

**FORMAL POLITICS AT THE DISTRICT AND SUB DISTRICT LEVELS: THE
CASE OF GOROMONZI**

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Abstract

Women's participation in public life has generated interest from both political and social science. Women use different strategies to gain access to resources and power within the local community. The focus of the study is the participation of women in formal and non formal politics. In party politics, women's participation may be constrained by the relative closure of the institutionalized political system. Women who are in the opposition parties may find it difficult to come into the open about their political participation because of fear of violence from the ruling parties.

Women in formal politics also have different sources of power and authority. Power may be wielded by individuals because of their personal characteristics or husband's positions. Women may access positions of power and authority because they are sisters, wives, aunts, daughters or widows of powerful men. However, women who have significant power in local structures are those who belong to powerful organizations such as the church, political parties and government. Women utilize different strategies in formal politics of which networks and patron client relationships are the most common strategies.

In non formal politics, the thesis analyses the participation of women in civil society organizations which include the Goromonzi Women's Ratepayers Association (GWRA), the Chinyika Farmers Group and the Agriculture Dairy Project. Market women were an important group in civil society in Goromonzi who pursued both economic and political objectives. The thesis identifies the similarities, linkages and differences between formal and non formal politics. In both formal and non formal politics some women become leaders because of their relationship with powerful men and women in the community or outside the local communities. The thesis emphasizes the agency of women in the context of opportunities and constraints. Women therefore organize around issues relating to accessing resources rather than politics per se. Some women in Goromonzi had disengaged from both formal and non formal politics or preferring to concentrate on individual ventures rather than associational activities. It offers fresh insights into the current knowledge on women in politics, transactionalism, gender and power relations at the community level. The concept of social networks is also explored in the context of politics at the grassroots level and is a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge on networks

List of acronyms

AREX	-	Agricultural Research and Extension Services
BRARWA	-	Bromley Ruwa Ratepayers Women's Association (BRARWA)
DA	-	District Administrator
DEC	-	District Executive Council
GMB	-	Grain Marketing Board
GRDC	-	Goromonzi Rural District Council
GWRA	-	Goromonzi Women Ratepayers Association
GRA	-	Goromonzi Ratepayers Association
LDC	-	Livestock Development Committee
LDG	-	Livestock Development Group
LDT	-	Livestock Development Trust
MDC	-	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organisation
PF ZAPU	-	Patriotic Front Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union
RDC	-	Rural District Council
RDDC	-	Rural District Development Committee
UANC	-	United Africa National Congress
VIDCO-	-	Village Development Committee
WADCO	-	Ward Development Committee
ZANU PF	-	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZCTU	-	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZUM	-	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

Dedication

To my mother Susan Tarwirana and My father Isaac Kwangwari

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Chapter 1: Concepts and research methodology

Introduction

This dissertation is about women's participation in politics in Chinyika ward in Goromonzi district, Mashonaland East Province of Zimbabwe. Chinyika Communal Land is located in Goromonzi District, 37 km south east of Harare. The ward lies in natural region two. Its boundaries include Marondera and Murewa to the east and Harare to the south. Chinyika ward lies only 10 kilometers from the major highway from Harare to Mutare (*See map 1*). In the colonial days, Chinyika was considered a dormitory area for Harare and workers commuted to Harare. There are a few workers who continue to commute to Harare for work but this has declined as a result of increase in transport costs as well as the opening up of residential suburbs in post independence period. During the time of the study Chinyika communal ward was surrounded by commercial farming areas but this was set to change as a result of the fast track land reform programme.

A few scholars have undertaken studies in Goromonzi district and Chinyika ward. These include the studies on women by Schimdt (1986), Hillier (1957) and Weinrich (1982) which highlight the role of women in agricultural production. Chinyika communal ward is surrounded by commercial farming areas. Schmidt (1986: 47) points out that before the creation of the reserves, Goromonzi was well known for its fertile soils and plentiful streams. Hillier (1957) in his thesis on Chinyika pointed out that the lands in Chinyika were increasingly becoming infertile due to population pressure. Weinrich (1982) notes that the land grab by the colonial administration resulted in high concentration of population, which led to the deterioration in the condition of the sloppy areas of land in Goromonzi. Agriculture is the dominant form of land use. Cultivation was mainly done by hand except for a few people who hired tractors from the commercial farmers or from the District Development Fund. Agriculture was restricted by the non -availability of seeds and other agricultural inputs.

Before 1998, there were sixteen wards in Goromonzi district. Chinyika ward was made up of six VIDCOs, which included Chatibuka, Chimoyo, Nyikandeyedu, Nyadzonya, Chamukamuvhu and Chaminuka/Munetsi (*see map 2*). However, these structures changed significantly with the introduction of the Traditional Leaders Act in 1998. The number of VIDCOs has risen to 39. With respect to party politics the district had two main political parties, that is, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In non-formal politics, there were a number of civil society organisations including farmers organisations, a market association, a ratepayers association, church organizations and a few non-governmental organisations.

Characteristics of the population

According to the 2002 census there 11 631 657 people in Zimbabwe and women constituted 51.56% of the population in Zimbabwe while men constituted 48.44% (Central Statistical Office 2002:3). In Goromonzi district women constituted 49.74% and males constituted 50.26 of the population (Central Statistical Office 2002:9). According to the Zimbabwe Human Development Report (2000,) there were significant differences between males and females in the literacy levels, for instance, males had an average of 6,05years, while women had an average of 5,29 years in school. In terms of literacy levels, 84% of the male population were literate while 76% of the women were literate. Men constituted 63% of the economically active persons while women constituted 37% (Central Statistical Office 1992).

Women in Goromonzi were involved in a number of activities, which are not captured by the term economically active persons. These economic activities include farming, small-scale market gardening, and marketing selling food at community schools, at the growth point and around surrounding farms. Some women were also involved in small scale dairy farming. These activities allowed women to have a source of income which they could own and control.

The dissertation is based on research that was mainly done in Chinyika ward in two areas under the jurisdiction of Villages Development Committees (VIDCOs) namely Chimoyo and Chatibuka during the period July 2000 to July 2001. The term VIDCO in this study is used in two aspects, firstly, the VIDCO was defined as a set of villages presided over by an elected chairperson and secondly refers to a village which is presided over by the traditional village head of that area. Chimoyo VIDCO lies to the south east of Goromonzi Growth Point. A tarred road runs through the VIDCO to Rusike ward. Some of its villages lie adjacent to commercial farms, and these include Takadii and Tafirenyika, Shangwa and Kuzvomunhu. Takadii is very close to the growth point and has linear stands, which are similar to those found in high-density suburbs (*see map 2.*) The VIDCO lies to the north of the growth point. Chatibuka VIDCO was made up of 4 villages, these were Nemhara, Tapfumanei, Dongo and Chiketero. A dust road runs through the villages to Acturus. In this village there is also the Chinyika dam and Chinyika secondary school and a clinic.

Background of the study

In this thesis a distinction is made between formal and non-formal politics whereby formal politics refers to institutionalized organisations or conventional politics. Non-formal politics is used to refer to the associational activities that take place outside conventional politics but which have an impact on the allocation and distribution of resources. Both formal politics and non-formal politics open up and close certain avenues of participation for women. The studies of Kazembe (1980) and Hirschman (1985) indicate that very few women are active in formal politics at the district and sub district levels. On the other hand, Eirhorn (1993), Chazan (1988, 1991,1982) Tripp (1994) among others note that women have responded to exclusion from formal politics by engaging in associational activities where they pursue a kind of politics that seeks tangible solutions to problems caused by state repression and economic reform. The traditional studies of participation, for example, Sanday (1981:116) and Epstein et al (1981:101) have assumed male norms of citizenship, voting and campaigning, and sought

to explain why and how women have failed to act like men rather than exploring female modes of political participation. However, unlike these earlier studies this thesis discusses women's participation in party politics, local government structures, and civil society associations from women's perspective. This chapter, discusses the concepts and indicators used in the study. Later sections of the chapter discuss the methodology used and the problems encountered during fieldwork.

According to Weber (1987), the essence of politics is the struggle for power between individuals, classes or nations. In this study, the term politics is used to mean efforts by local people, particularly women, to influence the allocation of resources and values in their communities (Mba 1982: 23). Participation may be defined as the effective involvement of a person or persons in the affairs of the state, government or public affairs in general. The notion of political participation shall be broadened to include the multi-locations of power contestation such as the party structures, local government structures and civil society associations. Women's participation in politics in Zimbabwe goes beyond direct electoral politics to multi-purpose organisations that are involved in the welfare of the community and the struggle over resources and power (Tripp 1994: 123).

When independence was attained in 1980, one of the major tasks of the new government was to ensure that the majority of Zimbabweans would be provided with facilities and opportunities for development. The ruling party ZANU PF advocated a socialist ideology, which had as one of its cardinal points as people's participation in decision - making and development. People's participation in the development process was seen as the foundation for self- reliant and self-sustaining development.

Participation, however, is an ambiguous concept that has been manipulated by different groups of people to mean entirely different things at different historical periods and in different contexts. Participation refers to people involving themselves to a greater or lesser degree in organisations concerned with decision making about the implementation of development. The United Nations (1998:18) defined participation as the involvement of people at different levels in the decision-making and processes to determine social goals and the allocation of resources. The African Charter for Popular

Participation (1990) defines participation as essentially the empowerment of people to effectively involve themselves in creating structures and designing policies and programmes that serve the interests of all as well as to effectively contribute to development and share equitably in its benefits

Other factors affecting the participation of women in politics are the prevailing ideologies or the competing ideologies found in the society. For instance, the socialist ideology espoused by the ZANU PF party in the 1980's which was premised on equality and the elimination of inequality opened spaces for renegotiation of power within the party structures. On the other hand, liberalism espoused by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) enabled women to make some claims for representation and participation in the formal political structures.

The political structures

The main players in politics at the district level include the state, women's organisations, non-governmental organisations and formal political parties. These players provide opportunities for women to participate in community politics. Bailey (1969:23) points out that every political structure has rules about personnel, which say what a person needs to do in order to qualify to occupy a political role. It also has a political elite and a political community. The political community refers to those individuals who can be recruited into an organization while the political elite refers to the group of people within the community entitled to compete for honours and power. The study revealed that in formal politics, the political elite among women are mostly relatives of the male politicians in power. Cases do exist, however, of determined women who are in politics because of their own abilities. In order to understand the participation of women in politics it is necessary to look at a brief history of governance and civil society.

History of governance and civil society

The history of governance demonstrates that government evolved as a process based on exclusionary and hierarchical distribution of power (Selolwane 1997: 27). The distribution of power was based on race in the colonial era and on ethnicity and party

affiliation after independence. In Zimbabwe, this processing of power has meant that women acquire positions of authority and power in formal political parties. In most cases women are relegated to health and welfare issues which are seen as inherently feminine for instance in the early 80s the epitomes of women's empowerment included Joyce Mujuru who was the minister of Community Development and women's affairs. Despite under-representation in party structures women do not simply acquiesce to party political power, they fight back both individually and collectively. Parpart (1988: 25) notes that Ghanaian and Nigerian market women often ignore conventional politics preferring to concentrate on their economic associations. Withdrawal, especially into civic organisations is an avenue for political participation for women but it is a drawback in extracting valuable resources distributed in the public policy arena.

The modern idea of civil society originates in the teachings of Hobbes. For Hobbes (1994:18), *civitas* or common wealth, is founded on the readiness of each individual to forgo his or her quest for self-preservation and mutually and voluntarily agree with others and appoint an individual or assembly to provide security for all. The creation of civil society results from both the capacity and the obligation of each individual to seek peace and conceived physical security. The key effect of this process is the imposition on government of an obligation to be responsible to the people who created it. Individuals begin to pursue objectives of security collectively. However, the modern political usage of the term civil society can be traced to Hegel (1994: 18). He used the term to distinguish what he called political society, whose consummation was the state, and civil society, which is the sphere of private individuals pursuing their own interests.

Civil society is seen as an indispensable intermediate between the state and the individual (Haberson: 1994 : 19). Some scholars point out that the concept of civil society is a western liberal concept whose existence in Africa is limited. Tripp (1994) argues that Hobbes' definition of civil society was formed by consenting men and their relationship to male government and thus excluded women. Rousseau was of the opinion that women would best stay at home as they were incapable of concerning themselves with issues of justice. Pateman (1970: 18) argued that there would be no public sphere if women participated in politics because the public sphere is contingent on the existence of a

peaceful, constant homelike environment tended by women. Civil society was seen as separate from the private sphere. However, current definitions of civil society locate it between the state on one hand, and kin and family on the other hand. Civil society is seen as a relational concept interacting with the state yet simultaneously maintaining its independence. Civil society is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

Research Problem

Since attaining its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has been one of the countries seeking to promote gender equality and equity in its policies and programmes. To this end Zimbabwe has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender, the Beign Platform for Action (BPA), to align itself with regional and international developments with regards to gender equality. Zimbabwe has also developed its own gender policy and set up a ministry which handles gender affairs.

Although women constitute the majority in terms of population, they remain at the margins of politics. However, some studies have noted that women's participation in politics may be higher at the district and sub-district levels compared to their participation in politics at the national level. The unequal distribution of power in society is based on gender discrimination in combination with patriarchal relations embedded in marriage and family institutions. The patriarchal mode of production contributes women's limited access to state and private resources. Participation in politics is depended on a number of factors including resources, networks, societal attitudes and individual capacities. At the center of the problem of women's participation in politics is whether women have simply acquiesced to limited participation in politics. Some studies have shown that women have fought back both individually and collectively. Participation in politics may not always be viewed as empowering by the women themselves and this creates a response commonly known as the 'exit' option whereby women move away from the formal political sphere and engage in other activities such as marketing and civil society organizations. In some of cases women may seek to

empower themselves by fully engaging with the state. In the situation of high state repression as experienced by Zimbabwe since 2000, women who are some of the most vulnerable groups may engage with the state primarily to protect their interest while at the same time seeking to change or subvert its repressive tendencies.

The two major political parties in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front and Movement for Democratic Change espouse an emancipatory agenda for women. However closer analysis reflects this may be mere rhetoric as women's participation in both political parties in higher levels of politics appear as mere tokenism. The formal and non formal politics are necessarily different but might share similar tendencies with regard to activities aimed at suppressing women's participation. The study also views women as agents rather than subject of their own participation in politics. The study thus explores the following questions, What are the problems of women's participation in formal and non formal politics at the district and sub district levels? How have the women responded to these problems? Is there significant differences between formal and non formal politics or distinctions are merely imaginary rather than real? How is the formal political sphere linked to the non formal political sphere with regards to gender? How have women been participating in these two spheres of politics? What strategies have been used to counter problems encountered by women in politics? What recommendations can be made on the basis of the findings of the research?

Theoretical underpinnings

The thesis draws from micro and macro theoretical perspectives in order to unpack the complexity of women's participation in formal and non formal politics. An eclectic approach was used in this study to enhance the understanding of women's participation in politics. Women's studies on politics in Africa emerged mainly in the 1980s with interventions by scholars like Chandra Mohanty (1988,1991) and Gaidzanwa (1981,1992,) who challenged Euro centric traditions that defined distinct forms and goals for feminism in Africa. Another important trend in Africa was the upsurge of publications describing the agency of African women, especially in anti-

colonial struggles. In almost all the countries in Southern Africa, women took part in the movements for liberation, independence and later on multi-party dispensations. However, their participation in advocating universal suffrage, independence from colonial oppression have not resulted in equal participation in politics and decision making for women.

The first phenomenon that confronted me as I attempted to analyse the situation of women and their participation in politics in Zimbabwe was that the positions of women are many and varied. Waylen (1996: 16) noted that it is difficult to talk of a unitary category of women and women's interests. According to Phillips (1991) in his studies on South African women in politics, the prevailing terms of contemporary politics suggests the triad of sex, race and class. Similarly, women in Zimbabwe are situated differently in society in terms of class, race, social position, age, political affiliation and personal skills.

The state is a key player in women's participation in formal and non formal politics and any meaningful analysis of women in politics must include the state and its relationship with society. The study borrows from the Marxist perspective where it is argued that the dominant ideas in most societies are the ideas of the dominant sex mingled with those of the dominant class and the state serves the interests of the dominant class and thus the dominant sex. To this end, the state acts in social struggles to create order and cohesion by concentrating and sanctioning ideological and political domination and in this way reproducing social and class relations. The political elite is male and women are never central to state power. In Zimbabwe, the state has ideological and political power but economic power rests mostly in international capital through multinational corporations and private companies. Women's participation in politics is heavily influenced by state ideologies on gender, networks and the appropriate mode of political participation.

However, contrary to strict Marxian perspectives, Zimbabwean males benefit from cultural beliefs. In traditional Shona society participation in political activity was based on the control of elderly males on young men and women's labour.

From the pluralists view, (Parpart and Staudt 1988: 3) states are viewed as 'neutral umpires' reacting to diverse interest groups and the electorate. The pluralists recognize that women have a right to political participation in their own right but make a distinction between the private and public sphere and identify the private sphere as being more appropriate for women. They go on to include the civil sphere which is considered to be neither private nor public where women can play a critical role. The civil society has relative autonomy and exists alongside a separate state which adjudicates its differences and aggregates the preferences of citizens in programmes of collective action (Mandaza 1991:4) thus the competition for space for marketing is sometimes mediated by the state apparatus. This perspective assists us in understanding power in politics. Men are constructed as holders of power while women play the role of reproducing the private sphere without formal control of resources.

This perspective also assists in understanding women's participation in non-formal politics as they see formal political parties as offering them nothing. There is more and more empirical evidence that suggests that there is general disillusionment with the authoritarian and corrupt nature of the state in Africa. For example, Longman's (1998) study of pre-genocide Rwanda found that the Rwandan people realized that the opposition party offered 'nothing really new' and offered them lukewarm support because, for them, meaningful change would only come through diminishing state power rather than linking the state more effectively with society. Women may make contingent engagements with the state as an option total withdrawal.

The private sphere is accorded low status and the public sphere a high status at the same time the public sphere remains out of bounds for most women. . Studies by Abrieu (1996) on women in politics in Southern Africa attribute the low participation of women in politics to culture and traditions that support male domination; that leads to a division of roles between the public and private domains. Although the liberalist perspective has roots in western scholarship it does seem to have some relevance in analysing the participation of women in formal and non-formal politics in Zimbabwe.

The feminist perspective offers a critique to the theories presented above. For feminists patriarchy is at the root of the marginalisation of women in politics. According to radical feminists, women still remain at the margins of politics because patriarchy has not been tackled at its 'roots' (McDowell and Pringle 1987: 32). They further argue that whether women are defined as the same as men or different from them, men remain as the reference point of gendered norms against which women are compared.

In the same spirit, Walby (1988:10) ties the radical feminist perspective with the Marxist feminist perspective and notes that patriarchy is a system, which is analogous to capitalism, and that there are patriarchal relations in the state. She argues that patriarchal relations of power, patriarchal mode of production and patriarchal relations in the state promote male interests at the expense of women's interest. Women are marginalized in politics because access to power is based on patriarchy, and women also lack the political resources because of the patriarchal mode of production whereby their labour and its products are accumulated by males. Furthermore, the state relies on patriarchal relations thus offering more opportunities to males through their access to productive resources such as land and employment. During the 1980's the Zimbabwe government practised state feminism which was based on socialist perspectives whereby women were incorporated into state structures on a party ticket and their participation was determined by the party. Studies undertaken by Debrieu (1999) in Mozambique have shown that women who enter politics through this route do not view themselves as women's representatives but representatives of the party. In this regard, therefore, party politics substantially contributes to divisions among women and hinders their collaboration. Initially, state feminism was closely tied to the notion of state socialism which was fashionable immediately after independence. Under these conditions, the state became the 'patriarch' that is a "father" state which assumed the right to speak for all. The 'party' which was closely related to the state and almost indistinguishable from it behaved like a pre bourgeoisie *pater familias*. The state ended up acting as a 'benevolent' all providing 'father' in terms of social welfare. The authoritarian father brooked no disobedience from his children who were given no space to articulate alternative political discourses. The

result was an emergence of an apolitical stance, passivity and cynicism by civil society in general, minority groups and by women in particular.

The issue of class would not adequately address the nature of the linkages in this study as there were different sources of power, which included traditional and patriarchal authority vested in some male relative or friend. . This supported the cultural writings of Foucault (1979) Said (1985) William (1980) who have argued that political power is widespread and so pervasive in society that it may be possible to understand its various manifestations without direct reference to the state. Foucault (1979) notes that the state is not the exclusive agent of power. The study illustrates the theoretical point that politics does not only exist within a narrow formal sphere but rather extends to many informal sites of politics including the market and civil society. Women of different categories create avenues of political participation. In this view the 'social is political'. I now turn to the definition of key concepts in this thesis.

Gender power relations in politics

In examining women's participation in politics, the researcher found it useful to examine gender power relations and look at gender as an analytical category. This would have the merits of ensuring that gender the study would be objective by looking at the relations between men and women rather than just looking at women. Hirdman 1991 (ed) points out that gender emphasizes the power relations referring to separation between sexes and the logic of the male norm where higher value is automatically given to masculine things. The study looked at gender issues in three ways a) gender roles (b) gender systems which refers to abstract level of cultural images, institutions and the interpersonal relations (3) gender and development which refers to the linkages productive and reproductive parts of women's lives in relation to politics at community level. Gaidzanwa (2005) notes that in politics women's participation is also influenced by their ownership, access and control to resources. Inequalities between men and women therefore tend to be historically constructed and maintained through institutions such as the family, the economy, the polity, the church and society as a whole. In electoral terms, opportunity structures are mediated through the deeper social inequalities that exist between men and women, rich

and poor, young and old, ethnic and other differences. The inequalities also vary with age, class. Despite evident capacity on some women to stand alone and pursue economic, social and material entitlements, there are some women who may be locked into stereotypical roles of subservient and subordinated women serving the interests of men and bound into the stereotypical roles of subservient and subordinate woman serving the interests of men and bound into constructs of society (Zvobgo 1991 et al (ed) J. E. Stewart et al 1997).

Transactionalism

Women in politics engage in mutually beneficial transfers of reciprocity and exchange with those more powerful than themselves and those who may be in a subordinate position to them. Economists point to the assumption that in social action individuals engage in bargaining to secure disproportionate gains for themselves. In Scott (1976) study of peasants societies in Asia, he observed that patron client relations between peasants were regulated by the ethic of reciprocity whereby the respect of the peasants for their elites and the payments made to their elites are supposed to be balanced by a return flow of justice, protection and subsistence. This according to him is a moral economy whereby risk averse peasants living at the margins develop social insurance system by contributing to somebody else or the community at large with the expectation of receiving something in return at a later stage. This is supported by Stewart et al (1997) who notes that because of women's exclusion from direct channels of access to resources often invested time and energy in promoting and consolidating relationships rather than developing their own skills and capacities as this secures necessary access to resources. According to Barth, social organization and political leadership notions of valuation and honor are based on revenge, reciprocity gift giving and individual choice. In his study Pathan men made rational decisions based on individual benefits of political alliances and social relationships rather than collective or even filial benefit. Individual interest is therefore seen as the primary determinant of political affiliation and social relations. He emphasized social individual agency, instrumental strategies and social process rather than structure. This enables theoretical

insight in women's participation in formal and non formal politics at district and sub-district levels.

Definition of concepts

Some of the key concepts used as tools of analysis include power, empowerment, authority, good governance, marginality, disengagement and incorporation.

Power

It was important to find out whether women who enter into politics acquire power. Power has been defined differently by different people (see Sanday 1981:116, Bierstedt 1976:137, Coser and Rosenberg 1976, Lowenthal 1976:118, Eade 1991:13 and Weber 1987). According to Lukes (1996: 24) power is an essentially contestable concept and can be viewed from three main perspectives. The first face of power is decision making which involves decisions over issues and where individuals or groups have different policy preferences and the groups or individuals whose policy preferences are upheld are the ones with power. The first face of power is visible in direct action taken where force is used. The second face of power refers to situations where people stop certain issues from being discussed or decisions being made about them. This view embodies a reformist conception of interests being submerged or concealed or deflected from full expression through a series of non-decisions. This face of power can be seen in attempts to stifle issues as they emerge or attempts to redefine or reshape an issue into something less threatening. The third face of power involves the ability to shape desires and the manipulation of the wishes and desires of others. Power is most successful when it can prevent a threatening issue from getting on the agenda at all. Those who have power may appear to embrace an issue when in fact they have seen that issue as a threat to their own security and work to suppress it as it emerges in the public sphere. In Lukes' (1996: 24) radical conception of power, a power relation exists whenever one agent affects another significantly and does so to the detriment of the latter's interests. According to Lukes (1996:24) people's real interests are in what they would want if they were fully autonomous agents.

Power is an interstitial phenomenon arising in gaps in the structural determination of social events. The first face of power was uncovered by asking questions on who took what action or what decision on an issue being discussed. While the second face was investigated by asking who prevented an issue from emerging into the public arena and who distorted it, remoulded it or diverted it. The third face of power was difficult to observe as it operated by controlling perceptions and attempts to control the minds of the people. The indicators of power used in this study included observing who spoke most at meetings, about what, and to whom? Whose ideas were included or excluded? People's responses to certain individuals during meetings were also observed as these reflected the people's attitudes towards certain forms of power. Due the multiple faces of power there were methodical challenges in examining the faces of power as there is always a gap between what is said and seen and what obtains in practices.

Scott in his study on peasants distinguished peasant public compliance from peasant private subversion as a means to argue for the identification and appreciation of cognitive resistance to land owner hegemony and outright domination. This is also supported by Janeway (1984) who argues that the most significant power is 'the ordered power' to disbelief. Women are powerful by rejecting the powerful's definition of their reality and can do so even if they are poor or trapped in oppressive circumstances.

Empowerment

According to McWhiter (1991:2) empowerment is the process by which people and organisations or groups who are powerless become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life, develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, exercise this control without infringing on the rights of others and support the empowerment of others in the community. The researcher looked at the extent to which participation leads to empowerment. Empowerment may also be defined as power, which is bestowed by one person upon another (McWhiter 1991: 17). The problem with this interpretation is that if power can be bestowed it can just as easily be withdrawn. Empowerment can be analyzed at two levels, that is firstly, at the personal level, where it is about developing a sense of individual confidence and ability and undoing the effects

of internalized oppression. Secondly, at the community level where it includes involvement in political structures and might cover collective action and co-operation rather than competition and conflict (Mombeshora 1998:23). In Goromonzi, women felt empowered by the existing government, civil society associations and they engaged in associational politics. However, empowerment in Goromonzi appears more pronounced at the individual rather than the community levels.

People who are denied power and influence in society, especially women may internalise the message of oppression they receive about what they are supposed to be like. This internalised oppression may be adapted as a survival mechanism. The assumption is that power is in finite supply and that if some people have more others will have less and this might mean that if women gains power it would be at men's expense. From this perspective it is easy to see why the notion of women being empowered is seen as inherently threatening, the assumption being that there will be some kind of reversal of role relationship. Men will not only lose power but also face the possibility of power being wielded over them by women. Men's fear of losing control is an obstacle to women's empowerment. Meaningful empowerment therefore must include processes that enable people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to make decisions. It must involve undoing negative social constructions so that women come to see themselves as having the capacity and right to act and influence decisions.

Disengagement

Women's reactions to exclusion from formal politics vary but one common response is disengagement. Disengagement refers to a tendency to withdraw from the political sphere and the state and its structures and keeping at a distance from its channels as a hedge against instability and dwindling resources (Azarya 1996:1, Azarya and Chazan 1987:106, Haberson and Rothchild 1994:88). Women who are possibly the most powerless groups of the populace consciously dissociate themselves from formal political institutions (Chazan 1982, 1983). In Zimbabwe, participation in formal politics at the district and sub-district levels has been largely through the Village Development Committees (VIDCO), Ward Development Committees (WADCO). In the past those

people who were not members of ZANU PF were automatically alienated from making meaningful inputs into the political processes. The indicators of disengagement used in this study include evidence of previous participation in formal politics but non-participation during the period of the research. A negative perception of formal politics evidenced by non-engagement in government and party initiated projects. This non- engagement is also associated with participation in the other non-formal organizations, which are seen by the women as more efficient and corruption free alternatives.

Opportunity and constraints

In this study, the term opportunity is used to mean any chance for women to carve out political space for themselves and to influence the allocation of resources within their communities both as individuals and as groups. The formal and non-formal spheres provide opportunities for women to gain access to power. Constraints refer to obstacles and hindrances to women's involvement in effective political activities, such as gender biased structures, attitudes and beliefs of both men and women, and gender biased time schedules for meetings. The indicators of opportunities in the formal political structures include government policy and ideologies of political parties which incorporate gender.

Authority

Women who enter into politics may also have authority derived from different sources. Weber's concept of authority was used to understand how and where women acquired their authority. According to Weber (1987:38), there are three sources of authority, that is traditional, bureaucratic and charismatic authority. Traditional authority is vested in traditional institutions, for example, chiefs. Charismatic authority is based on the personal characteristics of the leader. Bureaucratic authority is based on elections and leaders' qualifications. The nature of authority determines the form and nature of empowerment. At the community level, the source of authority also determines whether a woman will engage or disengage from political participation.

Incorporation

Some segments of the population associate with the government and take part in its activities in order to share its resources (Azarya and Chazan 1987:108, Bayart 1986:109, Azarya 1996:1). Incorporation provides avenues for power and authority to certain categories of women within rural communities. In Zimbabwe, the socialist ideology espoused by ZANU PF in the 1980s enabled large numbers of women to participate in formal politics. In party rhetoric, men and women were comrades (*cadres*) in the struggle to build a better society. This led to the creation of a women's league, which operates in tandem with the main wing. However, when the party speaks on matters of policy and other important issues, its normal voice is male (Crehan 1997:28). The activities that women engage in tend to be based on very traditional notions of the activities appropriate for women. Women's leagues may help strengthen women's confidence and increase their knowledge in areas such as conducting meetings and drafting bills. However, the women's wing promotes patronage and appendage systems, women are given top positions because they are sisters, friends and wives of powerful men (Epstein and Coser 1981:108). The indicators of incorporation include, the sex ratios in VIDCO, WADCO, council, ZANU PF and MDC structures. They also include women's participation in projects initiated by formal political players. A positive perception of government or party sponsored projects also indicates ideological incorporation. Moyo (1993) observed that in developing countries the state has expanded by fusing political, ideological and productive hierarchies into a single unified organisational structure as an affirmation of democratic centralism. There is no separation between civil society and the state in Africa. The type of civil society that was formed in Zimbabwe was characterised by associations such as village communities, elite clubs, political parties, burial societies, student groups, industrial confederations and fundamentalist religious cults which do not encourage an interest in matters beyond their own immediate concern.

During the colonial period, community organizations in black communities were trampled out in an attempt to relegate them to permanent political irrelevance. After independence, the ruling party ZANU PF claimed to be the sole representative of the

people and under the guise of this claim, the party declared itself to be the umbrella organization of all social movements. According to Weinrich (1957:167) in some rural communities noted that a prime concern for male farmers was to control a large labourforce, they were opposed to any of their dependants joining non agricultural voluntary associations such as those organized by Christian missionaries and wives of school teachers. They saw the clubs as a threat to their economic wellbeing and feared that if their wives and daughters participated in them they would become to independent. Rahmato (1991: 23) points out that the developmental state in post independent Africa reflected the ideas of those who supported the concept of state regulations and allocation of resources as the best instrument for producing and distribution of a wide variety of goods and services for all.

The propensity of peasants to engage in organizational activity is related to the extent of state and market penetration into rural areas. The proliferation of peasant organisations stems from three factors: they are flexible, familiar and practical, they are based on real interests and knowledge of the people involved. Rural organisations may intervene in the economic political sphere and may extend themselves to engage in welfare and investment activities.

Azarya (1996: 83) points out that the state is overwhelmed by pressure from many sectors in society and is not always able or willing to accommodate in its sphere of action, all those knocking at its door. Kasfir (1994) noted that farmers all over Africa have to cope with ineffectual states. In the 1990's era the state's capacity to serve communal farmers shrunk considerably. This could be attributed to the new liberalist's policies which emphasizes that the state must do less and cut back on its expenditure. In the face of dwindling resources from the state, communal farmers have developed strategies to protect their interest and profit. The strategies used by farmers include: (1) Seeking niches where personal action can lead to direct state aid, (2) Taking chances in the market and (3) Forming collective ventures.

Similarities and differences in formal and non-formal politics

There are certain features which are common to both formal and non-formal politics and these include the presence of patronage and appendage systems. The power-holders tend to be the wives, sisters and friends of powerful men. This is also the case in some civil society organisations and other non-formal women's associations. The more economically empowered women even within categories of marginalized groups, tend to have a bigger say in activities of non-formal organisations. March and Taqqu (1982:116) note that many types of informal organisations are used for the benefit of some women over others, or some families over others and one social group over another. There are large-scale organisations, for example, political parties and ratepayers associations, which being formal or non formal actively and ultimately promote the political and economic activities of the few.

Participation in either formal or non-formal politics empowers women at the personal and community levels. Individuals develop confidence and may be able to undo the effects of internalized oppression. At the community level, positions of authority held by women in any organization give women considerable experience in dealing with decision-making, dispute settlement, management of collective resources and the staging of public events.

Differences also exist between formal and non-formal politics. In formal politics women are seen as trespassers on the male domain while non-formal politics is one of the main avenues through which respectable women enter into public life, learn political skills and acquire authority within communities. Secondly, in formal politics women are given space to articulate their interests within the limits of what is seen as the acceptable women's sphere. Women are often relegated to the health and welfare issues while in non-formal politics women consciously pursue economic interests and may make demands on the state for help. Some informal associations may be tied institutionally to formal politics through their activities as organized groups. Some associations have direct institutional access to party bureaucracies. While formal politics relies mostly on cut throat competition to acquire power, women in non-formal associations often engage in 'smart' politics where they pursue politics in circumstances which are not threatening

to themselves or to their children. Nisnin and Drah (1993:61) note that while building its funds by dubious means a political party also provides opportunities for bribery, theft and embezzlement while virtue and honesty is emphasized in associational activities.

Problems and limitations of women's participation in formal and non-formal politics

A problem is used in this paper to refer to any hindrance, obstacle, policy, ideology and attitude, which makes the participation of women in politics difficult. These include the presence of patronage and appendage systems for allegiance in both formal and non-formal politics. Women may enter politics by the root of widow succession and personal relationships with powerful men. In formal politics women lack proper networks which are important for ascendancy in the political hierarchy. Their lack of professional and educational qualifications can result in exclusion from some important political activities. This is also intimately related to traditional attitudes and gender stereotypes.

There are certain problems, which are common to both formal and non-formal politics. These include images and ideologies that society has caricatured about women's roles which militate against women holding positions of authority. Whereas a man enters politics without much scrutiny as to his social fitness, a woman would have to first prove to all concerned that she is exceptional among the female folk. In formal politics, public positions are not always held by the most qualified persons, and this is particularly so in electoral politics. An individual's economic clout and the ability to employ illegal means to manipulate the electoral process to one's advantage may be the only qualifications the victorious candidates have over the losers (Woyugi 1998: 50). The female socialization process does not prepare women for cut throat politics and, secondly, women are unlikely to be wealthy in their own right. This means that women who enter formal politics are not entering from the same footing as men.

In both formal and non-formal politics, women's exclusion from decision-making positions is a function of the existing social and economic structures that discriminate against them. Divisions among women and other party members are due to the prevailing political structures that discriminate against women. Divisions are also due to the

prevailing political structures that manipulate and divide them by co-opting some and forcing the rest into silence and submission through the use of violence and these activities out-rightly deny women the right to organize as a pressure group. Mujuru (1987: 24) noted that women were not exercising the rights conferred upon them by the new democratic oriented measures because of a number of factors. These included the acceptance of oppressive customs by women, traditional practices which discourage women from entering into public life and resistance from those male groups who feel their interests threatened and their supremacy undermined.

In non-formal politics the major problem faced by women is that they define themselves as apolitical while pursuing political agendas. This means that they may still be viewed by the state as a direct challenge to the imperatives of statehood, state legitimacy and state revenue. The government feels that the benevolence of these organisations needs to be directed and coordinated in order not to undermine the state. Thus we find that wherever there are informal organizations, the state attempts to come in usually using funding as an entry into civil society organizations. In situations where the state fails to control civil society organization this might mean civil society organizations will be on the receiving end of state repression (Ndegwa 1996: 21). In Goromonzi district, there are civil society organisations, which challenge existing laws on cattle and farming. Those who challenge these laws are sometimes seen as rebels or opposition elements by government.

The major problem faced by women in formal politics is marginality. Women who enter politics may be rejected by the group, which they would like to join (Githens and Mackay 1977: 88). They may experience hostility both from men and other women. Women who enter public life are sometimes seen as 'prostitutes', especially if the women are single or divorced. Once women enter into public life, their private life receives much scrutiny from the public. Ambitious women participating in politics may be seen as going too far, as rejecting some of their traditional feminine roles. Women's participation in politics in Zimbabwe is limited with most women being relegated to those areas which are usually considered feminine. The next section presents the aims and objectives of the study.

Aims and objectives

The major aims and objectives of this study included:

1. Identifying the opportunities and constraints for women's participation in formal and non- formal politics.
2. Examining the sources of power and authority for women in formal and non-formal politics at the grassroots level.
3. Analysing the strategies that women use to overcome these problems and how successful these strategies are.
4. Identifying similarities, linkages and differences between formal and non-formal politics

Research Methodology

This section discusses the methods of data collection used in the research, the problems faced and the strategies used to overcome these problems. A number of research methods were used, these included direct observation, interviewing, review of party official records, attendance of community meetings and committee meetings. Data was collected over a one-year period that is from July 2000 to July 2001. The first six months of the research focused on formal political structures, that include, political parties, Rural District Council, Village Development Committees and the Ward Development Committees. The second phase of the research focused on non- formal political structures, that is, civil society organisations and women's self-help organisations.

Reconnaissance Field Trip

The reconnaissance trip was undertaken in July 2000. The researcher first approached the District administrator for Goromonzi who introduced her to the councillor for Chinyika ward. The councillor then introduced the researcher to the village heads. The village heads agreed to support the researcher throughout the research. The researcher held discussions with other community leaders who pointed out the relevant people to talk to on the different topics. It was during this period that the researcher was able to network

with people who later became the key informants. During the early period of research, the researcher faced one major problem whereby villagers thought that the researcher would provide financial assistance to women. This perception was dispelled when the researcher informed them that this was an academic activity and the research findings would be used in writing a thesis. It was also highlighted that in long term the findings of this research could also be used to improve the participation of women in politics by contributing to existing knowledge on the problems women in politics face and strategies used by women in politics. During this time, the researcher had limited funding but would have wanted to compensate the respondents for their time and to give the informants tokens of appreciation.

Selection of Research Methodology

When seeking the appropriate research methodology, the researcher considered the research aims and objectives, time and financial resources. The case study approach was appropriate in gaining an in-depth understanding of opportunities, facilitators and constraints for women's participation in politics. "Within its unique history, the case is a complex entity operating with a number of contexts, physical, economic, ethical and aesthetic" (Madriz 2000:439). These issues needed to be closely observed in order to come up with meaningful conclusions. Power and authority were also issues that needed to be observed using the case study approach because it is easier to relate the interaction of various institutions and individuals and to identify links between the different actors in one area. The method was also selected because the researcher had limited funding and time and could therefore not cover a large geographical area. The Chinyika communal area was selected because of its accessibility to the researcher. The case study method, however, has a number of advantages. Yin (1997:24) describes a case study as an empirical enquiry that aims to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The case study approach produces in depth knowledge about those who are studied and this knowledge can be used to understand similar phenomena elsewhere.

With reference to the identification of strategies used by women in politics , a number of issues raised by feminist theorists on the appropriate methodology to be used on studies on women were also considered. Mies (1983:102) notes that there is a contradiction between prevalent theories of social science and the political aims of the women's movement. Daly (1983:89) points out that positivist methods of research have contributed to women's oppression because women have not been able to formulate their own questions to meet their experiences. In this study, women's experiences, ideas and needs were considered valid in their own right and the experiences of men, were not the only recognized frame of reference for the researcher. The researcher considered women's ideas, experiences as valid and also took cognizance the women presented and what was the practice. The researcher was living in the community and was thus able to validate some of the ideas presented by women. The women's ideas and experiences helped to identify the opportunities, constraints and strategies used by women in politics. Klein (1983:93) argues that an important factor to be considered when doing research on women is how research will contribute to the ending of women's oppression. He further argues that researchers cannot uncritically use positivist quantitative methods. In this study qualitative methods were used because of the need to understand women's subjective experiences and meanings of participation and marginalization.

Review of secondary data

A review of secondary data was appropriate as this highlighted some issues which the researcher was not able to observe. This method was most useful for identifying the sources of power and authority for women as well as factors facilitating and constraining women's participation in politics. A review of literature was undertaken on women's participation in the public sphere in order to understand the gaps in knowledge to which the study could contribute. Literature review of the various political parties and civil society organisations and market associations was undertaken. This included a study of the constitutions of the political parties, their manifestos and other party records, such as progress reports, minutes of the committees of council, newspapers and other government publications such as census statistics, results of parliamentary elections and the referendum of 2000. Although literature on politics is abundant, for example, the works

of Eirhorn (1993), Tripp (1994), Chimedza (1998) Chiroro (1997), Cheater (1986) and others only concentrates on one of the two political spheres. There is limited literature which makes linkages between formal and non- formal politics. In this thesis, the researcher attempts to analyze the links and similarities and differences between formal and non-formal politics.

Direct observation and problems encountered

Direct observation is fundamental for all research in the social and behavioural sciences (Angrosino and Mays De Perez (2000: 673). Observation rests on the researcher's own direct knowledge and judgement and is therefore a more reliable source of information than surveys and interviews. This method was utilized to observe the sources of power for women in politics, strategies used by women in formal and non-formal politics. The method was also useful in identifying similarities and differences between formal and non formal politics. In this study, even in situations where other research methods were used, direct observation was used to note body language and other gestural cues that give meaning to the words of the person being interviewed and the focus group members. Direct observation was used in community and committee meetings of the various political groups. These helped to identify who has power and authority within the organisation.

The attendance of community meetings and committee meetings was selected because it allowed the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of community decision making processes and enabled the researcher to directly observe the participation of women in these structures. Attendance of meetings made it possible for the researcher to find out the problems and strategies used by women in formal and non-formal politics. Meetings are an important way by which communities engage in decision-making. They are a way of communicating with and informing the community. The power dynamics, ideologies and idioms used in decision-making within the community were exposed at meetings. This was an opportunity to assess and evaluate the contribution of both men and women to formal politics.

However, the researcher was confronted with a number of problems. The attendance of meetings of different political parties resulted in some community members regarding the researcher as a “police officer” recording the community’s activities. Although the villagers were informed of the research some of them thought that the researcher was a government official while others thought that she was a central intelligence officer for the government. These fears were allayed through discussions with the councillor and headman. The observation of meetings resulted in some changes being made in the way the meetings were held. The Livestock Development Committee (LDC) chair went out of his way to solicit the views of women because of my presence on the first day. However, time revealed that women were normally excluded from decision making in the LDC. The researcher was able to gain some trust from both men and women in the community. However as noted by other researchers, the researcher is rarely totally accepted in the community and may sometimes be viewed as a privileged outsider. As an outsider the researcher was also able to ask sensitive questions which would have been difficult for an insider.

Another problem faced by the researcher was that she could not attend all the meetings relevant to the study. Meetings of different groups were sometimes held simultaneously. In political party meetings, at the beginning of the study, the researcher was sometimes alienated from some members of ZANU PF who felt that the researcher was an MDC spy. This problem was resolved by the local political party officials who explained to the members that the researcher was only engaged in academic work and not spying on political parties. This, however, was not totally accepted by some members of the community as they pointed out that the researcher had political views and could use confidential party information for the benefit of the researcher’s party. The researcher explained to them that the study was more concerned with the role and contributions of women in politics rather than partisan politics.

The researcher also attended meetings of the Goromonzi Rural District Council. At first, the researcher attended all the committee meetings during the period of July 2000 and December 2000. This was aimed at getting an understanding of how these committees operated. From January 2001 the researcher attended the committee meetings which had

female councillors. These included the Human Resources Committee, the Planning, Licensing and Development Committee and the Social Services Committee. The researcher used the aims and objectives of the study as a frame of reference for studying all the groups of women. The attendance of meeting was useful in the identification of the sources of power and authority of women in formal politics, the strategies used by women in politics and the problems faced. The meetings also enabled the researcher to analyse the similarities, differences and linkages between formal and non-formal politics. One problem faced with attending meetings was that the dates of the meetings were constantly changed and this made it difficult for the researcher to follow on some meetings. However, the researcher was able to attend a total of 10 meetings. Most committees were meant to meet once in three months, but most of the committees were meeting at least twice a month because there were some budgetary discussions going on during the time of research.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviewing was selected because it allowed the researcher to find out the different perceptions and meanings of participating in local political processes. Interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but interactions between two or more people leading to negotiated and contextually based results. The essence of the unstructured interview is the establishment of face to face relations with the respondent and the desire to understand and to explain phenomena (Fontana and Frey 2000:654). Drawing from the information gathered from attendance of meetings and observations during the reconnaissance field trip, the researcher developed an in-depth interview guide for formal and non formal politics and non- participating women. The in-depth interviews were useful in identifying the strategies used by women, constraints faced in formal and non formal politics. An attempt was made to carry out interviews in all the villages of Chimoyo VIDCO and Chatibuka VIDCO and community leaders were interviewed.

One problem encountered by the researcher during fieldwork was the phenomenon of faking. Klein (1983:91) notes that faking is an important factor that has been ignored so far in most research on both men and women. Faking is giving a socially desirable

response rather than being honest and happens consciously and unconsciously. This may be due to the fact that faking is necessary for psychological survival for many women. Whereas traditional research tries to eliminate faking by skillfully asking questions, Klein (1983:91) argues that those doing research on women should acknowledge and incorporate faking into their research methodology. When asking about political affiliation for women and men in political parties, for example, women faked non-participation and presented an apolitical stance. This was a survival strategy since belonging to the opposition could result in one being subjected to political violence. Women were not sure about how information would be used, that is, whether it would be used for their benefit or against them. This problem was largely solved when the researcher approached the leaders to explain the research objectives to the members of the community. The interviews were held at the respondents's homes using an interview guide. The interviews were held for a period of one hour. Since the researcher was also in the community, interviews schedules were discussed with respondents who informed the researcher on when they would be available.

Focus group discussions

The researcher used focus group discussions to ascertain the opportunities, constraints and problems faced by women in community politics. Focus group discussions offered a way of listening to multi-vocal conversations on topics that are relevant to understanding women's lives. Focus groups encourage researchers to listen to the voices of those who have been subjugated, they also represent a methodology that is consistent with the particularities and every day experiences of women. The method helped the researcher to understand the different experiences of women in MDC, ZANU PF and in the Nemhara savings union. Focus groups also have a transformative effect of collective oral history because people speak, and speaking empowers as it enables people to verbalise their position. The problem with this method was that people were willing to discuss issues on which there was community consensus and were therefore presenting a united front to the researcher. The problem was overcome when the researcher followed up the discussions with personal interviews. Personal interviews were able to reveal the conflicts within the various organisations based on ethnicity, party affiliation and age differences.

Limitations of the study

The issues covered by the researcher were complex and the researcher could not attend and observe everything that was relevant to the study because of time and financial constraints. The case of Goromonzi may be specific to the district and Mashonaland East Province. However, the insights derived from this case study are important for the general understanding of formal and non-formal politics in Zimbabwe.

Contents of the following chapters

Chapter two deals with the participation of women in party politics that is women's participation in the MDC and ZANU PF structures. The chapter looks at the facilitators, constraints and problems faced by women in politics and the strategies employed to deal with these problems. Chapter three discusses the participation of women in local government structures that is VIDCOs and the WADCO and chapter four examines the Rural District Council. Chapter five discusses the participation of women in civil society, that is, the Chinyika Farmers Group, the Chinyika Livestock Development Group, the Agriculture Dairy Project and the Goromonzi Women's Ratepayers Association. In chapter six, the author discusses the political aspects of the marketing activities undertaken in Goromonzi. Chapter seven synthesizes the findings of the research, that is, it identifies the similarities and differences of the various political structures and the linkages between the formal and non- formal spheres. It also suggests recommendations for improvements which can be made with respect to women's participation in formal and non- formal politics.

Chapter 2: *Formal politics: Women's participation in political parties*

Introduction

This chapter investigates women's participation in formal politics. The two main political parties in Goromonzi district were the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Both parties included in their manifestos an emancipatory agenda for women. In practice however, women's participation has been limited to the women's wings with few women holding positions of power and authority within the main wings. Significant differences existed in terms of the political community and the political elite in the two parties. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, both parties utilized violence as a political strategy. In this chapter, I will argue that women's political participation and affiliation is determined by perceived benefits to be gained from participation. This was mainly as a form of reprisal since the MDC was mostly at the receiving end of violence from ZANU PF. The youths from MDC were targeting approached the homesteads of members of some of the staunch ZANU PF members and sang intimidation songs during the night. At the same time some of the market women who were perceived to be MDC at the market had their market tables attacked for their suspected participation in MDC activities. The study revealed that patterns of violence were determined by one's perceived powers and position within the political party. The field work on the political parties was undertaken between July 2000 and August 2001..

ZANU PF in Goromonzi district

In order to understand women's participation in politics in Goromonzi district, one needs to first examine the history of Zimbabwean politics in general and of Goromonzi district in particular. The early years of independence were characterized by a government which had a broad basis of legitimacy, founded on the legacy of the liberation struggle. The government also had a distinctive coercive strain which sought to enforce unity and compliance, where this was not immediately forthcoming. In political terms, this meant the introduction of political structures, which marginalized dissenting voices. The ruling

party ZANU PF put in place legislative reforms such as Electoral Act (No 7 of 1990) and the Political Parties Finance Act (No 4 of 1992). These measures enabled the president of ZANU PF to appoint 12 non-constituent Members of Parliament (MP) and 8 provincial governors who became ex-officio MPs. In addition, 10 chiefs were appointed under the Traditional and Headman Act (No 29 of 1982). The main political players on the Zimbabwe scene included ZANU PF and PF ZAPU.

The parties had an ethnic character. According to Makumbe and Nkiwane (1995) the Zimbabwean political terrain was characterised by permanent majorities (Shona) and permanent minorities (Ndebele). However, from 1987 when a unity accord was signed between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU - Zimbabwe became a de facto one party state, with a functional, nominal multi-party system. Women's participation in these parties was mostly through the women's wing. Makumbe and Compagnon (2000) note that by the late 1980s, the government of Zimbabwe came under increasing pressure from the autonomous trade union movement, a radical student movement and dissenting members of the ruling party who were asserting their political independence. In the 1990s general elections, new parties came into being which included, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) and the Forum Party among others. A new phenomenon also developed of candidates who contested in elections as independents. A few women participated as independent candidates mostly in protest against political hegemony. With the exception of a few women who participated in these parties as leaders, women remained at the margins of politics. These parties/ independents failed to capture the electorate, which opted to stop voting. This voter apathy could be attributed to the absence of a credible opposition. The UANC under the leadership of Bishop Abel Muzorewa was perpetually hamstrung by the fact that Muzorewa was the Prime Minister of the unrecognised Zimbabwe-Rhodesia government. Muzorewa was seen as a puppet leader of the white minority regime. However, Ranger (1995) notes that the UANC depended largely on the American Methodist Women's Organisation and women formed the majority of local assistants and adherents of guerrillas especially young unmarried women.

In ZANU (Ndonga), the president Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole was closely associated with Zimbabwe – Rhodesia and this was worsened by his self – imposed exile in the

1980's in the United States of America. ZUM gained popularity because it aspired to a national agenda and argued against the establishment of the one party state. The leader Edgar Tekere had credible credentials as the former secretary general of ZANU PF. However, the leader was seen to have personalized the party and his agenda was seen to be too fanciful rather than practical. The Democratic Party (DP), led by Magoche included in its constituents middle class people who questioned Tekere's personalization of the party. The aims and objectives of the DP appealed to the intelligentsia and the urban middle class category, which, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was rendering to extinct. This party could not acquire credibility in eyes of rural people. The mobilization strategy was therefore misplaced since most of the people in Zimbabwe live in the rural areas. The Movement for Popular Democracy (MPD) led by Austin Chakaodza largely appealed to the academia. It was aimed mostly at opposing International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies for Zimbabwe. It failed to take this appeal to the general population and concentrated on the academia. The assumption was that once the liberalist principles were adopted these would also improve the position of women in both economic and political spheres. The Forum Party, under the leadership of Enock Dumbutshena proposed to end government monopolies, to reduce government spending and to undertake land redistribution programme and gender equality. It received support from both the black and white communities. However, because of its multi-racial component the Forum was labeled the bearer of white interests and thus did not get much credibility from the people.

Goromonzi district in Mashonaland East province existed as a 'one party' district with little prospects for the opposition. In 1995 elections during the primary elections, only branch chairpersons could vote. Herbert Murerwa, the ZANU PF representative was elected by 891 voters (2% of the total registered voters while there were 48 130 registered voters. The combination of low participation in the primaries and the election of members of parliament unopposed meant that a significant section of the electorate was excluded from the electoral process or excluded themselves from the process the voters were disenfranchised by the lack of opposition in the area, that is, they could not exercise the right to vote although they had registered. Makumbe & Compagnon (2000:

134) argue that if grassroots members had been allowed to vote in the primaries, then the results of the elections would have been more reflective of the peoples' interests. However, in the absence of any opposition challenge in the constituency support for the ruling party could not be assumed as the leaders were imposed from the top. The ZANU PF candidate became an MP on the basis of participation in the electoral process of less than 2% of the electorate.

By 2000, some political opposition parties had acquired credibility in the eyes of the electorate. This is illustrated by the 2000 election results in table 2.1 below. This could be attributed to the increasing failure of the ruling party to deliver the promised goods. The rural people were also experiencing hardships due to the Economic Structural Adjustment Policies (ESAP). The MDC acquired credibility because of its focus on economic restructuring.

Table 2.1: *Goromonzi district, June 2000 parliamentary election results*

Political party	No of voters	% of electorate
ZANU (PF)	14 459	56.99
MDC	9 498	37.40
United Parties	319	1.26
Independent Candidate	1 102	4.34
Total	25 378	100

Source : Makumbe and Compagnon: 2000:134

Table 2.1 shows that there was significant opposition to the ruling party with 43% of the votes having been cast for the opposition. These included MDC with (37.40%, an independent candidate pooled 4.34% of the vote and United Parties had 1.26% of the vote. The increasingly harsh economic environment contributed to increases in opposition as people sought for alternatives to change their lives. In Zimbabwe, civil

society activities, particularly, the rewriting of the constitution provided the opportunity for the formation of an unprecedented strong opposition movement. Alliances were formed between the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA). This culminated in the formation of labour-based political party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This party was able to penetrate Goromonzi district and captured 37.40% of the votes. The authoritarian legacy of nationalism enabled ZANU PF to take advantage of an underdeveloped civil society by claiming that ZANU PF was the sole representative of the people. Moyo (1992:123) argues that as a result of the authoritarian legacy of nationalism, ZANU PF thwarted the efforts of civil society organisations. There is an accumulating tendency in the nature of nationalist movements, that the ideological good of national unity overrides notions of pluralism and associational autonomy. ZANU PF constrained the autonomous growth of various organizational structures in the name of a unified, more centrally controlled national structure.

The structure of ZANU PF

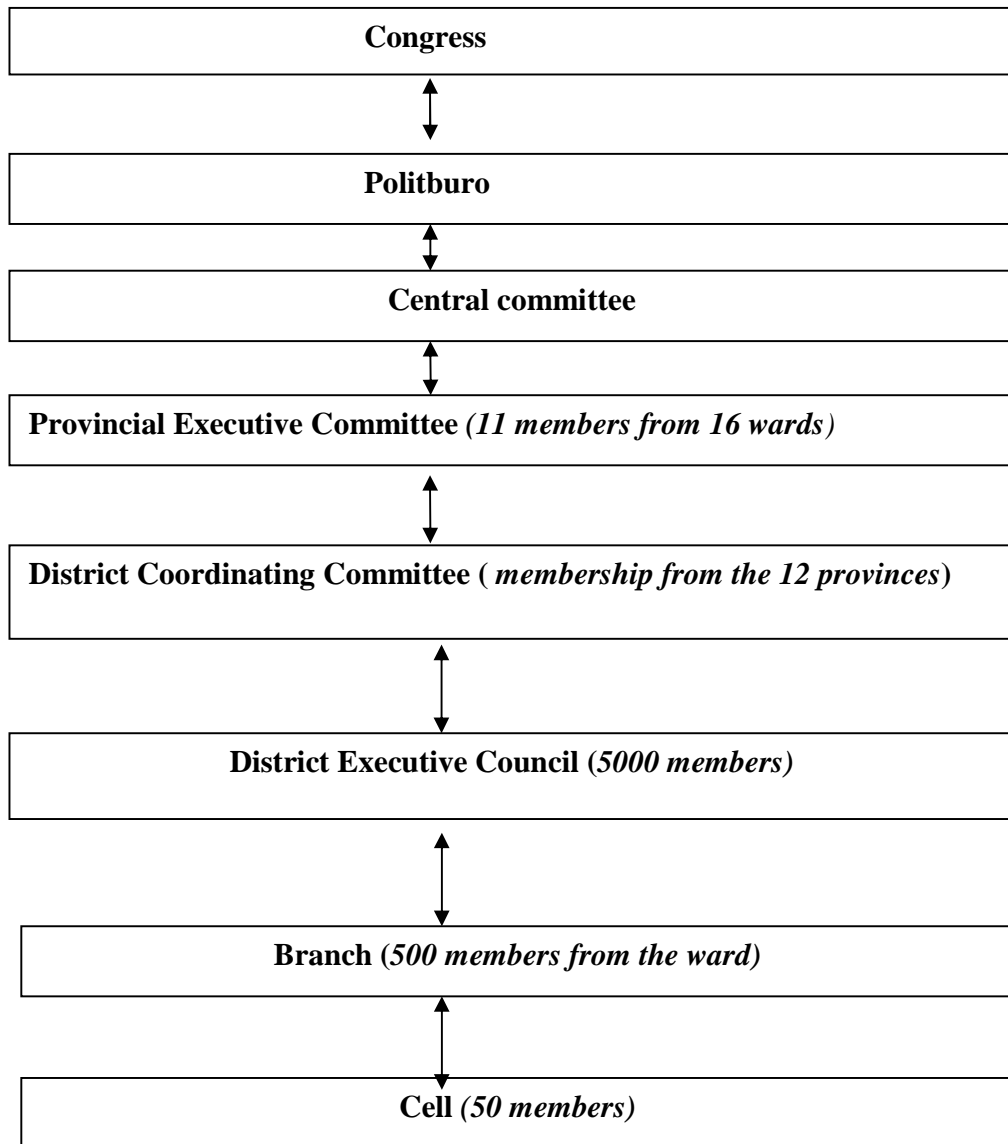
ZANU PF has three wings, which are the main wing, the youth wing and the women's wing. The lowest level of ZANU PF is the cell followed by the branch. Above the branch is the district, which is followed by the district co-ordinating committee and then the provincial committee which reports to the central committee. The highest authority in ZANU PF is the politburo (*see fig 2.1*). At each level, the three main wings are maintained and at each level there is a bureaucratic structure, involving the chairpersons, treasurer, secretary and committee members. Each wing has various departments, which include administration, finance, commissariat, and culture, security, external affairs, publicity and information, production and labour, transport, economic affairs, legal affairs, women's rights and health and child welfare (ZANU PF Manifesto 1999). The main wing's aim is to develop policy and it is the most important as the other two wings are seen as auxiliary forces whose main duties include providing support to the main wing. The women's league's role is the education and mobilization of women. It also develops and formulates policies for the development of women and children in political, social, economic, and scientific and technological fields. In ZANU PF as in many other

political parties elsewhere in Africa, women are not excluded from participation, but their participation is contained in separate organisations, whose purpose is defined by the hegemonic male dominated main group.

Women's participation in ZANU PF in Goromonzi district

The main structure which women use in ZANU PF is the women's league. The women's league has its hierarchy of power and authority running the various departments at different levels of the party. The league in a sense forms a femocracy (Joga 1996:72). A femocracy is a separate feminine structure, running parallel to the patriarchal oligarchy upon which it relies for its authority and which it supports (Joga 1996:72). In this case the patriarchal oligarchy can be seen as the ZANU PF male dominated main wing, while the separate feminine structure consists of those women in ZANU PF who run the women's league. The women's league may be viewed from a pluralist perspective as merely an interest group in a gendered public domain seeking to advance women's own interests. The women's wing is juxtaposed to the main wing showing that an important factor constraining women's participation in formal politics is the division of labour between women and men and the allocation of sexually divided responsibilities within the political domain (Crehan: 1997:27). In the political domain for instance, the main wing is the main decision making body for all other structures while the women's wing's mandate is decision making in issues related to women.

Figure 2.1 Structure of ZANU PF



In Goromonzi district, the women's wing of ZANU PF was a highly developed structure where women acquired significant power in terms of establishing regular channels of access to the state. Goromonzi is a peri-urban area, with most of the males migrating to Harare for employment. This has created space for women to participate in community politics and acquire significant power and authority. Contrary to Crehan's (1997:65) observation in Zambia that the existence of a women's wing meant that women could speak on specific issues pertaining to women, while men spoke for the community, women in Goromonzi district speak on community issues and concerns. This was particularly so in their encounters with high ranking party officials. Although women deferred to male authority in party affairs the men were less active than women. There were instances during meetings where I observed that men spoke less fluently than women. In some meetings men who had been nominated by women to speak, as a sign of deference, rejected this privilege by asking women to go ahead and speak. In instances where the men spoke, they often spoke less fluently and less frequently than women. It is possible that the fact that the men spoke less was also a sign of their power. However, they seemed to lack the skill to captivate the audience, which most of the women had. This often involved the use of riddles, proverbs and an awareness of the mood of the people. In non-formal communication such as gossip, some women even said that some of the men who had leadership positions were not counted but did not even know it. For instance, the district authorities were by passed in discussions on the Chinyika Women's Savings Union. Women skillfully maintained public deference to male authority while at the same time, they negotiated their interests with high ranking officials without the help of these male district authorities.

Before the formation of the MDC, the political community of ZANU PF constituted of 'everyone' in Goromonzi district. This was a one party district and everyone was entitled to join the savings union. According to interviews with members of this union, the Member of Parliament for Goromonzi district donated 10 000 Zimbabwean dollars in 2000. This money was given to women as a way of thanking them for supporting ZANU PF. However, the women's league leaders decided that the money should not be given to women, but rather that, it should be given to them as a loan with a low interest of 10%. In

addition, women intending to borrow money had to pay a joining fee of 100 Zimbabwe dollars, which would help them to form the union. The club was made up of 102 members. The case of Chinyika women's savings club reveals interesting issues which are discussed below about the political elite in ZANU PF politics.

As mentioned earlier, when the savings union was formed, party membership was not a pre-requisite for joining the union. However, many women viewed this union as a ZANU PF 'thing'. Middle-aged women whose average age range was between 40 and 45 years dominated the club. During interviews with non-participating women, young women argued that joining such a club was only for older people. Some cited exploitation of young women in the projects. Young women who had participated in the club complained that they only received their share after the older women had received their share. Younger women feared open confrontation with older women since they were suspected of having powers to bewitch others. Witchcraft beliefs were therefore used as a source of social control.

For those who joined the savings union, reasons for joining included the stated attempt to improve one's life. However, a major attraction of this project was that it seemed to provide access to power beyond the local community. Women who had joined the club could visit the party office and talk to political party heavyweights, particularly the Member of Parliament. According to the women who had joined the club, the money to be borrowed was too little and could not be used for viable income generating projects. The amount to be borrowed was not to exceed five hundred dollars and was to be repaid at the end of each month. The one-month period within which the money was to be repaid was also considered to be too short. Women who joined the club therefore were women who wanted to be in touch with heavyweight politicians and to keep up to date information about political developments in the district.

The political elite, that is, those entitled to compete for titles, honors and power at the district level consisted of the chairpersons, secretaries, treasurers and committee members. All of them had been educated up to standard six, while the rank and file members had only done standard two. These older women were astute members of

ZANU PF. They also included one woman who was also the chair of the club. In analysing women's participation in politics, one should not overlook the vested interest of the elite who always dominate official women's organisations and clubs who are anxious to retain their officially sanctioned role as women's representatives.

In Chinyika Women's Savings Club, the reason why a certain group of women decided to lend rather than merely redistribute the money, was that if women were merely given the money there would be no opportunity to mobilize and educate women and to strengthen the party. According to some women, the female political leadership used the discourse of strengthening the party to create some political space for themselves as leaders. The Member of Parliament was informed of the need to strengthen the party through women who could gather occasionally and therefore create an opportunity for mobilization of the women in the party. The main characteristics of the political elite includes an average age range between thirty seven and fifty five years, and a history of participation in the state's various post independence projects and cooperatives. The next section discusses the participation of women in the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change.

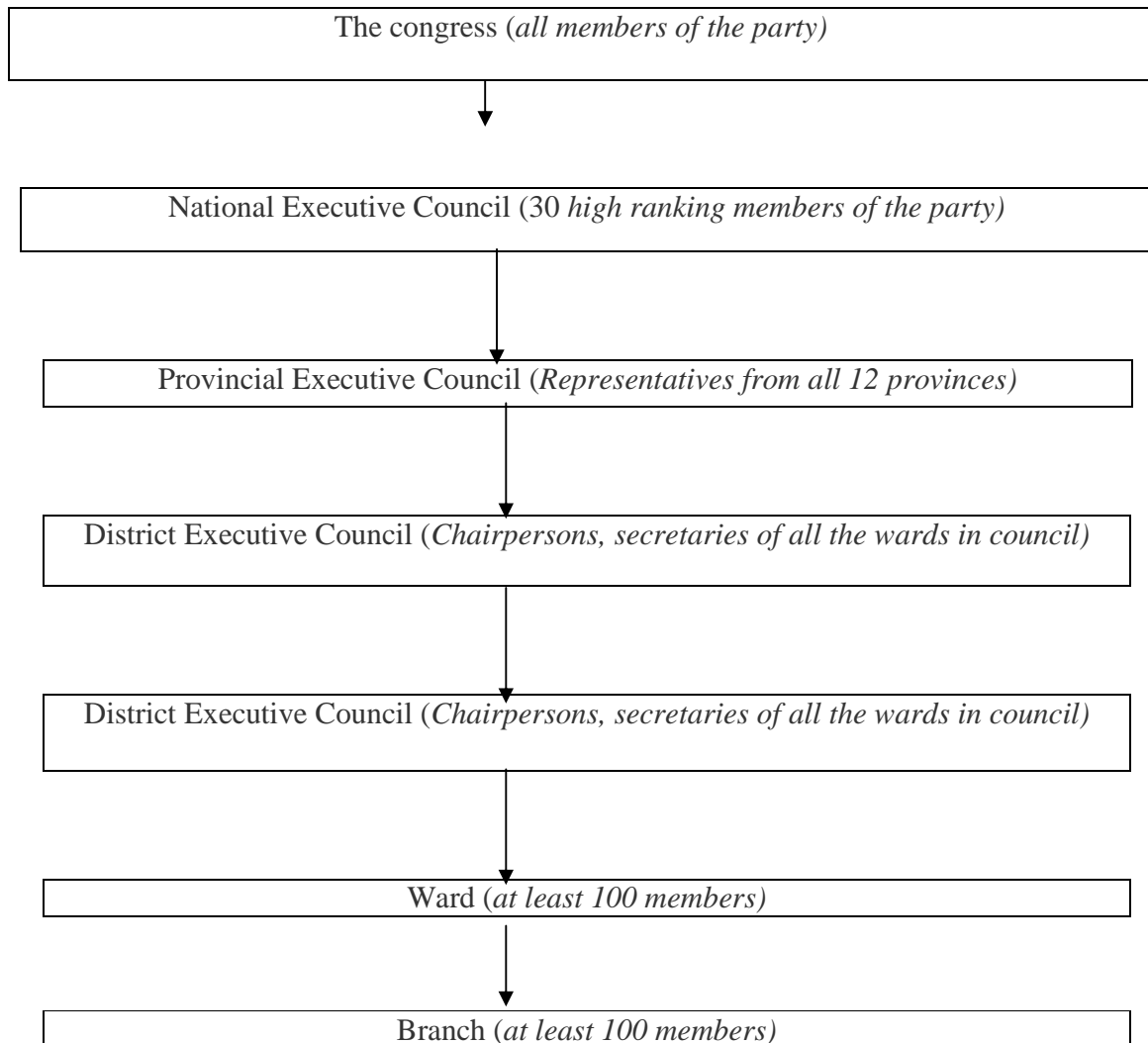
Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Goromonzi

It is necessary to compare the participation of women in the opposition political structures at the district. The MDC is structured in a slightly different way from that of ZANU PF. The lowest unit in the MDC is the branch and it comprised of at least 100 people. However, the members of branches did not exceed five hundred in one ward. At each level of the party, there was a women's and youth assembly which runs parallel to the main wing and which has a separate bureaucratic structure. Above the branch, was the ward, which comprised of at least five hundred members. The next level is the district, which is constituted according to the administrative boundaries. The District Executive Council is made up of all members residing in a certain district. The next level in the MDC is the Provincial Executive Council, which is made up of representatives from the twelve provinces, and this is followed by the National Executive Council which is made

up of 30 members. The council is made up of the high-ranking members of the party. The congress is the most supreme body is made up all members of the party.

The structure of the MDC

Fig. 2.2 : Structure of MDC



According to the MDC constitution (Articles 5.9.2), the functions of an Assembly for Women is to mobilize women to join the party and to ensure that women are fully involved in all party activities and to formulate and carry out training programs for women. The constitution also stipulates that there shall be an assembly for women in

each branch, ward, district and province. In the MDC, as in ZANU PF, there exists a separate women's wing which runs parallel to the main wing and which plays an auxiliary role.

As mentioned earlier, in the post independence period credible opposition to ZANU PF started with the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), independent candidates, and Forum Party all of which challenged the move towards a *de jure* one party state. However, none of these were perceived as a serious threat to the ruling party. The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change in 1999 was in the political history of Zimbabwe, the dawn of a new era. The president of ZANU PF described the MDC as a mere "ramshackle political party" which was good for democratic governance espoused by the International Monetary Fund but which did not pose a serious threat to the ruling party. As late as 1998, Moyo (1993:100) was of the opinion that, effective opposition to ZANU PF would come from within those marginalised elements in ZANU PF who for some reason felt alienated from mainstream politics in ZANU PF. In some respects therefore, the MDC was a "surprise party". Civil society, particularly the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) played an important role, first in mobilizing people for stay-aways and demonstrating against high food prices and secondly, against the adoption of the government led constitution. The civil society organisations in Zimbabwe laid the foundation for the regrouping of the fragmented opposition by targeting specific constitutional provisions.

In Goromonzi district, the MDC as a new party was seeking allies and was under the threat of political marginalization. It was much more receptive to feminist arguments and demands at an ideological level. In its manifesto (1999), the MDC recognized equality of opportunity and treatment of all peoples and the requirement for affirmative action in the building of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. In its constitution, it aims to eradicate all forms of discrimination including that based on gender, sex, tribe, place of origin and religion [MDC manifesto, 1999 (articles 3.3 (H) (k): page 9)]. The MDC also aims to ensure equal representation of women in public office within the party.

As pointed out by Randall and Waylen (1998:27) the state and civil society are both complex terrains, which are structured and oppressive, while at the same time providing spaces for struggle and negotiation. The MDC, like ZANU PF has a separate women's wing and only one woman in the District Executive Council main wing (DEC). At the same time, ideologies espoused by civil society such as the principles of non-discrimination, change, democracy enable women to make claims for representation in the party. Women in the MDC Executive Council had not yet created sufficient space for themselves in politics. According to the district chairman, women were incorporated into the MDC mainly because of the realization that the MDC could not win elections without women. The equality professed by the MDC is mere rhetoric as evidenced by the under representation of women in the main wing.

Significant differences exist in terms of the political community in Goromonzi. Young people and other previously marginalized groups within ZANU PF now constitute the bulk of the MDC membership. ZANU PF's land occupations alienated the ruling party from the white community in Goromonzi district. Commercial farms surround Chinyika Communal Land. The MDC continues to cultivate a relationship of mutual dependence between its members and white commercial farmers. Many economic relationships had been created between villagers and the surrounding white commercial farmers. Some white commercial farmers ploughed the land for the MDC villagers in Chinyika at a lower price than the District Development Fund (DDF). Some villagers had economic relations with farm workers, villagers sold clothes, vegetables, freezits to the workers and land occupation by the ZANU PF resulted in significant losses for the villagers who were engaged in these income-generating projects, the majority of whom were women. Land occupations resulted in farm owners deserting their farms. The workers went for months without pay and therefore the incomes of the villagers were negatively affected. The disruption of trade between white farmers, farm workers and villagers therefore increased the MDC's political community.

The MDC's political elite has different characteristics from those of ZANU PF in terms of age, education and composition. As pointed out earlier, the MDC was the political child of ZCTU and the NCA alliances. These organisations are labour and urban-based

movements. Women who constitute the bulk of the population in the rural areas were at a disadvantage in gaining information about the party. Women in Chinyika in particular, were not members of the ZCTU and most of them had not been active members of ZANU PF because of its policies, which they saw as benefiting certain groups of women. The wife of the district chairman of the MDC, for instance, pointed out that she only knew about the existence of the party after her husband visited the party's office in Harare. The only group of women who had the information about this new party were those who interacted with men in the party. On the other hand, the district chairman argued that women were under-represented in the District Executive Committee (DEC) because they did not want to be involved in politics at early stages in the formation of the party. He added that they only joined later and had no history with the party. The chairman also argued that commercial sex workers took a very active part in the campaigning period. They attended political rallies and were able to sleep at the district chairperson's homestead for overnight political meetings. However, the researcher noted that they were disregarded in the party when it came to power positions as they were seen as merely pursuing 'fun'. The position of young women as sex workers was used to discredit them of any legitimate claims to leadership. Some of them pointed out that although they had worked hard, there was only one woman leader who was also the wife of the chairman. She held the position of secretary in the DEC. A husband's position can be an opportunity for a woman to enter into mainstream political parties. The MDC secretary was elected during the District Executive Council meeting.

The secretary reported that since entering politics she was now able to relate well with a diversity of people and was more articulate in sharing her views through discussion and debate no matter what the circumstances. The secretary seemed to have been empowered at both the personal and community levels. Empowerment here is used to mean an individual being able to develop a sense of confidence and ability, engaging in political structures and collective activity. Formal political parties often empower certain groups of women under the context of relationships that are severely disempowering to other women. These might be women with the ability to lead, but who do not have relationships with powerful men. Joga's (1986) observation in Nigeria reveals that

women's visibility in the Nigerian Army Officers Wives Association depended on the women's relationships with senior men not on the competence of their ideas. This, he argues, had the effect of entrenching male authority over women in the context of relationships of dependence that militate against the development of women's autonomy. Similarly, the MDC secretary whose position was based on her husband's position was detrimental to the party's professed aim of attaining gender equality. At the same time, the husband's position also constraints the woman who thinks it is unacceptable to take higher positions than their husbands. The secretary reported in an interview that she would not accept a post at a higher level than that of her husband as this would be inconsistent with her belief that men are the leaders and women their helpers.

“kuwana chigaro chepamusoro ndizvo zvinoita kuti vakadzi vatonge varume” meaning when women get higher posts than their husbands it causes women to dominate men.

Like ZANU PF, the MDC promised to pursue economic development to meet the needs of the people. This was to be achieved through the introduction of income generating projects. In Chinyika, a project was undertaken with the help of white commercial farmers who provided paprika seedlings. The farmers had also promised to provide the villagers with technical knowledge on how to successfully grow the paprika. Villagers were expected to form groups and approach the chairperson to be given seeds. Women were expected to form groups made up of five people. A wellwisher would also donate the land for the group. As with Chinyika, Women's Savings Club of ZANU PF, there was limited transparency in the manner in which the project was being carried out with some women alleging discrimination. According to the chairman of the project, women were fewer in the project because they feared hard work and preferred easy projects with quick returns, such as, soap making. The claim was inconsistent with the women's complaints that only those at the top were benefiting from the project.

For a number of women, political participation in the 2000 elections resulted in a sense of empowerment. Most of the younger women from the MDC were exercising the right to vote for the first time. Some of the older women who had moved from ZANU PF were

excited by their perceived contribution to change. Their motivation was mainly to change the economic situation. Most hoped that the economic situation would change if the government changed and this would result in improved standards of living including affordability and availability of basic goods and services

Comparisons of women's participation in MDC and ZANU PF

In terms of leadership at the district level, both MDC and ZANU PF had only one woman in the (DEC). The MDC woman was twenty six years old and on the other hand the ZANU PF woman was fifty one and widowed. The amount of power that these women had was also different. Power here is defined to mean the ability to get one's wishes and preferences upheld in the party. The MDC woman had power but her husband could override her decisions in her view, it would not be proper for women to be above their husbands hence the need for deference to her husband. The ZANU PF representative pointed out that women in formal politics often experience discrimination because men usually try to monopolize important areas of travel and especially where there was money. Arguments about harsh environments considered to be unfitting for women were used to discourage women from taking part. However, in situations where there was no money the men would say that women were also free to go. In her opinion, being the only woman in the District committee means that she has to be constantly fighting to acquire legitimacy in the area. The level of education in the two parties was affected by the fact that ZANU PF's women's league was composed of middle aged women, as its political community. Most of the ZANU PF members had reached standard four, and only one had reached form two through correspondence. None of the women had done "Ordinary" level. This could be attributed to colonial policies and patriarchal attitudes, which discriminated against women in the past. Younger women who composed the bulk of the MDC membership had reached "Ordinary" level, mostly because of post-independence policies which encouraged education for women in both formal and non-formal institutions.

With regard to similarities, in both political parties, women's participation in the main wing is limited with only one woman in the district party structures of both parties. As

explained by Cheater (1986:170) in the party structure mature men have bonded themselves into restrictive decision making category within party organs creating separate women's leagues and youth leagues. These bodies probably account for majority of the party membership but they are usually represented in the central executive by a small minority of their total members. Their separate constitutions legitimate their underrepresentation by restricting their fields of competence to matters specifically affecting women or youth as social categories in the wider society. The MDC and ZANU PF have women's wings which operate alongside the main wing. Women played an active part in both ZANU PF and MDC but their contributions were usually assigned less value than that of men. For instance women in ZANU PF felt that they were not adequately rewarded for their participation in land invasions, while similarly in MDC women who were active participants in politics were viewed as undeserving of authoritative positions. In both political parties women also performed the traditional gender roles of cooking, singing and providing support to some males. The women however were not merely passive recipients of male instruction and activity; they were active agents in resisting male domination. They were responsible for transacting information, distribution of party pamphlets and regalia and recruiting new members.

Violence as a political strategy

Violence has been a common feature of national elections in Zimbabwe since the attainment of national independence in 1980. McKendrick and Hoffman (1990:3) define violence as the use of force to harm, injure or abuse others. In inter-group situations, violence ultimately means confrontation between individuals, but the individuals behave violently because of their group affiliation rather than because of some inter personal differences. Makumbe and Nkiwane (1995:15) note that inter and intra party factional fighting characterized the liberation movement which to this day pervades Zimbabwean politics. Political violence, particularly from the ruling party ZANU PF against those in the opposition MDC and other opposition political parties was widespread during the time of the study. The study revealed that political violence has a gendered pattern. MDC youths targeted ZANU PF women for violence, on the other hand ZANU PF women and youths targeted MDC males. These patterns could be attributed to the fact that these were

the powerful arms of main wings. Women in ZANU PF were important campaigning agents for the party. This meant they were a threat to the MDC. The most powerful arm of the main wing in the MDC was the youth wing, here the youths comprised of young men and women who were the important campaign agents for the MDC. It should be noted that this groups also constituted the bulk of the party's membership respectively. At grass roots level, all the men are less visible in ZANU PF except in the high echelons of power. In MDC older men, young women and older women are also less visible than the youth. This could be attributed to ideological principles of the two parties. ZANU PF is seen as a rural party and most women reside in the rural areas. MDC is seen as an urban and labour-based movement. It is youth who aspire to work who feel alienated by ZANU PF's land based approach to economic problems.

The use of dance and song were utilized by MDC youths to discredit, harass and intimidate ZANU PF women. Some women in Zimbabwe have been known for their unwavering support for President Mugabe. They have acquired a space in politics where they increase their visibility through dance before the president and receive money from the watching guests, if they perform well the money is increased. MDC youths accused the women of being ignorant and being used by the president. The women's patriotism is reflected in their dress, which has President Mugabe's head rather than the party symbol. Perhaps this was why they were targeted for violence by the MDC youth. Some MDC youth songs included phrases that pointed to the fact that women in ZANU PF had destroyed Zimbabwe "*tuchembere tweZANU twaparadza musha*" meaning (the little old women in ZANU PF have destroyed the home or Zimbabwe). In some instances the MDC youths moving in groups would approach the homestead of the staunch ZANU PF women during the night and sing these derogatory songs about ZANU PF as a way of intimidating the women. Their immediate response would be stay inside their homes until the youths left their homestead.

Moreover, within ZANU PF, more women than men participated in land invasions because the men were said to be in formal employment and they could not leave work to go and invade farms. As pointed out earlier, Zimbabwean women fought alongside men in the struggle and they also participated in land invasions which were seen as an

extension of the war “*kudzokera musango*” (going back to the bush). Surrounding commercial farms were occupied by women during the day and they returned to their homes in the evening. An attempt was made to revive the spirit of fighting and styles of living which occurred during the liberation struggle. However, women felt used and complained that they had jeopardised their marriages during the campaign by coming back in the evening “*taiita seticharambwa nevarume tichidzoka kumba pakati peusiku tozongopihwa \$50 chete*” (Our husbands almost divorced us because we came back late in the night only to be paid \$50). Women also complained that those in power were using them despite their immense contribution to the party. One woman said, “we gave them access to riches but now they have forgotten us.”

MDC and ZANU PF politics in Chinyika women’s savings union

When the MDC began to exert its influence in Goromonzi, there was some conflict between women who now belonged to MDC and those who belonged to ZANU PF. There were instances of confusion when some women who had positions of power in ZANU PF were also active in MDC. For the rank and file members it was easy to pull out from ZANU PF to MDC by merely stopping to attend the meetings. Most of the women in the MDC said that ZANU PF people still thought they were still on their side. They simply stopped going to meetings, giving excuses of too much work, ill health and funeral attendance obligations. Those who had high-ranking positions in ZANU PF could however not easily change to another party. The district female vice chairman of the main wing was accused of attending MDC meetings and her children were accused of wearing MDC T-shirts. She however, denied and argued that her position was the most vulnerable as she and one other woman were the only ZANU PF supporters in her village (that is, Tafirenyika). During the meetings the woman claimed that those who had attended MDC meetings during the campaigning period could not expect to borrow money from the union. This had the effect of silencing those who were pointing fingers at her.

According to Lukes (1998) some people have the power to stop certain issues from being discussed. Some women in power therefore attempted to limit access to resources by younger women claiming that those who were MDC members would not get

anything. Although women complained that they were not adequately remunerated for their hard work in ZANU PF they had more gains than would meet the eye. Women were also using patrons because they expected to be paid for sloganeering. The women's league had control over food, that is, they cooked and distributed food in gatherings of the party. This included celebrations after the general elections, Heroes' day, Independence days and national congress meetings. Women selected to cook were usually the high-ranking members at the district level. These had control over the food resources in the party. They could ask for more food, arrange and organize the distribution of food. According to the cooks, people must be seen to eat at the same time food is reserved by the cooks to take home as usually there is no remuneration for cooking. Politicians often provide opportunities for corrupt practices; however, the looting if done publicly is often regretted by other members of the party, particularly the males. Thus looting is usually done discreetly.

Women's tradition of kneeling before important officials with gourds of water on their heads, has been described as a tradition that subordinates women. However, for most women in Chinyika, it is actually an honour to present this. On the other hand an incentive was the money which was given to women when they presented this water.. As in many contexts contact with powerful people is highly treasured as this might result in some benefits in the future. This was observed in some of the political meetings which the researcher attended in Goromonzi.

Women may respond to exclusion and corrupt practices by disengaging from party sponsored projects and forming small informal unions which they perceive to be more efficient. Some women who had joined the Chinyika Women's Savings Club decided to form their own union in late 2000. These were from Nemhara village. This was in protest against the lack of transparency in the Chinyika Savings Club. This was a village-based union made up of 12 women from the marginalized groups within Chinyika. According to the chair of this group, these women were marginalized in development projects because of their ethnicity making it easier for them to become members of the MDC. They were *vauyi* (outsiders) most of whom were immigrants from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. The women made contributions to start the project. The

resources gained from these were then circulated among the women. They made contributions of Z\$20 and thus had a capital of \$240 which was borrowed among the membership. These groups were allocated land which they claimed was infertile. Most of them complained that the soil was salty. Their farming activities were therefore unsuccessful. Moreover, they were discriminated against when the government provided aid in the form of fertilizer or seeds to the community. They pointed out that when resources came to the community they were the last to know. They said that by the time they got information the resources would have run out. They accused the village heads and VIDCO authorities of practising favoritism in the community.

The formation of a separate union was meant to curb the problem of access to finance. Women from these groups pointed out that it seemed as if they would never receive their share in the Chinyika Savings Union as only members of the Chinyika original inhabitants were the first to receive money. They felt that they could not question the distribution of resources since they were outsiders (*vauyi*). The Nemhara Savings Union was an important act of withdrawal from ZANU PF initiated projects. The ZANU PF savings union was said to be characterized by secrecy, for instance only women who had high ranking positions seemed to know what was going on in the savings union. The other members were in the dark and became tired of going to the party offices and being told that some people were not returning the money. The formation of the Nemhara Savings Union was therefore a reaction to both marginalisation and secrecy.

Conclusion

Formal politics offers women an opportunity to gain access to resources, however, its main limitation is that women are often excluded from positions of authority. Some women have utilized their personal relationships with powerful men to get access to political positions. There are different ways by which women enter into politics. In the MDC, women's participation has been limited by lack of information while in ZANU PF women's participation has been facilitated by party ideology and party sponsored projects. The political elite and political community in ZANU PF are middle aged while in MDC younger women dominate. There also exists a group of women in ZANU PF

who have monopolised power, whose vested interest is to retain their officially sanctioned role as women's representatives. Some women have dis-engaged in formal politics and have started their own unions, for example, the Nemhara savings union.

The disillusionment with party sponsored has created parallel unions formed to achieve the same objectives as party sponsored. Most of the party sponsored projects are perceived to benefit only a small group of elites. Most women feel used and abused by both formal and non-formal politics. There are significant differences in terms of the nature of participation by the women from the two political parties. Women in ZANU PF are a more vibrant political group while those in MDC have not yet developed the political community of women as a group. Individuals who have positions in this party do not have a history of participation in politics but rather are the wives of prominent men in the party. This is more significant because the members themselves did not yet know each other sufficiently enough to elect people who would represent their interests. The general feeling was that women who were wives of prominent men were likely to be faithful to the party, since it would cost them a lot to betray the interests of the party. At the time of the research, the MDC was still a relatively new party. However, sex workers who had participated in politics in their own right were discounted when it came to political positions. They were not seen as legitimate or possible leaders. Women's participation in ZANU PF is aided by the presence of state structures, which are used for development purposes. Women's participation in politics in the MDC was limited by the fear of violence from the ruling party. However, some women have managed to carve out political spaces for themselves. These women are likely to be those with male networks in the MDC party. The women in ZANU PF on the other hand, have a relative wider political opportunity structure because of the dominance of the party in Goromonzi. Women have a history of participation, which dates back to the liberation war days. ZANU PF women were powerful both as a group and as individuals. As a group they manipulated the various authorities at the district level for the purpose of acquiring resources. As individuals some of them were able to stand for important posts in the main wing and were respected by the community. However, the majority remain at the periphery of politics and are disempowered to influence community decisions.

At the district level, the government also facilitates the participation of women in local government structures, which include the VIDCO, WADCO and Rural District Council (RDC). The next two chapters discuss the participation of women in these structures.

Chapter 3 Formal politics: Women's participation in sub-district structures

Introduction

This chapter discusses the participation of women in Village Development Committees (VIDCO) and Ward Development Committees (WADCO) in Chinyika ward. These structures were formed as part of the decentralization programme. The term Village Development Committee has been used differently at different historical times. In 1984, under the Prime Minister's Directive (PMD), the term referred to a democratically elected group of people by community members from one hundred households. In 1998, the term referred to a committee elected by members of a village. The village itself referred to that area which was traditionally under the leadership of one village head. This chapter, examines the sources of power and authority for women at village and ward levels, the problems they face and the strategies employed to deal with these problems.

A WADCO normally consists of two representatives from each VIDCO. These usually include the secretary and the Chairman of the VIDCO. The functions of VIDCOs and WADCOs are similar but differ in the degree of responsibility or area of jurisdiction, with the WADCO being responsible for a larger area than the VIDCO. According to the PMD, The WADCOs are the grassroots organisations designed to articulate the aspirations and demands of the ordinary villagers through the development of the Ward Development plan which should be fed into the District Development Plan. A comparison of the characteristics of VIDCOs and WADCOs under the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984 and under the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998 is undertaken. The comparison helps to highlight the differences between traditional authority and bureaucratic authority and the impact of each structure for the participation of women in politics.

Historical background

In Zimbabwe, a dualistic mode of development favoured the white race to the detriment of the black majority. Communal areas, where the black majority lived were largely devoid of basic infrastructure such as roads, clinics, schools and sanitation facilities.

Women's participation in political life may be understood when their background of participation in the liberation struggle is taken into account. As early as 1961, women played a part in the nationalist movement, they attended African National Council meetings, brewed beer and constituted the majority supporters. With the formation of Zimbabwe African Peoples Union in 1961, women began to demand a place in the committees. Women demonstrated against the 1961 constitution which would grant Africans fifteen seats in a parliament of sixty five. In 1973, women in ZAPU began to get military training and a women's detachment was formed. In Zimbabwe there was an attempt by government to acknowledge women's contribution to independence through the incorporation of women's issues in the policy making process. The Ministry of Women's Affairs led by Joyce Mujuru was formed to this end. Legislative provisions were also passed which included the Legal Age of Majority Act (1982) and the Electoral Act of 1990. These acts made provisions for women to vote and to run for political office on equal terms with men. The UNDP Human Development report (2000:133) pointed out that at the district level, there has been a marginal increase in female representation from 2% to 2.7% female representation in rural councils. However appointments were made in ministries regarded as 'feminine' such as the women's affairs and meaningful participation was not achieved.

History of VIDCOs and WADCOs

The VIDCO and WADCO structures were formed to fulfil the demands of decentralization (Makumbe 1998: 46). At the sub-district level, the VIDCO is supposed to be the basic unit of organization for development in communal areas in Zimbabwe (Makumbe 1996:45). The history of VIDCOs shows that local governance structures have undergone three stages. Firstly, the period after 1984 when VIDCOs were defined by the Prime Ministers Directive, 1988 VIDCOS defined through the Rural District Councils Act and 1998 when VIDCOs began to be guided by the Traditional Leaders Act. The VIDCOs functions include enabling the villagers to identify and articulate the villagers' needs, the co-ordination and forwarding of the villagers' needs and proposals to

the WADCO. They are supposed to be a link between the people and the WADCO. They are expected to cooperate with government extension workers, operate market stalls, income generating activities, health posts, adult literacy classes and craft and technology industries. The VIDCO includes a youth representative and women's representative. Makumbe (1996:45) notes that the inclusion of representatives from the youth and women's groups is primarily intended to cater for the ruling party's youth and women's league who acted as the party's 'ears' and 'eyes' at the grassroots level.

The creation of WADCO and VIDCO structures was expected to lead to the 'empowerment' of women and other marginalised members of the community in rural areas. The concept of participation is closely tied to the concept of empowerment. McWhiter (1991:89) argues that empowerment in a development context, refers to a process whereby people, organisations or groups that are powerless become aware of the power dynamics that work in their life context, develop skills to control their lives, exercise the control without infringing the rights of others. For Eade, (1991:65) empowerment is the opening of access to decision making process that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy decision making space. At the collective level, individuals work together to achieve a more extensive impact than each could have alone.

According to the Rural District Councils Act (1988), the duties of the VIDCOs were to articulate the interests of the villagers. Their duties included the allocation of land to new settlers. The Rural District Council Act, (1988) also created a Ward Development Committee, chaired by the councillor of a ward. The WADCO was expected to formulate a Ward Development Plan, which took into consideration the needs of all the villagers in a ward. The Act resulted in each village now operating as a VIDCO. This changed significantly with the introduction of the Traditional Leaders Act (1998). The Act stipulates that the WADCO shall be in charge of reviewing, integrating Village Development Plans with the direction of the Ward Assembly. A ward assembly consists of all headmen, village heads and the councillor of the ward. Members of the ward assembly also elect a headman from among themselves to be the Chairman of the ward

assembly. Their duties include the supervision of village assemblies and the review of development plans.

The researcher selected two VIDCOs as defined by the 1988 RDC Act for the purpose of this study, these were Chimoyo and Chatibuka. These same VIDCOs were reconfigured under the Traditional Leaders Act and each village in the ward became a VIDCO. Chimoyo and Chatibuka villages were selected because they were easily accessible to the researcher. Another factor that was considered was that, the two VIDCOs had contrasting political party processes. Chimoyo VIDCO was predominantly MDC territory while ZANU PF dominated in Chatibuka.

Table 3.1 below shows the representation of women in the two VIDCOs where an in-depth study was undertaken. The age, marital status, sex, village of origin, level of education and political affiliation variables were selected in order to compare the general characteristics of the women participating in VIDCO structures with those of men. It was also necessary to find out if there were similarities in the women participating in the VIDCO structures before and after the Traditional Leaders Act was passed.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of members in Chatibuka VIDCO

Name	Age	Marital status	Sex	Village of origin	Years in formal education	Political affiliation
Musasa	60	Married	Male	Nemhara	14	ZANU PF
Mupani	52	Married	Male	Domboshava	8	ZANU PF
Mutohwe	38	Married	Male	Chegutu	9	ZANU PF
Muunga	42	Married	Male	Mhondoro	9	ZANU PF
Maunze	43	Widow	Female	Rusike	6	ZANU PF

The table shows that the majority of the participants were male, and that all members were middle aged. The participants were all ZANU PF members and had secondary education. The characteristics reflect the general trend of male domination in local political institutions although the most of the males are labour migrants. From 1985 to 1998 VIDCOs were still constituted of four or five villages, the VIDCO chairman in Chatibuka was the brother of the Nemhara village head. The four villages had elected him because of his prominent role at Goromonzi primary school. He was a teacher who took an interest in the affairs of the community. He was well known by the community. He was also selected because he was an active and staunch member of ZANU PF. In this VIDCO, there were four males and one female. The woman entered this committee as the women's representative from women's wing of ZANU PF. In terms of gender and marital status the characteristics of committee members contrasts quite sharply with those of Chimoyo VIDCO (*See table 3.2*). Most of the VIDCO members were elderly and the chairman of this VIDCO was also the brother of the village head. The other members of the VIDCO were from other villages. This shows that one's village of origin did not determine participation in the VIDCO. Table 3.2 below shows the characteristics of VIDCO members in Chimoyo

Table 3.2: Characteristics of VIDCO members in Chimoyo

Name	Age	Marital status	Gender	Village of origin	Years in education	Political affiliation
Ms Fire	56	Widow	Female	Tafirenyika	6	ZANU PF
Ms . Ruva	60	Widow	Female	Ngazimbi	4	ZANU PF
Ms Tom	40	Married	Female	Ngazimbi	8	ZANU PF
Ms Maggie.	45	Widow	Female	Ngazimbi	10	ZANU PF
Mr Ruva .	60	Married	Male	Ngazimbi	12	ZANU PF

Table 3.2 shows that in Chimoyo the participation of women in the VIDCO was high as compared to that of men. The female members had at least four years of education. Only one VIDCO member was a man who was over 60. Four of the members were from Ngazimbi village and one was from Tafirenyika. Three villages falling under the Chimoyo VIDCO were not represented in the VIDCO, these were Takadii, Kuzvomunhu and Shangwa villages. These groups felt that the VIDCO structures instituted by the 1988 RDC Act did not give due respect to the traditional authorities and did not participate in elections of the VIDCO members. Of the four members of the VIDCO one was married and the others were widows. Their ages ranged from forty to sixty years old. In this VIDCO, there was a high representation of women due to the fact the women participating were widows who were free from control by husbands and had time to spend in political activities. The main factor influencing the participation of women in politics in Chimoyo however, was the refusal by male village heads and their families to participate in the VIDCO structures. This resistance to bureaucratic authority opened up an opportunity for women to participate in local politics. The fact that all VIDCO members were from ZANU PF also shows the general belief that the VIDCO structures were seen as an extension of ruling party structures rather than a politically neutral arena for community development. The members of MDC including women disengaged from the VIDCO structures which they perceived to be part of the ruling party structures and opted to support traditional leaders as the authorities in Chimoyo.

Changes in village and ward structures: The impact of the Traditional Leaders Act

In the 1980s, the government lacked a clear policy on operations of the traditional custodians of land and newly appointed bureaucratic organisations of VIDCO/WADCOS. This resulted in conflict between the traditional and bureaucratic authorities. The Rural District Council (RDC) was recognized as the land distributing authority responsible for land redistribution under the Communal Land Act. The RDC worked in consultation with the village heads, headman and ZANU PF representatives in land redistribution. In rural areas, there was a pervasive culture of intolerance for people of other political persuasions. Stewart (1998:27) noted that the traditional leadership did not accept the new dispensation and some kraal heads, headmen and chiefs still exercised

their traditional right to allocate land without consulting the WADCO/ VIDCO or the RDC. In 1998, the Government of Zimbabwe sought to resolve the conflict by reinstating the traditional leaders' power through the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998. This Act had a significant impact on the manner of participation in politics by women at the grassroots level in Goromonzi District.

The Traditional Leaders Act (1998) restored the powers of village heads and the headmen, at the expense of those of the bureaucratic VIDCO structures. The village assembly was given the power to consider and resolve all issues relating to land, water, and other natural resources within the area and make a development plan for the village. It had the power to elect and supervise the VIDCO. The village assembly would be chaired by the village head. The old VIDCO structures were made up of five or six villages whose representatives were democratically elected. These structures had many problems, some of which included the hostility between the villagers who were forced to become one VIDCO for development purposes. The hostility led members of some villages to abstain from participation in community structures. Both the male villagers and the village heads welcomed the restoration of the traditional leaders' powers. Women however accepted the new law with resignation. They saw this law as retrogressive to the progress of women in local governance.

Political characteristics of Chimoyo VIDCO

Under the old VIDCO structures constructed through the Prime Minister's Directive of 1984, Chimoyo consisted of 5 villages which included Shangwa, Tafirenyika, Ngazimbi, Kuzvomunhu and Takadii. The head of Takadii is a classic example of village heads, who, through corruption continued to distribute land even before the Traditional Leaders Act was passed. During the time of the study, the village head was serving a jail term for illegally distributing land. Other village heads referred to this village as *Rukisheni* meaning a high-density suburb. Individuals who wanted land simply approached the village head and paid money ranging from 3 000 to 5 000 Zimbabwe dollars. They were then allocated land without consultation with the bureaucratically and democratically elected VIDCO, WADCO, or RDC officials. This resulted in many people from Harare

and Ruwa 'buying' land in this area. However, as the government attempted to regain control of the villages, the RDC found out that this village head had been illegally selling land to settlers. He was arrested and given a one year jail term. Although the VIDCO/WADCO structures had been given authority, the communal people continued to have respect for the traditional leaders. It was therefore common to find an individual who had been allocated a piece of land to approach the head with a chicken or a goat as token of appreciation for being allocated land. This was also considered a safeguard against the wrath of the ancestors. The traditional leaders therefore had *defacto* power while the VIDCO/WADCO leaders had *de jure* authority and the village head continued to exercise power over the villagers.

Restructuring of Chimoyo VIDCO under the Traditional Leaders Act 1998

There were significant declines in women's representation in Chimoyo and Chatibuka VIDCO when the Traditional Leaders Act was passed in 1998. However, the participation of women in the VIDCO structures remained high in Chimoyo as compared to that in Chatibuka. The following cases illustrate the form of political participation in the Chimoyo VIDCO after the Traditional Leaders Act was passed. The Act also introduced new committees, which included the village assembly (*dare remusha*), the neighbourhood committee and the forestry committee, and the conservation committee. It is necessary to note that in most villages, it was difficult to find all these committees. In some villages, for example, the Kuzvomunhu, Tapfumanei, Dongo and Tafirenyika there was only the VIDCO and no other committees set up. In others, for example, Chiketero and Nemhara there were other committees stipulated in the Act. The establishment institution of the committees depended on the interpretation of the Traditional Leaders Act by the village heads. In examining women's participation in VIDCOs, the researcher used two cases which were identified through interviews. Case one below shows the experience of one female member in Shangwa village after the Traditional Leaders Act. Some women were empowered by this Act while others were dis-empowered.

Case one: *Empowerment through the Traditional Leaders Act: The case of Ms Mhangwa*

Ms Mhangwa who is a sister to Mr Mhangwa, the village head, is a middle aged woman who returned home after divorcing her husband. She lived in Arcturus for most of her life and has been living in Goromonzi for only two years. She feels she has an important role to play in the activities of the village. She is bitter about the old VIDCO structures which were instituted by the RDC Act. “...we have been cheated by the laws of this country but now we are happy because we control our own people, our own land not like in the old days when we were being ruled by outsiders. The old VIDCO members did not know anything! They did not know anything about this village... They trod on holy places, they did not respect the ancestors...They were destroying our country and we were forced to keep quiet. What could we do?” She noted that as the oldest woman in the Mhangwa family no important decision could be made without her knowledge. During the study she was the acting village head and she felt empowered by the Traditional Leaders Act.

In all the committees of Chimoyo VIDCO, there were twelve women and thirty men. In percentage terms women constituted 36 % of all VIDCO members in Chimoyo. Of the twelve female members, six were married, four were widows and two were divorcees. In all the VIDCOs women’s education was lower than that of men with the majority of women having an average of 4 years. All the male members of the VIDCO were from Goromonzi district, with the exception of four women who had married into the VIDCO. Women who had married into the villages were seen as outsiders or *vatorwa* and somewhat questionable power holders. In almost all the situations women were less educated than their male counterparts, this could be attributed to the colonial and patriarchal policies, which discriminated against women. The researcher's intention was to find out if there were any significant differences between Chimoyo VIDCO which had MDC supporters and Chatibuka which had ZANU PF supporters. The next section discusses Chatibuka VIDCO where ZANU PF was predominant.

Political characteristics of Chatibuka VIDCO

In Chatibuka there were 4 Villages which were also reconstituted as a separate VIDCO. For purposes of analysis the cases of two of the villages Ketero and Tapfumaneyi are used. In Chatibuka VIDCO there was only one female member in the committee (*see*

case two). The case of Ms Taps also highlights the position and experience of female members in the VIDCO.

Case two: Ms Taps Incorporation in local structures

Ms Taps was aged 43 and had 6 years of education. She has been an active member of ZANU PF. She noted that women have played an important role in politics particularly in the liberation struggle and there was no reason for women to sit back without participating in local structures “ ...I think it is difficult for young people to understand. I have been in ZANU PF for a long time. Yes, we say we are oppressed as women but we have to fight for ourselves because the government has done everything for us...if we do not get high political positions as women that is our fault. It is only that power has been give to village heads and it is now difficult for us as *vatorwa* to be in the VIDCO but that does not stop us from participating in local structures. We have to make an input even as women who are married to powerful men.”

In most of the committees in the VIDCO, there was a sexual division of labour between the members of the community. Young men were involved in the policing duties of conservation, that is, they looked out for people who were involved in the indiscriminate cutting of trees. Women were involved mostly with the planting and regeneration of trees and gully reclamation.

The structures immediately above the VIDCOs are the WADCOs. These institutions have control over a much wider area. The level of participation of women in the VIDCO determines their participation in the WADCO structures since members of the WADCO are selected from the VIDCO. The next section discusses the representation and participation of women in WADCO structures.

Women’s participation in ward structures

As noted earlier women’s participation in ward structures was facilitated by government policies especially after independence when the VIDCO and WADCO structures were formed. Before 1998 most of the village heads complained that WADCO members had too much power and were dominated by women. The Traditional Leaders Act reversed the situation, with women mostly attending meetings as secretaries of the different

VIDCO structures. However, during the time of my research the Ward Assembly overpowered the WADCO. No meetings were being held by the WADCO. The Councillor in his capacity as chairperson explained that the duty of development planning now lay with the ward assembly and his duty was merely to take the decisions of this committee to council. The paradox was that while according to the Traditional Leaders Act the councillor should sit with Chairpersons of the various VIDCO authorities, the VIDCOs were now falling under the traditional authorities. Some of the traditional leaders had developed conflicts with the democratically elected leaders and it was therefore not easy for the two groups to work together.

When the councillor called the village heads to meetings for instance, they refused to recognise his authority and questioned his authority. (*Muringi chii? Isu tinoziva headman Damu*”, “ (Who is Muringi? We only know headman Damu). There was therefore hostility between the traditional leaders and the elected councillor. This hostility dated back to the time when the elected councillors had been given power over the traditional leaders. These new structures which were meant to link traditional leadership to the democratically elected Rural District Council structures in a manner that would remove rivalry, tension, conflicts and promote consultation and team work never met their goal in Goromonzi. The following table shows the characteristics of members of the WADCO before the Traditional Leaders Act was passed.

Ward Development Committee of Chinyika (before the Traditional Leaders Act was passed) Table 3.5: Chinyika ward

Name	Age	Gender	Marital status	VIDCO	Years in school	Political affiliation
Muringi	65	Male	Married	Chanetsa	8	ZANU PF
Rusomu	60	Male	Married	Chatibuka	14	ZANU PF
Mureha	42	Female	Married	Chatibuka	8	ZANU PF
Tomu .	56	Female	Widow	Chimoyo	6	MDC
Fire T	45	Female	Widow	Chimoyo	6	ZANU PF
Damu H.	56	Male	Married	Chaminuka	7	MDC
Damu T	46	Male	Married	Chaminuka	9	ZANU PF
Gamura	56	Male	Married	Nyikandeyedu	10	ZANU PF
Mutsa	56	Female	Widow	Nyikandeyedu	10	ZANU PF
Charapi	45	Female	Widow	Nyadzonya	6	ZANU PF
Munhu	47	Female	Married	Chamukamuvu	8	ZANU PF
Moto	45	Female	Widow	Chamukamuvu	2	ZANU PF
Zai	43	Male	Widow	Chatibuka	3	

The table shows the characteristics of the WADCO in Chinyika. The WADCO was composed of the chairpersons and the secretaries of the VIDCO. Women constituted a relatively high number in the WADCO structures, that is, 7 out of 13 were females. Five of the females were widows and 6 belonged to ZANU PF. The high representation of women was a result of the fact that women were elected into the committees mostly as secretaries. This caused the traditional leaders to raise their eyebrows and criticise the government for giving women power. In the words of one village head “*Nyika yanga*

yava kutongwa nevakadzi” (The area was now being ruled by women). The village heads complained that the WADCO structures were now encroaching on the space of traditional authority, a terrain which was ‘sacred’ for women to tread.

In most cases women in these structures were also staunch ruling party supporters and had some networks with ZANU PF members. One woman from the MDC was elected because she outwardly professed allegiance to ZANU PF while she belonged to the MDC. She also had strong links with ZANU PF political heavy weights including the councillor and Member of Parliament. As pointed out earlier, participation in WADCO structures was a result of the support received from the ruling party. Their position in the WADCOs gave them power to allocate land and to solve disputes concerning boundaries between villages. The traditional leaders accepted the WADCO’s decisions because they feared being seen as opposing the government.

Women in the WADCO structures complained that they did not benefit much from participation, as there were no economic rewards. Women especially complained that they had to travel long distances to solve disputes between village heads, at the same time the community members did not respect their authority. Some villagers continued to violate the decisions made by the WADCO and mentioned that women could not rule them. They called them names such as ‘outsider’, ‘newcomer’ and ‘prostitute’. This was worsened by the fact that the members sometimes had to visit villages in pairs to solve certain problems. This created some anomalies where widows could travel long distances with a man who was married. Women also argued that their decisions were respected more if they visited the village with other males rather than as females only. Community attitudes were therefore an important factor in constraining women’s participation in politics.

In terms of age, most of the women participating in village structures were over forty years. This was because of the communities’ belief that younger women were not permanent members of the villages in which they were living. Older women also felt that they had to participate in politics since this was what the liberation war was about. They felt that, by participating in politics they would empower themselves and the community.

Younger women on the other hand, felt that there was no reason to participate in WADCO or VIDCO structures. They felt that participation in these structures was something done by older women. (*ZveWADCO ndezvemadzimai makuru* meaning WADCO participation is for older women). Younger women also felt that participation in politics was too demanding and that there were very limited economic and political returns from participation. Most of the women in the WADCO structures were women who could read and write and who had shown themselves to be good in interpersonal relations. Of the seven members in the WADCO structure, six of them were widows. This could be attributed to the fact that they had more freedom and were free to travel to different places unlike married women who had many commitments at home.

There were significant changes in terms of representation when the Traditional Leaders Act was passed in 1998. In theory, the composition of the WADCO did not change. According to the Traditional Leaders Act, the WADCO would be appointed according to the RDC Act 1988 (Chapter 29:13). However, the VIDCO structures changed since each village now became a VIDCO, the total number of VIDCOs in Chinyika changed from six to twenty nine. There was also a ward assembly, which was to consist of all the members of Chinyika ward. Women's participation became limited, as most of them were no longer VIDCO committee members and were therefore not eligible to become WADCO members. Furthermore, the structure of the WADCO had operational problems, as the village heads did not accept it. The councillor who is supposed to chair the WADCO was therefore isolated from the leadership role, which he once held before the Traditional Leaders Act was passed. The headman now took the role of chairman of WADCO. In theory, he was supposed to chair the ward assembly; in practice he chaired both the ward assembly and the WADCO. He then took the decisions of the ward assembly to the councillor. The councillor pointed out that he gave respect to the headman to ensure the plans for the ward were implemented. When these plans were made it was now the duty of the councilor to take them to council. The problem between ward assemblies and WADCO structures seems to have been quite widespread in the other wards. In a meeting meant to discuss the different ward plans in order to formulate the District Development plan, I found that most of the wards had not come up with ward

development plans, but rather different VIDCOs had submitted their development plans. It was now the duty of the RDDC to formulate ward plans. This was done according to the popularity of the different VIDCOs plans. If certain projects had been suggested by a number of villages in a ward then it was incorporated into the ward development plan. The case of the RDDC and its role in ward plan formation shall be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Opportunities and facilitators for women's participation in the Village Development Committee.

Veneklasen (1991:1) notes that, the law plays a significant part in the subordination and emancipation of women by regulating access to resources and decision-making processes. By the same token, the law can facilitate women's emancipation by regulating their access to resources and decision-making processes. In Zimbabwe, women's participation in politics has been facilitated by legal provisions, which make it possible for women to contest elections and to vote. These include the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, which made adult members those aged 18, conferring on them the right to enter into contracts on their own. Prior to this, women were perpetually dependent on the authority and permission of adult males. The Rural District Councils Act (1998) and the Traditional Leaders Act (1998) stipulated that the VIDCO should have a representative for women and youth. This opened an opportunity for women to participate in local politics.

In the communal areas of Zimbabwe, particularly in the early 1990's, there existed a dual structure of authority and power. Village heads refused to be elected as chairpersons for the VIDCO structures. One village head pointed out "*inini ndine nyika yangu*" (I have my own area of jurisdiction). On the other hand, some villagers used traditional authority to secure a place in the VIDCOs. They used their traditional authority to their own advantage, as they were seen as the 'natural' leaders of the community who were nominated first for VIDCO posts. Some traditional leaders therefore monopolized places in both the traditional and bureaucratic spheres.

The resistance of the village heads to be incorporated into bureaucratic authority structures created an opportunity for women to participate in politics, competition was reduced and women particularly in Chimoyo, were free to contest to be elected in the VIDCO. There seemed to be a relationship between the degree of resistance to bureaucratic authorities and the representation of women in local structures. In villages where resistance was high, the participation of women was also high and where resistance to the traditional authority was low (where village heads participated in the bureaucratic structures) women's participation was also low. For example in the Chatibuka VIDCO traditional authorities held positions in both the VIDCO and the traditional structures. In Chimoyo, the representation of women was high because the village heads resisted the bureaucratically instituted VIDCOs.

As pointed out earlier, women constituted the bulk of residents in Chinyika ward. This was because the men in the productive age groups were mostly employed in Goromonzi commercial farms, Marondera and Harare. This meant that they could not attend the VIDCO meetings regularly as actively as the women who were permanently resident in the area. This temporary absence was also an opportunity for women to participate in politics.

Constraints on women's participation in VIDCO and WADCO structures.

Constraints in this study refer to obstacles and hindrances to women's effective political participation, which may lie in the social, economic and political spheres. I distinguish between 1) constraints faced by women who were participating in politics in VIDCO/WADCO structures and (2) women who were not participating in political structures. In the first group, an analysis of constraints as structures that hinder women from realizing their full potential in politics is made while in the second group constraints are looked at as structures and policies that hinder women from entering into politics.

The main constraints for the first group of women lie in the social and cultural realm. Most of the women felt that although they had been elected, they could not make all decisions without consulting their husbands or deferring to the males in the committee

who might otherwise have lower positions than themselves. For example, in Chimoyo VIDCO, where the VIDCO chair was a widow from Tafirenyika clan, she claimed to always consult her late husband's elder brother when making decisions. She had been a widow before she was elected to the post of VIDCO chair. She pointed out that, although she had been elected, it was important to work with the traditional authorities and to consult her late husband's family. In some cases therefore women continue to defer to male authority even when in positions of power and this is a way of ensuring legitimacy in the eyes of both the community and the family. The alienation of either traditional leaders and family members might lead to a loss of respect, authority and power for the women.

Lack of education was also a constraint for women who were participating in VIDCO and WADCO structures. Women were generally less educated than their male counterparts. This limited the women as some villagers felt that uneducated women could not effectively represent the villagers at higher levels where the language of communication might be English. At the WADCO level, for example, women were not free to attend workshops on resource conservation where a small allowance was given. Women who did manage to attend workshops sometimes found themselves at a disadvantage, as they could not understand some of the issues discussed. It should be pointed out that, the women themselves were aware that even in situations where education was not important, women could be discriminated against mainly on the assumption that they might not know how to behave in the presence of high ranking officials. While certain opportunities for increasing access to resources arose, women were not as capable as men in seizing these opportunities, as they were less educated than men. Sometimes women were offered opportunities to attend workshops, training courses but denied them saying that they could not accept the opportunities because they were not educated. One woman pointed out that the duty of a committee member was merely to support the committee when they reach the ward level.

There were also structural constraints for women's participation in the VIDCO and WADCO structures. The VIDCO was empowered to allocate land. It became clear that the traditional leaders would not tolerate women distributing land that was traditionally

theirs. This was further complicated by the fact that the VIDCO was made up of five or six villages. The VIDCO chairperson thus had authority over five villages, which were made up of different people. Brant (1991:13) argues that, the VIDCOs were largely demographic creations based on the 1992 census and in determining the sizes of the various villages and wards, government authorities did not follow either traditional or colonial boundaries. This resulted in some villagers refusing to participate in the activities organized by the VIDCO. This created problems for the women on the VIDCO, as they could not implement the VIDCO plans. Another constraint created by these VIDCO structures was that they were large in size and this made it difficult for the VIDCO members to fully implement their decisions, as they had to travel long distances to distribute land and resolve disputes.

Some women whose ages ranged from eighteen to thirty years pointed out that it was difficult for them to participate in politics because they had to look after children at home. Three women pointed out that being in the VIDCO was something done by older women. The researcher found that most of the younger women had married into the villages in which they were now staying and were considered as outsiders (*vatorwa*) and therefore had no legitimate claim to leadership positions in the villages. The structural anomalous position of women before and after marriage is a constraint for women's participation in politics. Young, single women are also regarded as *vapfuuri* (people in transit), in the community in which they were born since they will get married and leave the village. On the other hand, when they leave and join their husbands in other villages they are regarded as *vatorwa* (outsiders) (*see case three*).

Case three: Ms Chimoto non-participation in local structures

Ms Chimoto is a young lady with three children. One of the children is four and the other two are twins aged 8 months. She seems to have no interest whatsoever in local politics. "... I think VIDCOs are for older women and I am only 23. How would you even go to the meetings? I am sure the whole village will talk about it..." She pointed out that it was easier for those who were born in the area and not those who were members of the community through marriage. She noted that questions would be raised as to why *vatorwa* want to rule. The other problem is that party politics is something to avoid as it is dangerous. "people are being used, going up and down but they get nothing. I have children to look after and I am sure my husband would not permit me to go for those WADCO meetings so I keep to myself, if I want company I go to church and ... I keep myself busy. There is no time for politics in my life."

The case illustrates that women find it difficult to claim leadership positions in their village of origin or in the village in which they are married. In some villages, such as, Ngazimbi two women were VIDCO members and both of them were divorcees who had returned to their original homes. Mature divorcees however, are seen as semi permanent members of the villages as their chances of remarrying are very slim.

Being in the VIDCO required mobility thus good health is necessary if one is to carry out their duties effectively. According to some women, the rewards offered for being a VIDCO member were very small. VIDCO members travelled long distances from one village to another. Another constraint mentioned by women who withdrew from politics was the issue of political affiliation. This became particularly important during 1999 when the MDC was formed. Some VIDCO members who had joined the MDC had to renounce their positions because VIDCO structures were closely associated with the ruling party. Some withdrew by not attending meetings, claiming other social commitments such as attending to the sick, funeral or church commitments.

The outsiders/*vatorwa* in Nemhara pointed out that it was not possible for them to actively participate in VIDCOs because they did not belong to the villages where they were living. They alleged that the issues of ethnicity were very important in the VIDCO. They also alleged that they were not informed when meetings were held. Some considered themselves too poor for any participation, as they were too busy engaging in activities, which relate to survival such as securing food. Others pointed out that they had come from Mozambique and Zambia and were therefore not entitled to participation.

Problems and limitations of women's participation in politics.

The women interviewees pointed out that, one of the major problems faced by women in VIDCO was that for a woman to implement a decision it was important for her to consult with the other male committee members. In Chinyika there were gendered conflicts over resources, such as, land and decision making processes. One village head pointed out that, the old system was bad as it empowered *vatorwa* to distribute land. "...*zvimwe zvinhu zvinoitwa nevakadzi ndosaka miti yaparara uye nyika iri kuparara*" (.....some

things are done by women that is why there is deforestation and condition of the villages is deteriorating.) Women were accused of abusing power, in fact male village heads felt threatened by women whom they saw as tougher than their male counterparts. The female VIDCO members were accused of reducing the village heads to “dogs” in their own villages. While the RDC Act (1988) empowered bureaucratic authority to take over the traditional leaders’ role, the traditional leaders resisted this. Women ended up being accused of having ostensible power over land, which they never actually exercised because of the resistance of village heads.

Most of the women who participated in politics felt that they had not gained much from participation except ridicule and wasting of time. They compared themselves with traditional leaders who received their token of thanks in the form of a chicken or goat when they allocated land to individuals while they received nothing. Women pointed out that, people humbled themselves before them in order to get land, but when they finally got land, they never gave them anything. Instead they approached the village head with a goat or a chicken as their token of appreciation. This could be attributed to the fact that most people had to have their names registered in the village head’s book. If they were not registered they would be regarded as squatters which meant that they could be evicted at any time. The new settlers also feared the wrath of the ancestors of the villages in which they had settled, if they did not thank the village head. The ancestors were considered by the villagers to be the ultimate ‘owners’ of the land and their representative was the village head. This belief contrasted sharply with the government’s claim that all land belonged to the state and should be distributed by bureaucratic structures of the VIDCO and WADCO. The settlers considered the wrath of the government and party authorities as minor compared to that of the ancestors.

Women’s Participation in VIDCO/WADCO structures and power

Rowlands (1996:17) describes power as an instrument of domination where some people have power over others. Power is wielded by men over other men, men over women and by dominant social, political and cultural groups over those who are marginalised. Kauffman (1997:163) and Kaufman and Alfonso (1997) note that the conception of

power where it refers to control and domination results in differential participation for men and women. They point out that uneven capacities for men and women to be participants and leaders in the democratic and participatory institutions is not a result of gender inequality but is the result of the different values that men and women have internalized as they have created their gendered identities. Power as control is equated with hegemonic conceptions of masculinity, to have power becomes a confirmation of manhood.

The two main sources of power are individuals and institutions. The main institutions distributing power in local government are the state, the government and the political parties. The government has put in place policies, which attempt to ensure the participation of women. Women in VIDCO/ WADCO structures sometimes relied on patron-client relationships between themselves and members of the ruling party. For most women, participation in the party was seen as a stepping stone to other more rewarding positions. Election into the VIDCO without the backing of the party was seen as useless as this would not bring any resources to the participants. Despite the various problems discussed, women revealed that participation in VIDCO/ WADCO structures resulted in a sense of empowerment for them. The women gained new capabilities and potential, that is, developed self confidence and capacity to participate in formal politics. The women now viewed themselves to have learnt new skills in public speaking, networking, conflict management and resolution and generally working with people from different areas. It also involves undoing the effects of internalized oppression. Women developed confidence through interacting with people of different backgrounds and males in public. Empowerment includes women being able to access and participate in decision-making processes. The result is that women perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy decision-making positions in politics.

In some cases mature educated woman wields power in the community and is able to represent the community to the outside world. This was the case with Ms Chara who had reached standard six, and was elected to lead a variety of development projects done by women. Ms Mukwe who had also reached standard six was highly regarded by the community and was the secretary of Nemhara VIDCO. This meant that she wrote

minutes of the various proceedings of meetings. She was also a WADCO member. Similarly, the community respected Ms Mbave who was the village community health worker. In Tafirenyika village, the VIDCO representative was able to read and write and was respected because of her maturity and education. On the other hand, women who moved from other villages, particularly if they were young were not seen as legitimate claimants to power. They were regarded as *vatorwa*. However, as they became older and gave birth to children who were members of the village, the perception of them as outsiders declined but did not totally disappear. Women are never totally assimilated or accepted in the village in which they marry. Older women with some education compete for positions in community politics. Most VIDCO members are elderly and it was only in Ngazimbi village where a young woman was elected to represent youth. This could have been due to the fact that she was a divorcee with older children but was an active member in various community projects, which included conservation and farming ventures.

Ms Kuzvo, the female village head who held delegated authority is an interesting case which illustrates how women are divided by politics. She became a village head by default after the death of her brother's son who was residing in Harare. For her empowerment, meant that she was in a position to control the people in her village. Waylen (1996:6) argues that there is no unitary category of women, the ways in which women come together may represent different kinds of patriarchal bargains for women with different rules of the game. Women try to maximize security and optimize their life options. The village head Ms Kuzvo supported the restoration of the traditional leaders' power although it resulted in the lower participation of women in politics.

On the other hand, she reported her problems to the male councillor who would then mediate between her and the villagers if there were any problems. Her case illustrates the contradictions inherent in women's participation in formal politics based on traditional authority. While she could turn to other village heads for help, she had to rely on the councillor who had bureaucratic authority to help her solve her problems. Alliances of interest were formed between the traditional and bureaucratic authorities. The councillor in turn could count on the village head to support him during WADCO meetings. Both the councillor and the village head belonged to the Johane Marange church and supported

each other as brother and sister in Christ. Ms Kuzvo covertly belonged to the MDC while the councilor was a ZANU PF supporter.

The strategies employed by women to deal with problems in politics

Women have developed numerous ways to deal with problems they face in politics. Some women pointed out during interviews that people did not respect them. This translated into a situation of powerlessness where the women leaders failed to have their own preferences upheld. One common way used by women was to develop patron-client relationships with those in power such as, heavy weight politicians and other government officials who would back up their decisions. Chazan (1983: 95) argues that when a society's legal personal guarantees of physical security, status and wealth are relatively weak or non-existent, individuals often seek personal substitutes by attaching themselves to big men (sometimes women) capable of providing protection and advancement. In her analysis of Ghanaian politics, Chazan (1983: 97) observed that patronage positions relied on and exploited traditional notions of status, deference and status aggrandizement. In Chinyika ward, patronage positions were related to access to state structures, political leaders, traditional leaders and leaders of dominant churches such as the Apostolic and Salvation Army churches. In Kuzvomunhu all the VIDCO members were Apostolic Faith church members of the Johanne Marange sect and were referred to as *Madzimai* (*mothers*) and *Madzibaba* and (*fathers and mothers*). Women therefore utilise personal ties to consolidate their advantageous positions in politics.

The problem of some former members of the VIDCO/WADCO in Chimoyo pointed out that they had merely withdrawn from VIDCO/WADCO because they could not cope with the heavy load of work which involved extensive traveling on foot but which did not offer any remuneration. Another group in Chatibuka merely accepted the responsibilities as they were and enjoyed the exercise of power for its own sake. They felt that the respect they gained from the community was sufficient. Yet another group of women in both VIDCOs used their positions in the VIDCO/WADCO to create patron-client relationship which could be utilized for support and for gaining access to state resources.

Conclusion

The research findings revealed that women's participation in politics at the sub district levels was affected by the new legislation of local government. Women's participation in local structures is closely related to the degree of resistance of village heads to the new structures. In some villages, village heads incorporated themselves into bureaucratic VIDCO/WADCO structures. In others traditional leaders disengaged themselves from bureaucratic structures. The attitude of the village heads affected the nature of participation of women in political structures. Women in local structures utilized patron-client relationships and social networks to secure advantageous positions in politics. With regard to MDC participation in local governance structures was limited due to the general repression against opposition members from participation in formal political structures. In most cases women use their social networks to secure an advantageous position in politics. Some have chosen to withdraw from local politics. While in others, village of origin and lack of education created obstacles for the opportunities available for women to participate in local government politics. The next chapter will look at the participation of women in local government at the district level.

Chapter 4: Formal Politics: Women in the Goromonzi Rural District Council

Introduction

This chapter focuses on women's participation as councilors in the Rural District Council (RDC). As noted in the previous chapter, the Traditional Leaders Act of 1998 negatively affected women's participation in the VIDCO/WADCO structures. Women who participated in the RDC had themselves been the active members of the VIDCO/WADCO and other community development projects. This chapter will analyse the characteristics of these women, their history of participation in politics, the problems encountered, the strategies employed to deal with these problems, and how successful they were. Women's participation in the RDC was limited with only three female councillors in a council composed of twenty-five councillors. However, the study reveals interesting issues on authority and power. Women in the RDC were a relatively empowered group which was incorporated into formal politics. Their strategies were similar to those used by women at the sub district level as they utilized social networks to negotiate power and authority in politics. According to Mitchell (1995) potential members of a person's network may be defined as a category of people who in terms of general norms or values of a community might be expected to provide special type of service or support or alternatively who might expect to provide specific type of service or support. Social networks were critical for women's participation in formal politics as women formed a minority in the Goromonzi Rural District Council (GRDC)

The Goromonzi Rural District Council (GRDC)

In pre-independence Zimbabwe, there were three main local authorities, these were the local municipality, the district councils and the African councils. The European settlers controlled the system of government at national level. Africans in both urban and rural areas were disenfranchised and excluded from participation in local government. Agere (1996:23) notes that the local government system structures were dualistic, with one for whites and another for blacks, and this disadvantaged the black majority. On the

attainment of independence in 1980, these structures were seen as a means by which the government could implement the National Development Plan. Local government structures were viewed as the vehicles of popular participation in governance. In 1998, the government tried to solve the problem of a race based dualistic mode of development through amalgamation, which in practical terms meant the incorporation of Ruwa Local Board and Goromonzi Rural Council into the GRDC.

There are twenty-five wards in the district and of these, only ten are commercial wards, while fifteen are communal wards. At the district level, there are commercial wards and communal wards. Commercial wards are those wards where the majority of the population engages in commercial activities such as farming and mining, while communal wards are those wards where the population is largely communal. The three female councillors represented the commercial wards, that is, Mandalay Park, Greater Bromley, and Glen Forest. All the twenty-five councillors belonged to the same political group, that is, ZANU PF. This increased intra party competition with members of the same party fighting for limited posts in council.

The Goromonzi Rural Council (GRC) was established in 1980. In 1990, the Ruwa Local Board joined with the Goromonzi Rural Council under amalgamation and it became the Goromonzi Rural District Council (GRDC). Of the twenty-five councillors mentioned above, three were appointed, while twenty-two were elected. The three appointed councillors were the chiefs in Goromonzi District. These included Chief Chinamhora, Rusike and Chikwaka who were appointed by the Minister of Local Government to represent traditional Commercial interests in Goromonzi council. Although the minister is empowered under the Rural District Act (1988) to appoint councillors to represent certain interest groups he did not appoint any women to represent gender interests. A number of committees were set up to deal with the different issues raised in council.

Committees of Council

In the Goromonzi Rural District Council, there were six committees of council. These included; 1) the Agriculture and Conservation, 2) Social Services Committee, 3) Roads

and Works, 4) Planning and Licensing and Development, 5) Finance Committee and 6) the Human Resources Committees (*see table 4 below.1*). The duties of the committees are defined by the RDC Act of 1988 Chapter 13 section 58. The most important sub committee of council was the Rural District Development Committee (RDDC). As noted above, women were already under-represented in council, however, they were further marginalised by being relegated to committees of council which had very limited power and status in council. The other key committee was the finance committee whose main duties included the control of all income and expenditure and the overall running of council affairs and its committees. This committee is also considered to be one of the most important committees of council. At the time of the study no women was in this committee.

Table 4.1: Gender representation in council committees

Committee	Men	Women	Total
Social services	4	1	5
Human resources	4	1	5
Planning, licensing and development	4	1	5
Agriculture and conservation	5	0	5
Finance	5	0	5
Roads and works	4	0	4
Total	26	3	29

The roads and works committee was considered to be the most important committee in council and maintenance of roads was considered to be the core business of council. None of the women were in this committee. The issue of road maintenance was seen as a male domain to which women could not contribute meaningfully. One male councillor pointed out that he would welcome women in the committee but women knew very little about roads and their maintenance. The agriculture and conservation committee's duties included the development of agricultural projects and the conservation of natural resources in Goromonzi. The council is also empowered to appoint committees of a general, specific or local nature as it may see fit and may delegate to any such committee

any power that may be exercised by council. The other committees elected in the GRDC included the human resources, the licensing and development committee and the social services committee. Table 4.1 above shows that women were represented in three committees of council these committees were perceived to be the least important.

In Goromonzi, the social services committee was chaired by a woman from Glen Forest called Ms Kumalo. The duties of this committee were to discuss issues related to social welfare such as issues related to health and education and delivery of welfare services for the poor, the old and the disabled. The other councillors and the administrative staff, also, had low regard for this committee chaired by Ms Kumalo. She also faced problems in representing her committee because of the general attitude displayed against her and her committee. For instance, during one full council meeting when she was representing her committee, it was almost impossible for her to be heard clearly as some councillors continued to mumble among themselves. Later on, when she presented her minutes to council she found herself facing the same problem of people talking during her presentation. Some shouted out comments about her wasting council time, whilst others said that the councillor needed to speak loudly. The Chairman of council tried to help her by asking her to present the report of the social services in Shona. However, she decided to present the report in English. The refusal to speak in Shona was a way of resisting the control, which, the chairman would have on her, at the same time, the refusal was also a fight for recognition of her proficiency in the English language by fellow councillors. She felt that there was no reason for her to embarrass herself in council by using Shona when all other councillors were using English. The woman in politics thus finds herself ill equipped to deal with the procedures and the language of politics. Men are unwilling to help, they are quick to laugh at the weaknesses of women. Fellow women councillors on the other hand, did not offer any help to the other women but join in showing that the women themselves are not a unitary category who act together on the basis of shared gender interests.

The Rural District Development Committee (RDDC)

The Rural District Development Committee (RDDC) is governed by the RDC Act (1988) chapter 60 sub-section 6. The RDDC is a sub-committee of council made up of technocrats whose duties are to produce development plans for the district. The low participation of women in the RDC is also reflected in the RDDC. However, whereas in the RDC women's representation is mitigated by administrative staff, in the RDDC women's representation is mitigated by the presence of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and representatives of the government departments. All the meetings were to be attended by the District Administrator and technical staff of council, who included the executive officers of the various committees of council and ex-officio members who were the Chiefs and Headman from various wards in Goromonzi. The ex-officio members also included the chairman of council who was also the provincial chairman in ZANU PF. During one meeting attended by the researcher, the participation of councillors in the RDDC was severely limited. The people attending the meeting did not know the procedures they were supposed to follow. They met to discuss two issues, that is, the preparation of the District Development Plan and secondly, to review progress reports from the different committees of council.

The RDDC is composed of four-sub-committees, which include (1) infrastructure committee chaired by the Ministry of Transport, which included representatives from the District Development Fund (DDF Roads), Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), council representatives and local government, (2) resettlement, commerce and industry chaired by local government included representatives from National Affairs, Agricultural and Extension services (AREX), NGOs and council representatives, (3) Agriculture and conservation chaired by the Agricultural and Extension services included representatives from Water Development, Natural Resources, National Affairs, Council, Veterinary Service, District Development Fund (water), National Parks and Wildlife, (4) Health and Social Welfare Committee chaired by Education and Social Welfare Department included local government public services, education and ZRP, Kunzwana Women's Association, Women and AIDS Support Network(WASN) and Farm Community Trust of Zimbabwe. The number of women

present at this meeting was twenty two while the number of men was over thirty. Of the twelve women present, six were council administrative staff members, five were from NGOs and one was a councillor from the Great Bromley area. The main purpose of the meeting was to ensure input by all members of the community into the development of the District Development Plan. The participants were to prioritise development projects, to cost and justify them and approve the District Development Plan. The various committees were given village development plans related to their fields. They had to draw up ward development plans, therefore, it was now the duty of the RDDC to develop the Ward Development Plans. There was confusion as to what was to be produced and at the end of the day, the RDDC chair appealed to members to read the RDC Act. It became clear that the day had been wasted as no committee had come up with priorities for the district. In fact, women from NGOs failed to find the purpose of the meeting and left the meeting. Women often exercised the exit option when they felt that their participation in local government was a mere waste of time. The NGO's representatives felt that the council activities were poorly organized and their input into these programs would have to be given later on and not to be incorporated into the District Plan. The existence of structures for participation of women in governance sometimes constrained by the mismanagement by the administrative staff, for instance there was no clarity on the procedures to be taken on formulating the District Development Plan.

Characteristics of women in the GRDC

Githens and Mackay (1977:114) in their study of American women in politics argued that women who participate in politics have different characteristics from their apolitical sisters. They argue that middle class women and highly educated women were more likely to participate in politics than the working class women and their lowly educated sisters. At the national level, women's participation in politics has been influenced by patron-client relationships. Women who have powerful positions in politics are those who are allied to powerful men in politics. At the district level, issues of class, age, educational attainment influence the kind of women who are likely to participate in politics and to stand as candidates for election into council.

The three female councillors had at least 13 years of formal education and could communicate in the English. The legal structures facilitated the participation of women in council structures. These women had also been active members of ZANU PF who had held positions in the Ward Development Committees and other district structures such as the branch and women's league in ZANU PF.

All the women represented commercial wards. Their ages ranged from 38 to 51 years. One councillor attributed the age disparity to the fact that young women had not done much in the party. Younger women also had more in terms of family commitments and time was a scarce resource. This significantly decreased their chances of participation in politics. It was pointed out that younger women were likely to have jealousy husbands who would not allow them to move from one area to another to attend council meetings. The husbands would try to restrict the participation of women in public affairs. In the words of one elderly women “*..varume vavo vanotyva kuti vanozowona zvimwe!*” when translated this means that husbands fear that other men will approach their wives. Older women also pointed out that their husbands could trust them because they had proved themselves worthy of trust. This shows that issues of sexuality sometimes constrain women's participation in politics through the attempts by society to control women's mobility. Women were culturally regarded as 'private property' to be protected from other men who might trespass over their husbands's exclusive rights to their wives bodies.

The older women, however, were limited by their lack of education. From the WADCO level up to the council level, education was an important consideration both for nomination and support from the ruling party. Marital status was also considered an important factor for the nomination of one to a leadership post. Single, widowed women and divorces were seen as risky candidates at the district level, as they could pose a threat to the marriages of other community members. They also faced problems in gaining credibility and support from the local community.

Ms Chitare pointed out that one of the reasons why she succeeded in the 1998 elections was that the other contestant was a widow. She only gained acceptance because the

district chairman and the Member of Parliament of Goromonzi District supported her. Her husband later died and she now felt that her marital status was disadvantaging her. She faced problems networking with the male councillors; for instance, she was accused of trying to use her sexuality to gain political mileage. Women in politics are marginalised by the men in the council, at the same time they are competing with other female councillors to gain political favours from powerful men in council. Women in council do not form a unitary category they are divided by competition for patrons and allies in council. The fact that women are few in council also means that the competition is stiffer and thus in politics, women may find themselves as enemies rather than allies.

The ruling party, ZANU PF, had high political legitimacy in the communal areas where the majority of the black people reside. In the commercial wards the ruling party had limited legitimacy since the communities were made up of white commercial farmers and farm labourers. The commercial farmers and farm workers felt alienated by the land occupations, which started in 1999. White commercial farmers are a political group, which had a largely discontent population and most of them supported the opposition party, that is, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The white commercial farmers were also very affluent members of the rural community and thus formed an economically powerful group.

This has important implications for the councillors in commercial wards as these councillors were seen to have less work since the commercial farmers did not need economic help. Their main priority was infrastructural development, particularly the maintenance of roads. When the councillors came into office in 1998 the allowance for the communal ward councillor was \$270 per month while that for the commercial ward councillor was \$90 per month. All the women represented commercial wards. In most cases either by design or default women often find themselves relegated to periphery of politics where they get the least benefits.

As noted earlier, the majority of ZANU PF were in communal wards while all the female councilors were in commercial wards. This meant that they were selected to represent the party in the constituencies where there was no vibrant political community. One of them

had to be nominated by the Provincial Chairman since the members of these communities were refused to nominate an election candidate demanding certain administrative issues to be addressed. This meant that the female councilors they did not have the mandate of the people as the candidate was imposed from the top. The commercial wards were the weakest areas of ZANU PF. With the formation of the MDC, whose political community included the workers, commercial farmers, the position of female councillors in commercial wards became precarious. This pattern of marginalizing women within the party by relegating them to the least important areas or areas with the weakest support base is also reflected at the national level. During the 2000 elections, for example, women who were representing ZANU PF had been nominated to stand in the urban areas where ZANU PF had limited credibility and where opposition to the ruling party was high.

Women in the GRDC

Since women were under represented in council, I found it necessary to look at the characteristics of each woman, her networks and the problems she faces in order to get an in depth understanding of women's subjective experience of participation in council. Women in politics face a number of obstacles. As mentioned in chapter two, women's socialisation process may not adequately prepare them for the cut-throat competition that characterises the formal political sphere. Women who enter politics may utilise social networks as a strategy to deal with some problems they encounter.

The concept of network may be used to mean the group of people with whom an individual closely interacts. An individual may know and interact with a number of people some of whom may or may not know each other. Mitchell (1969:4) notes that it is important to consider the content of a network rather than the characteristics and attributes of the social network. Women in politics have different types of networks, the networks that one develops are a result of the individual's personal skill and the resources that the person might have. I will look at the networks of each female councillor and will show how the different councillors' social networks are inter-related. The proximity between the councillor and each individual shows the importance of the network to

her. In all cases women utilise political, religious, neighbourhood networks. The importance of the network is also shown by the proximity of individual to the councillor.

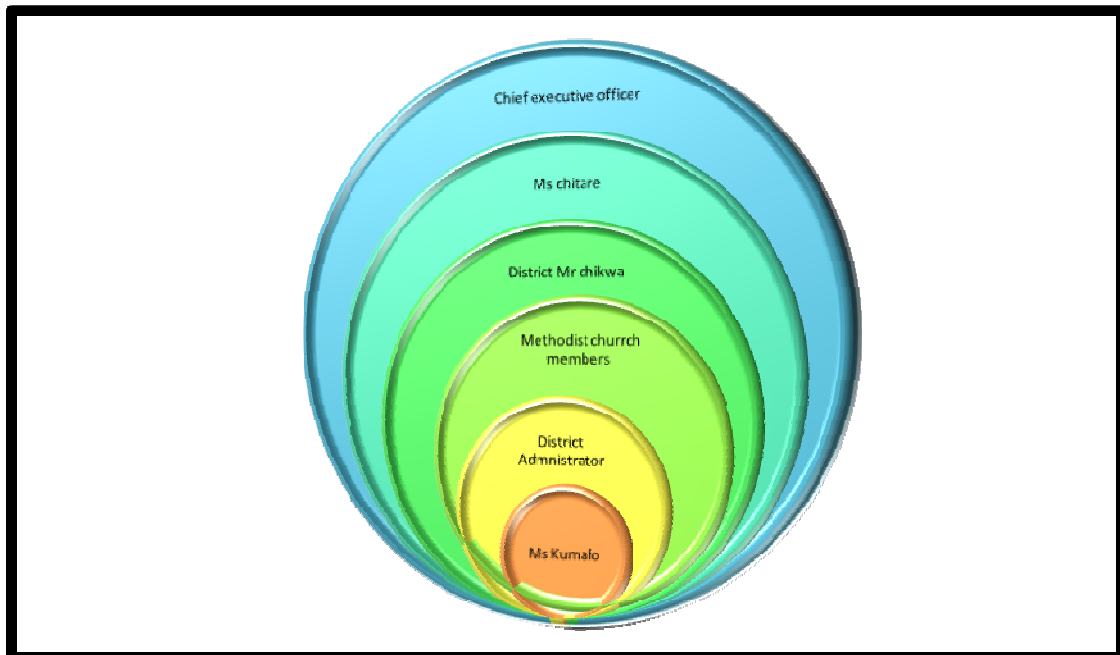
Ms Kumalo's networks

Ms Kumalo, aged 45, was the chairperson of the social services committee and represented Glen Forest Ward. In terms of education she had only gone as far as form 2 through the adult literacy programme. The acting Executive Officer pointed out that the social services committee was just as important as the other committees of council. However, he absent mindedly said that if any of the MDC members were elected as councillors then the best thing to do would be to make sure they were in the social services committee. In other words, in the event that some undesirable groups are elected into council, placing them into the social services committee would help to minimise the input and impact that a person could have in council. Women who participate in politics like Ms Kumalo are often relegated to the traditional feminine areas of health, social services and child welfare.

Networks with the chairman of council

Ms Kumalo was highly respected by the Chairman of council since her husband had been an active member of the party. He also worked for the Metropolitan Bank and was highly respected by the community. Ms Kumalo was able to get information about important party events before the other councillors. She also managed to get information concerning potential funding, for instance, in her ward one NGO, the Women Aids Support Network was able to start an AIDS awareness programme in the ward for commercial farm workers. This helped to broaden the political support for Ms Kumalo. On the other hand, the Chairman of council hoped to get support for himself if there were to be any elections taking place within the party. This behavior is in line to Scott's concept of covenant (Hyden 1990) whereby the individual's contribution is with a expectation of mutual performance based on an agreement about norms and governs future conduct.

Fig 4.2 Ms Kumalo's networks



Networks with the District Administrator

Ms Kumalo networked with the female District Administrator. The two were both members of the Methodist church and shared information concerning council activities. While the councillor was able to receive information from the District Administrator, the District Administrator received support and companionship from Ms Kumalo. Most councillors were hostile to the District Administrator because of her apolitical stance in politics. For instance she argued that she was not a political appointee but an administrative one. This was seen by some councillors as a way of saying that she belonged to the opposition party, that is, the Movement for Democratic Change.

Networks with the Methodist Church

As highlighted above, Ms Kumalo utilised some members of the church in political activities. In her ward that is Glen Forest, Ms. Kumalo was able to cultivate political capital by participating in church activities such as, visiting the sick, attending funerals,

participating in development projects in the community. She also informed the church to support projects that were introduced in her community. In return the community offered her political support and this made it easier during the campaigning period to mobilize some community members to participate in rallies.

Networks with fellow councillors

Ms Kumalo was a rather quiet member of council. She interacted most closely with Mr. Chikwa and Ms Chitare who was one of the female council members; Ms Kumalo would ask Mr. Chikwa to speak for her since she was not fluent in English. Ms Kumalo was often called upon to speak since she was a chairperson of the social services committee. However, her networks were not always effective because Mr. Chikwa had mood swings and sometimes refused to speak for her. He was a member of the social services committee and felt that council was not taking him seriously. Ms Kumalo also interacted with Ms Chitare and she also discussed her programs and problems with her. The two however, did not have much time together during council meetings, each of them attempted to talk to high party members rather than talking among themselves.

Networks with the executive officer

Ms Kumalo also networked with the Executive officer for her committee. He was a technical officer whose duties were mainly administrative. The Executive officer helped in explaining certain issues, which were discussed in the social services council. He defended the interests of this committee during council meetings. This made it easier for some of the proposals made by this committee to be accepted, for instance, those concerning the need for Red Cross boxes to be purchased for all the schools in Chinyika. This network also had limited effectiveness because councillors complained that administrative staff were encroaching on the councillors duties.

Ms Chabvo networks

Ms Chabvo represented the Greater Bromley commercial ward, in Goromonzi district. She was a well-educated married woman who held a teaching diploma and who was

articulate in dealing with council affairs. She however, was limited in her participation because she represented a commercial ward. She also could not attend most of these meetings, as she was a teacher with a tight work schedule. She networked with men and was respected because of her education. She frequently expressed her opinions although these often took the form of two sentences, agreeing supporting or seconding a moved motion. Ms Chabvo was an outspoken woman who networked with the administrative staff. Although she was a member of the planning, licensing and development committee, she had also been elected into the agriculture and conservation committee but refused to accept the post because of what she called a busy schedule which included her teaching duties and looking after her children.

Networks with administrative staff

Ms Chabvo cultivated good relations with the administrative staff, which, as I pointed out earlier, were important in up-turning the decisions of council, sometimes, by saying that some decisions were impractical or by failing to provide important documents to support certain decisions. The administration staff also manipulated the councillors and sought to establish social and political relationships with the councillors. Ms Chabvo was able to network with these because of her proximity to the council's offices as she taught at nearby school, which is located a few metres from the GRDC. The council employees could use some of these employees to further their own goals in terms of employee conditions, privileges and duties. For instance, Ms Hansen who had resigned from council employment in protest of the fact that she was being asked to do duties which were not in her job description, used her networks in council to enable her to be reinstated into council. Ms Chabvo who supported the reinstatement of Ms Hansen and she in turn received information on the various councillors from Ms Hansen.

Networks with local community

March and Taqqu (1982) noted that in many communities women maintain many of the inter-family village commitments, such as sick visits or condolences especially when they get older. In some situations women who seek to acquire skills for real active power may

use casual relations to get into power. This was the case with Ms Chabvo who was a member of a number of local community organisations, which included the Bromley, Ruwa, Acturus Women's Ratepayers Association (BRARWA). In this organisation, Ms. Chabvo was given an honorary position to chair the meetings and to advise the association on some ways of improving the impact of community development projects. Like the Goromonzi Ratepayers Association, which shall be discussed in chapter 6, BRARWA was an association, which was an offshoot of the combined male and female group of the Bromley, Ruwa and Acturus Ratepayers Association. Women felt that some of the issues affecting women were not being dealt with effectively by the combined group. Ms Chabvo was seen as an important person in the community because of her interests in gender. The women who were members of this group were mostly urbanised women and supported the councillor. Ms Chabvo was also a member of the Methodist Church, and had joined the various burial associations. Her participation in these associations enabled her to pay courtesy calls to a large number of people in the community. This enabled her to interact with a large group of people in the community to her political advantage.

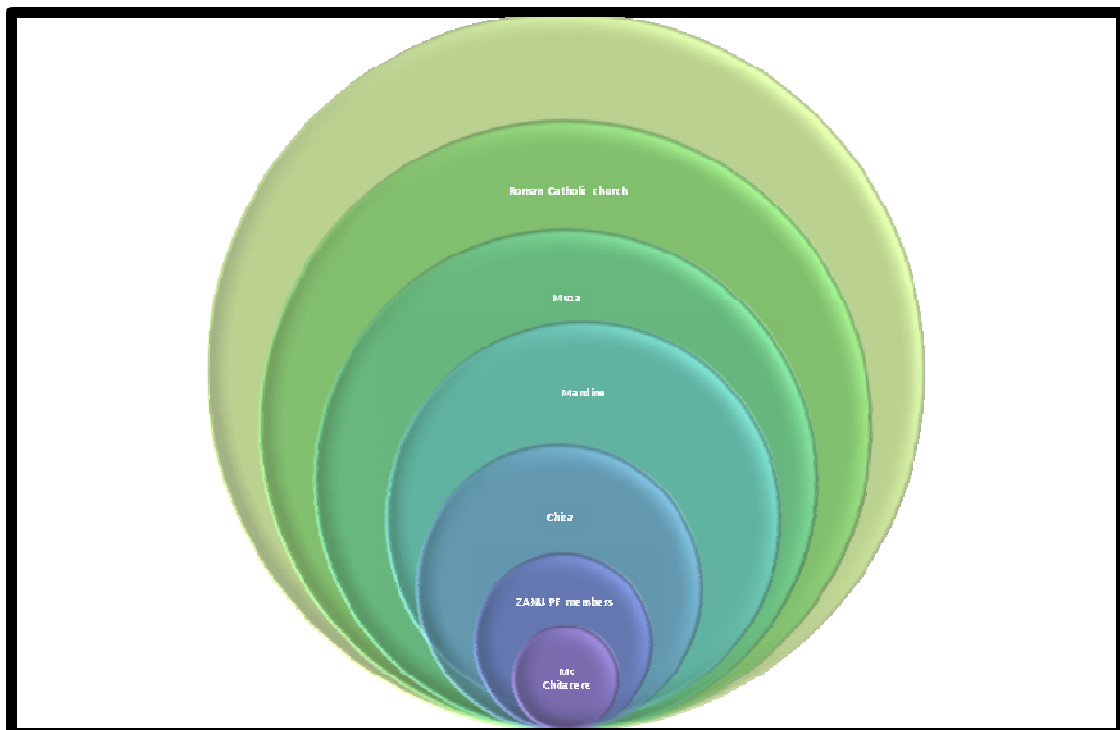
Networks with fellow councillors

Ms Chabvo effectively networked with other councillors. Her most significant networks however, were with Councillor Mare and councillor Handise. Councillor Mare was a relatively well-educated man who had just received a Bachelor of Science degree in education. Mr. Mare had been in council for a number of years. Ms Chabvo pointed out during discussions that this man helped her to settle in council by telling her some of the problems normally found in council. She discussed her problems with this councillor and hinted that it was easier to talk to educated people rather than to those who were not. Ms Chabvo also networked with Mr Handise whom she regarded as her son in law. She was able to get information concerning council meetings, and programmes in council since she could not attend all the meetings. She in turn supported the two councillors if they moved a motion in council and during debates. Ms Chabvo also took an active part in the social life of council members. She would attend meetings and funerals if she was

informed of them. She argued that this was important since one never knew her own day of need. This enabled her to get the respect of fellow councillors.

She used her interpersonal skills to network with the other male councillors. Ms Chabvo's networks were numerous and the other female councillors regarded her as someone who was going 'too far' in politics.

Figure 4.3. Ms Chitare Networks



Ms Chitare

Ms Chitare represented Mandalay Park ward, which was also an area, surrounded by white commercial farmers. She was 46 years old and a widow of a liberation war hero. She had reached form two during the Rhodesian area and therefore could be considered relatively educated.

Networks with ZANU PF Officials

Ms Chitare had a long history of participation in ZANU PF politics. She had been an active member of the party during the liberation struggle. Her husband had also been an important member of the party during his lifetime. As the widow of a man who was said to have contributed much to the liberation struggle, Ms Chitare was nominated for the position of councillor. She had support, which came from the highest ZANU PF authority at the district level, that is, the Member of Parliament for Goromonzi. She had also been an active member of the woman's league and although nominated from the top, she had some grassroots support because of her participation in sub-district structures. She used her influence in ZANU PF to gain political mileage. She would in turn support ZANU PF in its policies and programs on the ground. As a leader of the community she would be an entry point in community based projects for ZANU PF which were used to mobilise support for ZANU PF.

Networks with fellow councillors

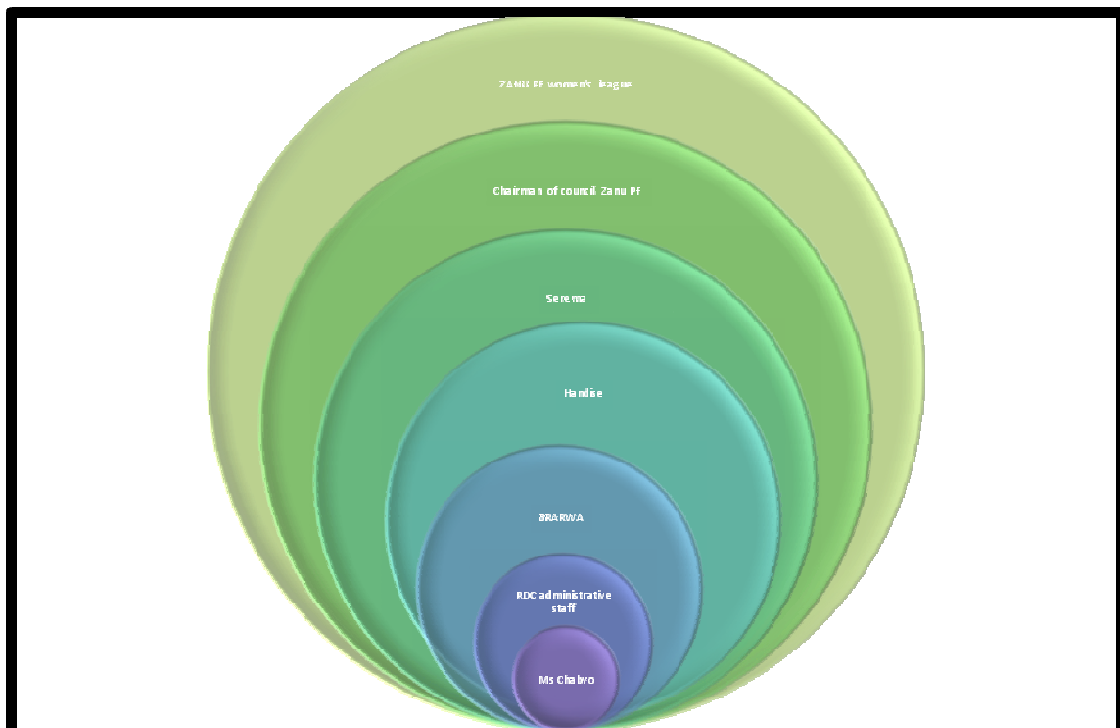
Ms Chitare networked with a number of male councillors. These included councillor Chiza, Mandine, Kunye and Muza. She interacted with these men and shared information with them concerning council activities. They also plotted against some councillors whom they saw as trying to dominate council, for instance, councillor Chikwa and Handise. The councilor and her fellow councilors provided each other with mutual support against other councilors. This was a way of ensuring that those dominating council's power to do so was diluted by resistance direct and indirect offered by Ms Chitare and her network of councilors. These two councillors also had close networks with Ms Chabvo. Women participating in the GRDC did not always find themselves as friends in politics rather at times they pulled each other down as they formed alliances for different purposes with different men.

Networks with the Roman Catholic Church woman's fellowship.

Ms Chitare's participation in the Roman Catholic Church was a facilitator for her effective involvement in politics. Her participation in the church enabled her to be an acceptable candidate for election to the post of councillor. She used the church to inform

the people of upcoming events. The church provided her with support during the campaigning period. It should be pointed out that the church itself as an institution did not do much but rather it was individuals within the institution who supported the councillor and gave her the opportunity to address the church. Participation in church activities is an important activity for women's respectability. Women who go to church are usually seen as virtuous individuals who live 'pure' lives. This enabled Ms Chitare to be elected to the post of councillor even though her husband had died. In council however, her extensive networks with male councillors were viewed with suspicion since she was a single woman. The councillor and some of the administrative staff made fun of her and made comments of her 'moves' towards men. This in turn resulted her in shying away from some of the councillors. Her networks in council were therefore limited by her marital status. This resulted in her being alienated. However, as a councillor she had power, which, was rooted in her strong connections with party officials. Her networks were not as dense as those of Ms Chabvo.

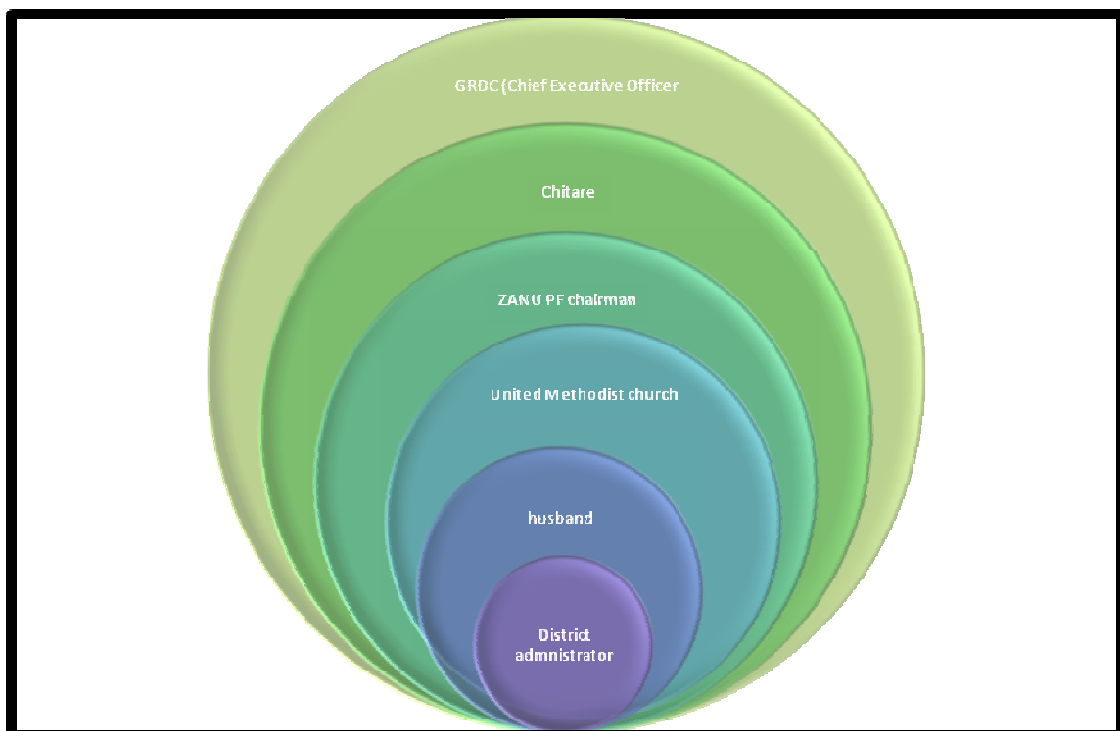
Fig 4.3.



The District Administrator (DA)

The last woman who was influential in the GRDC was the DA. The DA is a civil servant employed by the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing. She is the government's most senior official at the district level. The DA was a woman aged thirty-five and held a Bachelor of Science Degree in Politics and Administration. She felt that as a civil servant she had to be neutral. Her political neutrality was viewed with suspicion, since she did not openly support ZANU PF and most people thought that she was an MDC supporter. The fact that she went to the United Methodist church which was regarded as 'Muzorewa's church', made her susceptible to criticism from the some people in Goromonzi. The District administrator was accused of refusing to register important people for resettlement. In her own defense she argued that it was her duty to follow the 'correct' procedures for resettlement.

Fig 4.4: District administrator's networks



She was expected to support the ruling party because she was a civil servant. She had to chant the ZANU PF slogan during the meetings. Some war veterans had threatened to

beat her up for forestalling the resettlement programme by refusing to attend to their demands. She had refused to register some war veterans without the necessary documents. One of the councillors with whom she networked had informed her that the war veterans intended to beat her up. She avoided a confrontational situation by travelling to Marondera on the day of the proposed beating.

The District Administrator's networks with the Chairman of council who was a respected ZANU PF official helped in avoiding this disaster. He went out of his way to explain to the war veterans that they had to follow proper procedures for registering for the resettlement. He threatened that those members who were being violent to the District Administrator and any other government official were tarnishing the image of ZANU PF and therefore would be punished accordingly.

She also utilised absence as a way of avoiding difficult situations, for instance, in Chinyika there were two families who were fighting for the headmanship. While the DA had attended the meeting the first time, she pointed out that she would not return to the area until the villagers had solved their problems. In fact, most of the villagers pointed out that they did not 'know' the DA or that they had never seen her. In Shona language, when people say that they do not know somebody they may mean that they do not know the person with such a name but they might also mean that they do not recognise the authority of that person. The same thing was also said of the councillor of Chinyika by some village heads. (The issue of village heads was discussed in chapter 3). The people compared her to the former DA who was an ardent supporter of ZANU PF and was perceived to be friendly to the people. However, she was also disliked because she was from Mutare and spoke a different dialect from the people of Goromonzi district who were mostly Zezuru. We therefore find that the DA developed strategic networks to deal with problems she encountered in politics.

Conflict between councillors and the administrative staff

The work of councillors is limited by the presence of the administrative staff, who are more educated, who also claim to know more about the provisions of the Rural Councils

Act than the councillors. In any committee of council, there is an executive officer, who attends the meeting as a technocrat who is supposed to be a “non political neutral player” in the committee. His role is mainly to advise the committee. In the roads committee, there were six councillors and eight members of the administrative staff and six other members from the different government departments, which included AREX, Ministries of Water Development, Health, and Education. The administrative staff overpowered the members of the roads committee. The administrative staff accused the councillors of having ambitious programs, which were not practicable. The councillors viewed the administrative staff as a hindrance to progress.

Conclusion

The participation of women in the Rural District Council has been facilitated by the ruling party’s policies on gender most of which are based on the liberation war ideologies. At the time of the research the opposition party had not been able to field any candidates in council elections. In Goromonzi District, the three female councillors had been elected on the basis of a party ticket. All had a strong history of political participation in ZANU PF politics at the cell, branch and district levels. Women also utilised their participation in a number of community projects to build political networks. Women are underrepresented in council and they are also relegated to the traditional feminine spheres of social services, planning and human resources. Women have utilised personal networks to gain political mileage in council. According to Long 2001: 132 individuals have the capacity to command scarce resources by virtue of their membership in networks and broader structures. In Goromonzi Women were able to transform social capital for political mileage. Once in politics women were able to mobilize these network to support them in attaining their political goals. The networks in this instance were mostly enabling rather than disabling. As noted by Long social networks do not always make a positive contribution as they sometimes lead to conflict and exclusion. For instance the membership of the DA to the UANC led her to be viewed negatively in Goromonzi. Women participating in council politics have a general feeling of being empowered. However their power is limited because of they are only three in a council dominated by men. These women, however enjoy a degree of involvement in decision

making because they have been incorporated into mainstream politics. This means they are entering politics under conditions set and determined by the state. Women skillfully negotiate power within council but have remained at the periphery of council decision-making. All the women were mature, aged well over 40 years. All the women were relatively educated having spent at least eight years in formal schools. Given the limited participation of women in formal politics, it is necessary to now look at the other avenues of political participation. The next two chapters will discuss the participation of women in non-formal political structures.

Chapter 5: Non-formal politics: Civil society organisations

Introduction

The previous chapters have highlighted how women participate in formal political institutions. In this chapter, women's participation in local level politics will be broadened to include other locations of power contestation, that is, civil society. At the grassroots level, civil society appears more accessible because women combine politics with childcare and domestic duties. Eirhon (1993), Tripp (1994) and Geisler (1995) among others note that women have responded to exclusion from formal politics by seeking tangible solutions to problems caused by state policies such as economic structural adjustment programs and they have created a space for themselves in the civil society. However, Waylen (1998 :88) points out that civil society and formal politics are both complex terrains where women have to fight for recognition. Bratton (1996: 407) notes that civil society organisations such as schools, churches, unions and interest groups can legitimate the prevailing political regimes by reinforcing or challenging the way power is exercised. Civil society is that area or arena of society between the household and the state. Groups are constituted at a level beyond family, which interact with the state to pursue their interests. The relations between the state and civil society can be co-operative, inter-dependent, or confrontational. In Chinyika, three organisations were. These included the Chinyika Farmers group, Chinyika Livestock Development Group, and Goromonzi Women's Residents Association (GWRA).

Civil society, the state and women's participation in politics

In order to understand women's participation within civil society, it is necessary to look at civil society, the state, and interaction processes in these institutions (*see also chapter one*). The state is a compulsory association, which organizes domination. Azarya (1996) notes that, the state is an organisation within society, which co-exists and interacts with other formal and informal organisations, from families to economic associations. The state seeks predominance over other organisations. It aims to set binding rules regarding other organisations or at least authorize other organisations to make such rules.

During the colonial period, community organizations in black communities were trampled out in an attempt to relegate them to permanent political irrelevance. However, there was also a large group of women who participated in women's clubs and associations. According to Weinrich (1957:167) in some rural communities noted that a prime concern for male farmers was to control a large labourforce, they were opposed to any of their dependants joining non agricultural voluntary associations such as those organized by Christian missionaries and wives of school teachers. They saw the clubs as a threat to their economic wellbeing and feared that if their wives and daughters participated in them they would become to independent. Parpart in her study on women and agricultural resurgence in sub-Saharan Africa noted that some of the women's clubs or associations of a purportedly recreational nature may contain elements of social conflict between the sexes. After independence, the ruling party ZANU PF claimed to be the sole representative of the people and under the guise of this claim, the party declared itself to be the umbrella organization of all social movements. Rahmato (1991: 23) points out that the developmental state in post independent Africa reflected the ideas of those who supported the concept of state regulations and allocation of resources as the best instrument for producing and distribution of a wide variety of goods and services for all.

The propensity of peasants to engage in organizational activity is related to the extent of state and market penetration into rural areas. The proliferation of peasant organisations stems from three factors: they are flexible, familiar and practical, they are based on real interests and knowledge of the people involved. Rural organisations may intervene in the economic political sphere and may extend themselves to engage in welfare and investment activities.

Azarya (1996: 83) points out that the state is overwhelmed by pressure from many sectors in society and is not always able or willing to accommodate in its sphere of action, all those knocking at its door. Kasfir (1994) noted that farmers all over Africa have to cope with ineffectual states. In the 1990's era the state's capacity to serve communal farmers shrunk considerably. This could be attributed to the new liberalist's policies which

emphasizes that the state must do less and cut back on its expenditure. In the face of dwindling resources from the state, communal farmers have developed strategies to protect their interest and profit. The strategies used by farmers include: (1) Seeking niches where personal action can lead to direct state aid, (2) Taking chances in the market and (3) Forming collective ventures. The Chinyika farmers group was formed on the initiative of government, however with the passage of time it became an organisation which operated outside the government. The Forestry Commission, Zimbabwean Farmers Union and private companies engaged in agricultural marketing, such as, the Zimbabwe Fertilizer Company (ZFC), Seed Co became the main external players in community based farmers organization. The state withdrew its support and expected the organisation to fend for itself.

Civil society organisations in Chinyika: The Chinyika farmers group

The Chinyika farmers group is a small community based organisation composed of people from the 6 VIDCOs of Chinyika, that is, Chimoyo, Chatibuka, Nyadzonya Chamukamuvhu, Nyikandeyedu and Chanetsa/Chaminuka. Its main functions include: (1) the development of community, through training of farmers , (2) promoting co-operation among farmers in order to reduce the cost of fertilizers seed and their transportation and (3) to reduce the transporting outputs to the market.

Farming in Chinyika was mainly done by women. This could be attributed to the fact that most of the men are involved in wage labour in the nearby commercial farms or migrate to Marondera or Harare in search of employment in the formal and informal sectors. The women were also involved in the day to day management of the land while the male migrants retained some control over some decision. There were more than 80 female members in the group which had a total of over 150 members. The membership fluctuated from season to season. Although women were the majority of the farmers group members they were under-represented in leadership positions.

Among the women in the leadership, one held the post of chairman. This position was a highly respectable one in the community. However, the researcher observed that the

woman chair was afraid to make decisions and referred all issues to the male vice-chair who seemed to have the power and whose wishes were normally upheld. According to some interviewees, the membership of the organisation had declined because of the leadership's unpopularity. At the time of research, the group had problems of survival as many felt that the current leadership was not carrying the interests of the farmers to the relevant authorities. This necessitated all meetings to be organised around the dates of the more successful groups such as the farmers Livestock Development Group.

Membership in Chinyika farmers group

There were no clearly set criteria for membership. It was said that everyone who had an interest in farming was free to join the group. However, certain resources were necessary before one could think of joining the group. Access to land was one of the most important requirements for one to become a member. Secondly, one had to be able to save money which could be used to contribute resources to the group to pay for the transportation of agricultural inputs and outputs. The majority of the members of the group were women who felt that they needed to develop their skills in farming. The number of men participating was lower than that of women. This was due to two main factors, firstly, the majority of the men were migrant labourers who did not reside in the area and secondly, the men in the area were critical of the activities of the group. Some seemed to consider their own methods to be much better than those taught by agricultural extension officers. Men, mainly participated temporarily through competitions. Some men boasted that their harvest was much larger than that of people who were in the group.

Active participation required time from the members of the group. Time is a resource, which some people have while others do not. Older women with mature children or who have daughters in-law were freer to participate than young women with younger children. Young women therefore tended to be underrepresented in many organisations which required travelling and spending time away from home. On the other hand, young men participated in the group more than older men. This could be attributed to the fact that young men felt that they needed to acquire new knowledge. The farmers made some contribution to the group according to their income. Savings were made during the dry

season. When the rainy season came, the representative of the Zimbabwe Fertilizer Company, (ZFC) resident in the area, would then, organise for the farmers to buy the fertilizers or seed in bulk.

The researcher also found within the community, persons who did not participate in the farmers group. Before 2000, the farmers group was seen as successful, under the direction of a charismatic young man who worked for Windmill Private Limited. During his time, that is, from 1996 to 1998, he organised the farmers in such a way that there was transparency. He was known to be very active and moved from homestead to homestead encouraging people to join the group. He also went out of his way to look for donors, to organise meetings and agricultural shows with other groups. However, when he was transferred to another area, the group's viability declined, since the farmers had not yet organised themselves and had developed something similar to a dependency syndrome. With the departure of this man, membership subsequently declined from over 200 members to about 150 members. The Windmill representative who replaced the first one was approached by the villagers who asked him to organise their access to fertilizers and transport. This venture was not successful as the money for the project disappeared. The villagers had at first continued making their savings through the group. However, with time, it became clear that the *Sahomwe* (treasurer) who was also the Agritex representative abused the money. Although the contributions had been made, the farmers did not receive any fertilizers or seed from the representative. During harvest time, the farmers had to take their products to the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) using other forms of transport and not that organised by the group. The group eventually collapsed and a new group evolved in 1999.

According to the villagers, there was no reason why private companies like Windmill should lead their group. The villagers felt that only someone from the group and the community could lead the group not an outsider. However, Agritex officials, Forestry Commission and Seed Co representatives were called to ensure that the villagers would acquire the necessary knowledge from private companies and agronomists. While men dominated the first group of the Chinyika Farmers Group, the second group was a smaller union dominated by women. The new group's main activities included, encouragement of

better farming methods, soil conservation and forestry conservation. The groups however shared the same simple name of Farmers Group (*Group revarimi*). The activities at the time of the study included tree planting, prevention of soil erosion, chicken or cattle raising, the utilization of indigenous and natural methods for maintaining soil fertility and conservation.

Leadership wrangles in the Chinyika farmers group

In civil society, as in formal politics, women have to deal with problems of marginality and isolation. Civil society and formal political spheres are both complex terrains where women negotiate power and authority.

The group, as noted earlier was made up of more women than men. The chairperson of the group was a woman. This woman was also wife of the chairperson of the livestock development committee. Although the two had been elected separately, the people viewed the two as selfish people who were trying to monopolise leadership positions in the community. While the two were elected by popular vote, the majority of the people resented the simultaneous holding of leadership positions by husband and wife. The villagers asked why the two should lead in both groups “...ndezevumba here?” (Is this a family affair?). Since the meetings were usually held simultaneously, feelings of resentment grew as the two addressed the meeting in their capacity as chairpersons. This among other factors, led to a decline in membership of the group. During an interview, the wife who was the chair of the farmers group indicated that she had discussed the issue with her husband and would have to resign since her leadership had proved to be unpopular.

When meetings were called some people did not turn up, initially the meetings were held on Thursdays but later had to be convened on Fridays in order to benefit from other community meetings. The councillor, who was also a member of the group had to intervene in this group. He argued that it did not matter that the people were not happy with the leadership committee, in any case those who were not happy had to come for meetings and air their views, instead of absconding the meetings. He encouraged the

committee to carry on with their work instead of wasting time changing committees since the 2000/2001 rainy season was almost starting.

According to the chair of the group she felt that the problems of the group could only be solved if she exited the political scene. She felt that she was subjected to humiliation and isolation because the majority of the women felt that as a woman she could not lead them as effectively as a man. On the other hand, the male dominated group of the leadership was unwilling to accept her as an equal. Some felt that the position of chairmanship belonged to a man. However, some women who participated in this group celebrated the departure of men from the group. Many of them pointed out that, farming is a woman's issue (*nyaya dzekurima inyaya dzemadzimai*). Some respondents pointed out that, it was easier to discuss with the chairman who was female. They felt free to ask questions and to visit the chairperson and to seek advice without fearing sexual accusations from other people. Although the two leaders had been elected separately and democratically, the woman felt pressured to resign. She pointed out that it was better for her to resign and concentrate on her family because the leadership position she held was bringing her more problems than benefits. Some men had not come out in the open and said that they did not want to be led by a woman.

Women and training in the Chinyika farmers group

About eight women within the group had taken lessons in farming and had earned themselves certificates, after successful completion of a farmers training course. The training was undertaken under the leadership of the Agricultural Extension Services Officer (*mudhomeni*). It was government policy in the 80's for extension workers to work with groups of farmers. Interested farmers within an area organised themselves into groups and met regularly with the local extension officer for information dissemination and training. These groups were originally called master farmers clubs. A master farmer was described as someone who had successfully completed a prescribed program of on-farm training under the supervision of agricultural extension staff. The concept was male biased but the fact that the men were migrant workers women were able to participate in the training. As pointed out earlier, farmers received technical support from the

government but the farmers themselves initiated the formation of the group and elected a committee and organised the day to day running of the group. In Zimbabwe, some civil society organisations work closely with the government while others strongly oppose government.

A second group of women in Chinyika had taken these courses, however they had not received certificates. The AREX official who was new claimed that those who had not received certificates had failed. This information was in contradiction with what the AREX official's predecessor had said. He had told the women that the certificates were being processed. This resulted in women forcefully demanding their certificates from the official. The women argued that although they were not formally educated to know much about agriculture they were sure they had passed. The official did not know much about these certificates as he was new. He had not been told anything about certificates and had therefore cooked a story about the certificates. This created mistrust from the women and community of the official and the institution he represented.

Donors and Chinyika Farmers Group

The main source of livelihood in Chinyika is farming. However, not everyone was participating in the Farmers group. Although the group was called the Farmers Group or (*Group revarimi*) it had political connotations of exclusion. Like many other organisations in rural areas, political affiliation to the ruling party was an important base for inclusion or exclusion of one in an organisation. The Farmers Group was also involved in other small projects undertaken by women. One such group was made up of only 3 persons who received funds to carry out a sewing project. Once people form a group local donor funds become easily accessible, for instance, the Farmers Group members were especially targeted by private companies such as Cargill, Pioneer, Seed CO, Pannar and government organisations such as AREX, and civil organisations like Women and AIDS Support Network and others as potential beneficiaries of development funds. All these players in the local scene came armed with resources and funds which could be given to participants in the group. These included farm implements such as

ploughs, scotchcarts, fertilizers, household goods such as pots, pans and plates and financial resources.

One of the most important things needed for the success of any group meeting was the presence of donors who would provide food during the meeting. If the villagers knew that there would be no food, attendance was always low. Some leaders in the farmers' group tended to withhold information about the presence of visitors in order to minimize the number of people who would be present for any meeting. This was a ploy by the committee members to maximise personal gains from external players. Agricultural Extension Officers were important facilitators for these meetings. The leaders utilized patronage relations by hand picking those they wanted to attend certain meetings. Bratton (1996) explains patronage as personalized relationships between actors or sets of actors commanding unequal wealth status or influence, based on conditional loyalties and involving mutually beneficial transactions. Transactions between followers and patrons are reciprocal in that a patron offers material rewards and opportunity for social mobility in return for political support. The rural local elites stand as nets between the poor people and the outside world (Chambers: 1993:13). The community's powerlessness is reflected in the ease with which the rural elite act as a net to intercept benefits intended for the poor. The poor are robbed, cheated and are prevented from accessing resources from the state and private sector. For example, in the first meeting attended the researcher by there were only handful of the members. Later on when the researcher went round the village from door to door on familiarisation tour, she found that the majority of people had not been informed of the meeting. The chairman confirmed this and said that she did not like to invite people to meetings especially if they were not regular members.

The major source of differentiation within rural communities lies in the relationship of rich peasants to the state bureaucracy, through which they can control access to material resources and political influence. Under a capitalist modernisation strategy for rural development, emergent farmers, who are relatively well off are usually identified as the target group for official development projects. In Chinyika, leaders in the Farmers Group were also leaders in a variety of other projects, such as sewing and dairy farming. These

people were relatively better off than their fellow farmers. In a rural setting there is a tendency for some groups or even families to monopolize leadership positions which allow them access to the state, private companies and non-governmental organisations from which they can tap resources. The poor who are often the target groups of development projects are unable to participate and also excluded from leadership positions.

The Salvation Army dairy project

The church is another section of civil society which provides resources to the communities in the rural areas. Another project introduced to the Farmers Group was the dairy project initiated by the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army church initiated a dairy project intended to increase the income for local people and thus economically empower the Chinyika community. The Salvation Army was the oldest Christian institution in Goromonzi and had two of the oldest schools. These were Chinyika primary and secondary schools. The majority of the persons in the community had belonged to this church. However, with the introduction of new churches, the church lost some of its members but still remained as the most popular church in the community.

In Goromonzi District the church's relationship to the state was cooperative rather than confrontational. Although the dairy farming group was formed by a church organisation, it did not exclude those intending to participate in the group who were not members of the church. Everyone was 'free' to join. Under this project, the Salvation Army lent a dairy cow to the beneficiary. The beneficiary would then nurse the cow until it gave birth. The person given the cow could sell the milk from the cow as his own. He could also own the calf but the original cow remained the property of the Salvation Army. In the event that the cow died before giving birth to a calf then the beneficiary had to pay Z\$7 000 back to the Salvation Army.

The members of this group included mainly the community leaders. These were the councillor, headman, Salvation Army pastor, chairperson of the Farmers Group and the Livestock Development Group and other high-ranking community persons. The local

elite are relatively well off in assets and income. They are spatially, socially and politically at the centre of things, well-informed and able to draw on governments resources. They can also draw resources from non-government organisations and private companies. Most programs are either designed intentionally for the elite or so designed and implemented that they are likely to be intercepted by the economically powerful. The dairy project was considered a high-risk project by most of the poor villagers. The conditionality of paying \$7 000.00 back to the church in the event of the death of a cow meant that the project was not open to the poor who had no security in the event that the heifer died before it gave birth or if it did not make profits. The poor peasants are usually frozen out of the distribution of resources by conditionalities and lack of security.

On the other hand, those who had managed to get the heifer experienced fear and tension because of the risk they had taken. When the researcher arrived in Chinyika it was during a critical time when most of the heifers were giving birth. The farmers congratulated each other on the successful birth of a calf. At first, the researcher got the impression that the farmers were congratulating each other on the birth of children. It was only later that the researcher found out that the people were talking about cattle. The dairy cattle were seen as very important investments in the local community. Only one person had a heifer which had a difficult birth which resulted in the death of the calf. This was treated as a tragedy by co-farmers. The farmers knew that their economic status would be raised if they successfully engaged in the dairy project.

The project members used this as an opportunity to separate themselves from the communal dip tank activities. The main activities which every member of Chinyika communal lands was expected to carry out included fetching water and buying chemicals for the dip tank. These people were able to manipulate and maneuver their position within the community. They argued that they could not do any of the activities because they had dairy cattle which could not be dipped in the communal dip tank but had to be treated using chemicals different from those used for all other cattle. The Dip tank committee, which shall be discussed below forced all the members of the community to participate in the activities of maintenance of the dip-tank whether they used their own chemicals or the communal dip tank. The chair argued that it would not be possible to

know whose cattle were dipping. However, those participating in the dairy project were able to negotiate with the committee. Their claim was accepted partly because those in the dairy project were the most powerful members of the community.

The majority of the participants were older men and women who had the resources and space to keep a dairy cow. Cattle rearing is skewed in favour of older women. Young women did not take part because of lack of necessary security. Thus, unless an attempt is made to enable young women to participate, the project is likely to reinforce the existing age and class inequalities. In fact, all the participants in the Salvation Army project were married women living with their husbands. These husbands could be called upon to help their wives in the case of the death of the cow or calf and to help with the buying of the food for dairy cattle. The earning power of women is less than that of men, thus women have to rely on their husbands or brothers to help them if they fail.

The Livestock Development Committee

While the farmers group was a voluntary group whose aims were related to the sourcing of resources for crop production and marketing of agricultural produce, the Chinyika Livestock Development Group focused on livestock, particularly cattle. The group was not a voluntary group but had an element of compulsory membership for all villagers who had cattle. The main aims of the livestock development group were: (1) to enable people to independently monitor the dipping of their cattle without the help of government, (2) to ensure that there would be no theft of cattle (3) to ensure that the villagers operated within the boundaries of government legislation and (4) to ensure that the property of individuals was safeguarded. The group worked hand-in-hand with other organisations, such as, the veterinary service department and the Ministry of Agriculture. There were two committees whose duties were to keep money and withdraw it for purposes of buying chemicals for dipping.

According to political rhetoric, the farmers had to manage their affairs without government intervention. However, the Veterinary Department had written a letter to the LDC stating the amount to be paid as a contribution by the villagers. While the farmers

had agreed to make a contribution of \$10 for each head of cattle, the veterinary department stipulated that money to be paid was \$20 for each animal. This was resisted by the farmers who demanded partial independence from the Veterinary Department. In Zimbabwe, the government has been 'withdrawing' from the rural areas yet it has tried to maintain its control in civil society.

Composition of the committee

All villagers in Chinyika were expected to be members of the group. However, the researcher noted that men were better-represented in this group. The committee was made of 1 woman and 5 men. Women were underrepresented in the decision-making positions. The woman in the committee held the position of secretary. The Livestock Development Committee worked hand in hand with other state organisations, such as, the veterinary department and the Ministry of Agriculture. The duties of the LDC were to keep money and withdraw it for purposes of buying chemicals for dipping. According to political rhetoric, the farmers had to manage their affairs without government intervention. However, the veterinary department had written a letter to the LDC stating that all farmers should pay an extra \$2 per head of cattle as a contribution to the Livestock Development Trust (LDT). This resulted in conflict between the villagers and the Livestock Development Trust. They argued that if they had been weaned from the government then they had to be free to be able to choose the amount of money to contribute for the keeping of their cattle. The Livestock Development Trust was composed of 6 men. The LDT is a national body which appeared to come with decision from the government. The people of Chinyika were not clear about the mandate of LDT since there had been asked to form their own committees.

Participation

In a number of meetings attended by the researcher, participation by women in the LDC was limited. Participation here will be used to mean the effective involvement of women in decision making. Women's participation in politics, helps them to influence the allocation of resources and values in their community (Mba : 1982 : 80) In this instance,

women tended to be excluded from decision making in the LDC particularly because of their lack of ownership of cattle. The number of women who owned cattle in their own right was small as compared to that of men.

Women opinioned that their interests were being ignored by those in power. During one meeting some women started mumbling because the chair was speaking with his back to the women. During meetings, which were usually held under a *mukuyu* tree, the men sat on logs while the women sat on the grass. This was a reflection of gender inequalities which are based in cultural practices. The sitting positions which were culturally determined made it sometimes possible for the chair to ignore the women by addressing men only. In fact, the chairman and most male speakers tended to pick on men and ignore women in selecting contributors to the discussion. When women spoke, the chair would sometimes ignore the point and later accept it if it came from a man. Women often shouted (*tarisai kuno*) (please look at us too) and begged for attention, to indicate their discontent and to attract attention. Women sometimes started talking loudly among themselves to interrupt the meeting as a sign of discontent with being ignored. The fact that the men spoke with his back to the women also provided women with a space to speak unseen. This resistance to male power was useful in getting attention and space as women but did not actually result in changes in male behaviour. It is important to note women were not completely powerless as they could disrupt proceedings of meetings. In this meeting as in other meetings attended by the researcher older widowed women always tended to be freer to speak in public than young women. Older women could speak without fear of being seen as 'unwomanly.' They had respect which came with age and young women almost never spoke during meetings. Whereas married women had to be cautious, older women were less bound by cultural restrictions.

The LDC sought to maintain some degree of independence from the state. The state had vested in the village head power over cattle through by-laws. Some of the by-laws included the prevention of cruelty to animals. The laws prohibited the villagers from using their cattle during the night, beating them too much and carrying heavy loads. The villagers rejected these laws and made their own rules which went along with their norms and values. They believed that anyone who owned cattle had the right to use it according

to his or her own will. The village heads who are the gate keepers of these by-laws of the state were seen as lazy and people who did not have cattle. The LDC was a sphere, which created opportunities for those people who existed outside the state's bureaucratic structure and the traditional leadership structure, to have an opportunity to participate in politics and to hold leadership positions. The villagers believed it was now time to make laws which suited their environment since they had been "weaned" from the government. This was largely through their own administration of cattle dipping and control for livestock care.

Party politics and the LDC

Among the most significant form of organisation outside the state and the private sector in Zimbabwe are the numerous community based organisations, including farmers associations, women's groups, burial associations and traditional health groups. Moyo (1993) postulated reasons for the poorly developed civil society in Zimbabwe. These included: (1) The government's focus on deracialisation rather than transforming the colonized meant participation was constrained to mean the replacement of white figures by black figures. (2) The psycho-political legacy of the guerrilla struggle, that is, control based on fear rather than tolerance of individual values and identities. This mode of conduct has continued and has contributed to an environment where fear and violence dominate the political process.

After independence, the government encouraged producer co-operatives across all sectors as an important step to a new form of social and economic organisation that represented a community of free individuals. The government was to play an important role as a facilitator. Within the LDC and the LDT, the ZANU PF representative was given respect. The ZANU PF district chairman was accorded voice and space to air his views. Before the meeting was addressed, the chairman of the LDC introduced the meeting through a prayer and ZANU PF slogan *Pamberi nemusangano!* (forward with the party!) He then went on to introduce the important people present these included the headman, the councillor and the ZANU PF district chairman. For those who were not members of ZANU PF participation in the LDC was difficult as one could not make

acceptable contributions. Political affiliation was an important factor for one to have meaningful input in the LDC.

Gender and women's participation in the Goromonzi Women's Ratepayers Association (GWRA)

This section focuses on women's participation in the Goromonzi Women's Residents Association. While the Farmers Group and the Livestock Development Group were made up of people from both sexes, the Goromonzi Women's Residents Association was an all female group. This group was an off-shoot from the Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. Women in the urban sector of Goromonzi have been excluded from mainstream development projects. The relationship of this association to the state was confrontational on one hand and interdependent on the state on the other hand. The women confronted the council officers with a petition demanding the collection of refuse. The GWRA was formed mainly around the reproductive roles of women in the community such as funerals, child rearing and domestic responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking and access to water.

The residents association was formed in 1999. It was a break-away move from the Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. The Goromonzi Ratepayers Association was formed with the aim of developing and protecting the interests of the ratepayers in Goromonzi. Its main concerns were the development of roads and maintenance of Goromonzi as a clean place for the residents. However, the women felt that, most of their interests were not being served by the male dominated Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. This led to the formation of the women's residents association. The association was started as a club by three women. Their main interest at the time, was the need to know their fellow residents better. One woman remarked that, "We live here but we do not know each other, so we thought it would be a good idea if we formed a club". The club developed into a rotating credit association. This was aimed mostly at helping each other and to pool resources. The women started by contributing money to the club, they then approached fellow residents to see if they would be interested in 'rounds' which are rotational money saving associations. These 'rounds' went on for

about three months. Their meetings as a club led them to discuss issues of their marginalization in the Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. The women found that, although the GRA was concerned with such issues as the maintenance of roads, security and development, it neglected issues, which touched on the everyday lives of women such as, collection of refuse, community reproductive roles such as preparation of food on weddings, attending of funerals and other such community gatherings. The women pointed out that, one finds that if there is a death within the community, men will sit around and expect to be served by women. The men in the community were not concerned about the logistics of food. The same happened with weddings and births celebrations within the community.

The informal association took shape around these mundane daily activities. This informal association permeated the domestic realm, but nonetheless extended women's influence into both a public world of their own as well as one that they shared with men. This association became crucial in the political economic, social and religious life of the community. The women also felt most of the people in Goromonzi were too unconcerned about development. These women could not join village based burial associations since they were not members of the villages but were newcomers to the area. These women also felt that the other church based burial organisations which acted as safety nets in times of death made contributions which were too insignificant. The church was criticized by some women, especially, on big gatherings such as weddings. Some people within the church always try to pull down the amount to be contributed by each member in the church. For example, some churches contributed \$20 per member for burial costs. The sum of \$20 was considered too small a contribution by most of the women in the GWRA. One woman commented that, in the church one cannot force people to make large contributions because most of the people in the villages are poor and they do not work. The women found that most of the women residing in the stands around Goromonzi could pay more than the villagers monthly because they were used to paying rentals. However, in recruiting its members, the Goromonzi Residents Associations could use its discretion to select members from the village community who could join the group.

Fig 5.1: Characteristics of women in the (GWRA) Committee

Names	Age	Marital Status	No. of years in education	Religion	Place of Origin
Chair: Mrs Apple	45	Married	17	Salvation army	Wedza
Vice.Chair: Mrs. Orange	40	Married	15	Salvation army	Chegutu
Treasurer: Mrs. Banana	35	Married	14	Methodist	Goromonzi
Secretary: Mrs. Green	32	Widow	22	Catholic	Wedza
Vice.Secretary: Mrs Blue	29	Married	14	Methodist	Shurugwi
Mrs. Red	56	Married	8	Salvation army	Goromonzi
Mrs. Pink	36	Married	8	Catholic	Mutoko
Mrs. Brown	40	Married	13	Catholic	Goromonzi

The majority of the membership in the GWRA were middle aged. Their ages ranged from 29 to 56. The committee members were relatively educated women who had spent a number of years in school. Most of the members in the committee were married with the exception of Mrs Green who became widowed during the time of the research (*see fig 5.1*).

The women in the group had decided to have their meetings at the local school. The total membership at the time of research was 43. The meetings were supposed to be held weekly. Attendance at meetings had declined. This was due to the fact that the chair of the organisation was always moving and spent most of her time in Wedza, where she was a headmistress.

The members of the group were expected to contribute a joining fee of Z\$50 and another contribution of Z\$50 per individual to buy cooking utensils. The combined joining fee

was banked and interest which accrued on the money was shared among the members at an annual general meeting held in August 2001. In the event of death Z\$ 3 000 was also to be paid as a contribution to the bereaved family . The GWRA would meet to discuss contributions for weddings and parties. At one of the meetings attended by the researcher, the women who attended were 20, which was half of the group. The women felt that some of the women were absenting themselves for no apparent reason. Some pointed out that, some women did not share the objectives of the leaders who wanted to develop a pre-school, because four of the top leaders had small children under the age five.

The other members felt that the leadership was trying to manipulate others for its own interest. Some who had children felt that the pre-schools in the area were developed enough for their children. There were three groups of women. One group particularly the leadership was interested in a pre-school which would cater for the children of the elite in Goromonzi. The other group was satisfied with the existing pre-schools. Then the third group felt that the introduction of another pre-school would disadvantage two members of the group who were themselves running pre-schools. The leaders became unpopular because they tried to sell the idea of a new pre- school. In fact during the meeting, the issue had been placed at the bottom of the list of items to be discussed. Some women were marching out before the meeting was over citing such factors as having to attend to sick children or visitors. The researcher later found that they were in fact protesting against the institution of a new pre- school.

The members had developed a constitution whose aims were to uplift the social status of its members by encouraging them to be entrepreneurial, to support members in times of sickness, sorrow and death of any member of the immediate family, to share happiness and celebrating with those members hosting such events. The constitution covered the name of the association, membership, aims and objectives of the association, annual general meetings to be held at the end of the year, the need for electing an executive committee, financial management of the association, code of conduct for its members, identity and dissolution of the association and amendment of the constitution. The constitution was drafted by the members and reflects high levels of education of its members.

Table 5.2: Characteristics of some members

Name	Age	Marital Status	Years In school	Gender	Place Of Origin	Occupation	Religion
Muchenga	30	Married	11	Female	Goromonzi	Council employee	ZAOGA
Monza	45	Married	8	Female	Goromonzi	Council	Seventh Day
Rose	50	Married	8	Female	Chinyika	Pastor	Salvation Army
Vambe	48	Married	4	Female	Goromonzi	Teacher	Salvation
Ruth	42	Widow	8	Female	Chinyika	Police officer	Army
Duri	38	Married	11	Female	Goromonzi	Teacher	Apostolic faith
Tozora	35	Married	8	Female	Goromonzi	Business	
Matinetsa	30	Single	11	Female	Marondera	Woman	Holy apostolic
Muraro	34	Single	11	Female	Goromonzi	N-A	N-A
Matema	39	Widow	13	Female	Goromonzi	N-A	Methodist
Chenga	40	Married	16	Female	Goromonzi	N-A	United Methodist
Duri	39	Married	16	Female	Goromonzi	Teacher	United Methodist
Green	43	Married	5	Female	Goromonzi	Transporter	United Methodist
Murindi	32	Married	12	Female	Goromonzi	Business woman	Apostolic
Rudo	26	Married	16	Female	Goromonzi		
Dongo	42	Married	15	Female	Goromonzi	Teacher	

Of the 16 members present at the meeting, the general characteristics are listed above. The majority of the members were aged between 26 and 45 years. In terms of marital status, all were married with the exception of two who were single and one was a widow. On average most of the members had had at least 6 years of schooling while the least educated had four years of schooling. This shows that the majority of the members were highly educated, seven had diplomas and one had a certificate in teaching. The others had training in nursing, police work, secretarial and cutting and designing, two had bachelors degrees and one had a masters degree. Fifteen of the women were formally employed and the rest were employed as part time workers or self employed in their gardens, or in the hair dressing and sewing business.

The Goromonzi Women' Residents Association is an all women's group. Most of the members of the group came from Mashonaland East Province, that is, Wedza, Marondera, Macheke, Mutoko and Goromonzi. There were no people from other countries in the group. The husbands of these women were also the elite in the community; some were businessmen while others were teachers, police officers and employees. Thus in terms of income the group could be described as higher income compared to the rest of the rural people in Chinyika ward. This group of teachers, teachers' wives, police officers, police officers' wives businesspersons and business persons' wives constituted the bulk of the Goromonzi Majuru Growth point residents. A few of the women (2 were active participants) came from the villages, these were ex-police officers wives, teachers wives and wives of ex employees of council who had acquired land in the village.

Moyo (1993) notes that civil society is a highly contentious concept, historically used to designate a plurality or social enclosures which exist in contradiction with dominance of a particular monopolistic social system within the same social realm or territorial unity. This assertion is true when civil society is examined at national level, this can also be used to understand organizations at grassroots level which exist in contradiction to the dominance of a monopolistic social system dominated by men within the same social realm or territorial unity. In Chinyika, the GWRA is one such organization as it exists alongside a male dominated Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. Tripp argues that the

exclusion of women from political participation has important consequences for how society engages the public sphere. The way in which women as a group are political actors is different from that of men. Exclusion from formal institutions results in women seeking alternative strategies to shape and control their lives. It may involve complex contestation over resources, symbols and identity. Women's resistance to male dominated institutions led to the formation of a new organization, which was sensitive to the needs of women.

Gender, status and power in GWRA

Haberson and Rothchild (1994) observed that there is a pre supposition in positivist philosophy that civil society is cohesive and embodies consensus on norms of society and state. However, civil society is conflictual and divisive. Divisions based on wealth, status, gender and perceived power also exist in civil society. As the characteristics of the members have shown, wealth differences were an important factor in recruiting members. One finds that although there are many people in the Goromonzi residential area around the growth point, the more affluent members of the community are the main participants in the GWRA.

The meetings were conducted in an environment considered conducive to official business. The meetings took the form of business meetings. Prayers were said first to commit all work to God. During the prayer, verses were always quoted from the bible such as those from Proverbs, which highlight the need for women to use their hands to improve the welfare of their households. One of the most popularly quoted verses was proverbs 31 verse 17 and 18 which describes a noble wife as given below:

“she sets about her work vigorously, and her arms are strong for her tasks and she sees that her trading is profitable and her lamp does not go out at night”

The family and the community at large is seen as something that can be bettered by women. In the prayers appeals were made to God to help the organization to become successful and to help absent persons. Mararike (1989:19) shows how prayer can be used as a political weapon whereby people communicate their wishes to the community and

avoid conflict with people using prayers. In such situations any activities which contradict what was prayed for are seen as defiance of God. After the prayers, the minutes of the last meeting were read. It was the responsibility of the secretary to read these. However, because the secretary was usually absent from the meetings the assistant secretary took this role. This was followed by discussions on the need to build a crèche and reminding those who had not paid their contributions to pay and the feedback on the interest accruing on the contributions of members. Most of the members were of the opinion that the interest was to be distributed and that the Z\$50 contributions could be used to invest in income generating projects. Questions arose as to who would run these projects. Although one member was prepared to open a tuck shop, it became clear that the other members suspected her of being dishonest and feared that there would be no transparency.

Some of the members saw the building of a preschool as progressive but quite costly to start as women could not contribute much money. The issue of a decent school for kids was also raised. Some pointed out that they could not make contributions towards the school. Some said that they had school going children who needed fees. One woman pointed out that the whole group of women should not forget that they were women and that whatever plan they were to make had to comply with their husbands interests (*lets not forget that we are women*) Thus GWA had relative autonomy both from the state and from the men who were the women's husbands. Any suggestions which demanded substantial amounts of money were resisted by women as these would be difficult to negotiate with their husbands. There were many reasons for unpopularity of the crèche. However, the women could not say a meeting that a pre school was the committee's thing but used the ideology of male domination to resist certain activities imposed on them by the committee on them.

The highly educated were also concentrated in the committee. When they spoke people looked up to them especially the two women with degrees. They were the ones who had suggested that there was a need for a constitution, and a need to go beyond the immediate needs of the group and seek strategic goals which lead to the improvement of the general standards of living in the community. The committee also attempted to lobby

the council into providing it with facilities for refuse collection. The issue of refuse collection was of paramount importance to women and they had written to council. They argued that although they paid taxes, the council was not doing much for the taxpayers in Goromonzi. They criticized the Goromonzi ratepayers association for ignoring and neglecting some of the needs of women. The women also developed links with the Goromonzi Ratepayers Association. They could sometimes make their appeals for support financially or in human resources to council and Goromonzi ratepayers Association. This was particularly so in dealing with issues of development such as building the pre-school.

The GWRA's most successful venture was the burial society. Here it was seen as the most organized group as it did not move from door to door on the day of the funeral but merely withdrew money from the account. This contrasted with more numerous village based burial societies. These societies relied on contributions of Z\$10 to Z\$20 on the day of the funeral. In GWRA, money was only used for the burial of immediate family members. The secretary of the burial societies which also contributed money on the day of funeral.

In contrast, in village based funeral associations the money contributed by members covered anyone who died in the home of a villager. The villagers made a contribution of Z\$10 for any other villager who was not a member of the society. If the deceased was a member of the village, then Z\$30 would be contributed towards the burial of that individual. In Goromonzi district, there were numerous village based burial societies. These were seen as a necessary safety net in time of death. Being a member of a burial society also helped ease the burden of being a host for those attending the funeral. In all villages studied in Chimoyo and Chatibuka, women were running their own burial societies alongside the village burial society. The men societies focused on financial contributions in times of death, digging of the grave by the young. On the other hand, women's contributions to burial societies were less in monetary terms but more in providing support. The women also made contributions in kind. Thus women also brought mealie – meal and vegetables at the funeral. In some villages like Tapfuneyi, the women had bought pots and plates but in most villages women relied on the goodwill of their neighbours for provisioning of pots during times of funerals. On the other hand, the

GWRA had bought pots, plates and pans for functions and was able to hire them out. Some churches like the Salvation Army also had a separate pursue used for widow. This money could be up to Z\$5000 and was raised from the income generating projects carried out by the church. This money was given to widow after the mourners had dispersed to enable the widow/ mothers to cope with funeral expenses. The money was also given to the widow after the dispersal of mourners because of the fear that the money could be taken by relatives if given to the widow during the funeral.

The women in GWRA were members of different churches as illustrated by table 5.2 some women sometimes conflicted with church members who felt it was their duty to provide pots and work for their fellow Christians during times of bereavement. However in cases where women had no strong religious support, GWRA took the responsibility to provide utensils at funerals. Some members of the GWRA pointed out that, it is the responsibility of women to inform the association if they require GWRA to provide physical help. The church could not give service that was up to the standard required by teacher, nurses and police officers. Most of the members pointed out that they made their commitment to the organization for the purpose of quality of service. Some questions arose as to why some women were members of different burial societies. The women replied that GWRA could not be totally relied on as it was a newly formed organization, it could die anytime. The GWRA members were mostly outside Goromonzi and mostly came at weekends. This made the women wary of totally relying on the association. The church could always be relied on in times of death although the contributions were lower. So for the educated elite, membership in two groups at one time was common as a hedge against limited resources from the church perceived instability in the GWRA.

Conclusion

The three organizations analysed in this chapter illustrate how civil society interacts with the state. The first organization, the farmers group is closely linked to the state through veterinary department, and AREX, yet at the same time it attempts to remain autonomous from it. Women's participation in the farmers group was promoted by ideologies encouraging women's participation in agricultural development on the one hand and the

temporary absence of men in Chinyika due to high labor migrancy on the other. The Livestock Development committee also shows how the state or the rulers give some local people space in order to expand state penetration into the periphery. This is mainly through its control of these community based organizations. The state is unwilling to totally let go of the Livestock Development Group. However, because the state is financially weak it has been forced to partially withdraw from the communal areas. The case of GWRA shows how women have responded to exclusion from both formal political structures and patriarchal domination in civil society by forming their own societies. Civil society also allows women to have an input into local politics and development.

Chapter 6 Non-formal politics: Market women in Goromonzi

Introduction

As mentioned in chapter one, the term politics is used to mean efforts by local people, particularly women to influence the allocation of resources and values in their community, appeals to leadership and their participation in that leadership (Mba1982: 100). The notion of participation was broadened to include the multi-locations of power contestation such as the market, where women seek to empower themselves. Women in rural areas have limited access to credit. The market is a form of non-formal politics as women attempt to empower themselves economically through the market. Women's activities exist outside the formal domain of politics yet their activities are inherently political. Cheater (1986) women in urban settings , women also form associations, women social clubs, women's institutes, mothers union, provide welfare services in the field of education, child bearing and death and these offer new opportunities for achieving leadership and its associated prestige often but not always denied women in traditional societies.

Women often ignore conventional politics which they find to be alienating and prefer to concentrate on their rotating credit associations. Three groups of women were examined, and these include; women marketing in schools, market women at the Goromonzi Growth Point, and farm to farm vendors. The market which seems non political is also strongly linked to the formal political sphere. In a highly polarized political environment, the market women have to negotiate with politicians for space to market. The women who seem to be pursuing purely economic objectives have to engage with both the opposition party and the ruling party. The study revealed that women were not passive market women but also engaged in political activities as they empowered themselves through the market. These groups reveal the different problems faced and strategies used by women participating in the non formal political sphere of marketing. The groups reveal that women were also active participants in spreading political information. The women were also custodians of the political boundaries in the market by controlling who had access to the market.

Gender power relations in Zimbabwe

The political sphere has developed over time with women and men taking different responsibilities during pre- colonial, colonial and post independence Zimbabwe. Bhebhe and Ranger (1995) noted that women in Zimbabwe have played some formal political roles particularly as aunts (*vatete*) in the Makoni chieftanancy for example, they played the role of nominating a successor or call chiefs to present their nomination of a successor but were not formally involved in the succession of the 20th century. According to Weinrich, during the colonial period, the prime concern of farm owners was to control a large labour force and they were opposed to any of their dependants joining non agricultural voluntary associations such as organized by Christian missionaries and feared that if their wives and daughters participated in them they would become independent. As noted by Kriger (1992) and Staunton (1990) during the liberation struggle, women played an important role because of the nature of support tasks such as cooking, carrying messages as they tended to invoke less suspicion from government security forces. This position allowed them to challenge existing structures of power. Young unmarried girls played a significant role which they had never played before and enjoyed freedoms in associating with young men as they spent a lot of time with the guerillas. However, these were seen as merely contingencies of war and once the war ended they was a strong pressure to return to normalcy after the trauma of war, traditional leaders and male elders reasserted their power. Women in marketing play an important role in providing services to the community with regard to fresh produce. Marketing provides a women an opportunity to gain their income thereby increasing their access and control of resources and leadership without necessarily depending on a male or another patron. Although the market is normally viewed as the an economic activity as noted by orthodox Marxism is the economic relationship of production and have an influencing or conditioning effect on all other relations in society. As noted by neo Marxist there is reciprocal inter dependence between institutions and relationships in society. A close relationship exists between the Market and the political sphere in the Goromonzi Chinyika community.

Marketing in a rural area

Marketing in rural areas occurs under conditions that are significantly different from those obtaining in urban areas. Bryceson (1996:18) points out that a process of deagrarianisation

is taking place in sub-Saharan Africa. The manifestations of this process include an increase in time spent on non-agricultural activities and decline in agricultural output per capita. This deagrarianisation is also taking place in Zimbabwe. Diversification to non-agricultural activities maybe an exit from the state-citizen relationship and an entry into market relationships. Horn (1997:45) points out that commodity marketing in Zimbabwe has developed in two streams. Firstly, those commodities sold through parastatals like marketing boards, that is, grains and cash crops like tobacco and cotton. These constitute the formal market. The informal market includes fresh produce and other products whose marketing does not directly contribute to state revenue.

In this study, the term marketing, is used to mean efforts by rural people, especially women to increase their access to cash resources through commodity exchanges. The case of Chinyika is used to analyse how women attempt to increase their access to cash resources, the strategies that women have used, the constraints faced, the obstacles met and the challenges encountered, women's subjective experience and interpretation of participation in the market place. The chapter will also discuss the link between the non-formal political system and formal politics. Market women in Chinyika have utilized formal politics to further their economic goals and vice versa

The agricultural background of Chinyika

At the time of the study, the main crop grown in Chinyika communal area was maize. The other crops grown to supplement income included groundnuts, roundnuts, rapoko, millet and vegetables. According to Hiller (1957) groundnuts were mainly grown by women in their own right supposedly to buy kitchen property, such as pots and kitchen cupboards. Further research by Weinrich (1982) revealed that this money was necessary for the survival of many communal households.

The area is characterized by sloppy plains and isolated hills. The area is also surrounded by white owned commercial farms, whose production of tobacco and horticultural products is recognized by the government. Resettlement in Goromonzi has taken place at a slower pace than elsewhere in Zimbabwe, primarily because of the white farmers' production of tobacco and horticultural crops, such as, flowers. The ZANU PF leadership explained to the

Chinyika rural people that Goromonzi area was of importance for the economic well being of Zimbabwe. The suggestion went as far as arguing that those in Chinyika would be resettled at Juru Growth Point because in Chinyika, none of the nearby farms would be acquired for resettlement. The majority of young men from Chinyika communal area are employed on these farms. The 1992 census revealed that 52.8% of the population in Chinyika were women while that of men was 47.2%.

In agriculture, production costs are high because of poor soils. Many people particularly the newcomers/vauyi were not able to harvest much and argued that the soil was salty. However, the most successful individuals in the community were those who received remittances from children and relatives working in Harare. These could afford to buy the necessary fertilizers and increase their productivity. The social and economic factors create important opportunities for women to participate in non-formal politics. Women who participate in the market system face challenges, which require patronage links with political parties for credit facilities and protection against inter-party violence.

Factors promoting marketing in Chinyika

Labor migrancy to the capital city Harare and poor conditions for farming contribute to the creation of a market for both fresh produce and grain, which is perhaps not unusual in a rural area. The enterprising women of Chinyika have taken advantage of the gaps in production and have marketed products which are scarce in Goromonzi. The women themselves do not grow the vegetables they sell on the market, they buy these from Harare. The fresh produce sold on the market includes vegetables, onions, cucumbers, and fruits such as, guavas, pears, mangoes and peaches.

I studied three main groups of women. The first group consisted of women who marketed their products in school, that is, at Chinyika and Goromonzi schools. These engaged in selling snacks to school pupils. The second group consisted of women who had stalls at Majuru Growth Point and these were selling fresh produce. The third group consisted of women who were similar to street vendors but are referred to as farm to farm vendors. These moved from farm to farm, village to village and door to door selling their goods which included clothing and other light commodities such as freezits and sweets.

Table 6.1: Characteristics of women marketing in schools

Name	Political affiliation	Age	No. of children	No. of years in school	Marital status	No. of years marketing
Shuma	ZANU PF	48	6	7	Married	25
Dome	ZANU PF	51	8	2	Widow	22
Smarti	ZANU PF	45	6	8	Married	12
Mhembere	None	21	1	11	Married	2
Chimuka	None	17	0	0	Married	1
Chirodza	ZANU PF	41	4	7	Married	12
Mutepa	MDC	26	4	8	Married	1
Makhosa	ZANU PF	40	6	0	Married	2
Komero	MDC	28	1	9	Married	1
Mutepa	ZANU PF	39	3	4	Single	2
Mafuta	ZANU PF	33	3	9	Married	8
Komero	MDC	31	4	7	Married	3
Karimate	ZANU PF	34	3	7	Married	6
Nyakudarika	MDC	35	1	5	Married	4

The age range of women selling at Goromonzi School is 17-51years. The average age was 35.5. years Younger women were also participating in the marketing of goods for their parents. The women had spent an average of 6.1 years in school. Most of the members were married with the exception of one single lady and one widow. All the vendors were women.

Most of the husbands of these women were employed in the nearby farms and schools. Their husbands were also members of the Chinyika communal area, that is, they were not vaayi. Only one man had migrated from Mozambique. One reason given by women for engaging in marketing was the harsh economic environment which made it impossible for women to rely on their husband's income. In the words of one woman it was no longer possible to sit on one's hands because one would die of hunger (*Hazvichaiti kugarira maoko mazuvaano nekuti unofa nenzara*). For these women marketing was therefore an important activity in so far as it generated income for household provisioning. Women also explained their marketing activities as an attempt to reduce dependence on men. Thus women were thus constantly renegotiating the gender contract within their households.

In Zimbabwe, colonization encouraged the idea of domesticity for women where men as household heads had to provide for the household. However, this was in conflict with the African women's beliefs that do not passively accept the gender contract but challenges it. Married women try to negotiate without coming into open conflict with their husbands or society in general. Most of the market women were also wives, sisters or friends of the economically active members of the community and were engaged in some political self-help projects proposed by ZANU PF. Some of the members said that they had no political affiliation. For older women, marketing itself became a respectable activity by which women acquired resources, status and power in the community. The women at Goromonzi primary school were drawn together by their shared deprivations and problems and formed an informal group. They opened an account that could be used as a form of capital investment. The rotating fund operated on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. The women also formed a committee to regulate the savings club. The total membership exceeded twenty one members. However, at the time of carrying out the research only fifteen women were actively marketing their goods. The others who were absent were said to have been facing problems in ordering goods, some were said to be sick, attending funeral or nursing sick persons. Although the club had fixed dates for handling rotating money, the manner in which this was carried out was flexible. Like most groups which pursue survival interests, individuals could easily move in or out of the group. The poorest women participated in the

daily rounds and not the monthly rounds. This was because these women were surviving from hand to mouth and could not save enough money to throw in at the end of the day/month. Daily rounds were twenty dollars (Z\$20) while monthly rounds required two hundred dollars (\$Z200). The poorest woman was also the youngest whose husband was a migrant from Mozambique and was employed as a general hand at a nearby farm. She could not save enough money to buy attractive goods.

Horn (1997:18) notes that in the informal sector there is lack of formal credit, business, information, training, infrastructural facilities and equipment there exists a regulatory environment that stifles growth. Women have developed their own strategies where they have been excluded from the formal structures of credit, training and facilities for infrastructure to informal associations where they develop their own structures similar to those in the formal sphere. A point to note is the fact that most women who sell at these markets are active ZANU PF members. They engage in these marketing ventures in order to be seen as doing projects which can be used for the purpose of acquiring formal credit from the ruling party's projects. The informal marketing is thus strongly linked to the formal political party structures.

Women's subjective meaning of vending

There are two major macro level approaches to development in Zimbabwe. These are the poverty alleviation programs and the growth oriented approach. The first assumes that all women doing business are poor and engaged in income generating projects. The second looks at women as small business entrepreneurs. For the women marketing at schools, one reason given for engaging in this activity was to generate income to alleviate poverty and marketing was seen as an income generating activity. The women also saw their marketing as a way of increasing their independence and reducing their dependence on their husbands and as a way of making their lives and those of their children better.

The women's dependence on their husbands had risen because of the economic recovery program which was implemented ostensibly to alleviate economic crises brought about by a shortage of foreign currency, low level of investment, high levels of inflation, escalation of debt and infrastructure decay. The effective result of this policy has been to impoverish

Zimbabweans by reducing their incomes and increasing the cost of basic necessities. Women who are perhaps the most affected group by the economic recovery program take advantage of liberalization. However, they exist at the margins of liberalization policies since they market goods in areas that are not designated as marketing areas. Women engaging in the marketing of their own goods experience some degree of empowerment. Empowerment, here is defined to mean a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their right to make choices and control their resources, which will assist in challenging and perhaps eliminating their own subordination. Women are indirectly fighting structural subordination to men and ideologies which see men as the providers and women as their dependants. Once women have their own income, albeit small this can be used to negotiate for more resources both from the state, the community or husband.

Marketing in a rural setting may create conflict between women and their kin. This was the case with one woman who was criticized by her mother-in-law as running away from farming preferring selling goods. At the same time marketing can also foster new relationship between people, for instance, one of the women was selling the products for her mother in law. The two had worked well together to such to an extent that the mother in law lended to her daughter in law money to start her own business. In some cases marketing was highly regarded as this enabled the families to buy such households goods as soap, cooking oil and sugar regularly. This is important in the communal area where these goods are seen as luxuries and where cash is very difficult to come by.

The marketing women also organized themselves in order to keep their selling site clean. The women did not mind this as being allowed to sell their products was seen as a privilege. The women were operating on the open space without any protection from the vagaries of weather. The research was carried out during the rainy season and I was able to witness stranded women defiantly carrying their goods into the veranda of the school premises. The women travelled long distances with their wares on their heads to go to the selling sites about three kilometers away from their homes.

Carving out marketing territory at the schools.

Entrance into the vending business is not an easy task. One had to first seek permission from the market committee, which in turn informed the group of the newcomer. The newcomer was then told the rules and regulations at the market, her duties, which might include the days on which she would be expected to sweep the site. At Chinyika school, all the vendors were women. The reason why there were no men was not by accident but rather the result of the fight by women to monopolize the market place. New vendors have to cope with the barriers to entry imposed upon them by virtue of the limited economic space available. Women set barriers to other women and men who wanted to sell at the vending site. Collective strength was used to force other vendors away from the selling site. The women at Goromonzi primary school explained that their policy was that no male would sell at this site. They explained to males intending to sell at the site that this site was for women. In cases where the explanations had failed to deter new vendors the market women did not hesitate to use physical force against men. Prior to my visit to the site a man had been seriously injured after he tried to force his way on the market. The women at this site actively protected their economic space, politically saying that men had better employment opportunities elsewhere and therefore could not come and disturb women who were battling for survival. The women therefore gained power over other groups in the community including men by controlling their economic space at the market places.

Witchcraft and politics in the market place

The issue of magic in the market place was explored by Horn (1997) in her study of market women in Harare. Vendors accused other vendors, particularly, those who were doing good business of using magic. This can be seen as a mystification of reality where economic jealous led to the use of witchcraft ideology. At the Goromonzi Primary school marketing site there were instances where threats of witchcraft were openly made against successful women. Muchowe or joking relationships were also used to bring witchcraft in the public domain. For instance, a woman suspecting another of witchcraft would also make jokes about another's physical fitness. "If you want to show off, we will beat you up during the night" (*Mukada zvekushamisira tinokudhindai usiku, vamwe takavadhinda nhasi vaswera vachitsumwaira pano*, which when translated means we attacked them during the night so

they were tired the rest of the day). This shows that at this site there was an inherent fear of witchcraft. Witchcraft accusations of members also had direct physical results. For instance, ZANU (PF) party members beat some MDC women suspected of being witches although none from MDC were reported to have done a similar thing. Market women are largely invisible to political analysis. The effect of this invisibility is that women vendors are never considered an integral end point in the marketing chain. Their efforts are not viewed by the government, in terms of contributions they are making to family maintenance and community provisioning because they are not considered as business people, they are driven by the ethic of self reliance and are therefore not regarded as contributors to development.

Marketing fresh produce in a rural setting

The second group to be investigated in this study is that of women engaged in marketing fresh produce at Mujuru Growth Point. The goods sold mainly included, cabbages, vegetables, bananas, apples, freezits and onions. Although the majority of the families in Chinyika communal land produce their own vegetables or rely on other natural resources as relish. This means that the market for fresh produce such as vegetables is severely limited as people find alternatives within the local environment. The market for fresh produce constituted mostly of people employed by council and those people engaged in non-agricultural activities. The market included locals in Chinyika and those people in transit to and from Rusike ward . This group of women is different from those operating at Goromonzi Committee School as illustrated by table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Characteristics of market women at Majuru Growth Point

Name	Age	Marital status	Political affiliation	No. of years in school	Sex
Madau	35	Single	MDC	9	Female
Mavhunga	33	Widow	MDC	9	Female
Makwasha	27	Widow	MDC	5	Female
Zimba	45	Widow	MDC	7	Female
Smoko	31	Married	MDC ZANU PF	7	Female
Matare	41	Divorced	ZANU PF	0	Female
Hiya	59	Divorced	MDC	0	Female
Kayesa	28	Married	MDC	11	Female
Vambe	28	Married	MDC	11	Female
Dube	30	Single	MDC	9	Female
Rukate	32	Single	MDC	8	Female
Tapfumanei	33	Widow	None	9	Female
Mazora	34	Widow	MDC	9	Female
Karonda	28	Single	MDC	11	Male

From Table 6.2, one can see that the majority of women were single, widowed and divorcees. There was a marked difference with the women marketing snacks at schools. This may be a result of the differences in time demands made on women. While the women marketing at Majuru Growth Point were required by their jobs to spend the

whole day selling at the market, this activity was quite unacceptable for most of the women, who either sold at their homes or in schools. Most of the women selling their wares at Majuru Growth Point were MDC members. This might have been facilitated by the fact that most of them resided at Goromonzi Growth Point and were able to get easy access to information on the opposition party MDC. They also shared and interacted with many people from urban areas and were not directly benefiting from ZANU PF financial and material support to peasants.

There were also cultural constraints restraining women from engaging in marketing at the Growth Point. These included the notion that women at the market were 'free' women who interacted with many men and could therefore not be trusted. The cultural belief that a good woman stays at home, farms and looks after her family was prevalent in Goromonzi. The majority of women marketing at the growth point were therefore single/widowed or divorced or those at the margins of society who had very little to lose in terms of respect by engaging in marketing. This group of women had to work hard to ensure a regular income in order for them to take care of their children. Some had been deserted by their husbands and others were widows. These women had mobilized in response to adversity and crisis such as desertion and widowhood. At the individual level, women consciously pursued economic empowerment and organized around the market. However, once they entered the market they found that they had to make political links with the formal political sphere for the effective running of their markets.

The council, the state and the political parties created obstacles for the effective running of the women's markets. While the council had built structures intended for the vendors with storage facilities and accessible water, the fresh produce vendors shunned this site preferring their economically advantageous sites. Council activities also reinforced the idea that the ruling ZANU PF had no sensitivity for the needs of vendors. As noted above most of the market women belonged to MDC party and this made them highly susceptible to political violence. Planners often impose regulations which impede growth of the informal sector out of a desire to plan, control and legalize economic development of towns and growth points so as to promote the health and safety of the population. Vendors do not simply accept these regulations, they continually resisted regulations by installing

their stalls at their own desired places. Those who tried to follow the council demands found that business at the site was poor and eventually moved to their original places. Horn (1995) and Sithole (1995) among others have noted that it is necessary that vendors be consulted on the placement of new market stalls. The resistance to authority shows how formal authority may be held by one group while power is not merely held by one group but is diffused within communities. The marginalised groups especially women make efforts to empower themselves both economically and socially and are not passive but are active agents of development.

One problem arising from poor planning is that vendors have to bargain with formal and informal authorities to ensure the success of their business. The big business people at Majuru were aware that they were competing with vendors. They took advantage of the fact that the vendors did not pay rent and were not selling at designated sites. The business people argued that the place where women were selling was theirs because they were the ones who were paying rent. The vendors entered into an informal deal with business persons around the Goromonzi market area where they agreed that the vendors could sell certain products like vegetables which were not sold in the shops, while things like matemba, madora, maputi and cooking oil were prohibited for market women.

The market women's positions were not merely determined by market forces but political factors came into play. All the business persons were treated with utmost respect because they were also important members in the ruling party. Rejecting state and council related control, vendors also make themselves vulnerable to other forces of politics, such as unscrupulous businesspersons. They make themselves vulnerable to political violence directed against all those who oppose the ruling party's government in marketing. The vendors attempted to create a space outside the formal political arena, yet that space subjects them to outside forces which influence how they access resources both in the policy arena and outside it.

The women at Majuru Growth Point were consciously pursuing economic interests, they found it necessary to have savings societies. There was financial co-operation between vendors in the form of revolving credit and savings societies. The daily contributions were

set at Z\$40 while weekly contributions were Z\$200 per person. This money was utilized for buying goods for resale. The money could sometimes be used to pay rent and school fees.

The market women had to make links with political party heavy weights to enable them to survive on the market. This was particularly so during the 2000 campaigning period when some stalls were destroyed by ZANU PF youth. Some women supplemented their incomes through the produce from their homes where they were renting while some used prostitution to increase their income. It should be pointed out that the fresh produce vendors in Chinyika were also women who did not have communal land rights as individuals or through their fathers or husbands, since most of them were newcomers in the area; most came from Murewa, Mutoko and Mozambique and did not have land security.

Land alienation meant that the alternatives for accessing resources are more limited for women married to males who migrate into new areas. Men are less likely to be tied down by children and tend to find formal employment. Marketing is an acceptable alternative to formal employment, which is compatible with childcare, ill-health as one can absent themselves from the market without fear of dismissal. Marketing can therefore be seen as an alternative way by which women seek to empower themselves economically and politically. This group of women alienated by ZANU PF's land based approach to development and land insecurity because of their gender has opted to disengage from some of the state structures in favour of alternative livelihoods through marketing.

May (1983:22) notes that the women vendors regard the informal sector trading as a substitute for obtainable formal employment. These activities enable women to control resources, which can serve as an effective safety net from casualty, poverty, ill-health and widowhood. They represent a mechanism for insulating households and communities against disaster. They protect women where other channels of assistance are closed. When women engage in marketing goods and services, this provides a space for information sharing and companionship. This might lead to the formation of autonomous collectivities organized to manage resources.

Farm to farm vendors

The third group of women in Chinyika ward, includes women who grow their own food and market it when there is excess. These women are engaged in farm to farm vending and constituted the largest marketing group in Chinyika. These women could not afford to spend the whole day at the market, as they had to work in the fields. The type of marketing a woman engaged in depended on the type of household “government”. The government here is used to mean the household rules instituted by the husband.

Farm to farm vendors were a highly mobile group and were engaged by the political parties for campaigning purposes. They played a critical role in spreading information on the rallies to be carried out by the MDC. This was particularly so because in MDC secrecy was emphasized because it was considered to be politically incorrect to be a member of the MDC. The women also utilized their former membership in ZANU PF to enter areas which had been invaded by war veterans. Faking and deceit were utilized, because some women went into the farms to sell their wares purporting to be ZANU PF members while in fact they were distributing MDC T-shirts.

In one case, a certain woman who was also the wife of the village head of Takadii mentioned that she regularly went to commercial farms to sell second hand clothes to farm workers. She had two friends with whom she travelled to ensure security and companionship. The three women became active supporters of the MDC. However, they did not want to be identified as MDC supporters and were only known by the MDC leadership to be members of that party. They regularly attended ZANU PF meetings. Women could not come into the public about their support of the opposition because of the violence and intimidation meted out against such people. The women carried MDC T-shirts in their bags among their wares and were not subjected to any harassment from the ruling party. These T-shirts were given to farm workers as part of the campaigning strategy.

Another woman, who resided in Ngazimbi village, also participated in farm to farm vending using similar tactics. She was 32 and had 4 children who were still very young. She pointed

out that this did not stop her from being actively involved in politics. She felt she had a role to play in campaigning. She resided in a village, which was at the fringe of Ngazimbi and was close to commercial farms, and this enabled her to attend some rallies without the knowledge of ZANU PF people in the area. She also carried T-shirts to the commercial farms. Although she met war veterans on her way they never asked her to open her bag. Women can therefore use their femininity to participate in politics. In this case the fact that it is considered immoral to open a women's bag facilitated her to go about her political activities without experiencing problems. Women travelling to commercial farms were often asked to chant ZANU PF slogans and produce party cards when they met war veterans along the way. Most women in the MDC deceived ZANU PF members by faking allegiance to ZANU PF while they were wearing MDC shirts which were covered by their clothes and towels used to carry children on their backs. This strategy was common with women who travelled to the commercial farms.

Conclusion

Marketing in a rural area is therefore a challenging activity. Market women made links with both political parties in order to carry out their marketing activities. Farm to farm vending became a dangerous activity during the 2000 parliamentary elections. War veterans who occupied farms demanded cards for the ruling party and proof of active participation in ZANU PF politics. Most vendors simultaneously appeared to support ZANU PF and the MDC. Some of them encountered losses as farmers deserted their farms and workers who were their main clients were living without pay. This had a negative impact on the income of women who relied on farm workers. Some women prefer to concentrate on their economic activities rather than join formal politics. However the effectiveness of this strategy as a response to exclusion is limited particularly in politically unstable environments. Market women in Goromonzi were forced to ally themselves with certain political parties in order for them to be protected in the market. Market women, however were successful in developing alternatives to formal loan facilities and alternative employment of women. Market women associations though non formal are sometimes faced with the same problems that occur in the formal political structure. In fact it was very difficult for market women as non-formal political players to exist independently of

government and party protection in Goromonzi. The market empowered women to participate in formal politics, for example, the women in MDC were mobile as farm to farm vendors and became active agents for information dissemination. Marketing also enabled women to have resources which they could control and use for political activities. The women in ZANU PF used the market as a place to flex their political muscle. The non formal sphere provides opportunities for domination by some women which would otherwise not be possible in mainstream politics. There is therefore a link between formal and non formal politics and the distinction between formal and non formal politics becomes blurred as we go deeper in political analysis at community level. The final chapter synthesizes the research findings. It discusses the similarities, differences, and linkages between formal and non-formal politics.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the research findings on women's participation in formal and non-formal politics at the district and sub district levels. The major aims and objectives of this study were stated in chapter one. These included the identification of opportunities and constraints for women's participation in formal and non-formal politics. This also included finding out the facilitators for women's participation in politics. The second objective was to analyze the sources of power and authority for women's participation in politics. The third objective was to find out the strategies used by women to deal with problems faced in formal and non-formal politics. The fourth objective was to examine the similarities, differences and linkages between the formal and non-formal political sphere. The researcher was able to achieve these stated objectives as discussed in chapters two, three, four, five and six. The concepts informing the study were empowerment, power, authority, engagement, disengagement and incorporation of women in politics at the district and sub district levels. In line with these objectives, this concluding chapter draws together the major findings of the study.

Opportunities and constraints for women's participation in formal and non-formal politics

The case of Goromonzi district shows that opportunities for participation in formal politics are influenced by gender, party ideologies and legislation. However, it is important to note that as far as political parties are concerned, whether ruling or opposition, gendered politics occurs. This is reflected in the distribution of responsibilities between men and women in political parties. In ZANU PF women tend to do most of the singing and dancing and they are concentrated at the lower levels of the political structures. Similarly in the MDC women were used for mobilisation purposes as well as singing and dancing. Although this provides an opportunity for women to participate in politics it does not lead to empowerment of the participating women.

In ZANU (PF), women's participation in politics was influenced by the socialist ideology espoused by the party. This was expressed through both policy and legal reform.

Both men and women were seen as ‘cadres’ in the process of nation building after the attainment of independence in 1980. The legislative and policy provisions enabled women to stand as candidates in parliamentary and council elections. For example, in the GRDC, three women were elected during the local government elections in 1998. This would not have been possible without the support of ZANU PF and the legislative provisions, which allowed women to contest. In the VIDCO structures, which were created by the Prime Minister’s Directive in 1984, women were afforded an opportunity to participate in formal political structures because of the resistance by traditional leaders to take part in those new structures. The new government in its attempt to create bureaucratic structures based on principles of democracy, as an attempt to strengthen its own power, resulted in the alienation of traditional leaders. Women on the other hand, took advantage of the resistance by the male traditional leaders to acquire positions of authority in the community. This was more successful in some villages than others. In Chimoyo VIDCO, the women were elected as chairpersons from 1984 right up to the year 1998. This was because the resistance of traditional leaders to VIDCOs was high. The village heads disengaged themselves from the newly created VIDCO structures preferring to exercise their traditional powers even in situations where this was in contradiction with government policies. In some villages, however the traditional leaders were incorporated into the new structures where the village heads were also the VIDCO chairpersons. The fact that women successfully participated in politics as VIDCO/WADCO members is demonstrated by the statements given by the bitter comments of traditional leaders as they celebrated the restoration of their powers. This point was summarised by one traditional leader who said;

“.... ..We are now very happy as our land has been restored to us. This land was now becoming unmanageable, there was no respect of traditional shrines, traditional authority. We were treated like strangers or even dogs in our own land. People who knew nothing about this area were given authority and power over us... Ah.....yes... we really suffered. Worse still, women were controlling the area but we just let them do as they pleased because that was the law of the government. Now everything is normal as our powers have been restored.”

In non-formal politics, the failure of the government to provide certain services for the rural

communities has led to the formation of community based organisation which pursue political agendas. In Goromonzi district, male labour migrancy to the surrounding farms and to Harare means that the day to day running of the community organization remains in the hands of women. This creates opportunities for women to participate in organizations such as the Chinyika Farmers Group as leaders.

Women who are marginalized in the council structures and VIDCO structures in rural communities take advantage of their proximity to each other to form organizations, which serve their interests. March and Taqqu (1982) pointed out that women often organise around issues of everyday life because of their proximity to each other. The GWRA is one such organization. Women network with one another to counter isolation and form organizations to deal with their economic and social needs. This has led them to engage in politics where they seek the council to register their organization, to have their needs addressed by public sphere organizations. For example, the GWRA tries to lobby council to create structures for the collection of refuse and building of a registered crèche in the community.

The government's failure to provide for women has led them to disengage from some government projects and politics. There is a group of women in Goromonzi who feel that the money given in government funded projects is too little and they opt for their own marketing initiatives. Some women are too poor to participate in some projects which require joining fees. Marketing of fresh produce by the Majuru group of women was an opportunity for women to participate in formal politics. Farm to farm vendors were able to take part in campaigning for the MDC because of their mobility. Women's participation in formal politics is constrained by cultural restrictions in the form of family commitments (Mujuru 1987, UNDP Report 1997, UNDP Report 2000). In some formal political structures women are forced to toe the line of the acceptable feminine roles, namely being submissive and gentle. Women, who participate in the GRDC, for example, tend to be quiet during council meetings, women's participation only took the form of rubber stamping the decisions taken by men. They made one-word comments and agreed with others. In most meetings women did not challenge male authority but they manipulated the existing structures to their own advantage and used subtle forms of challenging

authority, for example, Ms Kumalo's refusal to use Shona in council was an assertion to her right to speak a language of her choice and this was also a means of fighting for equal recognition with men.

In both formal and non-formal politics, the participation of young women is severely limited. This is because young women tend to have limited time to participate in politics as most of their time is spent in child-rearing activities and home keeping. Older women's participation in politics is usually premised on the labour and services of daughters-in-law, young daughters or young maids who perform the duties expected to be done by older women. It is young women who attend to the sick, till the land and thus they have limited time for engagement in the formal sphere. Nabane (1997) noted that women were excluded from community decision-making because of their commitments and the gender bias of time schedules for meetings. Even in the MDC where young women constitute a significant proportion of the political community, their participation is limited by family commitments.

One of the most important constraints for women's participation in politics is poverty. Poor peasants tend to totally disengage from the political sphere preferring to concentrate on their day to day survival needs. However, it is important to note that women have different experiences within marginalized social groups than men, they are not automatically excluded and marginalized in the same way. Poor women often pointed out that, when they join politics they are also relegated to the margins of these organizations because they are poor. All organisations require some minimal financial contribution for one to be recognized as a member. This means that access to time and material resources becomes an important constraint for women's participation in politics.

Participation in politics is facilitated by government policies which accommodate women in their policies. The ideologies of empowerment are also important facilitators for women's participation in politics. In ZANU PF and MDC, projects initiated for the benefit of the poor, for example, the Chinyika savings union in ZANU PF and the Paprika project in MDC were important facilitators for women's participation in politics. Individuals such as chairpersons of political parties, Members of Parliament facilitate women's participation through nominating some women for political posts. They may also provide resources to

encourage the participation of women, for instance, the MDC Chairman provided the youth of Goromonzi with transport to attend rallies. The parents of the youth were asked for their children, who would participate in rallies, in return the chairman promised to make sure the youth did not indulge in sexual activities. The security given by the Chairman by assuring parents was a facilitator for young women's participation in politics.

Sources of power and authority for women in formal and non-formal politics

There are different sources of power and authority for women in formal and non-formal politics. Women may enter the public sphere under some form of patriarchal protection. Stiltung (1993) notes "almost all the women in electoral politics seem to be invariably someone's daughter in-law or some other close relation. One's individual networks were an important source of power for women. However, as noted by Epstein and Coser (1981), some women lack formal and informal networks which are important for one's ascendancy to power. For example, in the MDC, the secretary gained power because she was the wife of the Chairman. The most important network was therefore her husband. In ZANU PF some women had power because they had links with powerful men in the party, at the same time as they cultivated mutual friendship with the rank and file members. The ZANU PF female Chairperson (main wing) had the power to stop certain issues from being discussed or decisions being made about them. When the issue of her attachment to MDC was mentioned she threatened the other members by accusing them of supporting MDC. She also refused to account for her use of project money and went on to accuse those questioned of being members of the MDC (see chapter 2).

Power in formal politics comes from both individuals and institutions. In VIDCO structures enacted in the 1980's power rested in the hands of the traditional leaders, although the bureaucratic institutions were authorized to make decisions. Villagers continued to respect traditional leaders by-passing the VIDCO and WADCO structures. The main arena of power contestation in VIDCO structures was land distribution. While VIDCO/WADCO leaders were empowered by the government to distribute land, the traditional leaders still received traditional tokens of appreciation even when land was distributed by the VIDCO leaders. Kandiyoti (1989:277) points out that clientelist politics affects the way in which the

underprivileged make use of the political rights available to them. Personal characteristics such as age and charisma are important sources of power for women in VIDCO structures. In the GRDC, the three females utilized personal networks to gain power in the council.

In non-formal politics the sources of authority and power also include individuals and institutions. Sensoane (1991:37) points out that the exclusion of women from positions of power relates intimately to traditional attitudes and stereotypes and is compounded by a lack of candidates with appropriate educational and professional experience. A person's level of education is an instrument of power in these organisations, because of the low levels of education with respect to other members. Marital status is also an important source of power. Single women are less likely to be leaders than their fellow married women who have status and respect within the community. For instance, one woman was discouraged from handling a position in the Farmers Group after the death of her husband. Widowhood in particular has presented the most important channel for women in politics and business Epstein and Coser (1991:10). A husband's position within the community is also an important source of power and authority in the community. The wife of the Chairperson of the LDC was the chair of the Chinyika Farmers Group. Similarly, Ms Chitare was able to acquire a position in the GRDC because of her deceased husband's activities in ZANU PF politics.

Problems faced by women in formal and non-formal politics

The main problems which women face in politics include marginality and cultural restrictions. Women who enter the formal political sphere find themselves existing at the margins of politics. The councillors are viewed suspiciously by other women in the constituencies in which they live, their activities are sometimes described by the other women they purport to represent as being somewhat dubious. Both men and women criticise these women. They experience feelings of isolation and have conflicting demands on their political life. Githens (1997) argues that like the Ghetto Jew who tried to assimilate into gentile society, the women in politics find themselves at the margins of both groups. The women are neither totally accepted by the male politicians nor by the women

whom they purport to represent. These women often have the double burden of being mothers and household managers on the one hand, and politicians on the other. One councillor pointed out that her husband was now complaining about the number of trips she had to make to the various parts of the constituency. This shows that women sometimes have to choose between jeopardizing their marriages and furthering their political careers. As noted by Mill (1994) women may choose to stay in the domestic sphere and concern themselves with influencing their husbands rather than involving themselves in the public sphere. While some women choose to enter into public life, they often feel that the home should take priority in their lives. This may limit them in the political networks they can create.

Women who enter into formal politics may also find themselves relegated to the women's wing and may be forced to articulate women's interests. This is the case in the MDC and ZANU PF where only one or two women were participating in the committees of the main wing. Women who participate in the main wing find themselves holding the traditional feminine posts of secretaries. In the GDRC, women also face marginality because of under-representation in the council. Women are booed down during discussion and constantly interrupted when presenting facts, they are commented upon and given commands by the male councillors.

In VIDCO structures, women were silenced when they wanted to contribute to community discussions by men in the village assembly or the dare remusha. The dare includes both men and women but it is men who normally speak at these meetings. Another problem faced by female VIDCO members was that their decisions are not taken seriously and when effecting certain commands from the village head, a woman would need to be supported by men. In Chinyika, there were instances where women were told that as women they had no right to speak on land allocation. Women were sometimes perceived as illegitimate community leaders, who were imposed by the government. This was the case with most of the VIDCO members who were elected before the Traditional Leaders Act was passed. Currie (1987) points out that society has caricatured images about women's roles and these militate against women handling positions of authority within the community. Cultural restrictions make it unacceptable for women to be highly mobile, to speak aggressively and

assertively.

In non-formal politics, the main problem faced by women is that women are not considered serious leaders of the community. Although women constitute more than 80% of the members in the Chinyika Farmers Group. There is therefore no proportional representation of the sexes since men who constitute 20% of the membership represent 55% of the leadership while women who constitute 80% represent 44% of the leadership. Men are therefore well represented in the leadership committee.

For market women their non-political stance is used to make them targets of political violence from the two parties. Political activities affect market women's mobility. In Chimoyo VIDCO, some market women had their goods confiscated by war veterans from the ruling party, some of their market stalls were destroyed during the campaigning period. Market women were also subjected to harassment by council officers. The fact that the market women's association is not registered results in women being vulnerable to both manipulation by powerful business people and council employees. For instance, market women enter into unfair bargains with business people where they agree to sell only things like vegetables, tomatoes, popcorn, which are not sold by the businessman. On the other hand, the businessmen can sell the goods sold by the market women. Market women's resistance to use constructed market stalls which are located away from main bus terminus, has resulted in them losing certain rights. The area from which they choose to do business has been claimed by one businessman who threatened that since women do not pay rent to council, they have to agree to sell only selected items. The businessman also threatened to call in the police if women refused to comply with his commands.

In the GRWA, the main problem faced by women in their political activities is that women's beliefs about the form in which women participate is affected by patriarchal norms and values. The women believed that though they were seeking to progress as women they should also tread carefully on the political ground as changes which were too grand could upset the balance in their homes. The members of this group were treading a narrow line where they challenged existing gender inequalities and at the same time feared to trespass on the male domain. They certainly reminded each other during meetings that as

a group, and in spite of being economically empowered, they had to remember 'their place' as women.

Strategies employed by women in formal and non-formal politics

Women have developed strategies to deal with the problems they face in politics. In this study women in formal politics utilized personal networks to gain political mileage. The female councillors in the GRDC who used this strategy included Ms Chitare, Ms Chabvo and Ms Kumalo. For example, networks were used to deal with problems of presentation by Ms Kumalo. Women who enter politics may be isolated and the DA used her networks to deal with the problem of threats of beating by the war veterans. Ms Kuzvomunhu utilized patron client relationships with the councillor and the Apostolic church to deal with the difficult villagers who were not respecting her. The church is also used as an important support base for all the women who participated in politics. Church members could be counted upon to support the female politicians. This was also an arena in which information about party politics was disseminated.

Women also use the motherhood ideology to challenge the imperatives of statehood and territorial hegemony. For example, market women in Goromonzi district justify their participation in the market activities by emphasizing the need to feed their children. Sanday (1918:127) notes that female power in West Africa is achieved through marketing. Full time market women are usually single and therefore are not restricted by familial authority. They achieve power as a result of self-sufficiency and ability to establish an independent sphere of control.

Another strategy used by women is the exit option; some women have chosen to leave the public sphere preferring to concentrate on their homes and their household projects. This strategy was used to deal with corruption by moving out of the formal structures and forming their own associations, for example, the Nemhara Savings Union. The AREX official also spent some villagers money and this resulted in some farmers deciding to develop their own marketing and transporting strategies. Migrant women have distanced themselves from government led development projects. In formal politics women utilize personal networks as well as patron client relationships. The female traditional leader in the

Kuzvomunhu village had a patron client relationship with the councillor while the female councillors in the GRDC utilised personal networks in seeking power support and authority in politics.

Similarities, differences and linkages

In both formal and non-formal politics, women utilize personal networks and patron-client relationships to gain influential positions in the community. The power holders in society tend to be wives, sisters and friends of powerful men in politics. In both spheres women's participation in decision-making is severely limited by cultural expectations of how a woman should behave. Single women who hold positions of authority are usually linked in some ways to the community leaders.

Issues of class and gender are pervasive to both formal and non-formal political spheres. In Goromonzi district, women from the higher income-earning groups formed the GRWA and excluded poor women from this group. The marginalized immigrant women who were some of the poorest also mobilized themselves to form the Nemhara Womens' Association discussed in chapter 2. However even within these groups, the leaders were also the wives of powerful men. For instance in Nemhara Savings Union, the Chairperson of this union was the wife of the Salvation Army pastor who shared a marginal position with other migrant women because she was an outsider (muuyi). Here female solidarity overrode class and ethnic divisions. As noted in chapter 2, the members of Nemhara Savings Union were mostly outsiders from Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi who had migrated into the area. Stiffel et al (1994:10) notes that some institutions supposed to facilitate the participation of the poor and marginalized are vulnerable to the 'iron law of oligarchy' and may turn into instruments of manipulation and domination operated by a few.

The main difference between formal and non-formal politics is that in formal politics women are afforded protection by political parties. Non-formal politics is important in dealing with women's practical interests. For instance, the women in the Nemhara Savings Union were able to effectively challenge the ruling party's dominated activities, which excluded marginalized groups in society. The GWRA is also an important non-formal union which challenges patriarchal control and which mobilizes the hitherto politically excluded

middle class women. Market women particularly the ones who sell at growth points have developed survival strategies to deal with their exclusion from government initiated programs, opting to concentrate on their market associations. These non-formal political organizations are important channels of community participation but are a drawback in that they do not extract resources distributed in the formal political policy arena.

On the other hand we have civil society organizations which afford women an opportunity for participation in politics at the district level. The Chinyika Farmers Group and the Chinyika Livestock Development Trust are good cases. The civil society is partially inter-dependent on the state and women are able to utilize resources distributed by the state. The main limitation is that participation in these organizations is dependent on the political party of ZANU PF whereby members are subjected to party propaganda before engaging in the various projects. This restricts women in terms of freedom of choice in selecting a political party. The civil society organizations challenge traditional power vested in the chiefs thereby providing an opportunity for women's participation in community politics as elected authorities. For example, the Livestock Development Committee rejected the control of village heads on the prevention of cruelty to animals. Women as elected authorities in the LDC and Farmers group were able to exercise some degree of authority over the use of livestock resources in the community.

Conclusion

This study has important theoretical underpinnings for black feminists thought as it places women's experiences at the centre of analysis. From a liberal feminist point of view the changed consciousness of individuals and social transformation of political and economic institutions constitute essential ingredients for social change (Collins 1990:221). In Zimbabwe efforts have been made by both government and civil society to empower women through legislative and institutional reforms. However reforms and legal changes while ameliorating the condition of women are an essential part of the process of emancipating women, they will not basically change patriarchy. Such reforms need to be

integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform society.

The study also contributes significantly to the role of actors within the different structural reforms. It shows how women at the sub district levels have wielded power using networks, traditional authority and personal skills. The network of individuals at the grassroots level is critical to the success of the women in politics. Structural reforms have played a critical role in facilitating and opening opportunities for women's participation in local structures. However the actors themselves have used existing systems in highly innovative ways which reveal the strength of actors in a highly constraining environment. Women's action as arising out of structural constraints as the study's unique supplementation to transactional theory.

The participation of women in both formal and non-formal politics is important for women's empowerment and decision-making in community politics. In formal politics women's participation has been limited to the women's wing with only few women holding positions of power in the main wings. At the time of the study women's participation in local government structures was limited with only 12% representation in the council. Furthermore, women's participation in local governance has been limited to the traditional feminine occupations of social welfare. At the sub-district levels, in VIDCO and WADCO structures women's participation in community life has been severely constrained by the Traditional Leaders Act. There is therefore need for a gender sensitive policies for all the sectors to ensure the representation of women in community politics.

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