Women and Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe
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Peasant demand for land is one of the crucial issues determining Zimbabwe's strategy for agrarian transformation. Yet women's demand for land has been ignored. Susie Jacobs traces the development of gender divisions in pre-independence Zimbabwe and argues that current land resettlement models discriminate against women. Policies towards women are limited in scope and reinforce the domestic domain despite women's contribution to Zimbabwe's struggle. If a socialist strategy does not confront gender hierarchy, women's struggles will have to take on a new form.

Pre-colonial Economy and Society
The difficulties of describing gender relations and the position of women in pre-colonial Zimbabwe are, of course, profound. Our knowledge is distorted through the observations and practices of the period of colonial domination. What can be said here refers only to the socio-legal and economic institutions and processes which seem to have survived, or have been derived from, the pre-capitalist social formations and which present themselves as issues of women's struggle in contemporary Zimbabwe.

The economies of both the Shona and Ndebele peoples in the 19th century were based on subsistence production and dependent upon plentiful supplies of land. The household was the main unit of production and consumption and access to the means of production was regulated by seniority in the patrilineage system. Senior men/elders controlled the means of production and the labour of junior men and women, recruiting labour to the household through kinship and marriage. Production was organised on the basis of a strict sexual division of labour.

Amongst the Shona, the chief was caretaker and dispenser of land-use rights and each adult male who succeeded as household head had use rights to a given piece of land. Women did the bulk of farm labour yet throughout their lives obtained access to land only by virtue of their subordinate relation to men (of their own lineage, of their husband’s lineage) who possessed rights to sub-divide land to women as wife/wives or inherited widows. Each wife had her own plot on the family-fields so sub-divided, on part of which she could produce a crop for her own use: amongst the Shona, groundnuts were typically a 'woman's crop'. But men possessed authority over land use and site placement, and over the surplus from family fields which could be converted into livestock and eventually into wives. Shona women were entitled to own livestock acquired from some of those
paid as bridewealth for their daughters or earned from practising as herbalists, midwives or beer-brewers but had no rights in their husband’s herds. Women were (and are) likely to lose access to fields allocated to them if divorced or if, as widows, they did not marry their husband’s successor.

Wives collectively were excluded from political authority. Women moved to their husbands’ households at marriage and the men of one village represented the political unity of that village in which women were strangers. Polygyny was permitted and common amongst those who could afford it: those who could accumulate the property necessary for the acquisition of further wives. Bridewealth payments were of paramount importance in the socio-economic relations of both Shona and Ndebele societies and the primary means of recruiting women and women’s children to the household. A woman acquired status from hard work and from bearing children, particularly sons. Upon divorce, she lost possession of her children as soon as they were old enough to manage without her care. Women, therefore, were not only excluded from direct access to the means of production but from the customary processes of recruiting labour through marriage or through permanent authority over their own offspring.

Husbands had exclusive sexual rights over their wives: wives none such over their husbands. A man, for instance, could divorce his wife for adultery but a wife could not, nor could she refuse her husband’s sexual demands. However, a woman could not be forced into marriage and did have the right to be consulted about such matters as her husband’s choice of further wives. She did have rights of disposal over ‘women’s crops’ and over the earnings acquired through the exercise of such skills as pottery and healing. Women could and did acquire respect, even renown, but this did not alter women’s generally subordinate relation to men. Under colonial domination, this relationship was confirmed or modified into one of permanent legal minority.

Settler Colonialism and Capitalist Agricultural Development

White settlers began to appropriate land belonging to Zimbabweans in the 1890s. The Ndebele economy was fairly rapidly undermined by European takeover of cattle and when raiding became impossible. Men were proletarianised more quickly than among the Shona and Ndebele women were left behind in barren rural areas. For a time the development of mines set a premium on food production and the Shona were able to market their crops to Europeans. Prior to 1904, European agriculture was insignificant and the African peasantry provided the bulk of foodstuffs. This was known as a time of peasant prosperity in which female labour in agriculture was intensified.

Zimbabwe, however, was soon found to be poor in minerals and once hopes of a second Rand had declined, attention was turned to the development of capitalist agriculture in the hands of a white rural bourgeoisie. The creation of an African farm labour force was accomplished in various ways. After unsuccessful attempts to impose forced wage labour, hut taxes were introduced from 1894. Since these did not, however, discriminate between incomes from wage labour and from sale of produce, Africans could increase cultivated acreage or intensify cultivation in order to meet taxes. As Ranger points out, Shona peasants resisted working for Europeans whenever possible and opted for cash-cropping. As was the case in other parts of Africa, it was men rather than women who were more
easily able to allocate land and labour to cash crops.

Land expropriation was the main means of solving European agriculture’s needs for land and for cheap labour: by 1902 three-quarters of African land had been expropriated. Various measures helped ensure that Africans would move on to less fertile reserves and, once this migration had taken place, their ability to obtain cash through sale of produce was jeopardised. The land division was legally enforced by the Land Appointment Act of 1930, which established exclusive European areas over half of the total land. Another major piece of legislation, the Maize Control Act of 1931, reduced Africans’ returns on their main marketed crop while subsidising returns to Europeans. As intended, African men were forced into wage employment in mines, agriculture and European households on a much larger scale. Women, children and elderly men were left behind in barren reserves.

Colonialism affected black women as members of an oppressed race but their experience of oppression differed from that of men. Largely excluded from wage labour, women became the life-long victims of colonial ‘policy’ towards the Tribal Trust Lands as the African reserves were called. Colonial rule confirmed certain practices of customary land tenure, in particular maintaining women’s exclusion from direct access to land. Women struggled to maintain their own subsistence and the conditions of existence of a migrant male labour force while encapsulated in a rural economy and society in which their status remained subordinate to absent husbands.

There were, indeed, some legal changes under colonialism which modified women’s position. African women were confirmed as legal minors. They were allowed to marry under customary law to which some minor modifications were made. The betrothal of girls under 12 was deemed illegal and women were entitled to redress if forced into marriage against their will. Women could file for the divorce of an impotent husband. But the status of legal minor was extended into domains in which previously women had had a certain degree of independence: under colonial law, married women were not entitled to keep their wages while there has been increasing confusion at divorce over their entitlement to any property, such as cattle, which they might have accumulated.

Minor changes in African women’s legal status, however, were less significant than the consequences of the general deterioration in black people’s political and economic position through which gender relations were affected. Alterations in the sexual division of labour, for instance, placed a greater burden on women. The ‘feminisation’ of subsistence agriculture arose as a consequence of male migration and of the enforced change from a system of shifting cultivation to one of sedentary agriculture. The establishment of permanent arable and grazing areas reduced men’s work of clearing the land but increased women’s labour in the struggle to produce crops from soils of declining fertility. It added to the time involved in fetching wood from further afield while their labour was further required in caring for livestock. Although women could market their groundnut crops, the poor and limited amount of land in the reserves and the sheer burden of maintaining production of subsistence crops meant that the potential of this source of income for women remained small. Rural women became increasingly dependent for part of their basic subsistence and for any disposable cash income upon cash remittances from husbands engaged in wage labour.
The colonial agricultural ‘policy’ towards the reserves until the 1940s created a class of mainly male worker-peasants and marginalised women in agricultural subsistence production. From the 1940s until independence, more direct intervention into the agricultural systems of the TTLs contributed to the development of some class differentiation among the African peasantry, bringing about in its wake consequences for African women. There were, first, some attempts to establish a layer of middle peasants and/or a kulak class. A ‘master farmer’ scheme to train Africans in ‘proper’ agricultural techniques was introduced (official anxiety which bordered on hysteria blamed soil erosion on Africans’ ‘poor’ farming methods). Married women were occasionally able to obtain such certificates but in general master farmer status was confined to men, more especially those considered politically co-operative. Purchase Areas were also established on 8 per cent of the land area in response to demands from aspiring peasant entrepreneurs. Here, women were not only excluded, in general, from capitalist ownership rights, but such capitalist farming as did take place was highly dependent upon women’s unpaid labour. Cheater’s research showed that polygyny in these areas, where a better off 3 per cent of the black population lived, was more widespread than elsewhere. About half of all marriages were polygynous as men used marriage as a device for securing labour and exerted strict control over their wives. Junior wives appeared to be treated virtually as labourers.

Another intervention into the system of rural production which had emerged since colonialism was aimed at establishing a permanent peasantry and a settled proletariat. Since the preservation of customary land tenure had been intended to ensure a migrant labour force which retained its rights in land, the obverse was to replace customary tenure by providing persons with individual titles to land and creating a rural land market. By the logic of its own argument, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 was to enable men to obtain individual rights in land. This measure increased landlessness and encouraged class polarisation in the rural areas. It was, however, abandoned with the victory of the Rhodesian Front in 1962. The system of reserved land under customary tenure and of migrant labour was reinforced.

The development of Rhodesian capitalism failed, on the whole, to create class differences of an extreme nature within the peasantry. It did, however, we argue, deepen other divisions, notably those between women and men. The role that capitalism has assumed with regard to women’s subordination has varied enormously. Although it is (rightly) unfashionable to claim that capitalism created gender divisions, it is common to claim that it inevitably perpetuates such divisions, albeit in new forms, and equally common to claim that it creates the prior conditions for overcoming gender divisions. In what sense did capitalism in Rhodesia deepen gender divisions and what conditions, if any, have been created for overcoming those divisions under the present ‘socialist’ strategy for agrarian transformation?

Capitalism in Rhodesia did not ‘free’ most black women either to become members of a proletarian class or from the pre-existing gender hierarchy. Capitalist development reinforced geographical, economic and ideological divisions between rural women, the majority of whom remained in the reserves, and men. Female labour in subsistence agriculture (and in the informal urban economy which some women entered) was crucial in maintaining the
characteristically low labour costs of peripheral capitalist economies. Women’s marginalisation in reserves facilitated the social reproduction of a particular type of migrant labour system. Women have also provided the unpaid labour in such African capitalist farming as was permitted to develop.* Indeed, it is possible to consider such class differentiations as did emerge in the African rural economy in terms of the different position of women within each category.

There were no accurate data concerning peasant ownership, production or distribution in Zimbabwe at the time of Independence as the Riddell Commission Report emphasises. However, Riddell states elsewhere that black per capita land ownership probably averaged around 3½ hectares, three-quarters of which was in the unproductive drylands regions. The average, however, conceals considerable variation. Purchase Area farmers constitute a rural petty bourgeoisie heavily reliant on female family labour. Amongst the landholding peasantry in the TTLs, Riddell estimated at least a twenty-fold size difference in plots cultivated. The ‘wealthiest’ peasants, almost invariably ex-migrants, were generally master farmers, some of whom employed labour although not on a large scale. Households with one or more members employed in wage labour formed the next stratum. The bulk of these were households in which subsistence production was ensured by women but income from migrant male labour supplied the external conditions for household reproduction. These ‘worker-peasant/farmer housewife’ households (using Bush and Cliffe’s terminology) were probably the most numerous. Such households reproduced themselves within two forms of production; men and women placed mainly in one or the other.

The most impoverished peasant households were those with no outside employment and which had to rely entirely upon subsistence farming. The harsh conditions in the former TTLs made social reproduction of a household difficult to achieve without outside wages. Almost certainly, most female-headed households fell into this category. In Zimbabwe, female-headed households were only so defined if the woman was single, widowed, divorced or permanently separated — that is, if no male were present even on a temporary basis. In Muchena’s sample, nearly 10 per cent of women in the rural areas were household heads even by this definition. Many women had been widowed during the war, but marital instability arising from male migration was the main reason given for the position of such women. These households, most of them with tiny holdings, female headed or not, may be classified as ‘poor’ peasant households in the sense that they were unable to reproduce themselves. Female-headed households lack security of access to the means of production and lacked control over labour for their future reproduction.

A final category of class differentiation included the landless. One study by Brand suggested that 4-11 per cent of rural households were landless. A high proportion of such households were probably headed by widows or divorced women who had lost access to land of any kind.

It cannot be over-emphasised that no matter to which category of peasant household a woman belongs, women performed, and continue to perform, most agricultural labour. In addition to the tasks assigned in the customary sexual

*Women also provided something like 25 per cent of the wage labour on white capitalist farms, which are not considered in this paper, according to D.G. Clarke, 1977.
division of labour, women with absent husbands have often had to assume tasks which were previously performed by men such as ploughing and herding livestock. Callear found in Wedza Communal Area that women did an arduous range of tasks including child-care, collecting fuel and water, grinding cereal crops, taking cattle to dips, guarding against baboons and so on. Muchena found that a woman’s day during the farming season would begin at 4.30am and end around 9.00pm, with approximately one-and-a-half-hour break.

WOMEN’S WORK IS NOT RECOGNISED

National statistics for the economically active usually omit women’s work in the subsistence sector yet:

- In the Himalayan region 70% of agricultural work is done by women
- In Africa 60–80% of all agricultural work is done by women
- Rural women in the developing countries as a whole account for at least 50% of food production

Yet however much of the farm work they do, women remain subordinate to the authority of husbands or other males as landowners. Muchena found that men frequently took decisions such as which crops were to be grown and sold. A significant minority of the women she interviewed felt so strongly about this lack of autonomy that they would have preferred to retain the migrant labour system in order to retain the degree of autonomy which it offered them. Callear found that where men were labour migrants, women nearly always took decisions such
as when to begin preparing land. She also found that even when husbands were present, women actually had more decision making powers than they recognised and it may have been an ideology of deference which led them to believe that they were powerless.

Anger over the discrepancy between actual responsibility and subordinate status is a reflection of women's continued absence of rights in wealth and property accumulated by husbands as household heads on the basis of women's labour. The two legal forms of marriage in Zimbabwe are defined by the Marriage Act ('civil marriage') which must be monogamous and the African Marriages Act ('customary marriage'). The African Marriages Act, however, specifically excludes black women entering into 'civil marriage' from attaining legal majority while their property rights are defined by customary law recognised in 'customary marriage'. Customary law has usually been interpreted to exclude women from rights in their own earnings (eg wages) or has facilitated abuse of women's ownership of property such as cattle. Moreover 'customary marriage' is only legal when it has been registered and a certificate obtained. Registration usually follows the completion of all bride-wealth payments which is a date largely determined by a woman's father or legal guardian. Some 40 per cent of marriages may not be registered and until recently such a wife remained the ward of her guardian, whether or not she was providing labour and sexual services to her husband, and consequently with very indeterminate property rights.

Rhodesian development can hardly be said to have equalised the position of black women with that of men, yet capitalism has both reinforced and undermined gender hierarchy. The distortion of pre-capitalist modes of production in the reserves towards the reproduction of male labour for capitalist employment weakened the patrilineage despite the attempts to retain customary systems of land tenure and to preserve the political functions of male chiefs. Women, as a result, acquired more informal control over household resources and surveys have shown that rural husbands, as household heads, felt that their authority over wives had been undermined. Women's labour burden had increased, partly as the result of absent male labour and partly because of the declining resources of the reserves. Divorced, widowed or with absent husbands, women remained unable to recruit labour to establish rural households capable of reproducing themselves without male wage remittances. Absent males gave women a degree of autonomy in decision making. But this autonomy itself was experienced as material and emotional deprivation by most women. A few women in communal areas had been able to establish themselves on their own account with small businesses or as 'master farmers' yet the majority of women had not been able to realise their enforced separation from men as any desirable independence, hence demands in independent Zimbabwe for family reunification.

The experience of colonial capitalism was almost uniformly oppressive yet it gave women perhaps some room for manoeuvre while their role in the civil war and struggle for independence led to greater political influence in the formulation of socialist strategy. How then are gender divisions to be overcome in contemporary Zimbabwe?

**Women, Land Resettlement and Problems of Transition**

The ecological, economic and political situation the government faced at
independence made land reform a priority. The land resettlement programme was the most concrete manifestation of the pledge made by the liberation movement and later by the new government to restructure Zimbabwean society. There was surprising consensus on this point from various interests. The peasantry’s main aim during the war was the desire to regain its ‘lost lands’, and the fact that ZANU actually waged a struggle for land clinched its support among them. However the white farmers union, the CFU, also concurred in supporting some degree of land reform. By 1979 white capitalist farmers recognised that some of the peasantry’s demands would have to be met, and also that the emergency of a black petty-bourgeoisie could no longer be prevented. But they wished for a limited and orderly transfer of land, in which property rights were recognised and compensation paid.

Land resettlement, then, has been a showpiece of government policy. And it is regarding land policy that any hopes of a socialist ‘solution’ have been voiced. There is no socialist organisation in industry, and indeed strikes and workers’ organisations have been suppressed. Land itself is still half white-owned and commercial agriculture will be protected for the foreseeable future. Peasant land resettlement is, nevertheless, officially envisaged in terms of socialist objectives. As in other socialist agricultural strategies, agrarian reform is conceived of as the first ‘stage’ in a series leading up to the establishment of state farms.

Three categories of persons were initially defined as eligible for selection for resettlement. These were (i) refugees and people displaced by war (ii) the landless and (iii) those with insufficient land to maintain themselves and their families. Five models of resettlement have been proposed since 1981, of which only two (Models A and B) have been extensively implemented and are described briefly below.

Model A: Individual Family Farming: This model involves village settlements with individual ‘family’ land allocations of five hectares apiece, with valuable livestock grazing rights on communal grazing areas. Each male settler is allocated a residential plot within the village with a small garden plot. This is similar to existing patterns of land use in the tribal areas, although a major difference is that arable boundaries will not be fenced off: this might permit later collectivisation.

Model B: Co-operative Farming: Model B is based upon co-operative farming and (eventually, perhaps) communal living. In this model there are no individual holdings: land is to be worked communally, although livestock is to be owned privately. Settlers are required to reside together on the co-operative farm. The co-operative is also to be established as a legal entity. A central objective is to enable poorer peasants to become more productive by providing resources such as land tillage, equipment and credit: initial state management would give way to farmers’ committees. The model is seen as particularly suitable for large-scale enterprises, for resettling refugees and young unmarried people with no land rights. Co-operatives are also envisaged by some as the main basis for a future, socialist transformation of agriculture.

Progress in Resettlement
Resettlement at first proceeded fairly slowly, but the pace has progressively quickened. In May 1981, land bought had amounted to 200,000 hectares and about 1,500 families or 10,000 people had been resettled. By March 1982, about
8,600 households had been resettled on 520,000 hectares and a total of 750,000 hectares had been acquired for resettlement. Roughly 10 families a day had been resettled over the period in which the programme was being organised, staff recruited and initial experience acquired. Since then the pace had accelerated: by April 1983, 21,000 families had been resettled and 33,000 were to be settled on land then in hand. Following the budget cuts of July 1983, however, the programme has slowed down.

Kinsey asserts that the pace of resettlement has been in itself an achievement, yet it has thrown up its own problems, most notably a lack of planning and preparation. One obvious problem is that land tenure policy is unresolved. Settlers occupy holdings under various permits which govern residence, planting of crops and grazing of livestock. These permits are the equivalent neither of leases nor of title deeds, convey no real security and appear to be open to abuse and political pressure. The period of validity of the permits is unspecified, yet the permit contains reference to the possibility of renewal; the permit may be revoked for a wide variety of reasons by the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development. In these circumstances, it would be surprising if settlers did as they are meant to do and renounced all rights in communal areas: it is reported that many settlers do not.

Other aspects of the current situation of ex-Tribal Trust Land peasants also appear to be exacerbated rather than alleviated by the current resettlement programmes. Settlers may reside far away from economic services, such as marketing facilities, or social services such as schools and clinics. The promised building of infrastructure, particularly water supplies, has not yet materialised. Some farmers initially lacked seed and implements and many more lacked draught power. The absence of provision of credit to buy inputs in the first year of resettlement prevented many from farming much at all. The situation has improved for men but lack of access to credit continues to affect women particularly severely.

While there remain ambiguities about the permanence or other of men’s rights in land in the resettlement areas, the major problems as far as women are concerned has been their exclusion from access to land in their own right. With the exception of widows who, unable to gain access to land through husbands, may be granted half the amount of land due to a married man, the resettlement of families has perpetuated women’s customary lack of land rights. For women, access to land has remained conditional upon their marital status.

Women have expressed a great deal of dissatisfaction with their continued lack of rights over land. This sentiment was widely voiced in a Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau rural needs survey. Women were frustrated that only men could fill in application forms for resettlement and felt that their contribution to Zimbabwe’s struggle had been unacknowledged, as this statement illustrates:

Why is it that only the names of men who have taken courses and have qualifications are being taken for resettlement? We women have also taken some courses but (the resettlement officers) are not taking our names. So it means that we women are not counted in any development activities being undertaken in Zimbabwe. We struggled much to win this Zimbabwe, but it seems that our Government has forgotten that, and it is not interested in women’s development and needs.

The extent to which women have individually been excluded from rights to land
as a result of discriminatory processes such as these and others is uncertain. However, it is clear that the absence of legislation overturning customary land tenure practices discriminating against women in general is bitterly resented. The UNICEF survey carried out by Muchena indicated that women were nearly unanimous in their desire for land rights. Ninety-nine per cent of women as well as many men wanted the past land tenure system abandoned or modified. Women commonly described men's behaviour in controlling land and women's labour on it in emotive language calling them 'exploiters' or 'bloodsuckers'.

The Squatter's Movement
Peasants themselves have often expressed dissatisfaction concerning the slowness of resettlement. The main response to the situation has been a widespread squatter's movement. There are no current figures for numbers of squatters, but the phenomenon continues on a very large scale, and the numbers involved are much larger than those provided for under the official resettlement programme. Squatters have in general taken over vacant and unused lands, although some white land in current use has been settled. It also appears that a minority of squatters are businessmen who take over an area to rent out plots to the landless.

Government response to squatting has been ambiguous. Squatters are not easily ignored, particularly because squatting has grass-roots support in some ZANU branches and because squatters are often well organised. Government is also under pressure from other quarters to remove them. In addition to the objections of white farmers which are to be expected, the newly-forming class of black landowers has protested against squatting. In January 1982, the first court decision to evict them was taken and other have followed although there has been reluctance to implement court orders.

In late 1981, the Accelerated Resettlement Programme was launched on an emergency basis. It is a response to squatting but one also aimed at regularising and controlling it by settling people on odd plots of land on the edge of former TTLs without having to provide infrastructure.

Co-operative Resettlement
The extent of resettlement along co-operative lines contrasts sharply with the extent of squatting and of individual family resettlement. The latter has proceeded fairly rapidly and been outpaced by squatting but the extent of co-operative formation has been very limited, in spite of official support.

Approximately 5 per cent of farms purchased have been earmarked as co-operatives though there are debates as to whether this percentage should be increased. Most co-operatives in Rhodesia were marketing rather than production co-operatives. Owing to their marketing function and to the fact that men controlled most cash crops, their membership was almost entirely male. However, a few production co-operatives did exist prior to independence and are now being reconstituted. Some 23 production co-operatives (Model B) have been set up under government schemes, mainly large-scale units based on former European farms. There are also co-operatives attached to non-governmental agencies such as Silveira House. Other co-operatives have been formed by ex-combatants. There is one women-only co-operative which includes craft production. Another new scheme is attempting to raise child nutrition standards
through the production of crops such as groundnuts. The land must be worked co-operatively and most participants are women.

Non-governmental co-operatives have often been more successful than official ones. Some co-operatives have difficulty obtaining capital and a climate of suspicion has often been fostered against them. According to the Zimbabwe Project Newsletter in 1981, for example, it was whispered that the communality of living extended to sexual communism, a charge which in fact pre-dated the present establishment of co-operative movements by the white regime. Attacks on co-operatives through allegations of sexual communism indicate, however, one ideological dimension of women's problems in liberating themselves from male control.

Another reason for the slow development of co-operatives is externally imposed. As European farmers produce over half of Zimbabwe's agricultural produce, both government and Western aid agencies are anxious to see these large units preserved. The Ministry of Lands would prefer that they continue as state farms or as large collectives. Others in the country and in the international aid fraternity would prefer them to be transferred to a black capitalist class. Mupawose and Chengu, in fact, report that by 1982 land was beginning to be acquired by black entrepreneurs on a much larger scale. These too can be expected to oppose vigorously any collectivisation, as the Ministry of Lands has recently recognised.

Of the many problems emerging from the resettlement programme, three stand out. One concerns the conflicting effects of the pace of resettlement. Although massive in terms of similar programmes and of numbers resettled, nevertheless the speed of settlement is widely perceived as inadequate and by no means satisfies rural people's land hunger. Popular pressure caused the government to
concentrate for a couple of years on the resettlement of as many people as possible with some neglect of other provisions. A linked problem is that the situation of those left in communal areas has so far been largely ignored and their material existence remains as before the war. There are no plans at present to restructure these areas.

A second problem is acknowledged by some in Government, if not officially. By resettling people on an individual family basis, the government may be sowing the seeds for class differentiation within the peasantry and, beyond that, to the development of a black landholding class. The further growth of the latter could undermine the basic aims of resettlement. The intention announced by Government in July 1982 to include master farmers in resettlement may be an ominous sign of this trend.

A third problem is that, to date, the female majority of the population has directly benefited little from the resettlement programme.

**Women and Resettlement**

The Model A resettlement programme is based on the individual farm family. Land is no longer controlled by patrilineages nor allocated by elders yet customary practices of land tenure survive in the allocation of land to male household heads. While some women other than widows have gained access to land on such schemes, the principle of family settlement discriminates against women's land ownership in theory and in practice. Male household heads are likely to continue to depend largely on family/female labour which may in turn exacerbate gender divisions. Men still maintain control over the main mechanism of recruiting labour to the household through bride-wealth and control over children.

No studies as yet have been carried out of the emerging patterns of family settlement, yet there are indications that the schemes were conceived in terms of male household head/female farm labourer/housewife. This can be illustrated by a consideration of the fact that a policy of ‘reuniting families’ was behind Model A. From a Western feminist perspective which sees the family under capitalism and in socialist societies as the main site of women's oppression and subordination, a socialist strategy which seeks to (re)-establish the family as the basic social unit without a prior transformation of gender relations is suspect. Family reunification in Zimbabwe, however, arises from different and passionate demands. Zimbabwean women, who have suffered years of separation from male (and female) kin as a consequence of the migrant labour system and of war, desire reunited family life. In Muchena’s survey, for instance, one of women’s demands was to make rural areas economically viable so that families could live together. The demand for united families is real, but the effects are already being experienced as contradictory and may not contribute to the realisation of women's other demands developing through struggle. Reunited with their families, men are likely to reassert control over women's farm labour and domestic services in the absence of any strategy for radical transformation in the gender hierarchy of family production and redistribution.

Such an approach marked the first years of resettlement. For instance, the ZIMCORD aid conference in 1981 talked of encouraging ‘dependents’ to settle near breadwinners. Women whose husbands were permanently employed in the urban sector were not entitled to resettlement but encouraged to settle with their
husbands. Breadwinners were assumed to be male, dependents — female. A statement by the Deputy Minister of Lands in The Herald at the end of 1981 echoed the same theme:

We cannot give land to the employed since they will not have time to work that land ... At the moment they have a lot of land belonging to the unemployed, lying idle ...

The category ‘unemployed’, astounding in the circumstances, subsumed most women. Families were to be reunited and resettled on the basis of a male household head with female dependents whose role in production was ignored and whose status as dependents was apparently to be reinforced. Undoubtedly, women’s workload would not have been reduced by being reclassified as dependents!

Technically, women can join co-operatives (Model B) as individual members since they were intended in part to provide for landless and single people. It is unclear, however, how far this is actually taking place except perhaps in the case of widows. It does seem clear that many co-operative members are not single and that normal procedure has been for wives of members to be asked whether they would like to join. When asked about women’s membership (in 1981), people responded with some puzzlement. Female membership was often seen as intrinsically dependent upon marital status even in socialist enclaves. There is now, however, at least one co-operative with a majority of women members, most of them married.

If family resettlement has been planned on the basis of male-headed households and co-operatives have not yet adjusted to the needs of women to gain access to land in their own right what, in fact, have been government policies towards improving the status and relieving the burdens of rural women? Women’s concerns — or what are defined as their concerns — are the responsibility of the Ministry of Community Development and Women’s Affairs. The Women’s Affairs Section sponsors various Home Economics type programmes and small-scale industries for women rather than programmes directed towards women as agricultural producers. The segregation of women’s issues under the administration of this Ministry from the business of peasant production which falls under the Ministry of Lands, Resettlement and Rural Development has real as well as symbolic significance. The MCDWA is in a weak position. Although its creation did signal official concern for women’s low status and acknowledged their participation in the war, it is still seen as an ‘inferior’ Ministry and its lifetime may be limited. Already threatened, it is not inclined (and would probably not be able) to disrupt the system of male domination under which woman live.

One of the responsibilities of Woman’s Affairs are savings clubs. These are spontaneously organised associations of subsistence producers for the raising of credit. Their membership is almost entirely female. They were previously independent of Government but now fall within the ambit of the Ministry which will undertake to locate funds for educational, development and income generating projects. These are defined as (a) self-reliance projects which emphasise the participation of women; (b) development projects that contribute to the raising of standards of living e.g. handicrafts, poultry raising; (c) projects to give shelter and food to women and children evicted from their homes; (d) projects offering courses on leadership, co-operative work, child-spacing and pre-school activities; (e) projects promoting Zimbabwean culture.
Typical activities under (b) have been to support, or find support for, women’s dress-making clubs and co-operatives producing school uniforms. These provide a community service and may provide an income for women independent of the family farm if they succeed in realising a reasonable cash return to women’s labour. However, women’s involvement in such activities is an addition to the long hours of work they already spend in productive and reproductive labour in male-headed or their own households. These activities may be seen as substitutes for the income from ‘women’s crops’ of the pre-colonial period. They do not, however, challenge the present sexual division of labour in peasant household production which remains dependent upon the presence of female labour nor the gender hierarchy in the control and distribution of peasant farm income.

Other programmes sponsored by Women’s Affairs emphasise women’s domestic labour and responsibilities towards the maintenance and reproduction of culture and community. Women’s incomes realised through small projects are specifically intended to be used, for example, to improve child nutrition in which women, but not men, receive instruction. Women on resettlement schemes receive instruction and education in nutrition, homemaking skills and family planning. Such programmes may improve rural women’s knowledge, and so the efficiency with which they can plan in the domestic domain, their responsibility for which is being reinforced.* Women, however, do not necessarily lack knowledge of nutrition but the resources or the ability to redirect household (male) income for these purposes.

Family planning/child spacing programmes may give women some control over reproduction and sexuality and could lighten their burdens of child-care and support. However, Zimbabwean women are highly dependent upon the labour that their young children can provide in production and in servicing men. Childless women are not only bereft of any labour to command but tend to be socially ostracised, while childlessness is a common cause of divorce. Women’s general health is poor, the incidence of malnutrition and of venereal disease is high and pelvic infections are common. Barrenness is more of an issue of personal tragedy than ‘too many’ children.

Moreover, even when it is to the advantage of rural women to limit child-bearing, family planning as an agency and as an issue is viewed with suspicion because of the way it was promoted by the former white regime. Contraception was misused as a form of racist population control and even if this is not the case now, the pill is dangerous and infections and lack of medical facilities limit the use of IUDs. Abortion is illegal (except for medical reasons), is little discussed and most strongly disapprove of it. Men’s attitudes to contraception are generally hostile and therefore preclude the use of most other possible methods. ‘Family planning’ has not and cannot challenge male control over women’s sexuality and reproduction nor male prerogatives of sexual access to wives.

Editors note: Their tendency to reinforce the domestic rather than productive role of women in Zimbabwe was referred to by veteran community worker Comrade Chiranga in the first issue of Community Action (Third Quarter, 1983: No.1) published by MCDWA in Zimbabwe, who commented that some women in the dress-making clubs ‘Just want to gain skills so that they can cook or sew for their families’ (p.8). The range and objective of activities sponsored by Women’s Affairs in Zimbabwe is almost identical to those undertaken by the Women’s Section of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in non-socialist Kenya: see Feldman in this issue.
The packaging of women's issues under the Women's Affairs Section of MCDWA seems arbitrary and inchoate. On the one hand, 'women's issues' have been hived off, defined as those concerned with reproductive labour and with 'marginal' economic enterprises which denies women's major contribution to agricultural production. Women's much needed access to land, agricultural technology, extension and credit on or off settlement schemes has not been provided because such access is not seen as the business of those Ministries which do provide these facilities. On the other hand, if the importance of small-scale production and marketing, the servicing of rural communities and reproductive labour in socialist Zimbabwe are to be properly recognised, they need to be handled in a framework which does not marginalise them from agrarian transformation as a whole.

The Ministry has challenged women's subordination in Zimbabwe rather more directly in the pursuit of legislation in favour of women's equality. Inheritance laws are being altered so that a wife may inherit her deceased husband's property. Under customary law, property goes to the husband's kin and the continuation of this practice along with the decline in that of widow inheritance has meant that widows have been amongst the most destitute in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the Legal Age of Majority Act was passed in December 1982 which made (black) women over the age of 18 for the first time legal majors, entitled to their own property, obtain credit and marry without their parents' consent. However, legislation has not been passed to amend the discrimination against women embedded in the African Marriages Act. At the present moment, single women and women in unregistered marriages retain their legal majority status, but women in customary registered marriages still possess no rights in household property. What the legislation signifies in improving women's access and title to land is not clear. Women will be permitted to buy and own land in their own right but in the communal and resettlement areas there is no market in land and no clear alternative means of access to land for women. Access to land is now formally in the hands of District Councils rather than by Chiefs, though in practice it is delegated. Women are entitled to election on the Councils, and some have been, but it is not yet clear how political representation will shift the prevailing practice in favour of the allocation of land to male heads of households.

Conclusion
The first section of this paper tried to outline the effects of capitalist development in Rhodesia, taking into account particular effects upon black women. It followed the literature in arguing that the situation of underdevelopment and general impoverishment created within the reserves was so severe that class differentiation within the peasantry was limited. While some class differentiation did and does exist, probably the most marked divisions created within the rural black population were based on gender. Gender divisions existed prior to colonisation but they were deepened via a system of labour migration which marginalised women in subsistence agriculture. Here the capitalist state preserved a non-capitalist form of production in which women's labour and reproductive capacity was of greater significance than in the capitalist sector proper. This system also accounts for the continued importance of tribal law and custom in determining women's legal states.

The paper has further argued that the resettlement programme, the main government policy with regard to land and the peasantry, has thus far continued
to marginalise women. Most peasants are resettled along individual family lines; this model perpetuates the existence of a landholding peasantry and thereby, the importance of household production. There is a possibility that a government strategy of supporting co-operatives would weaken the impact of household production, but this cannot be a foregone conclusion. Women may make some gains within formal co-operatives, but these are unlikely to be far-reaching.

There do exist indigenous traditions of co-operation in Zimbabwe, however, which could be significant for co-operative or for collective organisation. Such traditions were subverted by the colonial régime which exploited them in programmes of community development, commonly regarded as forced labour. Nevertheless, it was repeatedly emphasised to me that ‘working together’ (Kushandira pamwe/ukusebenza ndawonye) in groups on agricultural tasks is very widespread among rural women. The harsh conditions they have lived under, especially in recent years, have encouraged co-operation. Women work in groups for the company, for the extra help it gives them, and they often turn to one another for mutual support. Many informal co-operatives are begun by women. It is notable that, in the Zimbabwe Women’s Bureau rural survey, about half of women interviewed answered ‘yes’ to the question, ‘Are there any co-operatives in your area?’ What they were responding to was whether there was any ‘working together’ in their areas, as very few were in formal co-operatives and none of these were officially registered. Formal co-operatives of course, have the advantage over informal ones of state backing and aid; however, peasants may be more likely to be strongly involved in a form seen as democratic at a local level. The ‘solution’ most advantageous for women might be an integration of traditions of informal co-operation, into more formal structures — depending on the nature of the formal structures.

The problems of peasant agriculture and of resettlement in Zimbabwe have sometimes been construed as ones of unused peasant lands or of motivating women to participate in the economy. Neither contention corresponds to the situation in rural areas: any under-utilised land is white-owned, and women already participate economically on a massive scale. Rather the ‘problems’ are their continued lack of rights over land and over the means of production, and definitions of development which implicitly exclude women.

Why are women excluded in this manner? The main reasons are historical and ideological: women are excluded because they have always been and because they are ignored, made ‘invisible’. There may be another reason, however, which relates as well to women’s invisibility. I have referred before to the ‘feminisation’ of subsistence agriculture which occurred with the development of a migratory labour system. This has meant that the very great majority of people in Communal Areas are women and that they do most of the work. It is not always possible, even for those who do not wish to see, to overlook so many people, who contribute so much. At least, this may not be possible in a society where peasants hunger for land as they do in Zimbabwe. If subsistence agriculture has been feminised, then nearly all non-sustenance agriculture, from cash-cropping to the largest plantations, remains under male control. Government resettlement policies may be an implicit means of defeminising subsistence agriculture and of restoring it to its ‘rightful’ owners.

This account has been rather pessimistic about the possibilities for women contained within the resettlement programme, both in terms of the ways in which
women's roles are visualised officially and of the ways these have so far been put into practice. It is important, nevertheless, not to lapse into Marxist-functionalist analyses, and not to see the outcomes of struggles as determined. Bozzoli's concept of 'domestic struggle' is useful in combating such functionalism. Just as class struggles are waged partly on a day-to-day basis, so are the struggles of women (and men) waged within households. The outcomes of such struggles, and their effects upon household forms and upon women's status, should not be taken as given.

So far in Zimbabwe, policies which interpret the world 'through the eyes of women' have not, or not yet, been formulated. Where women are included in policy issues, they have continued to be viewed as social and biological reproducers. Zimbabwean women's expectations are still high: it remains to be seen whether the women who helped win recognition of an independent state, will also be able to win recognition of their own needs.

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