farm workers have found ways of coping, through crafts making (mats and pots), selling thatching grass and firewood, child labour and other even more desperate measures like reduction in food intake.<sup>108</sup>

Some farm workers have resorted to prostitution and child prostitution is rampant. Prostitution was reported during interviews and some women confessed to indulge in the trade because of lack of options. This, unfortunately exposed them to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. HIV and AIDS prevalence is very high in farm communities and the women especially the girl child are vulnerable to its spread.<sup>109</sup> Their vulnerability is made even more serious because of the cultural and socio-economic hardships which render the women "powerless and unable" to negotiate for safer sex. To further compound the situation is the fact that health facilities on farms are poor and in some extreme cases, non-existent. In his study of farm workers, Sachikonye also highlights the fact that the conditions of health care infrastructure were certainly disturbed by the land invasions and it will take time to rehabilitate them.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the food shortages and general economic hardship have worsened the situation for those living with HIV and AIDS. There is also reported general neglect of the farm workers by health authorities with regards HIV and AIDS. *The Standard*

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<sup>104</sup> The authorities argue that the type of beer they brew is dangerous to human life since it affects the lungs.

<sup>105</sup> *News Day*, 24 August 2003.

<sup>106</sup> For more on remittances see, S. Bracking and L. M. Sachikonye, "Remittances, Poverty Reduction and the Informalisation of Household Well-being in Zimbabwe, Global Service Research Group, Working Paper number 45, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> Magaramombe, "'Displaced in Place': Agrarian Displacements, Replacements and Resettlement among Farm Workers in Mazowe District," p. 370.

<sup>108</sup> These were common coping strategies given by women and children in Matepatepa.

<sup>109</sup> C. C. Gwata and E. Mahuku, *Evolving Employment Patterns, Gender Relations and The Impact of HIV and AIDS in Seke District*, A report prepared for Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe, Harare: 2005, p. 41.

<sup>110</sup> Sachikonye, *Land Reform for Poverty Reduction? Social Exclusion and Farm workers in Zimbabwe*, p. 14.

newspaper of 6 March 2006 reported that the National Aids Council (NAC) had come under fire for side-lining farm workers in various HIV and AIDS intervention programmes in the country despite shocking statistics that the farming community is one of the hardest hit sectors by the scourge.<sup>111</sup> The then Secretary General of GAPWUZ, Getrude Hambira, said the spread of AIDS on farms is being fuelled by poverty, which is rampant in farming communities.<sup>112</sup> A farm worker from Thomsons farm recalled how before the FTLR their boss used to transport them with his truck to collect anti-retroviral drugs, unlike the situation now where they have to find their own transport.<sup>113</sup> Another farm worker has resigned to fate as he argued that he could not possibly walk the thirty kilometres to collect his ARVs and had decided to “just die then.”<sup>114</sup> A farm worker at Sydney maintained that they were charged 30 United States dollars for transportation to go to Bindura hospital by their employer.<sup>115</sup>

In Matepatepa, local clinics are now closed and people have to travel a long distance to Bindura Hospital. They also have to rely on mobile clinics which visit once per month in the farms to offer free consultations and some drugs, Mathew from Crowhill, argued that this was a difficult position to be in especially “when you fell sick before they visit.”<sup>116</sup> He also claims that the health workers in compounds “only treat those who suffer from malaria.”<sup>117</sup> For him; “at least when *murungu* was here his wife used to dispense drugs for other minor ailments and if she doesn’t have particular drugs *murungu* would arrange transport to the hospital and pay the bills because *murungu* did want people who fall ill but now our new bosses cannot do anything.”<sup>118</sup> This was the case with the white farmer they didn’t want to affect production so health issues were taken in to consideration. To further worsen the health risk, most of the water taps are no longer functional because of failure by the new farmers to pay water bills and maintaining water systems. In most farms, boreholes which supply water to the compounds are no longer functional because of lack of maintenance.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *The Standard*, 6 March 2005.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Pedzisai Makiwa, Thomsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Tendai Moyo, Byron Farm, 23 September 2014.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with John Masawi, Sydney Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Interview with Mathew Rugare, Crowhill Farm, 9 September 2014.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

Other farm workers have resorted to theft as a form of survival. The *Financial Gazette*, noted that the number of cases of theft at farms had increased and unfortunately some of the cases have culminated in serious repercussions like ruthless assaults by the employer, leading in some cases, to death.<sup>120</sup> Scoones acknowledges the increase in thefts but he limits this increase mainly to the period during the heightened economic crises when many workers had to live through other means like stealing and moonlighting.<sup>121</sup> Stealing, has however, become a way of life for a majority of the farm workers because of the inadequate wages and the inconsistency characteristic of the payment of their wages.

The extraction of natural resources for sell has also become common amongst farm workers. Firewood selling have created an alternative source of income for farm workers in various provinces. The constant electricity black outs, acute shortage and high cost of paraffin and gas proved a lucrative business to firewood vendors, as the demand for firewood in the urban areas surged. Magaramombe supports that, it had become a full-time occupation for a sizeable proportion of the farmworker population.<sup>122</sup> Some are now specializing in vending and in Matepatepa, the vendors cater for a multitude of clients some of whom are drawn to the area by gold panning. This business has a number of advantages for the farm workers in that it does not require a large investment, and gives the entrepreneur the freedom to engage in other activities.

In Matepatepa, many farm workers are involved in illegal gold panning especially along the Mazowe River. Fungai, a farm worker, explains how he relies on gold panning along the Mazowe River.<sup>123</sup> Gold panning seem to be more lucrative for many as a source of livelihood given the high prices the gold fetches on the formal and informal market. The prevalence of gold panning in the area has actually created labour shortages for most farmers as they lose their potential labour to panning activities. This panning, however, causes serious land degradation with reported cases of shafts collapsing. Some interviewees admitted losing relatives and friends after the rudimentary mines collapse. Magaramombe also accounts for

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<sup>120</sup> *The Financial Gazette*, 20 April 2007.

<sup>121</sup> Scoones (etal), *Land Reform Myths and Realities*, p. 144.

<sup>122</sup> Magaramombe, "'Displaced in Place': Agrarian Displacements, Replacements and Resettlement among Farm Workers in Mazowe District", p. 370.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Fungai Banda, Thomsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

police raids as among other risks, particularly after the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Republic Police introduced operation '*Chikorokoza Chapera*' ('illegal gold panning is over') in 2005.<sup>124</sup> Because of such legal measures some farm workers could not openly admit that they are surviving on gold panning along Mazowe River and its tributaries.<sup>125</sup> The Utete Report of 2003 recommended the government to urgently address the plight of farm workers noted that 'their continued presence on the farms has created numerous problems arising from illegal gold panning, misuse of farm facilities and resources and general criminal activities.'<sup>126</sup> Farm worker organisations have also called on farmers especially new farmers to pay their workers decent salaries to reduce theft and a drift from farms to illegal mining activities, which compromise the country's agricultural output.<sup>127</sup>

On most farms, piecework is by far the most common form of income generation, which is most readily available at peak periods of the agricultural season, especially during planting, weeding and harvesting. However, this piecework is insecure and poorly paid. There are no benefits, such as annual or sickness leave and medical support. Most pieceworkers were poorly paid and struggled to get any remuneration for services rendered to the farmers. However, some workers do not want to be full-time workers because remuneration is fixed and too low. Piecework thus offers a more flexible option, with payment based on accomplishing an agreed task, for example, weeding several lines of crop. Abel tells of how the majority of the farm workers in his area, survive on piece work which is usually available during peak season. He explains how they are "usually offered \$1 per 3 lines, and sometimes we work for 6 lines (which are 100m per line) for a bucket of maize. During peak season I move around with my children so that they can help with weeding. We are offered food when we are working but that depends with the farmer."<sup>128</sup>

Farm workers have also sought to cope with their changing situations through constructing or joining informal settlements. In Matepatepa there is evidence of such small informal

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<sup>124</sup> Magaramombe, "Displaced in Place': Agrarian Displacements, Replacements and Resettlement among Farm Workers in Mazowe", p. 370.

<sup>125</sup> Gold panning is illegal as authorities fear major degradation of riverine resources.

<sup>126</sup> Utete, (*et al*), *Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee on the Implementation of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme*, p. 271.

<sup>127</sup> *The Herald*, 26 January 2007.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Abel Mairosi, Rotchford Farm, 15 September 2014.

settlements. These informal settlements provide a sanctuary for a growing number of former farm workers. The popular ones in Zimbabwe include Maratos, Chihwiti, Gambuli and Porta. Sachikonye, however, argues that the housing structures on most of these informal settlements are rudimentary and worse off than those they used to stay in the compounds.<sup>129</sup> He further argues that there is, however, at least a theoretical advantage of belonging to an informal settlement; they are in reach of local donor organisations and the authorities can easily notice their desperate situations.<sup>130</sup>

Some people mentioned that they are surviving from food hand-outs from the donors and well-wishers. However donors (non-governmental organisation) are failing to render their assistance freely because the government treat sympathizers as supporters of the opposition party especially during election period. So the government always want to control the distribution of such food hand-outs which it wants to distribute along partisan lines. This is against the humanitarian principle which give preference to the need. On the other hand NGOs are sceptical to offer assistance in these former commercial farming areas because of the fear of the Western Community. During an interview with a FCTZ official, he admitted that, “it’s now difficult to source funds with the intention of helping the farm community because for them it will appear as if they are legitimising the controversial “fast track land reform” .<sup>131</sup> However, there are some few NGOs which are managing to filter into the farming communities and alleviate the hunger amongst the farm workers. In Matepapatepa there is the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Vision and Farm Community Trust. Some farm workers in the area cites cases where they are being helped by churches like the Apostolic Faith. GAPWUZ is also trying to offer food hand-outs in farms but an official argued that they are failing to do that freely because their help is politicised and as such farm workers are scared of receiving the food for the fear of being labelled as opposition.<sup>132</sup> It is important to note that the food aid is not sustainable and is short lived .The workers are not getting enough assistance from the state. The Human Rights Watch reported that workers find it difficult to access the government run GMB maize subsidies because the government

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<sup>129</sup> Sachikonye, “The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe”, p. 63.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Interview with a Farm Community Trust Zimbabwe official, Harare, 1 November 2014.

<sup>132</sup> GAPWUZ Reports, 2010.

considers them as anti- ZANUPF.<sup>133</sup> Even children in some cases are denied food aid because of their parent's affiliation with the opposition. About 60 percent of the interviewees indicated that they are being segregated in some government relief programmes unless if they are ZANU PF card holders and as a matter of urgency some are now party card holders.

The FTLR's accompanying job losses and cessation of social services have led to some changes in gender relations. As a tradition women have multiple roles, reproductive and productive work, whilst men are expected to provide for the family through productive work. With the resultant loss of employment in the farming sector, women whose gender roles include the responsibility to feed and care for the children had to solely take over the breadwinner role and seek alternative sources of income.<sup>134</sup> Some men have abdicated their traditional roles as the heads of the family and have opted to leave their wives and stay with girlfriends in the nearby farms. Esinath recalls how her husband has been cohabitating with different "*small houses*" around the farms. She explains how she has been "left to bear the entire burden."<sup>135</sup>

### **Positive Outcomes for Labour from the FTLRP**

The FTLR has, however, not been all gloom and doom for farm workers. Some farm workers have expressed their pleasure at the new arrangements and their new masters. This is mainly because, the new employers have less total control over the farm workers than was the case under freehold title as they only have land user rights and cannot enforce the residential labour tenancy.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, the fact that farms have been parcelled out to many farm owners has made it more difficult to monitor the movement of labourers. In many cases, the political power conferred by land ownership is now diffused among many smaller farmers who compete for labour. The FTLRP has tended to de-racialize the agrarian labour relations which was mostly characterised by remnants of the master-servant relationship of the

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<sup>133</sup> Human Rights Watch, "The Politics of Food Assistance in Zimbabwe", *Human Rights Briefing Report*, Vol. 15, No. 17, 2004, p. 45.

<sup>134</sup> Gwata and Mahuku, "Evolving Employment Patterns, Gender Relations and The Impact of HIV and AIDS in Seke District", p. 15.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Esinath Matope, Sydney Farm, 9 September 2014. A lot of women were complaining about that. "Small house" is a common term used to describe women who cheats with a married man.

<sup>136</sup> Chambati, "Restructuring of agrarian labour relations after Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe", p. 159.



colonial period. The freeing of labour from residential tenancy tied to provision of farm labour means that farm workers can sell their labour to competing non-farm jobs.<sup>137</sup>

Chambati also argues that the inhumane treatment that workers suffered at the hand of their white employers declined significantly after 2000.<sup>138</sup> Rege Kizito, 42, his father is from Malawi but born in Zimbabwe, used to work as a permanent general worker argued that he was “better than before,” as the farm workers are no longer under any “pressure to wake up every morning and go to work all throughout the year.” He maintained that they were now flexible and able to carry out some income generating projects without any disturbances. More importantly, he argued that there were “now able to negotiate salaries with new farmers and we have a chance to choose who to work for depending on remuneration offered.” Indeed, some of the new farmers who are able to compete with favourable wage offers have experienced serious labour shortages. Kizito’s only concern was that the new farmers should be given equipment so that they could be “in full operation and create jobs and pay workers on time.”<sup>139</sup>

Darlington, a farm worker at Thomsons farm argued that their relationship with the whites was a difficult one “but with these black masters things are going on well.” For him, the best advantage brought by the new arrangements was the ability to “choose who to work for depending on wages offered” and the ability to “negotiate with our masters about our salary increase which we did not have with the whites. Darlington explains the difficulties the new farmers were having with employees as a common problem with every employer in Zimbabwe because “life is too tough for everyone these days that’s the reason they are failing to pay us and it’s not like they don’t want to.”<sup>140</sup>

Some farm workers have acknowledged how they have been empowered by the land reform programme, which had given them time to pursue their own business projects. Some now own small shops which sell beer, cooking oil, matches, candles, and vegetables and others are

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, p. 157.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Regie Kizito, Rosedale Farm, 11 September 2014.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Darlington Mudzi, Thomsons Farm, 25 September 2014.

now involved in gold panning activities. In as much as they acknowledge that things are difficult they are glad that they are now empowered to do things they could not do during the time of the white farmer.<sup>141</sup>

In some instances, new farmers are regarded as members of a broader community linked through totem affiliation, direct kinship and church membership.<sup>142</sup> This is very different to that of the old large scale commercial sector where the difference between the farmer and labourer were defined starkly by race, wealth and culture.<sup>143</sup> This new form of relationship to some extent limit some extreme abuses though it's not guaranteed because in Matepatepa some workers reported cases of abuses.

There are also a few farm workers who have benefitted from the FTLR. These workers have therefore become their own employer and have actually managed to employ their own fair share of workers. An interesting case of such a development is a former farm manager at Rosedale farm in Matepatepa. He is very popular with the workers in the area for his ability to pay workers on time and the good working conditions on his piece of land. For him he treats his workers as not "others" like what other new farmers do. In fact, his ability to attract labour has put the other neighbouring farmers in a difficult position as they lose labour to him during peak season.

## Conclusion

The chapter has demonstrated the drastic conditions of farm workers in Matepatepa. It used narratives from the farm workers to give a survey of the nature of their relationships with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of such changes on their livelihoods. The chapter also appraised conditions of farm

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<sup>141</sup> Group interview at Stephens's farm, 17 October 2014.

<sup>142</sup> Scoones (etal), *Land Reform Myths and Realities*, p. 141.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p. 145.

workers who took up other sources of livelihood after the land reform programme especially those who lost their jobs and went into other informal ways of earning a living like gold panning. A key factor highlighted in the chapter is the presence of farm workers who also benefitted from the land reform programme and own pieces of land and another group who went into “sharecropping” arrangements with the new land owners and other varying arrangements to eke out a living.

A core argument presented in this chapter is on the use of political connections by new land owners to perpetuate unfair labour practises on the farms. Also central in the worsening labour conditions in the farms were productivity challenges caused by the general economic environment which impacted heavily on the ability of the farmers to pay their workers a living wage. Above all, the displacing and marginalising effects of the land reform were a major issue that a majority of farm workers had to grapple with and they had to go out of their way to seek other means outside agriculture from where they could make a living.

**Farm images of housing, water sources, tuckshop and ablution facilities in Matepatepa**



Photos courtesy of researcher

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

This study has examined the effects of the FTLR on farm workers from 2000 to 2010. It surveyed the violent, displacement and physically and emotionally disturbing nature of the reform programme on farm workers. It advanced the argument that the farm workers situation was made worse by their already vulnerable circumstances which caused them to have limited options in reacting to the new conditions brought about by the land reform programme. The study has shown that farm workers have largely been excluded in accessing land. It has also demonstrated the complete resentment and discernment of the state towards the farm workers by excluding them in any meaningful way in the land reform programme. The thesis has validated how the state utilised the politics of exclusion against farm workers, a good number of them who were migrants or descendants of migrants, and the white commercial farmers on the basis of their perceived foreign ancestry or citizenship. Central to the thesis' argument is the traumatic nature of the land reform for commercial farm workers as it destroyed the only home and source of livelihood they had ever known. It also exposed them to serious displacement leaving many marooned on farms while others were forcibly displaced towards the urban areas, squatter and refugee camps.

The thesis used the case study of Matepatepa to test the different hypotheses given by different scholars to try and explain the motivation behind the FTLR and why it occurred when it did. One school of thought which provided a basis from which the effects of the land reform in Matepatepa could be analysed argues that its occurrence during the time it happened was not an accident but was a ZANU PF reaction to the emergence of the opposition MDC. It argues that the programme was used by ZANU PF not only to galvanise its declining support but to also punish the white farmers and their farm workers for lending support to the fledgling MDC opposition party.<sup>1</sup> It also contends that the response of the Mugabe regime through the farm occupations of 2000 and beyond was to demonise not only the white farmers but also the farm workers as being extensions of white politics.<sup>2</sup> It is in this context,

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<sup>1</sup> Key scholars who forward this position include J. Alexander, *The unsettled lands: State –making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1983-2003*, Oxford: James Curry, 2006; Pilossof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being*.

<sup>2</sup> Raftopoulos, book review, "Working on the margins", by B. Rutherford, *Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, No1. 2003, p. 178- 180.

that the violent and destabilising nature of the FTLR was analysed in this study. It examined how politics affected the farm workers in Matepatepa during the land reform exercise and how were marginalised.

According to Alexander, the land reform programme was seen by ZANU pf as a means of garnering rural support and punishing its political foes, the white farmers, their workers and other supporters of MDC.<sup>3</sup> The endemic marginalisation of the farm workers in Matepatepa during the programme was analysed and understood from that perspective. The thesis also examined the continuous justification of the violence in the programme as what Sabelo Gatsheni Ndlovu identified as an element of defending national sovereignty, from the MDC which was consistently cast by Mugabe and ZANU PF as “a running dog of British imperialism and a dangerous front for recolonization.”<sup>4</sup> As revealed in Chapter three the study looked at how majority of farm workers in Matepatepa were victims of violence after being accused of being supporters of the MDC. Similar to Rutherford’s findings that ‘alien’ farm workers have been used as symbolic vehicle for the rhetorical and political battles and how, for long, their less visible history has been exploited for political and economic purposes,<sup>5</sup> this thesis also made parallel claims for the majority of farm workers in Matepatepa. It highlighted how farm workers in Matepatepa, especially those of Malawian, Mozambican and Zambian descent, became entangled in this confrontation by being regarded as surrogates who worked in partnership with their white employers against the government.

The thesis also used the case study of Matepatepa to test emerging claims about the success of the FTLRP by analysing its “success” from the lenses of farm workers. Ian Scoones’ book *Zimbabwe’s Land Reform: Myths & Realities* argued that far from being a disaster, small-scale farmers who benefited from the programme had begun to turn the situation around and were improving the output of the farms they had taken over. Some were out performing the white farmers they had displaced.<sup>6</sup> In *Zimbabwe takes back its land*, Joseph Hanlon, Jeanette Manjengwa and Teresa Smart expand this analysis across the rest of the country. Their study

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander, *The unsettled lands: State –making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1983-2003.*”p. 186.

<sup>4</sup> S. J. Ndlovu- Gatsheni, *Do “Zimbabweans” Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crises in Postcolonial State*, Peter Land: Switzerland, 2009, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup> Rutherford, *Working on the Margins*

<sup>6</sup> Scoones, I. (etal), *Zimbabwe’s Land Reform Myths and Realities*

is broadly supportive of the Scoones-led approach. They conclude that the ordinary poor people who replaced white farmers have become more productive farmers.<sup>7</sup> The thesis thus investigated the FTLRP to see how farm workers fared under the new farmers given these claims of success. The case of Matepatepa thus goes contrary to Scoones (etal) and Hanlon (etal)'s claims. It exposes the struggles of farm workers as a direct result of the failure of their new employers' to improve productivity. This had ripple effects on the livelihoods of farm workers.

As discussed in chapter two, the farm workers have always been a historically disadvantaged group. This was an important point of departure for this thesis and formed an important background from which the story of farm workers was analysed. Notwithstanding the fact that independence produced some changes in the political status of the poor, farm workers, however, only enjoyed marginal benefits from the majority of such changes. They continued to be exposed to extreme poor living and social conditions. The majority of the farm workers committees created on the farms after independence were, in the main, not part of the trade unions and this undermined their ability to properly represent workers. The chapter also highlighted how, after independence, farmers continued to wield great control over their workers; a situation which did not augur well with any possibility of the improvement of farm workers' conditions. The job losses that hit the period after independence also meant loss of right of tenure, loss of basic subsistence and insecurity, characteristics which also emerged during and after the FTLRP. The workers were thus historically neglected by government and farm owners and this neglect resulted in some of the worst health, education, nutrition, and housing and sanitation statistics in Zimbabwe.

The thesis also advanced the claim that the endemic poverty pervading farm worker communities in the immediate post-independence period had a huge impact on the organisational abilities of the farm workers and this was made worse by the fact that little socio-political developments were targeted at this group by either government or the ruling part. It revealed how few literacy or adult education programmes were provided for farm workers. Another central argument provided by this thesis is the fact that in as much as

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<sup>7</sup> Hanlon (etal), *Zimbabwe takes back its Land*.

independence had meant that farm workers were now legally recognised as workers and represented by a trade union in collective bargaining, the trade unions failed, effectively, to be part of farm life. They continued to be at the periphery of any meaningful and regular mechanism of dispute resolution on farms. The government and party (ZANU PF) acted as midwives for labour organisers on farms in the early 1980s and they did not enable them to stand on their own and this condemned them to a marginalised role. Another major highlight revealed in the study is the role played by the 1990s economic reform packages in reversing the gains made in the first decade of independence, especially with respect of, and the majority's access to educational and health services. It emphasised the impact of such reforms especially on the vulnerable farm workers. It noted how most of the reform measures like statutory minimum wage adjustments and others which were aimed at alleviating the most severe forms of oppression of the colonial period were adversely undermined by changes in the political economy of Zimbabwe.

However, one of the worst periods, that Zimbabwean farm workers lived through was during the FTLRP. As argued in Chapter three, the competing demands for land during the FTLRP by different classes including landless peasants, urbanites, farm workers, semi-proletariats and an emerging middle class interested in commercial farming, meant that many farm workers preferences for land resettlement could not be met.<sup>8</sup> The farm workers' chances of benefitting from land allocation were severely limited by the fact that they were never on the government's priority as intended beneficiaries. The thesis argued that the fact that farm workers were perceived as a group of foreign migrants further limited their chances of getting land as land was seen as a sole preserve of the 'original' Zimbabweans the so-called *vana vevhu*. It explored how, in spite of their contribution to the country's political and economic development, farm workers, especially those of foreign origin have largely been side-lined. It investigated how the state demonstrated outright hostility and discrimination by excluding these 'invisible subject minorities' as citizens and denying them access to resources.<sup>9</sup> It argued that such biases were part of the land reform exercise where the politics of exclusion was

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<sup>8</sup> Chambati, *Changing Agrarian Labour Relations after Land Reform*, p. 165.

<sup>9</sup> J. Muzondidya, "Jambanja: Ideological Ambiguities in the Politics of Land and Resource Ownership in Zimbabwe", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2007, p. 335.



employed against African migrants and white commercial farmers on the basis of their perceived foreign ancestry or citizenship.

The negative impact of the land reform exercise is emphasised by this thesis and as chapter three demonstrates, most farm workers lost their jobs during the FTLR. It also confirmed the displacing characteristics of the FTLRP that are highlighted in Hartnack's work. Hartnack's work "*My Life Got Lost: Farm workers and Displacement in Zimbabwe*, where he argued that almost 50 percent of farm workers were affected by displacement and this study confirmed these findings in Matepatepa.<sup>10</sup>

The thesis has also avoided the temptation of presenting farm workers solely as victims who lacked urgency to deal with their victimhood. This line of argument is emphasised in Chapter three which highlighted how some farm workers used such urgency to try and benefit from the programme or to reduce their victimhood by joining the land occupiers, seeking land and denouncing oppressive and racist whites. One key point made by this study is that the farm workers were not a homogeneous group and it will be misleading to treat them as such. They reacted to the land reform programme differently and their different reactions was shaped by their different circumstances. For example, they were others who drove out occupiers and defended themselves against attack and the attack of their white employers. While others sided with the group of land occupiers and assisted in grabbing land from their employers. Chapter three's chronicle of the nature of land occupations reveals the uneasy fit of commercial farm workers within the politics and development of Zimbabwe.<sup>11</sup> The process of land occupations had a huge impact on the position of farm workers and it shaped how farm workers fared after the land reform programme. This is demonstrated in Chapter Four which examined the nature of the farm workers relationship with their new employers and how the conditions under which they were employed changed and the impact of the changes on their livelihoods and their coping strategies.

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<sup>10</sup> Hartnack, " 'My Life got Lost': Farm workers and displacement in Zimbabwe."

<sup>11</sup> Rutherford, "Commercial Farm Workers and the Politics of (Dis) placement in Zimbabwe: Colonialism, Liberation and Democracy."

Gender also played a key role in how farm workers were treated and it was a key issue in the broader context of the FTLR. Women farm workers experienced a great deal of violence and marginalisation than their male counterparts. This was made all the more serious by the lack of a framework or frameworks for women victims of such violence as rape and forced labour to seek justice and recourse especially the FTLRP. The dissertation demonstrated that human rights violations such as evictions, displacement and violence against women negatively affected their capacity to develop sustainable socio- economic and political lives. Chapter Four showed that the conditions of farm workers from Matepatepa, like most areas of Zimbabwe's farming landscape, have been drastic and a number of factors contribute to these unpleasant situation. Key to the factors is the education level of a majority of the workers which make them virtually unemployable in other sectors of the economy and besides the general economy doesn't have much to offer in terms of employment. A majority of the farm workers interviewed only had elementary education and this made them more helpless to the new farmers who have productivity challenges. Others, who are of advanced ages, have failed to adjust like the younger generation of farm workers who have adopted other survival mechanisms like gold panning because of the physical demands of such pursuits. Other new farmers have also taken advantage of the deeply politicised atmosphere by using their political influence to affirm their power on the weak farm workers in order to abuse their labour. This has led to very unfair labour practises to prevail in Zimbabwe with damaging effects on farm workers. However, the study has established that despite these worsening labour conditions, a majority of the farm workers have stayed and continue to provide their labour on the farms. This is mainly because the worsening economic environment has not offered them viable options which they could turn to. Another important factor is the fact that a good number of these farm workers are of foreign descent and have no other homes to turn too besides the farm compounds. They, therefore, are forced to stay on as farm labourers. Women especially single and widowed were the most affected after the FTLR because of structural bias against women towards permanent employment and in most cases because of arduous farm tasks, farmers prefer their male counterparts. Children were not spared either, they are "silent victims" of FTLR most of them have dropped out of school and are drifting into delinquency.

The thesis also argued that there were some positives to the farm workers as far as the land reform programme was concerned. Evidence in Chapter four attest to the presence of positive outcomes from FTLRP. It presented narratives from some farm workers who expressed their pleasure at the new arrangements and their new masters. For these workers, this is mainly because, the new employers have less total control over them and cannot stop them from looking for other alternatives to make extra money. The parcelling out of the farms to many different farm owners have also rendered the monitoring of farm worker movements very difficult and farm workers have used that to their advantage. Most of the workers have therefore managed to sell their labour in competing non-farm jobs. The thesis also provided evidence of narratives from farm workers who have acknowledged how they have been empowered by the land reform programme, which has given them time to pursue their own business projects.

Chapter Four noted that low productivity challenges has made it difficult for new farmers to pay their workers a living wage consistently. The thesis identified the key concerns that are central to the productivity challenges faced by the “new’ farmers. One such concern highlighted in the study is that a majority of the new land recipients have failed to make an attitude adjustment and regard farming as a trade; a major issue contributing to agriculture’s poor performance. A second productivity constraint underlined in the thesis is with regards the general economic and political conditions that have, unfortunately worsened the situation for both the farmers and the farm workers. A third productivity limitation also emphasised in the thesis is the uncertain political terrain which has impacted on the attitudes of farmers who do not have security of tenure on the farms. These have caused a marked hesitation to invest among those farmers with the ability to invest in agriculture because of the prevailing scepticism about the political economy. Other productivity restrictions also underscored in the thesis include the poor rainfall which followed the period 2001 -2005, political lawlessness, hyperinflation, lack of enthusiasm by new farmers to invest in land and lack of capital to invest in agriculture.

The thesis further alluded to the violence directed towards farm workers and white farmers during the FTLR. It discussed, at length, the involvement of physical violence and the violation of property rights of white commercial farmers and farm workers. Scholars like Muzondidya,

Sachikonye, Raftopolous and Savage, Moyo and Pilosof have accounted for the presence of violence in Zimbabwe's land reform programme as a result of attempts by ZANU PF to consolidate and seek legitimacy amongst the otherwise disillusioned Zimbabwean masses.<sup>12</sup> This thesis also utilised that line of analysis in unpacking the violence that was present in Matepatepa. It used oral accounts by farm workers to highlight this violence and demonstrate its impact on their livelihoods. There was also a marked complicity on the part of law enforcement agents to deal with this violence against farm workers and instead they were many reports of the police and other state agents promoting it. Many farm workers experienced at least one human rights violation whilst others experienced multiple abuses.

It advanced the argument that central to the government's instigation of the land reform exercise there were serious political reasons which explains its complicity and participation in some of the programme's violent episodes. The demonstrated support of the opposition by a majority of the white commercial farmers made them the ruling ZANU PF's prime target of its anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric. The white farmers were seen not only as supporters but as financial backers of an opposition movement meant to remove ZANU PF from its power. The thesis argued, like other studies on Zimbabwe's land reform programme have done elsewhere, that the land reform programme became a political, race fuelled war and farm workers were, unfortunately, caught on the wrong side. It is in that context that the new 'black settlers' have displaced former land beneficiaries and their "alien" workers and persevered in excluding them from land allocation.

Significantly, the study demonstrated how the farm workers have, to some extent, utilised their agency to activate themselves in their separate areas against their exclusion. It has illuminated the everyday forms of resistance utilised by the workers to survive the endless challenges arising from their side-lining. Though many operated on the boundaries and were ill-treated because of their character, they have remained active in negotiating obstacles emerging from the land reform. Some have either stayed on the farms in the hope that the

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<sup>12</sup> Muzondidya, "Jambanja: Ideological Ambiguities in the Politics of Land and Resource Ownership in Zimbabwe; L. M. Sachikonye, "The Promised Land: From Expropriation to Reconciliation and Jambanja", in B. Raftopoulos and T. Savage(eds), *Injustice and Political Reconciliation*, Cape Town: Institute For Justice and Reconciliation, 2004; S. Moyo, and W. Chambati, *Impacts of Land Reform on Farm Workers and Farm Labour Processes*, Harare: African Institute of Agrarian Studies, 2004; Pilosof, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Being*.

situation will improve, while others have been forced into a unique 'commercial farm-urban migration'. On the farms, sexual division of labour is, to a large extent, now completely non-existent and both men and women compete to secure the poorly paid piece jobs, casual work and other forms of making a living. A significant number of farm workers have got into informal occupations like gold panning, fishing, hunting and gathering, poultry, shoe-repairing, beer brewing and vending. Others, in order to benefit from government food aid, have acquired ZANU PF party cards so that they could be associated with the ruling party. It is important to note that these findings are similar to findings made by other scholars elsewhere. For example, Sachikonye argued that farm workers have, to some extent, employed their agency to mobilise by engaging in insecure and poorly paid casual works known as *maricho* on functional farms and informal occupations like gold panning, fishing and vending.<sup>13</sup> Of interest are the expressions of nostalgia by the farm workers who remember the "good old days" under their former white employers. These elements are highlighted in chapter two and four of the thesis where a significant number of farm workers I interviewed remembered, with regret, their lives under their old employers especially as they compared it to their present circumstances. Their conditions back then might not have been good but in the post-FTLR it became non-issue because of the treatment they are now getting from new farmers.

This thesis' discussion of the impact of the FTLRP on farm workers is premised on an awareness of the colonial legacy of such a phenomenon which have had a huge impact in shaping not only the direction of the land reform process but the treatment of farm workers as well. The forceful acquisition of land during the colonial period was conveniently used by many players and proponents of the FTLRP as justification for compulsory acquisition of land for redistribution in 2000. Such proponents related the land struggle to a longer and broader history of anti-imperialism and anti-colonial struggles. Likewise, the predicament of farm workers has a long history which stretches back in the colonial period. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, farm labour was associated with low wages and poor working conditions. It was also associated with long working hours, ill-treatment by farmers which

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<sup>13</sup> Sachikonye, "The Situation of Commercial Farm Workers after Land Reform in Zimbabwe", p. 61.

included physical means of discipline, poor accommodation, inadequate rations and outbreak of diseases like cholera and dysentery.

In conclusion, the thesis established the marginalized position of farm workers in Zimbabwe during the FTLRP. It has demonstrated the fact that this marginalization was not a new phenomenon confronting Zimbabwe's farm workers but had a long history that stretched from the colonial period. The FTLRP only worsened this marginalization because of its accompanying and worsening political polarization and economic meltdown which further exposed the farm workers to the vicissitudes of a struggling farming class who tried to deal with their low productivity by exploiting the farm workers. It has also revealed that the farm workers were not a homogeneous group and their reaction to the FTLRP was thus not uniform. Some, though in the minority, managed to benefit from the programme by acquiring land and becoming thriving farmers in their own right. Others managed to make use of other available avenues mainly in the informal sector to eke out a living for themselves. Some farm workers who were displaced and found themselves in informal settlements managed to make use of their displaced status to access resources from NGOs which they could previously not access as farm workers.

The thesis adds to the formidable body of literature on the FTLR and it brings a refreshingly different angle that goes deep to examine its impact on farm workers through a qualitative analysis that utilizes the voices of the farm workers to tell their own story. In as much as there are many studies on the land reform programme in Zimbabwe and its impact on farm workers, the thesis provided a detailed, in-depth, and qualitative analysis of its impact on farm workers. It utilized, in a big way, the voices of farm workers, which are usually suppressed in other studies of a similar nature. The study got into the homes, minds and lives of farm workers and provided them an opportunity to tell their own stories by its extensive use of narratives and interviews. Such narratives, though limited to Matepatepa, provides an important window to the general situation prevailing in the lives of farm workers in Zimbabwe.

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