

WOMEN AND LAND IN CHINENA VILLAGE,  
CHIBOMBO DISTRICT, CENTRAL ZAMBIA:  
VOICES FROM THE GRASSROOTS

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I. *Introduction*

The purpose of undertaking this research was to continue with the earlier work (Kajoba, 1994) which investigated the changes in perception that were taking place among small-scale farmers in Chinena Village in Chibombo District (Kabwe Rural) of Central Zambia. Since the earlier work had concentrated mainly on male farmers, the aim this time was to focus on female farmers, in order to assess their position with respect to their current status in terms of the following issues:- (a) women and accessibility to agricultural land; (b) availability of assets, food security and strategies for coping with insecurity; (c) the need for security in land; (d) the need for more information relating to acquisition of title deeds and their future perspectives on the provisions of the 1995 Lands Act and its assumed empowerment of female farmers; and (e) How the process of individualization of agricultural land tenure can be harmonized with traditional authority to avoid disruption of the relatively peaceful social relations in a rural community.

The previous study had shown that in Chinena Village, where there is increasing commercialization of maize and vegetable production in dambo, the perceptions of small-scale farmers with respect to land tenure were changing. Because of increasing commercialization shown by high levels of capitalization in terms of agricultural equipment, intensive use of dambo and upland for marketable production of maize, tomatoes, water melons and vegetables like rape, there were tendencies towards individualization of tenure contrary to Lenje tradition in which land is considered to be a communal resource. For instance, there is de facto individualization expressed in fencing of vegetable gardens, and male farmers expressed the desire to obtain title deeds to the traditional land which they were cultivating.

When the results of the research were presented at an in-house seminar organized by the Institute for African Studies at the University of Zambia, it was felt by some participants that the gender dimension was lacking. Therefore, it was decided that this should be redressed in the present study.

The paper therefore presents the background and literature review in section 2; the methodology and characteristics of the sample in section 3; and the findings are discussed in section 4 under the five issues outlined above.

II. *Background and Literature Review*

According to Kodamaya (1995) Chinena Village was established in 1974. Senior Chief Mukuni (Liteta) of the Lenje speaking people granted land to Mr. Meleki Chinena, the

father of the present senior headman Edward Chinena. The Village which is about 90 km north of Lusaka in Chibombo District (Kabwe Rural) in the Central Province of Zambia, is divided into eight sections. It is situated over several dambos, making it ideal for both dambo vegetable production and for upland maize cultivation. Because of moist conditions, dry season production of vegetables and watermelons is possible.

Since the Village is located only 90 km from Lusaka, 40 km from Kabwe and 260 km from the Copperbelt towns, the small-scale farmers are able to market their produce in nearby towns. Traders from Lusaka and the Copperbelt come to buy the produce, while it is also possible for the farmers to sell their produce at the roadside market or by travelling to Lusaka and Kabwe. Other traders come from Lusaka to exchange second hand clothes (*Salaula*) with the produce from the village.

The village is unique because of its organization into sections; its location on a dambo ecosystem and its ethnic mix that makes it into a micro-cosm of Zambia. Migrants from other parts of the provinces as well as from the rest of the country have decided to settle in Chinena because of its agricultural suitability (Kodamaya, 1995, p106, Table 2).

The estimated number of households in the village increased from 90 to 108 between August 1992 and August 1993 — an increase of 20 per cent in one year, giving a total population of about 669 in 1992 and 774 in 1993 (Kodamaya, 1995, p 108). Since the village register had an incomplete record of the total number of households at the time of conducting the field work in December 1996, it can only be estimated that given the 20% annual increase, there were about 160 households in the village.

Kodamaya is of the view that the ethnic diversity in Chinena village has “contributed to the prosperity of agriculture of the village because in the process the village received those with entrepreneurship, skills and progressive attitude.” (Kodamaya, 1995, p110). Paradoxically, the in-migration has led to increasing population pressure on arable and grazing land, and consequent land scarcity in the village (Kajoba, 1994).

It is therefore against this background of a vibrant rural community that it was decided to continue with the research on land tenure at a village level, but focusing on the condition and experiences of female farmers in order to extract and put their views (voices) on record.

Since the 1970s, there has been a great concern on the condition of women in agricultural policies and rural development programmes. The concern by researchers and policy makers is that these programmes have tended to discriminate against women in most Third World countries especially those in Africa, but favoured the menfolk and yet women are the major food producers (Kajoba, 1993, p. 21). It is argued that women are denied equal access to factors of production such as land, credit, appropriate technology and extension services.

According to the ECA (1984), “of all the factors necessary for agricultural production, land comes first as the factor which confirms the right of the producer to belong to the rural community. The social and security values that the right to land confers make for social stability and economic progress” (ECA, 1984, p. 11).

Although historically land has been treated as a common resource in many African countries, there is an increasing shift to individual ownership resulting from the process of modernization and commercialization. While this change is taking place it is observed that women farmers are being limited in having access to or ownership of land, although they continue to do the farm work. Therefore, their contribution to national effort and food self-sufficiency goes unnoticed.

With respect to agricultural technology, the ECA contends that in most parts of Africa, women farmers depend on the hand hoe, and "where drought animals have been successfully introduced into farming, it is the men who drive them" (ECA, 1984, p. 12). Furthermore, these animals are generally owned by men who hire them out to women at ploughing time — thus women lose part of their income in fees and planting time.

Spring and Hansen (1979) state that "the important contribution of women's labour is not matched by an equivalent control of the land that is farmed. Women are generally cultivating land which their husbands control ... although there are many societies in which women hold rights to land through inheritance or allocation within their lineage or through gifts received from husbands" (Spring and Hansen, 1979, p.3).

It is further argued that intensification of agriculture and government-sponsored land 'reforms' or settlement schemes are threatening rather than improving women's rights to land. Due to scarcity of land in view of increasing population, a lineage may restrict access to its male heads of households at the expense of women-headed households, which also suffered during the colonial period when European-originated land reforms transferred land holding to husbands as heads of households. In this change, the existing customary mechanisms by which women received rights to land were negated (Spring and Hansen, 1979, p. 4).

The literature on women and land tenure seems to emphasize the point that in many ethnic groups, African customary law made provision for women to have rights in land, although this might not be the case in the post colonial period.

Keller, Phiri and Milimo (1990) argue that under the traditional systems in many Zambian ethnic groups such as the matrilineal Bemba of the Northern Province, the Valley Tonga of Southern Province and the Lozi of Western Province, "both men and women had access to land and had considerable control over productive resources such as land" (Keller, Phiri and Milimo, 1990, p. 242).

Although Tonga women, for instance, were also allocated land by their husbands, they also had plots of alluvial land given to them by kin or inherited from relatives. These women "controlled these pieces of land and passed them on to their daughters or other heirs" (Keller, Phiri, and Milimo, 1990, p. 242).

Conroy (1945) pointed out that Tonga women could own rights in property, both in land and in cattle. It was customary for each wife in a household to cultivate her separate garden apart from the main garden that belonged to the husband. With increasing production for the market, the food for the household was taken from the wives' gardens while the main garden produced cash crops for sale.

It was also possible for a wife to own a portion of the extension to the main garden, where she planted groundnuts, beans and maize.

A grown, but unmarried woman was given a garden by either her mother or father. Some women lived with their sister's husbands and were also given land. Widows could also return to their brothers and cultivate land there. In all those situations the women "have the same rights in their gardens as men" (Conroy, 1945, p. 104).

Among the Lozi, a daughter was given land by her parents. Even when she got more pieces of land from her husband after marriage, she continued to retain her full rights to the land in her own village. In this regard Peters (1960) observed that "on attaining maturity a woman is given land by her father and she retains rights to this land when she leaves the

village on marriage and goes to settle at her husband's home. Her husband also has to give her land, but she may work her old gardens ... and the produce from her own land is hers absolutely. If she is divorced or widowed she may return to her village and claim either the old garden back or other land in lieu of it" (Peters, 1960, p. 47).

In those situations where the widow stays with her children at her former husband's place, she continues to work the land, but the land is that of her children which was granted directly by their father. If a man is polygamously married, he must give each wife an equal amount of land as the first wife.

As a result of this relative security in land which women enjoyed under local African traditions, they were able to contribute effectively to food production and food self-sufficiency of their communities.

However, Keller, Phiri and Milimo (1990, p. 244) argue that during the colonial period, the position of women in agriculture was undermined. The introduction of the plough and cash crops, led to a situation where men increasingly controlled implements and income resulting from the sale of such cash crops although women's labour had been expended to cultivate the husbands's field.

It is further argued that efforts in the post-world war II period by the colonial administration to promote improved African farming in Peasant Farming Schemes benefitted men more than women, as those were directed more towards men who began to produce for the market, while women continued to produce for the household. This legacy of directing productive resources such as land to men has persisted even into the period after the attainment of political independence in 1964.

It is therefore argued that increasing commercialization of agriculture has also worked to the disadvantage of small-scale farmers. For instance, the promotion of cotton production in the Gwembe Valley "has increased land shortage and has prevented some women from having adequate land for food production or from competing with men for cash crop fields" (Keller, Phiri and Milimo, 1990, p. 254).

Spring and Hansen (1979) did show that the resettlement of Tonga families because of the Kariba dam was detrimental to women who lost their land holdings because only men as heads of households were compensated for old land. But "women did not receive direct compensation for their lost lands and were unable to acquire new lands in the new sites to replace the old" (Spring and Hansen, 1979, p. 4).

In many parts of rural Zambia land tenure is of the customary type in which individuals and families enjoy usufruct (user) rights to individual fields by virtue of their traditional kinship ties in the communities. Although land availability for farming is not a constraint in most parts of the country, improved agricultural production by small-scale farmers may imply the need for change in land tenure practices. For instance, efforts to promote good husbandry and soil conservation "might be enhanced if farmers had security in their land. Under some types of customary land tenure some individuals may not have this security" (GRZ, 1990, pp 11 — 12).

Although there is need to ensure that small-scale farmers should have greater security in land, it is pointed out by the ILO that in those African countries where land reforms have been attempted, such as in Ethiopia, Ivory Coast and Senegal, women's rights in land have not been properly addressed and women continue to remain dependent on men (Ahhmad and Loutfi, 1982, p. 14).

Birgegard (1993) seems to agree with this position. He states that "women are increasingly being marginalised in changing tenure regimes ... In traditional indigenous tenure systems women are with few exceptions ascribed inferior tenure rights to men" (Birgegard, 1993, p. 24). He goes on to argue that while men get access to land through their lineage or clan, women have secondary rights which they get through their husbands. For unmarried women they have access by being given portions by their mothers, who in turn are allocated portions by their husbands.

Even in situations where individualization of tenure is taking place, Birgegard contends that women are still being marginalised. He states that "commercialization of production, individualization of indigenous tenure systems and formal titling schemes all work in the same direction; women's tenure rights are eroded" (Birgegard, 1993, p. 24). Those who are particularly vulnerable are unmarried women, divorcees and widows, whose customary rights are eroded as the formal legal system expands its influence.

Although a procedure for obtaining title to land in areas under customary tenure has been available in Zambia since 1985, Keller, Phiri and Milimo (1990) argue that "most rural women are unlikely to take advantage of this opportunity since they are much less familiar with ... bureaucratic procedures than are most men" (Keller, Phiri, and Milimo, 1990, p. 254).

With respect to the position of women in Bulenje society where the study area is located, Muntemba (1977a) points out that pre-colonial land ownership could be described loosely as 'communal ownership,' which means "the right of every adult to have access to some land for purposes of cultivation" (Muntemba, 1977a, p. 348-349). In this situation women also were allowed to own land.

Apart from cultivating a field jointly with the husband, some married women cultivated additional fields with the use of their children's labour. The produce from this field was the woman's. She could entertain her relatives with the food and also purchase trade goods including cattle (Muntemba, 1977, p. 55).

Muntemba (1977a) further shows that the introduction of 'improved' and 'peasant' farming schemes during the colonial period in 1946 and 1948 in Bulenje led to agricultural change in terms of crops, land tenure and the means of production. Maize, rather than the traditional sorghum was adopted as the major cash crop, and modern agricultural implements began to diffuse in the rural population.

Land alienation to accommodate European settler farmers in the 1920s caused congestion and land shortage in the Lenje Native Reserve. In Chief Mungule's area, the 'peasant farmer' scheme could not be introduced due to insufficient land available. She adds that "the shortage of land was further reflected in the enhanced value which land acquired by 1970 ..." (Muntemba, 1977a, p. 359), resulting in increased individual disputes.

Because of land scarcity, some people who previously had access to land found themselves landless or assigned less productive land. Women and especially widows who had been entitled to own and inherit land under the matrilineal Lenje society found that their inheritance rights were being challenged, and "some widowed women no longer had as much access to the best lands as hitherto" (Muntemba, 1977a, p. 359).

As far as the adoption of improved modern technology was concerned, Muntemba points out that although during the colonial period, male agricultural extension workers did not target women farmers, there is evidence that some women began to adopt modern

technology; own and operate the implements. In the Keembe-Mwachisompola area, 30% of the women she interviewed in 1975 could handle the ox-drawn plough, and of those women who cultivated independently, "40 per cent used ox-drawn ploughs which were mostly hired or got hold of through male relatives ..." (Muntemba, 1977, p. 287).

Married women who assisted their husbands to cultivate land did not acquire any rights to the property or inheritance rights over the land or the implements. At death, property went to the men's relatives. However, those women that were most enterprising, both married and single, were able to hire men to plough and apply the fertilizers for them.

In his country-wide study, Milimo (1990) indicates that female-headed households account for a third of the total number of households in rural Zambia. Most of those women are engaged in agriculture.

In his study of 648 farming households, he found out that 25.3% of female-headed households acquired land by inheritance, while 24.7% and 23.0% were given by headman and father, respectively. About the same number, 7.8% and 7.4% were given land by husband and mother, respectively. Another 11.8% were given land by a male relative such as the uncle or brother (Milimo, 1990, p. 20, Table 3.3).

With respect to security of tenure, Milimo argues that under customary tenure, property belongs finally to the close patrilineal or matrilineal relatives. Therefore, at the dissolution of marriage, either through divorce or death of husband, a woman is most likely to lose the land she cultivates since it will revert to the community of her in-laws who are the owners (Milimo, 1990, p. 21; Phiri, 1993, p. 117.) This insecurity greatly curtails a woman's agricultural productivity.

Milimo thus contends that land policies should ensure that the insecurity which women farmers experience should be reduced or eliminated. Women need to be assured that they will always have adequate land to cultivate irrespective of their status. In the event of separation or divorce, women should not lose their usufructuary (user) rights on land. He argues that "some arrangements must be made whereby the divorced (and widowed) woman does not forfeit the use of all the land she had helped to develop" (Milimo, 1990, p. 62).

This literature review has attempted to bring the position of women in terms of their access to factors of production, such as land and agricultural technology. It has been argued that women's rights in land were relatively secure under customary laws rather than under the conditions pertaining during the colonial period. Furthermore, attempts to individualize land tenure in the post-colonial period have also tended to marginalise women farmers.

This research therefore attempts to bring out the current status of women farmers in Chinena village, focusing on how they have access to land, and implements (assets); their strategies of dealing with food insecurity and what their views are on the government proposals for empowerment in terms of title deeds as implied in the 1995 Lands Act.

### III. *Methodology and Characteristics of the Sample*

The field work was conducted between December, 23 1996 and January 2nd 1997, in collaboration with Prof. Shiro Kodamaya of Hitotsubashi University and Prof. Kazuo Hanzawa of Nihon University in Japan.

Apart from the literature search, the data which essentially is of a qualitative nature was

obtained through semi-structured interviews. Upon entry into the community we contacted members of the village committee who drew up a list of all heads of female households. A total of thirty three such women were identified, plus one polygamously married woman who was not the head of her household. In addition, the senior headman who supervises fourteen villages, and is also the secretary of the committee of seven chiefs in Chibombo and Kapiri Mposhi was interviewed.

No formal questionnaires were used. Questions were asked through an interpreter covering such areas as family background; settlement; marital status; accessibility to land and implements; harvests, labour; knowledge about title deeds; tradition and women's access to land and inheritance.

The rationale for this approach was to focus only on women farmers who manage their own households since the previous research had concentrated mostly on male farmers. The strategy was to try and be as pragmatic and action oriented as possible in terms of learning from and also sharing information with the heads of female households so that they could be able to act intelligently in future with respect to the issue of empowerment through title deeds, which the Lands Act of 1995 could confer on women farmers. Frazier (1981), has argued that the pragmatic approach in geography is "action-oriented, (and) user-oriented," and aims at solving an immediate problem "for some target population" (Frazier, 1981, p. 67). Therefore, while it was necessary to obtain the views of the women farmers on the issues outlined above, it was also imperative that useful information be passed on to the target population, which could help the women to know what the government was attempting to do, so that they can also act in an informed manner and not be left out on the basis of ignorance.

The semi-structured interviews were an adaptation of the participatory methodologies that can facilitate the collection of qualitative data in a short time (Chambers, 1991).

Since there were 33 female heads of households who were interviewed, plus one other female farmer who is married and was included in the sample, a total of 34 female farmers constituted the sample. It was felt that it would be useful to include a married female farmer in the sample. Since the estimated number of households in the village was 160, the sample represents about 21.25% of all households in the village.

TABLE 1. ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF FEMALE FARMERS

Tribe	No	%
Lenje	11	32.4
Shona	6	17.7
Lozi	5	14.7
Chewa	4	11.8
Nsenga	2	5.9
Tonga	2	5.9
Chikunda	1	2.9
Swaka	1	2.9
Ngoni	1	2.9
Tumbuka	1	2.9
TOTAL	34	100.0

Source: Field Data

Of these women, 17 or 50% of the sample were widows (10 were widowed after settlement); 9 or 26.5% were divorced; 6 were polygamously married but live alone; 1 or 2.9% is separated from her husband, and the other one is polygamously married and lives with her husband. The ethnic composition of the female farmers was shown in Table 1.

The data show that there is ethnic mix in Chinena village, and the village is a real micro-cosm of Zambia since within it reside people from different parts of the country.

The majority (26 or 76.5%) of these women who were interviewed are aged between 31 and 61 years. Only two were below 30 years, while 6 or 16.7% were over 61 years old.

A slight majority of the sampled women farmers had some education. A total of 19 or 55.9% had Primary Education; while 14 or 41.2% were without any education and only 1 representing 2.9% of the sample had Secondary Education. It is therefore imperative that ways must be devised by the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to reach out to female farmers and provide information concerning the issues of empowerment, given the low levels of education.

In terms of family size, the 34 households had a total of 197 children and dependents, giving an average of 6 children per household. Although some of the older children were away in town, the families were generally large. This is not unusual in rural households, given the need for labour at family level. However, large families also have implications in terms of food security as will be shown later.

With respect to settlement, it was found that 16 or 47.1% of the female farmers settled in Chinena since 1989. An almost the same number, 18 or 52.9% settled much earlier — most of them in the 1970s and early 1980s. Thus, there are both relatively new and old settlers in the village. Continued in-migration is putting pressure on scarce land. The procedure for settlement is shown in table 2.

TABLE 2. PROCEDURE OF SETTLEMENT BY WOMEN FARMERS

Procedure	No	%
Settled Alone	13	38.2
Settled with husband	8	23.5
Settled with parents	7	20.6
Followed male relative	6	17.7
TOTAL	34	100.0

Source: Field Data

The majority of the women farmers (13 or 38.2%) settled in Chinena Village alone. They said that they came to search for land so that they could independently take care of themselves and their children. These came to seek for opportunities which did not exist where they came from. While some came after the death of their husbands, others came after divorce or separation. Other women of course settled with their husbands or followed either parents or a male relative.

One 60 year old Ngoni farmer with 9 children and widowed since 1991, stated that following the death of her Namwanga husband, neighbors in Muswishi in the Chamuka Lenje area began to make her stay uncomfortable. They started grabbing her fields and allowed their animals to graze in her fields, thus destroying her crop. Because of this her son-in-law advised that they migrate to Chinena in 1994.



#### IV. *Research Findings and the Issues*

##### 4. 1 **Women and Accessibility to Agricultural Land**

When the women farmers were asked to state how they obtained land upon settling in Chinena, the following picture emerged:-

TABLE 3. MODE OF OBTAINING LAND

Mode	No	%
Allocated by Headman	7	20.6
Given by father	4	11.8
Given by husband	10	29.4
Given by male relative	7	20.6
Borrowed from neighbours	5	14.7
Other (given by friend)	1	2.9
TOTAL	34	100.0

Source: Field Data

The majority of the women (10 or 29.4% of the sample) stated that they were allocated a portion of land from the husband's field. These did not have land or fields of their own but tilled that which the husband apportioned to them. An equal number (7 or 20.6%) were either allocated land by the headman or were given land by a male relative; and 4 or 11.8% were given land by the father. It is important to note that some women heads of households (5 or 14.7%) have no land, but they survive by borrowing from neighbors within the village. On the whole, although it is commendable that some women (7 or 20.6%) are allocated land directly by the headman on their own right, the greater majority (21 or 61.8%) have access to land through a male contact and do not have land of their own, although they are heads of households. This seems to be in agreement with the literature on the subject of women and land in Sub Sahara Africa as shown in the literature review above.

When the women were asked to explain how according to their customs women have access to land, the general picture that emerged with minor variations from different tribes was that in a village a single woman is supposed to be given land by her father. For a married woman it was argued that she is supposed to obtain land from her husband. It was emphasized that it was rare for a married woman to ask for land from the headman because she is under the control of her husband. If the husband does not have enough land to give to his wife, then he can approach the headman to ask for extra land for his wife. With respect to a divorced woman, it was argued that she is supposed to be allocated land by the headman so that she can be able to sustain herself and her children. The same was true for a widow. While it was expected that a widow was supposed to continue to cultivate the land which was left by her deceased husband, it was also unanimously pointed out, that if such land is grabbed by the relatives of the husband, then it is imperative that the headman allocated land to such a widow, so that she can have the means of sustenance.

Although these arrangements might appear somewhat discriminatory for married women who are not directly allocated land by the headman, it could be argued that it is necessary to follow the procedure in order to avoid creating sociological problems which may lead to conflict between husbands and their wives and traditional leaders, and therefore destabilise rural communities.

For instance A.M. a 50 year old Lenje divorcee, the only female farmer with a junior high school education was of the view that "if I were single and staying in the village with my parents, I would get land from my father, but if I want to be independent, I would ask the headman to give me land. But if I am married, I should seek a portion of land from my husband and not from the village headman — because if I approach the headman, my husband would query why I have bypassed him. So, I have to stick to my husband's decision".

Registering a slightly divergent position, C.N., a 33 year old Tumbuka divorcee was of the view that according to the Tumbuka of Kubuyombe, the tradition was that a single woman living with her mother could get land from the headman if she wants to be independent. If the woman is married, then the husband is obliged to give a smaller portion of his land to the wife, although she is expected to provide labour in the larger field that belongs to the husband. While contending that men take advantage of women through this arrangement, she argued that it was however a good strategy for a married woman to have her own field where she can grow the types of crops she wants in order to sell it and have her own business. However, she conceded that the wife has to continue to help her husband in the main field, although it was necessary for her to have a little more economic independence so that she can also contribute to the household budget.

When the women were asked to state who according to tradition would inherit their estate in the event of death (especially the land and any other major assets available), whether male or female children or relatives, it was unanimously stated that children are supposed to inherit the estate. What was surprising however is that the majority of the women were of the view that male children were supposed to exercise overall control over the estate and not the girls. While it was expected that boys would take control of major assets such as cattle and land, the girls were to get clothes and kitchen utensils. It was generally argued that girls could not inherit the estate because they get married and go away to live with their husbands.

The views on inheritance which reflect the weight of tradition in favour of male rather than female children, even by women themselves, were summed up by A. B, a 38 year old Chewa widow who stated that "the boy who has the power would inherit, not the girls, because us women are below the men." When pressed why she would not like her only daughter to inherit her estate, so that a woman can also be above the men, she replied in a rather resigned manner that "everywhere you go, men are on top of the women."

#### **4. 2 Availability of Assets, Food Insecurity and Coping strategies**

When the female farmers were asked to state what kind of implements and other assets they owned and used to cultivate their fields, the following picture emerged:-Table 4.

The level of ownership of farming implements among women farmers is rather low in comparison to that of male farmers who were sampled in 1994 (Kajoba, 1994, p. 52). While only 7 or 23.3% of the 30 farmers who were sampled in 1994 had hand hoes only, the number of women farmers depending on such rudimentary technology was 20 or 58.8% — out of the 34 female farmers that were sampled in 1996. Also, while 20 or 66.7% of male farmers

TABLE 4. ASSET OWNERSHIP AMONG FEMALE FARMERS

Item	No	%
With hand hoes only	20	58.8
With ox-drawn plough	13	38.2
With harrow	8	23.5
With ridge cultivator	6	17.6
With scotch cart	6	17.6
With a truck	1	2.9
With animals	13	38.2
With enough land	16	47.1
Without enough land	18	52.9

Source: Field Data

had at least an ox-drawn plough, only 13 or 38.2% of the female farmers had such implements.

Although this is the case, the significant point is that women farmers who manage their own farms and households also have access to modern farming implements and other assets such as cattle as shown in table 4.

Those without modern implements were also not completely disadvantaged, because they had access to the animals and equipment of their male neighbours. The women stated that they were able to hire the animals to cultivate their fields at a fee — usually about K500 per metre. Others paid in kind by offering chickens valued at K3,000 each.

For example, D.S., a 44 year old Lenje divorcee, indicated that although she had no implements of her own, she was able to hire them. In the 1995/96 agricultural season, she paid a total of K20,000 to have part of her field cultivated; and in the 1996/97 season, she had already paid (at the time of the interview) K25,000 and was due to pay an additional K7,500 for the remaining portion.

Another farmer, J.K., a 31 year old Lozi widow, stated that she spent K40,000 in the 1995/96 and K50,000 in the 1996/97 seasons respectively to hire animals to cultivate her field.

Although it is correctly argued by Larson and Kanyangwa (1990 p. 474) that women who do not own oxen and implements have to wait before their fields are ploughed and therefore lose out because of late planting, it should be noted that hiring of implements is a creative way of accessing the technology. This helps women in Chinena to cope with the fact that they have not been able to accumulate their own equipment and animals. This indirect way of having access to improved technology should not be underestimated as enterprising women farmers are learning to adapt and cope with prevailing circumstances. In this way they are able to sustain their households independently.

Although it is generally argued that insufficient labour is a major constraint among small scale farmers, it would appear that female farmers in Chinena do not have this problem. This is because most of them have large households, with an average of 6 children per household. Thus, the older children assist in providing the necessary family labour for weeding and harvesting, since the cultivation is done by hired animals and equipment.

It is also worth noting that about half of the farmers (18 or 52.95) complained that they did not have sufficient land from which to sustain their households. This is a reflection of the general scarcity of land in the village given the continuous in-migration of new settlers.

However, the women were able to get around this problem by borrowing land. A total of 5 or 14.7% of those interviewed indicated that they were able to borrow land from neighbours within the village.

The issue of land scarcity however is crucial with respect to food security. It was found that due to various reasons including lack of fertilizer, insufficient land to cultivate, sickness and the grabbing of grain from widows by in-laws, 21 or 61.8% of the women farmers were food insecure. In the 1995/96 season, they harvested only between 0-10 x 90 kg bags of maize. These, they said, were not enough to sustain them through to the next harvest. It is indicated that between 15-20 x 90 kg bags were the adequate amount that could provide food security for the female-headed households.

For instance, A.B., a 38 year old Chewa farmer who was widowed in May 1996, narrated that she did not really know how much maize she harvested in the 1995/96 season, because part of the crop was sold fresh to raise medical fees for the ailing husband. When the husband finally died, the relatives took most of the grain and left only the equivalent of 3 x 90 kg bags for her consumption with her three children. She pointed out that certainly these bags were not enough to sustain her to the next harvest.

When these women farmers were asked to explain how they were able to cope with their situation of food insecurity resulting from poor harvests and the ill treatment of widows by the relatives of the deceased husbands, the women replied that they participated in enterprising activities such as piece work to raise money or get paid in tins of grain with the money they could buy grain. One divorced woman said that she sold grass brooms at the roadside, while another baked and sold local buns in the village and also sold charcoal from the nearby forest reserve at the roadside market.

A married woman who stays alone since the husband lives in town and only visits occasionally stated that in order to raise money, she orders meat from a commercial farmer for sale in the village. In addition she buys and resells cigarettes. When she raises money, she is then able to buy grain from within the village.

The enterprises which the women farmers engaged in were quite numerous. Apart from the growing and selling of tomatoes, rape and water melons by those with dambo gardens, knitting, doing piece work etc. one widow indicated that she sold fish and diesel at the roadside market. When asked if the business was profitable, she replied that "there is not much profit but at least I am able to raise some cash to buy grain for food." Another widow, indicated that there was profit from selling grass brooms, which she ordered at K50 each and sold at K100 in Lusaka. With the money raised from selling fish, cooking oil, vegetables and brooms, she was able to buy an animal at K160,000 in August 1996.

Although the majority of female farmers in Chinena experience food insecurity resulting from lack of assets such as farming implements, insufficient land and inputs leading to low yields of the staple maize, there are also success stories.

M.M., a 24 year old Chewa mother of three with a grade seven education and is polygamously married, manages her farming responsibilities alone. Although the husband who stays in another section of the village is a successful farmer, she stated that the two small maize fields which she cultivates were given to her by her father after she got married. She owns one plough, one harrow and a scotch-cart plus ten animals.

In the 1995/96 season, M.M. harvested 100 x 90 kg bags of maize. She sold 50 bags at K10,000 per bag raising K500,000. She was speculating that if prices go up then she will sell

another 40 bags which are stored up, and only leave 10 bags for consumption. Since she has no vegetable garden, she buys these from other farmers for relish and her family was enjoying food security.

She stated further that she does not get any help from her husband in cultivating the land, as she uses her own implements and animals. To raise more money, she sells charcoal from the nearby forest reserve and tomatoes from her upland field, and was thus able to buy her own animals and implements.

M.M. stated that she was a farmer on her own and did not depend on her husband. When we asked her to express how she felt as a successful young female farmer, M.M. replied that "I feel very good about my economic independence and success as a woman, but I would like to achieve even more."

Then there is also E.K., a 53 year old Lozi mother of nine children, who is also polygamously married but her husband stays away and only visits occasionally. She settled in the village in 1986 from Lusaka. She cultivates about 6 hectares of maize, but stated that the land was small and she has to borrow more land from other farmers in the village.

E.K. owns three ox-drawn ploughs, two harrows; one cultivator and two scotch carts, plus 18 animals. The animals were bought while she was in Lusaka where she ran businesses of selling fish and groceries. In addition she has five houses or stands with several rooms which are on rent in old Kanyama. She indicated that the money raised from these enterprises was used to buy implements and the livestock; and she categorically claimed that the property was hers and not for the husband.

In the 1995/96 season, E.K. harvested 150 x 90 kg bags of maize. She sold 20 bags at K10,000 each and raised K220,000 which she used to hire people to make burnt bricks for her new house; then she later sold 30 bags at K11,000 each raising K330,000 which was used for building; and then sold 40 bags at K12,000 each raising K480,000 for roofing, transport and labour. Thus, she was left with 58 bags of maize which were more than enough to ensure food security for her household. She indicated that her seven children who lived with her together with her daughter's husbands provided the labour in the field. In addition, she hires casual workers and pays them money at the rate of K100 — K300 per line.

These two examples show that there are women farmers in Chinena (and probably elsewhere in Chibombo) who are as successful as their male counterparts (Kajoba, 1994, p. 55), and are using their initiative to run their farming and other enterprises with business acumen. To a great extent these experiences speak volumes about how women farmers are able to take advantage of opportunities available to them and thus break the stereo-type view that they are always disadvantaged, dependent and perhaps hopeless.

#### **4. 3 The Need for Security in Land**

All women farmers expressed interest in securing title to the land which they were cultivating especially because some of them felt rather insecure about the future in view of some of the experiences they had gone through.

For instance, J.K., a 31 year old Lozi widow who had been given about 6 ha. to cultivate by her husband in 1980, suffered misfortune when the husband passed away in August 1994. The relatives of her late husband grabbed her field for a year. During this season, she had to borrow land from her elder brother. However, a year later the field was given back to the surviving children and so the widow was able to recultivate it.

J.K.'s 'sister' in the polygamous marriage, a 58 year old mother of eight, had the same experience. She stated that she felt very insecure and unhappy because as the senior wife, land was easily accessible to her and she was given about 10 ha. But after her husband's death land was grabbed from her without due consideration of the expenses she incurred in developing the land over the years.

Thus, this elder widow expressed the view that "I would be very interested to apply for title so that I can have security. At the moment I don't feel secure because if my late husband's relatives feel that I should go next year because they are jealousy of my good harvest, then they will grab the land again."

Another Tonga widow M.M.L., whose husband died in June 1995, stated that her late husband who was one of the earliest settlers had been given about 76 ha. in 1978 by the headman. Before he died, all his three wives were given portions of the land to cultivate while the rest was for himself.

However, when the man died, the traditional leaders participated in grabbing some land from the estate and gave it to the relatives of the deceased man, who came from outside Chinena village. When M.M.L. requested the headman to give part of this land which was grabbed to her only female child, the request was turned down. The headman told the widow that her daughter should go and ask for land from her husband who resides in the other section of the village.

She then lamented that "as for me, the first widow, I was told to go back to my home in Monze and ask for land. Anyway, I am still cultivating part of the land which my late husband left although I am not too secure. I only hope that the land has been given to me."

Concerning the need to apply for secure title M.M.L. indicated that she would also be interested in applying, but raised fears that the headman might not allow widows to do so, since the land is considered as belonging to the surviving children. She added however, that she would be happy to assist her daughter to obtain such title.

According to D.S., a 44 year old Lenje divorcee, "getting title is a good idea which the government has introduced since it means that the land can now be registered in a farmer's name." She added that with title, "there is no pack and go" — referring to the insecurity caused by the fear of eviction by a traditional leader. Thus D.S. expressed the view that "if people in the village start obtaining title to their land, I will also apply so that I am not left out."

#### **4. 4 The Need for More Information on how to Obtain Title to Land**

The Lands Act of 1995 partly states that "any person who holds land under customary tenure may convert it into a leasehold not exceeding ninety-nine years on application ... The conversion of rights from customary tenure to a leasehold tenure shall have effect only after the approval of the chief and the local authorities in whose area the land to be converted is situated..." (GRZ, 1995, Lands Act 1995, No. 29, p. 274).

Moore and Vaughen (1994) point out that while many small-scale farmers and return migrants in the Northern Province of Zambia obtain land by approaching the local chief and headmen, some go further to apply for title deeds to be granted. They state however, that "this course of action tends to be taken only by those who are educated and wealthy enough to be aware of the advantages that can accrue from registration, or by those who wish to be able to bequeath their land to particular individuals ..." (Moore and Vaughen, 1994, p. 210).

They point out further that in the Northern Province, there have been situations which could be referred to as 'land grabbing' in the sense that wealthy and educated return migrants are able to use their money to persuade traditional leaders to give them large tracts of land over which they obtain title, while the rest of the rural community assumes that everybody still has the same customary rights over land as themselves (Moore and Vaughan, 1994, p. 211).

What is happening in the Northern Province could be taking place in other parts of the country as well. It is therefore necessary to educate small-scale farmers and especially women (who are less literate than men), on the advantages of applying for title to the land which they presently hold under customary tenure. This is necessary in view of the 1995 Lands Act, so that women can also be empowered and not be left out of the process which is unfolding due to modernization and increasing commercialization of agriculture resulting from the liberalization of the economy.

In an interview with the Senior Headman for Chinena village, it was learnt that a meeting of headmen, plus some small-scale farmers and attended by the Senior Chief Mukuni (Liteta) at Keembe Farming Institute on 27th November 1996, was held to discuss the implications of the 1995 Lands Act with respect to conversion of land and the issuing of title deeds to the customary land. He explained that it was agreed that if a person was Zambian and loyal, he or she could approach the headman requesting for such conversion; the headman could then recommend to the chief via the Advisory Committee of the chief. This committee could give final approval at the level of traditional leaders, before the application is submitted to the Council and then to the Commissioner of Lands who approves such applications on behalf of the President.

The headman however, added that he had not yet held a meeting in his village to inform his subjects about this important decision. Therefore, when the women farmers were asked to indicate whether they were aware of the 1995 Lands Act and its implications or provisions of granting title deeds to small scale farmers who were cultivating traditional land, 29 or 83.3% replied that they were not aware or had not heard about it. Only 5 or 14.7% of the sample said that they were aware of the Law.

At this point, the researcher briefly explained the implications of having title to land especially in terms of security which would flow from such legal entitlement. It was explained that the advocates of title argued that a small scale farmer who is empowered with title deeds feels more secure on the land and can therefore use it more intensively and undertake improvements such as building permanent houses, sinking boreholes and even fencing the dambo gardens. Furthermore, it was pointed out to the farmers that title deeds could be needed as collateral for securing agricultural loans from lending institutions.

After such an explanation, the women were then asked to indicate whether they would be interested in future, to apply for such title to the headman if they heard that other farmers were doing so and the traditional leaders were processing such applications. The replies were all in the affirmative. The women were of the view that they would be interested in applying for title deeds as it was a good thing to obtain.

The research, however, shows that there is a lot that needs to be done by both national and traditional leaders to mount public awareness campaigns targeted at small-scale farmers, especially women so that they can be made aware of the provisions of the 1995 Lands Act and how they can go about obtaining such conversion if they are interested. Further, there is

need for experts to explain certain technical issues such as whether title can be granted even to those with small holdings within the village. This issue was raised by one female farmer.

#### **4. 5 The Need for Cooperation from Traditional Leaders**

The Lands Act of 1995 states in part that the President “shall not alienate any land situated in a district or an area where land is held under customary tenure without taking into consideration the local customary law on land tenure ... [and] without consulting the chief and the local authority in the area in which the land to be alienated is situated. ...” (Lands Act, 1995, p. 271).

These provisions would seem to strongly suggest that the views of the traditional leaders will have to be taken into account, and that the cooperation of such traditional leaders will need to be solicited in order to make the conversions possible.

Headman Edward Chinena, who is also a senior headman over 14 villages, and is also the secretary for the committee of seven chiefs, emphasized that as far as the traditional leaders are concerned, applications for conversion will be carefully scrutinized, so that title is given only to loyal and cooperative citizens.

It was the view of the senior headman that as far as the traditional leaders were concerned “if a tenant with title does not respect tradition, the chief should be able to repossess the land since it still belongs to the chief”. He added that senior headmen have been instructed to address meetings in order to explain this decision by Senior Chief Mukuni (Liteta) and the Chief’s Advisory Committee.

It was emphasized that traditional leaders also have their own fears which must be addressed. It is generally feared that if title is granted to individuals, such persons will in future refuse to respect the headmen and participate in community work since they were now “independent and answerable only to the President who grants title.”

There were also fears as to whether the individuals who failed to develop their land after obtaining title would subsequently lose that land to the state, lending institutions or foreign developers. Initially, these issues were not clearly explained by representatives of the government who toured the rural areas. Now, it might appear as if no land would be taken away from the traditional leaders, and therefore the Senior Chief was more flexible and is willing to cooperate with the government to implement the Lands Act.

The senior headman emphasised however, that there is need for further explanation by the government on how title can be made to work in favour of the holders as well as the traditional leaders, who fear that lending institutions and foreigners will end up possessing the land especially of those who will default on loans and other obligations.

The sentiments expressed by the senior headman and other traditional leaders in Chibombo do suggest that there is need to develop values over title to land which are harmonious with the local village culture, so that the issuance of such title does not destabilise rural society by pitting the holders against traditional rulers.

Efforts must be made to accommodate the sentiments raised by the senior headman about the fears of traditional leaders. If the sentiments are taken care of such as by inserting a “protective clause” about repossession in an amendment to the 1995 Lands Act, then we could probably create a situation where local culture would be promoting rather than hindering land reform and agricultural development (Tembo, 1994).

There is need to be sensitive to local sentiments so that both individual title holders and



traditional leaders are harmoniously carried along to ensure sustainable land reform and agricultural development. In this way everybody in the rural society will have a positive role to play and culture will not be a negative but a positive factor ensuring democratic land reforms; and a new synthesis will be arrived at between the new system of title holders and the older traditional authorities. Thus, both the new title holders and the traditional leaders could be transformed into mediators between modernity and tradition (Lloyd, 1972).

### V. *Conclusion*

The paper has attempted to bring out the current status of women farmers in Chinena with respect to the five issues discussed above. It can be concluded that as per the literature, women farmers tend to obtain or have access to land through their husbands, parents or other male relatives. However, it is worth noting that in Chinena, an effort is made by the headman to allocate land to women heads of households on their own merit. Thus 20.6% of the sample indicated that they were allocated land by the headman.

It should be emphasized that although all the 34 female farmers had access to land, 52.9% stated that they did not have enough land. Although land scarcity is a general problem in the village due to continuous in-migration, insufficient land and lack of implements and other assets like cattle plus complications which arise from widowhood, create food insecurity in these female headed households.

What is remarkable is that the female farmers have devised creative ways of coping with food insecurity, which include borrowing land; hiring animals and implements from neighbours; doing piece work to raise money to buy grain, and engaging in small-scale enterprises to raise cash with which to sustain themselves. This adaptability is crucial for sustained independence and viability, as some women farmers are quite successful.

The paper has also shown through the voices of widows and other women farmers that they do not enjoy security in the land which they cultivate. Land has been grabbed from widows upon the death of the husband. Therefore, the women welcomed the "good news" about the provisions of the 1995 Lands Act in terms of granting title deeds to small-scale farmers including women.

However, rural cultivators, and especially women, need more information about the changing land tenure legislation and situation. In order to empower women farmers with secure title, the government, women's organizations and NGOs in general, need to sensitize the women farmers and provide them with necessary information with which to take informed decisions about their future and the changing land tenure situation.

Finally, but not least, the paper has argued that for these transformations in land tenure to take place successfully, there is need to enlist the cooperation of traditional leaders especially headmen and chiefs. It is necessary to create new values during empowerment so that the new title holders and traditional leaders form a new synthesis that promotes modernization and democratic land reform, without destabilizing rural society.

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### *Abstract*

The paper attempts to show that as per the literature, women farmers in Chinena village tend to obtain or have access to land through their husbands, parents or other male relatives. However, an effort is made by the headman to allocate land to female heads of households on their on merit. Although women farmers do not enjoy the same access to land and other productive assets and therefore suffer more from food insecurity than male farmers, what is remarkable is that they have devised creative ways of coping with this insecurity. Widows, divorcees and other women farmers do not enjoy full security in land, but would welcome the granting of title to the land which they cultivate as implied in the 1995 Lands Act. This requires that women are given more information about procedures for land conversion, and the cooperation of traditional leaders such as headmen and chiefs is enlisted in order to make the process of land reform successful, so as to empower female farmers with secure title.