



# The Reformed Agrarian Structure and Changing Dynamics of Rural Labour Migration in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

This article examines the changing dynamics of rural labour migration in Zimbabwe following the radical land redistribution since 2000 through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). Since the colonial period, dispossessed peasants with inadequate land access were forced to offer cheap migrant wage labour for large-scale capitalist farms (LSCFs) and beyond. Despite the wide acknowledgement of the redistributive nature of the FTLRP, there is sparse understanding of how the new land access patterns impacted on rural labour migration. Empirical evidence from Goromonzi and Kwekwe districts demonstrates that while there were many peasant beneficiaries, land shortages were not completely eradicated and the new farm labour markets depended on the super-exploitation of landless migrants. Altogether, the data contradicts the conventional wisdom that views migration as a deliberate diversification strategy of household labour to enhance a livelihood. Rather, resistance to proletarianisation undergirds the struggles of farm labourers as they largely seek autonomous land-based social reproduction outside the wage economy.

**Keywords:** migration, labour reserve, land reform, farm workers, Zimbabwe

## Résumé

Cet article examine l'évolution de la dynamique de migration de la main-d'œuvre rurale au Zimbabwe à la suite de la radicale redistribution de terres à partir de 2000 à travers le programme Fast Track Land Reform (FTLRP). Depuis la période coloniale, les paysans sans terres ou ayant un accès

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inadéquat à la terre ont été contraints de se transformer en main-d'œuvre migrante bon marché pour les grandes exploitations capitalistes et au-delà. Malgré une large reconnaissance de la nature redistributive du FTLRP, il existe une compréhension limitée de l'impact des nouveaux modèles d'accès à la terre sur la migration de main-d'œuvre rurale. Des données empiriques provenant de districts de Goromonzi et de Kwekwe démontrent que, même si de nombreux paysans en sont bénéficiaires, les pénuries de terres ne sont pas complètement éradiquées et les nouveaux marchés de travail agricole dépendent de la surexploitation des migrants sans terre. Dans l'ensemble, les données contredisent la sagesse populaire qui considère la migration comme une stratégie délibérée de diversification du travail des ménages pour améliorer leurs moyens de subsistance. Au contraire, la résistance à la prolétarianisation sous-tend les luttes des ouvriers agricoles qui recherchent, en grande partie, une reproduction sociale autonome basée sur la terre en dehors de l'économie salariale.

**Mots-clés :** migration, réserve de main-d'œuvre, réforme agraire, travailleurs agricoles, Zimbabwe

## Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to examine the changing dynamics of rural labour migration in Zimbabwe following the radical land redistribution since 2000 through the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). As the programme was rolled out, the dominance of large-scale capitalist farms (LSCFs) land ownership waned. The article's first objective relates to the examination of the extent to which migrant labour remains a key source of labour for the new range of agricultural production units. This assessment is located within a context in which land reform allocations were made predominantly to the peasantry, who constituted the 'labour reserve' of the LSCFs (Moyo 2011a, b, c; Bush and Cliffe 1984; Arrighi 1970). Migration for wage employment is often conceptualised as an 'exit strategy' from the vagaries of peasant production (Sender 2016; De Janvry and Sadoulet 2000) and/or a deliberate strategy to diversify livelihoods (De Haas 2008; Scoones 1998, 2009, 2015). Therefore, prospects for better incomes and food security are predicted for labour migrants and their families. The second objective of this contribution thus sought to test these assertions by assessing the socioeconomic conditions of the labour migrants on the new peasant and smaller-scale capitalist farms.

Research on the extent to which the new land access patterns affected migration dynamics in the mobilisation, sources and material conditions of wage labour on the new smaller-scale capitalist farms has been limited. The redistributive nature of the FTLRP in terms of the scale of land reallocated

and the beneficiaries reached is now widely acknowledged (Moyo et al. 2009; Scoones et al. 2010; Murisa 2009). However, there is sparse understanding of how the new land access patterns impacted on the migration of labour from communal areas to farms on the land of the former LSCFs. Alternatively, whether the communal areas continued to be a labour reserve for the new farming units as prevailed in the former LSCFs. Relatedly, what are the implications of the redistribution of land to the previously land-short peasants from the communal areas for the availability of farm labour? Land scarcity has played a major role in propelling the exodus of males from communal areas in search of wage employment in the capitalist sectors (Potts 2000). Moreover, the outcomes of labour migration on the incomes and food security of the migrants and their households have also been under-researched.

The problem stems partly from the failure to understand and appreciate the emerging agrarian class structure and/or new sources of wage employment that followed land reform. Some analysts claim that since most of the land was allocated to peasants, production was mainly organised using family labour and that hardly any wage labour was hired (Masiiwa and Chipungu 2004; Hellum and Derman 2004; ZHRF and JAG 2007). As such, the dynamics of continued wage labour migration were not anticipated. This is akin to other perspectives on sub-Saharan Africa that associate farm wage labour with only the LSCFs in the former settler colonies, while the preponderance of self-employed labour across the peasantry who dominate the agrarian landscapes elsewhere is noted (Binswanger, McIntire and Udry 1989; Sender 2016; Sender and Johnston 2004). The new diversified agrarian structure that resulted from the land reforms transformed not only landholding patterns but also land use practices, integration into markets and labour utilisation (Moyo 2011a, 2013). It is now composed of three farm classes, namely the peasantry, middle to large capitalist farms, and agro-industrial estates, which hire wage labour to various degrees (Moyo 2011a; Chambati 2009, 2013).

To ascertain the implications of the redistributive land reforms on rural labour migration, a series of research questions are posed for this article:

- What are the forms of farm (wage) labour utilised on the new farms?
- What is the role of migrant workers in the supply of farm labour?
- Does access to land still affect the participation of migrants in the labour market?
- How have the new land access patterns impacted on the availability of farm labour, which was previously abundant due to landlessness and land shortages in the communal areas?
- What material conditions are derived from labour migration to the new farms?

Following this introduction, the next section outlines the research methods utilised to mobilise data to answer the research questions. A brief context is then provided to set out a basis upon which to evaluate the changes and continuities in rural labour migration in the aftermath of land reform. The agrarian restructuring that was prompted by the FTLRP nationally and in the two districts studied are then analysed, to understand the differentiated sources of farm (wage) employment. The next three sections explore the variegated forms of labour used by the new farm households, the role of migrant workers in the supply of farm labour and the influence of land shortages in the migratory patterns. The material conditions derived from migrant farm labour precede the conclusion.

### **Methods and Study Areas**

The new farm labour mobilisation strategies, including the sources of recruitment, were explored on the basis of micro-level questionnaire survey data from randomly selected households that had been allocated land under the A1 and A2 schemes<sup>1</sup> in the two districts of Goromonzi and Kwekwe in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Data elicited from the survey included the sources of farm labour (hired versus family labour), the geographic origins of wage labour, and the wages and benefits the workers received. A farm labour survey targeting the wage workers in the same districts provided further insights into employment patterns, access to land by farm workers, and their socioeconomic conditions. Moreover, it corroborated the evidence of the material conditions given by the new farm employers.

The two district case studies provided an opportunity to examine the differentiated outcomes of redistributive land reform in the two areas, which are characterised by contrasting socioeconomic and agro-ecological patterns. Goromonzi District is in a high-potential agro-ecological zone, near major agricultural markets in the capital city, Harare, and is endowed with high per-capita public infrastructure. Altogether, these features affect the agricultural production patterns and labour relations of this case study. In contrast, Kwekwe District is located farther away from Harare, in a dry and low-potential agro-ecological zone, with gold mining as the key characteristic of the district's economy. These micro-level district case studies were also motivated by the need to comprehend how migration dynamics play out at the sub-national level, given that the FTRLRP entailed a differentiated process in terms of the land sizes allocated and the types of beneficiaries. Specifically, the agro-ecological location and per-capita infrastructure partly shaped the competing claims for land by different groups, including peasants, farm workers and elites (see Moyo 2011a, b, c; Scoones et al. 2010; Mkodzongi 2013; Murisa 2009).

## Conceptualising Rural Labour Migration

Historical-structural approaches rooted in Marxist political economy informed this analysis of the new agrarian labour relations (including wage labour migration tendencies). This is because, during the colonial and immediate independence period in Zimbabwe, labour relations were based on a historical context of specific land-labour utilisation created by land dispossession and discriminatory agrarian policies (Chambati 2011). Beyond this, gender issues, intra-household relations and the agency of the workers were considered to understand the trajectory of labour relations.

Historical-structural approaches propose that labour relations are influenced by the wider history of the people (e.g. colonisation and global capitalist integration) and structural factors (e.g. asset distribution) in a particular economy (Wood 1982: 302). The structural factors can be internal or external to the economy (O’Laughlin 2002) and in sub-Saharan Africa are rooted in historically specific conditions, such as differentiated and uneven colonial land dispossession and the incorporation of peasants into the global capitalist system (Arrighi 1970; Wood 1982; Neocosmos 1993; Mafeje 2003).

While the ownership and control of land is not the only decisive factor in explaining the evolution of agrarian labour relations, it is critical in shaping who sells or hires labour in Africa (Cousins 2009; Mafeje 2003; Mamdani 1996; Moyo 2011a, 2013; Moyo and Yeros 2005a; O’Laughlin 2002). Often, ‘... property rights in land also *strongly* influence access to other productive resources, most notably credit, but sometimes water rights, grazing rights and other entitlements’ (Evers and Walters 2000: 1342–1343, *emphasis added*). In capitalist social relations, ‘... productive assets (capital) are unequally distributed and held largely as private property, those who do not own capital must sell their labour power [for their social reproduction]’ (Cousins 2009: 10–11). This means that those deprived of an autonomous means of production (including land) are induced into wage work to survive. The hiring in or out of labour by rural households is thus a class relation evolving from the ownership of property (Cousins 2009; O’Laughlin 2002). Moreover, access to land enhances food security outcomes at the household level since some of the food needs can be met from own agricultural production (Moyo et al. 2009). Without access to land, wage incomes to procure food and other social requirements from volatile markets are crucial to sustain households. Given the low wages associated with farm labour across Africa (Tsikata 2015), those dependent on this source of income for their survival are more likely to be food insecure compared to those who own land. This proposes the need

to carefully examine the distribution of landholdings and related productive resources within a given agrarian structure in order to understand the varied forms of wage labour that exist in it.

This stance contradicts the approaches that conceptualise agrarian labour as one of the resources at the household's disposal that could be diversified in different agricultural and non-agricultural livelihood portfolios (Bebbington 1999; Niehof 2004; De Haas 2008), rather than being the fulcrum of peasant livelihoods. Migration and/or wage labour relations thus emerge from the diversification of household labour resources across rural and urban locales in both farming and non-farming activities (Scoones 1998, 2009, 2015; Bebbington 1999; De Haas 2008; Niehof 2004). Labour migration is considered '... not so much ... a coping strategy, but the deliberate diversification of family and household forms and sizes' (Niehof 2004: 327). It is associated with livelihood improvement, enhanced financial capacity to develop other non-farm activities, and the curtailment of the instability of household incomes that are sourced mainly from highly variable rain-fed farming (De Haas 2008: 37).

Those who argue that rural–urban migration to join wage labour markets is a 'voluntary' choice also argue that the abolishment of institutionalised and forced labour migration after the end of colonisation in settler southern Africa did not stem the flow of labour to towns to seek employment (Niehof 2004). This perspective, however, obscures the influences of structural factors, such as the persistence of land shortages and adverse economic conditions, in compelling peasants to migrate to wage labour markets in the post-independence period (Moyo 2008). In relation to southern Africa, an analysis of contemporary livelihoods cannot be divorced from the 'historical understanding of the proletarianisation' of peasants that evolved during the colonial period (O'Laughlin 2002: 513–4). What passes as the diversification of household labour resources is therefore rooted in the uneven distribution of the means of production promoted by colonial administrations (O' Laughlin 2002).

The point of departure of these approaches is that agriculture is just one of many activities in people's livelihoods and that its importance varies for different places and times. The importance of land to peasants is neglected, since it is seen '... as just one among several different assets/capitals required to make a living ...' (Chimhowu and Hulme 2006: 729–30), despite its multiple social, economic, political and cultural functions, which are critical to the sustenance of households (Moyo 1995). Consequently, the importance of self-employed agricultural labour in the livelihoods of the peasantry is also undervalued. Approaches that analyse livelihoods viewing land and labour as disconnected entities thus conceal how land access can extend self-

employment in agriculture or wage labour in the case of the landless (Amanor 2001; Tsikata 2009). These approaches are thus bereft of an analysis of class and class struggles, which are central to how people realise their social reproduction (Murray 2002).

Migration for wage employment has also been argued to offer an escape route from the vagaries of peasant production (De Janvry and Sadoulet 2000). Empirical research has shown, however, that despite the decline in farm incomes over the last three decades, there has been an expansion in the number of African households for whom farming is the centre of their social reproduction strategies (Hazell, Poulton, Wiggins and Dorward 2010).<sup>3</sup> This points to the continued importance of agricultural labour, especially in its self-employment forms, to the sustenance of rural households.

The rising demand for small plots of land to farm is also evidenced by the re-emergence of land reclamation movements in much of the countryside in the global South in response to the dispossession of the means of production (Van den Berg, Hebinck and Roep 2018; Edelman and Borrás 2016; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). This suggests that the peasantry is, in fact, being resuscitated rather than 'disappearing', as some scholars profess (Bryceson 2000; Riggs 2006). The increased demand for land is expressed in the concept of *repeasantisation*.<sup>4</sup> At the centre of this notion is the ownership of land for autonomy to subsist based on the land and delink from super-exploitation in the labour market (Van der Ploeg 2010; Moyo et al. 2013). Indeed, many urban-based social reproduction strategies are under threat from deindustrialisation and poor-quality employment, let alone precarious farm wage work.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the countryside is increasingly becoming an option for the reconstitution of social reproduction through petty commodity production (Moyo et al. 2013).

Gender intersects with class dynamics, kinship and customary practices to influence labour migration outcomes in rural sub-Saharan Africa in diverse ways. Women's marginalisation in the control of land resources, in particular, reproduces gender inequalities in intra-household labour relations, which men deploy to control women and children's labour (Evers and Waters 2000; Tsikata 2009, 2016). Indeed, women tend to be prevented from leaving the household to search for wage work to stabilise family farm labour supplies (O'Laughlin 1998).<sup>6</sup>

However, in a changing context, various bargaining processes within the confines of patriarchal institutions have allowed women to enter wage labour (Bryceson 1980; O'Laughlin 1998, 2002; Potts 2012). The need to widen family income, especially after the withdrawal of state subsidies for social services as part of the neoliberal reforms is a case in point (Bryceson 1980).

Gender inequalities at the workplace have nonetheless restricted women to irregular, insecure and poorly paid types of jobs (ILO 2015; Tsikata 2015, 2016; Torvikey, Yaro and Teye 2016).

### **Context: Agrarian Restructuring in Zimbabwe**

Before colonial land dispossession became widespread among the local peasantry, foreign migrant labour imported from Nyasaland (now Malawi), Portuguese East Africa (now Mozambique) and Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) formed most of the labour supply for the settler LSCFs (Clarke 1977; Amanor-Wilks 1995). Thereafter, until 2000, land-short and landless people from the communal areas were compelled to augment small-scale farming with migration, of chiefly male members, for cheap wage employment on the LSCFs and elsewhere for their survival. This process has been characterised as the semi-proletarianisation of migrant labour (Moyo and Yeros 2005b; Neocosmos 1993).

After 2000, over 90 per cent of the LSCF land was redistributed during the FTRLP, using two resettlement models – the A1 and A2 schemes (Scoones et al. 2010; Moyo 2011a, b).<sup>7</sup> This relieved land shortages (and consequential household food insecurity), which have been noted as the key drivers of labour migration from the communal areas since the colonial period (Arrighi 1970; Mhone 2001; Clarke 1977). Resettlement largely involved the relocation of beneficiaries from various places.

The dominant phenomenon entailed rural-to-rural migration, whereby peasants from the communal areas relocated to better quality lands in the former LSCFs and constituted as much as 62.1 per cent of the beneficiaries (Moyo et al. 2009: 21). The second-largest migration tendency (urban-to-rural migration) related to the movement of urban-based (former) proletariats and/or semi-proletariats to the resettlement areas. As the latter reoriented their livelihood and centred it on farming, the process has been called repeasantisation (Moyo and Yeros 2005b; Moyo 2011a). About 23 per cent of the land beneficiaries traced their origins to the urban areas across the models (Moyo et al. 2009: 22), but most of them were resettled in the A2 schemes. Only a few rural proletariats who had been employed on the LSCFs received land allocations.<sup>8</sup> Circa 2010, over 145,000 and 22,000 beneficiaries had received land in the A1 and A2 schemes respectively, on land formerly belonging to about 4,500 LSCFs (Moyo 2011: 512).

Overall, three farm classes were created by the land reforms, namely the peasantry, small to medium and large capitalist farms (Moyo 2013; Shonhe, Scoones and Murimbarimba 2021; Mazwi, Muchetu and Mudimu



2021). The peasantry, which includes those who were allocated new A1 farms; existing old resettlement and communal areas are now the dominant category in the share of the number of farm households (98 per cent) and agricultural land owned (79 per cent) (Moyo 2011a: 262). The small to medium capitalist farms included the new A2 farms; and the old small-scale commercial farms (SSCFs) account for 2 per cent and 13 per cent of the farm households and agricultural land owned respectively (ibid: 262). The remainder is accounted for by large capitalist farms, which include the remaining LSCFs and agro-estates. Simultaneously, the farm labour market was transformed by the increase in the number of farm households and/or potential employers, and shifting agricultural production practices (World Bank 2012).

The redistributive outcomes, however, varied across districts depending on the local dynamics of land reform. In Goromonzi, the number of farm households increased from 20,253 in 2000 to 23,626 in 2014 (MLRR 2014). Most of the 1,673 new farm households were A1 land beneficiaries, who complemented the 19,976 existing peasant households in the communal areas. The A2 land beneficiaries boosted the ranks of the small to medium and large capitalist farms – 778 and 89 respectively. About sixteen agro-estates are part of the new agrarian structure in the district. In sum, the land controlled by the LSCFs was downsized from 61.8 per cent to 29 per cent. The peasantry, in contrast, increased their share of land from 31.7 per cent to 44.87 per cent during the same period. Compared to the national situation and experience in other districts (including Kwekwe) (Chambati 2013; Moyo 2011a), the peasantry in Goromonzi got a smaller share of the land distributed due to high demand for the larger-sized A2 plots in this peri-urban district by elites who wanted land close to the capital city. Agro-estates in Goromonzi, which include private agribusiness companies, state farms, mining companies and church and trust institutions, control about 8 per cent of the land area. Patriarchal structures were in operation, as males received the lion's share of the land allocations across the A1 and A2 models (Mutopo 2011).

The FTLRP in Kwekwe created 3,586 and 266 new A1 and A2 farm households respectively, on 308,495.6 hectares of land formerly belonging to mainly white LSCFs (MLRR, 2014). The A1 scheme increased the number of peasant households from 29,066 in 2000 to over 33,801 by 2014, accounting for 98.6 per cent of the farm units in the district (ibid). The share of the land area they held increased dramatically between 2000 and 2014, from 52.5 per cent to 71.2 per cent. The first phase of land redistribution in the early 1980s in Kwekwe had already increased the shares of land held by peasants by 10.1 per cent.

By 2014, the new A2 farms had expanded the category of small to medium capitalist farms that were previously made up the SSCFs. The share of this category in the total number of farm households in the district grew from 0.4 per cent to 0.76 per cent. In relation to the total land area, their proportion rose from 1.4 per cent to 4.11 per cent. The large capitalist farms (which included remaining LSCFs and the large A2 farms) accounted for 0.6 per cent of the farm households and 16 per cent of the total land area controlled (ibid).

Notwithstanding the extensive redistribution, there were still land-short and landless people especially in a district like Goromonzi, which prioritised land allocations to the larger-sized A2 farms. Land pressure in this communal area was being exacerbated by the conversion of agricultural land into residential spaces in the Domboshava area, which shares a border with Harare. This suggests the continued significance of the labour markets for the survival of those who were still land short (Chambati 2013). In contrast, Kwekwe redistributed 56.2 per cent of the land acquired to peasants, and thus the number of land-short households in communal areas was substantially reduced, compared to Goromonzi.

## **Results and Discussion**

The previous section demonstrated that redistributive land reforms generated new farm classes and/or sources of employment at both the national and sub-national levels. This provides a framework for examining the diverse forms of farm labour using the detailed empirical data obtained from the household and labour surveys. After establishing the findings, this section proceeds to analyse the role of migrants in the supply of farm labour. An analysis of the character of the farm labourers from within the families and beyond extends the discussion on the influence of land access on the insertion of rural people into wage labour markets and the provision of unpaid family farm labour. Emphasis is placed on whether the communal areas still serve as the labour reserve for the new agricultural production units.

### ***Forms of farm labour***

Despite the proliferation of unpaid family labour in the resettled areas, farm wage labour did not disappear, as postulated by some analysts (De Janvry 1981; Sender and Johnston 2004; Hellum and Derman 2004; Sender 2016). The peasantry who benefited most from the land reform allocations did not exclusively rely on family farm labour, as these analysts claim. Hiring in wage labour was prevalent even among the smaller A1 landholdings, let alone on the larger A2 farms.

The A1 households in both districts were the ones that mostly, as before, depended on the backs of their families for farm labour to produce mostly food crops and livestock for consumption and surplus sales, akin to their counterparts in the communal areas (Moyo 1995; Adams 1991). In the A2 households, which were more integrated into cash and/or export crops, the use of unpaid family labour was far less important than in the A1 and communal areas, especially in Goromonzi District. Hence, approximately 60 per cent of the Goromonzi A2 households mimicked former LSCFs by depending entirely on hired farm wage labour, albeit with reduced absolute numbers of workers per farm unit. Their counterparts in Kwekwe, however, imitated the patterns of family labour use on the A1 farms in Goromonzi.

Up to 77.6 per cent of the Goromonzi A1 landholders hired wage labour to complement family labour. In the dry district of Kwekwe, this was true for as much as 64.9 per cent of the A1 households. These findings oppose claims that associate wage labour with large capitalist farming in southern Africa (Barrett, Reardon and Webb 2001; Sender and Johnston 2004; Barrett et al. 2005). That recruitment of farm wage labour was more pervasive in the A2 scheme (94.6 per cent in Goromonzi and 88.9 in Kwekwe) is in line with the expected trends. Hired labour was composed of permanent and casual labour. Both forms of labour were pervasive in the A2 households in the two districts studied, in terms of the proportions who utilised them and the average number of workers recruited per farm unit.

Gender inequities characterised the farm wage labour force: over 68 per cent of the permanent workers in the resettled households of Goromonzi were men and as much as 84 per cent in Kwekwe. Women's presence was higher in the casual labour component, echoing tendencies that prevail in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Torvikey et al. 2016; Tsikata 2015, 2016; Oya 2010, 2013). Even after land reform, the restriction of women to the margins of part-time farm work did not abate.

It is apparent that labour markets remained active even after the whittling down of the LSCFs through land redistribution. This paper's focus now turns to understanding the sources of farm labour in the new agricultural production units. Specifically, the research sought to ascertain the role of migrant workers in the supply of farm labour.

### ***Sources of farm labour: migration dynamics in the new agrarian structure***

In the 1980s and 1990s, women and children were left behind to actively contribute unpaid family farm labour as men migrated for employment to the LSCFs, mining centres and industries (Muchena 1994; O'Laughlin 1998; Potts 2000).<sup>9</sup> Such tendencies perpetuated the migrant labour

systems that had evolved in southern Africa during the colonial era (Bush and Cliffe 1984; Cross and Cliffe 2017). However, as previous studies have revealed, the levels of male non-residency prevailing in the resettled areas (Moyo et al. 2009; Scoones et al. 2010; Matondi 2012; Chigumira 2018) were far less than those seen before 2000 in the communal areas. Both men and women provided unpaid family farm labour to the households. Unpaid family labour was extracted from the families of the landholders who had established permanent homes (up to 82 per cent of the surveyed beneficiaries) in the new resettlement areas.

The family labour supply was also coloured by migration dynamics through the co-optation of extended family relatives who stayed with them.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a larger share of the A2 households (71.6 per cent) was organised as extended family units, compared to the A1 households (61.8 per cent) in Goromonzi. In Kwekwe, however, it was the A1 households who were frequently organised as extended family units. Earlier work in six districts (including Goromonzi and Kwekwe) in 2005/2006 observed that 80.1 per cent and 69.6 per cent of the A1 and A2 households were structured as nuclear families (Moyo et al. 2009: 25). This suggests that over the years, as agricultural production expanded, the importation of relatives into the resettled areas escalated in response to the demand for labour.

The survey evidence indicates that the resettled households mobilised mostly landless relatives from communal areas of origin, or *kumusha*. By controlling land, the FTLRP beneficiaries were thus able to call on the labour of their kin from the communal and other areas distressed by land shortage, as done by other landholders in Zimbabwe's communal areas (Gaidzanwa 1995; Mvududu and McFadden 2001) and many rural dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa (Tsikata 2009, 2015; Oya 2013).

The new agrarian wage labour force comprised former and new farm workers. Former farm workers included those who had been previously employed in the redistributed LSCFs and now worked on the new farming units. They remained in the old farm compounds after some of their colleagues were displaced during the land occupations or trekked back to the communal and other areas (Sachikonye 2003; Magaramombe 2010; Scoones et al. 2018). The new farm workers, in contrast, lacked any previous employment connection to the LSCFs and were imported mainly from various communal areas.

Migration from the communal areas remained an important source of farm wage labour in the resettled areas. Excluding former farm workers who were already resident in the LSCFs prior to the FTLRP, over 57.6 per cent of the Goromonzi workers came from rural areas, namely communal areas,

old resettlement areas and SSCFs. The children of former farm workers who were not in LSCF employment before 2000 composed the remaining workforce. Numbers of Kwekwe workers reported originating from other rural areas outside the LSCFs, more so than workers in Goromonzi.

The sources of permanent labour included the communal area of origin, or *kumusha*, of the land recipients, irrespective of the distance from their farm households. About 15.4 per cent of the Goromonzi A1 households had recruited permanent labour from there (Table 1). None of the A2 households in this district had mobilised labour from their *kumusha*. Other communal areas, including Chikwaka (western side) and Chinhomora (north-eastern side), which are on the margins of the resettled areas, and Chinyika, located at the centre of the district, provided permanent labour to 80.8 per cent and 67.7 per cent of the A1 and A2 farms. Overall, permanent farm workers in the surveyed households were mobilised from over twelve districts spread in half of the eight rural provinces in the country. Only three of the districts were in Mashonaland East Province, where Goromonzi is located, namely Mutoko, Murehwa and Seke. The peasantry as a source of permanent labour now consists of those from the communal areas working alongside the new peasantry from the local A1 farms that 4.8 per cent of the A2 landowners in Goromonzi hired.

Recruitment from the same district was more frequent among A2 farms than in the A1 farms in Goromonzi (Table 1). Former farm workers were mentioned as a source of permanent labour by 15.4 per cent and 83.9 per cent of the A1 and A2 farms respectively (Table 1). An estimated 6.5 per cent of the A2 farm households had imported former farm workers from outside Goromonzi as well. That the A2 farms were the ones that were integrated into the production of commodities for international markets (e.g. tobacco), and valued the skills of former farm workers, resonated in their hiring patterns of permanent labour.

Comparable sources of permanent labour were identified in farm households in Kwekwe but, unlike Goromonzi, workers from urban areas featured in this district (Table 1). Even so, the communal areas were the primary source of permanent labour but not their *kumusha* (Table 1). Peasants from the Silobela and Zhombe communal areas in Kwekwe resisted the poorly paid farm work offered by the new range of producers because they had alternative livelihoods (Murray Li 2011), especially in gold panning, which they combined with their own low-productivity agricultural production (Moyo et al. 2009; Chigumira 2018). Consequently, Gokwe South District, which neighbours Kwekwe on the northern border of the district, was a key source of permanent labour.<sup>11</sup> In fact, over 51 per cent

of the farms that utilised communal areas as a source of permanent labour mobilised workers from there, compared to 18.4 per cent from the Zhombe and Silobela communal areas. The balance was sourced from other districts, in the Midlands, Masvingo, Mashonaland West and Manicaland provinces. Overall, permanent farm workers engaged in Kwekwe in the A1 and A2 households were traced to sixteen rural districts in Zimbabwe.

**Table 1:** Sources of permanent and casual farm labour (%)

Source	Permanent				Casual				
	Goromonzi		Kwekwe		Goromonzi			Kwekwe	
	A1	A2	A1	A2	A1	A2	CA	A1	A2
Communal area of origin	15.4	0	6.1	17.5	50.8	0	90	3.7	4.1
Other communal areas	80.8	67.7	71.4	72.5	5.1	56.9	10	2.8	14.3
Local A1 farmers	0	4.8	16.3	27.5	8.5	1.5	0	87	73.5
Urban areas	0	0	0	10	74.6	0	0	7.4	16.3
Former farm workers in same district	15.4	83.9	6.1	12.5	0	89.2	0	4.6	16.3
Former farm workers in different district	0	6.5	4.1	0	6.8	1.5	0	0	0
N	26	62	49	40	55	65	20	108	49

Source: Author fieldwork (2017)

The mobilisation of part-time labour was dependent mostly on local sources of labour within the redistributed farms, in direct contrast to that of permanent labour. In Goromonzi, most part-time labour included workers from old farm compounds, whereas the new peasantry from the A1 farms supplied the main source of part-time farm labour in Kwekwe (Table 1).

It is suggested from the above, from the residential roots of the farm workers, that the 'new' agrarian labour force largely retained its rural character since it consisted of mainly communal area residents (Amanor-Wilks 1995; Moyo et al. 2000; Kanyenze 2001). Nonetheless, the 'new' agrarian labour force had also been 'partially urbanised' (Tabak 2000) by the inclusion of urban areas as a source of labour. About 18 per cent of the workers in Goromonzi traced their roots to the urban areas, compared to 16 per cent in Kwekwe. If mining towns were added, then those who had urban roots escalated to 20.5 per cent in the latter district. Nowadays, it is not unusual to encounter job adverts looking for farm workers in the urban townships.<sup>12</sup> Temporary migration by some poor urban residents for farm work from nearby Mbizo Township into Kwekwe resettled areas was

indeed observed during the field research. The same patterns were visible in Epworth and Ruwa townships near Goromonzi's new farms. Furthermore, these shifting recruitment patterns were due to the urban roots of the capitalist farmers in the A2 scheme. The new farm labour markets thus gave some insight into the deteriorating macroeconomic conditions and the dwindling employment opportunities in the urban areas.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from being a survival strategy by land-short rural people, their recruitment as migrant labour by both A1 and A2 farm employers has also been viewed as a response to increased resistance from former farm workers. New A1 and A2 farmers were neither able to convert the residential population from the old compounds into farm labour, as the former LSCFs had, nor exert control on the social life of farm workers (Chambati 2013, 2019).

### *Access to land as a key driver of rural labour migration*

The finite nature of land resources limits the extent to which land reform can satisfy the demand from all those who require land for their subsistence (De Janvry 1981; Delgado, Wise and Veltmeyer 2016). Therefore, even extensive land reforms such as experienced in Zimbabwe do not entirely resolve land shortages. Many land-short rural people will still require integration into the labour market for their survival. In Zimbabwe, land reforms reached only 10 per cent of the peasantry nationally in the land-scarce communal areas (Moyo 2011a). This suggests that were substantial segments of the rural population afflicted by land shortages who were constrained to survive based on farming opportunities alone.

Underlining the importance of land in structuring (farm) labour market participation, and/or migration for wage work, about 60 per cent of the surveyed farm workers did not own this means of production. The communal and resettled areas provided routes to land ownership for farm workers. In the former, 38.7 per cent owned farms in Goromonzi and 25.2 per cent in Kwekwe; their arable land sizes averaged 1.48 hectares and 2.78 hectares in the two districts respectively. As the data from the farm household surveys also revealed, Kwekwe had a higher share of farm labourers (13 per cent) who had received FTLRP land allocations than Goromonzi (5 per cent). The average arable land sizes they owned in the A1 sector were 5.4 and 5.3 hectares in the corresponding districts.

Even though many other farm workers accessed land informally from the compounds and unused resettled lands, and leased land from land beneficiaries, 33.4 per cent were still landless. Permanent workers (36.9 per cent) more than casual labourers (29.9 per cent) were separated from the means of production. Neither gender was shielded from landlessness, and it

was plain to see in 34.4 per cent and 30.3 per cent of the male and female workers, correspondingly. That few former farm workers benefited from the FTLRP land allocations indicates their limited prioritisation as a category of beneficiaries targeted to receive land, since they were earmarked to continue their role as wage labourers (Chambati 2011; Scoones et al. 2018).

Accessing land for independent residency and agricultural production was a key strategy of farm workers to exit from the oppressive LSCF labour market or to at least supplement their meagre wages (Rutherford 2001; Moyo et al. 2000; Vhurumuku et al. 1998).

**Table 2:** Aspirations of farm labourers (%)

Aspirations	Goromonzi				Kwekwe			
	P	S	PWD	Total	P	S	PWD	Total
Get own piece of land	49	5	51.9	45.7	36.9	51.6	39.2	39.9
Change profession	15	45	20.3	20.1	1	3.2	5.4	2.9
Better paying farm job	13	20	12.7	13.6	27.2	6.5	14.9	19.7
Buy cattle	12	0	8.9	9.5	9.7	16.1	10.8	11.1
Start a business	11	30	6.3	11.1	25.2	22.6	29.7	26.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	100	20	79	199	103	31	74	208

Source: Author fieldwork (2017)

\*P-permanent worker; S-seasonal worker; PWD-piecemeal/daily labourers

Many aspired to be land-owners and/or exit the farm labour market by changing profession or starting their own businesses (Table 2). If cattle ownership, which is also dependent on land access, is added to those wanting land, then land-based social reproduction strategies predominantly marked the future aspirations of the farm workers. Resistance to proletarianisation therefore continued to undergird the struggles of farm labourers, as they largely sought autonomous social reproduction outside the wage economy. Through participating in the land occupations and formally registering for land allocation with different authorities, as per state policy, farm workers took direct action to translate their aspirations into reality (Moyo 2001; Moyo et al. 2000; Sadomba 2011, 2013; Helliker and Bhatasara 2018). Such findings contradict perceptions that migration was an escape from volatile peasant agricultural production (De Janvry and Sadoulet 2000).

Overall, the data presented above suggests that the communal areas continued to be the labour reserve for the new agricultural production units, as the land-short still trekked to these areas in search of wage work (see also Chambati 2013). However, the labour shortages that the new farms sometimes



experienced illustrated the contraction of the labour reserve as some of the potential farm labourers from the communal areas gained land during the FTLRP. Around 2006, Moyo et al. (2009: 106) exposed the severe 'labour shortages' that were being experienced by 38.4 per cent of the 2,084 A1 and A2 households surveyed nationally. Beyond influencing the migration of rural labour for wage work on the new range of capitalist farms, access to land also distinguished households' capacities to achieve their food requirements and/or obtain incomes to acquire the same, as elaborated below.

### *Material conditions of (migrant) farm labourers*

Before the FTLRP, poor wages and working conditions characterised employment on the LSCFs. These tendencies were also visible in the new range of smaller-scale capitalist farms. Even for the few workers who earned above the stipulated minimum wage of USD 75 per month, this was well below meeting their social reproduction requirements.<sup>14</sup> As if the problem of paltry wages was not enough, farm labourers also faced challenges related to the accumulation of arrears, irregular pay dates, part payments and, devastatingly, non-payments by the A1 and A2 households.<sup>15</sup>

Poor wages were thus etched in the minds of permanent and casual workers, and over 82 per cent in Goromonzi ranked this as the foremost challenge in their social reproduction; 74.2 per cent and 62.1 per cent of the permanent and seasonal workers in Kwekwe communicated the same. Perhaps pointing to their diverse social reproduction strategies, 50 per cent of the piece/daily workers said low wages was their biggest challenge.

Not even the other non-monetary benefits that some of the workers received, such as food rations and land access, made up for the low wages to meet their subsistence requirements. Under this super-exploitation of labour many farm workers were not able to consume three meals per day. Food shortages afflicted more of the families of irregular wage-earning piece/daily workers (44.3 per cent) than those of permanent and seasonal labourers (32 per cent) in Goromonzi. Kwekwe had a larger proportion of farm worker households who failed to eat three meals per day compared to Goromonzi: for 6 per cent, one meal was all they could manage. Consumption patterns in Kwekwe were less balanced between the different forms of farm workers, but, as seen in Goromonzi, the piece/daily workers ate fewer meals than the permanent and seasonal labourers. The new landholders were not immune to food shortages, but they were far fewer, proportionately, than the landless farm workers. As earlier research revealed (Chambati 2011), the food consumption patterns of the A1 and A2 landholders were better than those of farm workers: over 70 per cent were able to eat three meals a day in 2017.

Moreover, evidence from the labour survey revealed the poor nutritional quality of the carbohydrate-dominated diets of farm workers. Repeatedly, land-beneficiary households had higher healthy food scores than the farm workers.<sup>16</sup> Most of them (over 80 per cent) also had acceptable food consumption scores. The land-short households, especially in Goromonzi, were the most challenged, expressed in the food consumption scores as less than expected daily meals consumed and nutrition gaps. Close to 41 per cent and 19.7 per cent of the workers fell in the borderline food consumption score in Goromonzi and Kwekwe respectively, while poor food consumption scores were recorded among 7 per cent and 4.9 per cent of farm-worker households in these two districts. Kwekwe land-short households, it seems, made up the limitations of their agricultural income with non-farm labour, particularly in high-return alluvial gold mining.

The lack of money to pay school fees impeded access to education for farm-workers' children. All groups of farm workers were affected by this problem and it was not related to the type of employment. Overall, non-school attendance was counted in 25.4 per cent and 25.8 per cent of households who had school-going-age children in Goromonzi and Kwekwe respectively. Now compare this with over 90 per cent of resettled households who were managing to keep their children in school.

It is plain to see from the results that land access distinguished a household's capacity to achieve its food requirements and/or obtain income to offset other social needs. However, even the landed classes were not free from exploitation. This was frequently reflected by the high input and low output prices offered by agrarian capital (Mazwi, Chambati and Mudimu 2020; Chambati and Mazwi forthcoming), as well as threats to the land tenure that small-scale farmers sometimes faced from large landholders and agribusiness that sought to extend their landholdings (Moyo et al. 2009).

These findings continue to expose the inadequacy and precariousness of (migrant) farm wage employment to meet basic requirements, a similar scenario to that documented with the former LSCFs. The small capitalist farms that resulted from the A2 scheme have therefore seen the perpetuation of the super-exploitation of farm labour, perceived in low wages that were below the cost of social reproduction.

## **Conclusion**

This article has demonstrated that land reforms do not necessarily allocate land to all land-short and landless people (Borras 2005; De Janvry 1981). Consequently, the agrarian labour reserve, though reduced by the allocation of land to formerly land-short peasants, continued to operate and the farm

labour market retained its relevance as a source of livelihood. Beyond land shortages and/or landlessness, the resistance of labour from the former LSCF compounds, and gender issues within and without households, influenced rural labour migration dynamics. Tellingly, 'labour shortages', which were uncommon in the former LSCFs (Tandon 2001), became characteristic of the farm labour market. This suggests a decline in the aggregate supply of labour as a result of some of the potential workers now being landholders in their own right.

Continuities and changes marked the new agrarian wage labour relations. While the new jobs for farm workers were commonly informal and part-time, the payment of wages well below the cost of social reproduction resonated with the tendencies of the former LSCFs. Even with the expansion of the wage structure through the receipt of 'social wages', such as access to informal land for own production provided by land beneficiaries, natural resource trading and food subsidies, the poverty that afflicted most farm workers was not substantially altered. Also replicating past tendencies of the former LSCFs, the marginalisation of women in the labour markets as irregular wage earners did not abate. Altogether, the data contradicts the literature that views migration as a deliberate diversification strategy to enhance the livelihoods of migrant labourers (Niehof 2004; Scoones 1998, 2009, 2015; De Haas 2008). Rather, resistance to proletarianisation marked the struggles of land-short rural proletariats and semi-proletariats as they aspired to become peasants and delink from the labour market (Jacobs 2018; Zhan and Scully 2018).

The findings validate assertions by Tsikata (2015) that farm work in its many diverse contexts in Africa is one of the worst paid forms of work. Therefore, analyses that claim that wage labour migration to LSCFs was crucial for the survival of rural people in settler southern Africa (Sender 2016; Bernstein 2014; Sender and Johnston 2004; Hellum and Derman 2004) need to be revisited. To the contrary, it was the undervalued self-employed jobs within the peasantry that provided better prospects for the livelihoods of the rural people. Indeed, the inequalities in the material conditions of the landholders and land-short farm workers were plain to see.

## Notes

1. The households allocated land in the A1 and A2 schemes are also referred to as new farm households in this article.
2. Data was collected from 407 landholders in Goromonzi and Kwekwe districts by the author in 2017; the farm labour survey interviewed 200 farm labourers in each district in 2017.

3. Another study of nine countries representing 51 per cent of the SSA population found that 92 per cent of the rural households surveyed were involved in own farming, and income from this averaged about 69 per cent of the total household income (Davis, Di Giuseppe and Zezza 2017: 169). The nine countries examined were Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda. In fact, the agricultural population in SSA grew from 316.21 million in 1988 to 432.49 million in 2007 (IFAD 2011: 247-248).
4. Repeasantisation is a process where farming is taken up by former proletariats and semi-proletariats as a major component of their social reproduction (Bernstein, 2010: 128; Van den Berg, Hebinck and Roep 2018: 4).
5. The quality of employment is also a major challenge, as 80 per cent of the people employed in SSA are in vulnerable employment (ILO 2015: 54). Vulnerable employment includes workers who earn less than USD 2 per day (ILO 2015: 43).
6. In southern Africa, this was reinforced by colonial policies that preferred the extraction of male labour while restricting the movement of women from the rural areas through various pass laws (Arrighi 1970; Clarke 1977; O'Laughlin 1998).
7. The former model had between 5 and 7 hectares of arable land and 15 hectares of grazing land allocated to the beneficiaries in the higher-potential agro-ecological regions (I to III) (GoZ 2001; Sukume et al. 2004); those in low-potential agro-ecological regions (IV and V) were earmarked to receive relatively larger land sizes of about 10 hectares of arable land and 30 hectares of grazing land. The A2 scheme was targeted to receive larger land sizes than those in the A1 settlements, ranging from 20 to 2 000 hectares, also contingent upon the agro-ecological location (see Utete 2003; Sukume et al. 2004; Moyo et al. 2009).
8. About a third of the 350,000 former LSCF farm workers were displaced to various geographical areas, including the communal areas (Chambati and Moyo 2004; Chambati 2011; Magaramombe 2010; Hartnack 2005). Beyond these, rural-to-urban migration dynamics were also noted during the FTLRP via the relocation of displaced proletariats in the LSCFs to urban areas, while rural-to-rural migration dimensions also involved in the latter retrenched from their jobs.
9. For instance, a trade union survey report in the 1990s suggested that as much as 75 per cent of the working class had links to the countryside and combined wage work in the cities with farming in the communal areas (Moyo et al. 2009: 29). Several studies by Deborah Potts have also reflected the pervasive nature of the semi-proletarian condition among urban workers in Harare in the 1990s (Potts 2000, 2012).
10. Instead of the traditional family, which is composed of a husband, wife and their offspring, also known as the nuclear family, 'extended' families include additional relatives alongside the nuclear family (Mvududu and McFadden 2001).
11. Furthermore, Gokwe South is one of the 11 districts that did not have any LSCFs and the prospects of many peasants from this area to gain land were more constrained than others belonging to districts that implemented the FTLRP (see

Mkodzongi 2013b). This was largely due to ethno-regionalism whereby those originating from within the district were preferred for land offers than those from elsewhere (see Moyo 2011a; 2013). So, compared to other communal areas in districts with LSCFs, land shortages were higher and compelled residents in Gokwe South to work in farm labour in Kwekwe and beyond. Additionally, the options for peasants in Gokwe to survive on the small pieces of land were severely dented by the collapse of cotton production, which had been its mainstay for decades, due to the challenges in contract farming and slump in international prices of cotton lint (World Bank 2012).

12. During the field research in Kwekwe in December 2017, I saw a job advert for farm workers placed by an A2 farmer at one of the shopping centres in Redcliff Town.
13. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of manufacturing jobs declined from 135,500 to 92,700 (GoZ 2014: 10). These trends were an outcome of the drop in capacity utilisation in the manufacturing sector. The industrial capacity utilization, which had declined from 35.8 per cent in 2005 to 18.7 per cent in 2007, recovered to 57 per cent in 2017 before falling to a trough of 34.3 per cent in 2015 (CZI 2015: 13-14).
14. The monthly rural PDL for a family of five averaged USD 835 in 2017 (ZIMSTAT 2018)
15. Such deficits in the new farm labour relations were also confirmed by various press reports. For instance, in a case brought before the Bindura Labour Court against Pasango A2 Farm in 2012, 150 farm workers deposed an affidavit claiming they were owed over two years of wages, amounting to USD 107,250. See 'Workers at Masawi farm offered \$13 wages', *Newsday*, 27 April 2012, [www.newsday.co.zw/2012/04/27/2012/04/27/workers-at-masawi-farm-offered-13-wages/](http://www.newsday.co.zw/2012/04/27/2012/04/27/workers-at-masawi-farm-offered-13-wages/) Accessed 17 June 2016.
16. The food consumption score (FCS) is an index that was designed by the World Food Programme of the United Nations to measure the acceptability of the food consumption of households (WFP 2008). It assigns weights to the different food items based on their nutritional importance, namely cereals and tubers ( $a_1$ ), pulses ( $a_2$ ), fruits ( $a_3$ ), vegetables ( $a_4$ ), proteins ( $a_5$ ), milk ( $a_6$ ), sugar ( $a_7$ ) and cooking oil ( $a_8$ ). Proteins and milk command the highest weight. The FCS is obtained by the summation of the weight of each food item multiplied by the number of days ( $x_i$ ) that each was consumed for all the food categories over the last seven preceding the survey. The  $FCS = a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + a_3x_3 + a_4x_4 + a_5x_5 + a_6x_6 + a_7x_7 + a_8x_8$ . The FCS delineates households into three distinct groups, namely poor food consumption, borderline and acceptable consumption based on the score. The ranges of the FCS for the three categories in places such as Zimbabwe where sugar and oil are part of the daily diet are: (i) poor consumption: 0 to 28; borderline: 28.5 to 42; and acceptable: > 42. Poor and borderline food consumption scores signify the infrequent consumption of milk and proteins.

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