

THE GENDER-DIFFERENTIATED IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL  
ADJUSTMENT ON POLITICAL EXPRESSION  
AND EMPLOYMENT IN ZIMBABWE

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A new consideration has developed in recent years – that women are the key to development. The supposition now is that the poorest nations will never grow out of poverty unless women become a more active part of civil society. No country can develop where half its human resources are undervalued or repressed. Without this, a country cannot succeed at population control, the eradication of epidemic diseases, or the conservation of its natural resources.

*Women and Development: Methodological Evolution*

Methodology on the role of women in development has evolved over the last two decades. In the late 1970s, researchers began to recognize and document the effects of development projects on women. In an attempt to integrate women into development and to make development projects more effective in assisting women, the women in development (WID) approach emerged. Another integrationist view, the women and development (WAD) position appeared in the second half of the 1970s as a more critical and discriminating version of the WID concept. This perspective recognizes the contribution women already make to development and their important role in the process. Women's productive contribution, however, needs to be acknowledged rather than downplayed or ignored and any inequalities questioned. According to this view, women are disadvantaged because they have been "forgotten" or "left out". When women have been added or integrated to a program or policy, their situations will improve. This approach often analyzes women as a homogeneous group, frequently overlooking important differences of class, race or ethnicity and the significance of the reproductive side of women's lives.

Seeking to address the underlying problems of class and gender inequality, the Gender and Development (GAD) framework arose in the 1980s. This school of thought emphasizes that the basis of the cultural and social assignment of

gender roles which contribute to the exploitation of women (and men) must first be examined. Gender is used to describe culturally and socially determined characteristics, sex to refer to those characteristics which are biologically determined. In realizing that gender is culturally determined, organizations, programs, and projects recognize it can also be changed. The GAD position is dedicated to issues of equity and looks beyond the roles of women and men in society to examine the relations between them, the significance of these relations for development and the factors that both maintain and change these relations. The GAD approach thus questions traditional views of gender roles and responsibilities and then seeks to advance strategies leading to empowerment. Women are seen as agents of change, rather than passive recipients of development assistance. (Zwart, 1992, 1–3). This agenda setting approach implies the transformation of the existing development agenda with a gender perspective. The participation of women as change agents or decisionmakers, in determining development priorities, is the key strategy. Women participate in all developmental decisions and through this process bring about a fundamental change in the existing development paradigm. Women not only become a part of the mainstream, they also reorient the nature of the mainstream. It is not just women as individuals but women's agenda which gets recognition from the mainstream.

Concern about the negative social costs of the structural adjustment programs supported by international financial institutions has been noted since the mid-1960s. UNICEF's *Adjustment with a Human Face* drew attention on an international scale to the significant deterioration in welfare among the poorest groups in countries undergoing structural adjustment programs. Women and adjustment questions were primarily framed as poverty issues. Women were identified as a vulnerable group, a specific category of the poor and thus at risk of being adversely affected by increased prices, reduced incomes and cutbacks in public expenditures, likely outcomes of stabilization and structural adjustment measures (Cornia, Jolly, Stewart).

In 1989 the Commonwealth Secretariat published a report *Engendering Adjustment* and UNICEF brought out its monograph, *Invisible Adjustment*. These publications emphasized the inequitable gender-based differences, i.e., the gender dimension, in the negative impact of structural adjustment programs on the poor. Countries were seen to be implementing structural adjustment programs but with the human and social cost of extra work and pressure on women within the poorest groups.

Others have criticized these approaches for their focus on welfare costs and argue that structural adjustment programs must be made more efficient by removing pre-existing social constraints which make it difficult for women to enter the productive sector, by recognizing the conceptual male bias of the macroeconomic policies themselves and redefining productive labor to include the productive work involved in the maintenance and reproduction of human resources. Power issues are also seen as important to the conceptualization of inequality in gender relations. Therefore, the perpetuation of male bias is not just a distributional issue of injustice rooted in inadequate information or individual

bias but exists in the economic theories and within the institutional structures of markets and public sector institutions themselves (Gear, 1994).

Even with growing recognition of the important contributions women make to the development process, they continue to face formidable social, economic and political barriers. This paper seeks to analyze their collaboration as subjects, participants, and actors in development by investigating gender dynamics and social change in Zimbabwe, a low income developing country in southern Africa with a population of 10.4 million. Focus on a particular country can be beneficial, as opposed to those involving wider comparisons, since there is no archetypical African women, but on the contrary women immersed in diverse socioeconomical, political and cultural arrangements. To study African women, one must recognize the diversity within the region and within the female population. Women are beginning to redefine their identities, their roles, and the meaning of gender. Although this is a global phenomenon, it is rooted in specific social, geographic and environmental conditions. Gender is not only a woman's affair. It is a social construct by which human beings organize their prerogatives, responsibilities and relationships and which is linked to all macro and micro processes and institutions. Conceptualizing gender is necessary for examining and interpreting information. Understanding gender in specific contexts enables researchers, government and development official to devise more effective and equitable social programs and policies. Promoting gender equality infers a thorough going change in the socioeconomical organization of societies. This involves reorganization not only of the way women work, live and nurture families, but also of the way men do and of the manner in which family, work and community roles are related.

## STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND ZIMBABWE

### *Gender and ESAP in Zimbabwe: Methodological Approach*

In 1990 Zimbabwe announced the start of its Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP). Access to World Bank and International Monetary Fund financing was made conditional on the adoption of such a program which involved measures such as reduced public expenditures, devaluation of currencies, and export promotion all directed toward debt reduction. The consequences of this program have been painful. Structural adjustment programs involve macroeconomic changes which are likely to have different consequences for men and women. Thus, the level and type of economic development, i.e., a low-income country in economic crisis necessitating the adoption of a structural adjustment program will serve as the independent variable in this analysis and will be examined in terms of its impact on two aspects of a six-dimension framework of women's status adopted from Janet Giele (Giele, 1977, 3–31). The author has analyzed the impact of structural adjustment on the other dimensions of Giele's model in another study. This classification can guide specific investigations of women's position within and across societies. The areas under consideration in this analysis are: political expression; work and mobility.

### *Zimbabwe's Position in the International Economic System*

Unlike the Western world, Zimbabwe and the developing world appeared to have little to rejoice in with the ending of the cold war. Whether in the areas of political economy, defense or ideology, the space on the agenda for the concerns of developing countries has contracted. Their bargaining power and leverage, always quite small, have steadily eroded since the beginning of the debt crises in the early 1980s. With the cold war over, developing countries matter little for the North. Interest, aid and investments were diverted away from the developing world to Eastern Europe. Investors reasoned that the new zeal for the market in Eastern Europe, along with the presence of necessary infrastructure, put it far ahead of most developing regions in regard to investments, potential risks and returns. In fact, the stringent requirements insisted upon for further assistance to developing nations have not been extended to the countries of Eastern Europe. Both attention and technical and financial resources are being transferred from development in the South to economic reconstruction in Eastern Europe. While the world's poorest got poorer in the 1980s, Africa is being marginalized in world affairs in the 1990s both geopolitically and economically. The lost decade of the 1980s may thus be extended.

North-South dialogue suffered a severe blow at the 1981 Cancun Summit of 22 Heads of State and Government. Ideological shifts in western politics reflected a firm commitment to market forces and little sympathy for poorer countries. At UNCTAD VI in Belgrade (1983), developed countries suggested that debt-distressed and crisis-ridden developing nations should approach the IMF and the World Bank to adopt monetarist policies in order to structurally adjust their economies. The majority of developing nations adopted structural adjustment programs to respond to their deepening economic problems.

The position of the developing world in the international trading scheme contributes to the difficulty of achieving consistent economic growth. From the incorporation of these countries into the international economic system during colonialism to the present, their role has been chiefly as suppliers of raw materials and agricultural products. Depending on commodity exports meant that these countries had to cope with fluctuating and frequently declining prices for their exports. At the same time, prices of imports increased. This made development planning difficult and often led to economic stagnation and decline.

Zimbabwe's economy since independence in 1980 has been marked by fluctuating rates of annual growth and high levels of unemployment. At independence, the socialist-oriented ZANU-PF government inherited a stagnant economy embodying racial inequities in which 4 percent of the population earned 60 percent of the national income (Tevera, 1995, 80). Frequent droughts since 1982 and the international recession of the mid-1980s have been faulted for the low measure of economic and employment growth and have limited the government's efforts to further development. Yet Zimbabwe's adoption of an economic structural program was not the action of a desperate economy or acute economic crisis but was taken from a position of relative strength. The problem for Zimbabwe was how to manage an economy which was scarcely growing and in great

need of foreign exchange. Unlike other sub-Saharan African countries, Zimbabwe's economy has a relatively large manufacturing sector (26.4% of GDP in 1990). Zimbabwe's relatively high level of industrialization is the legacy of Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1960 leading to the imposition of sanctions and the need to produce many industrial commodities domestically. Zimbabwe's main exports come from the agricultural (tobacco and cotton), mining (gold) and manufacturing (ferro-alloys and nickel) fields (Gear).

*The Inefficacy and Gender Inequity of the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Program*

The Zimbabwean government conceded possible social and political costs of adjustment by including measures in the reform program for the protection of vulnerable groups. The state acknowledged that there would be certain transitional costs and that not all groups in Zimbabwean society would benefit, or suffer, equally from the reform. The Social Dimensions of Adjustment Program was introduced as a safety net designed to cushion the worst effects of ESAP. Administration of the program has been hindered by its incorporation into the existing government ministries, especially the Ministry of Public Service, Labor and Public Welfare, which were already understaffed and managing the drought relief program. The program was made up of three principal components: the Employment and Training Program, the Social Welfare Program and monitoring and evaluation of the social impact of the economic reforms. A Social Development Fund (SDF) was set up to finance the program. However SDF's impact is insignificant. The Social Development Fund has had a number of weaknesses and limitations comprising the delay in implementation, its small size and the poor targeting approach. One of the major problems with the Social Development Fund has been the delay in implementation. It was not until a full year after the start of ESAP that the government announced its Social Dimensions of Adjustment plans in detail, and it was another 16 months before a full-time SDF Coordinator was appointed within the government. Another major weakness of the SDF has been its small size. The amount of money allocated to the SDF is tiny compared to the annual decline, due to cost cutting, in basic services such as health, education and agriculture.

In a period of massive resource reallocation, the amount of money allocated to the SDF can not begin to cushion vulnerable groups and reflects the government's lack of commitment in doing so. Even with its comparatively minimal resources, the SDF has had few accomplishments because of its poorly designed targeting strategy. First the SDF uses a targeting approach intended mainly to exclude ineligible applicants from gaining benefits, requiring exemption certificates for entitlement to assistance. Barriers to application are so high that most of the eligible population does not find out about the program. Second, the eligibility criteria for the SDF program present problems. The extensive documentation and complexity of the requirements exclude many of the most vulnerable who may not have proof of residence, proof of income or employment, may not have the time to make the several trips usually required, and may live far from

the Department of Social Welfare, which oversees the program, offices. The level of benefits has been low compared to the cost of applying. Furthermore, for the food money scheme, the money is paid directly to household heads assumed to be male. This may obstruct women's access to assistance from the program as the money may not necessarily be spent on household consumption needs. The requirement of wage slips to gain exemption from health charges has caused difficulties for women's access to help. Husbands may be reluctant to show their wage slips to their wives. The transitional costs provided are confined to retrenchments, due to civil service reform or the restructuring of industry, or to cushion increased cost recovery measures stemming from structural adjustment's adverse effects on social service access. The program has thus failed to reach the majority of female workers who have suffered as a result of the introduction of ESAP. An apparently gender blind policy of the SDA program, which targets formal sector retrenchees is in practice male-biased as most paid women workers are employed in the informal sector (Zimbabwe Women's Resource Center and Network, 1995, 21–25).

Overall, the efficacy of such a compensatory program as SDA is doubtful given administrative problems and the lack of adequate dissemination of public information. In addition, issues of gender differences have not been considered in the program design so few women have received any assistance from the fund. Inattention to interhousehold dynamics is another sign that the SDA program is unlikely to provide sufficient compensation for women and may even contribute to greater gender inequity.

In Zimbabwe, as in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the impact of the economic structural adjustment program has been harsh, with investment and growth remaining torpid while living conditions of vulnerable groups have deteriorated notably. Among the most hard-hit groups are women, especially female headed households, whose undependable means of support have been further weakened. It is difficult to disaggregate the effects of ESAP from those of other factors. Most important in this respect is the drought of 1991–92 and the arid years of insufficient rainfall since 1993. However, this paper seeks to provide some evidence that the effects of ESAP may be gendered and that women may have carried the preponderance of the transitional costs of adjustment so far.

## POLITICAL EXPRESSION

### *The Absence of Women's Voices in Decisionmaking*

In the process of reforming its fiscal and monetary policies, the Zimbabwean government gave little thought to the most vulnerable groups in society including women. While the government may have to a certain degree been gender aware, it was not gender sensitive. This is not surprising in a country where women's participation in policy formulation has been limited and gender issues have not been successfully integrated with the framework of economic theorizing on adjustment. The absence of women's voices in decisionmaking results in

a continued marginalization of gender issues in public discourse. Women need to participate not just as passive beneficiaries; their involvement as decision-makers is central to the direction of development.

Women do not encounter the state in the same way as do men, whether one is examining its ideological, legal, political, administrative, or developmental aspects. Women have limited access to the state and few occupy official positions. Laws, norms and ideology shape different meanings for men and women. In addition, the consequence of state action affects men and women differently, conditioned either by the invisibility of women and their interests or male bias. The presence of a patriarchal ideology and the existence of separate women's organizations can provide officials with the opportunity to control women's collective labor for public purposes. Women need to seek ways to redefine expectations at the interface of gender-based obligations and state agencies (Thomas-Slayter, Rocheleau, 1995, 195–196).

Although women make up approximately 52 percent of the total Zimbabwean population, their participation in decision making is insignificant. Immediately after independence, gender ranked high among political priorities. Women played an important role in politics as a sequel to the process that had begun during the liberation struggle. Participation at that time was greater at local levels and growing at upper levels. Currently women are underrepresented at the upper levels of the political structure.

	1988		1993 (Chitsike, 1994, 7)		1995 ( <i>The Herald</i> , 1995)	
	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total
Cabinet Ministers	3	27	0	24	2	23
Ministers	4	32	2	35		
Deputy Ministers	3	18	3	16	4	16
Judges	1	9	1	18	2	18
Heads of Parastatals	0	28	0	–		
Senators	3	40	–	–	–	–
Ambassadors	1	29	2	–	–	–
Councillors/Governors	80	1,824	–	–	–	–
Resident Ministers	0	8	1	8		
Members of Parliament	13	100	17	150	20	150

(5 nominated)

#### Decision Making Positions in the Civil Service

Permanent Secretaries	8.7%
Deputy Secretaries	9.3%
Under Secretaries	16.8%
Assistant Secretaries	30.1%
Senior Administrative Officers	

Considering political appointments, parliamentarians, and women in decision-making positions in the civil service, the total number of women in government constitutes 25.3 percent (*The Herald*).

The Zimbabwean constitution in its Bill of Rights guarantees that everyone has a right to participation and a right to information but omits sex as a ground upon which discrimination is prohibited thus conferring an inferior status of women. In not forbidding discrimination on the ground of sex, the Constitution thereby permits gender related discrimination. Legally there is no barrier to women's participation in public and political life in Zimbabwe. The Legal of Age Majority Act (1982) gave all citizens equal status at the age of eighteen. In addition, Zimbabwe has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. There are no property or educational requirements to vote but data from recent elections indicate that women vote less than men. Women do not stand for electoral office as frequently as men, although 47 women registered to run in the 1995 primaries. Women's political participation is confined to voting for predominantly male candidates. Males also fill most of the cabinet posts except for the welfare positions such as health, education, and labor and social welfare, reflecting ghettoization and prolonging women's ineligibility for traditionally male preserves.

#### *Transformation of the National Agenda to Include Women's Issues Needed*

Every political party recognizes the voting power of women and has included a women's wing or league as an integral part of its organizational structure. As deliberate creations of the political leadership in realization and for the purpose of exploiting of women's importance in securing electoral victories, women's wings probably represent women's interests to a limited extent. The parties themselves are led and controlled by men. Women political leaders must look to male political leaders for cooption into leadership and for continued political survival. The league's loyalty lies principally with the political party not with a women's constituency.

Outside league meetings women are outnumbered by their male counterparts in important political party meetings and in parliament. The ruling Zanu-PF party's whole central committee numbers 33 and of these 3 are women. The other parties are small and women are hardly heard of. The only time women feature is when they appear wearing party symbol t-shirts or cloth and dancing at political rallies. Although debate as a process may be conducted in a democratic manner, the range and content of the debates are largely determined by male members who predominate in leadership positions in both government and party (Chigudu, Tichagwa, 1995, 2-4). The idea of having a separate wing for women in political organizations is a continuation of the male/female dichotomy, where women's issues are assigned to women's institutions instead of being looked at as national issues for serious consideration. A complete and unqualified integration of women and men into the same national institution, without creating others for women alone, would help put women's issues and concerns on the national



agenda. Yet the ultimate goal extends beyond integration to seeing women assume a proactive stance working toward gender equality and women's empowerment while influencing and transforming the national agenda and national structures.

The barriers women confront to participation in public and political life are socially created. Authority over families and property is vested in the male family head and marriages are patrilocal. Thus married women are often required to vote for candidates of the husband's choice. Cultural and moral responsibility to the husband as head of the family is given as grounds for denying a woman her right to vote for candidates of her own choice. A woman seeking to stand for elective office or to apply for a senior post may be asked to show proof of no objection from her husband, even though there is no such legal requirement.

Although President Mugabe has urged the electorate to vote women into parliament, negative social attitudes against associating women with power persist. In traditional society, men owned and controlled the salient resources allocating them to various uses. Although women participated in the liberation struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, it produced no ideology compatible with the principle of gender equity. The benefits of revolution were tempered by the retention of masculinist principles. Legal reforms have been adopted but they favor economically advantaged women in urban areas. Rural women, who make up the majority, largely continue to see themselves as the custodians of African culture. Gender equity, as seen and defined by the educated and primarily urban elite, is viewed by rural women as an anomaly and contrary to their understanding of what is African. Women who aspire to political leadership are depicted in negative stereotypes as prostitutes, malcontents, social misfits, and analogous disparaging terms. Politics is associated with power and control and the popular attitude is that women should not be seen to want this power. Women who are interested in public life are viewed as unfeminine and are not compatible with Shona and Ndebele ideals of a wife and mother. Many women thus remain inactive in politics because of the fear of victimization and loss of family support. Many women in politics in Zimbabwe today are either sisters, nieces or wives of deceased politicians or politicians already in power. Few women ventured into politics in their own right.

#### *Improving Women's Political Literacy and Creating Access*

Women voters themselves appear to disdain their politically ambitious members choosing to vote for men. This suggests that women still tend to believe that political leadership is for men, that women accept rather than challenge male authority. This is a projection of decision making at the household level where men are the socially recognized heads of household. This attitude hinders women from acting on their own behalf and keeps party leadership in the hands of men. Allusion to the national leader as "Baba" (father) and other elected politicians as "Vakuru" (elders) is often heard at party rallies. This implies that the party as a whole is one large, extended family in which fathers and elders are not to be challenged regardless of whether they speak for everyone's (women's) interests (Chigudu, Tichagwa).

Female candidates for elective office have a number of factors working against them. First, women do poor or no networking. Women do not easily form strong networks. Generally after work women go home to perform their domestic responsibilities. Men meet other men in bars, clubs and on the golf course. Secondly, women candidates have access to limited or no funding. Economically women are not financially able to fund their own campaigns. This is made more difficult by the fact that already women are not in control of domestic finance in the private arena. Job segregation keeps women in low status jobs and caring occupations such as nursing, domestic workers, teaching, clerical, etc. These professions do not give women the financial resources to campaign for elections and are not jobs from which political candidates are traditionally recruited. Men, on the other hand, have more ways to attain funding. Third, the negative male culture in parliament is one that undermines the contributions of women. Popular culture supports the notion that women do not belong in decision making bodies, and this includes parliament. Some statements made in the Zimbabwean parliament demonstrate that certain parliamentarians do not regard the participation of women in the institution as meaningful. Fourth, women face negative media coverage. The print and electronic media do not have a positive attitude towards women in general and women in politics in particular. Consequently, the media inclines toward capitalizing on the negative views that society has on women entering a male dominated environment. Fifth, general societal discrimination makes it difficult for women to find time and energy to participate in politics. Sexist language is often used to disparage women. Individual women who seek leadership positions must also struggle with their own internalized stereotypes and with the fact that a woman running for public office will be assessed differently than men. Her private life will be probed into. Her marital status, husband's job, stability of her marriage, number of children, political inclination, her style of dress will be examined. It is much easier to become apathetic or withdraw leaving the political sphere to its own machinations. Politics has not traditionally been viewed as a place to find a respectable woman (Kunya, 1995, 7-8).

Women voters in Zimbabwe at present lack a sufficiently strong group consciousness able to serve as a power base for an aspiring politician or capable of selecting and electing its own leaders. Hence, as a constituency women lack political power to impact on the nature and direction of national politics in general and party politics in particular. Improvement in the level of political literacy of women, which is lower than that of men, and active promotion by the government of women's participation in politics, which it is obliged to do as signatory to several human rights conventions and charters, could assist Zimbabwean women in securing a voice in public affairs and policy. Women don't need charity, they need access. Without it, they cannot have input into the implementation of such policies as ESAP. Women's issues remain marginal to the national political agenda. Although numerous women's organizations have emerged (Women and Law and Development in Africa, Women's Action Group, Zimbabwe Women's Resource Center and Network, Women and Law in Southern Africa-Zimbabwe, the Association of Women in Business) since independence, the

undemocratic character of the regime and lack of public awareness prevent women from organizing and participating in decision making at all levels. With little or no opportunity to voice women's concerns within formal political structures, women's issues and their relationship to macroeconomic policies such as ESAP remain marginalized. In 1988 the department of women affairs, part of the Ministry of Community Development and Women's affairs, was moved to the Ministry of Political Affairs. In June 1992, the whole Ministry of Political Affairs was abolished. Thus, even a token gesture that masks the absence of women's issues and women from the policy area has been eliminated. In the current dire economic circumstances brought on by ESAP, the interests of the more vulnerable and invisible societal groups, such as women, are likely to receive even less consideration.

## WORK AND MOBILITY

The marginalization of women is both a political and economic phenomenon. As in all times of crisis and adversity, the weakest in society bear the burden. ESAP has resulted in the further economic marginalization of women, especially female-headed households. Historically, employment in all sectors except agriculture was the exclusive preserve of men. Even the poorest-paid factory workers, as well as domestic workers, were predominantly men. In Rhodesia, from the last decades of the nineteenth century through the time of the Great Depression, a geographical division of labor existed in which African men were recruited into wage labor on farms and in mines, while African women remained in the rural areas working the fields and taking care of children and the old. The vitality of village life depended on women's work, which also subsidized migrant workers' substandard wages without cost to the regime. Deteriorating rural conditions and lack of agricultural extension services by the 1930s affected rural livelihoods, compelling more and more women and children to migrate to towns. Since African women were largely excluded from urban wage labor, many provided for themselves by joining men as wives or consorts and/or by trading or marketing. After WW II, the Rhodesian government allowed African male workers to live with wives and dependents and began introducing education for African children. These developments led to the creation of a more stabilized urban African community. Newly created welfare departments began molding African urban notions of leisure and teaching western concepts of domesticity to African urban women. Only gradually just prior to and after independence did the dominant ideology of exclusivity in race and sex begin to erode.

### *Women in the Formal Employment Sector*

Prior to ESAP, a clear gender division of labor existed in the formal employment sector in Zimbabwe with women concentrated in the services sectors of health and education, public administration, and agriculture. The impact of ESAP on formal sector employment can be established by looking at retrench-

ment statistics following enactment of the program. More than 22,000 Zimbabwean workers lost their jobs since market reforms were launched in 1990 through 1993. The unemployment rate increased from 37.2 percent in 1990 to 44.4 percent in 1993 (*The Herald*, 1994). The highest retrenchment figures have been in the mining sector in which women's participation is low (3%). Women are comparatively highly employed in public sector jobs in Zimbabwe; but they have not been negatively affected by the civil service reorganization instituted as part of ESAP. In 1993, out of 4,869 public sector retrenchees, only 43 were women. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) argues that the actual number of retrenchees is much higher than official statistics indicated (Gear, 28–29).

ESAP policies have brought changes in the Labor Relations Act (1987). These involve the increased role of collective bargaining to supersede statutory minimum wage policy and government intervention in the establishment of fixed terms and conditions of service. The deregulation of unions has fortified these factors introducing a less secure environment for workers in general. Women's participation and representation in the labor movement has been historically weak in Zimbabwe. As workers, however, they will be affected by changes in the degree of job security. Since women rely more heavily on preferential treatment and protection in employment and employee benefits, such as maternity leave, the new insecure working environment brought on by ESAP augurs ill for the future terms and conditions of women's employment. Another result of change in labor legislation is the increasing casualization of the formal sector workforce. Although affecting both male and female workers, between March 1991 and June 1992, the number of women working full time had dropped by about 30,000 while the number of part-timers had increased by 8,000. This may indicate a trend towards a flexible workforce which often employs many female workers (ZWRN, 5).

The growth of female employment opportunities for young women in Export Processing Zones given experience with such zones in other countries will lead to appalling working conditions, low wages, and job insecurity. Women in these zones suffer ill-health and ill-treatment by employers.

ESAP has led to a general decline in real wages, employment opportunities and job security affecting both male and female workers. The average monthly income dropped from Z\$355.42 in 1991 to Z\$155.09 in 1993. Inflation rose sharply from 16.1% in 1990 to 23.3% in 1991 to 42.1% in 1992 and contributed to the erosion in real wages. Given the concentration of women workers in lower paid positions, reductions in the value of real wages may be particularly significant for women. A program of specific measures to bring about the advancement of women into middle and senior management positions within the civil service shows mixed success one year after implementation (1993). A 1991 report had shown that women within the civil service made up about 30% of public service employees at entry level but the proportion of women holding high level positions was inordinately low. The program has been maintained in principle despite civil service reform due to ESAP. However maintaining and increas-

ing the impetus in the depressing economical environment may be difficult (Gear, 31, 34).

The government itself recognizes that real wages have declined radically since the introduction of ESAP, and women are the ones carrying the bulk of the burden. From 1990 to 1992, real wages fell about 30 percent. Although the entire family bears the cost of this loss in purchasing power, women carry a larger share of the load. Women's basic needs may be designated lower priority than those of the male adults. As shoppers, they may be expected to provide the same supplies on a smaller budget (ZWRCN, 7).

#### *Income Earning Opportunities for Women in the Informal Sector*

Through the informal sector, a country's poor have managed to create their own employment opportunities in many hostile economic and political environments in developing countries. In Zimbabwe, the informal economy is especially important for providing women's income earning opportunities. The informal sector in Zimbabwe provides steady employment for 1.6 million people. This number is in contrast to 1.25 million in formal sector occupations. In comparison to other sub-Saharan African Countries, Zimbabwe's formal sector is both larger and is concentrated in manufacturing activities (70% of the total). The informal sector in Zimbabwe is important for women's income earning opportunities since two thirds of informal sector micro-enterprises are run by women (Gear, 37).

Some of the trends which have negatively affected women's ability to earn income within this area are decreased demand as actual purchasing power had dropped, increased male competition as more men lose their jobs, and increased costs of production as input prices rise due to price decontrol and currency devaluation. The latter is significant for women producing knitted and crocheted items which require semi-processed materials, wool and thread, since the costs of these items has risen following the introduction of ESAP.

More men are entering the informal sector and this could change previous gender divisions in the type of work women and men undertake. Preceding ESAP, women worked primarily in textile, weaving and apparel production (mostly knitted and crocheted items), as well as in food and beverage enterprises. Men were engaged in wholesale trade, construction and fabricated metal production. The number of men involved in petty trading, which was previously taken up by women, has increased. A growing number of middle class women (and men) are entering the informal sector as middle class incomes are shrinking because of price rises and reduction in the real value of wages. The negative impact of ESAP on women informal sector workers was evident in a survey of 100 households in one of Harare's low income suburbs. The study reported a decline of 34% in the amount earned by women from informal activities.

Changes in women's income earning opportunities also affect the welfare of other household members. Income from female household members, of nominal amounts, is entirely used for basic household expenditures, while men's income was also used for personal expenditures. Moreover, an increase or decrease in a

women's economic status may be influential in strengthening or weakening her room for maneuver, her bargaining power within and outside the household (Gear, 40).

#### *Microenterprises, Gender, and Development*

Microenterprises are important to the economy of developing countries. They provide employment and income for many people while supplying needed products and services. This sector has increased in importance as large scale enterprises are unable to expand rapidly and provide large-scale employment in developing countries as employment in agriculture declines, as migration from the countryside swells urban populations and as the effects of structural adjustment programs lead to economic hardship. Women play a major role within small scale enterprises which represent an important means of earning income for them in developing countries. Especially important for women who need to earn income, microenterprises are more flexible and less restrictive than employment in large companies, which may require education, training or experience that women lack. Such jobs may also demand that work be done at times and in places that are culturally unacceptable or difficult for women with family responsibilities. Small scale enterprises can be developed upon knowledge and skills women gain in the family, can be done on a part-time basis and within the household if necessary, and can ease the transition from agricultural employment as it begins to decline. In a country like Zimbabwe where a large portion of the population (70%) is still in the rural areas, and most of it women (50 to 60%), small scale enterprises are an efficient means of securing income given the cost and difficulty in the transport of raw materials and products. Microenterprises are an even more important means of income, products, and services under unfavorable economic conditions. Nonfarm income is especially important for the very poor, the landless, and women who live in rural areas but fail to share in the returns from agricultural development (Dulansey, Austin, 1991, 79-81).

Constrained by their limited job-related skills, burdened with domestic chores and driven to find additional income to compensate for the harsh effects of ESAP, women in Zimbabwe must seek and fill the available lacunae in income generating activities which are often low paying and generally not sought by men. Zimbabwean women represent about two thirds of the informal sector and comprise 67 percent of small scale enterprises (Zhou, 1995, 163). However, whenever a particular venture proved lucrative, men tended to move in. In general, the smaller the size of the business and the more rural or smaller the size of the locality, the larger the proportion of women business owners.

The issue of economic empowerment of women in Zimbabwe has traditionally been dominated by women's income-generating projects. One organization which focuses primarily on this strategy is a nongovernmental organization, the Zimbabwe Woman's Bureau (ZWB), organized prior to independence by white, liberal church women as a welfare organization. Currently it receives funds from donor organizations to empower women through functional literacy courses, seminars on legal rights, bookkeeping, project planning, marketing, and man-

agement, and the development of microprojects in high density and communal areas. Given Zimbabwe's patriarchal culture and society, the association strives for gender equity and leadership roles for women without alienating male support. Modern notions of western feminism are foreign to rural African women and often seen as antithetical to traditional African culture. Mobilizing women in groups (although men are not excluded) to earn income is viewed as a useful means of empowering women. Empowerment consists not only of income generation but also of making women aware of their role in society's development in general. Women earn revenue and understand the relevance and importance of their contributions to the community. Traditionally, it was unheard of for women to work for economic gain. Any revenue women gained from subsistence plots allotted to them by their husbands was used for the family's welfare. ZWB encourages women to take the initiative in problem solving and in starting cooperatives. The bureau itself does not organize cooperatives but responds to applications and leads an applicant group through a three stage process: 1) the pre-cooperative stage, 2) loan application, 3) cooperative working to become independent commercial ventures. Once a cooperative is formed it must register with the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperatives. The ministry has a marketing department which can buy products from ventures and help place them. Microprojects currently in operation include livestock rearing, oil pressing, pottery, tree plantations, catering, poultry raising, piggery, garment making (school uniforms, children's and adult clothes), gardening, carpentry, goat keeping, soap making, fence making, flour making, sewing, bread making, brick molding, small scale irrigation, bee keeping, and crocheting. Some of these areas had been the domain of men. The effects of ESAP, however, have prompted women to make money in nontraditional spheres. Where livestock raising was done by men and for status and personal use, not for commercial purposes, now women are raising livestock to sell on the market. Beekeeping in the traditional mode required work at night or dawn and was associated with sorcery and witchcraft if performed by women. With new methods of working bees, women are involved in the activity. Zimbabwe Women's Bureau has thirteen field directors in as many areas plus four trainees assigned by the United Nation helping to establish and provide supervision for projects. Recently, field workers have been learning to ride motorcycles (6 for seventeen field workers) at Silveira House in Harare, as an efficient and inexpensive means of field transportation for project oversight.

The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau conducts functional literacy classes in the 13 areas of its operation. ZWB adheres to the reasoning that for literacy to be successful among the illiterate with whom the organization works these women must embrace learning a functional skill as well, in order to learn directly how they can make use of their literacy. Along with an emphasis on literacy, there must be a stress on vocational skills. These skills should not only consist of traditional women's activities, but more lucrative male-dominated vocations as well. Literacy programs must affirm that what is learned can be made immediately practical and used right away. Continued adult education programs are nec-

essary for women with low levels of literacy who risk sliding back into illiteracy if their skills are not continuously used and strengthened. Literacy and the projects women undertake can become even more meaningful for women, according to ZWB philosophy, when they are linked to making women aware of their oppression, and at the same time to organizing and training them for effective self-reliance activities. The Bureau upholds the idea that learning how to read and write must go hand in hand with emancipation and empowerment. The Bureau, however, advocates a politically sensitive approach designed not to alienate men in Zimbabwe's still strongly patriarchal culture.

Most of the cooperatives have savings clubs to which members contribute monthly and which help the group accumulate funds for new equipment or allow members to withdraw money with interest in time for Christmas. Implementation of ESAP has led to a rise in prices, the retrenchment of husbands, and a rising cost of living. Years of drought have made things even more difficult and left women increasingly responsible for the economic support of the family. Where families were having milk with their tea in the morning, now they are drinking tea with a little sugar. Lunch is usually skipped. Where previously families could purchase two loaves of bread a day, they are now buying only one. School and health fees have also increased. The cooperative movement has given women a means of coping and surviving in times of economic adversity.

Thus, small scale enterprise is a major mode of income generation for women, especially women with limited financial and human capital. Yet these enterprises are criticized for being subsistence rather than maximization strategies. The financial return for the time and energy invested is extremely low. Despite this, microprojects provide women opportunities even if within a narrow range, do furnish some income and are often vital to household survival. As a rule, isolated areas do not offer any more than minimal opportunities for making money. To earn more than a small allowance, a micro-enterprise must offer an unusual product and have access to an outside market. Overall, there is much variation in the operation of these groups, depending upon the skill, energy and resources available to those running them. Small scale enterprises are a vital hedge against poverty and the lack of opportunities for women in formal sector employment. Unlike men, most women are confined to making money through small commercial undertakings. Yet these activities are no universal panacea for poverty. Low cash flows and restricted demand inhibit the activities of women in most remote, rural areas. Even where outside opportunities obtain, they may be seasonal, temporary, and highly vulnerable to interference from official services (Preston-White, Rogerson, 1991, 229-244).

In addition to the more conventional nongovernmental organizations like the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, there now exist more recently formed organizations like Zimbabwe Women's Finance Trust (ZWIFT) and the Association of Women in Business. These organizations are examining issues of women in big business and how to access credit. They are also providing alternative finance for women's projects.



The difficulties of the economic reform program have forced many women operating small scale businesses from their rented premises in Harare to the backyards of their homes. Many women have been harmed by the reform program and have seen their businesses collapse. Those remaining have eluded rising costs by operating from their homes. Women venturing into businesses are still encountering problems when approaching financial institutions for loans either to start or maintain projects. Women cannot borrow money because they find it difficult to meet the requirements needed by the banks. Women usually submit a house for collateral and given the fact that most houses are jointly owned, the bank will require the husband's approval. Often the husbands refuse to surrender the property as collateral for fear that if the projects fail, they may lose the house. Women are denied access to loans as a result. Another restriction is that banks request a track record as a means of security but most women do not have experience in running businesses (Makunike, 1993).

#### *The Marginalization of Women in Agriculture*

As part of ESAP, the Zimbabwean government has been liberalizing agricultural marketing, decontrolling producer and input prices, eliminating agricultural subsidies and continuing with its land resettlement program. Zimbabwe's population stands at 10.4 million, 69% of which lives in rural areas. The agricultural sector has a dualistic economic structure, composed of commercial and peasant sections. Also many engaged in agricultural production also depend on nonfarm income and urban remittances. Seventy percent of the rural population are women, 40% of rural households are female headed, and the majority of agricultural work is undertaken by women. Women work in agriculture, both as casual laborers on large-scale commercial farms and in communal land farming in the cultivation of cash and subsistence crops. Communal areas occupy roughly 50 percent of the country's available land in the worst natural regions. The communal farming system consists of small (less than 12 hectares) family farms under the communal land-tenure system. Under communal tenure, individual families do not own the land as private property; the land belongs to the state representing the nation. Families get long-term, usually intergenerational, user rights to this land. For married people the land is registered in the name of the husband so the man controls the land even though women are the actual farmers in terms of labor. Legally widowed, single and divorced women own land in the communal areas, but experience has shown that these women are seriously disadvantaged in access to land in these areas.

The remaining 50 percent of excellent arable land is primarily owned in the form of large-scale commercial farms (LSCF) under private ownership. LSCF are dominated by the minority white community. In between these two polarities, communal and LSCF, are two small sectors. The first is the small-scale commercial farming sector. This is made up of a number of trained communal farmers who have a certificate of competence in agriculture. These farmers are permitted to purchase small farms in specially designated areas. The second of these other forms of tenure is the resettlement scheme. This scheme was started after inde-

pendence to address the radically unequal land distribution pattern Zimbabwe inherited. Resettlement occurs on former LSCF land which is divided into smaller units. Private ownership is not allowed; tenure is on a contract basis with the husband or senior male of the family.

Research in agriculture has demonstrated that the owners of land also control the produce from that land regardless of who did the real farming. So, women who generally do not own land are seriously deprived of the benefits of this leading economic activity. Since women do not on the whole own land, men take all the money from the produce. Women are also disadvantaged in that they cannot afford their own agricultural support services even if they own their own land. This consequently gives the men authority over checks from the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe or the Grain Marketing Board as they are the provider of all facilities excluding labor. The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe and the Grain Marketing Board are government-owned institutions with a monopoly on the collection and marketing of their respective products. In 1994 they were commercialized and their monopolies ended (Getecha, Chipika, 1995, 52–53).

*Women's Bargaining Position in Rural Areas Weak Without Access to Independent Sources of Income or Access to Land*

The Legal Age of Majority Act has allowed women to own property in their own right, to enter into contracts, to sue and to be sued. This is certainly an accomplishment. However, the goals of LAMA are undermined by customary laws which are applicable to the majority of women, especially in rural areas where customary law takes precedence over general law. Women in communal areas still do not have access to land in their own right but through their fathers or through their husbands. Land as a major natural resource and source of security for accessing credit is thus not easily available for women. The land tenure system has negative consequences for women and often results in harvest suicides. These are cases in which women have committed suicide after their husbands have squandered all the money they received after the harvest. Gokwe District where women grow cotton has seen a large number of these cases.

In historical perspective, Zimbabwe's agriculture land distribution stems from a colonial legacy that left a distorted land ownership system which has remained largely unchanged. Most of Zimbabwe's best quality land is held by white settler farmers. LSCF produces three fourths of marketed crops. Tobacco, Zimbabwe's most important agricultural crop, is grown almost completely by the LSCF sector. Of the 70 percent of Zimbabwe's population that lives in the rural areas, the majority resides in communal lands which are overpopulated and concentrated in the areas with the poorest soil. At independence, the government sought to resettle 162,000 families by 1985. By 1991, however, only about one third of this number, or 52,000 families, had benefited from the plan. Since 1980 the government has directed resources to the communal areas building infrastructure and offering price incentives for food and cash crops. Commercial land farmers, therefore, were able to increase their production of marketed maize from 4.7 percent in 1980 to 47 percent in 1985/86 (Gear, 41–42).

There are important differences between and within communal land farm households. The greatest part of the marketed food surplus comes from a minority of relatively prosperous communal households while the majority of smallholders operate at a deficit. In 1987, 40 percent of communal land producers did not market any cereal and the top 10 percent of producers controlled 40 to 60 percent of marketed food. Access to land, credit, drawing power, off-farm income, and urban remittances were important variables in the expansion of crop production.

Women have different access to the production inputs of land, credit, draft power, etc., than men. As farmers, women have encountered a history of ostracism from land ownership through a combination of traditional and colonial practices. The resettlement schemes begun after independence continued the pattern of discrimination against women in regard to land ownership, a system in which land is assigned to male household heads. Access to credit is extremely difficult for women partially due to the lack of land permits which prevents them from getting credit or services in their name. Finally, women make up only eight percent of the 1,800 extension workers (1993) provided by the Department of Agriculture, Technical and Extension Services (Agritex).

#### *ESAP Means More Economic Pressure and Work for Rural Women*

Most rural households do not produce enough food for their own needs. Consequently there is an impetus for household members to earn cash income to meet basic needs. The pressure to earn extra money is especially felt by women who are responsible for family essentials. Yet, the majority of women do not earn income from crop production (orange, tobacco, cotton) but through such activities as market gardening or other non-farm income earning activities, such as crocheting, basket making, pottery or food processing (beer or peanut butter). The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau discovered that in many vicinities women could only make decisions independently in regard to income earned from these activities. Women are also responsible for domestic tasks within the home in addition to their considerable involvement in agricultural work adding another dimension of gender inequity and differentiation.

While higher producer prices due to ESAP have clear benefits for the large scale commercial sector, they are unlikely to benefit the rural farmer much. Increased producer prices have only benefited a minority of farmers not the majority which are deficit households or deficit net purchasers. Reduction in real wages has negatively affected the income of agricultural workers on large scale commercial farms. Thus the livelihoods of households which depend on agricultural wages have been affected both by increased consumer prices and decreased incomes. Urban wages have also declined in real value affecting the amount and regularity of remunerations from urban relatives. Assumptions behind the structural adjustment appear to be misguided given Zimbabwe's highly unequal agricultural sector and are likely to increase inequalities within the sector. Women's bargaining position in rural areas is especially weakened without access to independent sources of income and access to land and other productive inputs. Fur-

thermore, women's time is decidedly constrained in the rural areas where women perform both agricultural tasks, paid and unpaid, and have the responsibility for most domestic chores (ZWRCN, 10–11).

Since the introduction of ESAP, prices of food and basic commodities have risen due to a combination of the gradual removal of food subsidies and price de-control which have been aggravated by escalating costs of imported goods for manufactured products due to devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar. Rising energy costs (fuel and electricity) have also contributed to increasing food costs. Hence, higher food prices have not gone up noticeably during the same period. Increases in the cost of maize meal has necessitated changes in the diet of the average urban household. This has meant eating meat less frequently, eating just one meal a day or in higher income households, cutting out luxury foods. The problem of food prices is a matter of anxiety, particularly for women who are given fixed sums for housekeeping and hold the task of feeding the household. Reforms in maize marketing, the result of ESAP, have led to the greater use of small scale hammer milling in urban areas, a process which has a higher extraction rate and is cheaper than the previously subsidized roller mill. Households that switch to straight run meal produced by hammer mills are benefiting nutritionally and economically since hammer mill technology is more labor intensive, less skill-intensive and demands a smaller initial capital outlay than roller milling technology. Most of the hammermills, responding quickly to price driven changes in consumer tastes and to the new regulatory milieu, are located in high density suburbs (57 percent) where the majority of the poor live, or in industrial areas (11 percent) where many of the same population work. However, these gains have to be weighed against the costs in terms of women's (87%) and men's trips on foot to the hammermill to have their maize processed into straight meal. Fifty percent of the time, they spent more than an hour per trip in travelling and waiting as opposed to but ten minutes, (the average time) it takes to purchase a similar quantity of roller meal at the nearest shop (ZWRCN, 12–14).

A looming question is the degree to which women's voices will be heard in the current debate over the Land Acquisition Act (1992). The land issue was the underlying force behind the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe. After independence, the land issue could not adequately be resolved due to constitutional limitations on the acquisition of private property by the state. It is only with passage of the Land Acquisition Act that the question has been seriously addressed at the national level. To facilitate the process, and make it more consultative, the state has set up a Land Tenure Commission to deal with matters pertaining to land tenure. Women's rights and access to land, as well as inheritance rights, are subjects of interest to women which the commission will address (Gumbonzuanda, Win, 1994, 75). The Commercial Farming Union (CFU) which represents the interests of large-scale male commercial farmers is vehemently opposed to the bill. Debates are also taking place over the government's proposal to liberalize the Grain Marketing Board which is opposed by black commercial male farmers. Will the particular needs and interests of women involved in the agricultural sector be heard by policy makers in considering these issues?

## CONCLUSION

### *Women's Invisibility and the Gender-Differentiated Impact of ESAP*

The primary tasks of this study were to make visible women's invisibility and to evaluate the gender-differentiated impact of the monetarist macro-economic policy, the Economic Structural Adjustment Program, adopted by Zimbabwe in 1990 and extended in 1995. Structural adjustment policies, whether proposed by the World Bank or the IMF, are presented in a language that appears to be gender neutral, but that masks an underlying male bias. World Bank/IMF analysis of structural adjustment is written in macro-economic concepts such as GNP, balance of payments, tradables and nontradables, efficiency, and productivity – all of which seem to have no gender implications. Women are not visible in this analysis, but neither are men. It is an impersonal analysis mentioning only abstract suppliers and consumers of resources. Yet, this abstract study has a hidden agenda that excludes the process of the reproduction and maintenance of human resources. Work required for the maintenance and reproduction of labor (cooking, child care, housework, etc.) is omitted because it is unpaid. Since it is unpaid, reproductive labor has no relevance for the macroeconomic variables with which adjustment programs are concerned. This failure to explicitly consider unpaid labor is an example of male bias because it is women who carry most of the burden of financially uncompensated reproduction and maintenance of human resources. It is work that is, above all, considered women's work that is excluded from consideration.

Male bias that excludes the unpaid work that women do in the home leads to bias in terms like productivity and efficiency that are often used in relation to structural adjustment. What economists regard as an increase in productivity or efficiency may instead be a transferring of costs from the paid economy to the unpaid economy. For example, attempts to make hospitals more efficient may lead to earlier discharge of patients who still need convalescent care. This shifts the load of caring for them from paid hospital staff to unpaid female relatives in the home.

The advocates of "adjustment with a human face" in UNICEF do pay attention to the maintenance and reproduction of human resources. Women are visible in this methodology appearing along with children as a vulnerable group. However, the discussion of adjustment at the household level still treats the household as a unit. The male bias lies in not disaggregating the household to examine the different positions of men and women in the household, ignoring the significance of the household as a place for the subordination of women. Studies reveal that the household can be a location of tension and conflict as well as of cooperation – a site of inequality as well as mutuality.

Though women are not in control of household resources, they have the responsibility and obligation to manage household resources so as to feed, clothe, house and educate the rest of the household. This responsibility for the household budget without control over resources is a source of constant problems and

anxiety for poor women. They have to fashion household survival strategies, but it is their husbands who control access to major resources.

These relations of male domination and female subordination which characterize the household as a social institution are significant for conceptualizing household responses to structural adjustment. It cannot be taken for granted that households will react to structural adjustment by reducing expenditures on luxuries in order to uphold expenditures on necessities. In both developed and developing countries across a wide spectrum of class positions and even in poor households, men incline toward maintaining a personal allowance mainly spent on luxuries such as alcohol, cigarettes, gambling and socializing in beer halls and cafes. A wife acting alone has no ability to reduce household consumption of these luxuries so she can make ends meet in the face of higher food prices.

An approach sufficient to meet women's needs requires not merely making women visible and calling for resources to be directed to women. It requires an analysis of how male privilege and power over women can be reduced. Women quite logically focus on their immediate and urgent practical needs, particularly needs for resources to guarantee household survival and a better future for their children. However, the satisfaction of these practical gender needs is not disconnected from strategic gender needs. A meeting of women's practical gender needs implies also some improvement in meeting women's strategic gender needs, that is, a lessening of their subordination to men, for an alternative, more equal and satisfactory organization of society than that which currently exists, in terms of both the structure and nature of relationships between men and women.

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