

#### **4.1 IMPLICATIONS OF LAND REFORM PROGRAMMES – A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE: BY Robin Palmer**

The presenter prefaced his presentation by acknowledging that despite being a land expert, his knowledge of farm workers in the region was very limited as he had not looked at the farm worker as a social category. He noted that the conference was an eye opener for him, in regards to the plight of farm workers in the region. Mr Palmer's paper was based on a historical analysis of labour migration in Southern Africa of which farm-workers were one of the social category moving from one country to another since the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Mr Palmer went on to refer to his previous research on Land and Racial domination in Rhodesia and how this research focused on white Rhodesian farmers search for labour in neighbouring states of Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique and the legislations put in place to govern relations between farmers and the farm workers but without much on the farm-workers as a social category on the farms.

The paper went on to note that in the past due to the porous nature of the borders in Southern Africa – issues of citizenship were not a major issue.

The presenter also noted that historically farm-workers had generally been vulnerable, isolated, invisible and relatively powerless. The farm workers who were mainly migrants from one country to another in the region were trapped at the mercy of the farms and the farmer and were subject to semi-feudal exploitative relations. The presenter went on to note that not in all cases were farm workers found to be passive and always on the receiving end. In some documented cases in Mozambique some of the farm-workers withdrew their labour and organised passive resistance against the farm owners. Some farm-workers managed to enforce unpopular labour rent (thangata) agreements and deliberately reduced the daily tasks demanded on them. The presenter noted that it was generally true that farm-workers were isolated, vulnerable, with little access to education or health facilities, relatively powerless and very difficult to organise or mobilise.

The paper went on to describe how the old fashioned labour migration had ended in Southern Africa with countries tightening their borders, increase in xenophobia, vulnerability of farm workers has been on the increase without much assistance from the regional governments. The presenter also noted that the living and working conditions of the farm-workers in the region also relate to the issue of power relations that exist between those that control and have access to the land and those who do not.

Although there are laws that are enacted by the new governments to define and regulate labour relations in the respective countries the new governments lack the capacity and resource to implement the new laws. As a result the farm – workers cannot boast of having any rights at all. This situation is even worse for migrant farm – workers who are often taken advantage of in terms of remuneration and other benefits. The migrant farm workers are vulnerable from the both the farmers and other local farm workers. A Human Rights Watch report on The State Response to Violent Crimes on South African Farms has detailed extensive evidence on crimes against farm workers which go unreported or simply ignored by the police.

The paper also observed that farm workers have been ignored in the new land reform programmes in Southern Africa with Zimbabwe's land reform programme being cited as a

good example where farm-workers had been marginalised. The paper also cites the Malawi National Land Policy as having failed to address either the land rights and entitlements of agricultural workers and labour tenants in the agricultural sector. The land redistribution programmes have left the majority of farm workers without their source of livelihood and security.

The presenter concludes by urging conference participants to come up with recommendations that would lead to the empowerment of the farm-workers and to recognise them as players in the development of the region.

#### **4.2 HIV/AIDS PROBLEM AMONG FARM WORKER COMMUNITIES IN THE REGION: Paper Presented by Priscilla Mataure (Southern Africa AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS))**

The paper starts by acknowledging and reaffirming the importance of focusing on HIV/AIDS as a development issue, since it affects all aspects of life and affects everybody in society as victim or a close relative is affected. The paper also mentions the fact that the disease mostly affects the productive age group, meaning that economically there is bound to be a slow down.

The paper notes that the prevalence rates are very high in the region. The South African region has the highest in the world. If this be the case, then in the farming community it is expected to be higher based on the nature of farm communities, where housing is a poor, the locations are very far from any other recreational activities and high levels of poverty.

On legislation, the paper states that in Zimbabwe and Namibia there is legislation that is in place to protect the rights of the worker, the challenge is the fact that these regulations are not followed and there is no monitoring system to ensure that they are followed. Thus when farm workers fall ill they are dismissed without any benefits.

Delegates to the conference, during question time, questioned the role of NGOs in the region, with some claiming that some NGOs get money to enrich themselves while others were classified as being genuine. An important issue that were raised as a role NGOs could play, is that of educating farm workers on their rights

Another issue raised, as a concern by the delegates is the rising number of orphans on the farms, most vulnerable is the girl child who it was claimed had to engage in commercial sex to provide for the family.

The issue of treatment, was also discussed, here again it was noted that treatment is expensive and governments in the region need to make sure that their citizens have access to the necessary drugs. More importantly the delegates noted the need to raise awareness among the farming community on how to live and manage the disease with prevention being the priority.

### **4.3 THE GLOBAL AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY AND CHANGING LOCAL LABOUR PATTERNS: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE FOR ORGANISING WOMEN FARM WORKERS? : BY Deena Bosch**

The paper focuses on the changes such as labour relations that are currently characterising the Agricultural sector especial the agri-food industry where women are mostly employed. Although the paper focuses on South Africa – the observations documented do relate to other countries in the SADC region.

The paper identifies factors that impact negatively on agriculture in South Africa as:

- Relaxation of trade tariffs on agricultural produce
- High interest rates
- Changing consumer preferences in the rich developed countries
- Extension of some of the labour laws to agriculture and
- The deregulation of agriculture.

Responses by producers to the above factors has been to cut their labour force and to place greater reliance on seasonal and casual employment recruited by a contractor or broker.

In most cases women were the first to be retrenched as their security of tenure is not guaranteed as they are considered to be appendages or dependents of their male counterparts.

When retrenched the women lose the right to benefit from housing as well as the opportunity to benefit from any equity plan or skills development implemented on a farm.

With the new employment methods where the recruitment and management of labour is left to a contractor which lead to the preference for casual labour, women find themselves as the sources of the casual labour living off the farm in nearby townships. Being seasonal workers most women have to seek other sources of income during the times they are not employed. But not all employed. The Congress for South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has called for the Basic Income Grant to cushion those who are not able to access employment.

The paper goes on to highlight studies undertaken on ***The Externalisation and Casualisation of Farm Labour in Horticulture in the Western Cape***. The study found out that since 1995 77 farms had reduced their labour force by about a third.

The paper stressed the need to come out with strategies on how to mobilise and organise the women farm workers about their economic and social rights in the face of the fact that most are now work as casual workers.

The paper further illustrates how the women casual labours are exploited from the local levels to the international multinational companies level within the agri-industry sector.

The presenter concludes by urging participants to map out strategies that would seek to protect farm workers especially women from the global exploitation through the Externalisation and Casualisation of labour.

#### **4.4 IMPLICATIONS OF AGRICULTURAL AND TRADE LIBERALISATION ON FARM WORKER FOOD SECURITY : By Munhamo Chisvo**

The presenter first noted that it was disturbing that there was no data that exist on farm workers in the region. Participants who were drawn from the farm communities were urged to undertake research that properly captures data on farm workers conditions in the region.

Mr Chisvo's presentation was based on his own publications and research undertaken in the region on **Economic Reform and Smallholder Communal Agricultural Development in Zimbabwe; A Lost Agenda WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Security in Zimbabwe and Agriculture and Trade Liberalisation.**

The presenter noted that throughout the SADC region, countries had embarked on Structural Adjustment programmes and these demanded the cut in funding to the social sectors such as health and education and the agricultural sector as subsidies were removed. The cuts significantly affected the living conditions of farm workers who in Zimbabwe for example constitute between 10-12% on total population. In Namibia about 35 000 are farm workers constituting 10% of the total populations. In Zimbabwe, about 25% of the labour force are migrant labour with tobacco farming constituting 50% of the total migrant labour force.

Effects of Trade Liberalisation were outlined as:

- Minimum wages were removed and collective bargaining put in place
- In Zimbabwe research by GAPUWZ revealed that the current salary of between 1 500-2 200 for farm workers was only enough to cover one eighth of needs
- Some sectors in agriculture witnessed some setbacks e.g. the horticulture sector due to the increase of transportation costs as the shortage of foreign currency in Zimbabwe

The presenter also noted that even before the problems being faced by the agricultural sectors the farm workers did not receive any bonuses during the periods when there was a boom in activities in these sectors. What are the Trade Unions that work within these sectors doing to ensure that farm workers benefit from the toils of their labour?

Although GAPUWZ is now suggesting a minimum wage of about \$8 000 per month as opposed to the current average of \$1 800 per month there is no indication that this suggestion would be taken up.

Although some farm workers have plots on the farms they work from – the input costs such as fertilisers that has increased by about 400% since 1999 is not affordable to the farm workers.

Trade Liberalisation had affected the small-scale producers as well as the farm workers. The presenter urged participants to undertake proper market analysis for the benefit of the small-scale producers.

#### **Impact of Liberalisation on Social Welfare**

The presenter concluded his presentation by outlining the following impacts of liberalisation on health and education:

- Health personnel flight to greener pastures

- Health personnel flight from commercial farms in particular due to poor conditions of service
- Rising costs of medicines making it difficult for the poor especially the farm workers to access medical care
- Retrenchments are rampant in the farming sector due to increase of costs of production
- Farm workers are unable to cater for their basic needs due to low wages
- Costs of education are high and the farm workers are not able to meet the costs due to the low wages

#### **4.5 FARM DWELLERS, CITIZENS WITHOUT RIGHTS: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CASE: BY Andile Mngxitama**

The paper discusses the citizen rights of the farm dweller in general with particular reference to farm dwellers in South Africa. The paper notes that to be a farm dweller is to be a non-citizen. The paper argues that there is need to resolve the national question in Africa as this closely relates to the issue of the agrarian question. The paper also observes that to talk or fight for any form of rights including the farm-workers/dwellers' rights and the elimination of poverty in the context of a deformed state in Africa and the existing skewed economic and political relations is not only impossible but such an analysis fails to take cognisance of the factors responsible for the conditions of farm dwellers/workers.

In defining the term farm dweller the presenter linked this to the colonial era and noted that the farm dweller was the creation of the colonial system which heavily depended on the outright exploitation of labour of the indigenous African people. The farm dweller was denied both land rights and citizenship rights. The paper goes to give an outline of how the farm dweller was created for the perpetuation of capitalism whilst creating poverty among the African people. Unfortunately, even after independence the so-called independent states have perpetuated the unbalanced relationships with cosmetic changes here and there without changing the economic power relations.

The presenter went on to give the Poverty profile of Farm Dwellers as:

- Out of 13.7 million people living in abject poverty, 50% are farm dwellers
- In 1997, 33.5% households in former homelands earned between R401 and R800 a month while 42% earned between R801 and R1500 per month
- Farm dwellers by contrast earned between R350 and R591
- Both farm dwellers and former homelands are in the poorest category in South Africa

Although the South African government has sought to address the issue of landlessness of its citizens through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which was replaced by the lukewarm Gear Strategy which stresses on market led development as opposed to state led development. The strategy has further marginalised those social categories that were historically marginalised.

Although there have been attempts to protect the conditions of farm dwellers through for example the Extension of Tenure Act (ESTA) and the Labour Tenants Act (LTA), these do not provide the breaking down of property and power relations or a fundamental redistribution of land ownership nor do they deal with historical legacy.

In his conclusion, the presenter reminded participants of the need to mobilise and educate the farm communities so that they can challenge the property and power relations that exist between the farm dwellers/workers and the farm owners.

#### **4.6 THE FARM WORKER PROGRAMME IN ZIMBABWE SOME LESSONS FROM HISTORY. By Chris McIvor.**

##### **Introduction.**

Save the Children's engagement in this sector has been more of a move from an initial welfare and service type intervention to a more developmental / advocacy oriented project focussed on community development and empowerment of farm workers. The culmination of this process was the transfer of our experience, knowledge and resources to a locally managed and locally accountable organisation, namely the Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe that SC helped to set up in 1998.

The author goes on to say that despite the fundamental objective of the programme being that of improving the lives of children, until relatively late in the programme, they were generally regarded as beneficiaries only, recipients of charity and aid rather than participants in the process of their own development. It is our experience in many parts of the globe, Zimbabwe included, that unless children are involved in and consulted about the programmes that are supposed to benefit them, our projects can often be misplaced and misdirected.

##### **The Farm Worker Programme.**

Save The Children ran a variety of programmes in farm worker communities in Zimbabwe for almost 19 years. What prompted the interest was the clear evidence of marginalization and exclusion that characterised this population both before and after independence

“Farm workers are always on the move, sometimes staying for short periods only, at other times waiting longer, but waiting always for the bus that would take them to a better place. This is the way they live: few roots, few possessions and few responsibilities.” (1.)

This range of problems prompted a more interventionist programme, which sought to improve water quality in farm villages, improve standards of housing, introduce nutrition gardens and establish pre-schools for younger children. This provision of improved services for farm worker communities, which involved a variety of Government Ministers, farm owners, Save The Children and other NGOs, largely characterised the farm worker programme for much of the period I am talking about. In many ways the idea was to create a model, to establish a method of working in partnership with these various stakeholders, that could then be replicated in other communities and other provinces of the country.

##### **Welfare versus Development**

This kind of intervention has been criticised on several grounds. In some circles it was seen as “welfare”, as providing little more than a band-aid to a set of problems, which were much more deeply rooted in political and social marginalization. Rather than addressing the root causes of ill health in this community, such as poverty, or exploitation of agricultural labour by unscrupulous employers, or political marginalization by an indifferent Government our support for provision of services in a select number of farms and for a select number of families was seen as limited and shallow.



## **Child Participation in Farm Programmes**

Underlying Save the Children's programme of work in every community is our general commitment to improving the lives of children. Yet it is only relatively recently that we have systematically begun to listen to children themselves, to seek their views and opinions about the projects we are proposing on their behalf. This need to listen is critically important for several reasons. The first is that organisations ostensibly working for the betterment of children, whether in commercial farms or other marginalized areas of the country, can no longer assume that projects targeted at or run by adults will automatically benefit younger people. We have enough experience to question this assumption.

In 1999, and in acknowledgement of our previous omissions in this field, we conducted an exercise with children in commercial farms to explore their views about the provision of education in their communities. This exercise has subsequently informed the direction of much of our educational activities in these and other locations. The depth of analysis that children were able to bring to this debate surprised many of the adult research co-ordinators, parents on the farms and teachers themselves. The children drew our attention to a whole range of issues relating to what happens to them in schools. This varied from physical and verbal abuse by teachers, their questioning of the quality and relevance of what they learnt, the dismissive attitude displayed towards them by some trained teachers who had been posted to their areas, and the seeming lack of interest and involvement of parents in their school work. A similar sophistication of analysis informed a subsequent research programme with children on commercial farms, that we also published last year.

In conclusion, it is my contention that unless this younger generation of farm worker children are offered this opportunity to have their views considered, and if they continue to be viewed as objects of assistance rather than subjects with emotions, wishes, opinions and lives every bit as complex as our own, it will be difficult for them to escape from the kinds of marginalization and stigma that have afflicted their communities for so many years. One of our recent publications on the lives of farm worker children concluded that,

*"Invisibility is one of the reasons why the experience of aid for so many communities can be a negative one. It might be that at the end of the project a school has been built, a clinic established, an orchard left behind. But has the process of establishing these been an empowering one that involved the recipient and donor in an equitable and open partnership? If communities feel that they are perceived as little more than recipients of charity, they will assume a passive role. A project might be accepted but it will never be genuinely owned, and will not provide the experience from which the community itself can further develop and learn." (2.)*

### **Notes.**

- 1.) "From Bus Stop To Farm Village" – The Farm Worker Programme in Zimbabwe, By Di Auret, Published by Save The Children, Harare, 2000. Pg 1.
- 2.) "Children In Our Midst" – Voices Of Farm Worker Children, Published by Save The Children (UK), Harare, 2000, Pg x111