

## **Do Women Really Matter in Development? Evaluating Women's Wellbeing in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme: A Capability Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to evaluate women's wellbeing in Zimbabwe's land reform programme. I use the capability approach and feminist lenses in a qualitative case study focusing on the sugarcane growing region of Chiredzi West. The mediating question for the evaluation was what capability set do women have in the land reform programme? As findings I established that Zimbabwe's land reform programme was marred by gender blind procedures that fail to take into account existing gender responsive policies nor cultural norms that act as negative conversion factors to women's wellbeing. This negatively impacted on women's access to and control of land. In this regard, a systemic approach is recommended as a normative prescription for gender transformation in development, focusing on social and personal conversion factors. Having a shared conceptualization of gender equality as core development issue, and a development objective in its own right is also indispensable if women are to benefit from development as their male counterparts.*

**Key terms:** capability; well-being; functionings; conversion factors; Access, Control, Gendered practices, land reform, Zimbabwe.

### **1. Introduction**

Amartya Sen through his capability approach points out that development is about removing the obstacles to what a person can do in life, obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of access, or lack of civil and political freedoms (Sen, 1999). Fukuda-Parr, (2003) add that the purpose of development is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do. In this article I apply this thinking to evaluate women's wellbeing in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme.

Zimbabwe's economy like most developing countries is significantly dependent on agriculture as a result most national development strategies pay specific attention to this sector. Historically women have played a pivotal role in agriculture although in many cases as supporting partners to their male counterparts. This is regardless of the fact that women provide the largest share of agricultural labor in most households. As discussed in the following section, such gender inequalities has been acknowledged in theory by the Zimbabwe government and it has over the years made numerous policy commitments towards gender equality as core development issue. One can only assume that all development endeavors, like the land reform programme pay specific attention to gender equality.

In this article the unit of analysis is gendered practices in the national agrarian reform that was known as the Land Reform Programme (LRP). Adopting a case study approach focusing on the sugar cane growing region of Chiredzi West, I sought to evaluate women's wellbeing in this national development project. The evaluation was mapped out in the following interlinking stages: firstly I uncovered gendered practices shrouding the land reform programme as well as explaining causal mechanisms that drive such practices. In the second stage, I employed the capability approach lenses: (capabilities, functionings, conversion factors, well-being achievement, well-being freedom, agency achievement and agency freedom) to establish the capability set for women in the LRP. The process also assisted in establishing the obstacles women face in the programme. In the last stage I provide normative prescriptions as a way of contributing to opening up space to promote women's capability set in the

LRP in particular and development in general. The article is structured in eight sections. Section two gives a contextual background to the LRP context, highlighting historical inequalities related to land ownership.

The same section also highlights some of the effort made to supposedly improve gender equality in development programmes including land reform. In the third section, I present the capability approach and its associated parameters that I later used to conceptualise and evaluate wellbeing in the LRP. In the fourth section, I explain the methodology that guided the generation of empirical data on gendered practices. The fifth section looks at applying capability approach lenses to evaluate women's wellbeing in Zimbabwe's land reform programme. The sixth section gives an account of how I applied capability lenses to evaluate the well-being of women based on the qualitative data presented in section four. Section seven presents some normative prescriptions related to gender responsive development. The paper closes with some concluding remarks in section eight.

## 2. Background context

Land has been a source of conflict in Zimbabwe since colonization. Under British colonial rule and under the white minority government, white Rhodesians seized control of the vast majority of good agricultural land, leaving black people to scrape a living from marginal tribal trust lands (Thomas, 1996). Despite this racial land ownership being the major reason for the guerilla war and political upheaval that culminated into independence in 1980, by 1999, eleven million hectares of the richest land were still in the hands of about 4,500 commercial farmers, the great majority of them white (Moyo and Chambati, 2013). Most rural black Zimbabweans continued to be squashed in agriculturally poor regions of the country, despite some sporadic attempts to redress the land issue in the country.

The Zimbabwean government formally announced the "fast track" resettlement program in July 2000, stating that it would acquire more than 3,000 farms for redistribution (ibid). Two models for resettlement under the fast track program came up: model A1, "the decongestion model for the generality of landless people with a villagized and a self-contained variant," to benefit 160,000 beneficiaries from among the poor; and model A2, aimed at creating a cadre of 51,000 small- to medium-scale black indigenous commercial farmers (*Financial Gazette* (Harare), January 17, 2002). Twenty percent of all resettlement plots under the model A1 pattern were officially reserved for war veterans, those who fought in the liberation war of the 1970s. Through this, the government was partially fulfilling its commitment of honouring war heroes, made since the early 1990s, (Government of Zimbabwe, (2001),

The fast track land reform programme was characterized by key dynamic elements. The first one was a process called *jambanja*<sup>1</sup> or *hondo yeminda* (the war of land). *Jambanja* was a process in which the would be land owners occupy farms and evict the current white owners. The process was in most cases violent and chaotic. In this state sponsored fast-track land reform programme, spearheaded by veterans of the country's liberation, the plight of the white farmers in Zimbabwe became international headline news. As Pilosof (2011) puts it: - images of white farmers who were beaten, killed, exiled and driven from their homes became stock material for any coverage on the land invasions and their dramatic consequences. On the other hand, other commentators see the deployment of *jambanja* as an indispensable necessity for the authentic liberation of Africa and, indeed, all the colonised peoples of the world. For instance, Kahari, (2009) argues that the deployment of *jambanja* as the strategic vehicle is, needless to say, prompted by the reluctance of the former colonisers to concede responsibility and culpability for crimes against humanity. Ephraim, (2003) also argues that the former colonisers' reluctance, to acknowledge both responsibility and culpability leaves the formerly oppressed with no option but to insist that "the restoration of what rightfully belongs to any given group of people is a human right which must be wrested, by any means

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<sup>1</sup>With no precise definition, the word was, and still is, used to encompass a range of violent and angry confrontations on the land, which varied in degree, severity and manner. *Jambanja* in a way helped people to accept their confusion with state-sponsored lawlessness, the police were not expected to intervene or arrest anyone in a *jambanja* scene because those taking part will have prior state blessing and approval. But, only one interest group, war veterans and ruling party supporters, had state blessings to engage in a *jambanja*. Chimhundu (2001) sees this conception of *jambanja* as quite strategic for such groups because it enables them to legitimate their claims to rightful entitlement to the land they feel truly belongs to them. There is also a more positive meaning to the term *Jambanja*. For instance Magosvongwe, Nyamende, and Gwekwerere, (2013) cite Chimhundu who argues that the term *Jambanja* carries the Afrocentric understanding of life as a struggle in which challenges have to be faced and resolved. In this sense, *jambanja* stands tied to the human will to thrive in a context marred by life-stultifying circumstances.

necessary, from those who would dare to withhold it without due process by law, by physical force, or by violent coercion, psychological or otherwise” (ibid, p.157).

This conception of *jambanja* presents it as a quest to regain what a given group would have lost to other groups (Magosvongwe, Nyamende, and Gwekwerere, 2013). Thus, *jambanja* ceases to be engagement with the general hardships of life as expressed by Chimhundu in the footnote or the slide into chaos as generally perceived, instead, it becomes a quest for reparations and social justice against the backdrop of historical disenfranchisement (ibid).

In a second but complimentary step of the FTLRP, those interested in landfilled in an application form to register their interest in farming. This form was available either from the official structures-a district administrator, Rural District Council councilor, or other government offices-or, in practice, from the commander of the war veterans militia leading the occupation of the relevant farm (Mutopo, 2010). In the discussion section I make an evaluative analyses and prescriptive analyses of how conducive or not was this context to women’s capabilities in the agrarian reform.

In Zimbabwe, just like in most parts of the world women have always played a vital role in food production and food security. They account for great numbers of agricultural workers, food producers, and processors of basic foodstuffs. This ultimately leads to women spending most of their time in agriculture with their working hours in the sector forced to exceed those of men. In addition, to this, studies have found that female farmers are just as efficient as male farmers are, and with equal access to inputs and services, they would achieve the same yields as men (FAO, 2011). Moreover, studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa conclude that total efficiency in agricultural production would improve if resources were allocated more equitably across men’s and women’s land plots (Allendorf, 2007). However, women across the developing world even though they have access to they are still consistently less likely to own land, have fewer rights to land, and the land they do own or have access to is of lower quality in comparison to that owned men (FAO, 2011). All this emphasizes the relevance of prioritizing women’s issues not only in agrarian resource distribution but in development in general.

Zimbabwe is not an exception to this patriarchal course of agrarian development. In pre-colonial period people largely relied on agriculture. Chiefs were the custodians of land, and they allocated land to village headmen who would hold all the village land in the family name distributing it as necessary to male members of the lineage (Njaya, 2013). This meant that land was in the ownership of males however, women would be given small pieces of land by their male counterparts to grow supplementary crops. Thus women had secondary rights to land. This was due to patriarchal culture which dictated males as the name bearers of the family paying bride price to marry while women were destined to be married and move to other communities (ibid).

Colonization worsened women’s position with regards to land ownership. It brought with it aspects such as religion, education, migration and urbanization that were molded on patriarchal principles. Laws regarding land were introduced and Mutopo, Manjengwa and Chiweshe (2014) denote that by titling and registering land the colonial government eliminated the relevance of women’s secondary rights to land thus increasing men’s control over land as the land was registered in the men. Women however got control and access to land through the fact that they remained behind in communal lands while their male counterparts migrated to urban areas in search of employment. Thus the colonial period saw the taking away of women’s right to own land while it enhanced women’s de facto control over land.

By the time the FTLRP programme started in the early 2000s, Zimbabwe had entered into and ratified numerous gender related legislations, ostensibly to guide national development policies. The United Nations Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 is one instrument that compelled governments to ensure women’s equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets, as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls (Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). In line with this thinking, the first National Gender Policy of the country was drafted in 2004 and revised in 2013 as a legislative tool to guide every sector on issues of gender equality. The policy affirms that disparities between women and men cannot be allowed to continue for they pose a serious impediment to sustainable development and the attainment of equality and equity between women and men. By this the government was alluding to the fact that issues of equality and equity are a matter of social justice and good economics.

The policy states that the Zimbabwean government sees gender equality as core development issue; and “a development objective in its own right” (National Gender Policy, 2004, p.2). The Constitution of Zimbabwe adopted in 2013 also spells out gender balance as one of the objectives to guide the state, all institutions and agencies of government. All in all it can be said on paper Zimbabwe recognises that economic growth programmes that target women (womenomics) make good economics (Zimbabwe national gender policy, 2013-2017). Notwithstanding this, a government audit showed that by 2003 female land beneficiaries were less than 20 percent in A2 schemes (GOZ, 2003). While this was a significant increase in the number of women gaining access to land in comparison to the land resettlement programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, still the numbers remain worryingly low.

There are studies done over the years focusing on gender dynamics that characterise the FTLRP. Mutopo (2011) for instance denotes that the fast track presented a life opportunity for most women that had never happened in the history of land relations in Zimbabwe. Gaidzanwa (2011) discusses the various cultural, political and administrative factors that led to the limited number of women beneficiaries in the FTRLRP and these included the absence of effective tenure security for women, this demotivated them from investing in the land and agriculture as a sustainable livelihood. Mutopo (2011) adds to the discussion stipulating that during the fast track process, the state and some traditional actors wanted to capitalize on using culture to exclude women heads of households from accessing land.

In view of this context, the purpose of this empirical study was to uncover the capability set of women in the land reform programme. In this endeavour, the study sought to provide answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the gendered practices evident in the land reform programme?
- ii. What capability set (opportunity and process freedoms) was provided for women in the FTLRP? Which conversion processes were considered by the programme to establish the capability set for both genders?
- iii. What Normative prescriptions can open up space to promote and expand women’s functionings and capabilities in the FTLRP?

### **3. Theoretical focus**

The capability approach (CA) is based on the work of Amartya Sen (1933- ). Historically, some aspects of the CA can be mapped out of the works of among others, Aristotle, Adam Smith, Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill. In recent times, it is Sen who pioneered the approach and a growing number of other scholars most significantly Martha Nussbaum and Ingrid Robeyns contributing to it.

The CA is broad normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies, and proposals about social change in society (Robeyns, 2005). Robeyns (2017) adds that the CA cares about people’s real freedoms to do these things, and the level of wellbeing that they will reach when choosing from the options open to them. There could be no scholarly agreement on the best description of the CA, nonetheless it is generally understood as a conceptual framework for a range of evaluative exercises, including most prominently (Robeyns, 2017; 23-24): (1) the assessment of individual levels of achieved wellbeing and wellbeing freedom; (2) the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements or institutions; and (3) the design of policies and other forms of social change in society. It is important to point out that institutions are not merely laws and formal rules such as those related to the defined laws of property rights, but also informal rules and social norms, such as social norms on land ownership in a patriarchal society.

The CA has in recent decades emerged as a new theoretical framework about wellbeing, freedom to achieve wellbeing, and all the public values in which either of these can play a role, such as development and social justice (Robeyns, 2017). The core concepts of the CA applicable to this study are capabilities, functionings, conversion factors, well-being and agency. Firstly, what are these capabilities and functionings? Functionings are various things a person may value doing or being (Sen, 1999), they show the practical realisation of one’s chosen way of life (Walker, 2006). Examples of functionings include being well fed, having shelter, taking part in development activities, relating to other people, working in the labour market, caring for others, having an education, being healthy inter alia. In this regard, Alkire (2005, 122) described the CA as the proposition “that social arrangements should be evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value”. Arguing that not all functionings are positive, (such as physical violence or stress), Robeyns (2017 p52) added a precautionary suggestion “...and to promote the weakening of those functionings that have a negative value”.

Putting the two together one can say that, social arrangements should be evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value and how they stimulate the weakening of those functionings that have a negative value. Capabilities, on the other hand, correspond to the overall freedom to lead the life a person has reason to value (Sen, 1992; 2009). The difference between a functioning and a capability therefore is similar to the difference between an achievement and the freedom to achieve, or between an outcome and an opportunity. Sen, (1999) emphasises that capabilities correspond to the various functionings that a person can choose to adopt, according to his or her values in order to achieve the expected lifestyles. To illustrate this, Polishchuk and Rauschmayer (2012: 106–107) stipulate that single freedoms, such as “being able to be well nourished”, “being able to study” and “being able to express one's mind freely”, etc., refer to capabilities and, when combined, they constitute the person's capability set. Robeyns, (2005; 2017) adds that the capability set depends on the person's access to resources and on his/her conversion factors.

Sen came up with the notion of conversion factors as a critic to the idea of equality of resources as a central political value and measure of people's well-being. His (Sen, 1992; 2009) argument is based on what he calls conversion factors, where equality of resources falls short for two reasons: firstly it fails to take account of the fact that people differ in their abilities to convert these resources into capabilities and actual functionings, due to personal, social or environmental factors such as physical and mental handicaps, talents, traditions, social norms and customs, legal rules, a country's public infrastructure, public goods, climate and so on (Nussbaum, 2005; Robeyns, 2005). In his famous example (Sen, 1980 in Nussbaum, 2005, p.37), a person in a wheelchair requires more resources connected with mobility than will a person with ‘normal’ mobility if the two are to attain a similar level of ability to get around. Similarly I argue in this paper that a person or group of people who have been systemically and systematically excluded from a particular activity require more support if they are to attain a similar level of ability with those who have been involved in that activity. The question to pose is did the LRP pay attention to women's inclusion and in what way?

Capability and agency are two core concepts of Sen's approach to human well-being and development. For him, agency and capability are two distinctive but equally important and interdependent aspects of human life (Crocker and Robeyns, 2010 in Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti, 2015). Sen (1999; 2009) was concerned with agency freedom and agency achievement. Agency freedom entails having the freedom (opportunities) to bring about the achievement one values (Sen, 1992). This is concerned with being free to do and achieve our valued goals (Walker, 2006): “more freedom makes more (agency) alternatives available” (ibid. p.34). Agency achievement refers to a person's success in pursuit of the totality of her considered goals and objectives (Sen, 1992; Walker, 2006). In this sense, Walker added agency is then one's ability to pursue goals that one values and that are important for the life an individual wishes to lead. This demonstrates that agency and human flourishing are deeply connected. The concept of agency does not simply refer to the capacity to act in order to achieve self-interested goals, it also refers to the capacity to achieve objectives that go beyond improving individual well-being and involve sympathy, generosity and commitment to others, such as taking part in community development and poverty reduction (Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti, 2015).

The capability approach includes a notion of achieved wellbeing (focussing on functionings) as well as a notion of wellbeing freedom, represented by one's capability set (Sen 1993). In the capability approach the term ‘wellbeing freedom’ is used, it refers to what philosophers elsewhere would call ‘opportunities for wellbeing’ Robeyns (2017 p119). She went on to point out that the term ‘wellbeing’ is never used in a vacuum and in this case, the purpose of my use of the term is both evaluative and normative in the context of Zimbabwe's land reform programme given the gender responsive policy expectations and the patriarchal nature of the society.

#### **4. Methodology**

The capability approach in this study was used to conceptualize, measure, and assess the distribution of well-being of women in Zimbabwe's LRP. The aim is to measure gendered practices in the land reform programme as well as judge, evaluate their effects on women farmers/beneficiaries. Judgement and normative prescription is done based on various policy pronouncements made by government and on cultural historical gender injustice in relation to access to and control of resources. Opportunity freedoms for women in the LRP: that is entrance, retention, and advancement of women in the agrarian reform in Zimbabwe are used as a measurement of wellbeing in the programme. Feminist lenses are used to provide ontological and explanatory critique.

The study was qualitative in nature and straddles exploratory, descriptive, judgemental and causal designs. Following Creswell, (2007) the exploratory part sought to gain background information, to define terms, to clarify problems, develop hypotheses, and to develop questions to be answered related to gendered practices in the FTLRP. The descriptive element aimed at describing the phenomena at a point in time.

The causal design assisted in determining underlying mechanisms related to such gendered practices. Identified functionings and capabilities form the evaluative space, as highlighted above, to assess individual levels of achieved wellbeing and wellbeing freedom of women in the LRP. Following Robeyns (2017), I then used values to evaluate the state of affairs that is the evaluation and assessment of social arrangements or institutions shrouding the LRP. Finally, I came up with normative prescriptions of what we ought to do.

The study adopted the purposive sampling method to select key government officials in responsible ministries active in the LRP. Twenty eight farm owners, beneficiaries comprising of women and men were selected to participate in the study with the help of the snowball or chain-referral sampling technique. Open ended in-depth interviews were employed to obtain data from the sampled individuals. Focus group discussions triangulated individual interviews. Analysis of key documents such as policies and records of FTLRP was also done.

Data analysis was largely inductive, that is analysis that lets data speak for itself. The next level of analysis was abductive, which involves the use of theoretical lenses to make sense of data. Abductive analysis is “theoretically guided redescrptions” of data (Danermark et al., 2002 p.150.). In this case, I used the CA conceptual frameworks and some feminist lenses to interpret and redescribe the different components/aspects of gendered structures and relations related to the LRP in Chiredzi West.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Gender practices in land distribution.

The ministry of lands and the District Administrator’s (DA) office were the first key institutions in my quest to get answers to the *gendered practices veiling access to sugarcane plots in Chiredzi West and possible causal mechanisms behind such practices*. In an interview, an official from the Ministry of Lands and Rural Development stipulated that his ministry played a crucial role in the distribution of the land. He stated that the plots were equally distributed and there were no instances where one person would get more than one plot. He stated that the program was meant to and also benefited largely local people in Chiredzi West where those who applied for land got to be allocated some. With regards to steps taken by government to ensure gender equity in land distribution, the official stated that men and women were equally treated as both had the right to be allocated with land and to own land. He emphasised: *“land was given to both men and women in the sugar cane plots and women bore the right and capacity to have land written in their names in the title deeds”*.

He went on to explain that the gender disparities shown in the statistics of land ownership between men and women can only indicate that more men applied for the land not the fact that women were discriminated or anything. He elaborated: *“no favouring was done in terms of quality of land as both men and women could get the best quality of land available”*. However he confirmed that there were no strategies that were implemented to ensure the equal allocation of the land among the genders as the process was largely carried out on a first come first serve basis. This he emphasized by saying: *“the Fast Track Land Reform Programme was carried out on a fast track basis, you know the jambanja way as the land was a demand at that moment, so those who really wanted land applied for it in time to be assured that they would get it.”*

A follow-up interview with the official from the district administrator’s (DA’s) office gave similar information. She highlighted that as far as she was concerned her fellow female counterparts who participated in the land application process did get the land. The official reiterated that land was equally distributed to all people in Chiredzi West regardless of gender nor political affiliation.

### 5.2 Views of male beneficiaries

As data generation continued with farmers, it was easy to observe that most farmers were male and that they were war veterans. Generally male beneficiaries spoke highly of the FTLRP as they indicated that before the program they were landless while the country was said to be independent belonging to blacks. The framing of the masculine character was evident in the discourse that surrounded the FTLRP. As one male farmer puts it:

*Kutindiwaneivhuirindaitofanirakutotaridzakuridakwangunekuendawokuhondoyeminda (jambanja) nevamwevarumeendendakakawanda, mugovewachondiroivuirakanakarandakazviwanira”*.

(To get this land I had to show my interest by participating in the land reform program with other men and I did that very much and the price is this good land I got myself). Various other responses emphasised the roughness of the process as follows:

*There is no way I could have ever failed to get the land as I was one of the leaders of the men who invaded the land owned by whites during the FTLRP, I fought the war for independence in the 70s and I had always wanted to get land so in 2001 I decided to lead my fellow colleagues in the farm invasions so that we could get land”.*

All the narratives from the male beneficiaries stressed that the FTLRP really demanded persons of the masculine nature as there was much violence involved with the destruction of some of the white men’s property’s in the farms. Male beneficiaries also asserted that it was mostly men who got the land as they were the ones who participated in the FTLRP. One emphasised this by saying “*with the events that happened in the FTLRP land invasion, few or no men would have agreed to let their wives join the events”*. The high point in this is that there were few women who were active in the farm invasions of the 2001 FTLRP, and these women had to go an extra mile to do what was not expected of their feminine nature to be regarded as worthy beneficiaries of land.

### **5.3 Views of female beneficiaries**

It emerged in the research process that for women to access land they needed various forms of capital that is different forms of power. For instance, a female representative of the Farmers association indicated that the farms were distributed unfairly. She claimed: *A lot of biases were involved in the FTLRP that it is mostly war veterans who benefited while non-war veterans used their money or strong political connections to get the land”*. She further emphasized that, “*the process was not conducive at all for women and women were actually discriminated from the land”*.

She added that the women who got the land were either big strong war veterans or politicians who had strong influence. She described the FTLRP as having been masculine in nature that the few women who got the land used their agency by even offering favours to the men who were influential in the allocation of the land. The FTLRP according to the representative of the association, benefited males who got most of the farms and some men even got more than one farm that they ended up putting their other farms in the names of their concubines or children. She went on to lament: *I am sorry for the women whose names were put on the title deeds to cover up for men who got more than one farm...such women are as good as landless because they don’t have any power over that piece of land.*

She even stated that since 2003 after the FTLRP black people who would have been allocated land under the program have seen some other people coming in with offer letters for the very same pieces of land. She stated that most victims have been female widows whose husbands participated to get the land but would have died later on. She indicated that such shenanigans have further discriminated women from land depriving them of the right to own land.

The second phase of the land distribution according to the focus group discussion with female beneficiaries was more biased as the proper channels of land allocation were not observed. They said, “*The second phase of the land distribution involved much corruption and politics and it was rich politicians from some other areas as far as Harare who benefited from the land.*”

They stated that because of the controversies involved, much of the land taken during the second phase of land distribution has no title deeds and is still labelled with farm numbers. They all agreed that money and political connection played the determining factors in the allocation of the land that women were again negated. They recommended that, “*to avoid the collapse of the sugar industry, a land audit by an impartial and independent board should be carried out immediately in Chiredzi West. The corrupt officers and other culprits should be exposed and there is need to weed them out as they are obstacles to the economic turnaround of this country.*” They were convinced that if the above is done maybe women can get better chances of getting to own sugar cane plantations in Chiredzi West.

In summary all the interviewed women who owned sugar cane plantations in Chiredzi West, lamented that the conditions during the distribution process were very difficult, emphasizing that it was virtually impossible for women to be allocated with land. One respondent indicated that she was a war veteran and participated with her fellow war veterans in the farm invasions and applied for the land to which she received an offer letter in the year 2003. She went on to explain that she was given one plot which she wholly owns alone though she has a husband and family.

She emphasized that to get the land she used her agency and the reputation of her husband in the district which was backed by their war credentials to pave way for their attainment of land. In the absence of effective tenure security, women are more vulnerable especially if there is no male figure around. One woman testified:

*Since my husband was the one well known as the owner of the land and the fact that it is one of the plantations that have the best quality of land and is perfectly cleared with a plain surface, most people really targeted to take it from me. However I had to call in my sons to the rescue as they now represent me in processes of sugar cane production. They control the farm and ever since they came in no one has ever threatened to take the land."*

Another female respondent further elaborated that most widows faced the problems of being moved from one farm to another as their plantations were taken over. She added that Ministry Officials from the provincial capital Masvingo, with the assistance of Lands Officers in Chiredzi were conniving with local men in seizing plots with ready to harvest sugarcane crops from women whose husbands had passed on.

Single women had to go an extra mile to access land as one testified:

*I committed myself to the getting the land and did all that was required that they failed to find a reason not to give me land. The situation was very difficult as I had no man attached to me while almost all of the land applicants and participants in the mongers were males. I had to use my connections in the party and government to be seen as worthy to get the plantation."*

She showed that it would not have been possible for her to get the land if she had not used her connections as the very fact that she was single and never married made the men around her suspect her as a woman who was not upright and deviating from the local culture. She summarised:

*...most of the women who managed to get land that was solely theirs were either politicians or strong war veterans otherwise they would be married women with connected husbands who would use their links to get themselves and their wives some land."*

She elaborated that it was very difficult for women of her kind to get land as even the culture dictated that men were the rightful persons to own land. She said, "I always wanted this land since the first Fast Track Land Reform Programme, but I failed to get it because we as women were not allowed to attend the meetings for land distribution that were done by men with war credentials only".

## **6. Discussion: capability analysis**

In this section I use capability approach lenses to evaluate women's wellbeing in the programme LRP. This takes me to provide responses to the two research questions: *what capability set (opportunity and process freedoms) was provided for women in the FTLRP? and what obstacles do women face in the land reform programme?*

Walker (2006) alerts us that the space of capabilities as an evaluative space where what can be evaluated can be either realised functionings (what a person is actually able to do) or the capability set of alternatives she has (her real opportunities). In this case, we can probe the women's wellbeing in Zimbabwe's land reform programme through following questions: *what were women really able to do and be (their capabilities) and what did they actually achieve in terms of beings and doings (their functionings)? In what way did the envisioned institutions, practices and policies focused on people's capabilities, that is, their opportunities to do what they value and be the kind of person they want to be? In other words, in what way did the land reform programme focused on expanding women's capabilities, or did it merely serve the interests of a dominant group (men)?*

Based on the evidence in section four, there is no positive answer to any of these questions. It is clear from data that land allocation was done in a gender blind manner. When one is blind one cannot see. This is total failure (out of sheer gender ignorance) to recognise the differences between males and females and subsequently leads to failure to provide or cater for the differences (Chauraya and Mugodzwa, 2011). Gender blind people fail to realise that policies, programmes and activities can have different effects on men and women and this often leads to rigidity and unchanging attitudes. For instance, what the two government officials in section four, viewed as a gender fair process, was in actual fact gender intolerant.

From the capability perspective the big question is, with all the gender responsive related instruments such as the constitution of the country and other policies, that have the potential to act as social conversion factors, how then could government fail to come up with gender responsive practices (capability set for women) in the land reform programme? In this regard the social arrangements related to the LRP gets a negative evaluation because they failed to deliberately promote women's freedom to achieve functionings they value in agrarian reform.

There are two immediate reasons to this negative evaluation. Firstly, there is evidence that women were not free from restraint or compulsion. As the data shows, by and large women cannot freely own land as individuals, they have to be supported by a male figure as testified by: *...after the death of my husband...I had to call in my sons to the rescue as they now represent me in processes of sugar cane production.*

The terrifying process of *jambanja* further restrained women from participating as attested by male beneficiaries: *-“with the events that happened in the FTLRP land invasion, few or no men would have agreed to let their wives join the events”*. We can therefore not talk of opportunity freedoms or wellbeing in a development programme before the satisfaction of this basic freedom. Sen, (2009) puts it succinctly, before we talk of freedom as something to be so highly prized, that is positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, one has to get basic freedom.

Secondly and interlinked to the above point, the LRP social arrangements did not give special attention to the weakening of those functionings that have a negative value. These are functionings that emanate from patriarchal culture related to gender roles and control of resources. Women themselves are aware of such a need as one puts it: *- ...I failed to get the piece of land because we as women were not allowed to attend the meetings for land distribution that were done by men....*

Following this, it is easy to argue that the LRP failed to take into consideration the gendered conversion factors emanating from patriarchy. Traditionally, in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe, women are considered second class citizens especially with regards to access and control of resources like land. It means that historically women are systemically and systematically excluded from land ownership and cultural norms shape both men and women accordingly. This also negatively affects women’s agency, which is their power to take advantage of policies to achieve states of well-being. With the gender commitment spelt out in government policies, one would expect more support to be given to women in development programmes such as the land reform if they are to attain a similar level of functionings with their male counterparts.

We can deepen the analysis by interrogating the practice ontology that masks government officials. Taking the government as the unit of analysis one wonders why government fails to provide a gender responsive environment despite seemingly gender sensitive policies (potential social conversion factors). The starting point is that culturally in a patriarchal society like Zimbabwe, women and men do not have the same capabilities with regards to access and control of resources including land. This is well acknowledged by the state as reflected in the constitution (Zimbabwe constitution 2017):

*the state must take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances resulting from past practices and policies and ...must promote the full participation of women in all spheres of Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men; the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men, (p.20-21).*

It is evident from the data presented in section 4 that the obstacles for women to access and retain land in the land reform programme is hinged on the culture of patriarchy. Let us take the constitution as a social conversion factor that is supposed to guide every development in the country. One would expect that all *institutions and agencies of government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men.* One would expect a complementary conversion factors in the form of a policy or strategy to ensure women’s participation in a development programme such as the land reform process. Instead what we see is absence of attention to negative social conversion factors (patriarchal norms and other ills), personal conversion factors (such as adjusted preferences of women and environmental conversion factors (the harsh political climate change) that characterized the land reform process. There was no effort either to equip actors in the programme (government officials and beneficiaries both men and women) with necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to engage with patriarchal values that have the potential to impact on people’s capabilities in an unjust way.

One can conclude that government by not providing effective tenure security for women, in an environment shrouded by state corruption and patriarchal norms, the land reform programme does not at all expanding women’s capabilities, instead it merely serve the interests of a dominant group, which is men.

## 7. Normative prescription

Gender inequality in the LRP are based on deep cultural structures that is a collection of values, history, and ways of doing things that form the unstated rules of the game. These taken-for-granted values, ways of thinking and working that underlies decision-making and action are not easy to deal with. A systemic approach is required to overhaul such values.

In table 1, I propose some aspects that needs attention in such an approach if women's capabilities are to be expanded in any development process. Formative intervention process in the form of transformative learning is needed in this regard for people to be able convert resources such as tools into wellbeing.

**Table 1: Aspects that can contribute to women's capabilities in a development process.**

Capability set measures for women's well-being.	Expectations on subjects (actors in a programme)	Notes
<b>Social Conversion factors</b> Progressive social conversion factors should be in place. These include public policies and specific strategies to address negative social conversion factors	Drawing from national policies <sup>2</sup> e.g. constitution each programme should come up with a strategy to support a gender responsive programme that tackle negative social conversion factors in social norms, discriminating practices, gender roles, societal hierarchies, power relations related to class, gender, race or caste.	The understanding is that (gender responsive) policies are essential as tools to redress gender inequality buton their own they cannot complete the job. There is need for a concerted collaborative process to confront negative social conversion factors (patriarchal norms and other socio-cultural ills)
<b>Personal conversion factors and agency</b> Working on subjective elements of a programme. This involves an analysis and gender empowerment of the actors, including programme implementers (government officials and beneficiaries (men and women).	Any form of agency cannot be imposed, it has to emerge through a learning process. The transformative learning process can focus on supporting actors to develop the required knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to handle gender responsive aspects in the development programme. This process may include: - understanding and appreciating the national gender responsive policies (Social conversion factors). - developing individual and collective agency around gender responsivity in development.	Issues surrounding personal conversion factors include actors failing to convert resources (e.g. policy) into capabilities and functions, in view of personal, social, patriarchal and social environmental factors. Edwards (2007, p.259) made it clear that individuals and their society interact dialectically: "the way we see, think and act in our worlds are shaped by the cultures in which we are formed and in turn we shape those cultures by our actions". There is need therefore to have concerted effort to reflect on constraining patriarchal values.
<b>Building collective agency.</b> Fostering a shared conceptualization of gender responsivity in the development programme across layers (beneficiaries and government levels)	Supporting collective action in the process of addressing cultural patriarchal values that constrains women's capability in the development process. This implies increasing people's individual, relational, and collective agency.	The idea is to build on what Engeström (2016) refers to as distributed agency or collective intentionality
<b>Specific attention to retrogressive cultural norms</b> Gender inequality is deeply imbued in informal cultural rules: the norms of institutions, their decision-making processes, forms of exercising power, their rules, unwritten cultures, and approaches to allocating resources.	The process should involve surfacing invisible or undiscussable contradictions and stimulating a developmental dialogue around them is the most potentially valuable service.	There is need to reflect on: - what are the formal and informal (cultural) rules that can promote or constrain women's well-being in the programme? To what degree are these explicitly stated? Are there problems with these rules? What are the other structures that shape the way development viewed?

## 8. Conclusion

The argument that can be advanced from the above evidence is that formulating gender related policies and mission statements is essential but not enough for a gender responsive development process. Gender dynamics and practices as demonstrated in this paper are based on deep cultural structures that is a collection of values, history, and ways of doing things that form the unstated rules of the game.

<sup>2</sup>There could be need to reflect on the gender responsiveness of national policies.

These taken-for-granted values, ways of thinking and working that underlies decision-making and action are not easy to deal with. As Maruzani and Mutamba (2014) argue, deep seated patriarchal ideologies limit the degree of gender sensitivity of government officials in this case and also blind all those involved from identifying gender bias, discrimination, and stereotypes in development process. Patriarchal strongholds continue to strip people of the power to create a completely gender responsive development environment (ibid) and in the process undermine women's wellbeing. A systemic approach that involve working on social conversion factors (policies); personal conversion factors (individual agency and empowerment) and collective agency to confront and overhaul constraining cultural norms and values is essential. In other words, policies without political commitment of a process of deconstruction and empowerment cannot achieve much. Generally in development programmes in patriarchal societies, there is great need to focus on individual consciousness and empowerment to address what Sen described as "adaptive preferences": preferences women frequently exhibit that have adjusted to or are constrained by their second-class status (Nussbaum, 2005, p.36). Women's agency and well-being in this case study is to a great degree masked by taken for granted beliefs that are acquired through the whole socialization process. Deconstructing such gender exclusive values and reconstructing gender responsive practices require effort and commitment.

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