Women, Mobility and Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

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Women, Mobility and Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

Experiences of Fast Track Land Reform

By

Patience Mutopo

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To my late father, Crispen Takawira Mutopo, your legacy and wishes have been fulfilled through the completion of this book.
To my mother, Gertrude Zhakata-Mutopo, you have been able to witness this great achievement, glory to God!

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Preface

This book emanated from a PhD study undertaken at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and the Cologne African Studies Centre, University of Cologne, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Germany, in 2012. The PhD thesis was supervised by Professor Dr. Michael Bollig of the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and the Director of the Cologne African Studies Centre University of Cologne, Germany. It was also supervised by Professor Dr. Paul Hebinck of the Rural Development Sociology Group, University of Wageningen, the Netherlands.

Fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe has received a great deal of attention in the media and in academic publications since 2000. It has been associated with chaos, economic stagnation, and abuse of the property and human rights of previous white farm owners. There is, however, another side to the story. The detailed research presented in this book is based on iterative multi-sited ethnography at Merrivale farm, Tavaka village, and various sites in South Africa. The research reveals how the dynamics generated by fast-track potentially offer new development opportunities—specifically for women. This finding challenges existing expert notions and opinions about women's rural land use, livelihoods, and rural development. The book examines the extent to which negotiations and bargaining by women with the family, state, and traditional actors have proved useful in accessing land in one semi-arid district, Mwenezi, in southern Zimbabwe. The book reveals the hidden, complex, and innovative ways adopted by women to access land and thereby shape livelihoods based on transitory mobility. Intensification of land use is demonstrated in an area defined as agro-ecologically unsuitable for crop production, revealing a new discourse on land use and land classification systems. I challenge the assumption that western notions of individual rights provide the best approach for women in Africa to access land; rather, it is the negotiated, agency-centred, bargaining processes that exist in patriarchal structures that lead to cultural contracts enabling women's access to land. Access to land is linked to access to other natural resources at Tavaka village, such as water and mopane worms, reflecting how land is a resource that has broad economic and social benefits. Transitory mobility, involving trading in South Africa became a major activity undertaken by the women. Trips to South Africa intensified consequent to land acquisition, leading to new market searches beyond national borders. The role of collective action, conflicts, conflict resolution, and women's agency in overcoming the challenges associated with trading in South Africa are examined within the ambit of the sustainable livelihoods framework, a gendered

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approach to land reform processes and social networks analysis. Mobility of actors, ideas, and food crops—such as bambara nuts, groundnuts, and fresh vegetables—became a recurrent feature of this work, leading to the development of new commodity chains in the agricultural domain in Zimbabwe. An important tenet developed in the work is the importance and centrality of multi-dimensional social networks of people, ideas, and resources in influencing livelihoods through women's access to land; such networks are also fundamental in accessing of trading space in South Africa through totemic bonds (*mutupo*) and friendships (*chisahwira*) developed over long periods. I have demonstrated that there is not a uniform agrarian crisis in Zimbabwe; rather, different regions have different actors engaging in intensified land-based livelihoods. The case study shows how such livelihoods, hidden from official gaze, are actively constructed through ingenuity, agency, capabilities, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Women emerge as critical actors in constructing hidden livelihoods and making concealed decisions; these processes have led to the development of new capabilities with women at the centre of rural production, social reproduction and economic transformation in Tavaka village. I also show how the structures defined in conceptual approaches in the anthropology of development and rural livelihoods are challenged by the categorisations that I develop through the women themselves.

Patience Mutopo
Harare, November 2013

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Acronyms and Terminology

Agritex	Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services
bhuku	literally book, the list of names of village residents maintained by a headman
BSAC	British South African Company
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
chema	money or offering given to the family of the deceased as a demonstration of grief and empathy with the bereaved family.
chirimo	Warm part of the dry season, post-harvest period, when people are not working in the fields
chisi	day on which work in the fields for private gain is forbidden by the tribal guardian spirit; varies across Zimbabwe
CIO	Criminal Investigation Office
Cottco	Cotton Company of Zimbabwe
dare remusha	village court
EMA	Environmental Management Agency
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTLR	Fast-track land reform
FTLRP	Fast-track Land Reform Programme
garisanai vematongo	living amicably with neighbours and relatives in the community
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
humwe	work party with beer provided
ivhu repachuru	termite mound soil
jambanja	a term used to describe the violent, chaotic invasion of farms
kukohwa	to harvest, harvesting season
kumaruzevha	communal, home areas
lobola	conventionally bridewealth; a set of transactions uniting two families and centred on the marriage of their children
madhumeni	agricultural extension workers
maheu	sweet beer
mapfihwa	kitchen house (hearthstone)
maricho	labour in exchange for cash or food
matemba	small, dried fish
mativi	open-cast wells
matura	granaries

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mifuku	water holes
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
muchirimo	in the dry season
mufushwa	dried vegetables, especially spinach, cooked and dried
mugodhi	village well
mutengesi	a sell-out
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
nhaka	tangible assets, inheritance
nhimbe	beer party for work
nyamukuta	Village Health Worker
rapoko	millet
round nuts	bambara nuts (*Vigna subterranea* (L.) Verdc.)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
sadza	stiff porridge; the staple prepared from meal of maize, millet, sorghum or rice
sahwira	close, or ritual, friend
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
ivhu repachuru	termite mound soil
tsewu	the field a man gives his wife after she has spent time within his family and borne him children
ukama	family relationships
vahosi	senior wives (term of respect)
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
zhizha	rainy, or growing season

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CHAPTER 1

Setting the Research Agenda and the Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Fast-track land reform (FTLR) in Zimbabwe has been examined from various perspectives (Matondi 2012, Scoones et al. 2010, Murisa 2009, Marongwe 2008, Muzondidya 2007, Alexander 2006, Hellum and Derman 2004, Goebel 2005a, Sachikonye 2005, Moyo and Yeros 2005, Masiiwa 2004, Hammar and Raftopolous 2003, Roth and Gonese 2003); issues concerning politics and land, agricultural production, social organisation on fast-track farms, labour dynamics, and tenure security have all been probed. Gender, however, has not been an important category in most of the research undertaken so far. More than ten years after the implementation of FTLR began, it is important to find out how women, who have often been a neglected subject in fast-track research, have adapted to the new social and economic space.

In July 2000, the land occupation of white-owned farms by war veterans, local rural people, and urbanites began in Masvingo Province and spread to the provinces of Matabeleland and Mashonaland in Zimbabwe. These widespread land occupations played a critical role in compelling the Government of Zimbabwe to formulate and implement the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) that culminated in the transfer of "11 million hectares of land within a three year period. It was the largest property transfer ever to occur in Africa since decolonisation, with approximately 147,000 new farm units being created" (Sachikonye 2005:32). In Namibia, in contrast, only about 1,000 units have been created across the different regions in the country (Odendaal 2010); such contrasts give Zimbabwe a focal position in radical land reform in the Southern African region. It is useful therefore to conceptualise land reform not simply as creating a neutral social space but rather as an arena in which social actors strategise and cooperate as well as struggle and negotiate over access to, and use of, key resources and their meanings. Hebinck (2008) argues that land reform has to be analysed as creating both structured and unstructured social spaces—the result of interactions between and among a range of social actors. The emergent properties of land reform are thus a

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kaleidoscope[1] of various sets of interlocking projects. Hebinck and Shackleton (2011) have noted that land reform should be understood as a script, as it denotes competing claims of a political, social, and economic nature that influence attempts to redistribute land. In this book, I seek to demonstrate that the FTLRP was about the construction of livelihoods based on agriculture-centred notions of development that would also lead to the reshaping and redefining of new livelihood spaces and identities tied to agriculture by individuals, particularly in this case, women. I validate the contention that land reform should not be premised on a linear model because land issues in Zimbabwe encapsulate competing political, historical, economic, and social aspects.

To find out more about the actual events on the ground in the aftermath of the FTLRP,[2] I decided to undertake an anthropological study to examine the day-to-day strategies employed by women on the new FTLR farms to access land and establish other livelihood patterns, such as non-permanent patterns of mobility.[3] Land and gender have an interdependent relationship as almost 80 per cent of agricultural work in Africa is carried out by women (Jacobs 2010, FAO 2009), who act as the labour providers, managers, and harvesters of the agricultural produce; however, because primogeniture dominates African rural landscapes and natural resource governance at local and national levels, women do not own land as individuals.

It is important to note that this study was situated within a broader study called *Mobility, Networks, and Institutions in the Management of Natural Resources in Contemporary Africa*. It was funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung in Germany and focused on developing young scholars from Africa. It was

1 I use the term *kaleidoscope* to refer to the many facets of the fast-track land reform process in Zimbabwe in order to provide a visual analogy of the complexity of the process manifested by the ever-changing colours and shapes reflected in the constantly changing policies and legal prescriptions of those governing the land.

2 Matondi (2012) notes that fast-track land reform is an on-going phase in Zimbabwe's post-colonial history. Since 2000, farms are still being gazetted on a daily basis for resettlement. However, I argue that this study was conducted on a fast-track farm where the settlers had occupied the space since 2000, hence my referring to the period as "the aftermath of fast-track land reform" (Murisa 2009) argues that for these settlers the fast-track land reform phase has already concluded; hence I focus on the events surrounding the post-fast-track phase.

3 Transitory mobility refers to the circular migrations undertaken by women into South Africa in order to trade their agricultural produce. The women do not stay in South Africa for long periods; they only travel for trade purposes for between three days and two weeks at most. After trading their commodities, they return to their homes at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm.

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administered at the Cologne African Studies Centre at the University of Cologne. The major aim of the project was to investigate the relationship between new forms of mobility and natural resource management in African savannah environments and to find out how the accelerated mobility of people and capital, and how ideas disseminated via such mobility, influence livelihoods and lead to new livelihood options. The mobile people referenced in the various processes range from poor rural farmers and landless people to labour migrants and urban-based elites. All these groups compete for access to, and control over, natural resources. The project also sought to bring out the complex interrelationships among mobility, networks, livelihoods, institutions, and conflicts over the governance of natural resources in Africa.

The programme concentrated on three forms of mobility: rural–rural migration, where poor farmers leave impoverished lands in search of more productive lands within the rural sphere; urban–rural mobility, where elites with international and national connections often invest capital in land in rural Africa; and finally, rural–urban–rural circular migration, as, at present, many Africans are neither rural nor urban because they straddle settings and relate equally to rural home communities and urban communities. They invest remittances and different types of goods, as well as social capital, in their rural homes. My study was also influenced by rural–rural mobility, where farmers moved from communal areas to occupy land on the former commercial farms, and urban–rural mobility, where people moved from towns to settle on the land, as well as transitory mobility where women travel periodically to South Africa to trade their food crops and other commodities.

I also present the conceptual framework that has guided my arguments. I have drawn on the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) (Chambers and Conway 1992, de Haan 2008, Scoones 1998, Hebinck and Shackleton 2011). The SLA is situated within the paradigm of the gendered approach to land reform with regard to agency (Jacobs 2012, Goebel 2005a, Razavi 2003, Long 2001) and the strengthening of rural women's social organisational capacities.

The study is situated in Mwenezi District, which is located in southeastern Zimbabwe in Masvingo Province along the Chirundu–Beitbridge Highway, 120 km from the Beitbridge border post, which demarcates Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Research Objectives and Questions

Because I sought to find answers to the way land formed the central basis of women's access to natural resources at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm in

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Mwenezi District and how transitory mobility has been a critical livelihood strategy for women, the study was guided by the following research questions and objectives:

- How have women in Mwenezi District used passive strategies to access land in the aftermath of the FTLRP?
- How has access to land enabled the women to access other natural resources (such as mopane worms, water, firewood, indigenous vegetables, and soil from termite mounds) within the new plots?
- What role has transitory mobility to South Africa played as a coping and survival livelihood option for the women?

By answering these questions, the study seeks to contribute empirical knowledge on women's strategies in land reform projects and the dynamics of large-scale rural–rural mobility linked to international transitory mobility when the women engage in trading trips to South Africa. I analyse how post-fast-track access to land has been managed by women and how land acquisition has shaped other dimensions of livelihoods and survival strategies linked to transitory mobility to South Africa. Goebel (2005a:125) notes that "although a lot of data has been gathered on FTLRP, there is a dearth of literature on the role of women in this process." Marongwe (2008), in a 205-page document, has only half a paragraph on women in his in-depth research on the FTLRP. This work seeks to fill this gap and to present a more comprehensive understanding of women's access to land and livelihoods after land reform in Mwenezi District.

The Conceptual Framework

My conceptual framework is borrowed from the SLA and the gendered approaches to land reform. I have taken several components from each theoretical approach in my analysis. I have incorporated these theories into my anthropological work in order to elucidate how different political, economic, and social dimensions affect women's land-based livelihoods in Zimbabwe. My point of departure is to illuminate how land-based livelihoods are connected to women, social networks, self-empowerment, and livelihood strategies. These dimensions are brought together and interpreted on a foundation of ethnographic research. The ethnographic analysis is important for creating a better understanding of how land-based resources are tied to other livelihood options such as mobility; but this task cannot be undertaken for a community without deeper integration and study of the community.

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I have restricted myself to land reform as a gendered process influenced by the different profiles of activities and control that are created in a community in order to facilitate women's land-based livelihoods. Livelihood styles in situations where women access land resources and use the land to carve out new livelihood patterns are usually embedded within the agency of the women involved. I have been more anthropological in positioning my argument within the frame of self-empowerment of women, and I have avoided being overly philosophical since my work is intended to be purely scientific.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

The SLA was pioneered by Chambers and Conway (1992), Scoones (1998) and Ellis (2003). The approach usefully points to the different assets, both material and social (tangible and intangible), which affect the livelihood strategies that people adopt (Arce and Hebinck 2002, O'Laughlin 2001). Social, political, and cultural capital may not be easy to quantify–although attempts have been made with social capital (Bourdieu 1990)–but their role is undoubtedly important in understanding livelihoods. The SLA is a framework that seeks to demonstrate poor people's use of agency in shaping livelihood outcomes. The framework recognises that policies, institutions, and processes influence people's choices of livelihood strategies as well as change the opportunities and constraints that they face in pursuing different strategies in a particular context (Mubaya 2010). A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access), and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide livelihood opportunities for the next generation, and when it contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers and Conway 1992:6).

This approach is reflected in this study by the multiple hidden ways that women silently use to access land and engage in transitory mobility as a coping strategy to maintain their land-based livelihoods. The political and economic environment that has prevailed from the early 2000s to the present has led the women at Merrivale Farm to re-orient their livelihood options and hence look far beyond Zimbabwe's borders in search of markets, despite the threats and vulnerabilities they face in pursuing a livelihood strategy based on trading their agricultural and other commodities in South Africa. Livelihoods in this era of globalisation are increasingly organised in networks (de Haan 2008). This trend has been encouraged by the interrelated and accelerated processes of collectivisation, individualisation, multi-tasking, and mobility (Mutopo 2010, Murisa 2009, Matondi and Dekker 2010). These facets have taken centre

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stage in moulding livelihoods on the fast-track farms in Mwenezi. However, there are no clear or simple ways to measure these choices and trade-offs between different livelihood strategies and outcomes. A livelihoods approach has informed the study of food markets here, where the objective is to understand the extent to which the poor participate in these markets, on what terms, and whether they are net buyers or sellers at different times of the year. In practice, the framework encourages researchers to understand the complexity of livelihoods at household and community level, and the local contextual factors and relationships that affect livelihoods.

Livelihoods, Markets, and Land Reform

Few studies using the SLA have addressed the functioning of rural markets and the linkages between local, national, regional, and global markets. The construction of rural people's livelihoods is based on the functioning of such markets (Dorward et al. 2003). Their understanding of markets should be interpreted within the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres that influence people's day-to-day lives. Such interpretations have been an area in which economic anthropological studies have sought to fill a gap in the SLA, creating the social and cultural construction of markets in societies. In other words, the "policy, institutions, and processes" part of the framework in the anthropology of policy science remains something of an enigma. Policies on trade issues sometimes seem just to emerge, with no prior consultation with critical players, such as women. Mobility networks–used by individuals in different dimensions–require analysis at a community level order to understand how social capital is constructed, something on which the SLA is silent. This study has tried to reveal how women manage creatively and build social capital at home, across the borders when negotiating exit-entry formalities, accessing trading space, and engaging with other traders from various countries in trading their commodities.

My research findings about the women from Mwenezi–Zimbabwean traders in South Africa–seek to fill the gap in the literature on women, market creation, and agriculture. Ikdahl et al. (2005) assert that a sustainable livelihood is achieved by women only if they can engage in land acquisition via either state agency or their own self-help initiatives. Livelihoods within land-reform processes in Southern Africa should be viewed in terms of networks, network-builders, and network nodes, as these facilitate the emergence and resolution of conflicts in the livelihood options pursed by communities (Hebinck and Shackleton 2011). It should also be noted that livelihoods are shaped by circumstances and systems that are constantly negotiated, as women have to manage the ever-changing social spaces in which they craft their livelihood models.

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Women and Gendered Theories of Land Reform

Gendered theories of land reform should be understood as the social and cultural categorisations that influence how men and women access land in redistributive programmes. Gender is defined as the social construction that societies use to classify female and male roles, particularly in fields of social production, such as farming. In the context of declining support for smallholder agricultural production, and as women are the major agricultural workers not just on African farm plots but in the developing world generally, it is important to appreciate the critical role that women play in agrarian and land reform processes worldwide. Rural societies' gendered processes with regard to livelihoods shape how women and men access land (Matondi 2012, Jacobs 2010, Goebel 2005a, Razavi 2003, Makura-Paradza 2010, Mutopo 2011). Gendered approaches to land inherently provide evidence as to how women empower themselves in accessing and controlling land-based assets. The self-empowering of women is regulated within the sphere of power relations that are constantly negotiated and transformed by the different actors involved (Whitehead and Tsikata 2003, Jacobs 2010).

An analysis of rural social organisation that focuses on social networks and agency from a women-centred perspective thus becomes more compelling. I have taken this approach in order to develop a deeper understanding of how rural women, through their own forms of social organisation and agency, are responding to the challenges around their social reproduction in the quest to access and own land in Zimbabwe, where land—traditionally dominated by primogeniture—is increasingly becoming a commoditised resource. Thus, the study of social organisation needs to go beyond the traditional preoccupations of political economy. Political economy is imbued with notions of the effects of political and economic structures on the lives of women and men; however, it fails to take into account how the social and cultural fabric of society has a strong bearing on economic and political processes. Studies on gender, anthropology, and land must therefore identify the importance of women in shaping the processes underlying the emergence and evolution of local authority and platforms of cooperation.

Gender, Deagrarianisation and Agrarianisation in Zimbabwe

Most rural Zimbabwean households still produce agricultural commodities, but they have incorporated other highly diversified, non-farm livelihood strategies that include seasonal migration and rural-based artisanal activities to supplement incomes earned from agriculture (Moyo 2002). Through different strategies of trading, a large share of households' agricultural production is channelled into world markets through the export of classic primary

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commodities. Contemporary female dwellers on fast-track farms wear more than one hat, so it is difficult to categorise them as operating exclusively within a subsistence sphere as they are slowly using their land-based niches to carve out markets in regional trade.

Whereas agricultural-based livelihoods have been assumed dominant in the countryside, Bryceson *et al*. (2000) and Ellis (2003) have recently made the claim that farm-based income strategies are on the decline because of, among other factors, increased levels of rural to urban migration and the diversification of income sources and livelihoods beyond farm production. Generalisations about agricultural decline in Africa are not applicable as a whole because in Africa, as in some other parts of the world, agriculture plays a crucial role in shaping livelihoods of men, women, and the youth (Jacobs 2010).

Bryceson has argued that peasantries are disappearing in Africa; however, this notion demands careful scrutiny. For instance, with the FTLRP in Zimbabwe, women's mobility to South Africa motivates, and has been motivated by, access to land-based livelihoods. Thus, Bryceson's (2000) concept of "deagrarianisation" requires more nuanced and critical thinking about the nature of a changing agricultural world, particularly in Zimbabwe. Scoones and Wolmer (2003:4) have also asserted that "most farmers in Southern Africa have always been farmers, combining agricultural work with other livelihood activities including a range of off farm work." Such assertions will be further interrogated here through examination of the parameters of validity of these contentions. It has been postulated that peasant agriculture is not disappearing but rather is gaining momentum (van der Ploeg 2010) as women are increasingly becoming independent smallholder farmers. This perspective represents an important foundation for changes in managing smallholder production systems. Ecological and social capital supply the main natural resources, coproduction allows for steady improvements in technical efficiency (the ratio between output and the resources used as inputs), and self-provisioning implies that all the technical and social means required to convert natural resources into production are available.

Women, Rural Social Organisation and Social Networks

The ability of women to maintain their livelihoods in a land-based society is also influenced by social organisation rooted in social networks. Long (2001) argues that social actors possess the knowledge and capability to solve problems and to learn how to intervene in the flow of social events around them. The term *social networks* is used here to refer to either kinship or non-kinship

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associations that people establish for particular purposes with others in their locality or in another place. Rural women have developed different ways and means of coping with periods of physical, economic, and political stress in order to manage their livelihood portfolios. Most coping mechanisms employed by women emerge from their capacity to engage in different social networks and their ability to act as a group and with different social structures as people to produce a common good and develop better livelihood security systems. Giddens (1984) posits that actor networking depends upon the emergence of a network of actors who become partially enrolled in the project of some other person. Households themselves appear to be behaving as unstable units rather than as corporate groups. Individual members of households with diverse gendered resources and constraints are increasingly pursuing their own livelihood strategies–via pursuits that may or may not conform to societal and cultural norms in African rural households, where cooperative resource governance and sharing schemes are the underlying premise.

There is an interdependent relationship between the way rural communities organise themselves in terms of use of social networks and collective action. Women have emerged as critical social networkers in Mwenezi and have been able to form collective arrangements that facilitate their mobile livelihoods as a way of cushioning themselves against livelihood threats and vulnerabilities in the environments in which they operate, whether local or non-local. Social organisation has been influenced by agency because the links created by rural women through the work parties they conduct for agricultural purposes also influence their collective action when they are involved in trading their commodities. Over the years, rural women have developed different social organisational arrangements aimed at enhancing their quality of life and that of their families. These support systems include networks based on friendship, totem-based relationships, and communal work-sharing both locally and afar (Mutopo 2011, Matondi 2012, Hebinck and Shackleton 2011). These innovative support systems help them to cushion themselves against threats to their livelihoods. The gendered approach was useful in this study because it provided the lens through which to understand the specific concepts and analytical tools for the study of women, land reform, and social reproduction in the context of dependent social interactions that shaped land-based livelihoods.

Murisa (2009:56) further states that "rural social organisation entails the generation and use or manipulation of networks of social relations and the channelling of specific items such as claims, orders, goods, instruments and information." Individual or group action is influenced and modified by each individual's action as well as by the institutional arrangements forming the

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context of their action. Likewise, individual or group action affects and influences existing institutional arrangements, and actions are not totally determined by, or predictable on the basis of, contextual factors.

Law (1992) asserts that human beings should not be considered as mere organisms but as social actors who have material properties and a history of social relations over which they may have some control, but on which they depend. Gluckman (1958) argues that it is important to study social networks of groups that are not kinship based, for instance, women as actors. This approach helps to build an analysis of how people interact and build trust based on non-familial bonds. The social networks could be either *standardised* or *non-standardised*; standardised networks are referred to by Latour (1986) as spaces of prescription, and networks of variation and flux are also referred to as spaces of negotiation. Firstly, standardised networks are those networks in which entities are effectively aligned and the network is stabilised. Despite the heterogeneous quality of any previous identities, these entities work in unison, thereby enabling the enrolling actor (the centre) to "speak" for all. Standardisation thus could be regulated by rules, such as burial societies, or could emanate from social bonds that cannot be codified, such as totems. Social networks operate in the natural, economic, and political spaces in which the actors are involved.

From an actor-network perspective, actors can only do things in association with others (Latour 1986), and it is only by enlisting heterogeneous others in sets of stable relations that it is possible to transmit action and make things happen. Thus, Law (1997:3) claims that the conception of the term actor-network is deliberately "oxymoronic" because it refers to a centred actor on the one hand and a decentred network on the other. Although networks are forged for a variety of purposes, they are always a means of acting upon space, and it is the associations that define spatial qualities. Space, although partly physical, is therefore wholly relational.

Connecting Sla, Gender, Land Reform, and Social Anthropology

In developing the conceptual paradigm for this study, I have demonstrated the relationships that exist between livelihood approaches and the gendered dimensions of land reform processes. I have demonstrated that the anthropological field is embedded with social, economic, political, juridical, and cultural notions that one could empirically study and further develop an analysis of other theories constructed by different social scientists. The fact that women's livelihoods are outcomes of social, cultural, ecological, economic, and

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political interactions suggests that any one-sided analysis of processes in each of these broad domains is bound to fail in constructing reality. Adopting a *people-in-places* paradigm not only captures ecological and political economy concerns but also allows an investigation and a social analysis using livelihoods and gendered approaches to land reform. The approaches incorporate local knowledge, perceptions, history, and explanations influencing the scientist's understanding of social and ecological phenomena. This understanding of the social world of rural women is only possible through interactions with their society; and this is an important part of the work of socio-cultural anthropology.

The approaches used in this book provide evidence of the opportunities women create in order to be involved in the decision-making processes governing their lives in the context of different cultural, economic, and political inhibitions. The conceptual frames adopted in the empirical validations stress local self-reliance and the avoidance of external dependence (de Haan 2010). Sensitivity to the local environment is paramount as the women appreciate the importance of social networking in the different livelihood styles on which they embark, in building their capabilities as individuals, and creating livelihood security options for themselves as individuals and their families.

Outline of the Book

In Chapter 1, I set out the research agenda in which the research questions and the conceptual frame guiding this study are discussed. I unravel the link between social anthropology and the conceptual paradigms that I have used in the analysis of this work.

In Chapter 2, I present the detailed description of the methodology used in this study. The research protocol from the national to the local levels, the data collection methods, and the sampling procedures are spelled out. I describe all the steps taken in analysing the data. Information is also given on the challenges that I faced in conducting this study.

Chapter 3 describes the geographical location of the study area from the provincial to the village level. Information concerning the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial phases is analysed. I explain the agro-ecological conditions, the political systems, governance at local levels, natural resource management, and the people's other livelihood options.

Chapter 4 builds on Chapter 3, as I attempt to give an account of the birth of Merrivale Farm, the first settlers at the farm, the type of farm enterprise on which the white commercial farmers embarked, and their reasons for doing so.

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Mobility patterns that led to the birth of Merrivale Farm are also addressed. The labour question also features prominently in this chapter. I explore the question of the different owners of the farm since its inception in 1957. An explanation of black–white relations is also attempted in this chapter as a way of understanding both present day and historical land management systems in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5 explains how the new Merrivale Farm has evolved since 2000; I describe the events surrounding the FTLRP in Mwenezi and how Merrivale was gazetted for resettlement. The key actors in FTLRP and their influence on the local communities are also a subject for reflection. Women's roles in the occupation of Merrivale are discussed, as well as how the plots were carved out, and the actors responsible. I describe also the farming enterprises at Merrivale Farm, the organisation of the household farming units, the crops grown, and the livestock kept. The labour issues at the new settler farms are also assessed. In order to give a richer account of the new farming units, I draw on information on the political and social organisation of the farms and the traditional systems responsible. The agricultural produce commodity chains are discussed, as are women's role in related activities.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the role of women at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm. I explain the strategies that women deploy to acquire land, and the actors they—and men—consider important in their quest for access to land. In this chapter, I extrapolate the role of women in social networks and the importance of social networks in the lives of these women. A central point raised is how women negotiate and bargain with patriarchy at all levels of land and natural resource use and access. Since community gardens are an important source of livelihood for the women, I recount how the hand-irrigated gardens at Merrivale are managed by women and how men have been included in the hand-irrigated gardening cooperatives. The rules for operating the gardens are also presented. Women's access to other natural resources, such mopane worms, water, and non-timber products, is explored, and I recount how these natural resources are managed and how women cope with the different management styles as they strive to access these natural resources. An important feature in this chapter is how non-governmental organisations have been slowly starting self-help projects at Merrivale Farm in order to meet the needs of the women farmers.

In Chapter 7, I give a first-hand account of the journeys taken by the women from Tavaka Village to South Africa, as they travel to sell their groundnuts, bambara nuts, mopane worms, fresh indigenous vegetables, and other commodities manufactured from clay or reeds. This chapter develops a link between how land accessed is used and how markets have social influences

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and are carved out by the women. All aspects of the trips are detailed—from logistical planning to accessing markets and utilising social networks. This chapter also examines how agency and collective action are critical for the women in their trips to South Africa. Conflict and the approaches taken to conflict resolution are presented in cases where there have been disagreements among the women on their trading trips. This account of the trading trips helps to elucidate how land-based livelihoods at Merrivale have influenced the women to search for better markets for their produce in South Africa.

In Chapter 8, I conclude the study and reflect on the methodology and conceptual frame used. I also propose policy recommendations for the betterment of women's access to land and livelihoods within the context of human mobility in a rapidly changing rural environment in Zimbabwe.

Summary

I have set out the research agenda for the book. I have also attempted to situate my work within the conceptual framework of the SLA and gendered theories of land reform in terms of women's access to land and livelihoods in a world characterised by transitory mobility. I have also drawn reflections from the SLA about how rural populations use the physical, economic, and social assets at their disposal to engage in other livelihood strategies to cushion themselves against more physical or manmade threats. In order to buttress my conceptual framework more vigorously, I have also drawn parallels with the notion of gendered approaches to land reform. I reflect on the notions of agency in the debates on agrarianisation and deagrarianisation in Zimbabwe's land reform. Rural women often develop their potentialities and agency in order to access resources and enhance their livelihoods. The link between the conceptual framework adopted and the methodology has been described as it provides a basis for understanding how women operate in their life contexts as they seek to build sustainable livelihoods.

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CHAPTER 2

Methodology

> As a social ethnographer I came to realise that there was need to connect myself, the people with whom I worked, societal norms, and the different places, countries, and territories that I inhabited during my quest to understand the women-centred processes in land acquisition and livelihoods after fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe.[1]

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodological framework underpinning the study (de Vos *et al.* 2005). It gives the readers a background and context for the study carried out at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm in Mwenezi District, Zimbabwe. I adopted qualitative approaches to ascertain women's access to land and other natural resources on Mwenezi District's new smallholder plots in the aftermath of the FTLRP. The approaches taken also enabled me to deepen my knowledge as to how transitory mobility to South Africa was employed as a livelihood option by some of the women in the study sample. I explain in depth the methodology employed for the study. The chapter is divided into two sections: the first provides a description of the research strategies I adopted and the procedures I followed with national, provincial, district, and local level authorities to get clearance for the fieldwork; the second section explains the methods used for data collection, my experiences in Mwenezi and South Africa, and the challenges I faced as I sought to understand the complete discourse on women, land, natural resource access, and transitory mobility.[2]

This work seeks to fill a methodological gap and present a more comprehensive understanding of women's access to land and livelihoods after land reform in Mwenezi District. A more nuanced understanding has been achieved by employing a qualitative research methodology, including ethnography. My own understanding and reflections based on my 16 months of fieldwork in

1 Author's thoughts.

2 As mentioned in Chapter 1, *transitory mobility* is defined in this work as the temporary cross-border movement of women from Mwenezi to South Africa in order to sell their agricultural produce. Sometimes I use the term interchangeably with the term *mobility*, but I am still referring to the same phenomenon.

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Mwenezi enable me to confirm that ethnography involves the collection of data by participating in a society's day-to-day activities, by being one of them, across a range of actions—during church services, weeding, cropping in the fields, and trading in South Africa, for instance. It also involves the process of writing and making sense of the data in an academic field.

Qualitative Research Methodology

The study of a particular society in order to understand its social organisation, resource access, and other livelihood options is a convoluted and lengthy process. The interactions of the various actors within a given locality influence how they access important resources like land and how women's access to land is redefined in societies where primogeniture dominates. These interactions compel one to use research methods that expose the dynamism of the numerous intricate processes of social interaction. It is against this background that qualitative methods were considered suitable for my study. This methodology enabled me to have autonomous interaction with people, and I was able to capture all the events and perspectives of the informants within this particular social world. Quantitative methods could have been used, but issues of women, access to land, and transitory mobility are best captured using qualitative approaches. Qualitative methodology is multi-method and multi-sited in focus (Denzin and Lincoln 2000), and these characteristics enabled me to secure an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena within the scope of the study. The multiple-level research methods that I used included ethnography within the context of a case-study approach, participant observation, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, transect walks, and dialogues. Visual and oral methods were also employed; these included use of a camera, historical narratives, institutional and resource mapping, recording life histories and personal stories, wealth rankings, as well as conventional archival and desktop research.

Research Strategy

The main research method that I employed in this study was the ethnographic method with a focus on extended case studies. The term *ethnography* has various connotations and meanings within the domain of social anthropology (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001). Clifford (1998:39) defines ethnography as "the interpretation of a culture of a given people." Clifford regards ethnographic accounts as how people write about what transpires within a certain culture

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and what they observe within the field. Furthermore, Brewer (2000:6) defines ethnography as "the method of field work." Field notes are described as "a written account of the things the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting or reflecting on the data" obtained during the study (de Vos 2008:311). Brewer understands ethnography to be the study of people in naturally occurring settings or fields by methods of data collection that capture their social meaning and everyday activities. This process involves the researcher participating directly in the setting, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without imposing meaning on the people and their way of life. For instance, land is an emotionally charged issue in Zimbabwe, and the newly settled communities guard their land jealously. The new settler communities feel that any researcher in their domain is a British political agent–known as a *sell out* in the community's jargon–and so they are not forthcoming with information. Interaction around land-related issues took place only after I had spent some time with the community, and after they had developed trust concerning my presence there.

For this reason, I sometimes had to employ the undercover research methodologies[3] so that I could understand the sociological and political issues that motivated the settlers to move from their original homes. I had to do this because sometimes the respondents were not willing to answer all my questions and so I would not explain my motives to some of them in detail. I also used this strategy in South Africa because some of the sellers who were not from my sample were not willing to give me information, especially about marketing space, and so I had to disguise myself as a real cross-border trader who had no other activity. When I presented myself in this way, they gladly gave me all the information I required.

As Hovland (2009:4) states, "During fieldwork most ethnographers try to establish their role as that of a 'participant observer'; or, rather, they try to establish the dual and perhaps contradictory roles of 'participant' and 'observer'. This can require a fair amount of negotiation–both with the surrounding people and with oneself." The ethnography field is not simply a geographic place waiting to be entered; it is a space whose boundaries are constantly negotiated and constructed by the ethnographer and the members (Fitzgerald 2006). The methodological mandate "to follow the people" (Marcus 1995:253) as they travel between different localities takes seriously the movement that constitutes a migratory process. Thus, I had to do research in the

3 The under-cover research methodology was used by de Bruijn (1986) in the study of crime syndicates in Chad, where she disguised herself as one of the women interested in crime syndicates and became a follower of the group, until she completed her fieldwork.

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sending and the receiving state. Although I resided at Merrivale, I had the opportunity to visit other field sites that were not part of my main field site. I was not confined to Merrivale; I even went beyond Masvingo Province and Zimbabwe in order to understand the dynamics of women's initiatives to carve livelihoods out of land. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the multi-sited nature of the research and the areas to which I travelled to collect data over the 16 months. What was paramount to my interest was multi-sited ethnography, driven by "multi-sited research imagery" (Hammar 2007:54), which is based on, and contributes to, "developing knowledge of the relationships and connections that extend beyond the frames that have held the traditional act of field work in place" (Marcus 1998:21). Although multiple research sites were important in this work, I need to emphasise that my linguistic incompetence in South Africa was problematic, as I had to rely on the women with whom I travelled for translations. I crossed the border to South Africa's various towns that form part of the trading routes of the women, and I went to Chikwalakwala, Mozambique, where some of the women would go occasionally because travelling there did not require much logistical planning. Following the women across the multiple sites was a productive way to understand their experiences.

FIGURE 2.1 *Research sites visited from April 2009 to August 2010*

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The place names used in Figure 2.1, particularly those of the South African towns, are a reflection of the everyday names and pronunciations used by the women with whom I travelled. There have been changes to the names of the South African towns, some of which are contested: Messina is now called Musina, Pietersburg's new name is Polokwane, and KwaZulu-Natal Province is popularly known as KwaZulu by the Zulu people in South Africa.

The Case Study Approach

Stake's (1995) analysis of the case study approach is useful, and it strongly influenced the approach employed in this work. I used the instrumental case study, which has been explained as "when a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or a problem" (Bernard 2006:54). The case study, therefore, was important as it helped me to answer the "how and why questions" in the research. For instance, how did women access land at Merrivale? And how is transitory mobility a key livelihood strategy? De Vos (2008:272) notes, "The exploration and description of the case takes place through detailed, in-depth data collection methods, involving interviews, documents, observations or archival records." This differs from a survey where one uses a questionnaire to target specific households about a particular issue. In this instance, I was able to unravel how life at Merrivale was organised after FTLR. These case studies were based on detailed observation of the 20 households under study (see the following section). I spent 16 months in the field, covering a full agricultural cycle.[4] The question that often arises with the use of case studies is their potential for generalisation. Case studies, however, can help in facilitating generalisations for areas that have similar biophysical characteristics, as they tend to be representative in nature (Bernard 2006).

Sampling Procedures

I chose purposive sampling for this study because, as I was researching land, an emotive[5] issue in Zimbabwe, and as Mwenezi East District is a Zimbabwe

4 I experienced all the Zimbabwean farming seasons while resident at Merrivale Farm. When I arrived there in March 2009, it was the harvesting season, *kukohwa*. I was also there for the period of *chirimo*, when people are not working in the fields, the period of winter ploughing, and the land preparation activities for the 2009–2010 planting season, which started in October. In December, when the farmers were busy planting, weeding, cultivating, and spraying their crops, I was still there, as also during the 2010 harvesting period, *zhizha* from April–August 2010.

5 The land issue evokes many different feelings and emotions among people in Zimbabwe. The resettled feel that any focus on their resettlement is a way of trying to displace them from their ancestral land, those who have lost their land feel that they have been targeted because of the politics of race and identity, and those who have enforced the policies and

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African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) stronghold, and therefore politically sensitive. I needed an A1 farm (see Chapter 5) that was close to the road in the event of any unforeseen incidents that warranted my speedy departure from the area. Purposive or judgmental sampling entailed using my own judgment about which respondents to choose. I picked only those who best met the purposes of the study. Purposive sampling also assisted me in selecting a site situated along the R1 Beitbridge–Chirundu highway, which connects with South Africa. This proved to be an important zone for capturing women engaged in transitory mobility. I chose this area not only because of its proximity to the A1 highway that stretches toward the border with South Africa but also because there are some commercial farms in this area demarcated as A1 and A2 resettlement farms (see Chapter 5). Thus, selection of this area was a critical choice in seeking to unravel the issues that I wished to address. The selected households were purposively sampled because I was targeting households with women who practiced semi-subsistence farming and who were involved in transitory mobility as a livelihood strategy.

The advantage was that I could use my research skills and prior knowledge[6] to choose respondents. The purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in qualitative studies. Clear identification and formulation of criteria for the selection of respondents is, therefore, of cardinal importance (de Vos 2008).

I also purposively selected the female-headed household with which I resided during the fieldwork. The household head was a widow whose husband had died in 2004, after they had already settled at Merrivale. The broad characteristics of the 20 selected households were as follows:

- five households comprised married women farmers engaged in transitory mobility whose husbands were not involved in transitory mobility,
- five households had both wife and husband involved in farming and transitory mobility,
- five households never engaged in transitory mobility, and the wife and husband were both farmers, and
- five households had other family members, such as daughters-in-law or their sons and daughters, involved in farming and transitory mobility.

laws leading to FTLR feel that they have been correcting an historical imbalance. As I researched this area, I had to be careful about the questions that I asked to avoid enflaming people.

6 Prior knowledge of Mwenezi East District and the surrounding farms had been acquired from discussions with various officials from SNV Netherlands' Agricultural Advisor for Masvingo and CARE International officers. The information about farm accessibility and modes of settlement led me to settle for Merrivale.

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The variables that the study sought to investigate in these 20 households include women's access to land and other resources, household labour, area of plots, and children's roles in the household. These variables were important for understanding the dynamics of transitory mobility as a livelihood strategy and how it was carried out by women. To create rapport with other households that were not part of the sample, I would visit other villages to meet the village heads and also visit the politically powerful people to ask questions relating to the study and help them in their fields. Although this strategy was not intended to elicit any new information for the study, it was important and useful in developing and maintaining social relations that were needed to see me through the completion of the data collection process.

As the study was undertaken within the new settlement areas, the snowball method of sampling was also used. This sampling technique entailed my relying on information from staff of CARE International in Masvingo Province who provided me with the characteristics of farms that matched the criteria I had developed. Being new in the area, I had to consult with CARE since they were key actors in Mwenezi East and knew the area very well. With regard to the non-permanent mobility component of the research, snowball sampling enabled me to find out from the village head the households that had women participating in transitory mobility. The village head provided a list of names of the households. These households in turn provided more names of other women in other villages on the farm outside my study sites. This exercise enabled me to discern how land was accessed, identify plot boundaries, and the water sources in the study area.

National, Provincial and Community Agencies

Before I commenced fieldwork, I visited Masvingo Province in March 2009 to set up appointments with various government officials. This visit enabled me to proceed to Mwenezi for a familiarisation trip. I met various authorities in Masvingo and Mwenezi who told me that I required ministerial clearance for the subject matter that I wanted to research. National clearance was required to visit the study area. I visited the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Mechanisation by appointment, facilitated by my host institution in Zimbabwe, Ruzivo Trust. I was able in a short period to acquire a letter that enabled me to do fieldwork in Masvingo Province. Entry into Masvingo Province was facilitated by Dr E.S Moyo, the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation Agricultural Adviser, who assisted me to meet the Provincial Administrator, Mr Chikowo, who in turn granted me permission to work in the province. Research clearance was also sought from the Agriculture

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Officer, Mr Pambireyi, who notified his colleagues in Mwenezi that I was going to come and work in the area. I then went to the provincial officer responsible for livestock in Masvingo Province, Mr Kanda, who also stamped my letter from the Ministry, and from that point I had access to the district.

I then went to the Mwenezi District offices with a contact that Dr Moyo found for me, Ms Natsayi Mushayabasa, who is from Mwenezi East. We visited the offices, and the District Administrator, Mr Chamisa, welcomed me to his district. I also had to seek permission to conduct my work from the Environmental Management Agency Officer for Mwenezi District, Mr Munashe Gurumani, the District Forestry Officer, Mr Moyo, and the Agricultural and Extension Officer, Ms Moyo. I was also introduced to the Assistant District Administrator, Ms Elisah Chauke. After all the formalities with the provincial and district offices, I proceeded to meet with the village head, who assisted me in selecting the household with which I was to reside. Introductions to the villagers and recruitment of a field assistant were also facilitated by the village head.

Maintaining Ethical Neutrality

Carrying out research involving the need to understand the everyday lives of women required that I maintain ethical neutrality–neutrality in the sense that the social scientist, in his or her professional capacity, does not take sides on issues of moral or ethical significance. As a scientist, he or she is interested in the truth. Attempting to be purely objective in one's research regardless of personal feelings is another facet of ethical neutrality. It is suggested that this "neutrality could be accomplished if the researcher took care to separate his or her professional role in which he or she refrains from making value judgements" (Bailey 2003:27). Objectivity means that the conclusions arrived at because of the investigation are independent of personal factors such as race, colour, creed, occupation, nationality, moral preferences, and political disposition.

With this background, I informed the participants about the purposes of the research and its potential use. I clearly spelled out that the research was for academic purposes and their views would be respected as much as possible. I emphasised that participation was voluntary and those persons who did not feel comfortable about the use of the camera were free to indicate such sentiments. As research assistant, I engaged a middle-aged woman, Ms Juliet Maroro, from Merrivale, who could read and write in English and Karanga, a

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Shona dialect spoken in Masvingo Province. I chose a woman because this would be the acceptable norm in an African setting, given that I am also a woman; the selection of Ms Maroro also helped me to gain acceptance in the community.

Narrative 2.1 provides a sample of the respondents and some of their reactions to being part of this research.

Narrative 2.1: Respondents' reactions to the research process

Tinoda kuti mazita edu chaiwo asabude pane zvatiri kutaura izvi nekuti pano pane vanhu vane kufunga kusina kunaka. Tinozonzwa zvonzi tataura zvakati. Ipapa tinoda kuti utipe chivimbiso chekuti mazita edu hauanyore muzvinyorwa zvako.

(We do not want our names to be written down as you compile your work later because, as we are gathered here and talking, there are some people who are mischievous and can turn around this whole scenario for selfish purposes and then we can end up in trouble. We want you to give us assurance that you will not use our original names.) Mr Chisa

Zvemazita kwete mainini nekuti minda ingadzokere zvonzi tinopikisa hurumende.

(Do not use our original names because we are afraid that we might be viewed as going against the government and we do not want to lose our land.) Mrs Mumbure

As long as you write about the positive things we say and do, you can incorporate our names in your writing – Mrs Gwenzi

Those photos should not be given to the CNN or news people. Some of your colleagues come here and take photos and the next thing they give them to the whites and say we are poor…we are not – Mary

Source: Focus group discussions, Chatagwi School, Merrivale, September 2009.

Although it is often assumed by researchers that respondents in rural areas do not know about their rights in research, the responses above show, even though I had explained I was not going to use their names, they still wanted assurance as they feared losing their land and also seemed to be aware of their rights where research issues are concerned. Those who agreed to their names being written down emphasised that they were only to be used in relation to the positive issues they raised regarding land and not the negative issues. I emphasised the fact that research ethics compelled me to comply with their wishes. I assured them that their names would not be published and that the

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data would not be transferred to other places or organisations without their consent.

Data Collection and Mobility

My gathering of data and the concept of motion were intertwined. I simultaneously was part of the research process, because I lived with the women, was exposed to their day-to-day lives, and travelled with them to South Africa on numerous occasions. This travel helped in defining the different livelihood-crafting options and understanding how they were connected to access to land. Mobility proved to be important, as I was able to understand how cross-border movements to South Africa were initiated and the different factors regulating them. My travels, using the bus, people's open-backed pick-up trucks and my own feet, became part of the "field," as I interacted with people I met who were not part of my sample, and these encounters facilitated important insights into my work (Photo 2.1).

PHOTO 2.1 *Refuelling at Lundi service station, Mwenezi, en route from Ngundu growth point to Merrivale, April 2009*

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Data Collection Methods

Since rural women were the principal focus of this research, the relevant semi-autonomous social fields and structures, as defined by Falk Moore (1977), were the traditional leaders, male- and female-headed households, the national borders that the women cross to sell their produce, the markets where agricultural produce is traded in South Africa, provincial and district land committees, and churches. Representatives of these institutions were therefore interviewed as key informants. Special emphasis was placed on how these structures responded to women's access to, and control of, land before and after FTLRP. I participated in community activities such as *nhimbe* (reciprocal work parties), collection of water for the dip tank to facilitate cattle dipping every Wednesday (each household was required to send someone to Chatagwi dam for this activity), church services, political meetings, and memorial services. I also had to carry groceries since I was regarded as part of the family by virtue of residing in the household for more than a year. Residence in the village was valuable because it enabled me to build extensive social networks with the village inhabitants.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was the principal research technique for this study (Josselson 1996, Llewelyn 2007). I established it as a framework for generating trust and an indispensable aid in contextualising information generated from the other methodologies. I employed the phenomenological approach,[7] which is important in participant observation as the researcher endeavours to gain an in-depth insight into the manifestation of reality. The aim in this study was to analyse how women's access to, and control over, land enables them to engage in sustainable livelihood strategies, and how these livelihood options are influenced by transitory mobility as a tactic in accessing markets for their products in order to achieve livelihood security. This approach enabled me to dig deep into the origins and establishment of Merrivale Farm before its occupation by the new settlers in 2000. I was able to meet the original owners of Merrivale Farm prior to the FTLRP. I travelled to Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal, and I managed to meet with the wife of the former owner of Merrivale (Sydney Spencer), Mrs Maureen Spencer, on 24 February 2010 (Photo 2.2). Merrivale

7 This approach describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon, topic, or content from various individuals. It involves constructing meanings that respondents give to their everyday lives. In order to accomplish this, the researcher should enter the subject's life world and life setting.

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PHOTO 2.2 *Mrs Maureen Spencer and the author, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, 23 February 2010*

Farm is popularly known as *KwaDick* (Dick's farm), as the grinding mill which serves the villagers and those from surrounding farms is situated at this farm even to the present day. This trip to Pietermaritzburg helped me fill the methodological lacuna that has existed in the literature on land reform in Zimbabwe whereby most scholars have not taken the step of establishing the whereabouts and the present lives of the former white commercial farmers whose farms were gazetted for resettlement under FTLRP.

Participant observation research takes many forms, although in this research I became "a facilitator for a community." Participant observation is typically qualitative in approach; thus, I could not reduce the data obtained to mere figures. Further, as de Vos (2008:275) notes, "during participant observation researchers attempt to be both emotionally engaged participants and coolly dispassionate observers of the lives of others." DeWalt and DeWalt (1998:260) state, "Participant observation emphasises everyday interactions and observations rather than dependence on direct inquiries (through interviews) into sporadic behaviours." Issues involving rural women's access to and control over land and livelihood patterns are not easily accessible to an outsider, and one needs to understand how the community functions and how life is organised

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with regard to accessing land, a valuable resource. Staying with one of the plot-holders at the A1 farm for 12 months proved to be very important because I came to understand the social organisation of the households, the use of social networks in resource sharing, day-to-day interactions among farmers, how women access land, and how they devise livelihood strategies based on the land. Participant observation enabled me to know and study the culture and cultural contexts, customs, and lifestyles of the respondents. It also helped me to understand individual women's strategies to access and control land, and their livelihood options such as transitory mobility, as well as how they are conceptualised within the cultural context of the society. I adopted an open-minded and naturalistic approach as my observation tool when I endeavoured to become part of the lives and daily routine of the respondents.

Specific methods were required to unravel and capture the dynamics that influence women's access to land and how they utilise the land after securing it, or what happens when they do not. I was actively involved in the daily situations of the respondents, while observing their behaviour and making field notes, recording actions, interactions, and events in an unstructured or semi-structured manner on a daily basis. This approach helped me understand how tenure systems and land are regulated in the aftermath of FTLRP. I was involved in the community by residing in it. This helped me understand how day-to-day life is regulated, how land-use patterns are demarcated, how gender roles are differentiated during the farming season, and how women plan their trips to sell their produce–as well as whether they involve their male counterparts in the process. I also had the opportunity to observe how other natural resources are accessed by women—whether they seek permission from the village head to use these resources or whether the use of specific resources is governed by the fact of belonging to a certain community and thus having access to the resources in that community. I was afforded the opportunity to understand how disputes are resolved and the central institutions in the resolution of disputes about access to land and use of other natural resources.

Living with people and participating in their day-to-day activities—such as packing cotton bales (*kutsikirira bhera recotton*) (Photo 2.3), harvesting maize (Photo 2.4), grinding groundnuts for peanut butter, watering hand-irrigated gardens, fetching water, ploughing fields, and attending church services and funerals—enabled me to catch up with current news that sometimes fed perfectly into my research agenda. I found this to be an asset.

It was only in September 2009, after staying for six months in the field, that I discovered that the household where I resided was part of a polygynous family and that the woman with whom I was staying was the second wife, although

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PHOTO 2.3 *The author, packing a cotton bale, Tavaka Village, Merrivale, April 2009*

PHOTO 2.4 *Mai Enock and the author harvesting green maize, Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm, April 2009*

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she was widowed at the time the fieldwork was conducted.[8] This information came out during one of my trips with the widow's daughter-in-law to fetch water. I found that people would not disclose much about their lives until I had gained their trust. Participant observation brought to light the social realities governing women's access to land and how land is accessed and livelihoods are constructed. I was able to gather information on how the women and other stakeholders perceive customary law, policymaking, and the legislative framework affecting improving access to, and control over, land. This method was also useful in investigating whether society recognises women as critical players in reducing poverty through the multiple strategies they embark upon in order to sustain themselves following FTLR.

I had the opportunity to explore how mopane worms were accessed and the norms regulating their harvesting and use. Participant observation also aided in understanding how transitory mobility is understood by men in the society and whether it has an impact on the household governance system.

The method was also useful because it gave me the opportunity to travel with these women when they went to South Africa to sell their produce and other commodities. Participant observation enabled me to have a clear picture of the networks upon which they relied, how they negotiated their entry into South Africa at the border (since trade in fresh produce needs an import licence), and how they market their produce side-by-side with South African women traders. This process involved me in acquiring farm produce and other products manufactured out of other natural resources, such as baskets, clay pots, reed mats, mopane worms, and dried flowers, so that together with my research assistant we could travel with these women to South Africa and embark on the selling venture with them. This created an understanding of how they establish networks to transport their goods, the transport they use, the networks in which they participate to acquire markets in South Africa and the risks involved, and the vulnerabilities and threats to which they are subjected.

There were also disadvantages to participant observation. When I fully participated in community activities, respondents did not act as naturally as when no outsider was present. In the majority of social gatherings, such as political meetings, garden visits, church, and work parties (*nhimbe*), it was not proper for me to take notes on site. I would thus immediately capture the details of the

8 Polygyny is something that cannot be openly discussed in Karanga culture, particularly if the matter concerns the second wife, as evidenced by this case. This woman feared being reprimanded by people, and as I was a stranger, she felt that I would judge her. However, even the other women eventually told me about the polygynous union.

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events when I arrived home, when the information was still vivid and clear in my mind. I have explored observation-based research as a forum for interaction between researcher, interpreter, and respondents, and as a means of learning to see beyond the narrow epistemological frameworks within which research problems are formulated (Llewelyn 2007).

Daily Observational Guide

For each household, I kept daily observational diaries that I recorded with the help of a child of school-going age from each household. I gave each household an exercise book and ballpoint pen to fill in the data on the required page. If there was no school-going child at the homestead, I recorded the diaries myself, in either the morning or the evening. All the activities undertaken in each homestead were noted. There were columns for various activities such as wake-up time, first activity to be done, how labour was divided at the homestead, the role of children and what they did. A date for each day was recorded as well as the particular month and year. This information enabled me to understand the general household routine activities. These activities included how labour was pooled for various tasks at the homestead, how mobile families engaged in social networks to enable the women to travel and the assistance given by the extended family when the women were on their trading trips to South Africa. These diaries enabled me to gain insights into the areas that the families prioritised, thereby enabling me to come up with gender-based resource maps. These diaries have proved invaluable as they show the different farming and non-farming activities that the families undertook in the different agricultural seasons.

My research assistant assumed the role of diary manager if I was not available. She would visit each household and find out how the daily observational guides were being recorded and whether they attained my standards. The problems I had with the observational diaries were that the children would sometimes tell me that the books had water spilled on them or pages would go missing. In the case of missing pages, I knew that they were tearing out the pages to use at school. To minimise such problems, I later provided each child with an A4, 150-page exercise book for his/her own use. I had to provide pens every two weeks because the children began to use the pens I provided at school.

Seasonal Activities Calendar

The seasonal activities calendar identifies the responsibilities, roles, and tasks of a particular household according to season, gender, and labour relations

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(Thomas-Slayter *et al.* 1993). I derived much of the information from the daily observational guides and focus group discussions with men and women. My aim was to find out how farming activities and women's mobility are organised throughout the year. These calendars also enabled me to identify the roles that children and older persons played in the homesteads throughout the year. I was able to solicit information daily on time management within the households. I was also able to discern how childcare arrangements were organised during the periods when women travelled to South Africa and how men had to be involved in the daily care of children under the guidance of other immediate or extended family members.

Key Informant Interviews

Data and information were also collected using key informant interviews. The questions asked in these interviews were contained in a discussion guide, which enabled me to follow up and clarify relevant issues as respondents raised them. A discussion guide "…enables the researcher to probe deep on issues that are unclear, interesting, or considered likely to be useful to an understanding of the research problem" (Hellum 1999:162). In this process, the researcher is able to adjust the questions being pursued. I conducted the interviews with household heads, both female and male. This enabled me to probe views about accessing land by women, how women access other natural resources in the area, and whether mobility as a livelihood strategy is improving the women's lives or not. I was thereby enlightened as to how gender is a critical variable in livelihoods, resource access, and mobility. It enabled me to understand the socio-economic status and the decision-making patterns of the household. The approach accorded me the opportunity to record spontaneous answers, which are more informative and less normative than the answers which respondents have time to think about. I wanted these interviews to be within the range of 45 minutes to 1 hour; however, sometimes I would arrive at a homestead and the inhabitants would start telling me other stories and not directly answer the questions that I asked them; this led to more time being required for interviews.

These interviews were useful because I could observe non-verbal behaviour and assess the validity of the respondent's answer, and gestures carry weight in such circumstances. It was paramount for me to ascertain the reality of how land matters were governed, whether women had a role to play in traditional institutions when land was being allocated, whether under FTLRP women were consulted on issues of control over land, and whether men realised the changing nature of livelihood patterns with more women entering economic farming and trading in agricultural products.

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Key informant interviews were also held with government personnel at national, provincial, and local levels. I juxtaposed their information with what the respondents told me, and this sharpened my understanding of laws, policies, and governance regimes dealing with women and their access to land, how transitory mobility livelihoods are crafted, and how certain government programmes are tailor-made to meet the daily requirements of rural women's lives.

The problem associated with such interviews is that they require a well-informed and responsive researcher. When I carried out the interviews in the homestead, respondents were happy and would sometimes dwell on other subjects in which I had no interest. It is not usually appropriate for interviews to be carried out by research assistants working on their own, so I conducted the interviews in the presence of the research assistant in order to obtain verification of the information obtained. This was important since interviews are prone to interviewer bias, and the interviewer may misunderstand the respondent's answer.

Recording Life Histories

The life stories elicited as a result of the life history approach are "reconstructions of a person's experiences, remembered and told at a particular point in their lives, to a particular researcher/audience and for a particular purpose: all of which will have a bearing on how the stories are told, which stories are told, and how they are presented or interpreted" (Etherington 2006:234). Through life stories, "a whole life is told using careful interviewing techniques" (Bernard 1998:75). Just as the story is very important, "so too is how well it is told" (Bernard 2006:12). These stories became very important, especially with regard to how women accessed land, the strategies they used during their trips to South Africa, ordeals they faced, and how they dealt with each situation at the border and in South Africa. The extent to which eliciting such information is possible is determined by the ability of the researcher to work closely with the research participant in exploring and recording the story. This is because there are many ways of eliciting a story, as well as telling it (Bertaux and Kohli 1984). The literature on the life history method highlights several advantages to this approach. These include having the effect of "humanising" the research participant (McKeown *et al.* 2006), revealing history and culture as lived, and enabling the researcher to know the research participant better and to ask relevant questions (Peacock 2001). All this was possible as I travelled with these women to South Africa, observing how they manoeuvred the different border formalities, how they accessed markets, the networks that played a critical role, and how collective action was an important resource in transitory mobility.

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Life histories are important in this study because they created an idea of how the women acquired land and how they have negotiated access to land. They also provided an opportunity to find out how the women settled on that particular farm and how they have been able to establish relations with the formal and informal structures with regard to control over the land. Life histories were also useful to find out whether women have land permits, how they deal with the process of acquiring these permits, how they have been able to use natural resources and how they came to grow the crops they grow. I was able also to find out the motivation behind external transitory mobility and the use of natural resources and the type of products they manufacture for sale, along with their agricultural produce. This approach allowed for a more in-depth exploration of a particular situation as it generated knowledge characterised by multiple voices, perspectives, truths, and meanings. Life history research can have a "recuperative role" (Etherington 2006:25) for individuals who participate in it, and, by extension, for their relationships and the societies in which they live. In this way, the process becomes a "moral act." I constantly had the opportunity to understand and develop the truth as I situated myself within the study.

Collecting Stories

Oral sources are useful as they lead to the development of the stories approach, and "they help to elicit the emotions and views of the research subjects" (Hammar 2007:320). Since this study focused on women, access to and control over land, and livelihoods in the face of transitory mobility, it was important to understand that personal worlds of emotions, identity, memories, motivations, and desires are not simply given by discourse, but are always in flux. These worlds also emerge and impinge on social action in variable and complex ways that are worthy of further exploration. This approach is mainly concerned with analytically assessing women's experiences and the normative structures that impinge on their access to resources in society (Hellum 1999). In this research, I was able to discern people's different worlds, such as farming and marketing in South Africa, through the different stories they would tell me on different occasions. In a broad sense, one can describe all social action and interaction as performance, in that social actors (such as individuals, groups, and institutions) constantly engage in some form of representation of themselves and their stories to others, either consciously or unconsciously.[9]

9 Stories relating to land acquisition were at first recounted consciously, but after some time elapsed and I had developed a rapport with most villagers they could unknowingly give some information that they would not have said in a normal set up. I was constantly told that I had

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Based on the stories that I was told, I was able to discern the problems the women faced in accessing their own share of land as individuals. With regard to trips to South Africa, I was able to depict the challenges the women faced and how they resolved conflicts among themselves or with the immigration officials at the South African border. Case studies in Zimbabwe are described by Fortman (1995) in which white commercial farmers on the one hand and black villagers in contiguous communal lands on the other hand told stories to assert and legitimise their respective claims to resource use on commercial farmland. The storytellers would create a discourse that favoured their claim, render invisible inconvenient bits of history, and try to deceive the listener about the existing issues.

Sometimes I would visit a homestead just to have an informal talk with the women, and sometimes their husbands would be at home—especially when it was not the agricultural season (*muchirimo*). I would hear stories about their motivations for migrating to Merrivale and how their livelihoods had changed since they had been resident in the village. Important information included how formal and informal structures shaped women's access to and control over land, the networks they entered into in South Africa to establish markets for their produce, and whether they had been faced with risks and threats, such as crime or failure to enter South Africa with their produce after South African border officials seized it. The tone of voice, emotions displayed, and the actors' gestures during the sharing of the stories proved to be valuable and reshaped my original thinking on women, land, farming, livelihoods, transitory mobility, and informal trade, giving me vivid reconstructions of the stories as I captured them.

Assembling Historical Narratives

Central to the analysis of narratives is the relationship among the points of view concerning those events as expressed or implied by the characters in the narrative, the narrator, and the audience at whom the narrative is directed (Carr 1996). The narrator may oscillate between "I" or "We" to emphasise the centrality of an idea and the social and collective significance of the event in question. Narratives were adopted in this study to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the institutions active in land demarcation, methods of land acquisition, the position of individuals in the agrarian reform programme, and the effects of these on women's capacity to access land

to have *hana isingabvinze*, meaning I was supposed to guard their secrets and not volunteer the information to anyone else as the information was a part of their lives that they treasured.

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as individuals. The strength of the narrative approach is buttressed by the notion that, "when social identities are used to define boundaries of difference or sameness in relation to claims, particularly those over land, authority and belonging, the terms of such boundaries require shared frameworks of meaning, knowledge and understanding whose construction and/or assertion are profoundly linked to the narrative" (Hammar 2007:320)

In order to understand the history of land in Zimbabwe up to and including post-FTLRP, it is important to understand the history of the land question nationally. For this reason, I had various in-depth interviews with key government officials from the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Agriculture. In Mwenezi, I had the opportunity of meeting the different war veterans who provided information about land settlement in Mwenezi dating back to the land reform of the 1980s and what inspired them to occupy farms in 2000. The village head of Tavaka Village, where I resided, was good friends with Chief Chitanga, whose jurisdiction covers Merrivale; I would ask him questions that he would take to the chief and relay answers back to me since I could not meet the chief personally. He was also a senator for Mwenezi East and had political and administrative issues to deal with in Mwenezi's new communal resettlement areas, and he had to attend parliamentary sessions in Harare. I also visited the National Archives of Zimbabwe and read widely on the history of the land question before and during the colonial era and in the post-colonial period.

These narratives enabled me to understand the histories that the people valued with regard to land, especially the liberation struggle, which they associated with land and the year 2000 as the year of their total emancipation from white supremacy. It also helped me understand what motivated the people to settle at Merrivale Farm; key protagonists pointed out that it was their land before the whites settled there. I was also able to decipher the natural resource base at Merrivale before the FTLRP, features such as the game animals available, the number of dams on the property, and how women would go on fishing expeditions in the four dams on the farm. My knowledge in this regard was based on the narrative accounts that I collected from men, women, and young people at Tavaka Village.

I had the opportunity of meeting the pioneer owners of Merrivale in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa in 2010. An in-depth interview with Mrs Maureen Spencer enabled me to understand how her family came to the farm from their origins in South Africa. It also answered the question dealing with who were the original inhabitants of the farm and the type of farming enterprise on which they embarked.

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Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions, hereinafter referred to as FGDs (also known as group interviews), serve as a means of better understanding how people think or feel about an issue, product, or service. FGDs are defined as carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (de Vos 2008:300). The FGDs comprised men, women, youths, and community leaders (Table 2.1). Four groups were identified: women respondents only, men only, youths, and mixed respondents. Each FGD comprised no more than 12 people; if it had consisted of more than 15 people, then it would have become a public meeting.

A series of six FGDs was held with the same groups over the period that I stayed in the village. I noticed that the greatest amount of new information usually came in the first two group discussions, with considerable repetition after that. A series of more than two discussions enabled me to understand all the issues raised at different times, because then I could grasp the variations and complexities in perceptions, conceptualisations, or practices. It is important to apply a framework that ensures that different sectors of the population are included. This helped me to analyse the data provided in the earlier discussion groups.

What the participants said during the discussions constituted the essential focus-group data. In order for the respondents to attend, I tasked key people within the community with facilitating the focus groups. The village health worker (*nyamukuta*), Agritex officials (agricultural extension staff), the village head (*madhumeni*), and the research assistant formed part of the discussion

TABLE 2.1 *Characteristics of the focus groups*

Group composition	Age range	Number of participants
Women's group	18–67	12
Men's group	25–70	10
Mixed group, of which		
Male	28–70	5
Female	25–65	5
Youth, of which		
Male	13–17	10
Female	13–17	8

SOURCE: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION NOTES, CHATAGWI SCHOOL, MERRIVALE, 2009–2010.

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groups. I had to compose the focus groups in this way because I did not want the groups to be viewed as political meetings. The discussions were facilitated by the Agritex officials, the research assistant, and the village health worker. I took a secondary position because I simply wanted to capture the notes of the meetings in detail on my own. I captured information such as seating arrangements, the order in which people spoke, and additional supplementary details such as voice recognition, non-verbal behaviours such as eye contact, posture, and gestures between group members, crying, and fidgeting. Some of the female respondents cried when they were asked why they had moved to the new resettlements areas. Crying stemmed from historical, social, and political emotions; these strong emotions related to how they had been mistreated during the colonial era and to how, while clearing the new land at Merrivale, they had suffered from strong antagonism on the part of Mr Botha, the white commercial farmer at Merrivale at that time. All these incidents returned vividly to their minds in the group discussions. Crying was a way of expressing the difficulties they had experienced in their old lives in the communal areas and the stigmatisation that they had faced being labelled ZANU-PF people in different forums.

Since group dynamics can serve as a communication tool during these sessions, I attempted to capture them as much as possible. At times, I looked for a male research assistant who would also write down the themes that were striking and highlight the conversation as much as possible. This person was always selected from the community as I realised that it gave the respondents the confidence to participate freely in front of their own people.

The focus discussion guide was written in Shona and English in order to deal with communication hurdles, and every participant received a copy. The aim was to find out whether women's multiple livelihood strategies after the FTLRP had improved, the strategies women employed to access and control land, and how the women were able to find their way in using other specific natural resources. The FGDs enabled me to solicit information from men as to whether they were comfortable with their wives or sisters venturing into transitory mobility strategies in light of the different risks and threats that they could encounter. I was also able to investigate a multitude of perceptions in my areas of interest. The FGDs enabled me to elicit the respondents' views on the threats that these women face and how they deal with vulnerabilities, such as crime. The aim was to promote discourse among participants. It is possible to draw information from these respondents and identify whether rural women can voice their concerns freely in a setting in which men, young people, community leaders, government officers, and community-based workers are present. The FGDs provided an avenue to understand how institutions are depicted

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among the actors. The respondents pointed out the institutions that are crucial in accessing land, whether these same institutions control the use of other natural resources, and whether these institutions are effective or not in their mandate to redistribute land and ensure resource access.

Upon completion of the FGDs, the respondents were asked to evaluate the process based on whether it was useful to them or not through an evaluative guide that was written in English and Shona. This procedure helped me to improve and refine the research process. The advantage of FGDs is that they create a process of sharing and, comparing the notes from each session, I could find points of divergence and agreement from the responses of the participants. The resulting patterns helped in my attempt to understand diversity. Because they helped me understand the variety of the respondents' experiences, I could elaborate follow-up points and obtain clarification on the spot. The respondents generally wanted to unearth the hidden issues that are normally not explored in everyday settings, and this feature enabled me to gain more knowledge of my subject of interest.

One of the disadvantages of FGDs that I noted was that some respondents would not voice their views because they were too shy to speak in public. These respondents were usually women. I later learned that it was a cultural value for women not to speak too much in the presence of men, but some women were vocal, especially in the mixed group of men and women. In their own group, the women were very vocal and expressive. In such instances of male and female presence in one group, I felt that sometimes I could not access valuable information from these dynamics, as the women were so quiet. Some personalities would dominate the proceedings and feel that their views should be the only ones recognised; this further limited the participation of other informants. In order to deal with this challenge, I ended up having a special session for the village heads, councillor, and other powerful men and women at the farm so that I could gather what they wanted to say. This special treatment made them very happy because they felt I had shown respect to them and their offices. One of the elder women in the village said to me after one of the sessions, "*Masibanda wakabva kuvanhu waziva kuti vakuru vanoremekedzwa*."[10] In

10 The Shona believe in totems associated with an animal by which one is recognised. My clan is of the Shumba (lion) and so as a woman, I am referred to as *Masibanda* (and the men are referred to as Nyamuzihwa or Nehudya). The people in the village seldom called me by my name; they would all call me *Masibanda*, a sign of great respect among the Shona people. The elderly woman felt that I had respected them and hence she mentioned that as a sign of happiness and approval of some good that she felt had been done in the community.

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the female-only groups, women felt comfortable about discussing tenure rights and their economic status, as they did not have any men to oppose their contributions. In one of the focus group evaluation guides, one woman respondent wrote, *"This has been a very useful exercise because we have said that we do not have the land and at least someone has taken the prerogative of wanting to have our views and hear our voices. As a woman I feel that I have contributed on my own and I have been recognised on my own."*[11] This statement shows that these women longed for the opportunity to express their views concerning their identity as individuals and how they shaped their livelihoods in their new settlements.

Matrix Scoring and Ranking

As I wanted to find out how women accessed land at Merrivale, during the focus group discussions institutions important in land allocation were ranked by the participants. To carry out this task, the participants were first asked to identify the institutions and actors that were important for them in accessing land. I then asked the participants to rank them, e.g. village headmen and the district administrator's office, among others, on a scale from 1 to 10. The highest score was 10, denoting the most important institution or actor, and the lowest score was one, denoting the least important institution or actor in relation to accessing land and or other natural resources within the respondents' new social spaces/settings. This exercise was important to me as it served as a basis on which the community could nominate the institutions important to women for accessing land.

Success and Wealth Rankings

A central feature of the study was to gain insights into the temporal dynamics of livelihoods in the new resettlement areas, with women as the principal focus. "Understanding the patterns of difference in rural farming communities requires a detailed knowledge of the range of factors influencing a household's asset ownership and income levels, as well as more intangible factors such as social or political standing, prestige and influence" (Scoones 1995:71). In a study in Mazvihwa communal area in Masvingo District, rather than imposing a definition of wealth, the question "What is wealth?" was posed to those in the community (Scoones 1995:75). Wealth ranking combines qualitative and quantitative insights into the different perceptions of wealth among different

11 This was raised during a focus group session evaluation exercise by K.M., one of the women respondents, demonstrating the importance that women attached to forums where they were given priority to raise their views on issues linked to their livelihoods.

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groups (men and women). The wealth ranking exercise involves choosing a sample. I made cards with the names of each household as entered on a register that I acquired from the village head. I reached agreement with the village head and then began the selection of the households. I approached every homestead and asked the male or female head whether he/she and his/her family would participate in the exercise.

Key variables in the exercise were household income and asset ownership. As wealth ranking is commonly part of participatory action research, I also included the agricultural staff, NGO personnel, and district officials in the ranking exercise. In addition, I included other villages that were not part of my study to ensure those villagers' goodwill.[12]

Scoones (1995:71) argues, "It is important to have the wealth ranks in the form of focus group workshops, this helps to bring the different actors together." I adopted this format because I was able to gather all these officials in one place for these workshops. There were three groups, one comprising men, another one women, and the third development workers. The workshops were conducted based on a semi-structured guide with questions. This approach enabled the respondents to demonstrate what they meant by wealth, the variables that constitute wealth, and how they rank wealth—whether based on income or assets. This approach is guided by Scoones' (1995:78) assertion that "the important variables about socio economic strata within the community are determined both by male and female respondents and not by the researcher."

I thought it prudent to interview five men and five women from the selected names and find out what they perceived wealth to be. This approach enabled me to ask each respondent why a certain household had been placed in a specific wealth cluster. This information was useful for this study because it helped identify how livelihoods are ranked by the community, whether access to land is regarded as a form of wealth, and whether remittances from off-farm activities influence the selection of a household as wealthy. It also helped me to assess the correlation between gender roles and socio-economic class and how the two interact in rural communities. It was important to find out the extent to which control over resources varies according to class and family structure.

12 I had to develop cordial relations with all the villagers in order to be able to carry out my fieldwork properly. People in the new resettlement areas are still very uncomfortable with strangers and so, to avoid any points of contention with them, those who wanted to attend the wealth-ranking exercises or the FGDs and were not part of my sample were welcome at the sessions. Sometimes they would ask to have their photographs taken and I would oblige, as I wanted support and protection from these villagers.

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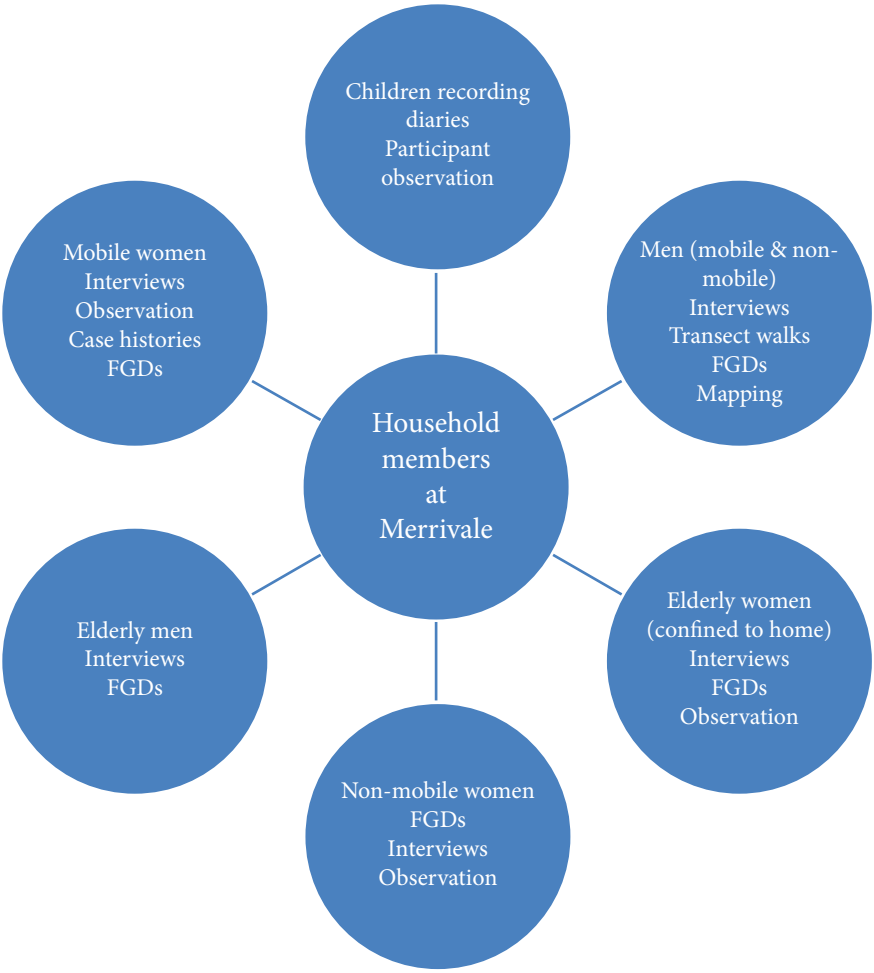

FIGURE 2.2 *Features of respondents' households at Tavaka Village*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S DATA, 2010.

Features of Respondents' Households

It is important to convey an idea of the households with which I interacted as I collected my data. These households comprised people of different genders and ages who, in various ways, provided the information that helped to focus my data-gathering activities in the field. Figure 2.2 represents important features of the different people in the households with whom I interacted at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm.

Document Study and Secondary Sources

Data sources are conventionally classified as either primary or secondary. Primary sources are seen as original material from the author's experiences

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and observations, whereas secondary sources consist of material derived from elsewhere. In this study, I analysed archival material that dwelt on the history of natural resources, land, gender, and livelihoods. Personal workshop notes of my own formed the basis for increasing the depth of the study. I also considered it prudent to review the council reports and documents on land perspectives at the level of the Rural District Council. Several postgraduate theses have come from research in Mwenezi District, and it was useful to review these and gain cross-disciplinary insights on access to natural resources and management in the district. Records of non-governmental organisations working in the area were also reviewed to understand how they work and interact with livelihoods and farming in the area; these organisations included CARE International, United Nations' World Food Programme, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, and the Institute of Development Studies (United Kingdom). The activities of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) were also very important as these facilitate young girls' childhood education at secondary level in the new resettlement areas. Red Cross International's activities in farming and horticulture were also important for my study.

Other sources provided important information that sharpened my analysis and knowledge on land issues in Zimbabwe. Particularly useful were empirical research conducted on land and livelihoods in various provinces of Zimbabwe by the Centre for Rural Development, Ruzivo Trust, the African Institute for Agrarian Studies, and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences.

Data Analysis

To make sense of the data, I analysed the data on the basis of the grounded theory of coding in qualitative research (Charmaz 2008) in which I applied line-by-line coding and analysis of the information that I had gathered by the abovementioned methods. I incorporated two general analytical strategies. First, data were sorted, organised, and reduced into manageable themes based on the study objectives, which I term *focused coding*. Secondly, I explored ways to reassemble the data to interpret them by breaking down the whole into constituent parts only to reassemble the parts to understand the interrelationships among the variables.

Ultimately, however, I sought to bring order to the largely undifferentiated mass of data found in the interview transcripts by comparing, contrasting, and labelling the text data. Before, during, and after data collection, I became involved in identifying abstract themes from the materials collected. During the process of identifying key emerging themes, the preliminary analysis involved looking for evidence on women's access to land-based livelihoods in the new resettlement areas, social networks and resource sharing, and transitory mobility and marketing in South Africa. I was able to identify the information and collated it to produce meaningful content.

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I analysed the data by drawing on discourse analysis,[13] which considers language as an important tool that creates meanings and understandings of the lives lived by individuals and groups at particular times. Although I refer to language here, it is possible to view discourse analysis as a method for examining all sorts of signalling systems, both visual and behavioural, as well as verbal (Mills 1997), since its concern is with the detail of how something is expressed, and what its patterns and hence meanings are. In so doing, I searched for themes and patterns. Correspondingly, the analysis was an inductive, data-led activity.

Preliminary results of the analysis were shared with local people, international scholars, and local scholars on land and livelihoods at a PhD seminar in September 2009 in Harare. This seminar was organised and hosted by Ruzivo Trust, the host institution during my data collection. I invited two women and one man from Merrivale, who belonged to the 20 households under in-depth study, so that they would be there as I presented my work based on their environment and be able to correct any information that I had missed or misrepresented. I did this as part of a feedback process to the community and to enhance my methodology as it gave the audience an opportunity to see and ask the community members questions they had concerning my research. This seminar contributed to the process of data analysis as participants' comments and reflections were taken into account. Peer review of my research findings was an important component of the data analysis and of interpreting my research findings and writing up the results.

Connecting the Field, Emotions, and Feelings in Ethnographic Research

My experiences in the 16 months of my stay in the research area led me to conclude that it is nearly impossible in cases were participant observation is used to distance one's emotions from the research field and study participants. In April 2011, I had to go from Harare to visit the village. This was because the household where I resided had been struck by a tragedy in which one of the sons had died. I had to contribute to this funeral by paying *chema,* that is,

13 Most of the respondents speak Karanga, a Shona dialect of Southern Zimbabwe. I found that there were certain phrases and words whose meaning I, as a non-Karanga-speaking person, had to find out as they influenced the research outcome through interviews or conversations I had within the village. This has had an effect on my study as I had to ascertain their precise interpretations and feed them into my work.

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money paid to the family of the deceased as a demonstration of empathy with the bereaved family. Chema also serves as evidence that you are a person willing to offer a helping hand. The death of Mr Moyo, who resided at the homestead where I stayed, affected me. I had been connected to him in many ways, as he taught me the systems used in dipping cattle and the cropping patterns employed by the households, and he helped me understand more about the community under study. Throughout my fieldwork, I was made aware of the difficulties surrounding being professional and accurate as a social researcher. In line with an ethnographic study about death rites, facing death and grief on a daily basis was having a profound effect on how I felt about the prospect of the people I cared about dying, yet to date "relatively little systematic attention is paid to the emotional…work that frame[s] the fieldwork experience" (Woodthorpe 2007:1).

As I travelled with the women to South Africa and experienced numerous problems at the border, the difficulties of selling the commodities, and the long distances we would walk trading our goods, it was sometimes difficult for me to simply forget these experiences and ignore my emotions and feelings. I became emotionally involved because I had immersed myself in the process, which by its nature was extensive, and because I needed to develop a deeper understanding of the issues at hand. I argue that emotions are a valuable lens through which we can understand our participants and their environment, and therefore when we disseminate our data, somewhere, to some extent, we must address emotions as an integral part of the research process (Mutopo 2011).

After December 2009, I had to stay at Merrivale Farm most of the time and was only out of the village for very short periods until June 2010, when I completed my 16 months in the field. It is important to focus upon the complexity of the research process in terms of how life and feelings (in the research field and away from it) can influence what the researcher is generating and how he or she goes about interpreting it (Woodthorpe 2007). I am here making an argument for the inclusion of emotions in the research process.

As social anthropologists, we are concerned with research among human beings by human beings, and thus, as a fundamental part of humanness, emotion cannot be left out of the ethnographic picture. It informs the way we negotiate, interpret, and communicate our reality. As a result, when exploring other people's realities, we need to synthesise the notion of, and indeed turn our attention reflexively to, our own problematic relationship with accuracy and honesty, to enable emotions to be incorporated and identified as a key analytical strength in our interpretation of the social world.

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Challenges Faced During the Fieldwork

The major methodological challenge concerned the ethnographic methodology that I employed as my main mode of data collection. Everyone wanted to understand why a young black Zimbabwean woman would want to study land issues, social organisation, livelihoods, and transitory mobility, issues normally associated with male researchers. The villagers were suspicious of why I wanted to stay in the village with them, giving up my life in town, for such a long duration. When I first arrived at Merrivale and introduced myself to the villagers, the gossip went around that I was a political agent of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This rumour circulated despite the fact that I had shown all the household heads who could read and write the clearance letters that I had from the Ministry of Agriculture and the stamps that showed approval from the provincial and district officials. I constantly had to explain to the villagers my mandate in the village and defend myself from these allegations, and every time there was a political meeting, almost everyone would come to tell me about it and ask whether I was going to attend. This was done to ascertain whether I was really a student or an agent of the MDC.

My situation was complicated because the village head was accused of defecting to the MDC after the installation of the unity government in February 2009. The villagers quickly elected another village head, this time a woman. I again had to clear myself with her despite the fact that I had met her on several occasions. I was now caught in the web of a widening political rift within the village. However, most of the villagers were supportive and I was able to carry out my study without any more political mishaps. I tried as much as possible to desist from any conversations about politics. The villagers argued that the new village head would never compromise the gains of the liberation struggle. It was a bit challenging as there was so much confrontation and so many alliances brewing within the village over the headship, and sometimes I became confused about whom to approach on village issues as both village heads wanted me to brief them. I had to tread a difficult path, but I managed to survive despite the upheavals.

The issue of trust was paramount. I decided during the early stages of my household and community visits not to use my electronic voice recorder. Most of the respondents were not comfortable with the voice recorder and asked me not to use it, as they feared that their voices would be sent outside Zimbabwe, a point that I constantly corrected. At other times, different issues arose in relation to recordings. For instance, when I visited the political and traditional leadership, it was difficult for me to take out the voice recorder, as I was placed

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at some distance from the respondents, mostly male, as a sign of respect for them. In such cases, I could not electronically capture all the information because of the distance between the informants and me. I ended up just talking with the informants and I would capture the information in a notebook afterwards.

Even in the household in which I stayed, as mentioned earlier, it only came to my attention at the end of September 2009 that the old woman had been in a polygynous relationship and the husband's first wife had died when they settled at Merrivale in 2003 and 2004, respectively. Finally, some of these polygyny issues started coming to my attention when the villagers were comfortable with my presence after six months of fieldwork. The community really needed to understand what motivated me to be in their area. Someone said to me, "Why would you choose Merrivale of all farms? Why Mwenezi and not your own village?" It was difficult having to answer all these questions.

In October 2009, the research assistant with whom I had started working had to leave Merrivale and relocate with her husband to South Africa, and so I had to find a new one. Thus, I recruited a middle-aged woman from Tavaka Village, and I had to start explaining to her what I expected from her, introducing her to the key district officials and informing the villagers. It was an arduous task because she also had to do her farm work and would do my tasks when she was free. I had no choice; since I wanted to maintain peace with the villagers, I had to be patient despite the less-than-satisfactory situation. Sometimes she would not capture the events in as much detail as I wanted, such that I would have to ask other people in the village who attended the events to give me details of what had transpired at the meetings.

The issue of emotions, as discussed earlier, was another challenge that I had to face in the course of my fieldwork.

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the methodology employed, including background information on the sampling procedures as this information helps to visualise and elucidate the issues under discussion. I have also given an in-depth analysis of the approach and the data collection methods that were triangulated in order to gather the information. The methodology used builds mainly upon qualitative social science. The aim was to give the reader the capacity to understand how the research questions were answered at a practical level. This chapter builds upon the notion that anthropology is

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now the understanding of the self.[14] The methodology I used leads me to conclude that it would be difficult for one to study land, rural livelihoods, transitory mobility, resource access, and women's issues without being resident in the particular locality.

Not being resident can lead to missing some of the dynamics that evolve in these communities and to misunderstanding why certain actors behave the way they do. As a young Zimbabwean woman researching this topic, I had the advantage of sharing the same culture as the community in many respects, and this helped me understand their behaviour and life values as they related to my topic. My being fluent in Shona also helped. Despite the fact that the people spoke Karanga, a Shona dialect, with some minor exceptions I could understand them without problems and this gave me a great degree of autonomy in my interaction. The encounters I had with people during interviews, at community gatherings, and even at the bus stop shaped an understanding of some of the issues with which I dealt. Archival and historical material helped provide a background to the study site.

14 Clifford 1998 postulates that the researcher must explore the social and cultural character of his or her own society in order to understand how it affects the research and interpretation of the research material.

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CHAPTER 3

Description of the Study Area

Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed description of the study area, including the political, economic, social, climatic, and natural resource characteristics of the field site. In-depth descriptions of the geographical location, the biosphere, and the environmental characteristics of the study site are presented. The demographic characteristics of the district and the current population statistics of the study site are provided. The first section deals with the general characteristics of the district, while the second section presents with the characteristics of the location where the study was carried out.

Mwenezi District, Zimbabwe

This study was undertaken in Mwenezi District, situated in southeastern Zimbabwe. The district is located in Masvingo Province, one of Zimbabwe's ten provinces. The district derives its name from the Mwenezi River, which provides irrigation water to sugar cane plantations in and around Rutenga Business Centre. Mwenezi is situated on the main A1 highway connecting with the border town of Beitbridge, is the point of entry into South Africa. Mwenezi East and Mwenezi West, the two constituent parts of the district, are situated along the Mwenezi River, which serves as the boundary between the two parts on its way to joining the Limpopo, of which it is a major tributary, in southern Mozambique.

Environmental Characteristics

Mwenezi District has a total land area of 1,339,657 hectares, made up of Communal Areas, Intensive Conservation Areas for wildlife, large- and small-scale commercial farms, and old resettlement areas. The climate is characterised as hot, and rains are experienced in summer. Mwenezi lies between agro-ecological regions IV and V. The agro-ecological region classification of present-day Zimbabwe was undertaken by Vincent and Thomas (1960), based on rainfall amount and variability. Agro-ecological region 1 has the highest mean annual rainfall, and region V has the lowest. This classification led to recommendations on land use and the most productive farming systems for the farmers in each area. The ecological regions of Zimbabwe are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

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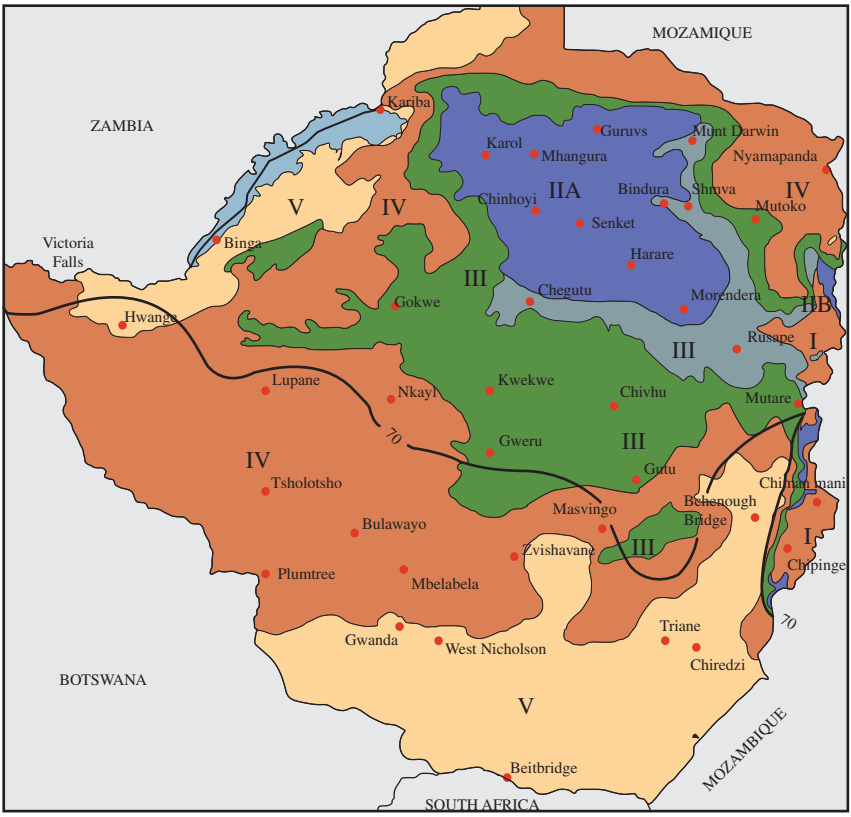

FIGURE 3.1 *Agro-ecological regions of Zimbabwe*
LEGEND: I—SPECIALISED AND DIVERSIFIED FARMING REGION; IIA—INTENSIVE FARMING REGION; IIB—INTENSIVE FARMING REGION; III—SEMI-INTENSIVE FARMING REGION; REGION IV—CATTLE RANCHING; V—EXTENSIVE FARMING REGION.
SOURCE: DERIVED FROM *NATURAL REGIONS AND PROVISIONAL FARMING AREAS OF ZIMBABWE*, 1:1,000,000 (SURVEYOR-GENERAL, 1998); INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, TECHNICAL, AND EXTENSION SERVICES (AGRITEX).
SOURCE: MATONDI (2012)

The mean annual rainfall over Mwenezi District is some 450 to 650 mm, as indicated in Figure 3.2, which presents annual mean rainfall data for two sites within Masvingo Province and for the province as a whole. Rainfall in the district is highly variable, and the district is drought-prone. The majority of the households in the district depend on agricultural production, including livestock production (Bvocho 2005).

Natural Resources in the District

Formerly, the research site was surrounded by different kinds of natural resources that encouraged tourism, but these were not spared in the land

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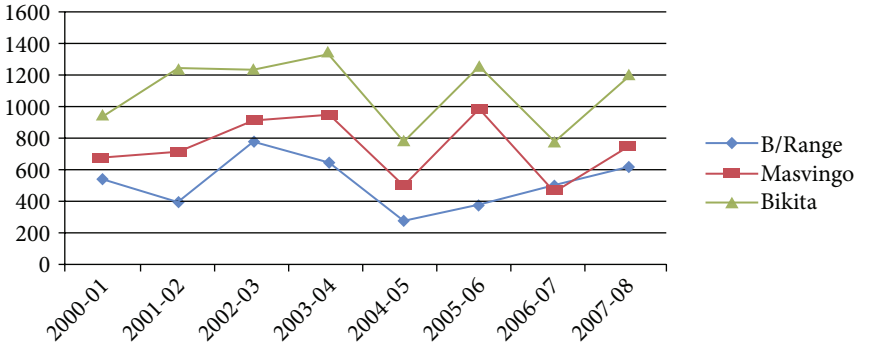

FIGURE 3.2 *Rainfall in Masvingo Province, 2000/01–2007/08*
SOURCE: SCOONES ET AL. (2010).

invasions and are now being used by the new peasant farmers for purposes such as timber supply and agricultural production. The continued existence of wildlife is a major characteristic of Mwenezi District, and the most common animals include elephant, buffalo, zebra, wild pig, monkeys, antelope and giraffe. The lowveld area of Masvingo Province includes some of the most significant wildlife and conservation areas in the country (Scoones et al. 2010, Wolmer 2007). These have been of major economic importance, attracting substantial inflows of foreign exchange through tourism, hunting, and game farming. The conservation lobby has been hard at work exploring how land reform and wildlife might mix, and an array of policy proposals has been tabled. Scoones et al. (2010:41) note that "a substantial area of the lowveld is also envisaged as part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, which is supposed to connect Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe; while the agreement for this massive area has been signed by political leaders in all three countries, but progress in implementation has been slow, certainly on the Zimbabwe side." However, the plans are still on the table and, if executed, would have major ramifications for land reform beneficiaries in Mwenezi sites (Wolmer 2007).

The district is spotted with various types of forest with different types of indigenous trees. The southeast lowveld is dominated by mopane woodland, which provides a major resource in the form of the mopane worms found mainly from December to April. Riverine forests, shaped by edaphic and micro-climatic conditions, are found on the fringes of rivers in Mwenezi. The most common tree species are marula (*Sclerocaya birrea*), baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), and mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*).

Management of Natural Resources

A number of actors are involved in the management of the natural resources in the district. The Department of Forestry through the Ministry of Agriculture,

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the Mwenezi Rural District Council, NGOs such as CARE International, the traditional leaders, the village headmen, and most men play a role in forest management (Mudege and Bourdillon 2003). Following the FTLRP, environmental management in Masvingo District has been problematic because extensive damage has been inflicted on indigenous forests, grazing lands, commercial timber plantations, rangelands, and national parks (Marongwe 2008). This situation has led to the emergence of new natural resource management institutions. In 2001, the government created the Environmental Management Agency whose duty it is to implement natural resource management policies and regulations in line with the new land settlement patterns. The chiefs are also instrumental in forest management: *"If you start a fire like Mr Kimbini did last year when he started a fire at his plot, while clearing his fields in preparation for cotton planting…he was summoned to the chief, and at the chief's court he was asked to pay a fine of a beast because he had destroyed vegetation, and the chief also pointed out that people could have been killed or injured. Granaries of food crops could have been destroyed, leading to hunger."*[1]

Village heads on the fast track farms have also assumed natural resource management functions as they seek to preserve grazing lands. Women are not involved directly in forestry regulation making but some are active in the watering process.

Pre-Colonial, Colonial, and Post-Colonial History

Present-day Masvingo Province came into being because of different mobility patterns that existed during the pre-colonial era (Mavhunga 2008).

Bannermann (1981) reports that in the 1750s and early 1800s elements of the Tsonga, another group of Bantu people resident along the coast between Sofala and Nyaka (later Maputo), settled around what nineteenth century travellers called the Thirstland. Between the Runde and Bubi rivers were many small Pfumbi and Rembetu chieftaincies, and sprinklings of Venda, the bulk having been pushed south of the Limpopo and west toward Beitbridge (Mutetwa 1976). As Mangule and his offspring expanded northwards to establish their kingdom, his brother Shigombe was settling in the west of the Zebechua–Chitolo confluence. Kaschula (1967) argues that, from their father's late-eighteenth century settlement between the Mwenezi and Zebechua rivers, Shigombe's sons Shikovele and Shingwanza moved their homesteads just slightly northwest in about 1824 and 1845, respectively.

1 Interview with Mrs C., Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm, September 2009.

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In 1895, the country became known as Rhodesia, named for the businessman and politician, Cecil Rhodes. The country became known as Southern Rhodesia in 1901 and was part of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in the 10-year period 1953 to 1963. In 1964, it became Rhodesia again when Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) became independent from Britain. Under the Rhodesian Front of Ian Smith, in 1965 the country unilaterally declared independence from Great Britain but was still under white rule. The war of liberation was fought from 1966 until 1980, when the country gained its independence, this time under African rule.

The Zimbabwe African National Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has ruled the country since 1980. The year 2008 saw the birth of a new political system with the formation of a coalition government between the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and ZANU-PF. The land issue has been at the heart of the economic, social, and political struggles in Zimbabwe, such that in 2000 the country was subject to a land revolution, when the veterans of the liberation struggle mobilised the masses to occupy the white commercial farms as a way of redressing colonial imbalances. The fast-track land reform was widely condemned for its violence and because it challenged traditional property relations in Zimbabwe.

Mobility, Identity, and Settlement

The pre-colonial history of Zimbabwe is usually framed by the inflection points that led to the rise and fall of great empires; these include: the great Zimbabwe, the Rozvi, the Mutapa, the Torwa, and Ndebele states (Mlambo and Raftopolous 2009). The birth of Mwenezi District resulted from mobility patterns characterised by need for land and the establishment of permanent settlements. Kaschula (1967) maintains that one of Shikovele's two sons, Chikwarakwara, settled in the southern part of his grandfather Shigombe's domains, straddling the Mwenezi. It is from there that his own son, Sengwe, moved west along the Limpopo to set up his own village between the Bubi and Mwenezi in about 1850 (Bannermann 1981). The second of Shikovele's sons was Hokwanye, whose son Mateke would cross the Mwenezi and settle on the hills at the source of the Babumba and Marakanga streams.

The colonial period was characterised by the presence of Europeans, starting in the fifteenth century. Mavhunga (2008) indicates that at various times the Europeans included the Portuguese, the Germans,[2] the Afrikaners, and the British. However, in the 1880s, the British occupied much of present-day Zimbabwe, and various skirmishes and wars were fought over land

2 German explorer, Karl Mauch, launched hunting expeditions in 1865–73 from Natal to the Bubi and Runde areas in present-day Mwenezi.

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habitation. The Shona–Ndebele uprising of 1896 led to the movement all the black people to the dry areas of Gwaai and Shangani to pave way for white settlement (Ranger 1960, Tindell 1967, Palmer 1977). Rule by the British South Africa Company led to the movement of the people of Mwenezi into the drier communal areas in Mwenezi: Neshuro, Matibi, Sengwe, Maranda, and Sarahuru (Beach 1998). These reserves, like the Gwaai and Shangani, were mostly located in areas of light sandy soils with little rainfall and inadequate water supplies, making them poorly suited to agriculture (Moyana 1984).

These movements of people from their ancestral lands started in the 1880s and continued until the 1960s. According to Wolmer (2007), the British South Africa Company realised that the country was not as rich in minerals as the Witwatersrand in South Africa and therefore decided to focus on developing the country's agricultural potential. Whites were settled on large tracts of the most productive land at the expense of black Africans, who were denied the right to occupy these areas and confined to so-called native reserves. These reserves were then subject to an array of interventions framed as attempts to modernise agriculture and prevent environmental degradation.

Population

The population of Mwenezi District in 2008 was estimated at 133,108[3] people, including those in the communal and the new fast-track farms, however it has been noted that, "The population figures are difficult to ascertain in Mwenezi District because of the everyday movement of the people to South Africa, Mozambique, and Botswana."[4] As recorded in the 2012 census, the population of the district is 166,263, (Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency 2012). The demographic characteristics of the population show a predominance of older men, women, and a few young people in the communal areas. The fast-track farms mostly comprise relatively young, middle-aged, and older people. But there are wide variations in the demographic profile due to the migratory patterns of the people in the district, as the able-bodied frequently migrate. "It is difficult to find youths in this district because they go to work in South Africa and Botswana and, in 2008, even in Mozambique."[5]

3 Based on CARE International's register for the distribution of food aid in the communal and fast-track farms, Masvingo Province, August 2008.

4 Interview, Dr E.S.M, Agricultural Adviser, SNV Netherlands, responsible for Masvingo, Manicaland, and Bulawayo Provinces.

5 Interview with Mrs E.C., Assistant District Administrator, Mwenezi District Offices, February 2010.

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Mwenezi District is populated by people from various ethnic groups. These include the Karanga and the Venda people. The latter also reside extensively in the Beitbridge area and parts of Limpopo Province in South Africa, where the former Venda homeland is located, and in the towns of Musina, Louis Trichardt (Makhado), Thohoyandou, and Tzaneen in South Africa. There are also the Shangaan, found in parts of Limpopo Province in South Africa, mostly in a town called Giyani. Another ethnic group is the Ndebele-speaking people. There are some white commercial farmers, particularly in the conservancies in Bubi, Runde and other surrounding areas. The ethnic groups of Bantu origin have traditional leaders who are responsible for the upkeep of cultural values. Mwenezi East is under the chieftaincy of Chief Chitanga,[6] whose home is 20 kilometres from Merrivale Farm at the Lundi Mission. Mwenezi West is under Chief Neshuro, whose homestead is in Neshuro communal area. The chiefs have jurisdiction over the fast-track farms, the remaining commercial farms,[7] and the communal areas. The chiefs work in conjunction with the different village heads, both on fast-track farms and in the communal areas, but not necessarily with the remaining white farmers. *"The chief of this area is Chitanga, I have seen him on some occasions, but we do not interact much with him and, if there are meetings or ceremonies he conducts, I have not attended any and it has not been a problem at all."*[8]

Economy

The fast-track land reform has led to an alteration in land use patterns, leading in turn to a new economy emerging in Mwenezi, where there are now medium-scale farms, village self-contained farms,[9] and a few large-scale commercial farming areas.

The medium- and small-scale farms have been established on land formerly reserved for cattle ranches and wildlife farming. As Wolmer (2007:44) notes, "Changing environmental and political dynamics over time have led to land use

6 The current Chief Chitanga was a former teacher who ascended to the chieftainship recently after the death of his father. He has a fast-track plot on one of the farms near Merrivale, supporting the idea that chiefs played a central role in the fast-track land reform process.

7 It should be noted that the few white commercial farms that have not been gazetted under fast-track know that they are under the jurisdiction of chieftaincies, but the chiefs do not affect the day-to-day management of their farms, and they do not pay allegiance to them at all since they pay their farm levies at the Mwenezi District Offices.

8 Interview with Mr F, white cattle-ranching commercial farmer, Qapane 1A, Rutenga, January 2010.

9 These are family farming units characterised by livestock and crop production, with an area of 6 to 10 ha of arable land and common pool grazing lands.

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transformations as well as complex accommodations and adaptations, such as changes in the social context and landscape location of agricultural practices."

Belief Systems

Although the people are from different ethnic groups, they all live in harmony. Their traditions are similar in most respects as they all believe in God, in either the traditional sense or the Christian way. All the different ethnic groups, the Karanga, Venda, Shangaan, and Ndebele, believe in ancestral spirits. Hellum (1999) and Lan (1986) note that the communities in Zimbabwe have mixed belief systems. One leg is rooted in ancestral beliefs and the other is rooted in Christianity. This has led them to believe in the existence of *Musikavanhu/Mwari/Umkulumukulu.*[10] The Venda and the Karanga have similar cultural beliefs; they emphasise the importance of the woman's place in the homestead, and they believe in the God of rain and in practices like *kugara nhaka*[11] and *kurova makuva.*[12] The Shangaan are slightly different in that they have a gender-sensitive culture. Men also engage in household activities like cooking and going to the well to collect water (field observation, March 2009).

The Ndebele have similar cultural beliefs to the Karanga and the Venda, although they differ in their application in many respects. In terms of events such as rainfall celebrations and asking the ancestors to bless the land with rains, all the ethnic groups have rain gods that they appease and to whom they demonstrate their respect. The rain god for the Venda is a young girl who is supposed to be a virgin and will guide people in praying for the rains. If she desists from the norm of chastity, she is removed from the throne. Bourdillon (1987) states that only a girl child from the royal families that are known to have connections with ancestors and the higher God can be chosen as a rain god. There are also various churches in the area (Christian Zion Apostolic Church, Catholic, Anglican, Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe, Seventh Day Adventist, and the Methodist Church), and these provide focal points for social networking.

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10 These are the Karanga and Ndebele terms referring to God. There is a belief that a certain higher spirit protects people and should be praised and worshipped at times of good harvests; in times of problems, such as droughts, that same spirit can be summoned to assist people.

11 This is known as levirate, a practice where if a woman's husband dies she is supposed to choose one of her husband's brothers or close male relatives as her new husband. The woman shows that she agrees with the tradition by giving the male relative a cooking stick as a sign of the union.

12 A tradition where a dead person is venerated by his family and friends, with a special ceremonial beer drunk as a sign that his spirit is back within the family again.

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These ethnic groups believe that land is a resource connected to the ancestral spirits. Hence, the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was characterised as appeasing different male and female ancestral spirits so that the liberation fighters would gain support in the war against the white regime (Lan 1986).

Political System

Before 2008, Mwenezi District was run as a unitary district. There was only one member of parliament. However, since then, the district has been divided for administrative purposes. During the 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections, the district was split into two parts, Mwenezi East and Mwenezi West. Mwenezi East, made up of eight electoral wards, includes the large chunk of land north of the Mwenezi River. It is represented by ZANU-PF in parliament. Mwenezi West, with nine electoral wards, comprises the area south of the Mwenezi River, including Manyuchi Dam, and is also represented by ZANU-PF. Figure 3.3 shows the location of Mwenezi East and Mwenezi West in relation to the other districts in Masvingo Province.

The highest level of government is the Provincial Governor, who is a political appointee.[13] The Provincial Administrator is a senior civil servant who heads the provincial office. Because of the Prime Minister's Directive on Decentralisation in 1985, the political hierarchy stretches down to the District Administrator and the Assistant District Administrator, civil servants who work under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural, and Urban Development. Among their roles is the enforcement of the rules and regulations governing access to and use of land.

They also have the responsibility of overseeing other social welfare services. At ward level, there is the Councillor, who is a political appointee as he represents the needs of local people. At village level, there are chiefs whose incumbency in office is based on kinship ties

(*dzimba dzoushe*) through the dynasties of the Rozvi and Karanga that dominated Mwenezi. The chiefs, according to the Traditional Leaders Act of 1988, have power over their ancestral territories, can adjudicate disputes at the local level through their courts, and are responsible for rain-making ceremonies. However, in 2002, a new chiefly regime was created in Zimbabwe.

13 The office of Provincial Governor is a political appointment. Under the power-sharing agreement, the three parties—ZANU-PF, MDC–Tsvangirai and MDC–Mutambara—agreed to divide the governorship posts. Masvingo Province was supposed to be under the governorship of the MDC–Tsvangirai; however, the governors' posts emerged as one of the most contested and politically charged offices in the power-sharing government in Zimbabwe. The agreements were never fully applied. The term of office of the ZANU-PF governors expired in August 2010, and they could not be reappointed.

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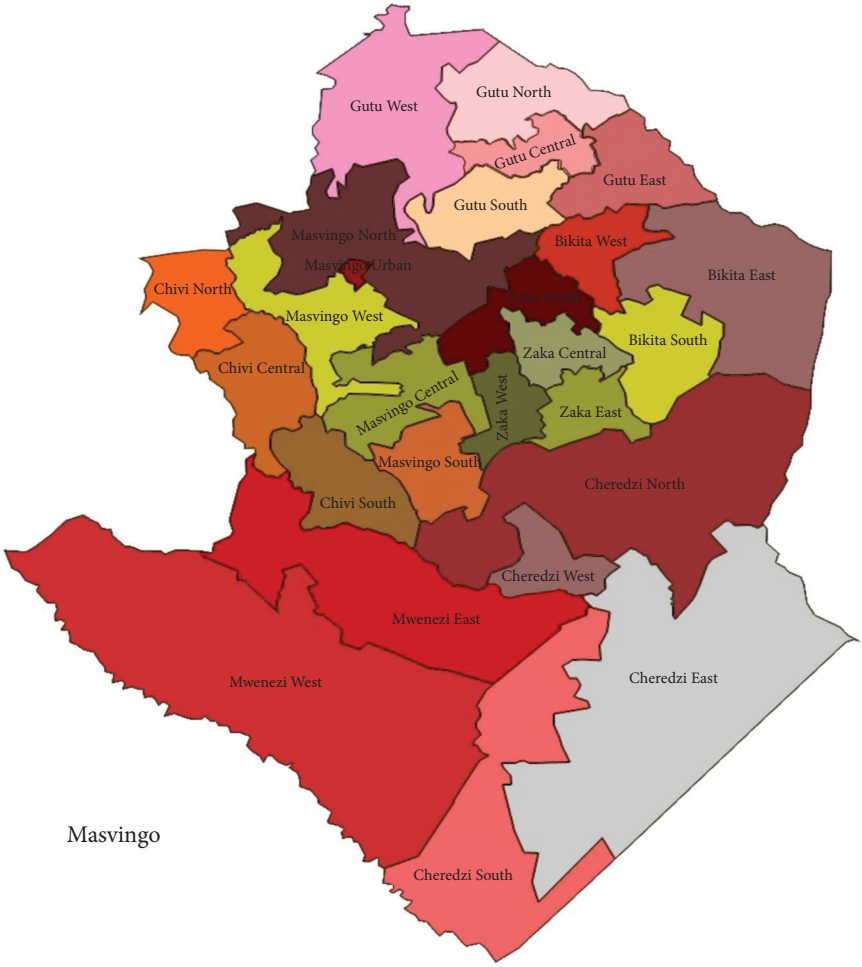

FIGURE 3.3 *Masvingo Province, Mwenezi East and Mwenezi West*
SOURCE: MWENEZI DISTRICT OFFICE FILES, JANUARY 2010.

The chiefs are now paid allowances, and have literally become government workers, and were influential in the fast-track land reform process as they argued for land acquisition based on restitution.[14] Village heads are appointed or elected by the villagers based on criteria such as affiliation with a political party (in the case of the fast-track farms), relationships with the chief or their perceived ability to manage village-level affairs amicably and competently.

14 Chief Chitanga is said to have been instrumental in the fast-track land reform process in Mwenezi. He insisted that Merrivale Farm had to be occupied because that is where the

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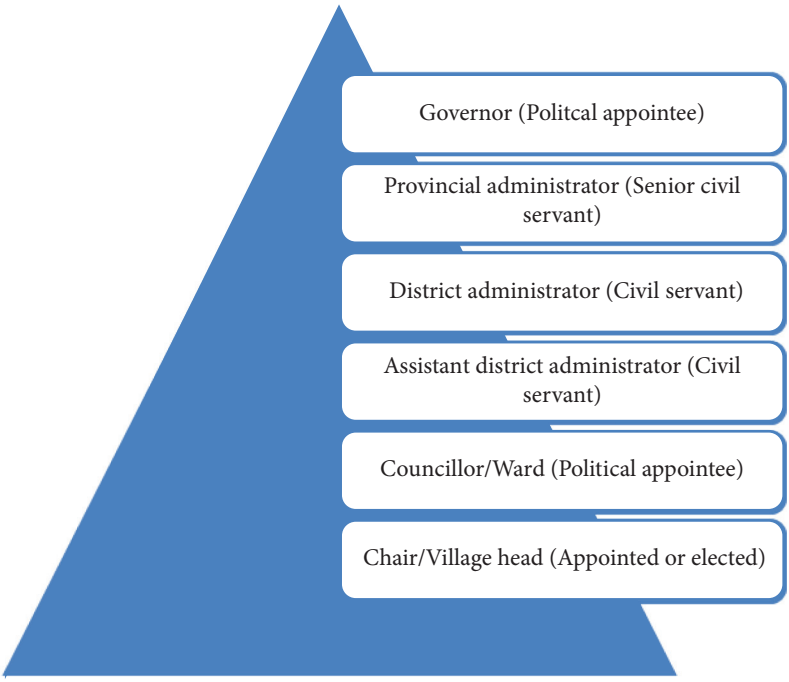

FIGURE 3.4 *Local governance structure in Zimbabwe*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK, 2011.

They are responsible for the day-to-day running of the villages and resolve matters that do not require the chief's involvement.

Figure 3.4 illustrates the hierarchical nature of the local governance structures in Zimbabwe, from the governor at the provincial level to village head at the village level.

Local Governance and Social Support Systems

Mwenezi District is run by a District Administrator whose job is to oversee the administrative and political governance of both Mwenezi East and Mwenezi West. The main administrative centre, the Mwenezi District Offices, is located at the Neshuro Business Centre along the Chirundu–Beitbridge highway. This is the location for the offices of the District Administrator, the Police Station, the District Court, the Prosecutor, the Office of Births and Deaths Registration, as well as the Agritex[15] offices.

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royal family was buried, at Sagwari Mountain, and he wanted the old burial practices reinitiated (Interview with C.M., Tavaka Village, February 2010).

15 Agricultural, Technical, and Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture.

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The district is serviced by a network of roads, which, apart from the A1 highway, are all gravel roads. During the rainy season, despite the best efforts by the District Development Fund, these gravel roads are washed away. Most places are accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicles. Some of the bridges washed away by Cyclone Eline during the 2005–2006 season have still not been replaced. Phone lines connect most of the business centres with the outside world, and cell phones are now almost universal. Although buses run on many of the rural roads, the basic mode of transport by most local people is the donkey cart.

People, Adaptation, and Survival

Bvocho (2005:410) states that, "Low rainfall patterns have created the desire to shift more toward animal husbandry, especially cattle and goat ranching. However, the majority of households have not been able to restock their livestock after the 1992 drought which had a devastating effect upon the households." Most people in the district are smallholder farmers, with others employed on sugar plantations in Rutenga and at Nuanetsi ranch.[16] Before the forced invasions of commercial farms in 2000, cattle ranchers used to employ a considerable number of people. The area south of the Mwenezi River beyond the Maranda communal lands is dominated by large cattle ranches. Nuanetsi Ranch, reputed to be the largest cattle ranch in the whole country, is found in the district along the Al highway between Masvingo and Beitbridge (Chaumba et al. 2003).

People in the district have different coping mechanisms after the FTLRP than they had before the programme.[17] They are involved in semi-subsistence farming, where they grow crops for sale and to feed their families. They grow mainly cotton, maize, sorghum, bambara nuts, groundnuts, and pumpkins. They also have 'water gardens' (hand-irrigated gardens), where they grow leafy vegetables, beans, tomatoes, and okra. The grown crops are sold either in Zimbabwe or in South Africa, Botswana, or Mozambique, but sales outlets vary by household. Kozanayi and Frost (2002:3) note that "Mwenezi is a high source

16 Nuanetsi Ranch still exists, but since 2000 parts of the southern and northern sections of the ranch have been occupied by new settlers during fast-track land reform. Attempts are underway to remove the settlers to the area north of the Tokwe-Mukorsi dam because the ranch is now a biofuel producer.

17 Most of the men in the area before fast-track land reform used to work for the cattle ranches. Since these workers had communal area homes, it was mainly women who oversaw their village homes, with the men residing at the ranches/farms where they worked. Some of the men also used to work on farms in South Africa, but many have since returned and have acquired land under the FTLRP redistributions.

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of mopane worms and most of the local people are involved in the trade of the mopane worms from within; they also sell to people as far as Harare, who come and purchase them in large quantities for resale. Some of them trade them in neighbouring Botswana and South Africa." Gold-panning along the river banks is also common, as is petty trading in various household commodities. Chaumba et al. (2003) note that prostitution within the new plots is also common, involving women who tend to believe that all the new farmers are rich clients. Rutenga and Ngundu growth points[18] have a notable incidence of prostitution since truck drivers sometimes use these places for stopovers (Chaumba et al. 2003).

Agricultural Activities

The fast-track programme enabled the resettled farmers to engage in agriculture on different scales. They now had land, and they embarked on different types of farming and activities on their farms. Since the 2000 farm invasions, peasant farmers from the communal lands of both Matibi, north of the Mwenezi River, and Maranda, south of the river, invaded some of the arid ranches found in the district and thereby changed the patterns of land use in the district.

Figure 3.5 shows the intensity of land invasions in Mwenezi District, indicating the extent of changing land uses from commercial cattle and wildlife ranching to mixed farming by the new farmers. The red colour toward the bottom right-hand side of the map denotes the high land level of occupations in Mwenezi District and neighbouring Chiredzi District. Settlers on these ranches started raising cattle and selling cattle or meat. Those who acquired arable farms practice semi-subsistence farming. Some people managed to settle on former sugar plantations with irrigation, so they now practice mixed farming since they cannot rely on growing sugar cane alone. They both keep cattle and grow horticultural crops and maize (Marongwe 2008). Some settlers are craftsmen; they make wooden items for sale out of trees felled on their own plots and adjacent areas. The FTLRP enabled them to access large farms with extensive forests from which to craft wooden ornaments.

Migration and Mobility Patterns

The district has been characterised by seasonal migration to South Africa since prior to 1980. Young men would flock to the mines in South Africa in search of

18 Growth points are service centres in Zimbabwe's rural areas where essentially services such as shops, post offices, clinics, and marketing points for agricultural commodities are provided by the state. Growth points are smaller rural centres that provide rural populations with basic amenities in easily accessible, central locations.

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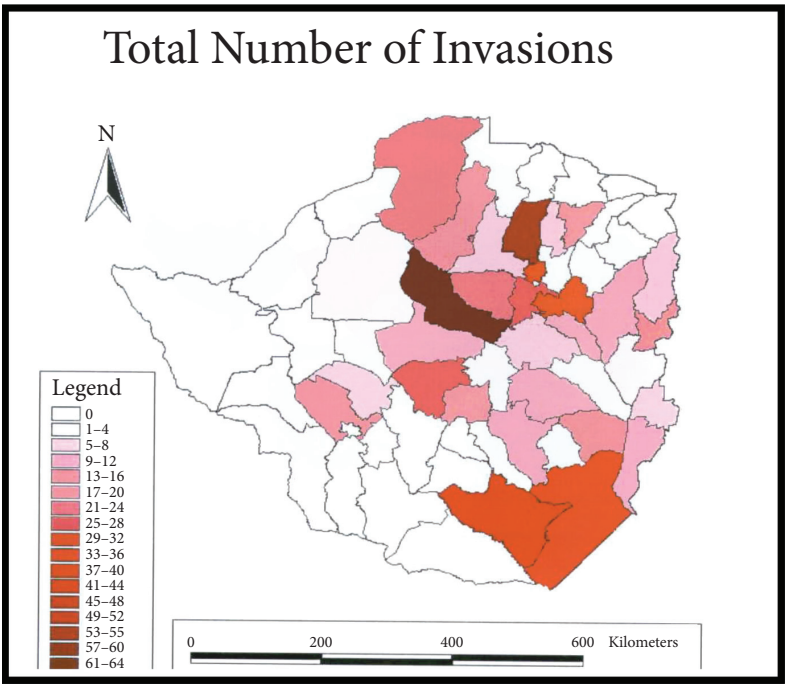

FIGURE 3.5 *Concentration of farm invasions in different provinces of Zimbabwe, 2001*
SOURCE: GLOVER (2001).

work (Scoones et al. 2010). Education in the district has been affected by these treks to South Africa because neither young men nor young women see the value of walking long distances to school in some villages when they can cross into neighbouring South Africa and get menial jobs that enable them to survive and feed their families back home.

Since 2001, human movement to Botswana and South Africa has increased. This movement is characterised as transitory. Transitory mobility is mostly undertaken by women who enter South Africa so that they can sell their produce and other items in order to feed their families. Some able-bodied men and women cross the borders into these countries legally–this applies to a small number of people who have valid travel documents–or illegally, which is the case for most of them.[19] Many of them cross into South Africa by swimming across the Limpopo River to avoid Zimbabwean and South Africa

19 Since April 2009, the requirement to have a visa to enter South Africa has been scrapped. Zimbabweans can now enter South Africa for a period of three months without a visa, and a temporary residence permit is issued at the South African immigration entry points.

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immigration officials. Since a visa is not required to enter Botswana, they simply cross the border. Those without passports cross by walking through the undergrowth, often under cover of darkness and trying as much as possible to avoid the electric fencing. These people who have migrated to South Africa still maintain their family ties. Some of them come to the Beitbridge border post every month to have their passports stamped, on both the Zimbabwean and the South African sides, and they always make visits to their families on these occasions.

There are also cases–involving both women and men–of inter-district and intra-district mobility, where people have moved from communal areas in other districts and villages to get land under the FTLRP. Other people have moved from towns such as Chiredzi, Masvingo, and Zvishavane so as to occupy the land they have been given.

These new farmers now maintain both their original and new homes, creating new patterns of human settlement and land use. It emerged from the focus group discussions that most of them have maintained their original homes, as is also evidenced by their continuation of farming at the former communal homes every agricultural season. Some families employ labourers to look after their communal homesteads, or have given the homestead to their elder sons as an inheritance. The settlers have maintained their homes for spiritual reasons; they cannot simply abandon their relatives' graves and the homes in which they have resided for decades. The pattern of maintaining former communal homes while moving to the new farms emerges as a coping mechanism that has been shaped by the lack of tenure security for the fast-track farmers.

A new type of mobility is evolving, whereby some farmers, the newly resettled, travel temporarily to South Africa, Mozambique, and Botswana to sell their vegetables. This type of transitory mobility has also attracted women from Mwenezi District who travel to many cities and towns in South Africa—Musina, Louis Tritchardt, Polokwane, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town—to sell agricultural produce and products made from natural resources. These farmers reside permanently in Zimbabwe, but their day-to-day trading life is mainly conducted far afield within Botswana, Mozambique, and South Africa.

Marketing produce in South Africa is favoured because it is more profitable than marketing locally, where prices are low, and it earns foreign currency as well as providing access to reasonably priced consumer goods that can readily be sold at home. Vegetables or groundnuts do not fetch much on the local market as almost every household has a supply of them. Meat and milk products are sold in Mozambique's Chikwalakwala area with both men and women involved in the trade. Women, however, are the predominant travellers to South Africa.

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The Field Site: Characteristics of Merrivale Farm

This study was carried out at Tavaka Village, Ward 13, Merrivale Farm. Tavaka Village is made up of around 40 homesteads. The other Ward 13 farms subdivided into Al plots under the villagised model of settlement (see Chapter 5) are as follows: Mariot, Sonop, Muzhanjire, BJB, Mbavarira, Mucheni Estates, Wensely, and Mukumi Ranch. Merrivale Farm possesses mixed soils of two main types: clays with low infiltration rates and relatively high fertility and sands with high infiltrations rates but relatively low fertility. The clay soils are alluvial clays derived from dolerite outcrops, and the sands are derived from granite (Scoones et al. 1996). The soils are unevenly distributed across the study site; some areas within the farm have more clay soil and others have moderate amounts of clay and sandy soils.

Getting to Know Merrivale Farm

Merrivale Farm is located alongside the 132 km marker on the Masvingo–Beitbridge highway. The bus stop for the Merrivale Farmers is at Sagwari, a school seven kilometres from the tarred road. (Photo 3.1.)

Merrivale Farm shares borders with Muzhanjire Estate to the west, Sonop Farm to the east, and Sweet Waters Farm to the north. Before the FTLRP, the area of the farm was 4,000 ha (Masvingo District File Reports 2005). My estimate is that at present the farm is subdivided to cater for about 500 families, in 25 villages. Following the villagised mode of resettlement, each family has between six and eight hectares of land for crop production. There are 25–30 ha of shared grazing lands per village. During interviews, the households repeatedly said that they had three hectares of grazing land each until I realised that they did not know what constituted a hectare. It seems the villagers have further subdivided the common grazing lands so that each household now has its own grazing space.[20] Figure 3.6 shows the location of Merrivale Farm and the pattern of household settlement.

The nearest growth points to Merrivale Farm are Rutenga–20 km away toward Beitbridge–and Ngundu–approximately 90 km away toward Masvingo. The two centres provide some basic needs to the Merrivale community. The hospital at Neshuro growth point serves as the Mwenezi District hospital and is about 50 km from Merrivale Farm. People can also seek medical attention at either Rutenga or Ngundu. When the children were being immunised in June 2009, most of the mothers at Merrivale Farm took their children to Lundi or Rutenga because it is much easier to get transport to these

20 Provincial Livestock Officer, Mr Kanda, personal communication, 2009.

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PHOTO 3.1 *Sagwari Secondary School, the bus stop at the beginning of Merrivale Farm*

destinations than to Ngundu, which is further away, and all the buses heading to Harare from Beitbridge are usually full by the time they pass Merrivale. From Rutenga to Beitbridge–the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa–it is 158 km by road.

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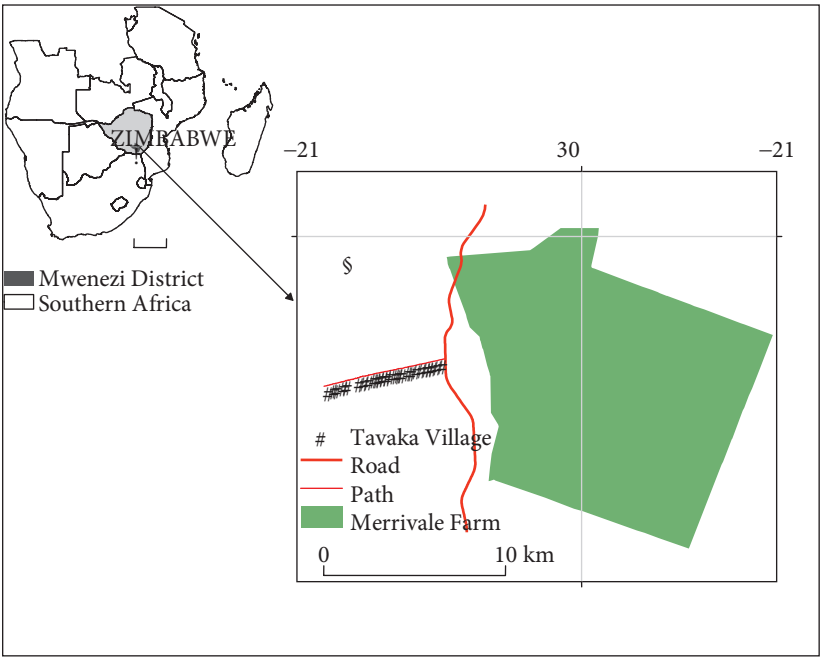

FIGURE 3.6 *Location of Merrivale Farm and Tavaka Village*
SOURCE: CARTOGRAPHY BY MUTOPO AND SIBANDA, OCTOBER 2011.

Household Composition

In terms of social differentiation, most of the households at Tavaka Village are male-headed. Of the 20 households included in the study, only three were female-headed. The personal circumstances of these three women were as follows: one was an elderly widow whose husband had died in 2004 after they had already settled at Merrivale Farm; the second was single, had never married, and became the village head; and the third had been divorced by her husband, was now living on her elder son's plot in the village, and had been given land to build her own home. Most of the other women were married and resident at the farm because that is where their husbands resided.

Sites Visited in Mwenezi

Although based at Merrivale, I visited other areas to understand more about how women shaped their livelihoods and engaged in transitory mobility as a livelihood strategy (Figure 3.7). For example, I visited the nearby communal areas so that I could observe and interview the residents about how their livelihoods had been shaped in these areas. I constantly visited growth points

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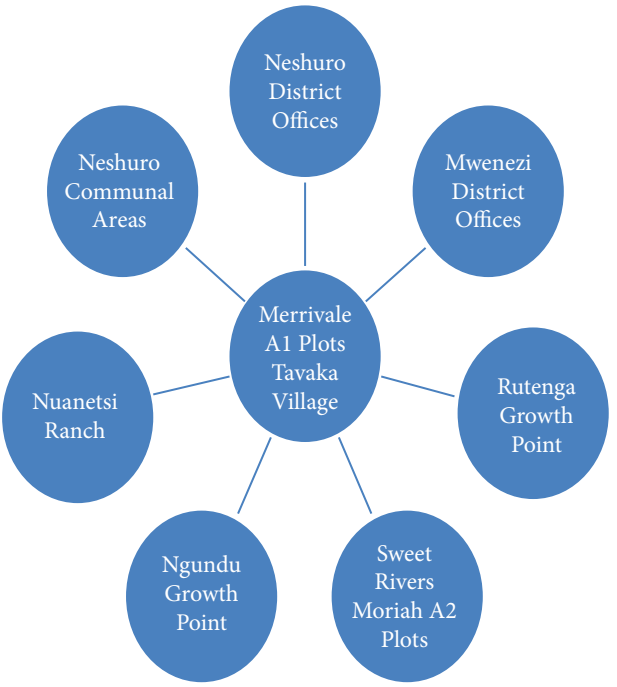

FIGURE 3.7 *Other field sites in Mwenezi*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELD NOTES, 2010.

because there I could see women from different farms preparing to travel to South Africa with their produce and how they negotiated for transport. This helped me to gain a clearer picture on how collective action and social networks were built and managed.

Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed overview of the research site, progressing from provincial to village level. This overview elucidates the geographic location of Merrivale Farm as well as the environmental and biosphere factors that are central in understanding human settlement and land use. The chapter sketches the political, economic, social, and cultural values of the people at Merrivale Farm, and in Mwenezi in general. I have also discussed the structure of local government as it had an influence on the establishment of the fast-track farms. The examination of the livelihood activities of the settlers led to a discussion on mobility as a livelihood option and the destinations that are

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popular. To provide background to the land issues that led to the establishment of the fast-track farms in Zimbabwe, certain aspects of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial history have been outlined. My aim has been to situate the subject matter within the locality in order to lead on to the development of my arguments in the succeeding chapters.

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CHAPTER 4

The Early Beginnings of Merrivale Farm

> The white population doubled between 1945 and 1955 to 150,000. This influx of immigrants continued during the years of Federation (1953–1963) and altered the political balance of rural constituencies. The number of white farmers increased by more than 2,500 in the fifteen years after the war; about 500 ex-servicemen were granted farms, but there was a much bigger influx of other farming immigrants from diverse backgrounds.
>
> SELBY 2006:59

Introduction

In this chapter, I present an historical overview of how Merrivale Farm came into being. I trace the origins of the farm and how the first owners were able to acquire the land and settle on the farm. I then give an indication of the type of enterprise that Merrivale was before the FTLRP. This synthesis elucidates the historical, economic, and social trajectories that have shaped the land debates in contemporary Zimbabwe. Issues of mobility are analysed in light of the regional cross-border mobility of the first white settlers from South Africa who accessed land in Rhodesia. The detailing of these activities illuminates the situation obtaining at Merrivale today. Prior to the FTLRP, there were some 4,500 white commercial farmers in Zimbabwe who occupied some 11.2 million hectares of land (Sukume et al. 2004). Land-use patterns encompassed crop production, livestock-keeping and wildlife ranching. However, since 2000, the situation has changed with the altering of the political geography of land ownership in Zimbabwe. White commercial farmers have remained in minimal numbers with the agrarian structure now mainly dominated by small-scale black farmers. I have relied on data derived from in-depth interviews with key informants, archival material from the National Archives of Zimbabwe, and secondary historical sources of information from other researchers who have worked on the southeast lowveld. Juxtaposing the information from the various sources has helped me to formulate a more grounded analysis surrounding the establishment of Merrivale Farm.

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A Brief History of Land Occupation and Use in Zimbabwe

Selby (2006) points out that the Moodie Trek of 1892 brought several hundred families from the Orange Free State to the area between Beitbridge, Fort Victoria (present-day Masvingo), and Melsetter (present-day Chimanimani). Bannermann (1981) notes that the Moodie Trek, comprising mostly Afrikaners and a few British families, left Bethlehem on 5 May 1892. It consisted of 37 men, and 31 women and children, 16 wagons and innumerable stock. From Tuli, the party followed the pioneer road to Fort Victoria, but numbers dwindled when quarrels ensued and some of the trekkers broke away to try their luck elsewhere. Mlambo and Raftopolous (2009) point out that, when Thomas Moodie left Fort Victoria (Masvingo) on 2 November 1892, his party amounted to only 14 men, four women, and three small children with seven wagons. He made his way steadily eastwards through incredibly difficult country, harassed by shortage of water, local communities (Photo 4.1), and attacks by lions. At one stage, the wagons had to wait four days while the men went ahead to dig and dynamite a way to reach the Save Valley.

The trail they took is followed today by the modern road and is called Moodie Pass. The British and Afrikaners were engaged in hunting activities during the Moodie Trek and followed the hunting routes through present-day Limpopo Province. Figure 4.1 shows the hunting routes taken by the Afrikaners and British from various parts of South Africa into present-day Zimbabwe during the Moodie Trek.

The men fell ill repeatedly with malaria and the horses died of horse sickness. Tsetse flies are found in hotter parts of Africa and are common in Southern Africa, but the trekkers avoided the tsetse-infested lands. Although much trouble had been expected during the expedition, the white settlers crossed the Save River successfully. They were able to connect to the various parts of present-day Zimbabwe using the Save River as a transit point. The mountain barrier that they then had to conquer was negotiated with great difficulty: three span of oxen sometimes having to be chained to each wagon. At last, on 3 January 1893, Moodie's party reached the rolling green downs of Chipinge. Mavhunga (2008) states that Thomas Moodie chose a farm in this area that he named Waterfall. The other trekkers dispersed throughout the district, which they called Melsetter after Moodie's ancestral home in the Orkney Islands. Thomas Moodie died within the year of blackwater fever.

Roder (1964) points out that Nuanetsi Ranch was gazetted in 1910 by the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company of South Africa, which was involved in livestock production. Nuanetsi Ranch is currently the biggest cattle ranch in Zimbabwe and occupies a third of the total land mass of the country.

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PHOTO 4.1 *The Moodie Trek wagons depicted during a confrontation with the local black population on their way to Rhodesia from South Africa*

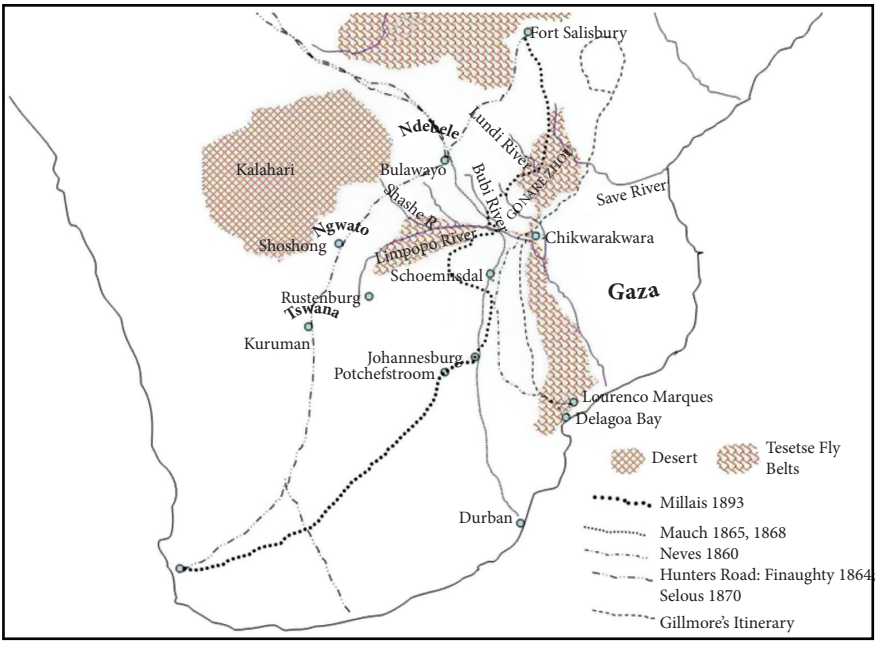

FIGURE 4.1 *The primary hunting routes from South Africa to Zimbabwe, 1892–93*
SOURCE: ADOPTED FROM MAVHUNGA 2008.

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During the 1950s, it comprised more than two-thirds of the country before it was subdivided into other commercial farms. Selby (2006:34) points out that "Southern Rhodesia was occupied as a commercial enterprise, within Rhodes' wider Imperial vision, in which mineral resources were expected to finance an extension of the British Empire." With the growth of cattle ranching in Masvingo Province, Alan Wright, the District Administrator at that time, together with the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company that had concessions to Nuanetsi ranch decided to carve the land into other large-scale farming units. Wright (1972) reports that Nuanetsi Ranch during this time was run by the white government as part of the agricultural economic venture of building up the state; an advertisement was placed in the *Farmers' Weekly* magazine in South Africa in 1956 inviting whites from different countries who were interested in farming in Rhodesia to come and explore land in Southern Zimbabwe. Roder (1964) is of the view that the whites justified their occupation of the land on the basis that the Shona were a semi-nomadic people who themselves were comparatively recent immigrants into the area and had no fixed boundaries of settlement, as the tribes were constantly moving in search of pastures for their livestock.

Contrary to the traditional African concept of usufruct rights, land was provided to settlers with full title deeds, and thus anyone willing to buy a farm could do so and acquire title deeds to the land. Wolmer (2007:36) gives an historical account of how the landscape in southern Zimbabwe was expropriated for farming by the white settlers through the British South Africa Company (BSAC):

> ...the BSAC on realizing that the country was not as rich as the Witwatersrand in minerals had decided to focus on developing agricultural possibilities of the country. Between 1908 and 1960 white settlers appropriated large tracts of the most productive land, denying Africans the right to occupy areas now designated as commercial or crown land and confining them to Native Reserves. These reserves were then subject to an array of interventions that were framed as attempts to modernize agriculture and prevent environmental degradation. The settling of the whites on these lands was motivated by the desire to have a country that supported white initiatives in mining and agriculture. It was a way of maintain their hegemony and dominance over the blacks.

There was relatively late settlement by individual white farmers on the farms carved out of Nuanetsi Ranch. As already mentioned, the area had been used

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as an extensive cooperative cattle ranch venture under the Imperial Cold Storage and Supply Company of South Africa, but it was moving toward a freehold farming system.

One of the ranches in Mwenezi produced a consistent supply of beef to meet the demands of the domestic market–through the Cold Storage Commission–and of the European Union market (Mavedzenge et al. 2008). The white farmers considered their land as the basis for an income-earning enterprise and security for their retirement and opposed any land policy that would threaten their rights. The Rhodesian Front government made efforts to change the racial land patterns, but these yielded no meaningful results because of the white Rhodesians' resistance to multi-racial settlement on the land. Selby (2006:104) notes that "Denis Norman was invited to Nairobi during the Geneva Conference, to gain an impression of the Kenyan land reforms." This tour was organised and paid for by the British government. Norman was introduced to farming leaders and the captains of commerce and industry in an exercise designed to convince him that a white community could prosper under black rule. He was impressed with the system of gradual land transfer and soon afterwards the Rhodesian National Farmers' Union published a land policy paper advocating managed market-based reform; this was the first formal promotion of the willing-buyer, willing-seller concept. This concept, however, further marginalised blacks' access to land as land became a highly monetised commodity, and no policies had been put in place to finance agricultural activities of black farmers at the time.

The Birth of Merrivale Farm and the Settling of the Spencer Family

Merrivale Farm came into being in 1957.[1] Initially, the farm had been part of Nuanetsi Ranch in Mwenezi District. Narrative 4.1 gives a historical perspective on the origins of Merrivale as a commercial farm. Mrs Maureen Spencer reflects on their arrival in what was then Southern Rhodesia and how they settled at what was to become Merrivale. They were the first white commercial settler farmers at Merrivale Farm. When the Spencer family arrived at Merrivale from South Africa, there were a few black families living on the farm in isolated settlements. They kept the Mashona breed of cattle, indigenous to the area,

1 Obituary of Sidney Warneford Spencer, 1989, shown to me by his widow, Mrs Maureen Spencer.

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and grew rapoko[2] and sorghum for consumption. The Spencer family settled with these blacks as they lived in tents until they constructed their own home, made of bricks and asbestos. The black families never attacked these settlers and they lived amicably on the farm, such that attempts were made to harmonise livelihoods as the blacks and whites shared the land and water resources that were available on the land at that time. This situation differs from that in South Africa, where agricultural history was characterised by the removal of blacks from the land, and no white farmers ever shared land with black settlers (Walker et al. 2010).

> Narrative 4.1: The Spencer family moves from South Africa to settle at Merrivale
>
> We had been married in 1954 and Sidney (Dick) Warneford Spencer saw an advertisement in the Farmers' Weekly of South Africa. At that time, we stayed on a farm where we worked in Thembisa, near Johannesburg. Merrivale was part of Nuanetsi Ranch, and they decided to subdivide the ranch into other ranches. Nuanetsi was part of the Cold Storage Company of Rhodesia. This was the time that ranches like Moriah, Sonop, Mucheni, Umbono and most of the cattle ranches came into being. Merrivale was bought by Peter Dross, an Afrikaner cattle breeder, who had a number of farms in South Africa. Peter Dross stayed at a farm in Pietersburg (Polokwane). Dross never lived at Merrivale; he only came to the farm for holidays. My husband got the job of being the farm manager and that was how we came to stay at Merrivale Farm, with our children. My husband was born in Bechuanaland, now Botswana. He had attended an agricultural college, so he had knowledge of cattle production. When we first got to Merrivale, there was nothing on the land; it was just grass with so many wild animals. There were three black families that we found on the farm who stayed there; they had cattle and grew sorghum for domestic use. This was Chief Chitanga's area, and the families we found at Merrivale spoke Karanga. They had never seen white people and the fact that my daughters had blonde hair fascinated them. Merrivale was a cattle and a game farm; we never planted any crops on the farm. We stayed in tents, with plenty of lions and elephants moving around, until we built a farm house near Sagwari Mountain. The name Sagwari came from the mountain where chiefs from the communal areas had been buried, and it

2 Millet grown by people living in southeastern Zimbabwe and appreciated for its drought-tolerant qualities. It is used both for brewing and to make *sadza*, a thick porridge eaten when the maize crop fails.

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had ritual importance in the lives of the people in Mwenezi communal areas. Merrivale was dry without any water, so we built four dams. During the war, Merrivale was an important base for the freedom fighters because they could access water from the dams. During that time, it was just bare land between Merrivale and Masvingo without lots of people; there were families in the areas, but not so many. The freedom fighters never harmed us or the workers but they would ask for cattle for meat. Dick, as he was well-versed with the issues happening during the war, told the workers to give the freedom fighters whatever they needed. He was even warned by the farm workers about the landmines that were planted such that we had all the information about their movements. Dick would visit the local chief, and we would attend the spiritual functions that were called for in the community. He also asked for more people to come and help us and stay on the farm. We only stopped attending the spiritual functions with the villagers and the chiefs as the war intensified. Dick would also ask the chief for permission to do cross-breeding between the Mashona cattle and the Afrikaner breeds that came from South Africa. After the war, we stayed on the farm and everyone thought it was going to be safe after the blood bath. Dick was a cattle breeder, and Merrivale became the best cattle producer as well as beef producer in Zimbabwe. Dick was even winning awards for that. He also sat on a number of boards within the farming organisations within the province and nationally. As more and more white farmers started coming in Mwenezi, we abandoned going for the chief's spiritual and exorcism ceremonies. I remember that white people would question the importance of attending these African ceremonies. We also learnt a lot about witchcraft. In 1985, when it was my 50th birthday, we left the farm because there had been a four-year drought that had ravaged the country and we lost a lot of cattle. The drought forced us to move, and Mr Dross sold the farm to Danie Theron, who had a farm near Rutenga. I heard that the farm manager became Mr Botha. We came to South Africa, and Mr. Dross found us work on another farm where Dick continued with cattle breeding. Danie was a wealthy farmer too. Our main reason for moving was not political but the drought; Dick was also invited for the new Zimbabwe's independence celebrations.

Source: Interview, Mrs. Maureen Spencer, Pitermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, February 2010.

Personal experience also shows that the removal of black families from commercial farming land to the so-called native reserves was far from universal at the time the Spencers moved to Merrivale:

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> The black families occupied the other parts of the farm where they had their homes, and we all met once in a while at the water sources. The families stayed on the farm during that period because it was their ancestral lands since they all were under Chief Chitanga.[3]
>
> The chief of the area was Mr Chitanga, during that period, and Mr Spencer met with him as he had been told about African customs and he appreciated them. Consultation with the chief enabled Mr Spencer and his family to attend some of ceremonies that were held by the chief especially as the Spencers had built their home near Sagwari Mountain, a place where the royalty within the Chitanga and Neshuro chieftainships were buried and rain ceremonies were conducted. These meetings enabled Mr Spencer to appreciate and learn the customs of the people.[4]

These stories call into question the idea that when the whites came they displaced blacks from the beginning; the displacement of black farmers began as the white settlers increased in number and turned inwards toward their own culture. More European settlers came in the late 1960s, and these late arrivals started arguing that the African-led ceremonies were not important and that the discourse on witches and spirits was nonsense. Most of the white families that had settled in 1957–1960 decided to stop attending the chief's ceremonies. This led to various conflicts because the chief felt that his authority and customs were being challenged by strangers whom he had allowed to settle on his land without objections. It culminated in mixed feelings within the population about the white settlers, but, "the Rhodesian Front made sure the whites had protection that enabled them to suppress the black people. As the district commissioner, I made sure the conflicts did not erupt into violence by protecting the white settlers" (Wright 1972:138). The photographs below provide images of the social and environmental landscape that existed at Merrivale Farms before and after fast-track. These images will help the reader to visualise the environmental and social changes that resulted from pre-to post-fast-track land reform.

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3 Interview with Karen Caister, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, February 24, 2010. Karen grew up at Merrivale, where she used to play with Mrs Spencer`s children as her father was a missionary of the Methodist Church at Lundi Mission, Mwenezi. She spent most of her childhood at Merrivale before her parents left Mwenezi in 1989 to return to the United States.

4 Interview with Mrs Maureen Spencer, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, February 24, 2010.

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PHOTO 4.2 *Mr and Mrs Sidney Spencer at their farm, Merrivale*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

PHOTO 4.3 *Mrs Maureen Spencer and her children at Merrivale*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

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PHOTO 4.4 *Julius, one of the Merrivale farm workers*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

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PHOTO 4.5 *After the drought—retreating to South Africa and the coming in of new cattle ranchers at Merrivale*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

PHOTO 4.6 *A cattle herd at Merrivale Farm*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

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PHOTO 4.7 *Mr Spencer and livestock extension officers at the farm*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

PHOTO 4.8 *Karen and Floppy the Elephant*
MERRIVALE FARM, PIETERMARITZBURG, MARCH 2010. PHOTO COURTESY OF KAREN CAISTER

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Mobility and Merrivale's Origins

The Spencers moved to Merrivale from an area where they had worked on farms in South Africa to Rhodesia so that they could have access to land and manage it independently. Their relocation thus reflected notions of permanent mobility. Merrivale's owner, Mr Dross, was based in South Africa and only came to Merrivale to visit periodically. Due to the fact that the Spencers were the first white inhabitants of the land, the farm was registered in Mr Spencer's name by the Rhodesian Cold Storage Company and the Spencers thereby assumed ownership (but the legal situation in South Africa was not the same).[5] Land was a crucial resource that regulated their livelihoods. It was not a complicated process for them to acquire the land and the title deeds because the process was part of an economic programme meant to transform and improve agriculture in Rhodesia. This programme hinged on settlement motivated by the need to expand farming–a crucial livelihood for both blacks and whites. For the Spencers, Merrivale was an ideal place for entrepreneurial activities tied to land use through extensive livestock production.

Merrivale Farm

Merrivale Farm, as it had been known since 1957, was then mainly a cattle ranch. It covered approximately 4,000 ha on which Mr Spencer kept cattle for meat production. Mr Spencer even asked his farm workers to provide the war veterans of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle with cattle for meat if they asked for any. There were also a lot of wild animals on the farm, and eventually it became a combined cattle ranch and game farm. The wild game automatically became the property of the Spencers since they had the title deeds to the land. The game at Merrivale included elephant, zebra, kudu and impala. A fence demarcated the paddocks of the wild animals and the cattle on the farm.

Mr Spencer would go to Chief Chitanga to ask for cattle so that he could mate the Mashona breed and the Hereford breed that he had brought from South Africa. This proved to be very fruitful, and his herd grew to more than 10,000 head by 1985. Crops were never produced at Merrivale because the area was too dry for crop farming. Selby (2006:38) notes that "these variations in farm potential shaped the evolution of particular farming systems, and often accounted for organizational, financial and management differences between farmers, particularly as the sector became more sophisticated." This quotation alludes to the fact that other farmers in the area, for instance at Moriah Farm

5 Interview with Mrs Maureen Spencer, 24 February, 2010.

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40 km from Merrivale, are engaged in citrus production as they invested in irrigation on their farms.[6]

Changing the Landscape: The Making of Water Sources

When the Spencer family moved onto Merrivale, there was no water source. They had to get water from a flowing river. They started to construct dams in 1960, and by 1965, they had built four dams to provide water for the livestock, wild animals, and their personal use (Photo 4.9). At the livestock watering points, special tanks were built to store water after it was pumped from the dams to the livestock drinking troughs. The water engineering processes that led to the building of the dams were financed partly from the Spencers' financial reserves and partly through loans acquired from the Agricultural Finance Corporation. No boreholes were drilled on the farm.

David McDermott-Hughes (2006) argues that large-scale commercial farmers redesigned the landscape, altering the balance between soil and water. The Spencers transformed and redesigned the landscape via their investment in manmade lakes as a way of demonstrating their identity and sense of

PHOTO 4.9 *One of the four dams at Merrivale Farm*

6 Moriah Farm was not gazetted for fast-track land reform, however, it was invaded by war veterans. The white farmer decided to stay on the farm as land was demarcated both to him and to new settlers.

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belonging to the land. McDermott-Hughes, (2006:270) contends that "the resultant hydrology gave farmers maximum control of moisture, growth, and labor." Meanwhile, many farmers became concerned about protecting "nature." They stocked dams with American bass and sculpted shorelines in order to provide habitat for fish and birdlife. The dams became islands of anthropogenic biodiversity as well as engines of wealth. In their own minds, white farmers reconciled production and environmentalism, gaining strength from both of these bases of legitimacy. The new landscape of manmade lakes at Merrivale provided the Spencers with a new habitat of environmental governance as they could use the lakes for recreation and as breeding grounds for fresh fish.

The dams also provided water for the rebels who frequented Merrivale because it was strategically located. Derman (2008:2) notes that "the control of water through storing, moving, and pumping requires changes in social and political organization depending upon scale." By 1967, the settlement patterns at the farm had started to change; the black families, as they were settled near the water sources, had to move off the land and establish homes in other surrounding communal areas. These changes, of course, led to conflict and cooperation between upstream and downstream users of water, intensified by race and gender. At Merrivale, the Spencers shared the water with their resident farm workers, but the methods of sharing were differentiated on the basis of the Spencers' acquiring water through taps at their farmhouse and the farm workers using open-cast wells (*mativi*) and sharing one communal water tap at their compounds. Figure 4.2 provides a schematic representation of the four small dams at Merrivale in relation to the sources of water that supplied them.

Labour Patterns at Merrivale Farm

The labour regime at Merrivale Farm was mainly organised by the Spencers. There were permanent and casual labourers whose responsibilities centred on cattle rearing. The labour force also dealt with the evolving game farming as there was a need to oversee the development by maintaining equilibrium and preventing poaching by surrounding local villagers.

> There were 50 permanent workers at Merrivale who included foremen, a domestic servant, a cook, a gardener, and cattle-herders. There were both female and male workers. The female workers were mainly doing the household chores, and the looking after of cattle was done mostly be men.[7]

7 Interview with Mrs Maureen Spencer, February 23, 2010.

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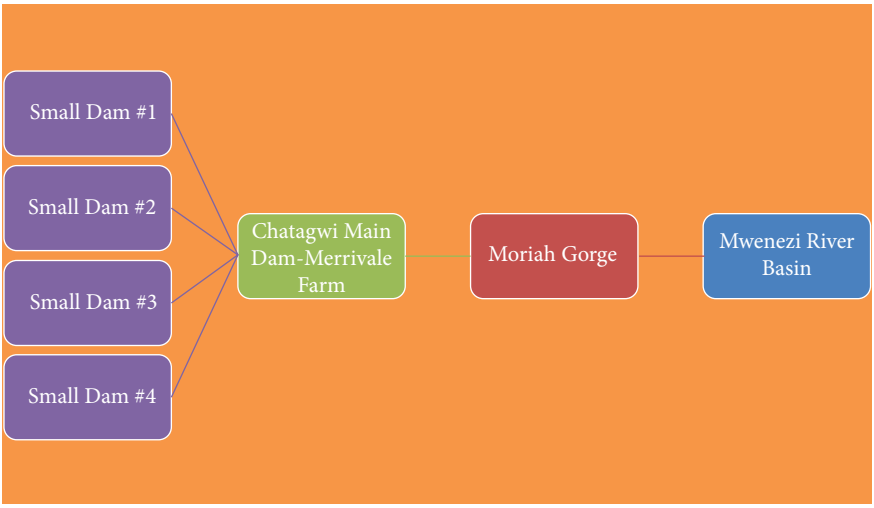

FIGURE 4.2 *Schematic representation of dams at Merrivale in relation to the Mwenezi Basin*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK.

During wet periods, the Spencers realised that there was a need for extra labourers, so 30 to 35 casual workers were employed because the livestock required maximum attention while grazing in the paddocks, and sometimes the livestock would need to be fed while in their pens. In total, there were, at most, 85 workers on the farm. All these workers came from the surrounding communal areas of Lundi, Neshuro, Maranda, and Chimbudzi. During the week, they stayed on the farm, where accommodation was provided for them. Some permanent farm labourers resided with their families on the farm, and others had their families at their communal homes in different parts of Mwenezi (Amanor-Wilks 2009).

> However, with the advent of FTLRP, the labourers all left the farm and either retreated back to their homes or sought labour on the few remaining ranches in Mwenezi East, such as Mukumi Estates or at other farms still operated by white farmers, or A2 plots such as Moriah, Qapane 1A, and Sweet Waters.[8]

Chambati (2009) contributes to the debate on livelihoods practiced by the former farm workers before FTLRP by emphasising that some 71 per cent of farm workers earned wages conforming to the gazetted statutory requirements, but only 30 per cent of them could meet their household needs from their wage

8 Interview with Village Head, Tavaka Village, January 2010.

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income. To supplement their incomes, they were involved in other income-generating activities, such as farming on their employers' premises, or at their communal homes. This pattern was common at Merrivale even during the Spencers' stay.

Migration and the Changing Landscape at Merrivale

The Spencers' departure from Zimbabwe and return to South Africa was environmentally induced migration. Because of consecutive droughts in the early 1980s, most of their cattle died due to lack of water so the Spencers had little option but to move back to South Africa.

> The farm was sold to their friend Danie Theron, an Afrikaner, originally from South Africa, who owned a cattle ranch in Rutenga. Danie later sold the farm to Mr Botha, who had been a manager at Merrivale during the Spencers' stay. Botha was an Afrikaner of South African origin.[9]

Mr Botha continued cattle ranching and game farming at Merrivale, and one of his brothers was the owner of Muzhanjire Estates. Mr Botha was later evicted from Merrivale during the chaotic phase of the fast-track programme.

> Mr Botha left Merrivale in 2002, just before the presidential elections, as it became unbearable for him to stay at the farm with the new settlers because conflicts brewed each and every time he wanted the settlers away.[10]

Mr Botha is remembered as a very cruel man by the present settlers at Merrivale who would sometimes come to the farm from Lundi or Neshuro communal areas to look for firewood. The settlers had no regrets about occupying his land. An elderly woman at Merrivale told me what Botha would always say to them when he was going to Masvingo or Rutenga, and they were waiting for transport. He would stop at the bus stop and shout (Narrative 4.2).

> Narrative 4.2: Perceptions of Mr Botha by a Merrivale woman
>
> *He was a very cruel man. His house was at Dhiziri, where the teachers and the Agritex Officer stay today. When we came here, transport was a problem,*

9 Interview with Karen Caister, Mrs Spencer's cousin, 22 February 2010. See note 2.

10 Interview with Mr C.K.M, driver at Mwenezi Rural District Council since 1987. He knew Mr Theron and Mr Botha very well as they would come to pay their farm levies at the council and were famous for cattle ranching.

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> *but he would not stop his car to give us rides. One time when we were going to Rutenga, he stopped his car and spoke to us in Shona*, "Ngaikwire mopane iyende kuRutenga, nekuti yakada ivhu" (*You should get onto the mopane trees…that is your transport…and get to Rutenga because you wanted the land*). *He did not allow us into his car. Jan, the white man at Mucheni Estate, is very good. He sometimes gives us grain; that is why his farm was not taken over. He has been good to us blacks. At one rally in 2000, he said*, "Ini nemuhuri yangu tinovhotera VaMugabe" (*I and my family will vote for the people of Mugabe*).
>
> Source: Author's field notes, February 2010.

The woman's perception is that Mr Botha saw Africans as non-people, in contrast to Jan, the owner of the neighbouring Mucheni Estate, who was not affected by fast-track and whom most the villagers at Tavaka Village respected. The whole of the Merrivale community respected him because of his good heart and the cordial relations he had with the new farmers.

> Those who worked here before we took over the farm always told us Mr Botha became a target for eviction because of his ill-treatment of the settlers. Jan survived because he was cooperative and a pleasant employer.[11]

This example serves to show that several explanations emerge as to why some farms were targeted for acquisition: either because the former white owners behaved inhumanely toward the blacks or simply because the people wanted land and were willing to take it by any means.

Mr Botha subsequently moved to Bulawayo and sold most of his cattle, but he left the wild animals on the farm. They have since been depleted by the new settlers, who hunted them down, and some have retreated to Nuanetsi Ranch, which has been turned into a biofuel producer and commercial game farm by the government. I am told that Mr Botha now operates several companies and has never returned to Merrivale. The Spencers continued to have contacts with the new white ranchers after they left and would occasionally visit the farm because they had such a strong connection with it. In South Africa, they bought a farm where they continued with cattle ranching near Pietermaritzburg

11 Informal talk with Mr E.K.C.M. one of the male settlers at the farm. That afternoon on 7 February 2010, we talked about the story surrounding the birth of Merrivale and how Mr Botha left. I had gone to visit him at his homestead as he was not feeling well.

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Summary

This chapter sought to develop an overview of the origins and birth of Merrivale Farm. A number of themes have been explored: the settling-in experience of the Spencers, their integration with the black community, the utility of the farm enterprise, water resources, labour dynamics and the eventual return of the Spencers to South Africa. Merrivale's cattle production capacity has been described, together with the marketing avenues for the farm's livestock. These features help us to understand how Merrivale has been characterised by mobility as a central feature since its inception–a major theme in this work. Emigrating from South Africa and later retreating represent dynamics that show how people respond to environmental conditions that shape the livelihoods they can achieve. The consecutive droughts experienced by the Spencers forced them to migrate back to South Africa, demonstrating how climatic conditions, land use, and settlement of people are interconnected and indivisible parts of livelihoods. Merrivale came into existence when there were already black families settled in that space–a fact the significance of which will unfold further in the following chapters. Migration has shaped societies and influenced human interactions with the environment for millennia. Although environmental qualities vary across sub-Saharan Africa, the political and economic systems advanced during colonial times fostered similar responses in terms of mobility and migration. The Spencers' move to Rhodesia also resulted from the need for a better agricultural environment, influenced by the political geography of both Rhodesia and South Africa.

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CHAPTER 5

Merrivale Farm during and after Fast-Track Land Reform, 2000–2010

> When we are talking about land in Zimbabwe, we are not talking about the types of farms one sees in Britain, or for that matter most of Europe today. The average size of a family owned farm in Britain is 65 hectares; in France, it is 35 hectares. Even in the US, the land of the giant farms, the size is between 200 and 250 hectares. In Zimbabwe, the average size is 3,000 hectares! There are farms of 15,000, even 20,000.
>
> SHIRE 2003:12

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the land-acquisition process at Merrivale Farm during the mayhem (*jambanja*) phase of the FTLRP.[1] The events surrounding the new era for Zimbabwe's agricultural sector are dealt with here at a micro-level. Marongwe (2008:5) notes that "most research work on FTLRP is at the macro-level and is largely deficient of what occurs on the ground." Thus, for instance, Moyo and Sukume (2004), Masiiwa (2004), and many other researchers based in the developed world have written on the FTLRP but have not meaningfully unpacked it at a micro-level. Scoones et al. (2010) have attempted to demystify some of the widely held myths about post-2000 land reform in Zimbabwe. The Land and Livelihoods Research Programme[2] has been involved in fieldwork in Masvingo Province for almost a decade. Scoones et al. note that there is no single story of land reform in Zimbabwe: the story is mixed–by region, by type of scheme, and by settler. The descriptions given here reflect how politics usurped the role of law and how the uniformed forces and war veterans felt they had been victorious because they had annexed land from the white farmers in the area. Moyo and Yeros (2009) have pointed out

1 This term reflects that fact that fast-track land reform was characterised by disorder, chaos, violence and loosely coordinated efforts by the actors involved in the exercise to redistribute the land.

2 A research programme coordinated by Ian Scoones from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, the Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian Studies, University of the Western Cape, and the Centre for Applied Social Sciences in Zimbabwe. The researchers focus on livelihoods after land reform in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia, examining the different land reform contexts.

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that the only way forward for effective land redistribution in Africa is "for social movements themselves to take the initiative, but not by contesting the control of the state apparatus." They have called for (Moyo and Yeros 2009:15):

> ...a retreat from dogmatic party politics and a return to grassroots political work with the objective of building durable and democratic structures in the countryside, especially cooperatives, to build alliances with urban workers, and to begin, once again, to change the correlation of forces. For us, it seemed self-defeating to stand up to the state apparatus on a neo colonial platform or without adequate progressive alliances. For our detractors, however, the platform of the opposition was not neocolonial; it was progressive. This, in turn, has been among the most disheartening aspects of our colleagues' work: their failure to integrate the external factor and penetration of Zimbabwean politics.

This perspective has been further supported by Sadomba (2008) in a study that used participant-observation to examine the land-acquisition process in Mazowe District, where he finds that war veterans played a crucial role in mobilising the population to repossess their land.

In Masvingo Province, 1.2 million hectares of land have been redistributed to around 20,000 households. Chaumba et al. (2003) and Marongwe (2002, 2008) attempted, albeit in limited fashion, to capture some of the FTLRP dynamics at local level. In this study, I expand the understanding of these dynamics by examining the role of women at the Muzhanjire base in Mwenezi to demonstrate women's participation in the birth of contemporary Merrivale. It is my intention through this study to close an existing lacuna in the literature addressing women's roles.

I elucidate the gazetting of Merrivale as an A1 farm and how land was acquired by the participating actors. The events surrounding the present settlers' move onto the land at Merrivale are also explained. I documented the households on the farm, the land area per family, crops grown, marketing facilities, and the socio-political organisation of the new settlements, building on my need to discover how the social and political governance at Merrivale influences how women manoeuver to access land today.

Land Acquisition at Merrivale in 2000

In 2000, there were unprecedented attacks on white commercial farmers by the then government of Zimbabwe, war veterans, ordinary rural and urban

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people, as well as the army. These attacks aimed to take the land from the white commercial farmers and resettle the land with black, land-hungry peasants in Zimbabwe's countryside (Moyo and Yeros 2005). The programme was characterised by displacement of white farmers and their replacement by black communal farmers. Merrivale was one of the farms targeted for the resettlement of people from Mwenezi communal area. Black Zimbabweans occupied 16.3 million hectares of land in the drier communal areas (Sukume et al. 2004), and the majority of the communal areas are found in Masvingo Province, where Mwenezi is located; thus, people felt compelled to take over land from the white commercial farmers as they were settled in the arid and less productive zones of the country, mainly in Zimbabwe's dry belt (see Chapter 3).

A number of actors were involved in the settling of people, including war veterans, army personnel, police officers, and Criminal Investigation Officers (CIO). Thus, the FTLRP reflected an apparent unity of purpose among 'common people', political incumbents, and civil servants, who all participated in the process. In Mwenezi, this meant that the land struggle emanated from these groups through collective action. These actions led to the removal of the white commercial farmer, the farm workers, and their families on listed and non-listed farms,[3] including Merrivale, paving way for new farmers to take over and use the land. The listed farms were those that the government, through the Ministry of Lands and the Ministry of Agriculture, had designated for compulsory acquisition in the fast-track process. Non-listed farms were those the government had not designated to be occupied. However, during the farm occupations, people ignored the legal distinctions and seized on non-listed farms as well. In Mwenezi, the non-listed farms occupied by settlers were Nuanetsi Ranch and Moriah Estates.[4]

Establishment of Muzhanjire Base and Occupation of Farms in Mwenezi

A political base was established in the Safari Grill at Lundi filling station at Muzhanjire, which is one of the farms bordering Merrivale. A political base was a temporary camp where people strategised and planned the procedures

3 These farms were not gazetted for settlement by the government since Nuanetsi is run under the Mwenezi Development Trust and Moriah is a citrus farm where the white farmer was still producing commercially. However, in 2009, Moriah was invaded. The case has gone to the Mwenezi District Court, where it is still pending.

4 In mid-April 2001, Army, police and CIO were said to be involved in resettling people on listed and non-listed farms in the Mwenezi area ahead of Independence Day. Farm workers at Merrivale Farm were chased away from the farm (ZWNEWS.com, accessed 10 January 2010).

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for farm occupations and where there was political indoctrination of the masses on the politics of land in Zimbabwe by the base commanders and various leaders. Photo 5.1 shows the political base during the land acquisition process in Mwenezi East.

The base commander was a senior war veteran and a ZANU-PF official in the area. He had fought in the liberation struggle and was a leading member of the party, holding a district party office. The commanders used military as well as political language and concepts in their mobilisation of the people to take over the farms. The key base commanders at Muzhanjire were Mr Lainos Sibanda, who originally came from Lundi communal area, and Mr Murefu who came from Neshuro communal area, both of which villages shared borders with the commercial farms before they were occupied. They were actively involved in the liberation struggle in Mwenezi District during the war and were key people connecting the ordinary people and the party. They were able to mobilise villagers with the help of other war veterans and ZANU-PF supporters in the communal areas in the wards: Chitanga, Gold Star, Chimbudzi, Musaverema, Chingami, and Gwamatenga, among others. The men, and some women war veterans, joined their counterparts at Muzhanjire base and started the process of teaching and indoctrinating the villagers about the importance of their

PHOTO 5.1 *Muzhanjire base, September, 2009*

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ancestral lands, and how their land had been forcibly taken from them in the 1890s when white settlers first came to Zimbabwe.

At these bases, information on how farms were being divided for occupation was given out to the people. Lists of names of the people who wanted land were compiled by the secretaries through the Muzhanjire base, and the farm occupations were planned, along with the specific names of farms to be acquired in Mwenezi East. The farm occupation tactics were also planned at the bases. After the farms for resettlement were identified, some men within the group would be told to go to the white owners and give them ultimatums to move out of the farms, paving the way for the new claimants of the land to repossess it. Those who had been indoctrinated at the base would sing political songs and eat as they took cattle from the surrounding commercial farms, which included Merrivale, Sonop, and Mariot. The cattle were taken by force, and the white farmers could not protect their cattle from being confiscated; in most cases, confiscation of the cattle was a violent process and cattle were killed without the consent of the owners.

Depending on their village of origin, each group of people from the various parts of Mwenezi communal areas had their names written down to compile a list for resettlement by occupation. There were frantic efforts to create orderliness and ad hoc organisation to formalise the process of land occupations. Chaumba et al. (2003:553) note:

> …the ostensible disorder and chaos of the Zimbabwean farm invasions is not a different order but rather, the outcome of different rationalities and causalities. Rather, there has been a continuity of the project of modernity. It is not so much that disorder is instrumental – although it evidently has been – but that in Zimbabwe, familiar, deeply embedded instruments and mechanisms of order assert themselves even in the midst of violent disorder.

Those involved in the contest for land had developed tactics for asserting and ensuring order in turbulent times, something that the people themselves saw as successful, as evidenced by one respondent:

> By being involved in this project of land redistribution, we were able to reinforce order in the base and this is how we managed to successfully acquire the farms. During our training as liberation fighters, instilling of order in ourselves and civilians was paramount.[5]

5 Interview with C.M.M, Mwenezi Rural District Council Offices, February 2010.

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For every farm identified, the base commanders and the other war veterans would follow the list for resettling the new farmers. Land was subdivided and allocated by the base commander, war veterans, and other ordinary people who would be chosen to assist with the process of land demarcation. This process resulted in ad hoc measuring of plots as there were no proper measurement procedures to denote the size of plots that each individual would acquire. Such ad hoc procedures show that fast-track inevitably had inherent shortcomings, contrary to what the government claimed about universal success. The often wide variations in plot sizes across beneficiaries manifested the weaknesses in jambanja-based models of resettlement implementation. They also demonstrated the profound gap between reality on the ground and government rhetoric about planned villagisation as a core element in resettlement.

Occupation of Merrivale, April 2001

A detailed account of how the settlers gave one another information about the farms, and the events at Muzhanjire base, is given in Narrative 5.1, which is based on interviews with one of the influential cadres involved in FTLR in Mwenezi East (and who is now a plot-owner at Merrivale).

> Narrative 5.1: Mapping occupation procedures at Muzhanjire base—Strategist, politician, and war veteran
>
> I was involved in starting the new Merrivale. I mobilised the villagers, and all men in my village came with me from Neshuro. We stayed at Muzhanjire for more than six months starting October 2000, when we learned that other provinces were taking the land. I was part of the committee that formed the strategy of the takeover. Villagers came from Maranda, Chimbudzi, and Bopi communal areas in Mwenezi. They were mostly men and camped at Muzhanjire Estate, where the major base of farm invasions was in the whole of Mwenezi District. The villagers were organised, had their names written down by the ZANU-PF provincial and district leaders. The leaders of the people were Mr Marufu, a war veteran, who resides in Rutenga, MaZebra, the present ZANU-PF councillor for Ward 13, of which Merrivale is a part, Mr Machaya, who was the village head of Chimbudzi village in Ward 4 but is now deceased and was buried at his new plot in Tavaka Village at Merrivale; his sons, Edmore and Clopas Machaya, were among the first invaders. We stayed at the base and sang revolutionary songs; strategies for occupying the whole of Masvingo Province were mapped out. Farms to be occupied in

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> Mwenezi District were listed and planning committees to lead the take-over of the farms were put into place. The former member of parliament, Masvayamwando [Isaiah Shumba], would also visit the base as we crafted the way forward. The owner of Merrivale was told about his farm being occupied. Since he resided at Dhiziri, we immediately moved onto the farm. The white man stayed in his farmhouse until March 2002, and he left when the campaigning for the elections got into full swing as whites were under pressure to leave the commercial ranching areas. I have no regrets about participating in the seizures of the farms because it is our ancestral land. We were forcibly moved from here, yet our forefathers were buried on Sagwari Mountain, which is here at Merrivale. Since I participated in the land carving, I got hectares of land because I had to be rewarded. We moved to Merrivale immediately after demarcating the plots for ourselves. I had to clear the land and built a pole thatch house. I then went to take my family from Chimbudzi in May 2001, so that my wife would help me clear the fields as we had to plough the land that year. The land here is good because it is still fertile and we are back at our forefathers' homes. I was instrumental in dissecting plots for the other villages and mapping boundaries of fields and homesteads. We have gained the real asset that drove the liberation struggle to be fought. The district lands and agricultural officers later came and had to take us through the process of giving us offer letters by putting cards in a hat and then one would take the cards and that represented your plot number. That is also when we were told that Merrivale was an A1 farm and grazing lands were to be shared. Before these officials came, we had already started sharing the paddocks and water points for our cattle. We chose our representative here so that everyone with a farm here could have their names written down. They did not measure all plots, only a few so that they could have an estimate of the six hectares required per person in an A1 settlement.
>
> Source: Author's field notes, February 2010.

This narrative illustrates how land is viewed as an essential asset for livelihood among Zimbabweans. Land is interwoven into the social, political, and economic fabric of society to such an extent that it was felt repossession of the land from the white farmers was a way of regaining a heritage that had been lost. The strategist states that the land-acquisition process was orderly–a claim that has been widely contradicted. This disparity shows how assertions of order and disorder may vary according to a person's understanding and needs at a particular time.

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The analysis by Moyo and Yeros (2009) and Sadomba (2008) stating that the FTLRP was an initiative by the long-neglected, land-hungry masses–hence their revolutionary land seizures–is challenged by Jacobs (2010), Matondi (2012) and Marongwe (2008), who argue that the land reform process was necessary, but that the policy and legal framework guiding it was untenable. Matondi further notes that land acquisition is not about political violence and describes a social movement that excluded segments of the population based on race or gender—for instance, the lack of women's participation in the land-reform processes. Based on my field data from Mwenezi, I agree with Matondi (2012) that distributive justice is about ensuring gains that devolve to all segments of society and about broad beneficiary participation, especially women who have been neglected in land reform projects across the globe. I argue that the land question in Zimbabwe has exposed the disparity that can exist between policy design and its implementation. Well-designed policies may not necessarily be implemented as intended. In my work, however, the history and dynamics of the settlers' obtaining access to land are important as they were shaped by political, cultural, and social influences that have regulated and do regulate how women access land in rural Zimbabwe.

I am uneasy with Moyo and Yeros' (2005:5) position that sees the recent land invasions as part of the longer continuum of an on-going and clearly identifiable "land occupation movement." They stress differences between earlier land occupations and those of 2000 onwards, while acknowledging that one constant has been, in Alexander's (2003:114) words, "the existence of popular demands for land from a wide set of social groups, driven not only by historical injustice but also increasingly by the pressures of a faltering economy." The ideology behind the fast-track occupations of 2000 and later reflected a new era in which war veterans in different parts of the country felt that they deserved control over land redistribution and related state policies as they were influential in the policy process through their actions in occupying farms. This ideological change by the war veterans across the country was mirrored on the ground by the fact that contestations over land occurred across districts, and not just on commercial farms in Mwenezi.

Marongwe (2003:163) argues that the occupations of 1998–99 were "community-led," whereas those of 2000 and later were instigated by war veterans as part of ZANU-PF's "official campaign strategy." Nevertheless, he states, "This does not negate the sense of empowerment that some occupiers experienced during the process." Although Marongwe also gives a well-judged warning, especially given the much more recent and very public disillusionment of some war veterans, this sense of individual

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and community empowerment later changed in reaction to the lack of transparency of the controversial district land committees[6] and the direct involvement of the militarised arms of government. Inasmuch as different schools of thought exist on the role of social movements in the countryside during the FTLRP, I tend to agree with Alexander (2003), Matondi (2012) and Marongwe's (2008) conclusions that even the war veterans themselves were disillusioned and saw FTLR as the chance to reassert hegemony over a political system that could not meet the needs of its citizens.

The occupation of Merrivale Farm is situated within the broader debates surrounding revolutionary and evolutionary approaches to land; even those who settled at Merrivale 10 years after the most politicised phase of fast-track began have defended the seizure of the land. Chaumba et al. (2003:545) in a field study in Chiredzi District, adjacent to Mwenezi District, observe that "even in the most violent and chaotic farm invasions during the 'time of jambanja' there was an equally instrumental order beneath ostensible disorder." This orderliness reflects the fact that during the farm occupations government agents, the war veterans and the people united in establishing ways to create order even though the underlying situation was anarchic and not easily understood; there were many complex social and political dynamics compelling the need to move from anarchy to order.

In a strange, and typically Zimbabwean, contradiction, the ethos of professionalism exhibited by land-use planners was threatened, yet simultaneously reinforced, by the actions of the ZANU-PF government and the war veterans. War veterans proved to be useful actors and helped to regulate the occupations of the farms according to the policies and practices they created unilaterally. This interpretation is challenged by some scholars,[7] however, who maintain that twisting policy and manipulating legal gaps for one's own benefit cannot be regarded as order in any case, contrary to what Chaumba et al. (2003) contend.

6 These are committees that the government put in place in each district in the country to deal with land management issues such as disputes and contending land claimants and to advise the district administrator on land management. The district land committees comprise seven officials: a war veteran representative, the district administrator, a CIO official, an official from the Ministry of Gender, an Agritex officer, the ward councillor, and an environmental management officer.

7 Authors on Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform process have different opinions as to whether war veterans provided rudimentary order or not, as noted by Alexander (2006), Marongwe (2008), and Matondi (2012).

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The Role of Traditional Authorities

The head of Tavaka Village provided an historical account (Narrative 5.2) that enlightened me regarding the motives for the land occupations and why people participated. According to him, they were driven by political, social, cultural and economic reasons.

> Narrative 5.2: Custodians of culture and land for the new settlers at Merrivale: Village head, Tavaka Village
>
> *Land and settlement are critical and emotive issues. When the whites came to this area in the 1890s from South Africa and Britain they pushed our forefathers out of these lands that people have had recourse to now. I was a small boy then, and I could see that we were not allowed to pass through some farms and collect firewood or let our cattle in there, that was in the 1930s. The 1966 battle showed that we really wanted the land as blacks,* Masvingo eZimbabwe, hakata dzaikandwa ndichiti nyika tichatora asi ivhu richanets akuzoita chimwe chimurenga chinova chazozadzikiswa muna 2001 apo vanhu vaSvosve vakapinda mumapurazi avarungu isu tichiteverawo kuno, (*The Great Zimbabwe ruins are symbolic because they have been instrumental as a place of mediation with ancestral spirits on the course of the liberation war in order to find the strategies. People desire land for historical and social reasons*), madzitateguru edu akachengetwa mubekerwa raane varungu saka nhaka ndiyo tinoda sevanhu vatema (*our forefathers were buried in these lands that had been occupied by white people so now we decided to take this land*). *Laws were passed that we had to pay for the land…land tax, yet it was not productive, pay for cattle, cattle tax, hut tax…all this was done to make sure the white man benefited, paying for our ancestral lands. This has always been in our minds. The land and rain god always said we would one day have control. Last year I and the villagers performed a rain-making ceremony; hence this year we had a bumper harvest. The land is the true heritage for us as black people,* utongo hutsva haufanire kukanganwa izvi. *This new government should not forget that. Our children should have the inheritance that our parents failed to give us.*
>
> Source: Author's field notes, July 2009.

The village head explained to me that land was symbolic and people wanted to correct colonial injustices and reclaim their inheritance so that they would have tangible assets (*nhaka*) to pass on to their children when they died.

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Through his historical narrative, the village headman defended the occupation of Merrivale as both important and orderly. Traditional leadership was also an important feature of land management at Tavaka Village. The village head presented his role to me as an important one that had to be appreciated during the fast-track process and has remained so even during the resettlement of the villagers at Tavaka. The settlers simply imported the village headship mode of leadership to Tavaka Village from their former communal homes. In their former communal homes, each village had a head, who presided over land, water, grazing, and rain-making issues and who was accountable to the chiefs. Tavaka Village is in Chief Chitanga's domain, and thus the village head is under the jurisdiction of Chief Chitanga. Chief Chitanga is an ex-officio member of the state, as chiefs in Zimbabwe are paid by the state for the various cultural roles they play in managing land and people in rural areas (see Chapter 3).

The Role of Women at Muzhanjire Base

Goebel (2005) indicates that issues surrounding gender justice in access to and control over resources, inequality in the intra-household distribution of benefits from resource use, and even gendered dimensions of labour have remained unaddressed because primogeniture dominates in African societies. During the chaotic phase of the FTLRP, women also participated alongside men in the occupation of farms (Marongwe 2003, Chaumba et al. 2003). In Mwenezi East, women were among those who came to Muzhanjire base from the communal areas of Bopi, Chimbudzi, Maranda, Lundi, and Gold Star. The participation of these women took various forms; for example, women war veterans mobilised fellow women to come and support the *third chimurenga.*[8] As one of the female war veterans remarked," It was a question of fulfilling our mandate as women and producers at the farms that we needed total liberation, and hence men needed us…during the liberation struggle that is why I encouraged other women to come to the base."[9]

Sadomba (2008) notes that each land occupation was unique, depending on the nature and characteristics of the group involved and the linkages among

8 The FTLRP has been called the *third chimurenga*, particularly by ZANU-PF and its supporters, as it was portrayed as emancipating blacks from whites through blacks repossessing the land their forefathers had lost during the colonial era.

9 Informal interview with E.K.M., one of the female war veterans who played a leading role at Muzhanjire alongside her male counterparts; she has a plot at Merrivale.

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the various stakeholders. He further reports that, in Mazowe, women played a central role in the occupation of the farms. The zone command centres at Mvurwi, Concession, Nyabira and Glendale, among other areas, had three women members on the five-member organising committee. This level of participation shows that in other parts of Zimbabwe women war veterans played crucial roles in the farm occupations.

At Muzhanjire, the zone commanders were all male, while the women war veterans held posts such as secretary or food coordinator. In this situation, the issue was to encourage women to participate and have their own land: "… [T]he base was dominated by men, who always emphasised the importance of culture and respect for one's values, such that as a woman I ended up not acquiring land on my own but supported my husband's initiatives at the base.[10]

Most of the women at Merrivale indirectly participated in the takeover of Merrivale Farm by sending provisions to the base for their husbands who had left home. The elderly women in Tavaka Village would also visit the base to see the progress of the movement and then return to their communal areas. When the occupations were in full swing, the women largely remained at their communal area homes, and they relied on information from their husbands about the progress of the farm demarcations: This seemingly passive role was necessitated because, when the farm occupations started, the women still had to continue with farm activities—such as shelling maize, maintaining their gardens, and looking after the homesteads—at their communal homes in case their husbands failed to acquire land.[11]

This pattern shows that the households had put certain measures in place and did not want to disrupt their everyday activities at their communal homes. It was the duty of the women to take care of the homes. When plots were demarcated, however, the women came to help clear the land. Since most of the land was heavily forested, clearance required heavy physical labour and so wives had a role to play. Most of the women pointed out that they were involved in the occupation of the land by the mere fact of starting a new home and seeing it flourish. From my analysis, the important issue was not one of physical presence at Muzhanjire *per se.* Rather, what counted to the women at Merrivale as participation in the acquisition of a new, better-resourced home was moral support, continuation of farm activities at the old settlement, and moving to the new home when the husband accessed a plot.

Land occupations at Muzhanjire base were, however, spearheaded by men. The base became a men's forum where they would advise the few women war

10 Interview, Mrs Mondi, Tavaka Village, April 2010.

11 Interview, Mai Enock, Tavaka Village, March 2009.

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veterans on how best to influence their women counterparts about the importance of the land movement and the need to reconfigure farming activities in Mwenezi: "[In Karanga culture], the women's place—whether married, single, or divorced—is the kitchen. You can come to a men's forum upon invitation and in crucial matters when men see the necessity of women's contribution… that was one of our guiding frameworks at Muzhanjire as organisers."[12]

Sachikonye (2004) observes that such thinking is a general trend in Africa, where the needs and interests of women tend to be overlooked in land reform, and these attitudes reinforce women's disadvantages of marginalisation, vulnerability, and poverty. I stress that this is in spite of the 'strong' representation of women in development activism. Women's organisations in Zimbabwe are trying hard to overcome on-going barriers and protect women's existing minimal rights regarding access to, control over, and inheritance of land.

The Landscape of The New A1 Plots at Merrivale

Three resettlement models were designed during the FTLRP—A1, A2, and the three-tier model. The A1 model is villagised in nature and comprises smallholder family farms. At Merrivale Farm, the plots are under the A1 villagised mode of resettlement. Settlers were allocated individual residential and arable plots, but they share common grazing, woodlots, and water points. Each settler has arable land with an area of 6 to 10 ha at Merrivale. The common grazing lands amount to 25 to 50 ha per village. These grazing lands have been defined depending on the natural assets of the farming region, infrastructure, access to roads, and water points at the farm. The variations in what were intended to be uniform arable plot sizes resulted from the chaotic nature of the land distribution process, with district officials demarcating plots to legitimise the outcomes of the *jambanja* phase. The errors made in demarcation, however, have not to date been rectified.

The basic objective of the A1 model was stated to be the reduction in pressures on land in over-populated communal areas while, at the same time, maintaining the social and cultural fabric of the settlers by resettling as many households with common origins as possible in the same village. The A1 model was based on the earlier A model of resettlement undertaken during the 1980s, and the government used the procedures of the A model as the basis for A1 planning and structuring (Kinsey 2010). A1 resettlement mainly targeted peasants from the overcrowded communal areas and landless squatters. The three-tier model is a livestock-based variant of the A1 model. Merrivale's settlement pattern was based on mixed farming, hence the other modes of resettlement—such

12 Interview with C.M., Village head, Tavaka Village, March 2009.

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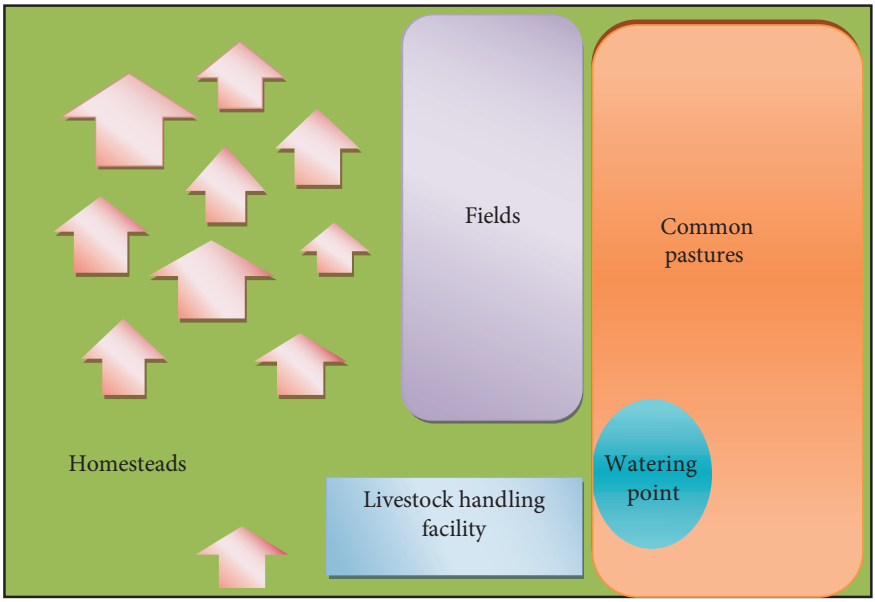

FIGURE 5.1 *An example of a Merrivale village scheme*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S, FIELDWORK, JUNE 2010.

as the A2 model, designed to cater for medium-sized farms, and the three-tier model—were not tried because Agritex staff wanted to maintain the agricultural systems used in the communal areas from which the settlers came. Figure 5.1 demonstrates the typical shape and plan of a Merrivale village after the FTLRP.

Rural-To-Rural Mobility

The new plotholders at Merrivale had been farming in the communal areas of Bopi, Chimudzi, Gold Star, Chitanga, Lundi, and Neshuro. They were not landless but desired new productive land because of the depleted nature of the communal area soils. The FTLRP presented the farmers with an opportunity to move to a rural space that had better soils and was uncrowded. The relocation happened within the same geographical zone, from a communal area to a commercial farm within the district, to the once prohibited spaces that had been dominated by white settlers. In this work rather the concept of rurality becomes an important theme, in which people prefer to stay and develop rural areas as opposed to the dominant mode of mordernisation based on emphasising urban development. Chigbu, (2013:10–11) define rural areas in Sub Saharan Africa as 'land-spaces with culturally defined identity; situated within a place statutorily recognised as non-urban; and occupied by settlers predominantly depending on primary sources of labour for their livelihood'. This definition is relevant to

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and broad enough in the Sub Saharan African perspective. It should be observed that rural- rural migrations evidently bring out the importance of natural resources and how people constantly search for productive land resources that leads to sustainable household food baskets and livelihood enhancement. The new rural centred notions of rural development in Zimbabwe after the fast track land reform reflects how the modernization theories of development that emphasise urbanization have radically changed in Zimbabwe.

The New Owners of Merrivale Farm

The new plot-owners at Merrivale comprise different categories of people. Many of the settlers are ordinary villagers with connections to war veterans and ZANU-PF political figures who were instrumental in distributing land during fast track. The farm is now home to more than 300 families.[13] I now turn to the characteristics of the population in the village where I stayed, Tavaka Village.

The ages of the farmers at Merrivale range from 25 years to 65 years. The mean age of the population at the farm is 35 years. Household sizes vary, with numbers ranging from four to eight people residing at a homestead. Households consist of a wife, husband, children, and other extended relatives, or parents staying with their children. Among the 20 households, there are three families with their extended family residing with them, and in two cases, the owners of the plots are taking care of their mothers. Farming knowledge is largely based on experience and what might be considered traditional practices; 19 of the farmers in the study claim to have gained farming knowledge from parents without attending a formal agricultural college. Three farmers—two men and a woman—have teaching diplomas and are currently teaching at Munhundishe School. Ten of the male respondents in the households studied have an Ordinary (O) level certificate with at least one pass, five (including men and women) have Zimbabwe Junior Certificates, and four have grade seven certificates. One, a woman, never attended any formal school. Out of the women, one has an ordinary level certificate with the required five passes, including English; she is the wife of a teacher at Munhundishe School.

Plot Distribution Patterns

At Tavaka Village, the A1 farms are distributed on a household basis, and most of the land went to small-scale farmers from the communal areas. Half of the recipients were from the rural areas and another 18 per cent were ordinary people from towns. There are plots owned by women only and a

13 Interview with Assistant District Administrator, Ms E. Chauke, Mwenezi Rural Council, February 2010 and Mwenezi Rural District Council files, accessed in February 2010.

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plot owned by a widow through inheritance of her late husband's estate; two of the plots are owned by women war veterans. One woman's land was allocated to her, but she wants joint registration on the permit as the offer letter bears her name only. Table 5.1 presents gender disaggregated data on plot ownership at Tavaka Village.

Employment History of Plotholders

The livelihoods of the settlers before settling at the farm varied. Some were in formal employment and have remained so. The village head, for instance, is a supervisor at Sabot Abattoir, a part of Nuanetsi Ranch located 200 m from Mwenezi Rural District Office. Three other settlers are teachers at

TABLE 5.1 *Plot ownership and tenancy relationships, Tavaka Village*

Name of plot-holder	Plot number	Male ownership[a]	Female ownership[b]	Age	Educational status
Machaya, C	6	Yes		46	O level
Machaya, P	8	Yes		37	O level
Chimbudzi, E	9	Yes		39	O level
Chisenge, W	10		Yes	52	ZJC
Chirimutanda, Z	12	Yes		40	ZJC
Mangure, F	13	Yes		33	O level
Chifodya, B	15		Yes	35	ZJC
Moyo, C	16	Yes			O level
Matemera, D	18		Yes	65	N/A
Chauke, E	5	Yes		55	O level
Nyoni, BZ	7	Yes		60	Grade 7
Chibude, R	19	Yes		58	Grade 7
Mutungadore, A	21		Yes	40	ZJC
Chimbangare, G	23	Yes		26	ZJC
Makomichi, P	25	Yes		34	O level
Chikito, H	26	Yes		35	O level
Berenyenze, K	27	Yes		43	O level
Mhuruyendwe, D	1	Yes		28	O level
Matavire, W	11	Yes		65	Grade 7
Chigushe, N	3	Yes		45	Grade 7

[a] Spouses stay together whether married customarily, civilly, or cohabitating.
[b] Plots owned by female household heads—war veterans, widows or single women.
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S DATA.

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TABLE 5.2 *Employment history of plotholders*

	Formally employed before coming to Merrivale (civil service or private sector)	Informally employed before coming to Merrivale (crafts, farming, service industry)	Currently employed at Merrivale (civil service, private sector, service industry, self-employed)	Farming full time
Men	5	3	4	13
Women	1	5	1	14

SOURCE: AUTHOR'S DATA, JUNE 2011.

Munhundishe School. The majority of plot-holders are unskilled workers and have left the different jobs they were previously doing. These jobs ranged from being general hands at Neshuro District Council to working in Masvingo as general hands in shops. One of the plot-holders, a brother of the village head, operates a small shop at Dhiziri; he was able to venture into shop work after accessing the land at Merrivale. Others have never had paid employment and were staying with their parents in the communal areas, where they had been given fields to grow crops. They would also help at the family homesteads. There is one retired teacher at the farm; he received the plot while he was still teaching but has now resorted to full-time farming. Most of the women have never worked formally but were involved in vending at the growth points and farming on their husband's communal homesteads. Table 5.2 shows the different occupations engaged in by the inhabitants at the farm before coming to Merrivale. These data are based on the 20 households under study.

Although some plot-holders are involved in other activities from which they derive an income, farming was the major source of income for settlers, with the exception of the teachers and women who derive a monthly income from trading in South Africa.

Nature of Farming Activities at Merrivale After the FTLRP

Since the FTLRP, the farmers have practiced semi-subsistence farming; they keep cattle and grow maize, cotton, sunflowers, round nuts, groundnuts, potatoes, and sweet potatoes (Photos 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.)

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PHOTO 5.2 *A sunflower field at Merrivale, April 2009*

PHOTO 5.3 *Natsai in a cotton field, April 2009*

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PHOTO 5.4 *A maize crop, February 2010*

PHOTO 5.5 *Maize cobs in a roofed silo to enable them to dry for seed use, September 2009*

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Farming Systems at Merrivale

The new farmers, both men and women, are involved in a variety of farming systems meant to enhance crop production and maintain soil fertility. Van der Ploeg (2003) defines a farming style as a particular way of integrating various components in practicing agriculture. I have dwelt on the farming styles at Merrivale because they help to elucidate how farmers in the real world of agriculture engage in their cultivation activities. The predominant farming system is based on use of the ox-drawn plough and the hoe, as plot-holders do not have specialised equipment such as tractors. The sequence of activities for the farming system during the agricultural cycle in most households is ploughing, hoeing, planting, weeding and harvesting. McNetting (1993) and Hebinck and Shackleton (2011) note that it is difficult to pinpoint the commencement of an agricultural season for smallholder farmers as they are busy all year round, with different crops planted to suit the specific climatic conditions. The farming season starts in July when farmers begin winter ploughing using the ox-drawn plough to prepare the land for the summer rains in October. Land preparation is done in October with the first rains, using hoes and ploughs. Maize or cotton planting stations are made with hoes and seed is planted manually.

In order to cover the seed holes, ox-drawn ploughs are used, or soil is simply kicked in when households do not have access to cattle. Weeding in all fields is done by hoe and is the most labour-intensive process as it is done repeatedly, especially in December, January and February, when the crops are maturing and susceptible to weeds because of incessant rains. McNetting (1993) and Scoones et al. (2010) posit that smallholder farmers through intensive household labour can achieve high production as they combine energy efficiency and attention to detail while encouraging practices of stewardship and conservation of resources, measures that large farms do not seriously undertake. As most farmers indicated in our discussions, and on the basis of my observations in the 2009–10 agricultural season, they did not apply any fertiliser to their crops because the soil was still fertile and all the necessary nutrients were available. This information had been passed on from *vakuru vedu vekumatongo*[14] (our elders in our former communal villages). I term this information 'indigenous knowledge' as it was passed down to children from elders without any formal schooling processes (Narrative 5.3).

Although agricultural extension officers were involved in offering farming advice at Tavaka, people preferred to rely on local knowledge. Most women indicated that they had no formal training in agriculture and relied on farm

14 This includes parents and other members of the extended family, such as aunts and uncles, who form an important base of community relations, land, and farming in Zimbabwe.

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knowledge from their husbands or parents. At Merrivale, one male farmer had formal training in agriculture and had a master farmer certificate.

> Narrative 5.3: Farmer's perceptions of the importance of indigenous knowledge
>
> I use the soil as it is and, for my planting seeds, I also use the indigenous way of storing the best maize cobs and dry them in a hut, as the next season they will produce more grain per cob. I critically analyse each cob, and I take those ones without any defect and I store them so that all the moisture content is balanced, and they dry up. I learnt this from my late father when we were still in Chimbudzi village. He never used to buy any seed from the shops as he pointed out that such seeds require lots of fertiliser and are prone to weeds and they do not have resilience against some diseases as well. Ever since we first came here, my production in terms of maize keeps increasing. This year I managed to have eight tonnes of maize.
>
> Source: Extract from an interview with E.K., Tavaka Village, February 2010.

The appreciation of indigenous practices has increased among the farmers, especially during the 2003 to 2008 farming seasons, when there was a lack of farming inputs, such as maize seed, fertiliser, and pesticides for crops like cotton, in the shops. A further point to note is that local knowledge is accumulated over time and influenced by experience of the ecosystem and institutional arrangements in the context of local organisation. A salient feature of agricultural production at Merrivale is that men give women space for crops about which they consider women knowledgeable, especially pulses, legumes, and vegetables. Women emerged as actors who had knowledge on cultivation of crops like sorghum, round nuts, groundnuts, maize, sweet potatoes, and watermelons. They always achieved better yields with these crops and stored them in the best possible places to avoid their spoiling quickly. Thomas-Slayter and Asamba (1992) assert that, if research results in the documentation of gendered ethno-science at community level, then rural women and men can make informed choices about which skills and visions of nature and society they can carry into shaping their ecological and economic futures. The women have put into practice techniques for maintaining soil fertility, since they regularly practice intercropping in their fields, and employ a version of conservation farming by not needlessly applying fertiliser to their crops.

Agricultural Production at Merrivale

Land and agrarian reform as processes have directly impacted agricultural performance. Matondi (2012), writing about crop production in Mangwe

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and Mazowe, observed that agricultural production declined in the former large-scale farms with the advent of fast-track. The performance of the new farmers has received mixed reactions from different observers. One group of writers strongly argues that poor performance was due largely to the sabotage of the programme by the white farmers who were affected as well as the international community that imposed restrictive measures and/or sanctions, especially on balance of payments support that affected the economy in general. On the other hand, other scholars argue that the violent tendencies underpinning the FTLRP account for the decline, as well as the destruction of property rights, whereas still others believe that the explanation for agricultural decline could be the sum of both and/or the combination of factors from the opposing views, including the lack of skills and commitment by settlers as well as weak support institutions. Despite Kinsey (2004), Zikhali (2008) and Rukuni et al. (2006) arguing that agricultural production has declined in these new settlements, the responses catalogued in Narratives 5.4 and 5.5 present different perspectives about improved production and livelihoods at the local level.

Narrative 5.4: Enjoying high crop productivity at Tavaka Village, Merrivale

Ever since I moved from the communal areas to the new plots, I have had enough to eat and to sell. I have bought more cattle and farming implements. The problem with you people from Harare is that you are saying that we do not know how to use the land; have you ever walked around our fields or you are saying that in your homes? My daughter, look at this maize and cotton crop…is this not so much produced? Last year I had 40 bales of cotton and 15 tonnes of maize. That is production. Here in Mwenezi, people write all sorts of stories that we do not produce; it is a lie. We have always produced, the soil is good. You should write the truth of what you are seeing…not lies like some of your friends.

Source: Extract from an interview, Tavaka Village, June 2009.

Narrative 5.5: Farmer's perceptions of improved livelihoods

Ever since I moved from Chimbudzi communal area, I have had all my granaries full of maize, sorghum, and cow peas, and I store lots of pumpkins and watermelons under my granary. That was never the case in kumaruzevha (communal areas). I can sell and still have more to eat and give to others as hand-outs. My life has changed so much. I can afford to buy whatever I want when the women traders from

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> Beitbridge come because I have the round nuts (bambara nuts) and ground nuts to barter with them. I take clothes, blankets, pots, or plates. I had 60 bales of cotton in 2006. I earned a lot and managed to buy a new scotch cart, install solar energy in my house, and I have built new houses made of bricks and asbestos. I had 15 tonnes of maize. My wives are enjoying the good life here. I am never hungry these days because here in the new plots there is plenty of food. People are really using the land to produce.
>
> Source: Focus group discussion, July 2009.

All the respondents in Tavaka Village and other farmers residing at Merrivale Farm indicated that, as compared to in their old communal areas, they were much more productive and had not been threatened by hunger. From my transect walks in the fields and my visits to the farmers' homesteads, I would see *matura* (granaries located outside the homesteads) full of maize. I observed the same with cowpeas, round nuts and groundnuts. This observation changed my perceptions about these new farmers because initially I had had a strong belief that they did not produce any crops and were not fully utilising the land. Ethnography gave me the opportunity to have a first-hand account of life at Merrivale in its fullest form.

There is a need for a focused, balanced analysis in order to determine how the new farmers have been producing crops since 2000. Across the country, there is much variation on the A1 schemes, where there is low capital investment and a reliance on local labour; yet some settlers have done reasonably well, even in the drier parts of Masvingo Province.

Box 5.1 Crop Production and FTLRP

The dominant view of land reform in Zimbabwe is that farm invasions from 2000 to 2001 were nothing but a corrupt land grab by ZANU PF and its cronies. This is said to have initiated a calamitous decline in agriculture from which it has never recovered. The media endlessly reproduces the image that commercial farming has completely collapsed, conjuring up images of empty farms and a ravaged landscape. This stereotype of Zimbabwean land reform is profoundly unhelpful. It is not based on empirical evidence of the impact of the land reform, or an understanding of underlying complexities and trends over time. Seeing land reform as a total failure clouds understanding of complex new realities that farmers, government officials, political parties and other players are grappling with in trying to chart the new way forward. The findings of a three-year study in Masvingo Province included medium size farms (A2 model) as well as smallholder farms (the A model) in either villagised or self-contained units. The study finds that crop yields and output on the

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redistributed farms, particularly on the A1 Schemes, have increased steadily in the past few years. From 2006 onwards, more than two thirds of households have produced more maize than they can consume, whenever rainfall is sufficient. Cotton production has been a notable success, helped by processing companies providing inputs and a reliable market. Many of the new settlers are adamant that their livelihoods have improved considerably after fast track, despite four droughts in the past decade. In Masvingo, former beef ranches or wildlife farms are now supporting much higher rural populations that they did before redistribution.

Source: Adapted from Cousins 2010.

The outcomes presented by Cousins (2010) (Box 5.1) resemble what I witnessed at Merrivale during my 16-month stay at the farm. The ordinary villagers had acquired farms and were involved in agricultural production. This is in sharp contrast to South Africa, where land reform has not been implemented radically, and black smallholder farming is concentrated in only a few provinces of the country. Hebinck and Shackleton (2011) note that the South African black farmers are few in number as compared to those in Zimbabwe due to the much wider extent of urbanisation. However, Cousins (2010) argues that with resurfacing land demands and 80 per cent of land in Limpopo under restitution claims, it could be that South Africa is moving more rapidly toward black smallholder farming. The South African case has challenging political, economic, and social dimensions, such that radical land reform might not be on the agenda. In light of the land reforms that have occurred in Namibia and Zimbabwe, it is important to closely watch whether they will have a significant impact on agriculture and land rights in these countries.

Production is about not only numbers and econometric projections; according to these farmers, it is also about being able to feed yourself and meet market needs. Moyo (2009) has supported this notion by pointing out that smallholder farmers after the FTLRP have achieved high production levels of some crops, especially maize, cotton, bambara nuts, groundnuts, edible beans, and tobacco. In contrast, however, production has been at low levels for crops such as sunflowers, soya beans, wheat, citrus, and horticultural produce. Moyo also notes that comparing production levels on fast-track farms with those on former large-scale farms is problematic since the fast-track farms are relatively new and attract little financial support compared to the financial support received from the government by former commercial farms.

Based on data from six districts in Zimbabwe, Moyo (2011) suggests that there is a need to clear up mysteries about production and land reform in Zimbabwe, as some farms are enjoying a considerable degree of success that should not be overshadowed by the non-performing farms. In some cases, in

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some years, the majority of people may be enjoying such success. For the settlers, the new land is an invaluable form of social security, providing an alternative to complete destitution. However, agriculture in dry areas like Mwenezi, with limited support and few assets is tough and needs more financial and human capital; the fact that the farmers are producing should be appreciated.

It is misleading to argue that not all new farmers are producing in Zimbabwe; according to Moyo (2009), most new farmers are actually producing. Kinsey (2004) and Zikhali (2008) argue that data on production trends, especially in the new resettlement areas, ought to be carefully analysed because productivity in agriculture is an interplay of a variety of political, economic, and social factors that all contribute to the meaningful business of farming.

My findings are corroborated by Scoones and Cousins (2009), who reveal that former beef ranches in Chiredzi, Mwenezi and other parts of Masvingo Province that have been taken over by small-scale farmers are characterised by significant new investment in multiple use livestock herds and flocks, combined with arable agriculture, mostly maize, with small grains in the drier areas. Although operating well below potential due to the poor supply of inputs–notably seeds and fertilisers–this sector, particularly the A1 schemes, is certainly producing. Interviews carried out with the farmers, personal observations, and remote-sensing data and aerial photographs at Merrivale confirm that conclusion. In the relatively wet season of 2005–06, around 75 per cent of households in Mwenezi District[15] produced more than one tonne of maize, sufficient for household provision, some sales, and storage. This result demonstrates the potential of small-scale agriculture in the new settlements.

Gender-Based Livestock Production and Ownership Patterns at Merrivale

Most households owned cattle at Merrivale since cattle are an important part of crop production. Both men and women were involved in cattle-rearing and had related responsibilities. Cattle ownership was greatest among male household heads. In Tavaka Village, 18 households had cattle while two households had none. Of the 18 households with cattle, 12 had five head each, five had a herd of 10, two had a herd of 20, and one had a herd of 25. The village had a total of 175 cattle. According to the wealth ranking that I undertook with the villagers, cattle ownership determined farmers' wealth status. Those who had no cattle were considered the poorest (*varombo*) and struggled with farming.

15 Based on the *2006 Zimbabwe Crop Vulnerability Assessment* in Mwenezi District.

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Those with a herd of five were classified as poor (*vana tagumhana*), those with 10 cattle were categorised as being in the middle range (*varinani*), the household with 20 cattle was considered as rich (*vapfumi*), and the household with 25 cattle was termed the richest (*vashumi urete*). In terms of livelihoods, cattle ownership was considered to reflect whether a farmer was serious or not, and these were the farmers that produced more crops and had well-built homesteads. Those who had cattle herds ranging from 20 to 25 were considered the prestigious families in the village, and most decisions concerning Tavaka Village were made by them even though they were not village heads. They had better lives and could send their children to school without difficulty. Ownership of cattle in Tavaka is associated with power and status.

Those who did not have cattle had to borrow from their friends or relatives who stayed on the farm during the cropping season. The two families in the study that did not own any cattle had goats and poultry. These families were referred to as *dhiga uhle*; this term refers to people who do not have cattle and have to rely on the hoe for farming activities. They were seen as lazy and not fit for settlement in the new fast-track farms since they were not serious about farming and had not bought any cattle; yet, they harvested something and acquired money from other sources that the other villagers knew about.

Men owned most of the cattle, goats, donkeys, and sometimes sheep. Women who had inherited plots of land after the death of their husbands in the village automatically inherited the livestock at the homesteads and became owners of the cattle. They could even milk the cattle and decide how to use the milk. The women owned poultry, and some had goats too. Three women had each one cow because they had acquired it through *mombe yeumai*, a cow given to a man's mother-in-law when their daughters got married. However, during the wealth-ranking exercises, the three women who owned cattle included their individual cattle in their husband's herds as they abided by the cultural norm that cattle belong to men (*danga nderababa/vashe*) as the household heads. Control of cattle movements and the slaughtering of cattle were in the hands of men. Women could use the cattle for ploughing with their husband's permission. Women in all villages were able to sell some animal produce such as milk, eggs, or a whole bird within the village if they needed the money and if their family owned livestock. Whether they were able to retain the income from their sales differed from household to household. The milking of cattle in some households was done by women and children, with some men being unable or sometimes unwilling to milk the cows and thus reliant on their wives or mothers for that chore (Photo 5.6).

Grace (2005) notes that, even though women cannot control decisions about the sale of an animal, they often have some control over the animal's

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PHOTO 5.6 *An elderly widow milking one of her cows for family consumption and for sale*

produce. In my study, women in all the villages were found to trade within the village, and in some cases, were able to decide how to use the income. At Tavaka Village, the selling of livestock was mainly the prerogative of men as this involved looking for the highest paying buyers, and they generally decided how to use the income derived from the sales. In terms of animal-related produce, the women had to consult with the men first before selling and would give them the income, or they would plan the use of the income together. Sometimes the women would not inform their husbands about selling chickens or milk; they would do so secretly and, in such cases, they would use the money for their own personal needs.

Grazing lands for the cattle are common pool resources and were ostensibly managed by the village; but in essence, the grazing system is based on each household's being responsible for the portion of paddocks[16] to which they send their cattle for grazing. Each family's use of the paddock is regulated by

16 I define a paddock as a large fenced area for grazing livestock. However, with the advent of fast-track, some farmers have removed the wire mesh fencing the paddocks and use different identification features such as certain trees, and they have knowledge about the former paddocks' boundaries.

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the village head, who assigns the households to their portions to prevent congestion and other farmers from using appropriated grazing lands. The use of grazing resources in woodlands and riverine areas was restricted as villagers with households nearer these places often put in place control systems to curtail open access. My findings are in harmony with Nemarundwe (2003), who reports that, in practice, grazing in the commons constitutes privatisation of such resources by livestock-owning households. This is because non-livestock owners have less claim over, and use of, the grazing areas. In Tavaka Village, the two households that did not own cattle were not directly involved in the issues to do with grazing land management, but they were indirectly involved as they also took turns with the owners of the cattle that they used during the farming season to take the cattle to the pasture.

In addition to the grazing areas, stover (leaves and stalks) left in the fields in the post-harvest period also constitutes a common pool resource for all livestock owners. However, some households secured such resources as private property, either through fencing or through storage of the stover on elevated wooden platforms from which they could control their supply and use it for their own cattle, donkeys, and goats.

An important rule was that all households were supposed to respect Sagwari Mountain, and hence the grazing of cattle on the mountain was prohibited. Failure to observe this rule led to the payment of a head of cattle if anyone was caught near that area with his or her cattle or actually grazing their cattle on the mountain. The chief had put this rule in place, and all the village heads in the area had to make sure that it was observed. The village head has total control of the paddocks and ensures that trees and grass are not burnt by the people. The households were responsible for their cattle in the paddocks and for watering them at the water point, Chatagwi dam. Rules had been laid down by the village head and the community at the village court (*dare remusha*) when the settlers first came to Merrivale that those whose cattle strayed into the fields of others would be liable to punishment in the form of paying money or replacing damaged crops. These measures were put in place to minimise incidences where the herdsmen did not take enough care of their cattle and they damaged other people's crops.

The grazing paddocks were rotated to enable fodder to regenerate. If the community holding such resources is not recognised as a legitimate and legal land-holder, as is the case with farmers at Merrivale who lack secure formal tenure for the land they occupy, free-rider problems may undermine customary rights. This leads to the depletion of the resource as no one is worried about the importance of preserving the pastures for tomorrow's use (Lund et al. 2006). Grazing lands became spaces where competing private claims

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manifested themselves in subtle ways within Tavaka Village. The farmers who owned substantial herds of cattle, especially those with 20–25 head, wanted to control the grazing lands and always wanted their cattle to graze even in paddocks that were not meant for them as they were powerful because of their wealth. Nemarundwe (2003:13) notes that the concepts of the "front-stage and back-stage" are pre-eminent in grazing land management. Front-stage represents the public and private processes and patterns of interaction. At Merrivale, pastures appeared to be owned by the whole community. Yet, through my observations and interaction with the community, I learned that the grazing lands were mainly controlled by rich farmers, with the village head being the supreme authority over the paddocks. The back-stage, on the other hand, represents the more private processes that cannot be seen; for instance, some families placed wiring on the paddocks for demarcation, especially around their homesteads, to avoid stray cattle; this was a private initiative that had to be approved by the village head, since the grazing lands were deemed to be communal property. Such situations lead to the need to understand the community fully to determine how so-called common pool resources are accessed by women and men.

Women and Grazing Land Management

Women played a minimal role in grazing land management. It was mostly the elderly women, and those women who owned plots on their own, who could control where their cattle grazed and negotiated paddock use with the other farmers. The middle-aged and young women left the grazing land management to their husbands or male relatives within the household. The women could not influence most of the decisions made about the grasslands. Cattle herders in the various households—all men—played an influential role in the rangelands as they were more knowledgeable about the paddocks that had the richest grasslands for the cattle. Some households would bring their cattle from the communal areas to graze in these paddocks, and it was mainly the men who dealt with outsiders about the use of grazing lands. This often led to conflict as overgrazing by cattle could result in suffering for the inhabitants of that particular village. Conflicts over grazing lands at Tavaka Village were mainly resolved by negotiations between the parties, and it was the village head who presided over such issues. The conflict described in Narrative 5.6 demonstrates how grazing lands were controlled by the powerful and rich villagers, who would, without a thought, bring cattle from the communal areas for grazing without notifying the village head or other villagers. Those who owned more cattle, like Mr X, used their wealth as a means of controlling the grazing lands. The village head adjudicated the case in fear of Mr X and hence

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he was not found guilty of any offence by the village court, and this angered the other villagers. Judging by Narrative 5.8, one might say that the grazing lands were slowly becoming the property of the rich, like Mr X and his kind.

Narrative 5.6: Conflicts over grazing lands at Tavaka Village

> Since 2008, when there was a drought, Mr X has been bringing the cattle of his whole clan from Lundi communal area so that they graze and drink water here. This is not right because he has not consulted all the villagers about his plan to help people in Lundi communal area with grazing lands. Our grazing lands are not enough as we have had bad rains; adding more cattle will affect our own cattle. He is taking advantage of the fact that he is the wealthiest man in the village. We took the case to the village head but he did not resolve it amicably because he fears Mr X because of his political influence and wealth. This is why we still see the cattle grazing here.
>
> –Extract from interview with M.K., Tavaka Village, October 2009.

> Mr X said that these people do not understand; they tried to create a conflict (kusawirirana) where there is no conflict. Should I leave the cattle of my relatives to perish in Lundi when I own land here? The grazing lands are huge and they belong to everyone in the village. Even the village head resolved the case properly; he said this is not worth being considered a conflict in which I should compensate the other farmers. I have heard that they are trying to seek audience with the chief; they will not win the case. They still have to come back to the village head so that they can take their story to the chief because that is the protocol; just because they are not happy with the help I am giving my family from Lundi. Do you think it is right for me to leave the cattle to die? These pastures were created by God and no one irrigates them.
>
> –Extract from interview with Mr X, Tavaka Village, January 2010.

The cattle were watered (or dipped) on Wednesday of every week, by either men or women. Women had the role of collecting dipping water for the cattle since the dip could no longer automatically produce enough water since Chatagwi dam had been destroyed by rains. Each homestead had to make sure that every Tuesday a woman would go to fetch water and put it in the dip tank in preparation for the dipping, which started at seven in the morning and ended at nine in the morning. There was a dipping committee comprising villagers and involving men only. Because women were not seen as cattle owners,

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they did not qualify for positions on the committee. Each family contributed five South African rand every week toward buying the chemicals used for dipping. An officer from the veterinary department would come to inspect whether the correct dosages of the chemicals were applied to the water and whether all villagers were dipping their cattle. Those who did not contribute the money were not allowed to dip their cattle, nor were those who had not helped with the carrying of water to the dipping spot. All these rules had been put in place by men on the committee, and the women abided by them without question for fear of being ostracised; however, some women complained among themselves about the rule that those without money were not allowed to dip their cattle as they felt this was against the values of communitarianism.

Mobile Livestock

The permanent movement of livestock from communal areas to the fast-track farms is an important element of understanding livestock history at Merrivale. When the people moved from the communal areas, they also relocated their cattle. Mobility was not confined to human beings as it also involved goats, sheep, donkeys, and small livestock. The livestock were moved on foot by cattle-herders together with the owners of cattle from different parts of the communal areas to Tavaka Village where the grazing was seen as abundant and conducive to healthy livestock. Thus, fast-track farms were spaces that experienced livestock movement also, an element seldom considered in academic debates. Livestock are highly valued by Zimbabweans; and it was the men who had to move the cattle to their new plots at Merrivale (Photo 5.7).

There was also temporary movement of livestock from the communal areas to Tavaka to access the better pastures there. Some of the villagers would bring their relatives' cattle to Tavaka for grazing purposes, especially during the dry months of July, August, September, and October. As already shown, this practice created conflicts as other villagers did not want such livestock arrangements. Livestock were also moved from Tavaka to the neighbouring villages, especially during the dry season to access better water points. There was also movement of livestock from Merrivale to the communal areas for slaughtering purposes, especially during spiritual or social ceremonies such as celebrating the life of the dead and when relatives died in the communal areas.

Commodity Chains in the Marketing of Agricultural Produce

Many farmers sold their cotton to the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco) at Ngundu depot. Transportation to the depot was either by large-haul trucks,

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PHOTO 5.7 *Cattle pen of the Chimbudzi family*

smaller open trucks or, in some instances, donkey-drawn scotch carts. Since some of the farmers had entered into contracts with private companies on a contract-farming basis, these companies would come to their homestead to collect the cotton and pay them on the spot in fulfilment of their contractual obligations. Some sold their cotton to companies that would come to the villages looking for cotton to buy. This was favoured by some elderly women who grew cotton as they did not have to worry about transport because the companies brought their trucks and paid them in cash. *Some of the trucks had South Africa registration numbers and could have been coming from neighbouring South Africa to purchase the cotton, as it was affordable in Zimbabwe.*[17]

This pattern of marketing was a significant change because, before fast-track, cotton was mainly sold to Cottco at the Ngundu depot in Mwenezi. With the new fast-track farms, buyers were coming from all parts of the country–and from outside the country–because of the new commodity chains that had evolved because of the political and economic malaise prevailing in Zimbabwe for a decade. The South African companies find Merrivale convenient in terms

17 Discussion with Mbuya Tava about her cotton crop and the market for it.

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PHOTO 5.8 *Ngundu Cotton Depot*

of proximity, and the farmers favour these companies as they offer more money per bale compared to Cottco, which has had problems regulating the price of cotton to a rate acceptable to farmers. Photo 5.8 depicts the Cottco sign outside its Ngundu depot.

Maize was sold mainly at the homesteads, with farmers selling a bucket for US$3 in 2009.[18] Few farmers took the maize to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB); the farmers said that the amount paid by GMB was rather small and that it was better to sell at home, as they could get more if they sold directly. In 2009 and 2010, GMB paid less than US$150 for one tonne of maize. Business people with catering businesses purchased maize at lucrative market prices, as did Beitbridge residents since there was no maize production in Beitbridge. In 2010, a bucket of maize was selling at between US$8 and US$10 since most regions in Zimbabwe had been affected by dry spells. Some of the maize was sold in Chikwalakwala in Mozambique as they did not produce much maize. Figure 5.2, a commodity chain map, illustrates the different maize outlets, channels, and networks in which the farmers at Merrivale engaged.

18 Since September 2008, Zimbabwe has been using multiple currencies: the United States Dollar, the South African Rand, the Botswana Pula, British Pound, and the Euro.

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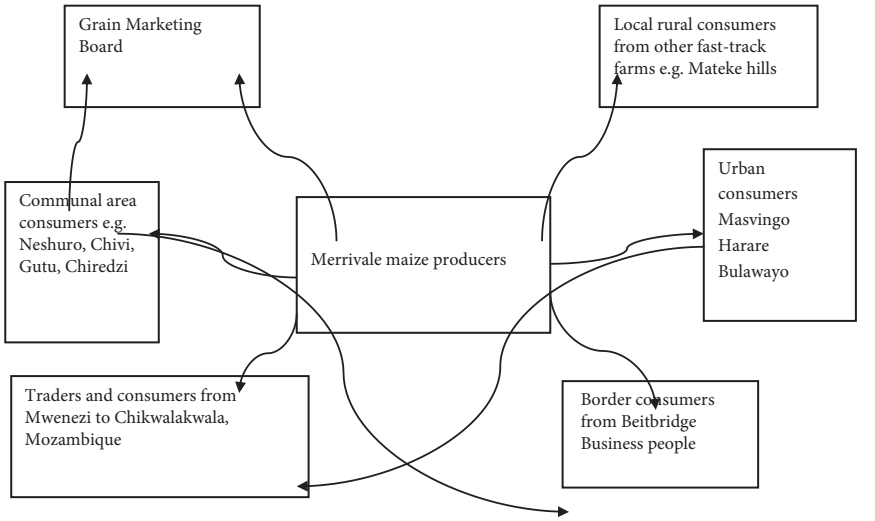

FIGURE 5.2 *Maize commodity chain*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK.

Other crops such as groundnuts, bambara nuts, sunflowers, and vegetables were sold locally or in South Africa, Mozambique, and Botswana. Women and some men travelled there because consumers in these countries did not have abundant supplies of these crops. The women liked to trade abroad as they could earn foreign currency and buy other products to sell at home when they returned. This income-generating activity was seen as creating better livelihoods through farming and accessing land during fast-track.

Meat products and milk were sold locally within the farms and to traders from Masvingo, Rutenga, Ngundu, and Beitbridge who had butcheries. Most households would sell their cattle or goats to these butchery owners as they paid higher prices than the locals who would constantly negotiate low prices. Some of the farmers at Merrivale had entered into contracts with white farmers and would supply them with beef, especially in Bulawayo, Mutare, and Harare. By word of mouth, I also heard that cattle were being sold to Nuanetsi Ranch as feed for their crocodiles.

> In February 2010, a small goat was $15 USD, a medium-sized goat was $20 USD and a big one was $25 USD. Beef cattle ranged from $150 USD a beast to $300 USD depending on the quality of the beast.[19]

19 Interviews with farmers selling at Merrivale, Ngundu, and Rutenga, Mwenezi.

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Some men and women would also sell meat and milk in Chikwalakwala, Mozambique. Wolmer (2007) states that the trade in cattle products in Chikwalakwala was dominated by men, who used the women's networks to help them smuggle the goods into Mozambique (Box 5.2).

BOX 5.2 WOMEN NEGOTIATING ENTRY INTO CHIKWALAKWALA FROM MERRIVALE

The train to Chikwalakwala, Mozambique, from Rutenga had women on board mainly carrying milk and meat they stored in plastic buckets. When we arrived at Chikwalakwala, it was mainly men who were searched by the Mozambican immigration officials and had to open their bags. I realised that men were searched because it was believed that they were the ones smuggling meat and milk from Zimbabwe into Mozambique. The border officials did not search the women who were the ones who actually had milk, fresh vegetables, and meat products. The women's buckets were concealed behind their legs, and some women were even sitting on their buckets and happily greeted the Mozambican immigration officials when they came to do the searches. Other women who knew the officials would follow them and give them 200 Meticais, the Mozambican currency, for drinks. This was done to pay for being allowed to bring the meat into Mozambique without being harassed and undergoing difficult border formalities.

Source: Author's fieldwork.

Mavedzenge et al. (2006:91)[20] note that "different people have carved out new market niches, with great energy and ingenuity." Not all will survive in such businesses, and one characteristic critical for survival is to keep changing and manoeuvring as the external economic environment shifts. The women and men found ways and means of developing viable strategies in the informal economy. As the Zimbabwean economy became more and more a parallel economy, it required constant renegotiating of markets and boundaries and the redefinition of border formalities in order for the fast-track farmers to survive in the chaotic political economy. Berry (1989) stresses that the complex production and marketing processes in Africa can be understood through processes of investment in institutions and the social relations of exchange; the functioning of patronage networks based on kinship, religion, or political affiliation is central, but this diversity of players and the dynamism of their

20 Mavedzenge, B.Z., Mahenehene, J., Murimbarimba, F., Scoones, I. and Womer, W. 2006. Changes in the Livestock Sector in Zimbabwe Following Land Reform: The Case of Masvingo Province, Livelihoods after Land Reform Publications, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Sussex.

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activities is a far cry from the very formalised, organised marketing chains of the past. Mavedzenge et al. (2008) further posit that, in many contexts in Africa and beyond, the 'second economy', often characterised by illegality and a redefined relationship between the economy and the state, is often more important than the formal, official economy.

I argue that occupation of space in the new resettlement areas has led to the emergence of new entrepreneurs too, now able to engage in business and trade in new ways, although with small turnovers and limited profits. Overall, it is a much more complicated commodity chain, based on different principles, relationships, and politics. Cousins (2010) and Scoones (2009) report that novel commodity chains for crops and livestock are emerging, with new agribusinesses showing an interest in supplying inputs and buying outputs.

New Land, New Socio-Political Organisation

The new settlements have witnessed the rise of political and social structures that regulate daily activities. Each village in Merrivale has a village head; the village head at Tavaka Village inherited the village headship from his father, who died in 2004 at Merrivale. The family hailed from Chimbudzi communal area originally and brought the village headship post with them. When the father died, the villagers decided to appoint the son as the new village head. However, since 2009, the appointment has been challenged by other villagers on the basis that the new village head was now an MDC agent, and so he had to be removed. In August 2009, a serious conflict erupted between the villagers who formed two factions; one wanted a male village head and the other wanted a woman village head (Narrative 5.7).

This conflict resulted in the thorough beating of the male village head, and he lost his headship to the woman. The villagers appointed the woman because she has strong political ties and would not reverse their land gains. This case demonstrates how the fast-track has led to institutional battles among settlers in terms of village governance. The woman village head was possibly given the office because of her former role as a war veteran, demonstrating how village level governance has been politicised after fast-track land reform. The other villagers decided to select her because they were concerned about preserving their land; they were convinced that the former village head would not support them in this as he was reported by the villagers to be an MDC agent. Because they suspected him of being an MDC agent, the villagers were fearful that they could lose their land once the MDC gained political power in Zimbabwe. I could not establish whether the former village head was really an MDC agent

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as these reports from the villagers were based only on hearsay. There were factions in the village, with some respecting the male village head and others paying allegiance to the woman village head. A complex socio-political governance dispute erupted, raising new complexities about the role of village heads and office execution on the fast-track farms.

Narrative 5.7: New woman farmer, new Tavaka Village head

[Ms Murunge, the new village head of Merrivale since August 2009, is 53 years old.] *I fought in the country's liberation struggle. I am a war veteran, and land is important to me and the people. I have accepted the village headship because the former village head ascended to the throne after the death of his father. The villagers were not happy with that, and there were problems that ended up seeing him beaten by an angry mob. The case was made into a police case, and I was fined for inciting the violence even though it was the villagers. I have since paid him his compensation, and I am now comfortable with my new position. The other village heads have recognised me in the area, and I am happy with that. The problem is that the former village head still wants the throne and, as a result, we do not talk together. He thinks I should not be a village head because I am a woman; however, Tavaka Village has chosen me and I will lead the village.*

[The months of June to August 2009 were marked by political and social tension at Tavaka Village. The village head, CM, was heavily assaulted, resulting in his right ear being seriously damaged. He was beaten by other male villagers, who wanted him to cede the throne to their new choice, the woman, MM. The conflict ended up at Mwenezi District Court. The court ruled that the accused were to pay the village head monetary compensation and his medical bills, which they were paying in instalments until the time that I left in April 2010.]

Source: Interview with Ms Murunge, new village head, Tavaka Village, September 2009 and personal observations.

Scoones et al. (2010) have observed that, in some areas, the interaction between new authorities, deriving from the particular political context post-2000, and older authority structures, such as chiefs and headmen, has been highly contested. In some areas, the chiefs, working with traditional spirit leaders/healers and others, have (re)claimed land control in new settlements, asserting power and authority on the basis of ancestral control and the influence of spirit

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mediums; but in all instances competing claims exist and a highly contested politics around control of new land has emerged.

A new relationship is also emerging between chiefly authority over new territory and spiritual authorities (through both spirit mediums and wider territorial cults). As the state tries to assert power over the new resettlement areas through administrative authority, there are a variety of confrontations evident, which are always being renegotiated. The war veterans also have a role to play and influence the way political aspects are managed at Merrivale. The village chiefs, village heads, and spiritual and district authorities all pay their allegiance to the ZANU-PF government, which spearheaded the land acquisition processes during the FTLRP. However, at times, because of the lack of clear operational boundaries, chiefs believe that they have the power to perform even the administrative tasks of the planners and district administrators. The government has not laid out clear operational mandates on land management, especially after the FTLRP, and at Merrivale every authority believes it is supreme and has the prerogative of land governance.

These results are in line with those of Nemarundwe (2003), who noted that social and political engineering cannot work in managing land resources as the governed are bound to change ideas on village leadership and a leader can automatically lose the position. At Merrivale, these competing jurisdictions, in the form of persons with hybrid positions of authority, played an active role in the management of local level politics and national politics in the village–for example, being a village head and a ZANU-PF ward secretary at the same time, despite the obvious conflict of interest.

However, confrontations keep erupting among the war veterans, technocrats, and chiefs as to who has the social and political power to control these new spaces. Scoones et al. (2010:23) point out that "as the state tries to assert power over the new resettlement areas through administrative authority–electing councillors, establishing land committees, and sending in land use planners–there are a variety of confrontations and conflicts evident." These have become more intense because the administrative technocratic state authority has combined with the increasingly militarised/securitised state through the presence of security service operatives and youth militia engaged in everything from seed distribution to price control. This has culminated in some situations where one individual can represent more than three offices, emphasising the economy of affection (i.e. favouring relatives over non-relatives in the distribution of assets) as a regulated norm determining access to resources. The advent of the national power-sharing arrangement did not really led to substantial changes in the political organisation of new

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resettlement areas dominated by ZANU-PF supporters. In their focus on wider historical trajectories of power relations, community formation, and the consolidation of state institutions, Evers et al. (2005) summed up these outcomes as reflecting processes of inclusion or exclusion of different categories of people (often grouped together under the label of *secondary users*) in relation to access to land and natural resources.

Crop Production and Agro-Ecological Zones

As discussed in Chapter 3, the physical landscape of Southern Zimbabwe has always been seen as unsuitable for crop production; but with the advent of fast-track and its aftermath, a lot of agricultural production is now seen, challenging the widely and commonly held assumption that Mwenezi is a hot, arid place suitable for cattle ranching only. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this premise has been criticised by Wolmer (2007:44) who points out that "changing environmental and political dynamics over time have led to land use transformations, as well as complex accommodations and adaptations such as changes in the social context and landscape location of agricultural practices." There has been both a social shift toward smaller units of production and a spatial shift from riverbank cultivation to more extensive cropping. Scoones et al. (2010) and Wolmer (2007) further stress that it is imperative to understand that the turbulent dynamics around these land invasions and the associated FTLRP may actually open space for these previously silenced notions of landscape to influence crop production and agricultural policy in general. Worby's (1994) work in Gokwe is important, as he highlights the relationship between the state's power to create new landholdings, remake boundaries, and translocate people and its power to introduce new forms of agrarian social practice. There is a need to shift from the conventional thinking that, because Mwenezi is between agro-ecological regions IV and V, it is purely a ranching area. The new farmers' harvests serve as testimony for this. The aerial images in Photo 5.9 demonstrate the before fast-track situation in 1991 and the after fast-track situation in 2009 (Matsa and Muringanidze 2009) and the changing land use patterns at Merrivale.

These agro-ecological zones were defined in 1960. There have been changes in the ecological landscape over the intervening period; hence, the 1960 research cannot suffice in present-day Zimbabwean agricultural discourses. My observations of crops and livestock confirm the agricultural potential of Mwenezi's former ranches as zones for both plant and animal production, challenging the long-held belief about the nonviability of farming in Mwenezi District. Wolmer (2007) and Hammar (2007) emphasise the fact that discourses on the productivity of land in the lowveld have been essential props to land use

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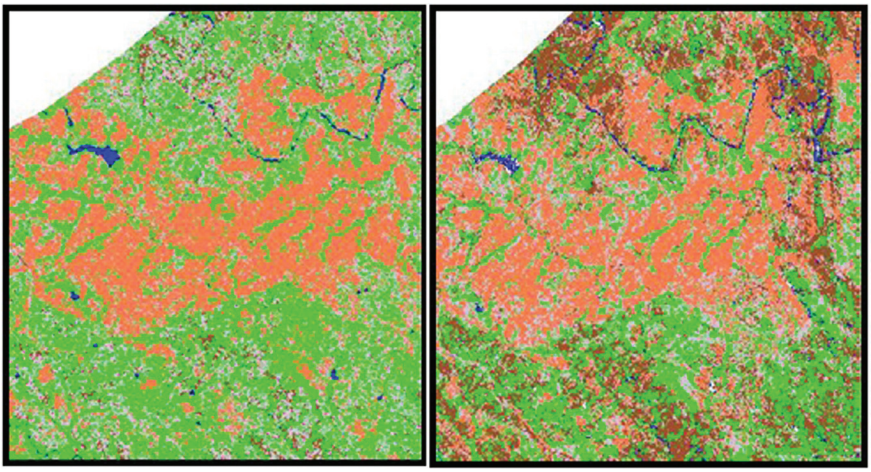

PHOTO 5.9 *Before and after images of FTLR areas* (*Left: Before1991-Right: After 2009*)
LEGEND: LOCAL NPP SCALING BASED ON SOIL AND VEGETATION MAPS. GREEN–VEGETATION, LIGHT BROWN–CULTIVATED LAND, DEEP BROWN–BARE LAND, WHITE–DEGRADED LAND, BLUE–WATER.
SOURCE: MATSA AND MURINGANIDZE (2009).

planning. The landscape has been zoned in such a way as to define as ecologically inappropriate either dry-land or rain-fed agriculture. This framework continues to hold sway among policymakers and agricultural extensions workers in Zimbabwe. Defining appropriate land use is an inherently political exercise, and no more so than when used as the rationale for the suitability or unsuitability of land reform and resettlement programmes.

In light of the past conceptual rigidities regarding the appropriateness of land for specified activities, suffice it to say that agricultural decisions and agro-ecological zoning are primarily about the policies that influence a locality at a certain time. A variety of ecological understandings, political struggles, and livelihood strategies are brought to bear on and in the landscape. This leads to an overlapping constellation of porous bounded jurisdictions, each of which is very far from fixed but, rather, continually contested and remade. Hammar (2007:90) writes in favour of my argument when she asserts that colonial cartography was part of the "geographic violence" through which space was explored, reconstructed, renamed, and controlled. Potts (1998) supports critics who have made plain the inability of such categories to provide a sufficiently nuanced picture of the potential for mixed production systems within each category. She goes further, pointing out that the same categories had the political advantage of making visible (and therefore easy to criticise) both unfair colonial land ownership patterns and unfairness in subsequent land reform and resettlement programmes. The mixed production systems supported for

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each region by Potts (1998) are the same ones that have taken centre stage after fast-track. This is corroborated by my field observations that maize yields were sufficient for both subsistence and for sale by the farmers.

Summary

The events surrounding the settling of new communities at Merrivale have been examined. The political, economic, and social organisation encompassing the strategies to acquire Merrivale has been thoroughly examined, leading to a paradigmatic shift in perspectives on land reform in Zimbabwe. This presentation helps to elucidate how the FTLRP took place and how the events surrounding the farm occupations in Mwenezi changed the agro-historical landscape of the district. The new farmers' lives have been described; livelihoods depend on mixed farming on a small scale as opposed to a single family controlling the large area of the entire farm before fast-track land reform. Arial images have been provided as evidence of changing landscape use at Merrivale between 1991 before FTLRP and 2009 after the FTLRP. I have examined the role of women in the occupation of Merrivale to help in understanding women's role in fast-track. Merrivale emerges as a transformed landscape upon which smallholder farming patterns have been expanded, and indigenous knowledge systems are emerging as important in the evolving farming systems at Tavaka Village. The role of women has been treated in these cases in order to understand how women contribute to these farms. I have also reflected on the existing commodity chains for produce within Tavaka Village, in urban areas, border towns, and across borders. Competing jurisdictions of village level governance in the new resettlement areas have been examined, along with how they affect the day-to-day operations of the inhabitants of Tavaka Village. The new political and social organisation has also its own emerging dynamics that have resulted in conflicts resolved more often than not by politics, and sometimes, if violence has ensued, the courts are used to redress the grievances between the different parties.

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CHAPTER 6

Access to Land and the Shaping of Livelihoods at Tavaka Village, Merrivale

> Rights, marriage, community, power, food, markets, traditional leaders; all of these issues come together around one piece of land, in which modest goals vest. What should land reform be doing to meet the needs and expectations around land of the woman and her husband? Can it, should it, aim to accommodate both sets of interests, and if so, how?
>
> WALKER 2002: Preface

Introduction

Against the backdrop of how women traditionally acquired land in Zimbabwe, this chapter explores how women acquire land in Tavaka Village using different strategies and tactics. In rural landscapes throughout the world, women have increasingly taken responsibility as the "daily managers of the living environment" (Thomas-Slayter and Asamba 1992:1). A steady stream of field research and informal publications indicates the changing nature of ecological management in most cultures (Scoones et al. 2010, Nemarundwe 2003, Mubaya 2010, Thomas-Slayter and Asamba1992, Ikdahl et al. 2005, Ikdahl 2010, Makura-Paradza 2010, Stewart et al. 2006, Matondi 2001). These researchers have documented the changing rights, responsibilities, and tasks of rural women, and the imbalance between women's rights and responsibilities as resource managers (Agarwal 1992).

This chapter also reflects on how women access other natural resources in Tavaka Village. As the chapter unfolds, it touches on issues with regard to labour dynamics at the fast-track farms, the role of NGOs in women's developmental efforts, the importance of social capital and social networks in sustaining livelihoods, and the different resource-sharing schemes at Tavaka Village. I examine access to these resources to see whether a relationship exists between them and women's access to natural resources found at the village.

UN HABITAT Representative, Ms Kerstin Engstrand, speaking at an ACTION AID ministerial conference on women's access to land in Zimbabwe in March 2009, underlined the point that women own only two per cent of the land in developing countries and that, despite progress in women's access to land and housing in policies and laws, there are still a number of obstacles that hinder

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them from accessing resources; these include patriarchal attitudes, cultural practices, lack of information, and a lack of political will and resources. She further stated that "*women's access to land is either through their husbands or fathers and they often lose their access to land through widowhood, divorce, desertion, and male migration.*"

Women and Access to Land in Zimbabwe

A World Bank report (2003:23) notes that "if women have access to and control over land then family livelihood patterns improve. Most women-headed households have better management policies in terms of farming practices, marketing of produce and use of the income." In Zimbabwe, most women farm their husband's land, but they do not have any form of title (deed or other customarily acknowledged right) to that land. Claims to fast-track resettlement land are supported only by the limited 'offer letters'[1] from the government. Similar patterns also exist in the communal areas where land use and control have traditionally been the domain of men and traditional leaders, making land a male-controlled resource. However, in communal areas the interplay of customary, codified, and colonial laws has systematically disadvantaged women in terms of access to land. In both the communal and the resettlement areas of Zimbabwe, land has become an arena of contestation where legal pluralism and semi-autonomous social forces are constantly remoulded by traditional authorities and local governments so that they may continue controlling land (Makura-Paradza 2010, Cheater 1986, Gaidzanwa 1994). This setting creates a difficult social environment for women trying to assert a right to land, inasmuch as their livelihood is tied to ever-changing rules governing this critical resource (Jacobs 2010, Tsikata 2003).

Rural peasant women face exclusion, particularly from different political and traditional regimes that control land, in spite of their immense contribution to food production. This treatment of women has been accompanied by "gender specific discursive justification" in Zimbabwe (Goebel 2005b:147). Land is a preeminent political resource for the state and for different actors at different geographic levels, and at this stage competing assertions of legitimacy and territoriality are always at play (Alexander 2003). The Utete Report (2003) treats women as a homogenous group, yet within fast-track it is important to bear in mind that women were not just discriminated against as women.

1 An offer letter is the quasi form of land security that assigns land under the FTLRP. However, an offer letter is not a legal document and hence is not a valid formal title to land.

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Women, like men, are not a homogenous category since they belong to different classes, ethnic groups, races, political parties, and professions. Derman and Hellum (2007) and Mazhawidza and Manjengwa (2011) note that under the FTLRP most women from urban or rural areas were discriminated against along political, social, and economic lines. This had more to do with women being treated as minors in everyday life in most cases–a situation constantly challenged by NGOs such as the Women and Land Lobby Group, which tirelessly advocated the view that women, in spite of their biology and marital status, had a right to land during fast-track (Moyo 2011). There was also differentiation between wives and women heads of households. The social importance associated with women's marital status is always an important factor in household relations in Africa (Jacobs 2012, O'Laughlin 2009, Goebel 2005a, b).

It has been stressed that households in Southern Africa have oscillating periods during which women sometimes assume headship of households, making social differentiation difficult (O'Laughlin 2002). Married women have a better social standing than non-married women do in most patrilineal societies in Africa. During the fast-track process, the state and some traditional actors wanted to capitalise on using culture to exclude female household heads from accessing land, but in practice women heads of households emerged as victors as compared to their married counterparts (Mazhawidza and Manjengwa 2011, Scoones et al. 2010). Most married women could not engage with the fast-track process as they had to continue managing their communal homes while their husbands participated in the *jambanja* phase (Chapter 5). Despite the situation tending to disadvantage women, in A1 schemes, single, divorced, and widowed women capitalised on the use of social networks and political party affiliations and gained new forms of power that enabled them to acquire land. O'Laughlin (2009) and Agarwal (1994, 2003) insist that such complexities require the appreciation of communitarian approaches to rights based on respect for the family and evolving living traditions and laws, as empirically these have always been critical in facilitating women's access to land. In spite of the social customs, the different categories of women assumed new modes of land acquisition built on resilience, agency, and changing the traditional land control spheres.

Patterns of land ownership after the FTLRP, as well as of tenancy, resettlement permits, and leases, show that nearly a fifth of women have independent rights to ownership, access to, or control over land (Chingarande 2008). Women in general lack the bargaining power to negotiate their right to land and livelihood. This is made clear by Article 23(3) of the Zimbabwean Constitution, which allows discrimination against women in matters involving family issues, and land is regulated as a customary law matter in most cases in Zimbabwean

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society. Most male attitudes toward land redistribution and security of tenure with regard to women have not been positive because of socialisation processes that view land as a resource associated with men, and women as the primary providers of labour. Gender stereotypes affect women's public and private lives. Moyo (2007b:78) notes that "women received the least resettlement land even though their skills and labour tend to be critical to food production and rural livelihoods."

Formal and Informal Processes of Accessing Land

The Zimbabwe Government's Utete Report (2003:40) on the FTLRP points out that women were a small minority (18 per cent) of those who benefited in terms of formal processes of accessing land, such as the offer letter in the A1 resettlements and leases in the A2 resettlements. A distinction should be made in terms of some women benefitting from the formal processes and others accessing land as a benefit emanating from family relations, negotiations, and marriage bonds. I use the term *access* to refer to the social and political relations that mediate acquisition and use. Different circumstances change the terms and conditions of access, and this changes the specific individuals or groups most able to benefit from a resource (Ribot and Peluso 2003). Accessing land through family-level negotiations has not been the focus of much attention in the FTLRP, yet these methods have been very important and have changed the role of women in a patriarchal culture. Attention has, however, focused on the absence of men in Southern Africa's rural areas due to labour migration to South Africa (O'Laughlin 1998, 2002).

This male migration created opportunities for women to gain access to land and control production activities. Women-headed households increased as men were missing from the rural areas, a phenomenon also associated with urbanisation. This process by which women accessed land has been termed "relatively secure access to land" (O'Laughlin 2009:44). Women-headed households assumed a new form of power over livelihood organisation, and subsistence agriculture remained a key survival strategy. Even the liberation wars did not dislodge the women; most of them remained fixed on the land. This pattern indicates that, when women become key actors in rural livelihoods, new forms of power trickle down to them, and power leads to new configurations in land use and livelihood options. For example, women have taken over the land in the Chokwe Irrigation Scheme in Mozambique, competing with the few men left, as most men departed to look for full-time employment (Pelizolli 2010). In this work, my intention is to show the complex and often hidden means adopted by women to access and control land in Mwenezi District. Moyo (2011) asserts that 14 per cent of women benefited countrywide;

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Scoones et al. (2010:55) note that women were beneficiaries "for eight percent of the A2 plots, 14 percent of the A1 villagised resettlements, 13 percent of the A1 self-contained sites and 15 percent of the unofficial sites, which were not formally registered under fast-track and are so prevalent in Masvingo Province." It is in the unofficial settlements that most women received land in Masvingo Province. Matondi (2012) reports a figure of 14 per cent of women acquiring land in Mazowe District. In Zvimba District, 25 per cent of A1 beneficiaries were women, and 22 per cent of A2 beneficiaries (Murisa 2007). These figures are actually higher than those reported by the Presidential Land Review Committee (Mazhawidza and Manjengwa 2011).

Variations in gender-disaggregated data reveal that women in rural settings had different participatory approaches and motivations for participating in FTLR processes. Despite mobilisation campaigns being held in all the different districts, in Mazowe women played more of a leading role in the mobilisation campaigns during the land occupations than women in other districts (Sadomba 2008). I disagree with Matondi and Sanyanga (2012), who argue that the gender statistics hide more than reveal the extent to which women were ostracised during the fast-track process. What should be borne in mind is that the quantitative data do not present women's entry point into the new farms and the role they played as individuals in acquiring land. For most women, fast-track presented a life opportunity that had never before manifested itself in the history of land relations in Zimbabwe. In comparison to the land resettlement programme in the 1980s and 1990s, the number of women gaining access to land escalated under fast-track, possibly because of the way society is evolving. In the aftermath of economic structural adjustment programmes, land has emerged as an asset that appreciates in value, such that both men and women value the importance of owning land.

It is important to remember that the women who accessed land were able to do so mostly in A2 settlements and minimally in A1 plots. However, despite the genesis of redistributive justice on which the Zimbabwe Government embarked, women who should not have access to land in their own right are gaining it at Merrivale through other channels that the government did not consider as potential mechanisms for these women to access land. The main aim of agrarian reform is to improve the level of living of the peasants, to redistribute land through legislated changes, to redistribute income by creating employment, to increase agricultural productivity by using insecticides and fertilisers, and to open up more land for resettlement, for example by improving road infrastructure and irrigation (Zarin and Bujang 1994). This objective implies that women should have leading recourse to the positive benefits of any agrarian reform, as they contribute almost 80 per cent of the labour on

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fast-track farms (Jacobs 2012). Masvingo Province had the lowest percentage of women FTLRP beneficiaries in the country. Table 6.1 gives the male–female breakdown by district and the A1-A2 distribution of resettled land during fast-track in Masvingo Province.

The table shows that all districts had similar percentages of land distribution between male and female beneficiaries, possibly influenced by the role of culture and religion that dominates this area, as evident from my fieldwork observations. In terms of land rights, women are marginalised in both models. Historical and contemporary disadvantages in the form of structural and market forces (for example, lack of access to finance or credit for the purchase/lease of land) facing women in particular explain this, especially for the A2 model. "It is unfortunate that available statistics do not show whether households headed by women that were allocated land are so as a result of death or divorce" (Chingarande 2004:14). There are cultural, legislative, and traditional explanations that account for the low number of women that have been allocated land under the FTLRP and previous resettlement exercises.

Strategies Women use to Access Land

Despite the many obstacles, in Tavaka Village women have used their traditional strategies[2] and devised new ones for accessing land and fulfilling their

TABLE 6.1 *Demographics of land acquisition during the FTLRP*

	Model A1				Model A2			
District	**Males**	**% of total**	**Females***	**% of total**	**Males**	**% of total**	**Females**	**% of total**
Chiredzi	6,009	79	1,589	21	349	87	52	13
Gutu	4,741	88	673	12	74	89	9	11
Masvingo	1,717	84	327	16	129	98	3	2
Mwenezi	6,559	86	1,005	14	157	100	0	0
Total	19, 026	84	3, 644	16	709	92	64	8

SOURCE: UTETE REPORT 2003:25, 111.
* Discrepancy in total females, Model A1, due to methodological issues.

2 When I speak of strategy, I mean conscious and coherently structured actions aimed at achieving a favourable outcome to the user in the end. Anderson (1994:20) adds that the end is viewed "within a relatively long term perspective." Niehof (2004) gives an elaborate view of the term strategy in livelihoods.

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goal of land-based livelihoods. As critical actors in the farming business, these women employed methods that were not obvious at face value but needed deeper understanding of them as women, the society within which they lived and operated, and the institutions that regulated their lives in their community structures. An anthropological study in Manesa Village in Chipinge reported that "women are not passive recipients and victims of patriarchal structures but are strategic social actors who also reproduce and transform everyday life" (Vijfhuizen 2002:1). Such roles had a great bearing on how the women in Tavaka Village shaped and defined land-based livelihoods.

Two interrelated concepts for analysing gender and production relations—*negotiative conflict* and *cooperative bargaining*—are presented by Sen (1999) to analyse inequitable socio-economic systems. Sen's analytical framework sheds light on the household as a dynamic site where various actors negotiate diverse spaces and strike bargains as part of their effort to position themselves for gains that are more equitable. To enable access to land, women have to create a bargaining table where power dynamics come out and can be managed to their benefit. In their full ramifications as addressed in the literature on intra-household gender and inter-generational relations, "questions of sexuality and sexual politics open a large arena of contestations and insights which have the potential to transform our understanding of livelihoods" (Tsikata 2009:13). Jackson (2003) emphasises the need for reflexive ethnographic methodologies in elucidating gender as social relationships, subject positions, and subjectivities, on meshing of shared and separate interests within households, and on the power residing in discourse that shapes access to land and security by women.

In their quest to access land, women at Merrivale used a number of strategies to circumvent the male-dominated terrain. Most of the married women indicated that they used their negotiating skills, such as talking with their husbands especially in their bedrooms; they would also know the right time to start the discussions, when their husbands were in a good mood, to circumvent this male dominance in order to access portions of land. Access to land is thus negotiated, involving many strategies and models that involve bargaining at family and societal level by those who do not have land (Mutopo 2011, Toulmin 2007, Berry 2002).

In fact, therefore, access to land for women involves their having some form of relationship to men—either a husband or a brother. One woman said to me, "T*he only land that we have as ours is the water gardens, but men still control their use. The problem is our names do not even appear on the offer letters."*[3] Women are slowly realising that the details on the paperwork have an impact on their tenure security. If permits are issued and their names do not appear

3 Interview with Mbigi, Tavaka Village, May 2009.

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on them, their right to inheritance in situations of divorce or death of a spouse is compromised. Outreach programmes broadcast by Women and Law and Southern Africa on national electronic media soon after the FTLRP in 2004 could have contributed to this awareness. My own assessment leads me to argue that there are clearly unresolved tenure issues in A1 settlements that apply to both women and men; these lead to insecurity in both groups and to a subsequent fear of dispossession on the part of the farmers. This fear is further accentuated by clause seven of the offer letter that states, "The offer letter can be withdrawn at any time, with the government having no obligation to compensate for any improvements that might have been made."[4]

In the focus group discussions, fear of losing plots was raised by quite a number of men as they pointed out how uncomfortable they were without codified tenure papers. Women do not have the independent right to use of the water gardens,[5] and this affects how they can manage and even plan the crops to grow, as male influence predominates. I observed this myself at the gardens: as we watered the vegetables, men would constantly visit and give suggestions about management, the vegetables to be grown, and how the water gardens should be maintained. In their quest to acquire the right to independent use of the water gardens, the women would adopt the strategy of appearing to be listening but would decide as a group to deviate from the rules laid down by the men. Deviation from the expected norm of accepting male advice that is deeply rooted in rural Zimbabwean societies became an important survival and coping strategy for the women trying to control the water gardens. The water gardens are dealt with in more detail below.

At Merrivale, some of the women indicated that they now had their own fields, established through trust and based on the number of years they had been married to their husbands. In addition to the number of years a woman had been married, her interactions with the community were another factor in this trust. Marriage offered established trust, which could not be easily eroded, and women felt it was important to build that trust and earn it from their husbands. On the basis of conversations that I had with the women, women's limitation in owning land is tied to a myriad of factors, including cultural notions that entail a married woman working on her husband's land and not having her own separate fields until a number of years have passed. The assessment and respect of traditional authorities were also key trust-building features for

4 Offer letter to Mrs Ziracha, Tavaka Village, June 2009.

5 These are also known as hand-irrigated gardens, where women plant mostly vegetables and crops such as maize; they are small portions of land near homesteads or sources of water such as dams, wells, and rivers.

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the women. Thus, the notion of security based on offer letters and legal courts was less important to the women, as the state's offer letters are not crucial with regard to settlement in the community; what is important is physical presence on the land. Hence, the lack of official documents does not affect their daily lives.

The land they referred to as theirs constitutes the areas where they plant women's crops, which are traditionally bambara nuts, groundnuts, and vegetables from the water gardens. These are regarded as women's crops because they are considered more labour intensive and requiring patience–factors seen as better provided by women. The crops are also considered as being of low market value and as not fetching a lot of money compared to cash crops, which are male dominated. This gendered specialisation has become traditionally accepted in households but with some reservations from most men. Men argue that if women invested more time in cotton and maize rather than bambara nuts and groundnuts, they would be more productive.

Narrative 6.1: Woman manoeuvres to access land

[Mrs Chimbari has managed to negotiate with her husband and acquired three fields that she individually manages and on which she grows crops to sell in South Africa. The negotiations took some time.] *As my husband is the village head, I had to start from a social distance, as you know that the bedroom is the place to discuss such issues. The land still belongs to my husband, though it would be good for me to have ownership too, especially if he dies. I am afraid of being chased away and losing everything during asset distribution, yet I have been putting all my effort into this plot. As he goes to Masvingo for constitutional issues, I want to coax him to talk about this as I want it to be sorted out.*

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2009.

The need to have individual income emerged as another factor that made the women realise the importance of accessing and controlling land. It should be noted that these farmers had a life in the communal areas where they had lived and had been married. The wives had now established entrenched relationships with the husbands and the clan and so could now safely ask for land. Most of these women had been married for more than five years and had resided with their husband's families before coming to settle at Merrivale. I realised that marriages have a deeper and symbolic meaning in women's accessing resources than we might think. After some years of marriage, the husband would assign some fields to the wife. Despite this, there was an

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element of tenure insecurity as the wives felt that they would lose the land in the event of their husband's death. The extract in Narrative 6.1 demonstrates that "there is a conjunction between place and the reproduction of cultural practices that are important inputs and outputs of livelihood strategies" (Bebbington 1999:2034).

Marriage enabled the women to acquire land and have access to their own fields after a certain period. The *tsewu*[6] is the name given to a field that a man gives his wife after she has lived for a certain period within the husband's family and borne him at least two children (although this number can vary). This tradition has existed in the Karanga and Shangaan cultures for years, long predating the FTLRP.

"When I grew up my mother had this tsewu, *so it is an important aspect that still helps women claim land from their husbands."* The Shona mythology of agriculture should be understood in terms of women being able to survive as agriculturalists because they had a portion of their own individual land where they could grow crops and vegetables that fed the household all year round (Bourdillon 1987). My findings corroborate those of Ikdahl et al. (2005:42) from a field study in Tanzania in which they point out that "the women were satisfied with the small fields their husbands demarcated for them on their homesteads because they argued that they had their own source of land which they would manage on their own."

Jeater (2007) and Schmidt (1992) have observed that differences exist in the Karanga and Shangaan cultures in terms of language, rituals, and marriage systems. In terms of their marriage, the women have differing levels of power and influence in the household; for example, during one of my field visits I went to a Shangaan home, and the wife greeted me and continued talking to me while the husband cooked and served me, something which is seen as totally against culture and disrespectful to one's husband in the Karanga clan. Most of the cultural practices of the Shangaan have been influenced by Karanga traditions due to intermarriages and sharing habitats, such that they are now more or less a mixed community adhering to Karanga beliefs mixed with their own cultural system.

However, with the colonial system of governance and the reframing of women's rights to land, women lost this right to land in most cases. Because of the imposed colonial norms of proper and respectable marriages, there have been constant reinterpretations of culture such that men have often been able to modify traditional cultural norms. The concept of the *tsewu* field is

6 The issue of *tsewu* was critically explained to me by Mrs Elisah Chauke, the Assistant District Administrator of Mwenezi.

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problematic because it is tied to the reproductive status of the wife in the Karanga tradition but not as much in Shangaan culture.[7] In the Shangaan tradition, if a woman is not married she may acquire the *tsewu* from her parents so that she can help look after ageing parents and the extended family. In some Shona customs, it is only upon the birth of the first child that a woman is given her own field. This requirement makes it rather difficult for a woman to assert any rights to land, as cultural considerations have to be appreciated in African societies. Deviating from the norm and being viewed as acquisitive are frowned upon.

At Merrivale, most of the women stated that granting of a field still happens, and sometimes coincides with the birth of the second child when they are given their own hut (*kupihwa imba yerumuro kubva mavamwene*); when a married woman in a village gives birth to a boy child, the woman is given her own field in recognition of her capacity to reproduce the clan name by the birth of the boy child. I interacted with polygynous households and, from my discussions of their marriages, I found the *tsewu* field was given to every wife after giving birth to children, but this event depended on the availability of land. Shortage of land influenced why the families had moved from the communal areas of Chimbudzi, Gold Star, Lundi, and Gudo and settled at Merrivale; there was more land to accommodate these cultural practices. Peters (2010), in a study of a matrilineal society, examined how daughters had the right to land but sons had to source and acquire usufruct rights to land through marriage, negotiation, and bargaining. Seur (1992) and Jackson (2003) have observed that in matrilineal societies, over time, men's interests in the conjugal unit have come into conflict with those of the matri-kin group because, in order to command their allegiance as sons, they require reassurance of their inheritance rights in the parental property. The conflicts have been exacerbated by the scarcity of land in these societies, such that negotiations to resolve the conflicts had to include both men and women as in patrilineal societies. I argue that gender relations are not rigidly set in any society, but rather they are an outcome of negotiations and bargaining in a context of a particular cultural and political history.

This contention is supported by Mushunje (2001), who notes that the fact that a woman was allocated a piece of land after she had given birth to her first or second child implies that women who were unfortunate enough to be childless were never considered to be worthy of a piece of land and were thus never allocated any. The vegetable garden was probably given to women as a piece of

7 Interview with Assistant District Administrator for Mwenezi, Ms E. Chauke, Mwenezi Rural District Council Offices, February 2010.

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land that was meant to provide for the immediate consumption needs of the family. The whole system smacks of a manipulative patriarchal system that gave women half measures in terms of "rights" that possibly could be revoked should the husband so wish. Clearly, there was no protection of women's rights, and this condition has been perpetuated in current policies and practices. My results are also reflective of Englert and Daley's (2008) research in East Africa, where they note that women are not powerless actors but find creative means to claim and ensure that their rights to land are somehow recognised by their communities.

It is therefore quite clear that, even in traditional societies, women were short-changed insofar as rights to land were concerned, and this treatment has been perpetuated in modern society. However, although the system of allocating a *tsewu* to women was shaped by all these contradictions, most men stated that they would abide by the norm because they feared that not to do so would have a bad effect on their children as the mother's wrath upon her death would affect their marriages or their lives. *"I have given my wife the field, according to custom because I do not want this to form part of the basis of an avenging spirit that will affect my children and family, I have to respect it since it has always been a custom, that even my father abided by."* [8] This meant that the husband had to abide by the cultural norm of giving the wife her own field lest he be faced with countervailing cultural beliefs that could result in misfortunes such as poor harvests or, if the wife died without the *tsewu* field, a failed marriage for a daughter.

It is forcefully argued that the rights approach assumes a particular individualistic and liberal stance that does not appreciate the social and cultural norms of African societies–hence the failure of the neoliberal agenda in resolving African land conflict (O'Laughlin 2009). I have demonstrated that gaining access to land and the right to use land may not happen through such individualistic routes, but through more collective negotiation and bargaining (within lineages, families, marriages). These gender relations are highly skewed and power-laden, but it has often been overlooked that the involved people understand and know how to manage the cultural complexities. From my findings, it emerged that women can have remarkable bargaining power in certain domains (kitchens, gardens, some crops, and certain trade and market routes). Individual liberal-rights approaches underscored by the language of rights, World Bank policies, and simple statistics of ownership by an individual do not necessarily capture lived realities.

8 Interview, G.C.M, Tavaka Village, July 2009.

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It should be observed that "after all, the conjugal unit remains an important site of negotiation of access to land and labour even in situations where it is embedded in more extensive kinship and residential units" (Tsikata 2009:14). Questions of marital residence practices, the physical and social demands of child-bearing and child-rearing, the hetero-normativity, pro-natalism, and male-child preference of many African societies have ramifications beyond personal freedoms and status. These are important in the structuring of men's and women's access to and control over land. Marriage is associated with reaching social maturity, and access to land is associated with social maturity, which is equated with marriage. Elmhirst (2011) concurs with my observations, in her Indonesian study. She concludes that marriage formed the basis of accessing forest resources, and the conjugal unit had an important bearing on the women who had a right to use the land and forest resources.

Land in some instances was also acquired through the concept of the economy of affection,[9] particularly if one was related to the village head or some influential person like a war veteran. One per cent of the Tavaka women were able to acquire land for their families using this approach; but the problem was that they did not have offer letters as the plots had been given to them after the land reform process in 2003. This outcome was facilitated by Article 5 of the Global Political Agreement, which states that those who were disadvantaged in the land-distribution exercise, particularly women and members of other political parties, could still have access to land. These people relied on the village head for support to stay and farm their land. Although they stayed with their families, they had to make sure that they always maintained good relations with the village head and never crossed his/her path for fear that their land would be repossessed.

Box 6.1 Woman's Access to Land through Kinship and Political Affiliation

Mary is related to MaZebra, her father's younger brother: a war veteran and a ZANU PF councillor in the area. They have eight hectares of farming and grazing land. Their portion of grazing land is bigger because MaZebra gave them the right to have extra hectares so that the husband could harvest trees in the plots for his wooden carvings. The plot is in her name since she shares the same surname as MaZebra.

9 This reflects the importance of family and village ties in resource distribution in Africa. This is also known as the politics of villagisation in which resources are distributed, with the family members and relatives of the distributor benefitting first before other villagers who are not relatives of the distributor.

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The husband at first was not happy about this but later he realised that *musha murume, ini ndakazviitira kuti tiwane pekugara bedzi. Dzimba nemombe ndezvavo*. (The man is the head of the household. I had to get the plot of land from my uncle so that we could have a place to stay. The huts and the cattle are his.)

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2009.

In another case (Box 6.1), a married woman relative of MaZebra, (the councillor of Ward 13, strategist, and influential ZANU-PF member) acquired land using kinship and ZANU-PF party connections. Those whose relatives were known to be ZANU-PF activists were given land, and those who were known to be loyal to the MDC were not included in the resettlement process. *"This was because ZANU-PF is the custodian of the land through the President."*[10] The woman felt that land was synonymous with belonging to ZANU-PF and that the President was the epitome and embodiment of land ownership in Zimbabwe. I understood this as reflecting the politics of exclusion and inclusion in women's access to land. The women who were considered to have defected to MDC-Tsvangirai or their husbands were always asked to leave the village and move to MDC-Tsvangirai rural areas. The fact that Mr Clopas Machaya, the incumbent village head when I started my field research, was rumoured to have defected to the MDC-Tsnagirai led to him being physically attacked by the other villagers (see Chapter 5). His wives were constantly warned to leave their fields and tell their husband to acquire land in MDC-Tsvangirai rural areas. The former village head was now viewed as *mutengesi* (a sell-out) and was chased out of the village for wanting to compromise the land reform process. It has been noted that "indeed, the trajectory of land reform may reflect little more than a collapsing state's scramble to maintain hegemony through strategic identification of certain groups as included among those entitled to land" (Goebel 2005a:146). Whites and other opposition party members have clearly become among the excluded. Interestingly, the woman in the case in Box 6.1 had to adhere to the cultural pressures and norms that, although the land was registered in her name on the offer letter, made her declare that her husband had sole responsibility for what crops to grow and the management of the plot. As she did not want disputes with her husband, she had to abide by this norm.

10 Interview with P.S.W., Tavaka Village, Merrivale, June 2009.

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Networks and Access to Land at Tavaka Village

Social relationships relevant to land, such as group associations and networks, are an important conduit for realising women's land rights. Social networks comprise collectives aware of their common interests and may include loose networks, patron–client ties, kinship, friendship, religious groups, and gender and age groupings. "Through these social ties individuals and groups have laid legitimate claim to land for productive use, whether cultivation or grazing, whether seasonal or non-seasonal, whether for fruit trees on individual land or for water on state land" (Meinzen-Dick and Mwangi 2008:37). These rights may be derived from localised relationships and longstanding practices and norms, or they may be allocated through projects, programmes, or state authority. Social capital[11] emerged as a prime factor enabling women to acquire land at Merrivale in the form of networks based on kith and kin, church, or women's clubs, where women would encourage one another to try to access land from the various institutions dealing with land reform. Social networks created by the women led to the building up of livelihood networks that led to land acquisition in the village.

The data in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 come from focus group discussions. The information provided by the women about the networks considered important in accessing land at Merrivale was distilled into the circles in Figure 6.1. Figure 6.2 characterises the corresponding views of the men. The circle size represents the importance of the network in descending order from greatest to least importance. Networks are discussed in relation to wider issues below.

There were some variations in perceptions between the group of men and the group of women. Both groups accorded most weight to the war veterans because they were the ones who started sensitising people to occupy the land. War veterans are now depicted as a social movement that arose to champion the rights of the poor in the rural areas, similar to their role during the liberation struggle (Moyo 2007b). "War veteran" refers to a person who joined the struggle in 1962 or before and underwent military training (Sadomba 2008). I treat this group as a semi-formal structure because they accord themselves a status that they think is useful in maintaining a quasi-official position given the fluid nature of governance in Zimbabwe, even though this posture is controversial. Sadomba (2008:265), himself a war veteran, argues that war veterans

11 Social capital refers to standardised networks or networks of variation or flux that people enter into to regulate their livelihoods. Standardised networks for example are burial societies, which have constitutions, and networks of variation or flux are those loosely created just for a specific time and continuously change. People can negotiate in networks of variation and they do not have formal rules (Nemarundwe 2003).

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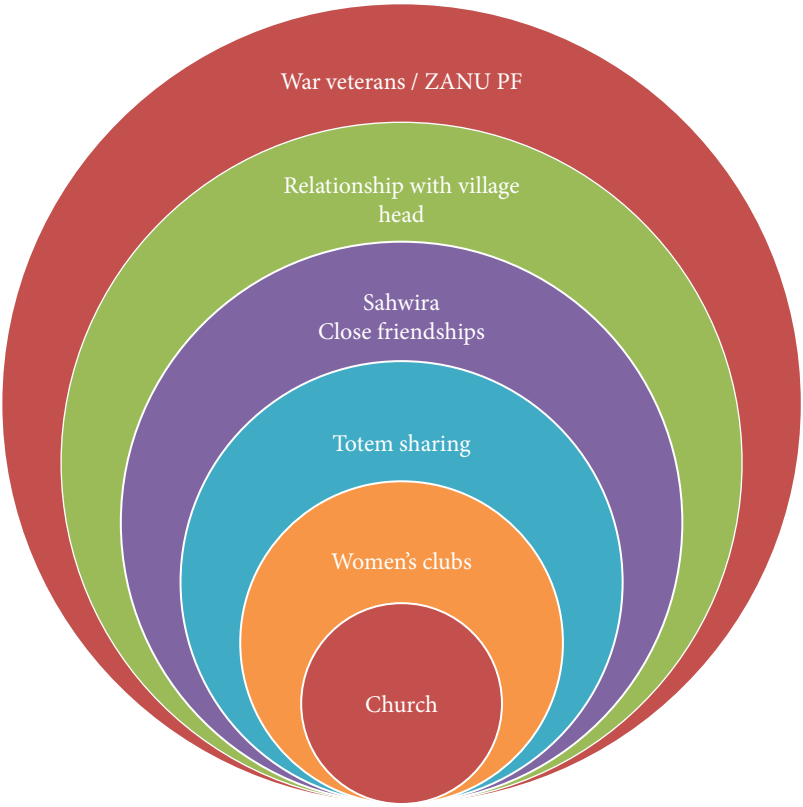

FIGURE 6.1 *Networks perceived by women as important in women's accessing land*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK, AUGUST 2009.

are a governing body and hence a formal structure as they form the central pillar of governance in the country.

Sahwira (close friendship) was rated equally by men and women as the third most important factor for women's accessing land; the second most important factor in the women's view was the relationship with the village head, but totem-sharing[12] was second in the men's view.

Relationships with the village head had different connotations; men felt that they were important but not as important as women thought they were. One man said in a focus group discussion, *"Relations with the village head are not necessary...after all he was imposed on us by you people from*

12 A totem equates with a specific animal in Shona culture. Every person is given a totem; this is done to respect family relations (*ukama*) and avoid intermarriages among people of the same totem.

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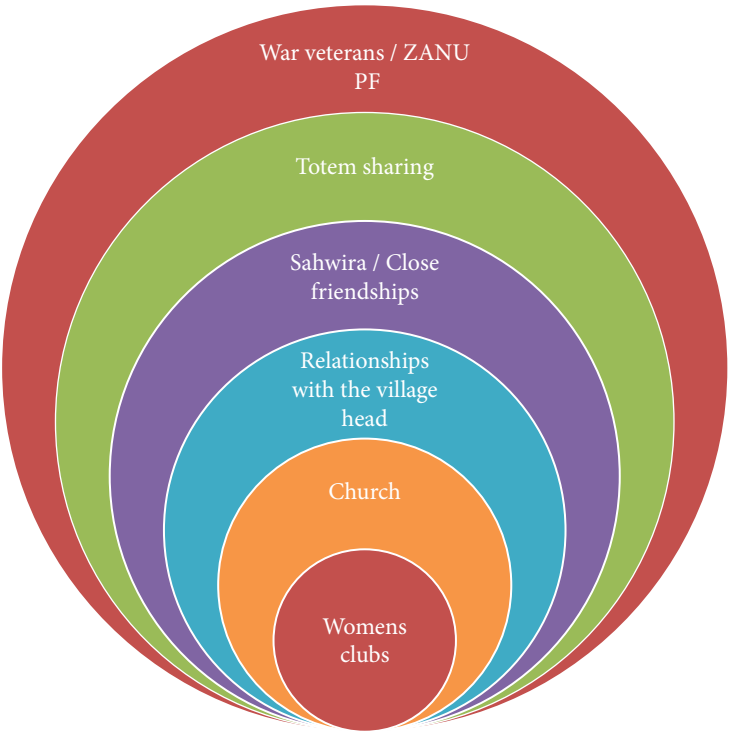

FIGURE 6.2 *Networks perceived by men as important in women's accessing land*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK, AUGUST 2009.

Chimbudzi."[13] Some villagers felt that social networks and the relations that developed were not fair and led to corrupt land allocation practices in the village; these practices, in turn, led to inequities in land accessibility for those who were not connected to the village head or the powerful people.

Kith and Kin

At Tavaka Village, some of the women indicated that they were growing crops on land that belonged to their parents or relatives. It should be noted that multiple ownership of plots by inhabitants is a common feature in this area. Some farmers acquired plots at Merrivale and gave them to their children to farm while they stayed at either Sonop or Simbamukaka, two farms that share borders with Merrivale. The women who farmed their relatives' plots had some difficulties because of the complicated tenure arrangements that could only be

13 Author's fieldwork, October 2009.

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understood by an insider. I was told that, if a woman grew crops on a relative's plot, the plotholder would sometimes demand a share of the produce and would have some of the income. There was no tenure security as the plotholder would sometimes ask the tenant to leave the plot the next farming season. A close relative from another farm or the communal areas would then be brought to stay on the plot, and would give the plotholder a share in the produce. I argue that the point here was to maintain the custom encouraged in the communal areas of close kith-and-kin settlement, *garisanai vematongo.* This practice reflects the belief that closely related people, who share the same totem, should stay together as a family in the same village to provide support through life's events: celebrating births, mourning deaths and assisting in funerals, and conducting farming activities together. Living in close proximity enables easier cooperation in solving problems together and easier sharing of resources or farming implements.

In most communal areas in Zimbabwe, people have settled based on the concept of *bhuku*, where those sharing the same surname stay as a community. In some new resettlement areas, particularly in A1 schemes, the farmers have also settled using these settlement patterns and often use the name of their village head as the name of the village. Women relatives who used the land found this arrangement easier as they could negotiate for continued use of the land without anyone bothering them about payment or the need to vacate the land. Women's use of land in this way was facilitated because, in order to avoid the parents or relatives being detected for multiple farm ownership, they would sometimes allow their daughters to settle on the land on another farm as it raised less suspicion. One woman said to me, *"It is better this way because my parents will not chase me and my family from here."*[14]

Thirty per cent of the women indicated that they employ young men from around the communal areas and plant their crops on their parents' farms, since it was easy to negotiate with one's own family for farming land. One woman said in an interview, "*If you share the same totem, you will not go wrong; that person has to be your father*." At Merrivale, the most common totems are fish, elephant, rat, zebra, and lion. For instance, the men who belong to the fish (*hove*) are addressed as *muzikani* or *save* and the women as *dziva* or *sambiri*. People belonging to the fish totem are not supposed to eat fish as doing so leads to loss of teeth or sickness. Information on totems and the resultant effects of not adhering to them are based on my own cultural knowledge and my personal communication with the people at Merrivale Farm.

14 Interview with Mai Eddy, Tavaka Village, May 2009.

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Renting or Borrowing Land

Other women were renting or borrowing plots of land to farm, especially from those households where husbands were living and working in South Africa. One woman said to me, "*It is easier to negotiate with the women alone as they want the South African rand, so we plant our crops on their land. When the men are back from South Africa during Christmas, we pretend we are working on the land to get paid.*"[15] Renting a field from people of the same kith and kin was also found easier in terms of renting arrangements as negotiations were marked by a sense of solidarity based on blood ties. The close relationship would normally lead to lower charges than renting from someone with whom there are no ancestral ties. The cost of renting was between R300 to R500 per month, depending on the relationship with the owner of the plot. One lady said to me, *"It is the rand which works here and not the American dollar, so you have to have it."*[16] I found the prices on the locally created land markets a bit high because in these rural communities access to income for most people is still problematic since dollarisation in Zimbabwe. Land was rented particularly by the women traders who went to South Africa, because they wanted to have a continuous supply of bambara nuts and groundnuts that would last them the whole year to sell in South Africa and tide them over until the next farming season. For those households that were not mobile, the women rented the plots to grow bambara nuts to sell locally at Ngundu or Rutenga. In interviews with non-mobile women, it emerged that they would not pay their rent with the South African rand or American dollars but with maize or cotton, depending on the size of the plot they had rented or borrowed. The rental amount was decided by the landowner, and renters were free to take it or leave it, and, as Kinsey (2005:148) stated in his study, over 60 per cent of "A1" settlers regarded land rental as a matter "for the plotholder alone to decide."

It emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions that the contractual obligations were verbal; they were not written down and the plotholders used this as justification to change agreed terms. For instance, they would demand payment in the form of crops, whereas the initial contractual arrangements were based on cash payments. This suggested that plotholders felt that "rights to farm land in resettlement areas are both individual and non-transitory in nature" (Matondi 2012:10). Further evidence for such a socially embedded attitude to land as individual property and a marketable commodity is provided by Zimbabwe press reports of fast-track allocations in

15 Interview with Mai Enock, Tavaka Village, June 2009.

16 Informal discussion with Mai Chingo, July 2009.

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Matabeleland South being rented out at Z$15 to 20 million per month for grazing herds of cattle. In terms of current financial transactions, rentals were between US$10 to US$40 a month. The active land market beginning to develop in Tavaka Village was enabling women to achieve access to a portion of land.

Twenty-five per cent of women in my study said that they were renting land from some of the new farmers who were no longer interested in the resettlement areas and had gone back to their original homes in the communal lands in Mwenezi District.

War Veterans and Access to Land

Some women had acquired land through kinship relations with the war veterans in the area. The women war veterans had used their ties to access the land, and so they had some form of quasi-control over the land. I argue that it is only quasi-control because they only had offer letters and had no formal title to the land, such as a permit or title deed. Local perceptions elsewhere may differ from mime. If the war veterans are perceived as able to ward off any attempted seizure of the land they farm, that, to them, constitutes control. Legality and the realities on the ground may differ and hence access to and control over land by women means in practice the capacity to use the land without inhibitions or the community's knowing that it is a woman's land. However, such control is difficult for women to attain in their own right, particularly without negotiated relationships with men, especially their husbands.

In some cases, women gained access to land through land invasions, as these subverted formal forms of patriarchal traditional or administrative authority (Scoones et al. 2010, Sadomba 2008, Moyo 2011). Invasions provided opportunities to some women, often widows, divorcees, and those ostracised from their communal area communities, as they were able to join the invasions and gain access to land (usually in A1 villagised schemes). Scoones et al. (2010) state that the women were valued in the invasion process and in the base camps as independent and able to help with a range of gendered domestic tasks; they did not have important positions like base commanders, but at times some assumed posts of secretaries and treasurers. For them, it was liberation and an escape from other settings where, as women, they would not gain access to such rights. This explains in part the higher number of women with access to land through offer letters in their own right than in communal areas, where traditional patriarchal lineage authorities allocate land, or in the old resettlements where a bureaucratic authority that is equally patriarchal in many ways allocates land. The quotas for women in some Seven Member Committees were established

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by the war veterans as the modus operandi for the FTLRP. These committees coordinated the occupations in different provinces and have since been maintained after the FTLRP. The Seven Member Committees earlier on also helped women manoeuvre access. This approach may have changed in the decade since, but it was an important feature of fast-track at the time.

Self-Allocation of Land

Land was accessed by women through self-allocation of fields of those who had retreated to the communal areas. Some farmers were leaving or had left; as discussed earlier, there was a myriad of reasons for their departure. Self-allocation reflected women's use of their capabilities[17] to control natural resources in their own environment.

Inheritance of Land

At Tavaka Village, there are only five independent female plotholders among the 40 plotholders; two of them are war veterans and another two inherited the land because their husbands and mothers-in-law had died. From the discussions that I had with the men and women about inheritance matters, I found two scenarios depending on how inheritance laws are applied. The death of a young or middle-aged male farm-owner automatically meant that land had to be transferred to the surviving spouse, but usually under the guidance of a male relative. However, in the Karanga tradition, the wife does not assume total control of the land as the husband has brothers and male children who stand to inherit. The wife would remain on the plot but, if there were no male children or the children were still young, decisions could still be made by the brothers even if they were in far-away communal areas.

However, elderly widowed women had full control of the land and livestock. They made decisions regarding the farming activities on their own. In such cases, elderly women have full rights to land just like men as they are considered mature. One elderly woman's husband died after they had settled at Merrivale in 2006. The plot became hers since her older children had their own independent plots at Merrivale as well. She pointed out to me, *"When my husband died some of the relatives wanted to come and stay on this new plot, but my sons protested against the decision and that is how I survived the inheritance family wars."*[18] Inheritance issues in some parts of Zimbabwe are very

17 Martha Nussbaum (2000) refers to the potentialities that one develops inwardly and manifests outwardly after some time to show independence and self-actualisation.

18 Interview with Mrs Moyo, Tavaka Village, June 2009.

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problematic as they are associated with property grabbing; it is only in the event of one having relatives that understand the changing nature of society and the dynamism of culture that one can maintain one's husband's property in the event of his death. This is in line with Izumi's (2004) research in Southern and Eastern African countries in which she noted that property grabbing after the death of a spouse was still freely practiced in most of the countries and there was need for strong legal and social sensitisation of both urban and rural communities about the problems of this culture. This finding is also confirmed by Makura-Paradza's (2010) study in Goromonzi District in Zimbabwe, where she found that women who lost their land and property to their husbands' relatives were being helped by the Zimbabwe and Orphans Widows Trust to reclaim their land and property in the courts. The Trust helped them with court procedures and organised legal advice for them. The women who lost their property were from both rural and urban areas, and their actions demonstrated a level of awareness on how to deal with land and property grabbing when their spouses died (Makura-Paradza 2010).

Another dimension of inheritance that emerged in Tavaka Village was that of a daughter-in-law inheriting her mother-in-law's fields and homestead. Mother-in-law had died and so she was made the custodian of the land since the husband had a full time job and worked as a teacher at a nearby school. She had overall responsibility for running the farm but with instructions from the husband. *"The decision for me to continue staying here and practice farming was made by my mother-in-law's relatives, and I could not dispute it as the word was from the deceased."*[19] Female inheritance in this case was not contested by the relatives as the son of the deceased woman was working as a teacher and so the wife was asked to take over the land because she had participated in the land occupations with her mother-in-law and father-in-law. This case was peculiar because most of the relatives of this particular family had remained in the communal area and had better lives, so they were not interested in land in Tavaka Village. Inheritance manifests itself not only in a woman's acquiring her husband's property but also in relationships that result from marriage and create life bonds. Hence, inheritance has formidable dynamics among the Shona in Zimbabwe and is remade and tailored to suit the particular circumstances of those who want it to be effective.

19 Interview with J.M., Tavaka Village, September 2009. In Shona society, when a woman marries into a family she cannot dispute any decisions that are made, especially with reference to matters concerning the dead. This is because the dead are respected and whatever is said about their land or any other property is respected.

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Return to Custom

Elderly women accessed land at Merrivale. The elderly women used direct relations with male children so that they could settle on their plots; in Shona society, it is the role of the male children to be custodians of their mother and father in old age. This relationship is demonstrated by the information in Box 6.2, drawn from a case history, in which an elderly women's access to land is tied to a male relationship. Her persistence means that she is confident that she is progressing as a farmer, has shelter, and is not affected by her lack of her own homestead and formal title to the land. In this case, the elderly woman's son decided to give her a home and farming space. The direct relationship with her son has enabled her to occupy land on the new farms. It was through friends and relatives that she learnt of her husband's second marriage. The problem with this type of settlement is that she does not have *locus standi* over the land as it belongs to her son and, in the event of any mishap, she could find herself landless and destitute.

Box 6.2 Elderly Female Farmers Access Land

Mbuya Tavah is aged 60 and resides at Tavaka Village with her second-born son. The first son is in Harare, and her daughter who was married in Bocha passed away. She was married to Tavah, who also resides at Tavaka Village but on his own plot of land. They are originally from Bopi village in Mwenezi Communal area, in Neshuro. Her husband took another young wife when he came to look for a plot of land during *jambanja*; it was only through rumour and relatives that she first learnt of this. When she came to Merrivale, she found out that it was true, but the son never told her and so she tried to come and stay with the husband but it did not work. She stays with her son and daughter-in-law and his two children and his grandson Tatenda, whose father is in Harare. She does not have her own land, and on her son's plot she has been given one hectare to plant her own crops; she has planted cotton. She plants other crops like maize, sunflower, bambara nuts, and groundnuts on her daughter-in-law's portion of land. She also helps his son in his fields and with harvesting. She has managed to get 15 bales of cotton this year, and the only problem is that the private companies buying from them are not paying well. The good thing is that the buyers now come to the homestead to collect the bales. "*It is now better because we can access the money on our own; before, husbands would disappear with the money and we would not even have a share of it*." She got 15 bags of maize and she can survive on them: "*I have enough maize for sadza and I will not face hunger until the next farming season*." She got 16 bags of bambara nuts and four bags of groundnuts.

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2009.

Mbuya Tavah's story demonstrates that she is comfortable with the arrangement and has a better livelihood than she had before moving to Merrivale. It seems

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that she is not bothered by the fact that she does not have any formal title in her own name, suggesting that the elderly view land as a resource to be managed by men; hence, I argue that, in the new resettlement areas, access to land by elderly women is still governed by the communitarian approach to land ownership common in African societies. The communitarian approach emphasises the importance of group rights and maintaining community values and recognises individual access to land or other natural resources mainly for men and not women. These findings demonstrate that these women had the capability to be what they wanted to be and do what they wanted to do by accessing land and independently planting the crops they wanted and using the income from the fields without interference from anyone. These women created financial and social autonomy in agriculture; the results may seem small in magnitude, but they do exist and deserve to be recognised.

My findings are in consonance with those of Moyo (2011), who concluded that fast-track led to ordinary women increasingly controlling land, despite this not being recognised and appreciated. I challenge Matondi (2012), who posits that it was only women from particular groups, such as war veterans and those with political connections, who received access to land, and that it is the powerful women who make up the majority of recipients. Scoones et al. (2010) and Moyo (2011) argue, however, that it was mostly ordinary women who accessed land and not so much the politically connected, thus countering the political elitism of women's access to land, at least in Masvingo. Accounts of land acquisition through bargaining and the use of negotiations have been little researched and, if such studies were done, the figures could actually increase. Whitehead and Tsikata (2003) are of the view that a re-examination of studies on land use by women in Sub-Saharan Africa can lead one to conclude that a return to custom might be useful in solving women's land problems.

Reasons to Relinquish Fast-track Land

The out-migration of some farmers back to their original homes reflects the fact that accessing land provided no security of tenure because the offer letters were not recognised as proof of legal ownership. Hence, many felt insecure on the new plots. One person stated that people felt disconnected from the resettlement lands and so preferred to return to their home villages; this disconnect could refer either to a lack of tenure security or a lack of connection with their ancestral spirits. Other sentiments expressed in focus group discussions included: *"Some people feel that they do not own the land as we do not have any form of real proof except these offer letters, which others do not have. They fear that the owners might come and repossess the land."* [20]

20 Focus group session, Chatagwi School, Merrivale, March 2010.

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Out-migration was influenced by both push-and-pull factors. Push factors included the lack of a sense of ownership of the land, lack of a sense of community in the new resettlement areas, spiritual reasons (like feelings of inadequacy after abandoning the graves of relatives in the communal areas), and difficulties in land-use planning; the pull factors comprised CARE International's food handouts to people outside the resettlement area, a bad agricultural year in 2008, and Red Cross International's donations of cattle to disadvantaged households managed by orphans, the elderly and women.

Retreat to the communal areas was seen as a viable option because the traditional authorities know who has rights to which portion of land. The people felt that it was much better to be in their former homes where they really had a right to the land as they had farmed on it for most of their lives, as opposed to the new spaces where they were not sure whether they were the legal owners of the land because of the contestations over FTLR processes.

Women, Institutions and Formalisation of Land

With the institutions discussed earlier regulating women's entrée to land, women could access land through various means, despite having no formal title, as land ownership was tied to the male-dominated institutions. Rural institutions, especially traditional leadership systems, need some kind of "cautious modernisation" in line with changing global management trends (Mukamuri 2009:86). There is need for administrative codification of all the institutions that regulate women's access to land and other natural resources. However, in the eyes of the women, they had tenure security by virtue of being physically present on the land and everyone in the village knowing that a piece of land situated in a certain place belonged to a certain woman. During a transect walk with some of the women to identify their fields, they pointed out to me that *"it is not about having the offer letter...what is important is having the land in your hand and everyone knowing it. My land belongs to me through my hands working it and my feet helping the hands. I equate title with my skin colour, the feet helping the hands till the land."* This statement reflects the fact that the women understand formal title to land as physical presence on the land and that everyone knows one another's field. Title to land was also associated with skin colour; being black made the woman feel that they had an automatic right to the land. The discourse emerging from the statement challenges de Soto's (2000) assertions that the poor should have their land registered to have formal title, as formalisation processes in Tavaka Village would not have conferred any benefits on the title-holders.

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The women in Tavaka Village were comfortable with informal title to land because their presence on the land that constituted formalisation. What should be noted is that it is not the increase in women's access to land that matters but the process by which the land is acquired that has a bearing on gender relations in the community. Titling is not about registration; it is about knowing, working, and appreciating the land in a community where this is validated, according to these women. Debates on tenure security have taken different forms in Zimbabwe with some arguing for freehold (Moyo 2009, Ikdahl et al. 2005) and others arguing for middle-of-the-road approaches that take cognisance of formal and informal approaches (Scoones et al. 2010, Matondi 2012). It should be noted that "if tenure rights are to work for the communities, there is need for socially legitimate occupation and use rights, as they are currently held and practiced, the point of departure being their recognition in law and for the design of institutional frameworks for mediating competing claims and administering land" (Cousins 2009:90). Formalisation processes will not work for women in Africa where there are problems of divergent political views, political polarisation, accumulation, class interests, and gender disparities that still need to be addressed, as the nation-state in Africa is still in the process of reshaping and redefining itself (O'Laughlin 2007). Figure 6.3 depicts the institutions affecting women's access to land in my study area.

Returning Home–Farmers and Former Communal Homes

It is argued that people were abandoning their new plots and retreating back to their original homes for reasons ranging from a lack of social appreciation of the new environment to failure to cope with the new farming activities that demanded most of their time (Matondi 2005, 2012, Murisa 2009). The responses in Narrative 6.2, given during a focus group session, explain why the new farmers retreated to their former communal homes in the different parts of Mwenezi.

Narrative 6.2: Reasons for leaving the new resettlement plots

Some have gone back to their original homes because they feel disconnected; so they feel it is better to go and live in villages where they are connected, have their families and friends. Muno muresettlement munoda vanofa naro gejo. Zvekufananidza nguo nedza Tarubva unoona moto, ukadzokera kwa Gudo uko. (*In these resettlement areas, you have to be geared toward good farming. If you came here on the pretext of following others,*

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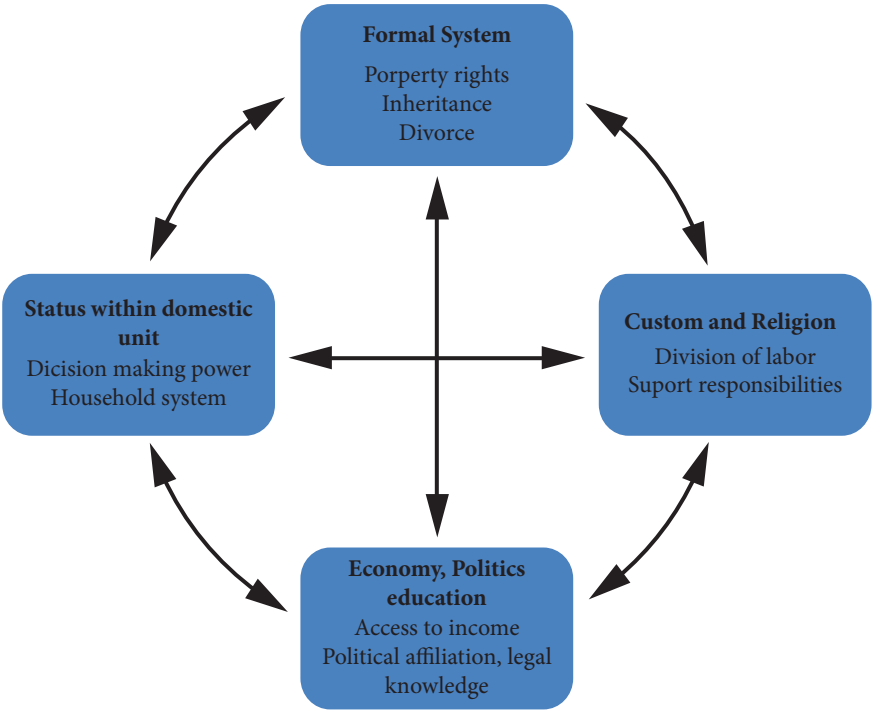

FIGURE 6.3 *Institutions affecting women's access to land at Tavaka Village*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK, 2010.

you will force yourself to retreat to Gudo communal area, your original home.)

Some people feel that they do not own the land as we do not have any form of real proof except these offer letters, which others do not have. They fear that the owners might come and repossess the land.

Some people are leaving because they constantly argue that they have deserted their dead relatives. This is a spiritual and moral obligation to honour the graves of the dead; especially graves of parents and children.

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2009.

As discussed earlier, the social organisation of Tavaka Village led some families to abandon their plots and retreat to their former homes. They were sometimes staying with people with whom they had no blood ties, and this affected them negatively, according to their own ideas, as they had been used to staying near relatives. I argue that return migration to the communal areas is based on the concept of *place utility*: the extent to which an individual is satisfied with a

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particular location. These preferences are based on the individual's mental maps and images. At Merrivale, there are people from different ethnic groups: Karanga, Ndebele, Shangaan and Manyika. Different groups felt some social distance between themselves and other plotholders. As a way of gaining land rights, some women would appropriate for themselves the fields of those who left, without any formalisation of the process with the responsible authorities.

In their study in Masvingo, Scoones et al. (2010:19) noted that "linkages with pre-settlement homes remain real for a significant proportion of the population." Some are in fact investing in their communal homes. Others intend to relocate on a permanent basis, but the costs involved in moving goods from the old homes to the new premises remain prohibitive, and many of them continue to maintain the two homes. In this context, it is evident that household attention in terms of investment and agriculture is spread over the two homes, diluting the impact of FTLR, as financial resources have to be shared between the communal home and the fast-track farm. At Merrivale, it was also evident that the new settlers were buying farming equipment for their old homes and continuing with farming activities by hiring labour from relatives that they would give the task of looking after their homes and carrying out farming activities. Some families had even left their own older children at their communal homes to take care of the school-going younger children; the schools near the communal homes are better and closer than the ones surrounding Merrivale. Reasons for retreating to communal areas—either temporarily or permanently—have to do with community and individual preferences, making it sometimes difficult for people to simply abandon the idea of moving back to the former communal home. Continuing cultural practices such as bringing a deceased person's spirit back into the family (*kurova makuva*) and attending funerals in both communal and new resettlement areas reflect strong cultural customs among the settlers and their former communities.

The notion of maintaining homesteads with wives and children in communal areas was repeatedly stressed. This has been referred to by Matondi and Mutopo (2012) as "split households," also a notable feature at Tavaka Village. Some men had wives in the communal areas, as polygyny was widespread among the settlers. They had to continue maintaining these homesteads and provide food and income for the families. Dual families also provided a defense to guard against losing both homes in case they were moved from the new land. It was argued that the senior wives (*vahosi*) did not want to move to the new resettlement areas as they felt that they had more honour and primacy in the first home, where they had been given their own kitchen house (*mapfihwa*).

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Communal homes had a particular influence during 2008, because people relied on food aid from there. *"Here, we were not given any food aid, so we would go to kumatongo* (*our original homes before we moved here*) *and acquire beans, maize meal, and cooking oil that* CARE *International gave to people, during the drought."* [21] It was mainly women who would travel to the communal areas to collect these food handouts from their relatives, their own homes, and friends, despite the fact that CARE International prohibited this and had vigorous selection criteria for food aid recipients. An official from CARE International pointed out to me that the organisation had a standing policy that food was not distributed in the fast-track resettlement areas of Zimbabwe.[22] The people, however, still found ways of collecting food from communal areas and bringing it into the new resettlement areas. Other authorities felt that the time was ripe to reconsider this policy stance, which was also applied by most international relief agencies in Zimbabwe.

Women's Niches in Village Community Gardens

Women and other poor groups are often excluded from formal natural resource management institutions, perhaps influenced by the "self-images of women and men" (Nemarundwe 2003:205). As a result, women have restricted access to key natural resources such as land. In such situations, women sometimes devise strategies (both intentionally and unintentionally) to ensure they gain access to key resources. The women in Tavaka Village participated in two different community gardens and had cleared the land on their own. *"The community garden projects were started in April* 2009 *and initially every woman had her own water garden at her home."*[23] Some of the women maintained their water gardens at home, but others had resolved to have the community one only in order to save time to engage in other activities at their plots. The two community gardens had been allocated to the women because they were able to convince the village head to allow them to clear fallow land and establish the gardens. This allocation signals the inherent importance of power that women as actors have and how group agency is important in women's initiatives in accessing land and achieving better livelihoods.

The women were allocated land at these community gardens and they could grow vegetables as the group agreed. The plots of land were registered by the

21 Focus group discussion, January 2010.

22 Interview CARE International Official, Programme Officer, Masvingo Office, April 2009.

23 Interview Mai Enock, Tavaka Village, September 2009.

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chairlady of both groups in the names of the women, thus permanently allocating the plots to them. Membership of the garden project was voluntary and based on the payment of five rand per person to contribute to the buying and transport of seedlings from Rutenga Business Centre. As there were two garden projects for the women, one met on Mondays and the other on Fridays so as to ensure that all members had time to water their vegetables, weed the vegetables, and make new ridges on the vegetable beds. The garden projects were called Batsiranai and Budiriro. Both used the bucket system of watering since the women had to draw water from Chatagwi dam near Tavaka Village. Some women would bring their scotch carts and ferry the water to their vegetable beds.

Membership in community gardening projects is predominantly female, and this has created an opportunity for women to take leadership positions that they are unlikely to attain in mixed male–female projects. This foundation can also be used as an entry point for building women's leadership capabilities that may later be broadened to other community arenas. The community gardens proved to be very important as they were a source of livelihoods for the women. They enabled them to have enough vegetables for domestic consumption and for sale locally and across the Zimbabwean border, generating income important for their household's survival.

Red Cross International provided support for the two garden projects. The Red Cross had even employed one of the women project members, Mrs Chauke, as the extension officer. Her employment was done as a capacity-building measure and part of Red Cross International's efforts to help the new farmers. It was also meant to encourage the women so that they could teach one another about horticulture and livestock farming. Ms Chauke had been trained in Masvingo and Harare on horticultural farming and small livestock-keeping. She was selected on the basis of being able to read and write. The Red Cross helped the women to organise a garden field-day in August 2009, and they gave prizes to the women who had the best crops.

Men that I interviewed from both gardens emphasised that they joined the community gardens as a way of improving their livelihoods and meeting dietary needs. They pointed out that they could grow their own vegetables and could water, and so they had no reason to buy vegetables from women. It also became clear that most men in the community were not interested in community gardens as they felt it was a woman's preserve, and so they would rather invest their time in their fields and livestock than in the gardens.

Batsiranai Garden Project

In April 2008, Batsiranai was the first community garden project started by women from Merrivale (Narrative 6.3).

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Narrative 6.3: Batsiranai Garden Project

We started this garden in May 2008. Seedlings were bought by members after contributing each R5. We also had help from the Red Cross until now who have given us rapeseed, sweet cabbage, onion, and carrot seedlings. There are 16 women and four men in the project. Each member has 15 beds to cultivate.

We allow members to sell vegetables on Tuesday and Friday when we open the garden, the other days we do not allow selling. We have water problems, and we have a thorn bush fence, which can be destroyed by thieves, and animals can eat our produce.

We do not use fertiliser on our crops but we allow members to use manure since the soil is still fertile. We sprayed R1 insecticide on the vegetables and we will start harvesting them on Friday after one week.

Women are helped to water the garden by their children, as they have to draw water from Chatagwi dam, which is 200m from the garden. The women carry the 20-litre buckets of water on their heads or they bring donkey- or ox-carts to ferry water from the dam and bring it into the garden.

Women as producers are working on the soil on their own. The committee for the garden comprises six women and one man.

Source: Interview with the secretary, Batsiranai Garden Project, September 2009.

The subscription fee was five South African rand per individual. Payment of the fee led to the subscriber permanently owning the plot portion, and she was registered as the plot-owner in a book kept by the secretary. Agarwal (1994) refers to this process in South Asia as obtaining "a field of one's own." The findings in Tavaka concur with Schroeder's findings in the Gambia, where women became landowners through the introduction of market gardening (Schroeder 1997). The project had a total of 76 women and six men. The one male committee member was the village head of Simbamukaka village, and some women said they were not happy with his inclusion in the project because he wanted to keep controlling their territory. Some men are used to extending their power boundaries even in places that are not under their domain, as evidenced by this village head. Women were emphatically singled out as the producers, and they were given first preference to join the project. Men were included later when the members were satisfied that the men were there just to farm and did not want to control the project.

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The rules of operation for Batsiranai and Budiriro were the same. Each individual member of the project had 15 beds of vegetables. The project operated on the basis of rules that had been put together in an unwritten constitution, which is in the process of being written. The main rules are:

- The garden gate shall be opened upon the arrival of all members; the gate opens at 12.00 noon, and each member should be there.
- The garden gate closes at 4pm, and all members shall leave the garden; no one is allowed to stay behind.
- Vegetables are sold on Mondays or Tuesdays (depending on the project) and Fridays, when group members are watering.
- Members are not allowed to sell vegetables on any other day besides the prescribed days, as the garden shall not be opened.
- If a member of the garden is sick, the children or husband are allowed to come and work in the garden.
- Batsiranai opened on Tuesdays and Fridays so that vegetables could be sold and watered.

The concept of livelihood, as locally understood, has responded to a changing social and economic environment by including sale of produce, but with the understanding that it is for basic survival purposes (Derman and Hellum 2007). Problems were raised about security at the garden, and the women pointed out that they had to use a pole-and-thorn fence and would like to have a proper fence because sometimes baboons strayed into the gardens and ate the produce. They also had problems carrying water from the dam to water the 15 beds (Photos 6.1 and 6.2).

Decision-making was a consultative process. When the idea of starting another garden project took shape, most of the women agreed that it was important to have other women engaged in a garden project, but they had to have their own site. Initially most women were said to be reluctant to agree to a new garden project as they felt that it would threaten their own markets, but eventually, after constant consultations and explanations, the women agreed to it. Decision-making in relation to local-level community projects is influenced by people with different opinions, and compromise is necessary so that divergent views are not neglected. Power relationships always come into play, and the voices of the influential will be respected.

Budiriro Garden Project

The Budiriro garden project members met every Monday, and their management structure comprised a committee. From my observations based on

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PHOTO 6.1 *Mai Chiyedza, a member of Batsiranai group, beside her garden portion, September 2009*

participation in the garden project, the chairlady, secretary, and treasurer were all women. Two men in the project had been included because the group felt that in case of disputes they would want the help of men to solidify their positions. The men had asked for permission to join and were included after consultation with all members of the group. The women thus showed that they had the power to control the male membership and, as they were the majority, they could veto any decisions that they felt adversely affected the operations of the garden (Narrative 6.4).

Narrative 6.4: Budiriro Garden Project

We started the garden in April 2009. There is a committee since it is a cooperative among women from Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm. Five of the committee members are women and two are men. As women, we felt the need to have men to help us understand some issues and, as women, we sometimes have unnecessary disputes. Including men was a way of creating gender balance. The project has 12 members.

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PHOTO 6.2 *Some of the male members at Batsiranai garden project watering their vegetables, September, 2009*

We grow rapeseed, tomatoes, cabbages, covo, carrots, and green beans. We agreed to pay R5 each and then sent committee members to buy the seedlings. Red Cross International, an NGO, gave us seedlings, namely, carrots and tomatoes. Red Cross started working with us in May 2009 when we had already started farming the garden. We had a field-day with Red Cross in July where we showed our produce, and they could see what the women were doing on their own. Unfortunately, the Red Cross did not give prizes for this event, which was held at Chatagwi primary school.

This year we do not have so many buyers because vegetables are plentiful around the farms, and people who used to come from Beitbridge or Messina are not so many this year. Some of the women take the vegetables to Johannesburg, and this has really been helpful because they always come to buy from us and in the group, some travel to sell to South Africa or Mozambique on their own. We have water problems, we do not have a proper fence and use thorns as fencing, and baboons eat our vegetables a lot.

Source: Interview with the chairwoman, Budiriro Water Garden Project, September 2009.

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PHOTO 6.3 *Some of the members of the Budiriro garden project, September 2009*

As in the Batsiranai garden project, each individual member had 15 beds of vegetables (Photos 6.3 and 6.4), and followed the rules stated above. These rules enabled the members to manage their garden projects effectively and avoid points of difference. From my observations, all 12 members of the project obeyed these rules, and anyone who could not adhere to them or had problems would always consult the chairwoman. The rules facilitated transparent decision-making among the women, and the group operated on an equity principle; no member was seen as superior to any other. However, decision-making processes are complex and rely on face value information. It was difficult for the women to make statements, but most of the women to whom I talked expressed satisfaction with the way the decisions about finances and crops to grow were handled by the committee members. The women even used the garden project as a network for accessing seeds for other crops, for helping one another with ideas about selling of their produce, and for discussing various social problems at their homes. The water garden became a site of exchange, encouragement, and business opportunity for the women. It also became a sphere in which the women could enhance their drive toward being entrepreneurs and hence fulfil their ability to be self-reliant and devise collective and individual coping strategies to improve their livelihoods.

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PHOTO 6.4 *Mrs Jonasi, Chairwoman of Budiriro garden project, September 2009*

Women's Access to Other Natural Resources at Merrivale

Because Tavaka Village follows the villagised mode of resettlement, natural resource use is tied to access to land within the farm. The rules for use of these natural resources were promulgated by the district authorities through the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and enforced at the local level by the councillors, the chief, and the village heads, with the intention of avoiding the depletion of natural resources by people from the surrounding communal areas.

Those who could collect mopane worms, water, termite mound soil, firewood and indigenous vegetables were strictly supposed to be inhabitants of the plots, and therefore the women's access to these natural resources depended on whether they had access to land in the village. Women with access to land could thus collect these resources. Visiting relatives could help the women but could not harvest or sell such resources of their own accord because they were not recognised as having tenure security in the village.

Mopane Worms

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the roles of non-timber forest products in the livelihoods of poor rural people and in the potential

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for expanding returns on such activities. One of the most nutritious, commonly eaten, and economically important caterpillars in Southern Africa is the edible larva or caterpillar of the Saturnid moth, *Imbrasia belina* Westwood, colloquially referred to as the mopane worm (Stack et al. 2003). It feeds primarily on the leaves of *Colophospermum mopane*. Estimates show that the processed mopane worm (dried and ready for consumption) contains 60.7 per cent crude protein, 16.7 per cent crude fat, and 10.7 per cent minerals on a dry-matter basis (Zikhali 2008). It also contains high levels of lysine, tryptophan, and methionine and three times the protein content of beef per unit weight, and has the advantage that it can be stored for many months (Zikhali 2008).

With minimal barriers to entry into both the collection and trade of the worm, coupled with an increasing incidence of poverty in Southern African countries where the worms are found, overexploitation is currently increasing and selective harvesting is decreasing (Hobane 1995). This, together with the threat to mopane trees from deforestation of the mopane woodlands for fuelwood, construction poles, or in some extreme cases agricultural expansion, has led to the disappearance of the worms from parts of Botswana and South Africa (Zikhali 2008). Women from Tavaka Village collected the mopane worms with the help of either children or visiting relatives. The most common and basic method of collection was manual picking of the worms from the ground and trees. The preparation of the mopane worms for consumption requires careful concentration, and so women are responsible for their processing. After the larvae are collected, the undigested material in the gut is removed either by squeezing the larvae between the thumb and fingers or by using a bottle as a roller to squeeze out the contents. Whereas younger larvae have a relatively large amount of gut content, fully-grown larvae have less; instead, their bodies are filled with a yellow nutritive material that is liked by consumers. After removing the gut content, the larvae are charcoal roasted or boiled and then dried to preserve them (Kozanayi and Frost 2002). In a survey in Botswana, 95 per cent of harvesters are poor rural women, of which some three-quarters live within 50km of the harvesting areas (Zikhali 2008). This differs from Merrivale, where the women harvesters were not poor; even the rich according to the wealth-ranking exercises participated in mopane worm harvesting, as the resource was a source of income.

Outbreaks of mopane worms, although seasonal, are very time-specific in that they occur during the early months of the rainy season, enabling parents to secure money for school fees for their children. These resources are widely important as economic buffers in hard times (Stack et al. 2003).

As with the other natural resources, access to mopane worms by the women at Merrivale depended on their access to land and permanent residence in the

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village. The mopane trees are located around individual homesteads and in communal grazing areas, where utilisation is based on open access. All the people in the village have connections, so they know one another, and this familiarity helped to regulate the harvesting of the mopane worms. At the village, the quantity of mopane worms was slowly declining, and there had been huge reductions in their numbers as compared to the time the settlers first came to the farm. "*This was attributed to the fact that mopane worms are sensitive around people and so they disappear if there are too many people in the surroundings. They had also vanished because people harvested too many for sale, without thinking about their extinction.*" [24]

Some of the women pointed out that the *"mopane worm were dried and pounded into powder and used for feeding young children as it had medicinal properties that boosted the children's immunity."* [25]

Harvesting Mopane Worms

At Merrivale, women and children were involved in the harvesting of the worm. Stack et al. (2003) note that, in recent years, men and youths have also been involved in the harvesting because of the lucrative cash that the mopane worms offer. At Merrivale, based on my observations and seasonal calendars, it was mainly women and children who participated in harvesting. The youths and men were mainly involved in other activities; most of the youths crossed the border to work in South Africa while others were now working at Nuanetsi Ranch since the ranch had been employing a considerable number of people from the surrounding farms. In rural areas, it is common for children to help their parents with routine chores and productive activities from an early age. The December mopane harvest occurs at a time favourable to the mothers for receiving help from their children because it coincides with the school holidays. The same is often true for the April harvest. The involvement of young children in mopane worm collection, in contrast to youths, is seldom an individual strategy, but rather occurs within the framework of the household.

Rules Governing Mopane Worm Harvesting

In Tavaka Village, the mopane worms were mainly harvested in the months of January to April, with some collection in December. In order for the people to be able to harvest the worms from specific trees, a system was developed by the village head, who would call for a meeting before the harvesting season and tell

24 Discussion during a transect walk with Mai Enock so that I could see the trees that produced the mopane worm, January 2010.

25 Focus group discussion, March 2010.

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women to identify their trees. Every woman had the chance to identify her own tree during the non-harvesting period before the moths started reproducing. The trees were identified by the women led by the village head's wife, normally in the early hours of the morning from 5am to 7am—the best time to see which trees have the most mopane worms. Peaks in abundance of this species are between November and January (major) and between March and May (minor), although population numbers and location of outbreaks vary from year to year. In order to protect the mopane trees from total extinction, the village head in Tavaka Village put an embargo on the cutting down of the mopane trees for use as firewood or for thatching poles. Anyone wanting to cut down a mopane tree had to consult the village head and give valid reasons for doing so. Those who failed to comply were fined a goat or money. It was also stipulated by the village head that only the villagers could harvest the Mopane worms and people from outside the village could not do so, as this disrupted other activities and sometimes would lead to the cutting down of the mopane trees. Most women were happy with these rules as they enabled them to have a ready supply of mopane worms.

Religious Issues and Mopane Worm Utilisation

In some households, mopane worms were not collected by either men or women for religious reasons. The rules and norms of the Seventh Day Adventist Church do not allow the consumption of the worm. The household where I resided belonged to the Zionist church; they collected the mopane worms and sold them, but they did not eat them. Other households belonging to the Zionist sect also applied this approach as the rules of this church derive from the teaching of the bible prohibiting the consumption of some foods considered unclean.

Mopane Worm Trading Patterns

The women from Tavaka Village sold the worms at Ngundu, Rutenga, or Chatagwi bus stop to raise income. They also sold mopane worms in South Africa and the major cities of Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, and Masvingo. My findings challenge those of Kozanayi and Frost (2002) and Hobane (1995), who note that women were generally engaged in the sale (including barter) of the commodity in small volumes, whereas men tended to be engaged mainly in the more lucrative long-distance and large-volume trade, which is sometimes cross-border in nature. At Merrivale, it was mainly women who were involved in the cross-border sale of mopane worm, while men concentrated on other activities. My observations reveal that it was not trade at a small margin but at a higher scale, and the women played a crucial role. It should be noted that,

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when men are involved in a business venture, it is always large-scale compared to women because they have at their disposal all the time and planning necessary, unlike women who confront the triple roles of reproduction, production, and trading. Trading in mopane worms, a home-based activity, became a livelihood strategy, a source of livelihood for the women, and a means of earning income that enhanced the livelihood security of their families.

Access to Water Resources

Water is a critical resource in any farming community and is a strategic resource that shapes the configuration of rural livelihoods. Manzungu (2004), Matondi (2012), Zawe (2006), Derman and Gonese (2003) as well as others underscore that, during fast-track, no thought was given to how existing irrigation systems, dams, and water management systems would be maintained or subdivided to take into account commercial farm resettlement. At Tavaka Village, water access and use were regulated mostly by men. The villagers, mainly women, had to walk a distance of more than one kilometre to the nearest waterhole. Water infrastructure that existed before fast-track consisted mainly of manmade dams, but the dams had dried up, and it was alleged by the village members that the former white farmer removed the underground water pumping engines and that this had led to the drying up of the dams. Water resources according to the people at the farm had now been crippled because the former white farmer was believed to have destroyed and removed the pumping system as a way of punishing the black settlers and of frustrating their new settlement at Tavaka Village. Other women from the village argued that the pumping systems had been vandalised by some community members, who sold the water equipment, leading to the malfunction of the dams and the water problems.

In February 2010, a dry spell in Mwenezi led to a water shortage at Merrivale that forced women to travel distances of between three and five kilometres to fetch water at Chatagwi dam. Most women in developing countries depend on water resources to produce food and energy and to earn income, yet they lack "the legal rights and control over resources and their rights of access are insecure in as much as they travel long distances to search for water" (Mubaya 2010:136).

The Village Well

In order to deal with the water shortages, the villagers decided to dig a village well (*mugodhi*), but the planning phase became a male-dominated terrain as the village head controlled all the meetings and asked each villager to pay R50. The villagers had set up an informal water management committee that was

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responsible for the task, because in the district there is a water-catchment council that presides over water issues. It was agreed that every homestead should contribute some finance toward the construction of the open-cast well (Photo 6.5).

At a village water meeting, the women were seated on one side and the men on the other. All the talking was done by men. From my own observations, these seating arrangements were meant to show respect and allegiance to what men said. One woman stated, *"Anyone who does not pay the required 50 rand is not going to use the well, as building the well requires financial resources."* [26] This statement did not go down well with the other women because they felt that, according to Zimbabwean culture, water is life, and therefore no one has the right to refuse water to anyone else. This belief is supported by commonly used statements indicating that to have abundant good life a person needs access to water. For example, the expression in the Romwe Catchment in southern Zimbabwe is *water is life* (*hupenyu*) (Nemarundwe 2003), in Shamva

PHOTO 6.5 *Current source of water* (mativi), *a deep well in between rocks, at Tavaka Village, February 2010*

26 Mrs Ziracha's contribution, Tavaka Village water meeting, June 2009.

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District, it is "*drinking water should be for everyone*" (Matondi 2001:125) and in Mhondoro communal area, it is "*one can't deny water to anyone*" (Derman and Hellum 2007:665).

Water as a communal resource now had an economic cost in a community whose norms emphasised resource sharing. The commoditisation of water has always been denied in Zimbabwe, even by the state authorities. In defending the abolition of the concept of private water, Minister Chinamasa asserted in the Zimbabwe parliament the common Zimbabwean understanding of water: "Water is a public resource. It is a gift from God. None of us here are rainmakers, and that includes commercial farmers. The rainmaker is God. He provides His people and that water forms part of the hydrological cycle" (Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates 1998:1526–1563). Any failure to observe these rules leads to a person being labelled as selfish and unable to live with the community properly. In some cases, if a person does not give water to others, he/she is labelled a witch, as witches are known to be hard-hearted and cruel. The discourse on witchcraft and water-related issues has not been explored thoroughly in the literature, but it resurfaces often in water-related conflicts in Zimbabwe. Proverbs such as *mvura haina n'anga*[27] are meant to underscore the fact that no person can bewitch you over water because it is a God-given resource. Local understandings continue to be that water does not belong to human beings but rather has divine origins (Derman and Hellum 2007). It is only witches who can kill a person by poisoning water and keep others from using their water-holes.

Repair of Dam

Chatagwi dam had to be rehabilitated following damage during the 2005–2006 rainy season; most women would come to work at the dam collecting stones, and those who did not do so were fined a fee of US$5. All four dams at the farm had dried up, and, as already mentioned, the cause of this was disputed, with some community members arguing that the white farmer had removed the pumps and others saying that the pumps had been vandalised by community members to sell the equipment. It is not apparent to me how those currently tasked with water management are thinking about how and to whom water should be distributed, where the resources can be obtained to maintain dams, and how to rehabilitate or rebuild irrigation systems. Given the collapse or

27 Proverbs in Shona society are meant to restrain people from behaving in certain ways that injure others or the community. In this case, Mrs Ziracha should not have said that those who did not pay could not access the water.

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near collapse of so many government institutions, water issues are quite low down the list of things to address (Derman 2008).

Water Management

In Chishawasha communal area in Zimbabwe, women used wells in particular and had control over the decision-making process with regard to water resources (Mubaya 2010). This research finding is different from the situation in Tavaka Village, where the community well used by the village was regulated by men who always pointed out how they had identified the well as they were choosing the plots during the *jambanja* period. Most of the women would not openly criticise the men's water management for fear of being reprimanded but would always demonstrate control of the water by drawing out most of the water during low water periods, and this would affect the men who would have to go to the dam to water their cattle. Technocrats have not given much thought to women's needs as the primary users and collectors of water in the post fast-track period, an area that needs attention in Zimbabwe.

The women played a part in water management to an extent as they were involved in the sinking of water holes (*mifuku*) along the dry river beds (Photo 6.6). The women did the digging as a communal activity so that they

PHOTO 6.6 *One of the water holes* (mifuku) *dug by the women, January 2010*

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could have fresh water for drinking and cooking. However, sometimes men would invade these water holes, using the water for bathing and for moulding their bricks, so therefore the women did not have total control over these water-holes. Derman and Hellum (2007:665) argue that, in Zimbabwe's rural areas and more broadly in Southern and Eastern Africa, access to water is not just an arena of contestation or overlapping and competing institutions, but rather has an "underlying normative framework, which limits what people can do and also sets clear expectations." The lack of women's tenure rights to water demonstrates that inasmuch as their livelihoods are shaped by water use, the women have usufruct rights and hence lack complete water rights. Men have the administrative and transfer rights to water, further disadvantaging women's position in water management. These findings have points of divergence from Nemarundwe's (2003) study in a communal area, where water access was regulated by sharing norms for men and women, and from Matondi's (2001) study in Shamva, where, in times of scarcity, there was common pool management. In Tavaka Village, it was men who controlled water use, but, women, by sinking *mifuku,* had established some minimal ways of exerting control. The concept of having to pay for water use was slowly gaining momentum in the community since the drought of February 2010, with villagers required to pay to draw water from a well, although this was not the norm in communal areas in the country. It was clear that overall control of water resources was monitored by men in the village, and that women had little control even over the small wells they dug themselves in order to have water for domestic purposes.

Access to Termite Mound Soil, Firewood, and Indigenous Vegetables

Termite mound soil, firewood, and indigenous vegetables could be accessed by women resident in the village, but it emerged that the use of termite mound soil (*ivhu repachuru*) was regulated by the village head as there were fears that women who took it to sell in South Africa were depleting the soils, which were also important for brick-making. This generated conflicts as some women argued the soils were a God-given resource. They would not, however, say this openly to the village head as they feared that they would be dragged before the village court for going against the orders of the chief or headman. It was also a rule that those whose relatives came from the communal areas should not chop firewood for them, as firewood was for the people in the village only. This restriction proved difficult because, when some women came from the neighbouring communal areas to sell such items as mangoes, they might acquire termite mound soil, firewood, and indigenous vegetables on their way home. It was difficult to prove whether they had stolen them or not. Most of

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the women in the village pointed out that they had an obligation to help their counterparts from the communal areas.

However, the restriction was violated as those whose relatives came from the communal areas would cut firewood at night. It emerged from the focus group discussions that people in the resettlement areas felt they had a duty to provide resources to their relatives and friends in the communal areas, since they had been fortunate and were now staying in resource-abundant areas. It was their perceived obligation to share these with the people in the communal areas. These responses from a focus group discussion, comprising women only, clearly showed that most of the women felt that it was their prerogative and duty to help others access the indigenous vegetables, termite mounds and firewood (Narrative 6.5).

Narrative 6.5: Sharing of natural resources

Unodova musenzeketo wedu kuti tivabetsere nehuni kwatakabva masango matema (*It is our obligation to help them with firewood because where we came from in the communal areas, the forests have been depleted*).

You cannot deny this nyevhe (*wild vegetable*) *or these indigenous fruits to these people because one day you might pass through their place and ask for a place to sleep and they will refuse.*

There are plenty of trees here so firewood should be taken to our relatives in Chimbudzi, we even sell sometimes because the forests are too dark and children are afraid as they go to school.

No one owns this termite mound, if I want to mould my bricks I will acquire as much as I want.

Regulating the use of these resources is good, but people should realise that we are Africans and ought to share as our community values prescribe.

Source: Focus group discussion, 2009.

The women strongly supported the sharing of resources despite the ground rules laid down in the village. These responses reflect the fact that the women had different strategies for dealing with resource harvesting and taking the other natural resources found within Merrivale to their communal areas. They felt obliged to share with their relatives who stayed behind, fulfilling the ideal of communitarian possession of natural resources. From my observations, it was difficult to manage the collection of termite mound soil, indigenous vegetables, and firewood because, in these tasks, women moved as groups or in pairs and men were not involved in these activities. If the village head found out about

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excessive harvesting, it was only after a complaint reached him from other villagers. *"Most women would harvest termite mound soil for sale even at road sites, and there were those who took it across the border as it was said to be good for pregnant women, as it was a rich source of iron."*[28] People wanted open access management of resources as opposed to individual control over resources.

Participation of Women in NGO Initiatives

Most of the literature on fast-track has been silent about how NGOs are helping the communities. It has always been claimed that there are no international NGOs working in these new settlements–an assertion that my research proves untrue. This claim results from representations of the FTLRP in the media and in scholarly work based on empirically unverified arguments (Scoones et al. 2010, Moyo 2011). NGOs are involved in various activities, ranging from agricultural support, to social services and health-related issues. In a marula tree-growing project carried out by the EMA of Zimbabwe with donor funds from the Swedish Development Cooperation, in village 7 and Tavaka Village, 65 per cent of women, compared to 15 per cent of men, participated in the project. Men's attitudes to managing the environment are negative compared to women's. Women are eager to preserve the environment and have some knowledge of the importance of marula trees as a source of livelihood.[29] The critical role that these women play in tree management challenges the persistent patriarchal attitudes that only men can preserve the environment. Most women are better environmental managers than men are–a point supported by empirical studies in Kenya by Thomas-Slayter (1996) and in India by Jonsson-Arora (2005). These two studies concur that women are changing the environmental management terrain at the grassroots level with 80 and 65 per cent of women involved in tree-growing projects, respectively–activities that may eventually lead to greater changes in gendered environmental policies and management. Most men will participate only in projects that bring immediate cash benefits, not in a tree-growing project that will take many years for profits to be realised.

NGOs were playing an active role in management of the ecosystems in these new settlements. The village natural resource management committee chair, Mr Mpofu, pointed out that "the initiative by these organisations helped in that women were gaining ground in decision-making over the trees they had planted as they had made great strides by watering the trees and selling some

28 Interview with Mbuya Vachinyavada, Tavaka Village, September 2009.

29 Personal communication, Mr Gurumani, EMA Officer, Mwenezi District.

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based on their own consultations."[30] The EMA was also training women to manufacture products, such as shoe polish, from natural resources and agricultural products, such as powered milk–a move that was appreciated by the women as an enhancement of their livelihoods. Some of the women had participated in provincial competitions on household economics hosted by the Swedish agency, and they saw such events as a channel for them to show that, in the new resettlement areas, life was not dormant but rather that the women were gaining ground in different areas.

CAMFED, part of the Catholic Development Agency of England, was helping elderly women-headed households by sending the orphans who resided with them to school and meeting their daily needs. For a selected number of elderly women at Merrivale, their grandsons and granddaughters' fees, books, and uniforms were being paid for by CAMFED. However, some of the elderly women were not impressed by the beneficiary selection criteria for the 2010 school year as CAMFED selected female children only. One woman said to me, "CAMFED is operating under a bad precedent in these new farming areas. This year they only took eight girls for their scholarship, what about boys? It seems the selection was unfair; there are some people whom I know who can pay the fees themselves."[31] These elderly women wanted all their children to get an education and were not overly concerned whether they were boys or girls. It should be noted that most of the NGOs campaigned for girls' education. The sentiments expressed show that NGOs are sometimes viewed with suspicion because of their operating procedures, particularly in the newly resettled farms, where people associated them with foreign-based entities and the former white farmers, who people felt wanted to reclaim the land from them. CAMFED makes a four-year commitment to beneficiaries, who are often selected at the point of transition into secondary school. To date, over 2,000 young women have graduated from the programme. The NGO has made a four-year commitment of support to 3,500 students in selected rural districts in Zimbabwe. NGOs have lessened the burden of some elderly women, and they have acknowledged the help received from these non-state actors in their daily livelihoods.

Emerging Labour Trends at Merrivale

Land tenure and labour regimes are interdependent in their contribution to livelihood activities and outcomes, however, because they have often been

30 Interview with the village environmental committee chairperson, February 2010.

31 Interview with L.M.B, Tavaka Village, February, 2010.

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analysed separately, their interconnections are often missed (Tsikata 2009). Studies on land tenure have demonstrated how inequalities between men and women in ownership and control of—and access to—land have resulted in gender inequalities in livelihood outcomes (Matondi 2012, Goebel 2005b, Chingarande 2004, Moyo and Chambati 2004, Ikdahl et al. 2005). Labour use at Merrivale is regulated by different household regimes depending on the nature of the farming activities undertaken by each family. The new settlers used either family-based labour or labour hired from the surrounding communal areas. If a household has a number of fields under cultivation, labour is hired from places as far away as Chivi District, because the people from Chivi who are involved in *maricho* (labour in exchange for either cash or food) require lower payment than do people from other districts.

In some cases, the labourers were new in the area or came from other areas such as Birchenough in Chipinge District. Cattle-herders in particular came from homes that are more distant and pointed out that it was better to work in Mwenezi than in their original home area because the income was much better in Mwenezi.

FTLR has led to new labour dynamics and a shift in livelihoods for the seasonal labourers, who also at times are given portions of land to plant either groundnuts or maize. The new configuration of agricultural space in Zimbabwe has led to the altering of the labour regime that existed in the commercial farms before the FTLRP. These changes are based on the duration of working time that a person invests in a particular plot. Chambati (2009:1) states that "much of the debate on the effects of redistributive land reform has been narrowly focused on job losses ignoring the other opportunities created for labour to reproduce themselves among the beneficiaries of new workers." Labour recruitment is still on-going, albeit on a shorter timescale than the commercial farms; but labour viability and hiring proved to be important considerations for most households, especially those growing highly labour-intensive cotton.

Labour Dimensions Within Households

Some households had fulltime labourers who helped look after cattle. Cattle-herders were all men; there was no household with a female cattle-herder, except when the wife of the plotholder would look after the cattle, or a widow would look after her cattle and those of her daughter/s. Five per cent of the labourers at Tavaka Village came from the surrounding communal areas of Gudo, Neshuro, Lundi, Ngundu, and Gold Star, and 30 per cent came from communal areas in Gutu, Zaka, and Chivi; the remaining 65 per cent came from other provinces, such as Midlands and Manicaland communal areas. Because Merrivale is located along the Chirundu–Beitbridge highway and livestock are

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frequently killed by road traffic, most households felt it was necessary to have *mukomana anorisa/ kufudza mombe* (someone who looks after cattle daily). During the dry months of September and October, when water is scarce, the herd-boys would go with the cattle to search for water, even at Munhundishe or Chatagwi dams.

Increasingly, there is a move toward commercialisation of agricultural labour in these new settlements. On a micro scale, additional employment opportunities are created by the FTLRP, although losses might have been incurred by the former farm workers at Merrivale. Moyo (2004) and Chambati (2009, 2011) note that the extensive redistribution of land has opened up a new framework for land and labour relations.

Gendered Dimensions of Labour

Women are the main food producers worldwide, and they contribute more than 70 per cent of the total labour force employed in the agriculture sector (Jirira and Halimana 2008). Tsikata (2009:23) says that feminist anthropologists have made invaluable contributions to livelihoods analysis by "emphasising the importance of intra-household divisions of labour and resources such as land, as well as women's unpaid work." Their analysis has drawn attention to women's roles in the everyday and long-term reproduction of the labour force. Women's labour contributions lead to a need to rethink how agricultural labour should be critically analysed and how women's roles, rather than those of men, should be codified as instrumental in production activities.

Both labour and land tenure studies suffer from the weakness of failing to fully integrate reproductive work in their analysis of livelihoods. Thus, although the burden of unpaid reproductive work and its implications for women's livelihoods are increasingly becoming topical, these themes have yet to be fully integrated into studies of labour and land relations (Tsikata 2009). Often, they are discussed in terms of their contribution to production and their costs to women's productive work. In their wider ramifications, as taken up in the literature on intra-household gender and inter-generational relations, questions of sexuality open a large arena of contestations and insights that have the potential to transform our understanding of land-based livelihoods.

In Zimbabwe, women provide most of the farm labour and in any case constitute 52 per cent of the population; this makes them a key resource in farm production activities. Labour use in Mwenezi was regulated according to the socio-economic status of the household. Those employed were both men and women from the communal areas, with women constituting slightly less than half and men slightly more than half of the total employed.

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Most of the households that I observed and the household heads I interviewed pointed out that women from Chivi were the best short-term labourers as they worked hard and demanded only food, in the form of maize, or clothes for their families, compared to their male counterparts, who required money and who would sometimes disappear on beer-drinking sprees. The monetary payment that women usually asked for was for their bus fare back home, after staying at a homestead until the harvesting period ended. Most of the employed had also been involved with providing labour for these households when they were still based in the communal areas, and they had a long labour connection ties. The importance of female labourers at Tavaka Village is demonstrated in the case history in Narrative 6.6.

Narrative 6.6: Female labourer at Tavaka Village

I am aged 25 and I come from Chivi communal lands. I am the first child in my family, and my parents both died and I look after my brothers and sisters. I started working permanently at Mrs M's plot in 2003; before, I had been her casual labourer in Neshuro communal lands. When they moved here in 2000, I continued working in their communal home, until they asked me to come here. I do the household chores, work in the fields, and sometimes if the cattle herder does not come I also herd cattle. I enjoy working here, as I am paid most of my money, they provide food, accommodation, and sometimes my family visits me here. I enjoy picking cotton mostly, and I am now able to cultivate using the harrow and can make ridges on my own. I am even better than the other male labourers here as they ask for my help on how to use the ox-drawn plough and herd the cattle. I have contributed to the progress of the plot, and I still want to continue working here.

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2010.

In terms of the labour on the plots in Tavaka Village, wives of the plotholders were a rich source of labour. The tasks they were involved in included ploughing, (*kurima negejo*), planting, weeding, and harvesting. They would wake early in the morning, at 4am, to fetch water for spraying cotton if it was time for cotton spraying. This information is based on observational diaries and seasonal calendars that I kept for each homestead for 16 months. Their husbands would be involved with ox-ploughing (*kusunga mombe*) and inspecting whether the farming business was being done properly. Children, both boys and girls, within these families worked alongside their mothers, especially at weekends when they were not at school. In some households, the children would help

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with weeding or planting before they left for school to contribute to productive time. My findings about the division of labour are supported by Jirira and Halimana (2008), who say that there are clear differences between women and men in rural areas when it comes to issues relating to the sexual division of labour. The definition of domestic chores and care-work as women's tasks stems not only from patriarchal domination and socialisation but also from customary laws and practices on the ground. The same applies to agricultural labour within households.

Community interactions with the villagers revealed that, although women are considered farm-hands, they serve as primary producers who play both specialised and general roles in farm production processes. Their obligations went beyond functions, such as cooking for male farm-hands (both members of the household and hired labour), that support men's primary roles. In addition, they performed the following activities: working in hand-irrigated gardens, weeding fields, collecting firewood, collecting both drinking and bathing water, feeding their families and households, childcare activities, family/household laundry, and food preparation. Men featured mostly in wood collection, taking cows to look for drinking water, stacking cotton bales, ploughing, brickmaking, and giving instructions to women. Most men used scotch carts or wheelbarrows when collecting firewood, whereas women collected firewood in bundles that they carried on their heads. The fact that the men use technologies to alleviate drudgery is seldom mentioned in discussion of production systems in resettlement areas. It is therefore important to develop a sound infrastructure base in resettlement areas so that women's practical needs are taken into consideration.

Polygyny as a Labour Enclave

Polygyny, *kuroora vakadzi vazhinji*, is a social practice whereby a man has more than one wife; it is common practice in many parts of Africa and Asia. In Tavaka Village, five of the families were polygynous. Some of the men had been in monogamous unions at their communal homes, but as soon as they moved to the new plots, they quickly married more wives. The men argued that they married more wives because they required more labour at the farms as there was a lot of work to be accomplished. The children born of these unions were an excellent source of labour as they could look after cattle, help in the fields, cook, fetch water, and help look after other younger children whilst the parents worked in the fields. Polygyny has existed among the Karanga and the Shangaan since the pre-colonial period and is seen as a prestigious way of life.

Polygyny was traditionally associated with wealth, and men who married more than one wife were known as *hurudza* (a man who is a good farmer and

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has plenty of livestock to feed himself and the community, as well as to sell); in the new plots, men are still thinking along those lines as they want to be considered *hurudza*.[32] Men would always want to prove that they were the best in a particular village, and so most families would want their daughters to marry these men for security stemming from the men's wealth and the fact that they would also be looked after. The man becomes the manager of the farm and the wives and the children are the workers. If there are three wives, the first wife does the ploughing with oxen, the second drives the cattle, the third drops the seed, and the children close the seed holes.[33] I argue that polygyny made men drivers of the farm operations, and women and children became the workers who had to produce in order to fulfil men's aspirations to be the best farmers. The polygynous families in Tavaka Village were doing well agriculturally; for instance, Mr Ndeya had totally revamped his homestead and, from the wealth-ranking criteria discussed in Chapter 2, he was rated as the best farmer and the richest in the village.

Livelihoods, Social Capital and Social Networking

A starting point for the research reported in this book was an examination of the various meanings and applications of social capital, together with their strengths and limitations. Social capital is one of the five capital assets in the pentagon of the livelihoods framework, developed by Scoones (1999). Bourdieu (1986) has defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or, in other words, to membership in a group." Membership in groups and involvement in the social networks and social relationships developing within and from such membership can be utilised in efforts to improve the social position of the actors in a variety of different ways. Group memberships creating social capital have a multiplicative effect on the influence of other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986).

In this formulation, social capital is considered the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These include networks and relations of connectedness, both vertical and horizontal that

32 Interview with Mrs Elisa Chauke, Assistant District Administrator, Mwenezi Rural District Council, 2 February 2010.

33 Interview with Mrs Elisah Chauke, Assistant District Administrator, Mwenezi Rural District Council, February 2010.

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increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand their access to wider institutions such as political or civic bodies. It includes membership in more formalised groups and relationships of trust, reciprocity, and exchange that facilitate cooperation, reduce transaction costs, and may provide the basis for informal safety nets among the poor. Social networks are defined by Bodin and Prell (2011) as the relationships among entities, and the patterns and implications of these relationships. Social networks analysis comprises diverse methods to study how resources, goods, and information flow through particular configurations of social ties. A social network consists of individuals who exchange, on a reciprocal and voluntary basis, information or other things with the aim of maximising personal utility. Long and Long (1992) stress that, in order to understand vulnerability and risk management as well as to design interventions to address risk, information is required on the networks to which households can have recourse. Social networks can contribute to enabling households to cope with a crisis, to ensuring food security, to avoiding an increase in poverty, or to spreading knowledge, for example about improved agricultural production technologies. The main risks covered by risk-sharing agreements/social networks are accidents or illnesses of productive family members or livestock, certain forms of crop damage, e.g., due to fire or wild animals, and other non-covariate income fluctuations such as low fishing yields (Coate and Ravallion 1993).

Women and Networks

People across the socio-economic spectrum utilise social exchange networks, which involve reciprocal resource-sharing, designed to overcome isolation and scarcity. Gender is an important factor in the organisation of these networks and influences the degree to which households or individuals may utilise such systems at Tavaka Village. Women's networks are more stable than men's networks because of the contrasting dispositions of men and women toward interpersonal relationships. Women have the zeal to maintain these relationships for a long time, especially if they are kin-based, and so want to build ties that added value to their lives. These networks are based on long-standing relationships with neighbours and often link families from different socio-economic strata. At Tavaka Village, the family plays a vital role in social networks as in the whole of social life. These relationships are maintained over long periods and often lead to patron–client relationships. For the poor and disadvantaged, these networks provide both regular and emergency access to scarce resources such as land, water, and food. Village politics and networks are used by men and women as a basis for accessing land. In this respect, my results contradict Cleaver (2003), whose study in Tanzania noted that poor

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women and men were not accepted in the social networks in the villages and could not participate freely, as their social status always served as a reason for their exclusion. At Tavaka Village, women of all social classes participated in social networks despite levels of poverty, and social networking facilitated collective labour action; even the well-off needed the less well-off for sustenance.

As discussed earlier, the networks that emerged as key instruments by which women could acquire land—associations with war veterans, use of personal links such as totem-sharing with the church leader, and the village head—helped women to use some deserted plots. Access to resources is a social asset in its own right that conforms to the concept of social networking.

Totems are significant in resource sharing in these communities–something that they have continued as a form of lifestyle borrowed from the communal areas where they lived before coming to the resettlement areas. In the communal areas, people lived in a village according to family relations and totem relationships. People of the same totem in Shona culture are considered relatives and are supposed to trust and help each other (Narrative 6.7). Kinship turns out to be the major factor for network formation (Beuchelt et al. 2005). The closer the relationship is, for example with siblings or parents, the more likely they are to be members in the network.

Narrative 6.7: Totems, women and livelihoods at Merrivale

I am Mrs Machaya and I have known Mrs C. since we came to reside in Tavaka in 2000. After some conversations every time we met, we both found out that we shared the same totem, which is Ndhlovu, the elephant. Ever since, we treat each other as sisters because totemic bonds are about kinship ties, which are important in our Shona culture. We had to tell our husbands and children this as it is important for them too, such that even if I become sick here or I die she is the one who is considered my relative here. As a result, we share so many issues with regard to life, and we normally travel together on our trading trips to South Africa.

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2010.

The case recounted in Narrative 6.9 demonstrates how the women at Merrivale valued totems and how the relationships that emanated from sharing the same totem were valued by both families. In the case of death of women who shared the same totem, the surviving woman had the obligation to make funeral arrangements (*kubata rumbariro*) on behalf of the deceased and even to allocate the burial site before the blood relatives come. The

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totem was an important social network that was valued tremendously in the village.

The notion of close friends, whose friendship had developed over long periods of time, (*chisahwira*) was paramount as a network that helped in creating livelihoods at Tavaka Village. Most women used these friendship networks to acquire seeds for bambara nuts and sweet potatoes, and poultry. Friendships were seen as having an important bearing of how one as a woman related with other women in the community. These bonds of friendship led to even sharing fields with one another, helping with weeding, and watering hand-irrigated gardens. These friendships also assisted women to acquire land; for instance, they would advise one another about who had left their land, where there were fallow lands worth ploughing, and about any friend whose relative was influential with the village head. The friendship extended beyond agricultural production; in times of bereavement, the friends would also help one another to such an extent that those who did not know they were friends would think they were relatives. The bereaved woman would have the other one speaking, making jokes, and ensuring that the funeral was lively so that the friend did not grieve too much. At a funeral, words such as these are said by a *sahwira*[34,35]

> Can you please give us food with meat because here we are at a master farmer's home. I do not eat vegetables only; we are not in the communal areas but in the new area of milk and honey. Take the plate of food back, and slaughter either a goat or a big chicken so that I can eat. I do not care about those crying. I am hungry. I have danced all night. If I start my singing, I want paper money only, no coins, they are mean people in this house…please no coins.

She was doing this to provide comfort to the mother of the deceased, and to deflect everyone's attention from crying so that they could laugh for a while. They are even paid to make the funeral lively. These friendships form part of community values, and a homestead without a *sahwira* is problematic as it is important to have one because they are considered of help during good and bad times.

I argue that women are skilful social networkers; networks developed by women have no social boundaries. Social networks emerge as a basis for

34 A sahwira is a close family friend, and this form of friendship (*usahwira hunokunda ukama*) is said to be more valued and treasured than blood relationships.

35 A woman (*sahwira*) on the death of one of the villagers, Tavaka Village, April 2010.

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self-development and a way to improve one's participation in community activities. There are differences between men and women's social networks due to primary and secondary socialisation. Women's groups are locally based; they help one another in times of crises in the village, when they are sick, or have travelled to South Africa. Women's networks are intimate and pervade all facets of life. Although men have groups based on social distance, whereby they travel to Ngundu or Rutenga to drink beer, the relationships they form do not affect their farming activities. Women's networks impact positively on farming because women are able to help one another with seed for crops. Many of the villagers, especially women and disadvantaged groups, participated in a variety of networks for sustenance within the rural landscape (Nemarundwe 2003). These enabled such groups to acquire certain economic, social, and natural resources that further led to realisation of their individual capabilities.

Networks and Trust

Networks facilitate livelihoods that build on trust and mutual dependence on others, leading to the promotion of the right to adequate well-being and recognition by society–one of the important features of the capabilities approach. The majority of these social networks depend on uncodified rules and norms, some of which are based on regular practice in the everyday existence of the villagers (Nemarundwe 2003, Matondi 2001). Livelihoods are about sustainability in an economic, social, and natural environment. This sustainability is achieved through interaction with others in order to enhance one's own capabilities.

Trust emerged as an important facet for those who asked for help. Elderly women in particular were very cautious about new relationships and only trusted people who had come from the same villages as them. Trust in the new resettlements is problematic as the spaces have become inhabited by people who in most cases were strangers to one another because they came from different communal areas. Barr (1999), in a study of old resettlement schemes in Zimbabwe, concludes by noting that resettlement into villages of relative strangers leads to a reduction in within-village familiarity and thus greater uncertainty and less trust in strategic situations. To the extent that this reduced familiarity is due to the lower density of kinship ties, it may persist; in Barr's study, it had already persisted for 17 years, and she argued that it might only be restored by intermarriage. I agree with this summation since it is also evident at Merrivale, but the villagers tried to live in harmony with one another, such that to an extent trust was slowly building up. However, Dekker (2004) and Dekker and Kinsey (2011) note that, in the old resettlement areas, trust was an evident feature among the villagers as they all realised that they had left their

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original homes and so they had to start building new relations as one family, and it worked perfectly for them.

My own observations reveal that trust emanated from people who shared the same totem. At Merrivale, this was evident. However, the "mobile workshop"[36] that has evolved because of these new settlements, as people are constantly resettling and occupying new spaces, means that totems are now slowly losing their symbolic nature. Mavhunga (2008:37) notes that "all these mobilities must be seen as encounters, as the traction of mobile bodies upon existing territorialities. The most intriguing aspect of the encounter is its disruption of existing totem-based settlements and its consequences for totem-based human–animal interactions." Despite Mavhunga's (2008) argument about totems losing ground, my results actually demonstrate that totems fostered community cohesion at Merrivale and were important for farming purposes and mobility activity.

Beef Committees

Men established some social networks via forums such as beef committees, where they arranged issues about selling meat. These committees were a phenomenon imported from the communal areas, where people wanted to share all aspects of communal life. These meetings took place especially during the February–March 2010 dry spell and helped as a means to ensure that the households had meat to eat with their *sadza*. The beef committees were initiated by men who drank beer together or belonged to the same church group so that they would help one another slaughter a beast and share the meat among the families who made a financial contribution. Each committee selected people on the basis of their friendship or kin relationships to avoid problems with those who would not want to pay to get the beef. Most committees were composed of eight to 10 people so that they could be manageable. Women would only interact with the committees when they went to pay the fee for the meat or to collect meat (Narrative 6.8). Negotiations and slaughter dates and days were exclusively a male realm. There were no female committee members because it was pointed out that "*it was a male initiative and women had their own places to meet, so this was basically a man's hub.*"[37]

36 I define the mobile workshop as referring to the new trends in mobility where people are constantly moving in rural areas in search of better livelihoods; they are mobile workshop in the sense that the men and women are constantly on the road and their lives are connected to hearth, land, and their feet. See Chapter 7.

37 Informal discussion with C.K.M. about the beef committee at Masukume homestead, March 2010.

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Narrative 6.8: Beef committees and the role of women

> We have this committee on most farms. We contribute money. This month, we are six people and all paid US$35 per family so that we buy a beast from those selling and slaughtering. This beef committee is at the Masukume homestead in village 1 Merrivale. We share all the meat equally. This helps us during these dry periods as we have some relish to eat. We dry the meat either by the sun or by fire (kuvedzenga) so that it stays unspoiled and we hang it in the kitchen where there is always some fire to help dry it thoroughly. There is another beef committee going on today in village 2. Men slaughter the meat, women we just go when asked to collect, but it is a men`s day.
>
> Source: Extract from an interview Mrs C.M., Tavaka Village, 2010.

The women's role is to dry the meat, re-emphasising that the woman's place is the kitchen. The women have to make sure the meat is stored in the best place to avoid spoiling. There were quite a number of beef committees, and each village could have more than two.

Living Together and Women's Roles in Resource-Sharing Collectives

Shields and Thomas-Slayter (1993) note that households across the socio-economic spectrum utilise social exchange networks, involving reciprocal resource-sharing designed to overcome scarcity and isolation. Gender and class are important in the organisation of these networks and determine the type of resources that families share.

In Tavaka Village, as noted earlier, it was common to share labour and resources, such as ploughs, oxen, and *maricho*. I observed resource-sharing on three levels: resource-sharing within the same village, resource-sharing within A2 farms, and resource-sharing with neighbouring communal areas. Mostly women participated in these activities and had to represent their husbands whenever they could not attend such functions. These groups are formed among neighbours, people of the same totem, and relatives living within Tavaka Village and outside the village. From my own observations, the village head's two younger brothers resided in the same village so they helped each other with oxen and casual labourers. Some arrangements of resource-hiring went beyond the farm, with other villagers going to Simbamukaka or Sonop farms to old acquaintances from the communal areas to acquire cattle for farming or seed for crops. Resource-sharing and social networks are interdependent and intertwined facets in the rural areas of Zimbabwe (Matondi 2001).

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Another form of labour-sharing was through *nhimbe or humwe* (work parties). This involved a household brewing sweet beer (*maheu*) that women drink and the type of beer drunk by men, so that on the chosen day the villagers would come and work on a particular plot. Such work normally took place during harvesting, and people would go to pick cotton or engage in *kupura chibage* (maize shelling) as a group. This communal work enabled faster completion of the task and fostered a sense of collective action among the villagers. Food was also provided, and it took the men and women a day to complete the work. The work party could not be held on *chisi*[38] as this was prohibited, and it had to take place on a normal working day. At Merrivale, *chisi* was observed on Wednesdays.

From my own observations, there were women-only work parties, where they helped one another harvesting and shelling bambara nuts and groundnuts. These work parties were small-scale, and the women involved were normally good friends. The women would later drink tea together after the task and share stories. They tended to start work in the morning and stop in the afternoon. I also gathered through informal conversation with the women that resources were also shared with surrounding A2 farmers from Sweet Waters farm, which is near Merrivale. A2 farmers would ask for support from A1 farmers when they had field shows. They would also ask for oxen to plough their fields since most of the A2 farmers had other fulltime jobs and so, when they started farming, they had no oxen and A1 farmers would help them. However, farmers at Merrivale showed resentment toward some of the A2 farmers, arguing that they were very proud but always wanted their cattle, yet they looked down upon them. From focus group discussions, it emerged that A1 farmers had a feeling that A2 farmers were too individualistic and only appreciated them when they wanted help or when there were funerals in their homes.

At times of bereavement, they would support one another. Support during funerals consisted of the farmers at Merrivale going to the farm where a funeral had occurred. Women would help with cooking pots, provide labour for collecting firewood, cooking, singing at the funeral, and sleep at the grieving homestead as moral support; this support demonstrates good community living. Men would also provide their labour at the funeral by helping to dig the grave and collect water with scotch carts if the water collection point was far away. They would also sit with those mourning outside the huts where a fire was lit, and sometimes would help ease disputes on how best to conduct the

38 This day is set aside for the villagers to rest. They do not go to the fields or engage in individually profitable activities but rather do tasks such as laundry, collecting firewood, visiting families within the same settlement, or assisting in projects for community benefit.

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funeral. This also happened in Tavaka Village; the people in the surrounding farms and villages, and even in the communal areas, would come to pay their respects.

Resource-sharing was not limited only to moral support, cattle, and labour. Farmers would also share their thoughts, experiences, and information on crop and livestock improvement. They would share information about the farming seasons and rainfall amounts, as some believed that among them there were "good natural weather readers, who the community respected and trusted and who could predict the coming of rains or drought."[39] The people of Tavaka Village demonstrated detailed knowledge of the linkages among resource-sharing issues as well as the creativity and initiative needed to improve their life conditions.

Resource-sharing feeds into livelihoods because human beings have the propensity to develop by elevating one another's status, particularly in African societies. I advocate the enhancement of capabilities that improve livelihoods and are based on respect for cooperative efforts in improving well-being. I argue that resource-sharing leads to the realisation of cooperative capabilities that promote better management of one's resources and those of the community.

Women at Tavaka Village were all willing to share food as they operated on the daily principle of reciprocity that one might have something today and tomorrow one might be in need (Photo 6.7). The resource-sharing techniques were used as safety nets to cushion households against different forms of vulnerabilities. Restricting the use of one's personal resources jeopardises access to the resources of others.

Summary

I have examined how women silently carve out access to land at Tavaka Village, Merrivale, in the present era. The key issues identified here are that women employ various tactics and strategies to acquire land, and they are always able to do so despite the existence of competing jurisdictions in the new settlements. The role played by community gardens has been identified and how these community gardens act as zones for women's access to and control over land in their villages–thus defying the traditional view that women cannot access land in their own right. These findings have led to new concepts of tenure security according to the women's understanding—concepts that have not been extensively dealt with in the literature. NGOs emerge as non-state

39 Interview with B.G., Tavaka Village, September, 2009.

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PHOTO 6.7 *Mai Ruth watering Mai Chiyedza's vegetable garden because Mai Chiyedza was ill, Batsiranai garden project*

actors engaging with the settler women farmers at Tavaka Village and offering support in agriculture, natural resource management, and social services, demonstrating a shift in Zimbabwe's new resettlement areas "where donor agencies have not been participating or offering support due to their policies that restrict them from working in these areas."[40] These women have been able to define their capabilities and improve their livelihoods based on effective use of innate and environmental capabilities.

Access to mopane worms, water, termite mounds, firewood, and indigenous vegetables follows from access to land within the village, but women again have means of evading the rules that govern access to these resources. Some of the women violate the rules to enable them to help their relatives or friends in the communal areas–a means of fostering the concept of "*chirere chigokurera mangwana.*"[41] Social networks and resource-sharing are mainly dominated by

40 Interview with CARE International Official, Masvingo, March 2009.

41 A Shona proverb, which means that you should help others, especially relatives and friends, and not forget about them, so that they will help you tomorrow if you face difficult situations.

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women despite men being engaged in these arrangements, demonstrating that women are more active in community-based initiatives modelled along collective action. Social networks are sources of women's access to land and facilitate women's joint efforts to conduct work parties on their own.

In patriarchal systems of land management, women develop systems for accessing resources that suit their conditions. This outcome further challenges the individual rights to land promulgated by western jurisprudence. The recommendations in Articles 2(f) and 5(a) of the 1979 CEDAW convention (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) state the objective is "modify all social and cultural practices that violate women's rights." This goal calls for the modification of socio-cultural factors that impede women's enjoyment of their human rights in line with principles of individual rights. I argue that since Zimbabwe is a state party to CEDAW and has signed and ratified the convention, there is a need to adhere to these principles. But, as evidenced by the women from Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm, such adherence should respect the communitarian approach to land that has its own set of measures allowing women to access resources. Systems of accessing and acquiring land being developed at Tavaka Village should be accepted because they are improving women's right to access and use land and natural resources.

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CHAPTER 7

Life Beyond Merrivale Farm

Preparation for and Trading in South Africa

> Despite its importance, female migration has been hidden from research, history, and policy. Through the new land that we have been given by our government, I have been going to South Africa to sell vegetables, mopane worms, bambara nuts, and round nuts. My life will never be the same again.
>
> Conversation with one of the women traders, Merrivale, August 2010

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the link between women's access to land and the social creation and shaping of markets through transitory mobility to South Africa. I elucidate how women shape their livelihoods through transitory mobility[1] to South Africa. I illustrate this process with evidence on the merchandise that women sell there, the transport logistics involved, how border formalities are negotiated on both the Zimbabwean and the South African side of the border. Social networks are an important facet of these trips to South Africa, hence I give them primacy.

The question of women's identities in the market place is complex because women's activities range over households and work places, rural and urban environments, and ethnic and social divides; and they operate in spaces where local, national, and global divisions but are blurred by the circulation of people and commodities (Gudeman 1986, Seligman 2001, Dodson 2008, Peberdy and Crush 1998). "The best-documented form of migration by temporary workers is from surrounding African countries in such sectors as mining and agriculture; less well-known are the migrants and new immigrants who have established themselves in the informal and small enterprise economy" (Rogerson 1997:1). I explore relationships between the women and South African and other foreign traders in the light of temporary mobility.[2] The issue of the threats and risks

1 Morreira (2010), in a study of undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa, notes that migration is about permanence and mobility is non-permanent.

2 I use this term because these women became engaged in trading trips to South Africa to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families when Zimbabwe was grappling with economic, social, and political upheavals that destabilised farming in the nine years from

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that the women face is also addressed to elucidate how these transitory mobile trips work. In addition, the business practices adopted in conducting trade and the contribution of the trading to the women's finances are explored in both the South Africa and Zimbabwean settings.

Characteristics of Female Traders from Tavaka Village

Twenty women from Tavaka Village are engaged in trade to South Africa. They are a disparate group. They comprise young women, middle-aged, and the elderly; 15 are married, two are widows, and three are single. The married women range in age from 28 to 65 years, the widows range between 40 and 55 years old, and the single women are all 23 years old. The two women from the polygynous households in the study were among those involved in trading trips to South Africa. Table 7.1 profiles the women's educational levels.

All the women have at least enough education to read and write. Trading trips contribute significantly to the livelihoods of the women and their families; the money and goods imported from South Africa acted as safety nets in the early 2000s. The same is currently true since Zimbabwe's economic crisis persists.[3] The next section gives an example of the budgetary decisions made by the women about how to use their income.

TABLE 7.1 *Educational levels of the female traders from Tavaka Village*

Marital status	Educational level attained		
	Form 4	Form 2	Grade 7
Married	8	5	2
Widowed	1	–	1
Single	3	–	–

SOURCE: AUTHOR'S DATA, 2009–2011.

2000 to 2009. After the installation of the power-sharing transitional government between the MDC and ZANU-PF in March 2009, there were signs of economic normality again.

3 What should be understood is that the Zimbabwean crisis has economic, political and social connotations that ought to be viewed holistically as all these facets affect the citizenry's economic well-being.

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Trading Expenses and Use of the Income Acquired in South Africa

On the basis of individual preferences and values, each woman determined how to use her income to meet her household's needs. The largest portion (50 per cent of the money) went toward food purchases. Educating children was also considered an important expenditure, and 30 per cent of their profits went toward this. This substantial expenditure on food and educating children demonstrates how important these activities are considered to be in shaping the success or failure of the Tavaka women who went to trade in South Africa. Remittances were also sent to former communal homes, where members of the extended family benefited; these transfers accounted for 10 per cent of the income. The remaining 10 per cent was spent on farming inputs and used for the improvement of the fast-track farms by purchasing assets, such as solar panels (Photo 7.1). Some of the money was also used by the women to finance their travel, for example, bus fares to South Africa.

Women Traders, Mobility, and Cross-Border Trade

Cross-border migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa has historically been a male-dominated activity (Zinyama and Tevera 2002), partly

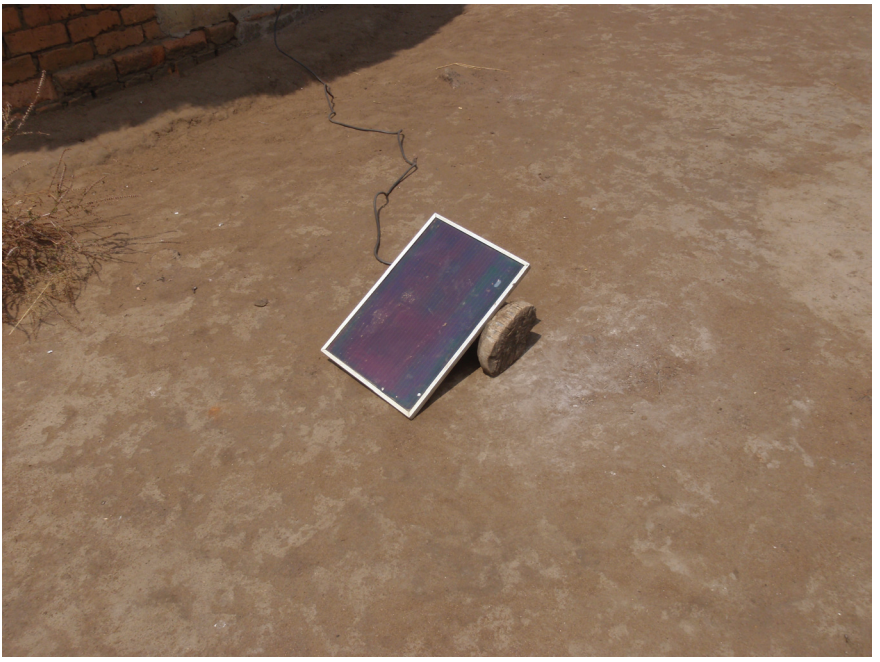

PHOTO 7.1 *A solar panel at the Machaya homestead, Tavaka Village*

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because it was deemed both too far and too risky for women in pre-independence Zimbabwe to travel to South Africa on their own, and partly because migration was strictly regulated by the requirements of the South African mines for labour from north of the Limpopo River. However, with the changing global migratory patterns, women from Zimbabwe have increasingly been involved in cross-border migration as a livelihood option. Women in Masvingo's urban town of Mucheke, for example, were very much involved in cross-border trade and used it as a strategy to fight poverty (Muzvidziwa 1998).

It has been postulated that, although intra-regional migration in Southern Africa has always been complex, complexity has increased because of recent changes in migratory patterns (SADC 2009). The mining industry, a traditional destination for male migration, has declined, resulting in the redefinition of migratory strategies. At the same time, other points of entry into the labour force have been identified (construction, the service sector, etc.), and other sources of income have been created (cross-border trade, the informal sector, etc.). These sectoral changes coincide with a feminisation of intra-regional migration in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Although women have always been part of these population flows, this migration has historically been very male-dominated for the abovementioned reasons. Lately however, the presence of women is becoming more significant. Data are hard to obtain and are often incomplete, but it is estimated that, overall, women represent more than 70 per cent of all cross-border migrants in the region (SADC 2009).

Commodity Chain Analysis

A useful methodology for understanding how markets operate for a particular good is commodity-chain analysis. A commodity chain is a set of value-adding activities through which a product passes from the initial production or design stage to final delivery to the consumer and can be local, national, regional, or international in scope (Kaplinsky 2000). The worth of the commodity increases at each stage because processing, packaging, transport, or alteration adds value. Commodity-chain analysis has its origins in industrial sociology and new institutional economics and focuses on transactions between firms operating within the chain. It analyses the significance of how the revenues generated by gross consumer spending are translated into the relative net revenues distributed along the chain.

The women are engaged in cultivation of the produce, harvesting, shelling, packing and arranging the transportation of the goods they will sell in South Africa (Figure 7.1).

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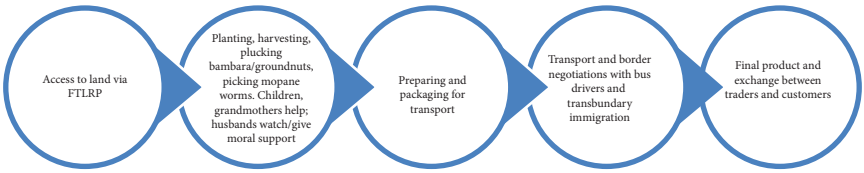

FIGURE 7.1 *Merrivale female traders' commodity chain pattern*
SOURCE: AUTHOR'S FIELDWORK, 2009–2011.

Narrative 7.1 exemplifies the different bargaining models that exist in women's choice of crops to grow and trade in South Africa. The response of the man in the extract shows that the conditions under which women and men make decisions about livelihoods in a certain household depend on their power to influence those decisions. Changes in livelihood sources and livelihood construction also lead to changes in bargaining power; the fact that the husband is somehow involved in his wife's trips indicates that he supports her trips, at least partially.

> Narrative 7.1: Husband's view on wife's trading in South Africa
>
> I appreciate that the selling of produce in South Africa raises income. I am not involved in the planting of the groundnuts, bambara nuts and the pumpkin leaves. I only provide draught power. She is helped by the children. This is because we do not eat these crops she grows as they do not form part of the daily food basket. We survive on sadza (maize meal porridge) and so I have to make sure we grow enough for sale and to meet the household needs. When she is going, I accompany her to the bus stop using the scotch cart.
>
> Source: Author's fieldwork, Tavaka Village, June 2009.

The agricultural activities are undertaken with some help from family members. Most men argued that the crops grown to sell in South Africa are "women's crops"; they preferred to concentrate on cash crops like maize and sunflowers, and on livestock production. The women with whom I travelled argued that, in order to increase their bargaining power in selling crops in South Africa, they now entered into consultative processes to ensure that a greater area of land would be dedicated to their crops. The income raised from the sale of this produce served as an important leverage for negotiating more space to plant. Most married women said that the husband was just informed about the crops to be grown as the income to purchase the farming inputs came from the wife. This is clearly brought out in Narrative 7.2:

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Narrative 7.2: Woman's view on farm decision-making

> I now have overall control of the crops that I grow for trade in South Africa because the farming inputs are bought from the income derived from my trade in South Africa. Although the land belongs to my husband, I have control over the land too, because I purchase the farming inputs. Financial gains from trading in South Africa have enabled me to have a better bargaining capacity in crop production at the farm.
>
> Source: Interview, Mrs C.M., Tavaka Village, January 2010.

The woman is now a strategic actor in using her income as a bargaining tool in determining the crops to be grown at the farm, further challenging the long-held assumption that, in an African household, agricultural production is planned entirely by men.

The Trips from Merrivale to South Africa

The Merrivale women undertook trading trips to South Africa mostly at the end of each month. This was seen as the best time for business because potential customers would have been paid their salaries and social welfare grants, making it easier for the women to sell their crops. The trips had to be carefully planned as they required organisation and coordination because of Merrivale Farm's location. A law had been passed which stated that most long-distance bus drivers were not required to stop at Sagwari bus stop at Merrivale (Photo 3.1). On my first trip with two women from Merrivale, we had to wait at the bus stop in Lundi to make a prior arrangement with a bus driver, "*mukoma* Zeff" (brother Zeff), about our trip to South Africa the following Thursday; we wanted to arrive in South Africa the next day–on the last Friday in the month, the day when people are paid their monthly salaries–to be able to sell our produce and get an immediate income.

My findings corroborate those of Peberdy and Crush (1998), who argue that women traders were likely to visit South Africa once a month (usually at the end of the month) for a week or two. We arrived at Lundi in the morning to meet the 11am bus, which arrived half an hour late, and had the following conversation with the driver:

Narrative 7.3: Conversation with a bus driver

> Travellers: *We want to travel on Thursday to Johannesburg. We want three seats as we are going with our sister, Patience, whom you see here with us. The two of us have three 25 kilogramme bags of groundnuts* (*nzungu*),

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including bambara nuts (*nyimo*)*, and a bucket of fresh vegetables* (*muriwo werape nemuboora*) *each. We also have one bucket of mopane worms* (*mancimbi*)*. Patience has one bag of bambara nuts and a bucket of fresh vegetables. How much will we pay for all this?*

Bus Driver: *"You are my regular customers and I will reserve seats for you. You have to pay each 250 rand for the seats. And for the luggage, since you know how tough these days the South Africans are at the border control, you have to pay 300 rand for your luggage." I will put it in the reserved compartment and you will travel without any fear of confiscation of your goods. In order for the passports to be stamped quickly, make sure you have 20 rand put aside that each passenger has to pay so that we are not delayed waiting at the border, on the South African side. We have to pay the police and immigration officials there. We have to arrive in Johannesburg at 4am so be here at the service station by 6pm.*

Source: Extract from a conversation between Mrs C., Mrs M., and Zeff, the bus driver in preparation for our trip to South Africa, Lundi Service Station, 23 June 2009.

This narrative demonstrates the type of prior arrangements and negotiations made before the trips so that the women are assured of seats to Johannesburg for an agreed price on the particular day they want to travel.

I observed that, as I travelled with these women between April 2009 and August 2010, they arranged the transport on their own. They had to arrange with the bus drivers as early as three days before departure so that they would be picked up on the bus's way to South Africa. These special arrangements were made as the buses passed Merrivale at night, so they would just catch them at their local bus stop or they would travel to Lundi, Ngundu, or Rutenga. They had to pay the full bus fare from Harare to Johannesburg, despite the fact that they boarded the bus at a station more than three hours south from Harare's Road Port, where the buses are normally boarded. The prior arrangements enabled the women to organise their luggage. They would store their vegetables in 25-litre buckets and the bambara nuts and groundnuts in sacks. Such luggage was charged according to the number of sacks and buckets. Sometimes, they would pay R300 for luggage, depending on the weight of the luggage and the bus they would have to use.

After concluding the talks about the payment for the luggage and our bus fares, we would then catch the bus at the agreed time. Sometimes, we would board the bus at Ngundu or Rutenga growth points, depending on where the bus drivers told us to wait for them. Only the bus fare was destined for the bus company. The money that we paid for the transportation of our

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produce was for the driver, and sometimes he would share that with the bus attendant.[4] These preliminary negotiations demonstrated how personal relationships are important in the initial phases of planning the South African trips. The women were able to use their negotiating capabilities to facilitate their trips to South Africa.

We then had to prepare our produce, we packed the nuts in bags, and the fresh vegetables would be plucked from the hand-irrigated gardens immediately before we left to board the bus. This meant that the vegetables would still be fresh when we got to Johannesburg the next morning. Some of the nuts had to be shelled, and this involved the labour of the children and members of the extended family. Men were rarely involved in this task.

Before we left the village for the trip, we would gather in one house and pray for guidance and blessings for our journey. All the women who travelled to South Africa belonged to a church group. However, they did not all belong to the same church group. The majority of the women belonged to the Zion Christian Church, and the rest belonged to the Apostolic Faith Mission sect in Zimbabwe and the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. Prayer was an important practice that ensured safe and protected travel. We left Tavaka Village normally at three in the afternoon and would use a bus or a cart pulled by a donkey to ferry our agricultural produce to the agreed bus stop (Photos 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4).

The bus would arrive in Masvingo at three in the afternoon because the heavy police presence along the Chirundu–Beitbridge highway makes it difficult for the bus drivers to arrive at the scheduled time–two in the afternoon. If we arrived at Lundi, we would wait and talk about our trip. At this time, issues like prices were discussed, bargaining with customers, and the goods to buy for resale back at Merrivale. The women also discussed how they would use the money to meet their household needs. Waiting for the bus proved the optimal time for the women to discuss how best to use their income and how they would help one another to do so. Discussions also centred on personal issues, like marriage problems, and how best to solve them. The trips became avenues for discussing other social issues that would not normally be discussed at home because of societal constraints. The trips emerged as venues of exchange of personal communications, where solutions were found for woman-centred problems. Some women would also sleep as they waited for the bus. Seating was normally agreed along the road so that when the bus came from Harare,

4 This is based on my personal observations as I undertook six of these trips between June 2009 and August 2010. I had the opportunity of talking to other women traders from other parts of the country in addition to those from my sample, and they all concurred that the money paid the drivers for luggage was for them and the bus attendants.

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PHOTO 7.2 *Bags of nuts at Sagwari Station on their way to South Africa*

we could easily find our appropriate places. We would also meet women from other fast-track farm villages who were travelling to South Africa to trade their wares. There were also women from the communal areas of Neshuro, Maranda, and Sarahuru.

Border Formalities at the Points of Exit and Entry

The bus would arrive at the Zimbabwean border[5] side, where all passengers were required to disembark (Photo 7.5) and have their passports stamped by the Zimbabwean immigration officials. Those who did not have travel documents paid the drivers, and they would just move around until everyone had their passports stamped. Then, the immigration officials would check them once again, before the bus departed for the South African side. The bus was not searched on the Zimbabwean side; random searches by the police and

5 I define a border as a line demarcating units that differ or are supposed to differ and in that way they reveal their Janus-faced character. Van Houtum et al. (2005) give detailed descriptions of how borders are crafted and shaped with regard to particular citizenry/person specifications for entering a defined territory.

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PHOTO 7.3 *Going to Lundi Mission to wait for the bus to South Africa*

immigration officials sometimes do occur, but not often. On the South African side, the first stop was the foot-and-mouth clearance point, where all passengers had to dip their feet in trays with chemicals for the prevention of foot-and-mouth disease. Passports were checked by the South African police to see whether they had been stamped on the Zimbabwean side. After this, the

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PHOTO 7.4 *Waiting for the bus at Ngundu growth point, with bags of nuts*

PHOTO 7.5 *The bus in transit to South Africa*

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travellers would proceed to the immigration offices, where they would join the queue to have passports stamped as a sign of official entry into South Africa (Photo 7.6). *"Since 2002, the South Africans have been very slow; they want us to spend more than seven hours waiting in this cold weather just to get an official stamp. Last year it was bad, and we were asked to return to Zimbabwe; the whole bus had to go and vote. We made a loss because we were carrying fresh vegetables and they were all spoilt as we tried to get clearance for three days, but it did not work."* [6] This reflects how the women are treated at the border post and, because they are eager to sell their produce, they do not question the whole notion of these traumatic experiences.

Bus passengers were being told to go and vote in 2008, as the Zimbabwean crisis was interpreted by the South Africans as having its roots in the political and economic mismanagement emanating from the land question. The issue of irregular migration into South Africa has assumed a new security development nexus that should be viewed within the domain of creating sustainable livelihoods. "Citizenship has been reconfigured in the new black South

PHOTO 7.6 *Passport control at Beitbridge border post, South Africa*

6 Interview with Mrs S.V., Beitbridge Border Post, South African Side, August, 2009.

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Africanisation process, and the external borders of the republic have taken a new meaning. The politics of citizenship and livelihoods has recast the external borders as the threshold of national belonging, with dire consequences for members of the Southern African region, which have been excluded from pursuing crucial economic and social livelihood strategies" (Buur and Jensen 2007:22). The negative treatment the women experienced leads one to conclude that they are among the victims of South Africa's quest to build up its Africanisation philosophy.

After the passports are stamped and entry into South Africa is granted by the immigration officials, everyone has to go to the bus and collect their bags for searching and clearance by the South African immigration and police officials (Photo 7.7). There are fixed quotas for the amount of agricultural produce an individual is allowed to import according to South African law; exceeding the quota results in either fines or confiscation. All of the goods with which one wishes to enter South Africa have to be weighed on a scale. Duty is levied depending on the weight. People wanting to sell agricultural produce in South Africa can apply for trading permits at the Ministry of Agriculture in Harare, but most of the women from Tavaka Village argued that "*applying for the trading licence takes more than a year and what will you survive on in this world,*

PHOTO 7.7 *Customs control at Beitbridge border post, South Africa*

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hence it is better for us to pay the immigration officials, the bus drivers, and the police. As long as we can cross into South Africa with our groundnuts, that is fine with us."[7] The women felt that the payment of bribes was better than the formal procedures as these are too bureaucratic and time-consuming, and thus would affect their day-to-day survival. They have had to develop ways and means of overcoming the hurdles. Women who pay the drivers are not subjected to any searches since their luggage is put in special compartments that are not opened by the immigration or police officials. The drivers also negotiated with the South African police and at that point they would pay for any illegal immigrants they are carrying or pay for the compartments that are not to be opened and searched. These payments were in the range of 400 to 800 South African rand, depending on the issue influencing one`s entry into South Africa.

Negotiations about luggage resulted in the women asking for price reductions and arguing that they were everyday customers and the drivers had to understand them. If they wanted the bus drivers to help them clear their goods at the South African border post, they would have to pay a separate fee depending on the contents and the risks of entering South Africa with the goods. As already mentioned, South African immigration entry laws and regulations specify limits with regard to items that an individual can bring into the country. The restrictions on agriculture and animal products can be circumvented by employing *malaitshas,* a term used to refer to the South Africans or Zimbabweans who transport goods into South Africa using various tactics to evade the officials at the border post. *Malaitshas* are either Venda from South Africa or Ndebele from Zimbabwe who have dual residence status. The *malaitshas* do not face problems with the South African immigration authorities because they are involved in a web of networks whereby they give the South African authorities and border police money in order to enable the safe crossing of people's commodities.

The female and male *malaitshas* are very visible at the South African border post as they always come to Zimbabwean buses going to South Africa asking whether anyone needs their services. They work in coordinated groups, and they normally have trucks to help to carry the commodities from the border to the nearby border towns of either Musina or Louis Tritchardt. Using their services meant that the women from Tavaka Village had to pay anything between R100 and R300, depending on weight. Normally, the women who used the service would do so in groups so that they would be able to pay the required fees.

7 Discussion with a group of women on our way to Louis Trichardt at Beitbridge border post, South African side, January 2010.

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Women without valid passports would also be smuggled into South Africa by the *malaitshas* for a fee. Sometimes, the *malaisthas* operated syndicates with bus drivers, who would offload the commodities that they were carrying to the *malaitshas* and pay them a fee for crossing with the goods into South Africa if the border patrols were intense on a particular day. The bus drivers also helped the women evade these restrictions.

Vulnerabilities and Threats at the South African Border Post

Trips to South Africa entailed vulnerabilities for the women. The logistical issues raised by some of the women from Tavaka Village revealed that there were instances where their produce was taken and thrown away at the border because it had gone off during the wait. During one of my trips with the women, I observed that, as we approached the border, the women had sad faces as they all feared South African immigration officials. They were subjected to body searches and verbal abuse, and violations of their right to free movement, but because they wanted to go and sell their produce, they did not complain as they feared that they would be sent back to Zimbabwe. From my personal observations, women whose agricultural produce or other items exceeded the stipulated quota would cry as the officials took away their goods. This outcome was sad because their emotions showed how much hope they had built up only to have their hopes dashed and their livelihoods jeopardised. Some of the threats made are illustrated in Narrative 7.2.

> Narrative 7.2: Example of verbal abuse experienced by women at the South African border
>
> *No, mama, you have to leave your goods…ahaha, it is too much…put them on the scale. It is R500 for you to cross with all these bags of round nuts* [South African Border Official, speaking in a very loud and angry voice].
>
> *Body search…women this side with women police officers, men this side with male police officers. In case you are hiding some stuff, please all women and men remove your clothes in the bathrooms there because we know you do hide money* [South African Police Officers, yelling and shouting at the passengers while at the same time scrutinising their faces].
>
> Source: Author's observations at the border, 2009.

Although cross-border trade is demanding, female entrepreneurs expressed their satisfaction with the opportunities that financial independence and entrepreneurship offer through transnational trade (Peberdy 2007).

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My findings arrive at the same conclusion as that of a study on the marketing of small livestock by Ethiopian women in Kenya that also found women farmers were liable to threats and abuse by buyers and brokers, lack of price information, and failure to integrate into the national competitive markets through appropriate channels (Kocho et al. 2011). The women's continued engagement in the trading trips, despite the threats and vulnerabilities, suggests a need to reconfigure conceptualisations about the key actors in regional trade and mobility.

Cross-Border Trade and Women's Agency

Agency depends on the generation, use, and manipulation of networks of social relations and the channelling of specific items, claims, orders, goods, instruments, and information. Trans-boundary trade activities by the women reveal the sophisticated nature of how trips are arranged and how agency becomes a central force in carrying out the trips to South Africa. I differ from Akinboade (2005), who argues that trans-boundary trade undertaken by women in East and Southern Africa is unsophisticated and should not be given much attention as it does not contribute much to reducing poverty. Because of the collapse of the state in Africa and its diminishing role in meeting the needs and livelihoods of its population, the role of women in creating small-scale trade regimes that enable them to improve their livelihoods should be an important facet in trade development and migration (Taylor and Martin 2001, Sinclair 2002). What should be understood is that livelihood constructions and livelihood pathways in which women actors themselves engage enable them to make contributions to their survival and are always viewed as successful in the women's eyes. Whether a livelihood option benefits the person involved should be the starting point for assessing the success of the option. The way agency is reflected in processes of commodification and creation of new trading routes leads to deeper understandings of women-centred approaches to trade and the social value attached to the trading systems (van Binsbergen and Geschiere 2005, Appadurai 1986).

Tavaka Women Traders in South Africa

We arrived in South Africa in the early hours of the morning, at 4 or 5, and we would not rest as trading activities started immediately with market identification and agreement by the trading partners moving together (Photo 7.8). Trading started immediately because the women had to capitalise on time and make sure that each day was put to use.

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PHOTO 7.8 *Waiting for the trading day to begin at Park Station, Johannesburg*

The Creation of Marketing Space

Markets refer to the places or arrangements for the exchange of goods and services. Markets for goods are constantly evolving in response to changes in consumer needs, the global processes shaping trade, and production becoming increasingly complex and spanning social, local, regional, and global dimensions. Demand drivers are increasingly not local, emphasising the need to understand the links between local/domestic markets and overseas markets. The most obvious example is horticulture, where retailers, particularly supermarkets, in Europe and the United States, have stimulated the production of a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables in developing countries in schemes involving women farmers (Dolan and Humphrey 2000). Although theoretically the market is indifferent to personal social characteristics, the societies into which markets are introduced are not. Markets are deeply gendered, and this fact affects how market institutions function (Seligman 2001).

The women from Merrivale had experience in trading their crops in Zimbabwe, using different trading tactics that were sometimes not useful in South Africa. They would trade their vegetables, peanut butter, bambara nuts, and groundnuts in the major towns of Harare, Masvingo, and Bulawayo, which

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were familiar territory that they could manage. My discussions with the women revealed that, on their first trips to South Africa, they had lacked knowledge about trading in a different environment. Most of them could not speak the language; just two of the women could speak Ndebele. This proved to be a barrier to conducting trade, such that they tried to employ the tactic of displaying their commodities and using gestures to attract customers' attention. The women developed processes to deal with all the problematic issues of operating in a market in a foreign country. Innovative strategies were devised in order to deal with a complex web of issues, such as male traders, other women traders, language differences, and dealing with the law enforcement agencies in South Africa. These issues are discussed more extensively below.

Conflicts within the Trading Space

Conflict refers to disagreement between two parties over financial, economic, or political issues, and social or natural resources. In the marketing sphere, women from urban and rural areas have developed ways and means of solving disputes (Seligman 2001, Dodson 2008). The women are not passive subjects when it comes to conflict resolution. Because of collective cognition, the groups would avoid conflicts so as not to disrupt trading activities; the group shared common attributes, values, and cultures, and the individuals achieved conflict resolution outcomes that none could have achieved alone and that could not be credited to one particular individual's capacity (Kruijssen et al. 2009).

There were instances of conflict when the women were trading. These conflicts emanated from disagreements over commodity prices, the best locations to sell produce, and the poaching of a customer traditionally loyal to a fellow trader. Conflict resolution mechanisms that the parties used consisted of mediation, where I would sometimes be consulted to solve the dispute between the parties, or the women would talk about it and resolves the issue by taking the monetary gains and giving them to the so-called owner of the customer (Mutopo 2010). If I were not there, conflicts would be resolved by the senior member in the group, as it is a norm in Shona society that a verdict or ruling issued by an older person cannot be refuted.

However, some of the women traders, Zimbabweans but not part of my sample, travelled alone because they said that they had been subjected to conflicts on their arrival in South Africa with their trading partners, who would steal their customers or run away from them because they had identified certain market niches that they did not want to share with their friends.

I observed that there was no formal dispute resolution machinery; disputes were resolved through communication strategies. The economic and political

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conditions existing for women at Tavaka Village have led to their re-crafting their identities and managing the resolution of disputes as entrepreneurs in South Africa. The identity traits that manifested themselves were: developing assertiveness during trading, exhibiting knowledge of the trading area they were in, and the capacity to recognise an act of business that might jeopardise their ability to trade independently. In field studies about Kumasi market women in Ghana, Clark (2010:56) asserts that "Kumasi's women traders built their own system of market governance–organized in associations of women who trade in a particular commodity, elect their own 'market queen', and meet as needed to exchange commercial information, resolve disputes, and debate strategies for coping with official interventions or with crises, such as a collapse in prices, a fire, or a change in government policy." In my own trading trips with the women from Tavaka Village, there was no market queen who resolved disputes; most of the women would try to suggest a solution if a dispute erupted; however, the majority decision prevailed in the end.

Monitoring Behaviour Among the Women

We travelled in groups, and non-formal institutional rules regulated the trips. These rules were made so that business would be viable for all the women. Rules were developed to regulate the number of trading commodities that each woman had. It was agreed by the group that each member or pair of travelling partners would carry at least 20 bundles of fresh pumpkin leaves per person. This rule was introduced so that everyone's vegetables would be sold and all the women would have some income. Sometimes, as we travelled with the women doing door-to-door trading in neighbourhoods such as Soweto, if one woman was more successful than others were, she was required not to sell the next day so that her trading companions could have an opportunity to generate income. Also, the women had devised a trading language that conveyed how they would respond to one another if they had arguments with customers, immigration officials, or other traders in Johannesburg.

Public counting of each woman's vegetables was necessary to ensure compliance, and deviation resulted in being asked to leave the group or being omitted on the next trading trip. As these were rural women, they all conformed to the set rules as they all wished to sustain their livelihoods and enhance their capabilities. The results from my study are in agreement with those of Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2000), who studied urban informal women traders in Harare; they argue that there have always been rules of entry for those who want to engage in trade. New women traders from Merrivale observed and learned these rules as they accompanied the veteran cross-border traders, who

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were very knowledgeable about the trade after several years of going to South Africa or Botswana. The unwritten rules have helped shape the striking presence of women in markets, and hence the markets are referred to as *sites of female accumulation* due to the non-formal rules women create to manage their trade (Overa 2005, Morris 1999).

Such livelihood pathways required some social engineering so that all the women could benefit from the trading trips equally. The effectiveness of these verbal agreements was based on the principle of trust among the trading partners. For urban women who were not part of my sample, trading trips to South Africa were about competition. These women were more individualised and they all stated that cross-border trading was about competitiveness and vigour; if you are polite, you lose the game. In contrast, the women with whom I travelled operated in the spirit of *ubuntu* and were very cooperative toward one another as they engaged in trade in South Africa.

Challenges Faced While Trading in South Africa

Trips to South Africa involved a number of challenges for these women. The logistical issues raised by some of the interviewed women reveal instances where their produce was taken and thrown away at the border due to crossing delays, and instances where they would sleep outside Safari Motors in Louis Tritchardt, at the Butterfield Bakery in Musina, and at Park Station and Bree Street in Johannesburg (personal observation, 2009). During transit across the border, women were subjected to verbal abuse and invasive searches.

Sometimes as they were selling, they were harassed by South African police officials, who demanded to see their passports. This undermined the women's work as they were afraid to report these instances to the police. As we sold in Johannesburg, verbal abuse due to xenophobia was common and South African's would shout, "*Makwerekwere,*[8] go back to your country." Thieves were aggressive, and some women had lost money or mobile phones to thieves especially at Park Station as they boarded buses back to Zimbabwe. Furthermore, because the goods they sell are perishable, there is a risk of not being able to sell the produce in time. Although they provide a valuable service, street vendors are often seen as a nuisance in public spaces.

Importance to the Women of Trading in South Africa

Trading proved to be an important venture for the women as it made them realise their capabilities with regard to planning and inspired them to increase their plantings of produce that proved to be popular. In terms of their family

8 *Makwerekwere* is a derogatory word, meaning foreigner, used by South Africans.

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livelihoods, my interviews with the husbands of the women who went to trade in South Africa revealed that their burden of providing for the family had lessened as their wives were also providing income and groceries for household use. My findings corroborate a Ghanaian study where women were found to play a crucial role in the economy, controlling a large share of informal trade and market activity (Morris 1999). Differences also emerge. In Ghana, it was already standard practice in the 1960s to have split accounts between spouses; in rural Zimbabwe, this phenomenon has not become common, and the women do not parade their accounts as the information is concealed and revealed only to people they trust. Some men complained that the income was used without consulting them although it was intended for family upkeep. They felt the women should bring all the money home and plan its use at home, rather than spend some of it in South Africa and bring only some of it home.

Narrative 7.3: Woman trader, farmer, mother, negotiator from Tavaka Village in Louis Tritchardt, South Africa

Mrs Moira Changa (35) is from Merrivale Farm, Tavaka Village in Mwenezi District. She came to Louis Tritchard to sell her matemba*, dried green vegetables, bambara nuts, groundnuts, and mopane worms. She bought the* matemba *at Mucheke market in Masvingo for R100 a 25-litre bucket. Her prices range from R10 for a cup of* mufushwa*, a cup of* matemba*, bambara nuts, and mopane worms. She is in the company of her two-year-old daughter, Shamiso, who is seated and playing. She has an emergency travel document but not a passport; she has applied for the passport in Masvingo but it has not yet been processed. She is happy that crossing the border is now visa-free, and she can come here without having to undergo the pressure of crossing illegally into South Africa. She is married with two children; her husband stayed behind to look after their home. They were able to acquire a plot at Tavaka Village. Her husband at first was not happy about her acquiring land, but later he realised that any man needed land in order to be recognised in society:* musha murume, ini ndakazviitira kuti tiwane pekugara bedzi. Dzimba nemombe ndezvavo (*Any homestead, for it to acquire an important social standing from other villagers, has to have a male figurehead who acts as the embodiment of family values*).

Before coming to Merrivale, they resided in Bope communal lands on their father-in-law's land. They had only one field and they could not grow much. They did not own any cattle or goats as they could not make enough money to buy livestock. In her vegetable garden, Moira grows pumpkins,

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watermelons, onions, and leafy vegetables. She collects grass within their plot of land and around the farm to make sweeping brooms. She sells in front of Patel's store because she feels safe there, and she rents her stall from a local woman for R50 a day. A woman has pegged another stall beside her; she is from Zimbabwe but has been residing in Louis Tritchardt for the past 10 years as she is married to a South African. Her name is Maggie. Mrs. Changa has become friends with Maggie, and she also sells some of her agricultural produce in bulk to her. She is not harassed as people think she is Venda. She also speaks a little Venda because some of her neighbours at Merrivale speak the language; that is how she sells. The dried vegetables are termed munawa wa murowo*, the round nuts are termed* vafhiwi zvavowo*. The* matemba *she calls as they are.*

She comes to Louis once a month so that when she buys her things to sell at home she can bring them into Zimbabwe duty free according to the Zimbabwe customs regulations. She normally makes R500 to R800 the two days she comes to trade her commodities. This income has bought farming implements for their plot, clothes for her family, and food, and she can pay the man who helps them on their plot. She also takes care of her parents and in-laws. She decides herself on what to buy when going home. Her husband makes wooden carvings and sells them to bulk traders who come from as far away as Harare on their way to South Africa. She herself does not normally sell the wooden carvings because they take time to sell, and she feels that men are better able to sell them than women are. She herself decided to start coming to South Africa when it became difficult to survive in Zimbabwe. She felt that it would improve her family's life. The number of Zimbabweans trading in South Africa was still low in 2004, but it has increased now, and South Africans sometimes determine the prices of the goods. She has both South African and Zimbabwean customers.

Source: Author's fieldwork, Louis Tritchardt, South Africa, 2009.

However, the women and the men all agreed that the income from the trips provided them with South African rand, which, along with the US dollar, has been the main trading currency in Zimbabwe since February 2009, consequent to the scrapping of the Zimbabwean dollar because of hyperinflation. Access to the rand from the women's trading trips made it easier for the families to be involved in transactions at home. The women traders had financial autonomy as they could decide on income and budgetary issues through their own initiative to trade in South Africa. As noted earlier, the women traders emerge as

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"mobile workshops." They ensure that their income meets their family's needs. The case history in Narrative 7.3 substantiates these arguments.

The woman presented in the case history in Narrative 7.3 had financial autonomy because she decided on her own initiative to trade in South Africa and could use her income according to her own budgetary needs. Her income was meeting her family's needs. She aimed to achieve a better livelihood outcome to sustain herself and her dependents. It was through the acquired land that she developed the innovative strategy of exploring South African markets. My findings corroborate a study in which small-scale, cross-border women traders from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Swaziland, who were likely to be the biggest earners in their households, said that they valued the financial independence that their work brought to them (SADC 2009).

There was an even division of labour in Moira's household, because when she went on marketing trips, her husband remained at home to take care of the homestead and any children who did not accompany her. This is clear evidence of the changing nature of rural households in post-2000 Zimbabwe. Some rural men are allowing their wives to travel independently in search of better livelihood outcomes. It challenges the traditionally held assumption that women should be confined to the domestic sphere. Women are pioneering in the public sphere with innovative marketing skills. In the Ghanaian market at Kumasi, one woman said that she grew onions in her garden and was able to look after her husband and children, hence "onions were now a new source of income and had become a part of her family, as they provided for her livelihood needs" (Clark 1994:22). Her family's livelihood had taken a new shape, and her trade refuted the traditionally held African belief that men should work and look after their families. By entering the market economy, women were also taking care of their families.

Over the years, rural women have developed innovative strategies that cushion them against vulnerabilities and improve their level of living. The women are proficient in meeting the requirements and demands of any situation that confronts them as they go to South Africa and as they sell their products. The women in the market develop hyphenated identities, combining their own cultural and social values with the cultural and social norms prevailing at their market sites. The identities are created through a number of channels, such as language-learning and making acquaintances and friendships with other foreigners and South Africans who come to trade in the market. This pattern is exemplified in the case of Mrs Changa, who developed friendship ties with the other local traders and learned the cultural traits of the Venda so that she could trade her commodities.

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Social Networks and Information Sharing

A social network consists of individuals who exchange on a reciprocal, a non-reciprocal, or a voluntary basis information or other things with the aim of maximising personal utility. Social networks are regarded as a resource that actors derive from specific social structures and then use to pursue their interests; they are created by changes in the relationship among actors (Baker 1990). I define such networks as including friends, colleagues, and more general contacts that provide opportunities to use financial and human capital. A study on women traders in Botswana observes that, to understand vulnerability and risk management, as well as to design interventions to address related problems, information is required on the networks upon which households can fall back (Ntsiane 2004). This is evidenced by women's entry into different kinds of networks (Narrative 7.4).

> Narrative 7.4: Networks and transitory mobility to achieve better livelihood outcomes
>
> Kuti usimuke neladder reupenyu kuenda kuSouth untoda vekuziva kubvira kumabhazi (*In order for you to have a better livelihood when you embark on trips to South Africa, you need to have contacts, starting with bus drivers*).
>
> You have to be a good attractor of connections and have good agricultural produce for you to make the most out of these trips to South Africa.
>
> Even as we sell our peanut butter, bambara nuts and clay pots, as an individual you have to build good relationships between yourselves and the sellers, customers, bus drivers and all the border people.
>
> Even if they sell vegetables, fish, termite mound soil, or mopane worms, these women have very good ways of creating friendships with others. Sometimes their friends from Harare pass by and give them gifts.
>
> Source: Focus group discussions, Chatagwi School, Merrivale, August 2009.

The informants' responses indicate that women from Tavaka Village who are engaged in transitory mobility to South Africa have significantly improved their livelihoods as compared to their counterparts who are not. The informal sector provides an important area for income-earning migrant work, particularly for women and Zimbabweans, as street-traders, vendors, or hawkers, and for other productive activities in the informal sector (Ouchu 2007, Crush 2008, Peberdy 2007). A vendor depends heavily on personal style to supplement marketing skills; she needs social skills to bargain well, persuading her client that she is well aware of price ranges and is embedded in an extensive array of

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social relationships. Traders control the flow of information through a highly complex and far-flung market system. Women are more knowledgeable than men are about the gossip and ties of daily life that constitute the material of social information and networks (Seligman 2001).

The women traders from Tavaka Village have developed agency and capabilities as individuals that have enabled them to achieve better livelihoods and have changed their social status by gaining entry into social classes other than those in which they moved before trading in South Africa, and to which most of their acquaintances do not belong. Class differentiation emerged from the wealth-ranking exercise described in Chapter 2, where the villagers pointed out that those who undertook trading trips to South Africa belonged to the rich category as they had access to income and more food, harvested a lot of crops, had more cattle, and had access to electricity through solar panels. This classification points to differences in class among the villagers if a class analysis in undertaken. My observations based on my six trips in May, June, July, and September 2009, and January and June 2010, led me to conclude that the marketing of commodities in South Africa by these women is largely influenced by networks that are based either on kith-and-kin relationships or on friendships that have been built as a result of continuous meeting in cross-border buses. Totem sharing emerged as a useful basis for using jointly market information and marketing space and reaching agreement on prices. Another important feature tied to the totem was the concept of *zvidza zvematongo/kubva kumusha kumwechete*. This concept refers to the fact that, just as they had their own homes, the women also had ties with relatives and friends, enabling them to have information about the locations where commodities such as bambara nuts were making a profit. Social networks also facilitated collective action since the women were confident to invest in collective actions knowing that others would also collaborate.

A constant feature on my selling trips with the women was that Indians would buy raw groundnuts and, once we arrived in Johannesburg, the women would generally devote a day to selling at Bruma Market, where most Indians operate shops. The women from Merrivale also accessed the markets through South African customers, who would link them up with their own friends. My personal observations revealed that they would also enter into verbal contracts with Indian shopowners and sell in front of their shops for a fee of R30 to R50 a day, depending on the location of the shop (see, for example, Narrative 7.3).

The women would also display their wares at shopping centres, where traders from South Africa and other countries as well would be selling their goods. This was a much-preferred option in towns like Louis Tritchardt (Makhado)

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PHOTO 7.9 *Mrs. C., Tavaka Village, selling along Jeppe Street, Johannesburg*

and Polokwane (Pietersburg), as the South African police would not harass them much; if they did, South African traders would protect them. *"Protection by other South African traders, either men or women, would come after having sold in the area for some time."*[9] The goods would also be displayed in front of shops; these proved to be good marketing sites as many people come to purchase various items in Ackermans, Clicks, and Truworths on Songozwi Street, the main street in Louis Tritchadt (Photos 7.9 to 7.13). The women pointed out that these served as good selling points, particularly at the end of the month when people had been paid and had extra disposable income. Despite being harassed by the police, the women would continue with their trading activities for that day; they would never abandon their trading. They demonstrated strong resistance to intimidation and would not even allow the state security forces to deter their livelihood activities.

Some of the women had entered into partnerships with other non-South Africans, for instance Nigerians, and they would use the stalls they had acquired through South Africans to sell their wares. This option offered much protection since the women would not be asked to produce their passports and be

9 Informal interview with C.P., Bree Street, Johannesburg, April 2010.

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PHOTO 7.10 *Mrs. M., Merrivale, selling her goods in Louis Tritchardt*

PHOTO 7.11 *Indigenous vegetables being packed for sale by Mrs. Z.*

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PHOTO 7.12 *Ennety with her child selling crafts in Louis Tritchardt*

PHOTO 7.13 *Mopane worms packed for sale in Louis Tritchardt*

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harassed by the police, particularly in Johannesburg where the police are always on the lookout for illegal migrants from Zimbabwe.

Learning the local South African languages proved an aid to effective marketing. Linguistic proficiency enabled communication between sellers and buyers, creating leverage for bargaining for both the buyer and the seller. The women would learn the basics of Zulu, Venda, Shangaan, and Sotho; the women that I interviewed pointed out that, by learning the local South African languages, they were also protecting themselves from xenophobic attacks and preventing police harassment. Most selling in municipal markets is on a small scale with no capital support. Selling, bargaining, budgeting, and negotiating skills are learned on the job by the women. My findings challenge those of Viljoen (2005), who argues that, although most of them sell at the major markets in all the main towns and cities of South Africa, they have little idea of the dynamics of the towns as they are usually confined to one space. I noticed that the women had much knowledge about the rural and urban towns of South Africa, and they knew the best marketing spots. This gave them the incentive to learn the basic language skills that would enable them to trade in different locations. Women's success in marketing lies in part in learning the culture of the place and the language: acquisition of the appropriate language and aggressive marketing tactics are skills acquired though an informal socialisation process. Market women have distinctive ways of communicating among themselves when they discuss prices and customers, or when they quarrel among themselves. Markets offer glimpses of power linked to local and national market politics; that is a feature that I later saw evolving as I embarked on the trading trips with the women.

Another strategy used by the women from Merrivale was to join marketing societies with established Zimbabweans in Johannesburg who occupied large trading space in markets such as Park Station to help them trade at their marketing stalls. The women from Merrivale would pay these Zimbabweans a monthly fee of between R100 and R200. This tactic was mainly utilised when business had not been good that month, and the women would leave their agricultural produce, mopane worms, and other commodities so that they would be sold by the Zimbabweans who employed South Africans to trade their goods.

The door-to-door trading system was also popular among the women, especially in the black suburbs, such as Soweto. We would carry our goods every morning and get onto the train to go to these townships. We moved in groups of twos. This measure was adopted to cushion ourselves from any danger and to help each other with language. We would call to all the houses in the neighbourhood, which we divided among ourselves along the existing lines

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of houses in the area. With this type of trade, credit was accepted. The women carried little notebooks and pens where they would write the names of their customers, the commodities purchased, the amount paid, and the balance outstanding. Credit was given to customers who had established good trade relationships with the women. It was also given to demonstrate trust, as the people given credit had been buying from the women for long periods. This approach was adopted to avoid default and confrontations with anyone who wanted to renege on paying for the commodities they had purchased. The money would be collected the next month we came to South Africa. Sometimes, our customers would give us payment in the form of old clothes, *mazitye,*[10] and we would accept them as a monetary portion of the balance due was also paid. The clothes are disposed of in this way by the South Africa owners as a way of clearing their wardrobes.

The next month, the credit would be followed up. When credit was granted, a cup of bambara nuts was priced at R20, a cup of mopane worms at R30, and a bundle of vegetables at R15. This price-setting was seen by the women as a way of cushioning themselves against the threats associated with selling commodities on credit. The giving of credit had its own problems and risks. I noticed that sometimes we would visit the homes of our customers and they would tell us that they did not have any money, or we would find that they had moved to another location. The women did not give up, and they would make follow-up trips until they were paid their money. In their research on trading women in West Africa, Seligman (2001) and Morris (1999) found that such trading relationships cannot be regarded as enduring but are rather a heterogeneous combination of relationships that must be innovatively managed by the women to ensure survival of their business and to access their money. To facilitate trade and reduce risks, marketers and buyers developed a relationship involving trust and reciprocal favours, such as advances of credit and favourable prices by traders in return for a steady supply of products from the traders. A similar situation is reflected in the dealings of the Merrivale women cross-border traders.

Collective Action, Organization and Solidarity

Collective action refers to forms of on-going group activity, which may be formal or informal, involving women separately or together with men, with a shared purpose of promoting their role as direct actors in specific agricultural

10 *Mazitye* is a Shona term referring to old clothes that women cross-border traders accept as part payment for their produce from their South African customers and bring back to Zimbabwe.

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markets. Collective action is a strategy designed to achieve a particular objective that corresponds to a public good. There are many forms of collective action. The development of a collective action culture is usually gradual, and group objectives may include increasing the income and well-being of members, modifying social relationships, influencing policies, developing human and social capital, and fostering networks (Ramirez and Berdegue 2003). In order to cope with trading, organising the trips, and conflicts, the women have devised methods to sustain their livelihoods in light of all the complexities they face as they trade their produce in South Africa.

Collective action has emerged as a useful coping mechanism as the women do not travel to South Africa or sell individually; they are normally in pairs or in groups comprising four people at most. They only take different routes when selling in the same suburb, but they always arrange a meeting place so that they can keep track of one another. Collective action promotes the spirit of solidarity and agency in managing and improving livelihood options, as they discuss how best to use the income they derive from selling and the important items to purchase for use in their own homes and for resale. Collective action is needed to enable the building of small businesses among rural producers. In this instance, it is paramount to note that collective action facilitated social-learning processes. Social learning is the "process through which groups of people or stakeholders learn, together they define problems, search for the solutions, and assess the value of a solution for a specific practice" (Kruijssen et al. 2009:48). In my observations, the women developed collective cognitive capabilities as opposed to multiple cognitions, which tend to affect cooperative efforts in trading activities. In solving any marketing problems, the women would try to see the problematic issue from one angle and understand how best to deal with it, rather than maintain different viewpoints in cases of differences of opinion.

Being part of a group and participating toward meeting a common objective provides direct benefits to individuals (Dercon et al. 2006). The women developed social bonds emanating from working together and promoting the spirit of collective action emphasised in African culture, through the spirit of *ubuntu*.[11] Elements of working together were evident in the women with whom I travelled to South Africa. Cooperation and pulling apart were all manifest in the South African locations that I observed as I sold with the women. This raises the argument that the women's movement is not yet homogenised

11 *Ubuntu* is an African term that refers to the spirit of solidarity and oneness that Africans are taught in the primary and secondary socialisation phases so that they respect and adhere to the principle of collective sharing of assets and manmade and natural resources.

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in informal trade, thus posing another challenge for effectively speaking with one voice in regional trade and therefore affecting its prominence on the world trade agenda. The Merrivale women pointed out that, in their experience, collective action rather than individual activities was the more viable approach as it protected them against various problems, such as crime in South Africa. Individual and group efforts by women trans-boundary traders to create sustainable trading spaces should be appreciated–particularly the role played by Zimbabwean women when trading in neighbouring countries (Ndiaye 2009).

Summary

This chapter gives an account of transitory mobility and how women negotiate their trading trips to South Africa. I have explained the negotiation of border formalities from the Zimbabwean and South African sides. The importance of the trading trips has been highlighted in terms of the women's notions of livelihood improvement and capabilities. Access to marketing space and the role of social networks have been discussed to elucidate how the trade is organised by the women from Merrivale Farm. The notion of the different identities created during the trading trips by the women from Tavaka Village has been explored. I have also described how collective action is utilised in the trading sphere, and how it is a valuable addition to the women's trading activities. Conflict and conflict management are inherent features of any human activity, and the chapter demonstrated the conflict resolution mechanisms that the women adopt in order to solve any points of disagreements among themselves. The women's agency emerged as a core principle in managing their lives in a complex environment where they have to constantly negotiate survival strategies to meet their survival needs and those of their families. Trading groundnuts, bambara nuts, mopane worms and indigenous vegetables has emerged as a key livelihood strategy for the Merrivale women.

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CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Introduction

Global debates on land reforms have focused extensively on agricultural production; more recently, the role of women in accessing and using land in Africa has become an important concern because of the rising global need for food (Lipton 2009, Jacobs 2012, Hebinck and Shackleton 2011, Makura-Paradza 2010, Tsikata 2003). Women are seen as active participants in accessing land and producing food and as good environmental managers of other natural resources (Jackson 2003, Agarwal 2003, Vijfhuizen 2002, Jacobs 2012, Whitehead and Tsikata 2003, Seur 1992). This revised perception has led to the birth of new policy formulations and wider debates on land and rural livelihoods globally. The important theme elaborated in this study is that women are not passive agents of land reforms. Despite their not being included as beneficiaries in their own right in the FTLRP, they still find means to sustain their land-based livelihoods.

Contrary to the interpretations often found in the media and in statements made by donor agencies, the FTLRP provided opportunities that have been exploited by hidden actors, the women that I studied. My findings challenge deep-rooted stereotypes in development discourses. My arguments demonstrate that, largely through their active role in accessing land, growing different types of crops, and searching for alternative markets for these crops, women have managed to engage in food production and provide food security as they operate on the principle that a woman's granary is never empty (*dura raamai vemusha hariperi*). This sentiment was continuously conveyed to me by the women, and I witnessed it often during fieldwork. The woman's granary refers to the crop storehouses the women have built at their homes, and in these granaries they store food for family consumption as well as for sale—either locally or in South Africa.

The material presented in this book substantiates the need for further examination of how the theories of the sustainable livelihoods approach, gendered processes of land reform, and network analysis that form the basis of this study relate to the importance of understanding redistributive land reforms from ecological, political, livelihoods, and gendered perspectives. The Merrivale women's livelihood constructions verified the notion that political ecologies of the environment are better managed by women, whose

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understanding of the environmental landscape is influenced by their social knowledge of preservation of land-based livelihoods. Mwenezi is situated in an area previously designated as unsuitable for agricultural production, but the women settlers refute the concept of agro-ecological landscapes designated by colonial masters, whose interest it was to safeguard land that had both livestock and agricultural importance for themselves (Wolmer 2007, Scoones *et al.* 2010). Theories of changing land use in Zimbabwe's new agro-history should be understood in terms of the connection between the people and the landscape. This study has depicted the importance of natural, social, economic, and political landscapes in women's land-based livelihoods. Landscapes in the African setting are imbued with multiple meanings that go beyond what one sees at first glance. I postulate the need to revisit and reconceptualise conventional theories on gendered land reform, the SLA, and social networks to make them reflective of the changes in the everyday livelihoods and life trajectories of the women with whom I worked at Merrivale Farm. These new understandings of the landscape and agro-ecological environment could open up new policy space with gendered elements.

In light of this background, this study aimed to find out how women at Tavaka Village, Merrivale Farm accessed land and shaped their livelihood security in the aftermath of the FTLRP. In order to understand how women accessed land and carved out livelihoods using transitory mobility after the FTLRP, the study addressed three specific objectives: to investigate how women at Merrivale Farm used passive strategies to access land following the FTLRP; to explore how access to land enabled the women to access other natural resources; and to find out how transitory mobility to South Africa has emerged as a key survival and coping strategy for the women. This chapter draws some conclusions that are important in the discourse on women, land, and livelihood options.

Main Conclusions of the Study

Conclusion One

Agricultural production is taking place in the so-called dry areas of agro-ecological regions IV and V. Women are playing a critical role in agricultural production in these locations.

- Mwenezi had generally been considered an area suited only for cattle production and game farming. Environmental historian, James McCann (1999),

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has pointed out that landscapes change not in a linear fashion over time but within years, and the changes affect climatic zoning and land uses. Leach and Mearns (1996) raise a critique, based on observations and interviews over long periods, that local experience does contest scientific information with regard to land use as documented by colonial officers. They critique existing scientific environmental orthodoxies on land uses and ecological zoning in savannahs of Southern Africa.

- Observations on the ground, however, reveal that the fast-track farmers have been involved in mixed farming, and they are happy with the progress they have made since moving to the farms in 2000. This finding differs from the views of Rutherford (2012) and Zamchiya (2011), who assert that agriculture has almost collapsed on the new fast-track farms because land is idle. The farmers in Mwenezi grow cotton, maize, and sunflowers. They also keep cattle, goats, and donkeys. The women are involved in growing bambara nuts, ground-nuts, watermelons, and pumpkins. They are also involved in horticultural activities in communal hand-irrigated gardens, where they grow fresh vegetables. The crops are mainly for sale in South Africa, where a better market for fresh produce is readily available. Some of the crops are also for family consumption, hence meeting the food self-sufficiency requirements of the fast-track farms. The fast-track farms in Mwenezi have potential because the people, particularly the women, have been able to manage their land-based livelihoods, and all attest to an improvement in livelihoods 10 years after the FTLRP.

Conclusion Two

Women in Tavaka Village are strategic actors in relation to accessing land on the new fast-track farms as they are skilful negotiators in bargaining within a society rooted in patriarchy. The stereotypical assumption that only individual rights and titled property guarantee secure access to land for women in Africa is refuted in this work. Rather, the negotiated positions and bargaining processes that exist in patriarchal structures lead to contract-like arrangements enabling women's access to land. The contracts are verbal, and they are subject to manipulation and renegotiation by the women, creating winners and losers in the bargaining process; but I demonstrate that women at Tavaka Village emerge as victors.

- My analysis reveals that the FTLRP allowed women to access land. A few women managed to acquire land individually, the majority via men—particularly through marriage and cultural contracts. It should be observed that the FTLRP was never intended to create a substantial base for women

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to access land since the 20 per cent quota of land reserved for women under the A1 scheme was not met in the land distribution process (Jacobs 2012, Goebel 2005, Makura-Paradza 2010, Long 2001). The unintended consequence of the FTLRP was that women managed to bargain with patriarchy and access land. I have demonstrated how, after the FTLRP, despite the contradictory patterns in patriarchy, women had the ability to make use of these contradictions to access land and shape mobile livelihoods. Traditional patriarchal/patrilocal systems meant that women gained access to land largely through intra-household negotiations, and often hidden, informal means (weapons of the weak), typically restricted to employment only after the birth of their first or second child, as demonstrated by the *tsewu* concept discussed previously.

- Access to land is not formalised but is based on negotiation and trust relationships. This foundation entails some insecurity, but most of the women continued to invest in their land on the basis of this arrangement. Women's negotiations and bargaining with the family, state, and traditional actors have proved useful in accessing land in Mwenezi. It emerged from the women that despite most of them living in Tavaka Village as mothers, wives, sisters, or daughters, they still had land-acquisition opportunities, which they used to give themselves access to land as individuals. The different ways of acquiring land were all seen as prudent, and were even supported by the traditional authorities, as they enabled the women to have individual space in agriculture, and they could grow their own crops for which there was a ready market.
- Whether the land had been acquired by renting or clearing land that had not been designated for farming, the day-to-day working on that land constituted a legitimate ownership claim for the women. Some of them had acquired land as individuals during the chaotic phase of fast-track and so were land beneficiaries in their own right. Some, by virtue of inheritance consequent to the death of a spouse, had acquired land, and hence they were recognised as landowners in the village. The women's cooperative hand-irrigated gardens constituted their individual land. The land was registered in their names; it was their own property and had nothing to do with their families. In this instance, the women pointed out that they had access to and control over land that was recognised even by the district agricultural officers and NGOs.

Conclusion Three

Although women are mostly portrayed as engaged in farming their husband's fields, the women at Tavaka Village actually invested considerable amounts of

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time in farming their own pieces of land and, through cooperative efforts, they helped one another to work and harvest their crops.

- It emerged from the discussions, my own personal observations, transect walks, and participatory engagement that the women invested time in their own plots of land, and, as a result, they were able to produce an abundance of groundnuts, bambara nuts and pumpkin leaves, and managed to be critically involved in their water gardens. The women had the capacity to manage individual and family plots and could divide their time for each task without compromising the other tasks. It has often been said that women on farms in Africa cannot balance their time as they have a lot of activities to undertake; however, the women in Tavaka could balance their time effectively. Women were at the forefront in labour issues at the farms since they were the ones who organised and managed the labour on the farms. This finding applied even in the polygynous homesteads. The women there were actively involved in labour issues as they undertook most of the farming activities, while the men were responsible for supervising how the activities were carried out.

Although men regulate access to land and use of other natural resources, women have developed active strategies for accessing and using the land and other natural resources. Women are the daily managers of the land and have the opportunity to act as watchdogs of the other resources because they spend more time at home than the men, who are engaged in other activities and who are often absent.

- Women spend most of their time at home since agriculture requires a large time commitment. I concur with van der Ploeg's (2010) assertion that farming, especially smallholder farming, requires huge time investments, making it distinct from other entrepreneurial activities. The women operated in an environment where rules for managing natural resources were formulated by men, but, because they spent more time within the village, they had the capacity to gain access and use rights to the other natural resources. By virtue of residing in the village, the women could harvest these resources. Despite rules having been put in place to regulate, for instance, mopane harvesting, the women devised means to harvest mopane worms. Traditionally, mopane worm harvesting and trading have been a woman's domain. Their everyday encounters with natural resources gave the women an inherent advantage as they had the leeway to overharvest the resources on a daily basis, and the traditional leaders could not question them.

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- Men had a say in relation to access to water, arguing that they were the ones who had acquired the fast-track plots of land. Some women were vocal in water management policies at village level and even challenged the traditional leadership, demonstrating that women's voices could also be heard at times. As everyday users of water, the women knew how best to deal with water management issues. Keeping quiet was a strategy that the women used at water meetings. They ostensibly agreed with what was said about water governance in the village, but, when it came to paying water fees, for instance, to access a newly erected well in the village, the passive resistance displayed by the women worked because they refused to contribute the money required per household.
- Women also had independent access to water. They could find their own water sources by drilling their own water points that could be used by the whole village. They also helped in the reconstruction of the dams that had been damaged at the farm.
- The women were active managers of natural resources, such as indigenous plants, which they could harvest when they wanted without heeding the laid-down rules. Firewood was collected almost every day, and the women even collected more firewood to give to their relatives in the communal areas. Despite the existence of rules to curb firewood use and abuse, the women had silent channels for manoeuvring and asserting their control over access to these natural resources.
- The initiatives by NGOs for managing the environment through tree planting were dominated by women, demonstrating that women were better users of the environment and understood the importance of a soundly balanced agro-ecological environment.

Conclusion Four

Transitory mobility to South Africa is a crucial livelihood strategy for the women as it generates income, helps to develop capabilities for trans-regional trade, and enables individually initiated activities that lead to the successful survival of families and improvement of their livelihoods.

- Women emerged as "mobile workshops" since they were able to connect tilling the land with the search for markets outside their own country. The women who travelled to South Africa in order to trade their bambara nuts, groundnuts, mopane worms, indigenous and fresh vegetables, and other commodities such as baskets and clay pots manufactured out of natural resources, argued that their livelihoods had significantly improved. Most of the women started their trading trips after moving to the new fast-track

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farms–trips motivated by the economic and political problems in Zimbabwe. The women needed active markets where they could trade their commodities and earn foreign currency, which they could exchange on the parallel market at home. The trips to South Africa enabled the women to support their immediate families and members of their extended families because they could provide them with financial help and food. This result challenges the view that African farming communities are moving toward deagrarianisation (Bryceson 2000); rather, the women have better livelihoods consequent to re-peasantisation as a result the FTLRP. It is through farming that they search for markets in South Africa, further developing their capabilities to sustain livelihoods.

- Trading trips to South Africa also enabled upward class mobility. Socially, the women who travelled to South Africa acquired a better social status as they acquired items such as radios and mobile phones, and had access to a higher quality and quantity of food on a daily basis compared to their non-mobile counterparts. They could also pay their children's school fees and meet the needs of their farming business such as farming implements, seeds, and animal pharmaceuticals.

Conclusion Five

Women play a part in livestock production and are involved through hidden activities in the commodity marketing chain.

- Livestock production has been seen as the domain of men in terms of management and marketing. However, women from Tavaka Village played an influential role in livestock management and marketing. Most livestock were owned by men. Some women, however, also owned livestock that they acquired through access via cultural channels, such as *lobola*. Both men and women were involved in cattle rearing and had responsibilities in relation to the associated activities. Women owned poultry, but when it came to disposing of livestock, women were active in looking for buyers; however, the prices were determined by men. The fact that women looked for buyers who would be dealt with by their husbands shows that they played an enormous role in organising the commodity chain. In terms of the income derived from livestock sales, there was a traditional division. Men got all the money for cattle, goats, donkeys and sheep, as they made the decision to sell the livestock. Women sold eggs or milk secretly, without their husband's knowledge. This subterfuge meant that they had the autonomy to decide on prices in the commodity chain dealing with poultry products and milk.

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Conclusion Six

Social networks are an important feature of the women's survival. Social networks are an important asset at home and in South Africa as they shape the outcomes of the women's transitory mobility when they travel to sell their crops and other items manufactured from natural resources.

- Women were the most critical social networkers at Merrivale Farm. Networks formed the basis of access to and use of land. Networks were also important in the pooling of labour for work on the fast-track farms through cooperative arrangements. Women were able to recruit labour efficiently because they were trusted by the labourers. The casual labourers argued that, when recruited by women, they were assured of being paid the agreed wages, unlike when recruited by men—who would sometimes change the payments. Women were the ones who organised and ensured that there was enough food. In their trading trips to South Africa, social networks facilitated the journeys and were useful in the transportation of their commodities to South Africa. I found that the social networks were horizontally organised; they had a coordinated function and were not power based. Nor were they based on competitive actions, but rather on the need to ensure that every woman's livelihood goal was met. Hence, the social networks were organised and driven by trust. These networks also possessed flexibility; a woman with experience would arrange her own modalities and variations. If one woman, for instance, could not travel to Johannesburg on the same day as the others because she had family obligations to fulfil, it was acceptable for her to travel only as far as Musina to sell her produce. Social networks formed the central pillar for their access to marketing information and trading space in South Africa. Social networks were thus paramount in enabling the local and transitory mobility aspects in the lives of the women.
- Social networks enabled them to engage in transitory mobility since they had a pillar of support from their families. The most secure and important social networks in Tavaka Village and in South Africa were those based on totem bonds, and these were critically valued by the women in shaping their livelihood options. While the women were trading in South Africa, their children were looked after through social networks, by their friends, extended family members, and church members. These supporters would visit the absentee mother's family on a day-to-day basis to find out how the children and the other members of the family were coping. Men had their own social networks in the form of beef committees and the organised work parties that assisted to ensure survival on the new fast-track farms. Most of the men's social networks were shaped around beer-drinking circles at the

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local growth points. Men also had business networks, but an analysis of their business networks was beyond the scope of this study.

Conclusion Seven

Collective action is an important element for conducting trading activities in South Africa and for pooling labour at home, especially during the harvesting of crops that demanded large inputs of labour.

- Collective action was an important element that enabled the women to trade in South Africa and helped in the search for trading spaces and in manoeuvring around the difficulties of xenophobia and crime in South Africa. Collective action enabled the women to develop further the spirit of *ubuntu* away from Merrivale and foster the development of cooperative efforts in livelihoods. Conflicts that emanated during our trading trips were resolved by the spirit of sharing and seeking amicable solutions, as women are more inclined toward maintaining the spirit of *ubuntu*. Men also have the *ubuntu* spirit, but it is much more promoted by women. Collective action was also paramount at Tavaka Village during labour parties, where the women helped one another harvest groundnuts—a task that requires much labour and careful attention as the nuts are harvested manually. Collective action therefore helped in the sharing of farming knowledge, in finding trading spaces, and in creating new livelihood options at Tavaka Village. This happened among women who had come from different areas, further strengthening ties, even during times of sadness such as funerals in the village. I concur with Murisa (2011) on the importance of local agency in fostering collective associations among people who have come from different localities.

Approaches to conflict resolution during trading trips in South Africa often involved mediation efforts among the women to promote a spirit of togetherness.

- If conflicts arose during the trading trips to South Africa, the women would generally engage in mediation efforts led by a neutral person within the group or by the person deemed to be the best mediator. Sometimes, when outside Zimbabwe, the conflicting parties would not focus on their dispute, but once they got home they would sit down and try to resolve the issue amicably as it was always felt that conflicts could invite cultural interference that might affect the sale of products. This approach led to the place that was called home during that time being a centre for bargaining and mediation in order to resolve the conflict and find amicable solutions that

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would leave all parties feeling satisfied. The aim of the conflict resolution mechanisms was to create unity and not to punish individuals per se.

Conclusion Eight

Methodological and conceptual issues have been expanded

- The need to understand the social construction of land-based livelihoods after the FTLRP allowed me to go beyond existing, well-known typologies (Scoones *et al*. 2010, Bryceson 2000) dealing with men and women in rural economies, farming, and livelihoods. Thus, I was able me to deconstruct these typologies into those presented in this book.
- I demonstrate the emergence of a vibrant rural women's movement that is moving away from kinship-based arrangements of accessing land through patriarchal bargaining, leading to the emergence of a new discourse that challenges the social construction of the conceptual approaches that have dominated anthropological studies and rural development. I differ from Goebel (2005b), who presents women on fast-track farms as more vulnerable and as having lost individual strategies for accessing land. I challenge the social categories that have existed in rural sociological research and present analytical cultural boundaries that facilitate positive opportunities for the strategic women actors.

Summary

In summary, this research has demonstrated that detailed ethnographic study based on a case study approach can solidly add to our understanding of the strategies women use to access land in the aftermath of the FTLRP, about how access to land leads to their access to other natural resources, and about how transitory mobility is an important livelihood option for the women. This approach has led to our broader understanding of how capabilities are developed and different pathways are adopted by the women in order to have sustainable livelihoods.

The results in relation to my first objective have led to the conclusion that women are not passive subjects of land-reform programmes; they will adopt bargaining strategies and tactics to access land on the basis of cultural contracts. Social networks are very important in these different methods. With regard to the second objective, women will always silently utilise channels to access other natural resources based on their residential status on the fast-track farms. There are rules to regulate access to, and harvesting of, natural

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resources, but women have ways of creating suitable ways to circumvent these rules that will not lead them into trouble. With regard to the third objective, transitory mobility in the form of trips to South Africa is an important livelihood option for these women. This pattern represents a re-peasantisation of society, as the women largely grow their cash crops to sell them in different towns of South Africa. Despite facing many vulnerabilities and threats on their trips, the women—through their social networks and collaborative strategies—find their way to trading spaces in South Africa. Social networks are important in accessing marketing space and information in South Africa.

It is important to note that the study demonstrates that women are emerging as active in using their own agency and capabilities to shape their livelihoods in rural Mwenezi. The implication is that women will always develop pathways and styles of managing livelihoods in rural areas.

Key Points for Further Research

The theories of the SLA, gendered processes of land reform, and social networks all point to the inherent propensities of people to define their livelihood styles in terms of networks and to use different coping strategies based on self-empowerment. In this study, I have only researched women's access to land and livelihoods in the post-fast-track farms. There is thus an area needing further study; it would be beneficial to examine how both men and women shape their livelihoods on the new fast-track farms in different parts of Zimbabwe. This wider perspective would enable the development of research on social organisation, land and livelihoods that could feed into the theories of the SLA, gendered land reform, social networks, and women's agency. Such research is necessary because of the differences across agro-ecological zones in Zimbabwe that imply differences in the way livelihoods security is addressed. In addition, such research would help to interrogate how the five assets described in the SLA influence men and women's capabilities, pathways, and agency in building sustainable rural livelihoods. It would also help to build a policy on the effective management of land and livelihoods in the aftermath of land reforms. In the following section, I proffer some policy recommendations.

Policy Recommendations

In this section, I outline recommendations based on the analysis of the results of this study. This study recognises that some research has already been

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undertaken on women and livelihoods after the FTLRP. However, little research has been conducted in the selected study area, and most of the work has not focused on the relationship between women, land, and livelihoods based on transitory mobility. Therefore, this study may be important in providing policy recommendations for dealing with women and land-based livelihoods on fast-track farms.

Recommendation One

Acknowledge the crucial role that women play in strategising access to land in situations where important resources such as land are governed by male primogeniture.

- There is need for policymakers, traditional leaders, and institutions dealing with women's livelihoods to start rethinking the strategies that women use to access land. This refocusing will help to facilitate better approaches to ensuring access to land by women and to coordinating future land reform programmes. Such initiatives could also help in framing policies that are sensitive to the needs of women when issues relating to access to and control of land are dealt with at global, national, and local levels. The strategies used by the women studies here enable the concerned parties to shape policies on access to land based on the daily realities of women on fast-track farms. This reshaping of policies could also help to build national gendered policies on land and livelihoods that are responsive to the role played by women in matters relating to the access, use and control of land.

Recommendation Two

Women should be recognised as environmental managers who will always devise systems to access natural resources in ways that will not lead to depletion of these resources, as women are concerned about the needs of future generations.

- Natural resources policies tied to women's access to land should be developed either as separate statutory instruments or as part of existing policy frameworks because women are able to use the natural resources at their disposal in a sustainable manner. Women are also interested in reforestation, and a comprehensive policy should be developed, centring on the new fast-track farms and building on women's sustainable use of natural resources. Policymakers should note that women use natural resources to improve the livelihoods of all members of society, and hence self-initiated

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projects that centre on women's use of these natural resources should be encouraged.

Recommendation Three

Devise policies in which the government, civil society, and rural women engaged in transitory mobility to South Africa can work together to facilitate cross-border trading trips as this trading helps to strengthen the economic visibility of the women.

- There is need for the government, NGOs, and the women involved in transitory mobility to come together and devise policies that will see all actors being active in supporting the women's trade in agricultural and other commodities in South Africa. This collaboration would help the emergence of a rural women's movement active in managing land-based livelihoods through transitory mobility. Such policies would also help alleviate the mishaps the women face on their trips to South Africa. Existing agricultural policies should revamp the cumbersome bureaucratic procedure for acquiring trading permits; there is need to rethink the existing procedures for acquiring these permits and to redesign them in light of the new environment after the FTLRP.
- Space should be opened up for NGOs, both local and international, to reconsider their policies with regard to fast-track farms to deal with the positive daily realities that exist in these environments. This reformulation is important as it would provide the opportunity for the women to acquire financial support and even embark on their trading trips on a larger scale.

Recommendation Four

Design policies that are sensitive to the social realities of the fast-track farms and appreciate the importance of social networks in the daily management of people's lives.

- All stakeholders involved in agricultural activities in Zimbabwe need to come together and revise the existing social protection measures that exist in the country. Social networks are critical for the livelihoods of the people on the fast-track farms, especially women, and so there is a need to have policies that frame the importance of informal and formal support systems in the daily lives of women farmers and traders. This recognition would facilitate an understanding of how agricultural practices can best be improved and how social support systems are important in the lives of ordinary women in accessing land and in engaging in other livelihood security

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strategies, such as transitory mobility. This understanding would also foster common ground for understanding the importance of social networks in improving land-based livelihoods.

Recommendation Five

Create collective action principles in rural development policies as they are important in trading activities and agricultural production systems.

- There is need for the application of collective action principles in the design of rural development policies in Zimbabwe because, as the women's stories have shown, collective action on trading trips to South Africa and at home is crucial in creating livelihood pathways for the women.

Recommendation Six

Conflict resolution and conflict transformative approaches that are cognisant of cultural values must be applied in the new land policy being crafted in Zimbabwe.

- There is need to build conflict transformative models that are designed around societal understandings of conflict management to help to manage conflicts over livelihoods pathways and land.

Recommendation Seven

Recognise the value of women's multi-tasking nature in managing individual and family labour tasks on the new fast-track farms.

- It is important for policymakers and policy analysts to reflect critically on the multi-tasking nature of women in managing farm labour because women produce most of the food on the farms, and they are the largest contributors to the agricultural labour force. Such reflection should serve as an aid in understanding how women's multi-tasking nature leads to improved yields and sustained viability on these farms, where men mostly want to supervise women's work.

Recommendation Eight

Livestock production policies must reflect the role of women in managing livestock and poultry at the fast-track farms.

- There is a need to rethink the domain of women and livestock production. It has often been assumed that men are the owners of livestock. The daily

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realities on the fast-track plots reflect the fact that women play a role in managing livestock and poultry. There is a need for policies that acknowledge the role of women in livestock management and how they shape livestock-based commodity chains. Such policies would help to encourage women to own livestock in their own right and even to purchase livestock if they got support from agricultural extension staff.

Recommendation Nine

Design policies that reflect the mixed farming systems on the new fast-track farms and take into account the diversity of agro-ecological regions and the role of women farmers in the dry ecological zones.

- It is important for policymakers in gender, agriculture, water management, meteorology, and soil sciences to come together to change the agro-ecological zoning designations created in the 1960s. There have been climatic changes since then, as verified by the Mwenezi farmers being able to produce bumper harvests—in an area considered dry and suitable only for cattle ranching and game farming. A deeper understanding of soils would also feed into these policies effectively. Such policies would help explain the rise in agricultural production experienced in Mwenezi, particularly with regard to groundnuts, cotton, and bambara nuts. The policies should also actively acknowledge women's role in boosting agricultural production in the area and how this contribution relates to their trading trips to South Africa every month. This new, viable farming environment has also been buttressed by the women's use of indigenous knowledge systems, which should also become part of the framework for innovation in agricultural production in the study area.

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