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

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# **Understanding Social and Solidarity Economy in Emergent Communities**

*Lessons from Post-Fast Track Land Reform Farms in Mazowe, Zimbabwe*

*Manase Kudzai Chiweshe*

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## **Occasional Paper 1 Potential and Limits of Social and Solidarity Economy**

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## Acronyms

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
<b>DDF</b>	District Development Fund
<b>FLI</b>	Farm-level institution
<b>FTLRP</b>	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
<b>GoZ</b>	Government of Zimbabwe
<b>HIV</b>	Human immunodeficiency virus
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>SSE</b>	Social and solidarity economy
<b>ZANU PF</b>	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
<b>ZESA</b>	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority

## **Summary**

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

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## Introduction

The main objective of this paper is to outline the way in which small-scale farmers in Zimbabwe are using social and solidarity economy to survive the various social, economic and political challenges that they are faced with after resettlement. In 2000 Zimbabwe experienced a major shift in its rural landscape when land occupation and the government's Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) saw the emergence of new communities of black farmers. This paper deals with the emergent and evolving forms of social organization at the farm level. These institutional formations are part of an emerging social and solidarity economy (SSE) based on trust, reciprocity and communality. The FTLRP has been criticized both locally and internationally for its chaotic character and dire economic effects. This criticism, especially from Western donors, brought with it sanctions, suspension of balance of payments support, reduction in direct foreign investment and decrease in humanitarian aid. This, combined with declines in agricultural productivity and subsequent industrial production in downstream industries, led to a rapidly devaluating Zimbabwean dollar and high inflation and unemployment. This economic crisis impacted heavily on new farmers who found it increasingly difficult to afford inputs and access loans. Unlike in communal areas, most new farmers in resettlement zones cannot depend on kinship ties for help: they have, consequently, formed other social networks to respond to these challenges, which take the form of institutions such as farm, irrigation and health committees.

Farm level institutions are, however, important sources of social cohesion; they maintain order and resolve conflicts at the farm level. Institutions such as the Committee of Seven have several roles in maintaining security and ensuring good neighbourliness among fast track farmers. Organizing into institutions allows greater interaction and promotes togetherness of farm dwellers as they work for the collective good. Bonding of farmers is facilitated through working together for similar causes. Households that were strangers to each other find a way through associational activities to get to know and interact with each other. Rules, norms, mores and regulations are affirmed, shared, and policed through various institutional forms that ensure that, despite personal differences, conflicts remain manageable. This positive side of social capital as outlined by Putman (1995) is apparent in Mazowe, and building on it has potential benefits for fast track farms as they continue to evolve towards well-functioning and highly productive communities. Scoones et al. (2010) note that creative solutions generated by the necessity for solidarity, organization and a sense of community have emerged on the margins of state action and practice.

The government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) had neither the funds nor the capacity to provide social amenities when the fast track programme started. The paper is thus based on the assumption that A1<sup>1</sup> farm communities ensured service provision through their own initiatives. Certainly, the GoZ never had the foresight or resources to monitor, let alone enforce, people into forming communities. It is through informal institutions, built up through interaction and negotiation—and founded on trust, reciprocity and unity of purpose—that these communities have sustained their existence. In many ways, A1 communities exist under pronounced social, political and economic marginalization. These processes of marginalization have been exacerbated by a state that has restricted the entry of external actors onto fast track farms to

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<sup>1</sup> Zimbabwe's land reform had two types of schemes, namely, A1 and A2. A1 schemes are for smallholder farmers with six hectares geared mainly towards household consumption, while A2 farms are larger landholdings concentrating on commercial agriculture.



ensure it maintains near hegemonic control of these areas. Civil society organizations have also not been interested in working in areas that international donors view as contested lands. In this light, the paper offers a localized and nuanced perceptive of experiences at the farm level of how people have tried to resolve their dilemmas and create their own space to survive within a hostile environment characterized not only by a lack of services and social infrastructure, but by droughts and a national political and economic crisis. The emergent social networks, mutual assistance and farm-level institutions form a complex system which the author describes as social and solidarity economy.

## Background to the Study

Significant literature exists analysing the farm occupations and fast track land reform process that emerged in Zimbabwe in 2000 and that led to the A1 and A2 farms.<sup>2</sup> Much of this literature on Zimbabwe tends to focus on the country's broader political economy. In so doing, these studies regularly make assumptions about people on the land without offering a critical examination of their lived experiences. There is hence a serious gap in this literature on the conditions of existence of this novel class of farmers within the emerging communities in newly resettled areas. There are a number of newer works that provide a clearer sense of life after resettlement.<sup>3</sup> The FTLRP in Zimbabwe—codenamed Third Chimurenga (war of liberation) or *jambanja* (violence)—was characterized by chaotic and violent land invasions which led to the destruction of property, sabotage, beatings and, in some cases, murder.<sup>4</sup> The ordered nature and continued existence of communities that germinated from *jambanja* is sociologically intriguing. The Zimbabwean case provides important insights into how communities born out of conflict sustain themselves through various forms of associational groupings at local—in this case, farm—level.

Another related dimension of the land reform programme in Zimbabwe is that there were very few restitution cases that resettled entire communities on their ancestral lands. Rather, land redistribution under fast track meant that, on the majority of farms, there were men and women drawn from diverse ethnic groups, languages, professions, communal and urban areas, age groups, religious beliefs, customs, and traditions. The new farm inhabitants in Mazowe are now a collection of war veterans (who were allocated a quota of, on average, 15 per cent of the plots on farms), youths, war collaborators, government workers, formerly unemployed urban dwellers, politicians, women, and ordinary people from all walks of life. The concept of the social and solidarity economy is described as follows by the International Labour Organization (ILO): “The social and solidarity economy (SSE) refers to organizations and enterprises that are based on principles of solidarity and participation and that produce goods and services while pursuing both economic and social aims” (Fonteneau et al. 2010:vi). This definition includes any groupings or institutions such as cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises which achieve both economic and social goals that maintain social cohesion. In this paper, farm-level institutions in emergent communities in Zimbabwe can offer valuable lessons in understanding how alternatives to capitalist economics can emerge from the everyday relations of ordinary people.

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<sup>2</sup> See Alexander (2006); Hammar and Raftopoulos (2003); Moyo and Yeros (2005); Sadomba (2008); Selby (2006).

<sup>3</sup> See Scoones et al. (2011); Moyo et al. (2009); Matondi (2012).

<sup>4</sup> See Chaumba et al. (2003); Human Rights Watch (2002); Masiwa (2005).

## Conceptual Framework

This paper is influenced by the concept of social capital and how it relates to social and solidarity economy. Bourdieu (1986:249) conceives of social capital as one of four key forms of capital, along with economic, cultural (embodied, objectified or institutional) and symbolic capital. He defines social capital as:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu 1986: 249–250).

Social capital is thus a collective asset that grants members social credits that can be used as capital to facilitate purposive actions (Glover and Parry 2005:452). Social relations, in this fashion, constitute useful resources for actors through processes such as establishing obligations, expectations and trustworthiness, creating channels for information, and setting norms backed by efficient sanctions.<sup>5</sup>

Social capital has been viewed as a concept which is formed for the benefit of everyone in a community. Hence, Putnam (1995:2) argues that “the productive activity of social capital is manifest in its capacity to facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. Lin (2001:56) highlights that—like other forms of capital—social capital is premised on the notion of an investment (in social relationships) which will result in some benefit or profit to the individual. In other words, social capital makes it possible to achieve certain aims that cannot be achieved by individuals alone. Investing in social capital is, however, a risky venture; for example, given that a member of a network may fail to perceive or act upon a mutual obligation, any investment may fail to yield any positive result (Holt 2008:232). According to Coleman, social capital is defined by “its function. It is not a single entity, but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist in some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure” (Coleman 1988:98). Like other forms of capital, social capital is not completely fungible but may be specific to certain activities. A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others.

Farm-level institutions in Mazowe embody a particular and important form of structural social capital. In many ways they constitute an important asset in the livelihood strategies of farmers and are, thus, essential in service provision, agricultural development and poverty reduction. These institutional formations vary greatly in scale, size, effectiveness, democratic content, activities and degree of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. Such diversity makes it neither possible nor desirable to invoke unitary conceptions of social capital among fast track farmers. It also cautions us against romanticizing about the existence and work of rural organizations. The diversity and competitive positioning of farm-level institutions, and their internal relations and social cohesion (based often on trust and reciprocity), illustrate the existence of both bonding and bridging capital.

In this context, social capital is referred to as a feature of social life—networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives

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<sup>5</sup> Burt 2000; Coleman 1988; Putman 2000.

(Putnam 1995). Social capital is therefore productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that, in its absence, would not be possible. Social capital exhibits a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of capital. Unlike physical capital, but like human capital, social capital can accumulate as a result of its use. Social capital is both an input into, and an output of, collective action. All actors in the newly resettled areas invest consciously and unconsciously in the relationships and networks that benefit them in social, economic and political ways. For example, voting ZANU PF is perceived as a political investment guaranteeing continued residence on the farms. This is because of the widespread belief (propagated and supported by ZANU PF itself) that, if they lose power, white farmers will return to the farms. The new farmers are also largely resource poor and thus find it difficult to be productive if they work in isolation. As a result, collective action towards political goals by the new farmers has to be understood in relation to their insecure status on the land.

Various discussions of social capital have suggested that it is important to distinguish between two types of relationship, each of which constitutes social capital, but which apparently has different characteristics. One set refers to intra-group relationships, or relationships of bonding or integration that strengthen links between people facilitating forms of intra-group interaction and collective action. The other set of relationships is called linkages or bridging mechanisms, and refers to relationships that strengthen linkages between groups and other actors and organizations (Bebbington and Carroll 2000). The problem is that farm-level institutions remain fragmented and separated by divergent interests. They represent often competing groups, opinions, interests and sometimes political actors, because of which there are only, limited bridging relationships between groups (particularly across farms). As such, it is easier for the government to play the groups against each other through “divide and rule” tactics and keep A1 farms governable.

When researching social capital there should be an insistence on identifying the ways in which gendered, racialized and other forms of power are embedded in different forms of social capital, and hence also the ways in which certain forms of social capital serve to reproduce prevailing norms of inequality. This would make clear that a critical domain of social policy would be to challenge these norms—to upset doxa with public debate (Bebbington 2007). Social capital like all other social entities, is gendered and, in a patriarchal society such as Zimbabwe, it is the males who tend to dominate the public sphere. They are therefore more likely than women to lead farm groupings. Gender is an important organizing element at the farm level and women are likely to be under-represented. Social networks between and among the patriarchy marginalize women and undermine their contribution on the farms. Farm women tend to be sidelined to token positions such as secretaries.

## **Methodology and Study Area**

Mazowe District is located in Mashonaland Central Province and is divided into 29 wards, of which 13 are in Chiweshe communal areas and the rest in new resettlement areas. Mazowe has three administrative centres (Concession, Glendale and Mvurwi), with a total surface area of 453,892 hectares. It is in the southwestern section of the province where Guruve and Muzarabani mark the district’s boundaries to the north, Bindura and Mashonaland East Province to the east, and Harare to the west. It is also bordered by

Zvimba district in Mashonaland Central Province. The district's main government administrative centre (Concession) is about 60 kilometres from Harare. This paper uses case studies from small-scale A1 farmers in Mazowe District in Mashonaland Central Province. It employs qualitative methodologies to enable a nuanced understanding of associational life in the new communities.

Through focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, narratives, key informant interviews and institutional mapping, the paper outlines the formation, taxonomy, activities, roles, internal dynamics and social organization of farm-level institutions. Case studies consist of six purposively selected A1 (smallholder) schemes in Mazowe. Five of the schemes selected (Hariana, Hamilton, Davaar, Visa and Usk farms) have one or more of the following: irrigation equipment, school and clinic. They are also close to A2 schemes, which ensure that a wide range of farm-level institutions are covered. The assumption has been that on farms with this infrastructure, management and conflict issues will arise and one or more farm-level institutions will be in operation. The sixth scheme (Blightly farm) is situated approximately 40 kilometres away from major roads and service centres and has none of the facilities noted above. The six farms offer a chance to gain a close understanding of everyday life on fast track farms. Using a variety of research techniques outlined below, this paper presents the experiences of A1 farmers in their own language. Situated research methodologies that take into account local contexts require reflexivity and flexibility so as to respond to ever-changing needs in the field.

## **New Communities and New Institutions**

One of the greatest legacies of the land reform programme in Zimbabwe is how communities were created, seemingly overnight.<sup>6</sup> Social relationships in these new communities are important in the analysis of the political and administrative structure on the farms. Chaumba et al. (2003:19) note that there was a sudden emergence of a hierarchical governance structure which ensured easy monitoring and surveillance by the government. They argue that, in its own way, the sudden appearance, seemingly from nowhere, of an integrated top-down system of governance in the new resettlements is as striking as the dramatic physical transformation of the landscape. This new pattern of authority is characterized by a very hierarchical committee-based structure and has parallels with the decentralized ruling party cell and district development committee systems of the 1980s. However, many institutional forms have emerged from the grassroots and require careful analysis. In Mazowe, A1 farmers have been grouped into villages on every scheme, leading to the creation of what Baar (2004:1753) terms "stranger neighbouring households". These new communities were created by chance<sup>7</sup> and included households that did not know each other. These stranger neighbours were forced by circumstances to settle and interact with each other. Given that 39 per cent of A1 settlers in Mazowe were from the Chiweshe communal areas, many had a starting point with which to relate to each other, having, as they did, a similar cultural and social background. However, 26 per cent of the members of these A1 communities were from a

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<sup>6</sup> Morgan Tsvangirai, a former leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, was once quoted as saying that these communities were sprouting everywhere like mushrooms.

<sup>7</sup> A1 plots in Mazowe were given to people by drawing a number out of a hat.

different cultural setting to the one in Chiweshe. These new citizens were forced to learn and assimilate the many norms prevalent in Mazowe, and this became a source of conflict as new farmers were caught breaking Merowe's various social norms. One example was of a farmer at Wychwood farm who killed a python, which is not allowed in Mazowe.

The emergent communities in the former commercial farming areas offer colourful and exciting stories of individual farmers trying to make sense of a harsh and cruel existence. The new farmers were a collection of diverse people with varied ethnic, religious, educational and status backgrounds. Among the A1 farmers, a significant number are drawn from the Chiweshe communal areas, in line with the objective of decongesting communal lands. The villagized system of residence has meant that A1 farmers interact with each other on a daily basis, unlike those who live alone on their farms. They are forced by circumstances to interact, so that relationships have evolved among them. In most cases, these relationships arise out of the need for people to unite for a common cause, such as building a clinic—like the farmers at Davaar—or sharing everyday implements. The households on these farms have turned from being strangers to neighbours over the past 10 years. The loss of kinship support has meant that people are forming new ties based on friendship and trust.

## **Formation and Taxonomy of Informal Institutions in the Newly Resettled Areas**

The formation of farm level institutions (FLIs) is an enterprise fraught with contestation, negotiation and sometimes domination. This section discusses the many processes involved in the development of institutional forms at farm level, including the involvement of charismatic leaders, external agents, everyday interaction, coercion and even negotiation. Processes of formation are highly complex and, at times, it is difficult to delineate the different factors involved in influencing farmers to organize. As noted earlier in this paper, the formation of institutions has been largely a response to the diverse challenges facing fast track farmers (though there are other social and political factors involved, as discussed below). Farm-level institutions emerge in different forms within the fast track farms. Under fast track reform, each A1 farm has become a community on its own—defined and delimited by farm boundaries. Farm-level institutions are, therefore, any groupings that emerge and evolve within this bounded geographic area serving the needs of some, or all, people. These institutions are, however, fluid and expand in some cases to operate and influence beyond the physical borders of the farm. In many ways, their existence and identity has a spatial and temporal fluidity which makes typologies difficult. Even so, this paper offers a broad-based taxonomical understanding of farm-level institutions. The institutions range in size, form, organization, membership and influence. This wide variety of institutions found in the newly resettled areas is testimony to the vigour and enterprising spirit of rural societies in Africa (Rahmato 1991).

**Table 1: Taxonomy of institutions in new resettlement areas**

Type	Brief description	Type of organization	Reasons for formation	Rules/laws	Formation
<i>Sabhuku</i> village head	Unlike traditional <i>sabhuku</i> in communal areas who inherit the position, they are chosen by the traditional chief in the new resettlement areas	Political governance structure	Provide a structure for social order and security in a cheap and effective manner by the state	Traditional rules and norms dominate	Imposed by state through traditional chiefs
Committee of Seven	A <i>sabhuku</i> heads this committee, but other members are democratically chosen by plot holders on the farm	Socio-political governance structure	Assist village head in instilling social order	Dominated by traditional rules	Imposed by state but elected by farmers
Irrigation Committee	Present at farms with irrigation and usually chosen by only those involved in irrigation	Economic/productive organization	Resuscitate, manage and build irrigation systems	Payment of fees, sharing of pipes	Payment of fees by farmers pooling in
Development committee	Present at some farms; works independently of the Committee of Seven. However, at other farms the Committee of Seven becomes an ad hoc development committee	Economic/productive organization	Promote developmental projects on farms. Multipurpose	Informal rules	Farmers agree to elect a committee
Farm committee	Present at some farms and works in the same manner as the development committee but differs in that it has more responsibility over other non-developmental issues	Farm management organization	Manage farm assets, projects and so on. Multipurpose	Informal rules	Chosen by farmers
ZESA/ Electricity committee	Usually tasked with issues that relate to payment of bills, fixing faults and spearheading applications for electrical connections	Economic/productive organization	Manage electricity issues on farms	Payment of bills and fees	Emerge from grassroots
Health committee	This committee, like most locally initiated committees, is chosen by settlers and is responsible for health issues, including HIV and AIDS. There are also Home-Based Care Committees initiated by the Tariro Clinic at Howard Hospital	Health/social organization	Assist people in health related matters, especially HIV care and information	Informal rules	Emerge from grassroots
School Development Committee	Operates in schools in newly resettled areas	Education/social organization	Develop schools with new buildings and books	Written laws formalizing committee work	Emerge from grassroots
Women's clubs	Women come together once or twice a week to discuss issues that affect them	Social organization	Discuss women's issues in social clubs	Informal rules	Emerge from grassroots
Youth clubs	Mainly organized along sports or church lines	Social organization	Organize youth activities	Informal rules	Emerge from grassroots
Revolving savings clubs	Small groups based on trust where people pool resources together and share	Economic organization	Financial constraints	Timely payment of money	Emerge from grassroots
Burial societies	Arrangements at scheme level to offer assistance in case of death	Social organization	Assist in burials	Reciprocity in payment	Emerge from grassroots

**Source:** Fieldwork carried out in 2010.

New farmers in Mazowe create and recreate conditions of their own existence through various forms of associational activities. Given the paralysed nature of the Zimbabwean government after 2000, new farmers were forced to invent ways to survive and provide basic on-farm services. Based on the author's fieldwork, Table 1 shows some of the different types of governance structures within the new resettlement areas, and provides a brief description of each associational form. Table 2, on the other hand, derives from the Mazowe Land and Livelihoods Study 2010 and shows that 73.3 per cent of the 539 respondents belong to religious groups. This highlights the dominance of religion and its accompanying beliefs in influencing associational life at the farm level. The dominance of Christian beliefs has meant the emergence of certain institutional forms based on values of love, neighbourliness and unity. This has assisted in the formation of communities as people interact at multiple social levels, including at church. In Masvingo Province, churches have been one of the most significant sources of organization, to the extent that in a number of areas religious affiliation and land invasions were tightly linked (Scoones et al. 2010:208). Churches in Mazowe have become important signifiers of meaning, especially given the challenges facing fast track farmers. Church members have tended to see each other as relatives, hence enabling them to form new social networks. These networks transcend farm boundaries. A church leader in the area had this to say: "Churches have provided people with relatives when they had none. In church we are all God's children and the emphasis is on helping each other. We have also helped in resolving conflicts even in the homesteads involving our members. We are thus community builders and an important part of new communities."

**Table 2: Types of social institutions in Mazowe**

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Religious group	395	73.3
Agricultural consortium	64	11.9
Farmers' organization	153	28.4
Women's organization	85	15.8
Burial society	20	3.7
Savings club	14	2.6
Irrigation committee	189	35.1
Cooperative project	14	2.6
School development committee	68	12.6
Commodity association	8	1.5
Football club	68	12.6
Health committee	48	8.9

Source: Mazowe Land and Livelihoods Survey 2010.

Institutions in newly resettled areas are formed for the specific political, social and economic needs of communities. In most instances, farm-level formations are a response to challenges or are a way to ensure that certain needs are met. For example, the HIV pandemic has forced Howard Hospital to initiate a programme of Home-Based Care Committees on farms, which are responsible for out-of-hospital patients. At Blightly Farm, there is an operational committee which helps in caring for terminally ill patients on the programme. It assists with food, medicines, psychosocial support and general care

of the terminally ill. It is headed by a health worker who was chosen after training workshops with the hospital. Farm-level institutions are a form of agency on the part of fast track farmers in response to the numerous challenges facing them. In any land reform programme, the provision of social services such as schools, health facilities, transport and social welfare is critical. However, the GoZ adopted a “resettlement first, services later” approach. There was no concerted effort to provide the new communities with social services in terms of water, health, education and sanitation. It might even appear that the Zimbabwean government simply dumped people onto the land and left them to fend for themselves.

In response to these harsh realities of life on the fast track farms, A1 farmers have initiated various novel institutions to improve their lives. In response to a lack of health facilities, farmers in most parts of the district began organizing for the establishment of clinics on their farms. At Davaar Farm, a health committee had already been in existence before the clinic was established. The health and farm committees were jointly responsible for coordinating the turning of the farmhouse into a clinic. Together, they influenced the rural district council to site a clinic at Davaar, and ensured that A1 farmers contributed to the drilling of a necessary borehole. They also provided shelter for nurses and made bricks for—and paid part of the costs in—transforming the farmhouse. In this case, the need for health services led to the formation of an institution that took a lead in rallying the community to make sure the clinic was set up. People thus invest in social relationships to obtain benefits that accrue to them. In other cases, institutions were formed to advance an already existing service. Interviews with school development committee members at Mapere Farm School highlight how farmers organized to ensure that challenges facing schools were alleviated. Mapere School was built by the white farmer but was taken over by the government after 2000. It serves a total of five surrounding farms. The school now has teachers provided by the Ministry of Education and sustains itself through fees paid by the parents of students. However, the school faces many challenges in raising funds to sustain its operations. The parents whose children attend the school have set up a school development committee, as mandated by the Ministry of Education, to raise fees and run the affairs of the school with the headmaster. The committee, which has eight members from the farms served by the school (and includes farm worker representatives), is chosen annually by the parents.

## **Mutual Support Groups and Multipurpose Farm Organizations**

In Mazowe, FLIs vary from mutual support groups to multipurpose farm organizations. Small-scale mutual support groups do not extend beyond the farm (Rahmato 1991). They are usually informal and involve a small number of members. At Usk farm, there are various groupings of farmers involved in rotating savings clubs (*maround*). At the time of the research there were four such groups operating at the farm. They were made up of three to six members who contributed money on a monthly basis, which was given to one member each month. Money disbursed ranged from US\$20–US\$50. One of the groups ensured that money collected each month was used by the farmers to buy inputs. These groups are based on trust since farmers contribute on grounds that, when it is their turn to receive money, everyone will also contribute. They are self-selective and, at least in Usk, the groups are usually formed by people who have known each other before settling on



the farm. Trusting people one has known for only a few years (that is, since the start of the fast track reform) with money is difficult for most farmers.

One member of a savings group indicated: “*Zvinonetsa kutrusta munhu nemaUS dollar. Vamwe vanhu vakauya kuma resettlement vadzingwa kumisha yavo nenyaya dzekuba saka unotoita nevanhu vawaziva kwemakore akawanda*” (“It’s difficult to trust people with American dollars. Some people were chased away from their rural homes because of theft, so you can only trust people you have known for years.”) One of the groups had two members who had been involved in a similar scheme when they were in the communal areas. Revolving savings clubs are thus not novel to resettlement areas; rather, these clubs exemplify continuities from communal areas. In 2007, at the height of the Zimbabwean economic crisis and before the introduction of the US dollar, there were no revolving clubs operating in Usk due to the inflationary environment that made it impossible to save with local currency. At other farms such as Kia Ora, farmers during this period used groceries, kitchen utensils and inputs as a form of barter exchange. Each month members would buy soap, sugar and cooking oil and give them to one member at a time.

At the upper end of the continuum, there are multipurpose institutions which involve all farmers on a particular farm. These institutions are more or less formally constituted and geared towards service provision. An example of such an institution is the electricity committee at Blightly farm, which ensures a regular supply of electricity to the farm. The committee is responsible for the maintenance of electricity infrastructure and the collection of monthly levies for payment of the farm’s electricity bill. It comprises five members who are voted in every five years. Currently, the chairperson is a woman who was chosen by the scheme members. One farmer noted: “*Committee yakazara vanhu vakachangamuka. Tinoisa vanhu vano mhanya mhanya*.” (“The committee is made up of wise people. We only choose people who work hard.”) There is also an element of participatory democracy in that the committee is chosen by election.

In many cases, institutions overlap and at one point or another all institutions are multipurpose in nature. At Haryana farm, the school development committee provides and manages the borehole which the community uses for its water. Water provision on the farm is the responsibility of the Committee of Seven or the farm development committee. The school, however, takes the lead in providing water and controls the use of, and access to, the water source. Thus, an institution created for education provision can be involved in water provision. At Blightly farm, the home-based care group now works as the health committee as it is involved in all health issues, not just those dealing with HIV and AIDS. FLIs are thus multipurpose, and the section below focuses on the management of these institutions.

FLIs are multifaceted in nature, catering for a wide variety of interests. They are age-, gender- and class-based with varying degrees of influence. Evidence from Mazowe provides a nuanced understanding of the various latent and manifest functions of FLIs. These institutions have in some cases become important signifiers of meaning and belonging for A1 farmers. The multiplicity of institutions highlights the fluid nature of farmer identities as they struggle to meet different needs. In one instance, A1 farmers are resource poor and come together to help each other. In another instance, they are brought together by political influences at meetings and events to affirm their affiliation to the political party

which gave them land. At times they are in various networks based on identities such as gender. These fluid rationales highlight the agency of farmers in constantly changing into different selves in an attempt to ensure they access services and goods.

## Internal Savings and Loan Groups

There are various groups involved in internal loans and savings operations. They are commonly called *maround* (rounds). These groups involve pooling together an agreed amount every month which is given to one member. This lump sum allows the recipient to buy items or take care of any task which s/he could not do on his or her own. Trust becomes an important component of the social make-up of these groups because they are based on the assumption of reciprocity. Whoever obtains money in the first month of operation is obligated to continue contributing. These groups are usually made up of people who are related, or have had relationships, prior to arriving in resettlement areas. It is rare to come across people in the same group who meet each other after resettling. In these cases, strong bonds of friendship emerge among the farmers, each trusting that the other will not abscond. The groups remain particularly small with an average of four members per group.

At Usk Farm there are two groups of women involved in savings. One group is made up of four women, and the other of six women. Two of the women are plot holders, four are plot holders' wives, and the rest are relatives of plot holders. There are no farm workers involved, mainly because they rarely interact with A1 farmers at a level that can allow trust to develop. Social class is also important as farm workers might be perceived as being unable to afford membership in the groups, as membership requires a regular source of monthly income every month to be able to meet the obligations. This type of group is highly exclusive and depends not only on trust but also on access to resources. Another female savings group at Hariana indicates that during 2007, when there was a problem with accessing money in Zimbabwe because of inflation, it had resorted to using household utensils or groceries bought from neighbouring countries as modes of exchange.

The absence of men in savings groups on the farms in this study was an interesting observation. Through further probing among the men, the author discovered that *marounds* have always been viewed as a feminine activity in the areas where these people come from. The majority of farmers were from the Chiweshe communal areas in Mazowe, and from Harare. Talking to men on the farms it was apparent that they viewed savings groups as women's activity. As one male farmer at Hariana noted, "*zvema round ndezve vakadzi izvi*"<sup>8</sup> ("internal savings and loans are for women"). It was, however, not entirely clear why savings clubs were viewed as a preserve of women because men on other A1 farms were taking part in these clubs.<sup>9</sup> Exclusive female participation was thus limited to farmers in the author's sample. It remains a significant finding in that women were able to form groups in which the exchange of goods and money was a major preoccupation. Women in patriarchal societies, such as the Shona, are mainly relegated to the private domain, and men are the ones usually involved in public transactions relating to money. These saving groups challenge this notion and thrust women into positions in which they amass a considerable

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<sup>8</sup> In-depth interview with household head on Hariana farm, 23 April 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Agritex officer at Glendale, 7 June 2009.

amount of resources. The question nevertheless is whether these women ultimately have control at household level of the resources acquired from this activity.

## **Production and Marketing: Social Networks and Pooling Together**

Another critical activity of FLIs has been the provision of assistance in productive activities. The general characteristic of A1 farmers not only in Mazowe but in the entire country is that they are resource poor. Farming is an enterprise which requires considerable resources, and most farmers from poor backgrounds find it difficult to obtain productive assets. Most farmers also depend on help from others in their productive activities. Production and marketing of agricultural goods is the major economic activity that ensures that farmers associate together. Production-based and marketing institutions concentrate on access to inputs, credit and other productive assets. These institutions vary in size and structure. They may be made up of only three or four farmers who put together money every month to buy each other inputs in turn. Such a scheme at Hamilton Farm is between three close farmers who knew each other long before coming to the fast track farms. On the other end of the scale are various commodity associations and farmer unions. In the field, the author came across the Mazowe South Cluster. It is a grouping of A2 farmers in Mazowe South region. The cluster's committee is made up of farmers from different farms and the treasurer is from Dunberry Farm.

*Labour pooling:* A1 farmers in Mazowe generally lack mechanization and have serious problems with tillage. Access to cheap labour is crucial for successful farming. The Mazowe Land and Livelihoods Survey 2010/11 found that, in resettlement areas, 51 per cent of farmers use donkey-drawn ploughs while 38.4 per cent use ox-drawn ploughs. Another 7.5 per cent practice zero tillage while 2.6 per cent use hoes to prepare their land for planting. Only 0.4 per cent use tractors for land preparation. This lack of mechanization makes it necessary to develop cooperative arrangements to find enough labour for ploughing. With only 34.4 per cent of farmers owning cattle, draught power becomes a major challenge for those without cattle. Labour pooling takes various forms, including borrowing draught power, reciprocal help in ploughing and drawing on resources as a farm to hire a tractor. Borrowing cattle or donkeys from those who own them is a difficult process as people will only loan their livestock after they have finished with their fields. Given that there are few people with livestock, not everyone is able to borrow, as it is based on trust, friendship or family bonds. Most A1 farmers have six hectares of land, and livestock is only able to plough a limited portion of this land. In most cases, farmers are forced to employ zero tillage or reduce the area under cultivation.

Reciprocal help is the assistance farmers give to each other in their fields on alternate days. This involves three or four households who agree to work on a particular A1 plot for a day or two, and rotate between plots. This type of arrangement resonates with the traditional system of *nhimbe* where a farmer will brew beer, prepare food and invite people to come help him/her in the field. After work the beer and food will be consumed by all those who attended. In newly resettled areas, this type of arrangement is difficult, considering that with monetization people are more concerned with what they may earn than with the food they receive. The other form of labour pooling is the putting together

of money to hire tractors when and where they are available. Tractors are often hired from A2 farmers or the government through its District Development Fund (DDF). On some farms such as Bightly there are no neighbouring A2 farmers with tractors and the DDF only comes to their area when these arrangements are not possible to make. At Usk, farmers have inherited a tractor and planter which are controlled by the Committee of Seven to ensure that everyone benefits from the resources. It is at Hariana and Hamilton farms that the pooling of resources among farmers to hire tractors takes place. Hiring a tractor as a group is cheaper as costs are shared.

*Combating marketing constraints as a group:* Finding transportation for their produce remains a big challenge for farmers. Bad roads, long distances to depots and high transport costs are all serious obstacles which farmers have to face. At Hariana Farm, maize and soya beans are sold at the Mvurwi Grain Marketing Board depot, which is some 20 kilometres away. Tobacco is sent to the auction floors in Harare, which is approximately 80 kilometres away. The advantage is that Hariana is next to the Mvurwi highway, and the A1 farmers, consequently, have no problem with bad roads. It is easy to find transportation, but the major difficulty is cost. Tobacco farmers at Hariana produce on average 10–15 bales each, with some farmers having as little as one bale. Transporting a few bales at one's own is expensive as one has to pay for the entire truck as well. Tobacco farmers have resorted to transporting all their tobacco at once to reduce costs. Transport owners bring their lorry only if the amount of tobacco available is enough to fill their lorry so that they realize the maximum benefit. Filling a lorry means that many farmers are forced to sell together as a way of securing transport to the market.

## Conclusion

Novel forms of social organization in emergent communities are fluid and respond to a wide variety of needs. They have been a means of survival for new farmers at the height of Zimbabwe's economic meltdown. Macroeconomic challenges in Zimbabwe that followed the Fast Track Land Reform Programme impacted on the nature, structure and dynamics of farm-level institutions. Shortages of cash, food, fuel and basic commodities had a heavy impact on people, especially A1 farmers who had the burden of investing in moving and settling in new places. An investment in an initial form of housing, land clearance and planting required money that simply was not readily available. Institutionalization became an important livelihood strategy by which farmers tried to access scarce resources. Through various forms of assistance networks, such as revolving funds or input groups, farmers struggled to provide for their households. Macroeconomic conditions, however, had not been conducive to informal institutions because they were resource poor. Farmers in Mazowe are now involved in various processes, such as school development associations and health committees, to meet actual requirements by coming together and contributing to their own well-being. Social isolation from family that comes with moving into fast track farms leaves farmers vulnerable and without a safety net. There is a need for them to have multiple identities through different institutions that offer a promise of security in times of trouble. Fast track farms were new frontiers fraught with uncertainty, especially for farmers in A1 schemes. The new farmers had to devise manifold strategies to survive in an unfamiliar environment without the support of their family. A single farm now provides a plethora of institutions, all catering to different needs.

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