

## CHAPTER SIX

### IRRIGATION AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION (1991-2000)

#### INTRODUCTION

In the post-1990 period a number of socio-economic and political changes occurred which impacted on the process of differentiation among the groups under study. This chapter focuses on the ESAP period in Zimbabwe.<sup>1333</sup> It examines the problems confronting Sanyati agriculture and the effect of economic liberalisation on the area's irrigation economy. It also attempts to establish whether different individuals, households (both male and female-headed ones) or groups within the Sanyati community reacted in the same way to the new challenges both irrigation and dryland farming were facing. It would seem that peasant responses were quite varied. Some farmers failed to comprehend why, suddenly, cotton growing, for several decades the hub of this thriving rural economy, had become a liability in the 1990s. Others quickly realised that the days of cotton success were over and shifted their focus to maize and beans, among other crops. Still others hoped this was a momentary setback that would be rectified with the end of the drought and through strong government measures. Least did they know that the government had become so incapacitated by global monetary demands that prospects for spearheading a successful cotton programme were almost non-existent. State intervention in rural development had been drastically curtailed. The onus now seemed to be on individual farmers' ability to be enterprising and innovative. Those who did not subscribe to the belief that commodity crops, in combination with the role of the state, were the only factors that would redeem them from abject poverty progressed relatively well compared to their colleagues who kept on hoping that the cotton miracle (1960s-1980s) would one day return to grace Sanyati agriculture. Such hope was not matched by reality on the ground.

Government land, economic, and political policies in this period are reviewed to ascertain the extent to which these propelled farmers to adjust to the new situation. In general, it seems that people abandon old ideas and practices and embrace new ones only after the latter have proved beneficial. These considerations are integral aspects of rural differentiation and class formation as some farmers adapt relatively quickly to new opportunities while others refuse to change, thereby lagging behind. In this period, adaptation or otherwise was dictated mainly by the economic environment and consequences wrought by ESAP. During this programme, most irrigation tenants reaped so few if any benefits at all from irrigation that they were not willing to remain on their plots. In fact, the period 1991-2000, more than any other in the history of Sanyati, witnessed massive withdrawals from irrigated agriculture, a process that led to many plots staying vacant. The biting economic situation did not encourage new farmers to join the scheme, hence, the number of vacant holdings that were cultivated by the central estate or were illegally cultivated by some plottolders increased.

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<sup>1333</sup> In an effort to revamp the country's economy the Government of Zimbabwe adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991. The programme was abandoned in 1995 because it did not bring about the anticipated economic prosperity. Instead it brought economic ruin.

In spite of the increase in the number of vacant plots, the irony of the situation is that these could not be taken up easily at a time when hordes of people were made economically redundant when they lost their jobs during massive retrenchments. These people were either released into the rural areas where opportunities to start a new life as a farmer were limited or they opted to stay in the cities where they led miserable lives. With respect to Sanyati, the early 1990s experienced a huge influx of “immigrants” most of whom were retrenchees from the giant Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO), the state-run ARDA Estate, the agricultural marketing parastatals (COTTCO and GMB) and other companies in Sanyati, Gweru, Kwekwe, Kadoma, Harare and Bulawayo. Several skilled and semi-skilled workers were laid off from their jobs as a result of the effects of ESAP as enterprises began to downsize their operations.<sup>1334</sup> Commercial farms around Sanyati offered retirement packages to a number of farm workers. Patchway, Golden Valley, Cam and Motor gold mines in Kadoma and other mines like Chakari Gold in Chegutu also retrenched miners and most of these families found their way into Sanyati villages, but there was nowhere to invest their earnings. Fresh land allocations had ceased since the 1960s as this resource had already become scarce due to the limited land area characteristic of the district. Despite irrigation’s proven benefits to the rural community<sup>1335</sup> irrigation plots were too limited if not too small to absorb all the victims of the retrenchment and forced retirement system. Although according to official statements vacant holdings could be taken up by those willing to, in practice it was not as easy. Furthermore, irrigation did not inspire much confidence among the prospective farmers because it was no longer as viable during the 1990s as it was before. Cotton was not doing exceptionally well in this period. The farmers complained that they did not want to grow cotton because of poor soils and unremunerative prices.<sup>1336</sup> The small irrigation plots were not worth investing in because of the low prices offered on the local or domestic market. In addition, the small plots barely generated high volumes of quality products for the regional, continental and international markets due to the dwindling financial, extension and other vital services coupled with high costs of production. It should be pointed out that cultivating 3 or 4 ha, as is the case at Gowe, is very expensive because the cost of electricity and water can hardly be recouped on such small pieces of land. Thus, the overall income realisable on the tiny plots is relatively low, hence the lure to the scheme has been minimal in comparison to the early days. The only major advantage as far as income is concerned is that the smallholder farmers at Gowe can

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<sup>1334</sup> ZISCO Steel in Redcliffe, Kwekwe, was formerly known as the Rhodesia Iron and Steel Company (RISCO). It is the largest iron and steel firm in Zimbabwe located about 150 km from Sanyati town. In the 1980s and 1990s the firm faced a lot of financial and viability problems, which led to the scaling down of its operations. This resulted in the forced retrenchment of many skilled as well as semi-skilled workers. In October 1993 alone, 1 000 workers were retrenched and awarded packages of between Z\$3 000,00 and Z\$7 000,00. For a comprehensive analysis of the performance of ZISCO Steel in historical context see E. S. Pangeti, “The State and Manufacturing Industry: A Study of the State as Regulator and Entrepreneur in Zimbabwe, 1930 to 1990,” PhD thesis, Harare: University of Zimbabwe/UZ, (December 1995).

<sup>1335</sup> J. Moris, “Irrigation as a Privileged Solution in African Development,” *Development Policy Review*, 5, (1987), 99-123.

<sup>1336</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Minutes of Settlement Co-ordinator and Settler Farmers Meeting Held at Gowe Offices on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1993,” 2.

double crop (i.e. grow one crop in summer and another in winter), unlike dryland cultivators who can only grow one crop in summer.

The Main Estate, which for many years had been playing a custodial role with regard to the smallholder scheme, found itself in a serious financial quagmire. In the circumstances, it was trying to quietly withdraw, thereby depriving the plotters of traditional state or Estate support. With the “guardian” role of the ARDA Estate being gradually removed, irrigation in Gowe has become one big nightmare. It is militating against agricultural recovery. However, the efficacy of the Estate’s guardian role should not be over-emphasised because it would hardly survive without the injection of state funds. It is true that from a productivity point of view, the Estate was never known to enjoy any prosperity, so its relative success and that of the tenant scheme was more the result of the strong subsidisation element up to the 1980s. The second decade of Zimbabwe’s independence ushered in colossally intractable problems for the state as subsidies dried up. Government was actually forced to redefine its role in the operation and maintenance of schemes. It no longer subscribed to its old paternalistic role in irrigation, where subsidisation was strong. The resultant impact directly dislocated the bigger irrigation project and this also signified the beginning of operational hiccups for the small-scale scheme. For the Main Estate, the escalation of financial problems inevitably culminated in ARDA’s decision to shut it down in 2000. Gowe virtually collapsed too. During the difficult 1990s, some Gowe farmers thought they could resuscitate dwindling accumulation prospects by abandoning cotton in favour of other crops, demanding the transfer of the management of the scheme to the plotters and embarking on a process of land grabbing. Thus, this period witnessed the open onslaughts not only on the rising number of vacated plots but also on Estate land. Although fresh invasions of Estate land, since the ones that occurred in 1992 and 2000 have not been reported, those who helped themselves to Estate land have not been dislodged to this day, indicating a very serious administrative and political crisis.

Clearly, some plotters and dryland farmers made money from the sale of other crops. However, on the whole, irrigation did not produce significant forms of rural differentiation between 1991 and 2000. The cotton miracle had abruptly come to an end and those who did not know any other form of agricultural survival, apart from the one proffered by cotton, literally collapsed under the weight of the new economic challenges. A number tried to raise their status by acquiring more land for themselves from the vacant plots and Estate land. However, for these desperate farmers, land could not be a strong basis for differentiation because they could not make any meaningful improvements on such land because it was illegally acquired. They farmed it in fear that they could be evicted at any moment. Clearly, irrigation development was hampered by the exigencies of ESAP. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, accumulation was made more and more difficult, not least by the fact that the new economic programme was punctuated by horrendous droughts and the stark reality that the cotton miracle had run its full circle in Sanyati. By 2000, both dryland and irrigation agriculture had not recovered, and for a typically agro-based economy such as Sanyati, this meant that agriculturally driven differentiation had been put on hold for some time or for an indefinite period.

## **SANYATI: BEYOND THE MIRACLE (1991-2000).**

### **The immediate post-1990 period:-**

The cotton boom had ended by 1990. The options for many peasant farmers were limited. As already noted in preceding chapters, agriculture is the mainstay of Zimbabwe's economy. Although the sector contributes only about 18% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), by 2000 it was the country's largest foreign currency earner and about 40% of the country's exports were of agricultural origin.<sup>1337</sup> About 70% of the population is directly dependent on it for formal employment and agriculture provides about 60% of raw materials to industry.<sup>1338</sup> Recent experiences, especially the periods during and immediately after the severe droughts of 1986/87, 1991/92 and 1993/94, have shown that the performance of the country's economy is directly related to the performance of the agricultural sector. The economy performs well when agriculture is thriving. Immediately after 1990 there were clear signs that agriculture and in particular cotton growing in Sanyati's dryland and irrigation areas was hugely compromised by a variety of factors, chief among which were the unrelenting droughts and the deleterious effects of ESAP.

The severe drought in particular meant that yields were very poor. According to E. Munengami "in 1992 the excessively dry conditions and the [declining water levels]" in the normally reliable Munyati River, together with the "frequent pump break downs," made it impossible for the plottolders to achieve "above average yields."<sup>1339</sup> Another Gowe irrigator, G. Maturure, has corroborated this evidence by arguing that "due to the failure of rains," even the most successful performer could not surpass the wheat average yield of 19 bags per acre achieved in 1973 and the maize average yield of about 4½ tonnes per ha or 30 bags per plot realised in the 1982/83 season.<sup>1340</sup> The former Estate Manager, J. Gwerengwe, summed up the position by saying "This was [probably] the worst drought [since irrigation was introduced] in terms of its impact on plotholder and estate production," adding that "Less-endowed families suffered more."<sup>1341</sup> Because yields were not high enough for many plottolders (i.e. the resource-poor, the aged, the infirm and even some of the resource-rich) it was very difficult for the whole scheme to maintain substantial grain reserves<sup>1342</sup> which are often used as an index of scheme food

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<sup>1337</sup> Agritex, *Irrigation Branch Annual Report*, Harare: Department of Agriculture, Technical and Extension Services, 1999. See also Kennedy Mudima, "Socio-economic impact of smallholder irrigation development in Zimbabwe: A case study of five successful irrigation schemes," in Hilmy Sally and Charles L. Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Regional Seminar on Private Sector Participation and Irrigation Expansion in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 22-26 October 2001, Accra, Ghana, (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Proceedings of the International Water Management Institute/IWMI, Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO of the United Nations/UN; African, Caribbean and Pacific/ACP-European Union/EU Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation/CTA, 2002), 22.

<sup>1338</sup> Agritex, *Irrigation Branch Annual Report*, Harare: Department of Agriculture, Technical and Extension Services, 1999.

<sup>1339</sup> E. Munengami, (Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1340</sup> G. Maturure, (Gowe Irrigation Committee Member and Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1341</sup> J. Gwerengwe, (Estate Manager – ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Estate, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1996.

<sup>1342</sup> Grain reserves are most commonly measured in terms of carryover stocks i.e. the amount, depending on

security<sup>1343</sup> for a given season. At the beginning of 1991, underachievers included G. Tasara and F. Tizira, who could not produce because they failed to receive loans from the AFC due to previous arrears, and an unnamed old farmer who had completely failed to raise a yield because his field was overwhelmed with weeds. He had failed to weed because, apart from his age, he could not hire labour due to lack of money.<sup>1344</sup> Such problems led to a lowering of the harvest. The decline in settler production can also be attributed to the fact that of the total scheme hectareage of 120 only 79 ha were being utilised by Gowe I and Gowe II tenant farmers combined. This meant that a whopping total of 41 ha (about 34% of the scheme) were vacant plots.<sup>1345</sup>

Although so many plots lay vacant, the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement recommended only 11 new applicants for allocation of irrigation land in January 1991.<sup>1346</sup> Existing settlers sent delegations to the Minister of Lands<sup>1347</sup> imploring him to allow them to take over the vacant plots, but their efforts were ignored. This was so because the Ministry maintained that it was “policy [that] each settler should not have an excess of 4 ha.”<sup>1348</sup> Such utterances came at a time when new incumbents of plots were not easy to get<sup>1349</sup> because in the 1990s, the selection criteria had been further complicated by the insistence on the part of the Agricultural Land Settlement Board that candidates could only be short listed if they had a proven academic background, sound agricultural education, experience in agriculture, and cash in the bank and also if their

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the region, of both food grains and feed grains in storage at the time the new crop is harvested and begins to come in. This definition has been provided by Lester R. Brown and Erik P. Eckholm, *By Bread Alone*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1975), 58.

<sup>1343</sup> Food security requires that all individuals in a population possess the resources to assure access to enough food for an active and healthy life. This definition has been furnished by Michael Weber and Thomas Jayne, “Food Security and its Relationship to Technology, Institutions, Policies and Human Capital,” Agricultural Economics Staff Paper (88-16), (East Lansing, Michigan, USA: Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1988).

<sup>1344</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Production,” Settlement Officer’s Quarterly Report for Period Ending 31 January 1991, N. K. Kamudzandu.

<sup>1345</sup> *Ibid.* N.B. Vacant plots had risen to 48 by the 1996/97-summer season (i.e. 21 for Gowe I and 27 for Gowe II). See also Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, “Gowe Irrigation Scheme – Sanyati Estate No. 71: Farmer’s Land Allocation Codes 1996/97 Summer Season,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager).

<sup>1346</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Successful Farmers: Chisumbanje, Tsovane, Sanyati and Middle Sabi IIIA Irrigation Schemes,” C. Mundingi (for Secretary for Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement) to the General Manager (ARDA), 9<sup>th</sup> April 1991. See also NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Minutes of Meeting Held by the Settler Selection Committee to Interview Settlers for Irrigation Plots Advertised Under List 1 of 1990,” S. S. Musodza, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1991, 1-5.

<sup>1347</sup> Since Independence, plottolders referred all their problems to ARDA Sanyati as a matter of protocol. The Estate Manager forwarded the problems on their behalf to ARDA Head Office before the latter sent them to the Minister of Lands for final arbitration. However, in the 1990s plottolders increasingly succeeded in circumventing this channel to air their grievances directly with the Minister. Because sometimes they did not get any ministerial responses, they began to suspect that the Estate Manager was not taking up their problems for them.

<sup>1348</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 6.1 Management Meetings – “Minutes of the Management Meeting Held in the Estate Manager’s Office on 3 May 1990,” 1.

<sup>1349</sup> If the process to acquire land was made difficult then this meant vacant plots would also take a long time before they were filled which forced agriculture to stagnate.

employment status was known.<sup>1350</sup> This was used to determine their credit worthiness and to ensure that the selected settlers would have demonstrated some form of success in their original communal homes so that settlement would open greater opportunities and challenges for them.

Among the eleven was Ernest Forichi Ngwena from Nyakapupu Small-Scale Commercial farming area in Guruve. He had an advanced master farmer certificate, \$700,00 in the bank plus 26 head of cattle.<sup>1351</sup> Clayton Gwatsvaira was an ex-combatant and was highly recommended by AGRITEX. He had \$2 000,00 in the bank plus 6 goats and 10 head of cattle. Alexander Badza had no master farmer certificate but had obtained a grade “C” in agriculture at “O” Level. He had \$600,00 in the bank plus 15 goats, 10 head of cattle and owned a poultry project. Badza worked for the DDF in Bikita but was willing to quit if allocated an irrigation plot. Arnold Gonhi was also selected because he had gained irrigation experience on his father’s plot in Middle Save Stage IIIA. He had \$2 300,00 in the bank but no livestock. Misheck Ngwayi was a holder of master farmer and cotton scouting certificates. He had \$2 150,00 in the bank, 10 goats and 6 head of cattle. Margaret Muparuri was one of the few female recipients of plots at Gowe-Sanyati.<sup>1352</sup> She had a master farmer certificate, \$1 600,00 in the bank plus 10 head of cattle and she was described as an above-average farmer by AGRITEX.<sup>1353</sup>

However, cash declarations by applicants for plots were not always authentic as some of them connived with richer relatives to put some money into their accounts on the understanding that they would return it once the application had gone through. A case in point is Gladys Chekeche who in her project plan (asset appraisal) falsely stated that she had substantial investments in her home area and had a fat bank account approximating to \$3000,00. Being a daughter of a renowned small-scale commercial farmer, her submission to the Land Settlement Board was “highly regarded,” but in reality she had been temporarily “loaned” an equivalent sum by her father to facilitate the smooth

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<sup>1350</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 349224, Location R24.10.11.11F, File: ADA/SET/8 Agricultural Land Settlement Committee, “Lists of Approved Applicants Recommended by the Agricultural Land Settlement Board: Agricultural Development Authority Irrigation Plots,” G. J. Makombe (Land Administration - Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development) to Liberty Mhlanga (the General Manager, ARDA), 28<sup>th</sup> January 1993, 2.

<sup>1351</sup> This did not mark the official acceptance of cattle in the scheme. The cattle prohibition order was still upheld as animals continued to be perceived as an irritation if not a nuisance to irrigation farmers.

<sup>1352</sup> S. Mapondera, (Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Estate, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997. Mapondera who took over from Gwerengwe on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1996 says in 1997 there were only 6 female plottolders at Gowe. This was clearly not acceptable as a recent Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) survey on women’s view of the land question states that all the problems of women regarding land and all related issues stem from the fact that women are excluded from decision making processes. For detail on the disadvantages women face because they are not direct land owners see National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO), “Meet The President Programme,” – Land Question: Women’s View, Harare Sheraton Hotel, International Conference Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1994, 1.

<sup>1353</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Minutes of Meeting Held by the Settler Selection Committee to Interview Settlers for Irrigation Plots Advertised Under List 1 of 1990,” S. S. Musodza, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1991, 1-3. See also NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Allocation of Vacant Plots on ADA Managed Settlement Schemes,” R. Maposa (Settler Programmes Co-ordinator) to ARDA Estate Managers and Settlement Officers for Middle Sabi, Chisumbanje and Sanyati, 11<sup>th</sup> April 1991.

passage of her application for a plot at Gowe.<sup>1354</sup> She admitted that once the application procedure had been completed she was expected to return the full amount at no extra cost.<sup>1355</sup> Many would-be plotters, such as David Mayose, Taguma Chengu and Misheck Ngwayi connived with relatives in the same way.<sup>1356</sup> Such kinship networks meant that some of the new plotters entered the scheme without the financial resources with which to carry out irrigation farming; hence the need to seek loans always arose as soon as they were allocated a plot. This can be linked to the inability by the smallholder scheme to produce enough food to feed the local community for the greater part of the 1990s. The Estate Managers in this decade (Jacobus Gwerengwe, 1988-1996 and Stanford Mapondera, 1997-1999) testified that droughts and ESAP had a devastating impact on the productivity of Gowe. “The scheme, which was producing average yields of 20 bales of cotton per ha in the 1970s, 1,8 tonnes of maize per acre in the 1980s and approximately 20 bags of wheat per acre in the 1970s was achieving much less after ten years of independence.”<sup>1357</sup> Gwerengwe further noted that between 1990 and 2000 despicable yields of not more than 10 bales of cotton per ha were realised and both wheat and maize yields had declined to half of the 1970 and 1980 levels respectively.<sup>1358</sup> These statistics illustrate that the smallholder scheme was producing far below potential. Failure by the scheme to produce adequate grain reserves, thus, put the surrounding communal area, particularly during years of drought and ESAP, in a highly vulnerable position as it occasionally relied and still relies on ARDA irrigation to provide a perilously thin buffer against the vagaries of weather, plant disease and other incidentals.

This failure to adopt practical steps to mitigate food shortages due to persistent droughts<sup>1359</sup> had far reaching consequences for Sanyati as its population starved. One of the worst was the “great drought” of 1991/92, which compelled more than 5 million people throughout the country to request food handouts.<sup>1360</sup> Gowe farmers were seriously affected by the drought. Due to the catastrophe, E. Munengami, M. Mjoli, D. Mjoli, K Chipala, C. Mhara and K. Mushonga could not grow any crops in the 1992/93 season because they failed to get loans from the AFC, as they had not paid back the previous loan (i.e. 1991/92 loan).<sup>1361</sup> Representing his colleagues, Chipala stated that “We were not entitled to further loans until we had cleared our debt [and] without support from our traditional financiers we were stuck.”<sup>1362</sup> At the same time, engines had recurrent breakdowns and some plots were not being utilised. According to the Settlement Officer, N. T. K.

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<sup>1354</sup> Gladys Chekeche, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1355</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1356</sup> David Mayose, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005; Taguma Chengu, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and Misheck Ngwayi, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1357</sup> J. Gwerengwe (Former Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Growth Point, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005. See also S. Mapondera (Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Estate, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1358</sup> J. Gwerengwe (Former Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Growth Point, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1359</sup> “Let’s Have Plan to Transform Peasant Farming,” *The Herald*, Harare: (Thursday February 1 1996), 11.

<sup>1360</sup> “Drought Unfurls its Horrors,” “Comment,” *The Herald*, Harare: (Tuesday August 22 1995), 10.

<sup>1361</sup> E. Munengami, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1362</sup> K. Chipala, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

Kamudzandu, this drought could have been mitigated to some extent had the 30 vacant plots (from Gowe I and II) in that season been under cultivation.<sup>1363</sup> Notwithstanding all these problems, it can be noted that the lease agreement which had remained unchanged for many years also contributed to low productivity as the farmers, who were finding it increasingly difficult to access ARDA machinery which was either grounded due to shortage of spare parts or failure by the Estate to procure diesel, were not allowed to use their oxen for ploughing.

The new applicants for plots had indicated livestock in their declaration of assets oblivious of the fact that animal rearing was prohibited at Gowe. After being allocated plots, many brought their animals with them. Several such plottolders, including the old plottolders, were served with written warnings by the Estate Manager for flouting the lease agreement by keeping animals in the scheme. Among the old farmers who were warned in February 1993 were N. Mavhengere, G. Maturure, K. Muzanhamo, C. Wira, T. Nyamutova and D. Mjoli. The tone of the letters was the same for all of them.

You are keeping cattle in the scheme. This is in violation of your lease agreement. Your animals are a menace to other settlers' crops. They also necessitate the Estate to have crop guards twenty-four hours a day. You are hereby required to comply with the terms of your lease agreement and move your cattle out of the scheme. You are also required to close all the holes you cut in the fence of the scheme ...<sup>1364</sup>

Copies of such warnings were sent to the Settlement Co-ordinator for his information. It should be noted, however, that if a settler farmer's crops were destroyed by another's or a dryland farmer's cattle and the offending party refused to compensate him/her for the damage caused it was very difficult to launch a legal suit. It was a cumbersome process because farmers taking on responsibility for maintenance and operation needed legal titles and rights. Lamentably, they did not have these because they were not provided for in the lease. Therefore, in the absence of legal titles they were not and are still not able to enforce their regulations on their own members, or to sue outsiders who damage their facilities. In addition to damage to crops by cattle, natural calamities and lack of supporting services also resulted in low yields.

The effects of low productivity as far as cotton was concerned were more telling. Although cotton was not a food crop, it played a big role in ensuring food sustainability during its heyday (i.e. 1960s to 1980s). It was also instrumental in intensifying the disparities in wealth between Sanyati peasants. Clear categories of rich and poor farmers emerged. The 1990s did not bring much joy to cotton cultivators as the crop was not only affected by drought but was also no longer receiving the incentives that hitherto made every farmer want to grow it. Ploughing, extension advice and input support schemes,

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<sup>1363</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, "1991/92 Gowe I and II Farmers," N. T. K. Kamudzandu (Settlement Officer).

<sup>1364</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, "Memorandum – Keeping Cattle in the Scheme in Violation of Lease Agreement," Estate Manager (ARDA Sanyati) to Gowe Plottolders, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1993.



which had been deployed to good effect in the 1960s and 1970s, were virtually dead. Agricultural loans which seemed every farmer's right with the coming of independence in 1980 now disappeared or were given on extremely stringent conditions which did not take into account the changed macro-economic environment. Repayment terms had to be adhered to whether there was a drought or not. For K. Mushonga, "a certain fraction of the proceeds from cotton went into debt settlement [and] depending on previous arrears it could amount to three quarters of the total or could leave a grower in further arrears."<sup>1365</sup> The result was that both irrigation and dryland farmers became averse to growing cotton whose return did not justify the enormous cost of production. These problems coupled with the fact that in the 1990s, cotton was no longer as responsible for peasant prosperity as before due, among other things, to depressed prices, signaled the end of the miracle. The end was affirmed by the adoption of ESAP, which did very little if anything at all to render support to the small-scale cotton irrigators and their dryland partners.

## THE INTRODUCTION OF ESAP

### **Background:-**

By independence, Zimbabwe had become a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). As a member of the two multi-lateral financial agencies, it occasionally secured standby credit from the IMF as happened in 1983 when she got Z\$375 million.<sup>1366</sup> This amount was disbursed to offset the financial crisis facing the country as a result of the economic downturn of the early 1980s. In return, Zimbabwe in 1991 agreed to devaluation, restoration of internal and external balance of payments, cuts in development programmes and government subsidies.<sup>1367</sup> This meant that she had, in fact, adopted the IMF/WB Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP).<sup>1368</sup> Thus, the state, which used to play a pivotal role in cushioning the small as well as the big farmers from several problems via subsidies and other expedient measures, had been forced by ESAP to take a back seat. A lot of financing and marketing hitches arising from the vacuum left by a retreating state were witnessed. Farmers were invariably made to scout for their own markets especially against the backdrop that it was not easy for plowholder farmers at Gowe to penetrate the more lucrative foreign or international markets let alone solicit for independent or private funding of their farm operations. The expectation that there would be increased smallholder and black farmer participation in the government's new export production policy was nullified by the lack of equal commitment on the part of the same government to use ESAP to integrate on advantageous terms this group of farmers. The new export environment provided by ESAP gave the large and predominantly white farmers so many comparative advantages despite the fact that they devoted smaller amounts of land than expected to new export

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<sup>1365</sup> K. Mushonga, (Gowe Plowholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>1366</sup> A. S. Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: The Case of Zimbabwe, 1990-1995*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1997), xi.

<sup>1367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1368</sup> Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the developing world were designed jointly by the IMF and the WB. It is not surprising that save for Ghana, which is venerated as an example of success, SAPs were characterised by failure wherever they were adopted mainly because they failed to take local economic, social, geo-political and other conditions into cognisance.

crops, in particular, horticultural crops. Multinational corporations and white commercial farmers enjoyed the marketing opportunities availed by the programme to large business concerns. Indeed, one of the most often repeated charges against SAPs is that they benefited the big companies and the wealthy members of society at the expense of the poor.<sup>1369</sup> As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, small schemes like Gowe could not penetrate the new markets created by ESAP. Clearly, the disparities between black and white farmers became wider. In some instances, the gap between black farmers themselves increased as ESAP-induced poverty took its toll. The socio-economic effects of the new programme, therefore, are fundamental to understanding burgeoning rural poverty, which occurred at the height of the rhetoric of globalisation and economic prosperity for developing nations.

Indeed, ESAP was hatched as part of a programme to integrate Zimbabwe into the rapidly globalising world. For Mlambo and Pangeti, globalisation entailed the internationalisation of corporate production, distribution of goods and services as well as the removal of all institutional barriers to trade and capital to facilitate the opening up of markets.<sup>1370</sup> It was not a secret that to achieve the opening up of markets government should withdraw its active role in directing the economy. That role was perceived as socialist oriented and detrimental to the well being of, among other things, organised agriculture. It was in this context that the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) President, Peter MacSporran, in August 1994 called for “an end to government interference in the market place” to prevent what he called “further damage to the agricultural sector’s economy.”<sup>1371</sup>

The adoption of ESAP effectively marked the government’s renunciation of the socialist ideology it purportedly pursued since independence in 1980. ESAP in Zimbabwe, which was part of a push to open up the economy to the outside world, was externally imposed although no economic crises prevailed apart from frequent droughts, declining external terms of trade and low levels of foreign investment, which in turn led to low levels of employment growth.<sup>1372</sup> Since ESAP was introduced in 1990/91, the policies influencing the nature and scale of irrigation development in the whole country have been changing in tandem with changing and varied agrarian incentives, which were globally

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<sup>1369</sup> Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme*, xi. N.B. Studies in other parts of the world also confirm this. See also J. Roddick, *The Dance of the Millions: Latin America and the Debt Crisis*, (London: Latin American Bureau, 1988); M. B. Brown and P. Tiffen, *Short Changed: Africa and World Trade*, (London: Pluto, 1992) and W. Bello, *Dark Victory: The United States, Structural Adjustment and Global Poverty*, (London: Pluto Press, 1994).

<sup>1370</sup> Alois S. Mlambo and Evelyn S. Pangeti, “Globalization, Structural Adjustment and the Social Dimensions Dilemma in Zimbabwe, 1990-1999,” in Taye Assefa, Severine M. Rugumamu and Abdel Ghaffar M. Ahmed, *Globalization, Democracy and Development in Africa: Challenges and Prospects*, (Addis Ababa: Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa/OSSREA, 2001), 163.

<sup>1371</sup> *The Farmer: Zimbabwe Farming News Magazine*, 64(31/32), Harare: Modern Farming Publications, (August 4/11, 1994), 1.

<sup>1372</sup> Stoneman, 1992 and Gibbon, 1995 cited in Sam Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe: Land Use Change in the Mashonaland Provinces*, (Stockholm, Sweden: Elanders Gotab, 2000), 18.

determined.<sup>1373</sup> Production processes became oriented more towards the needs of global markets, which in a number of ways nominally arrested the tempo of rural differentiation. Small schemes like Gowe and even the Sanyati Main Estate could not directly export their produce. Any cotton that was earmarked for the external market was exported by COTTCO on their behalf. Under the new economic arrangements, the richer peasantry to a certain extent accessed the foreign market more than their poorer colleagues, which also signaled the disproportionate distribution of structural adjustment benefits. In reality the unequal benefits, which accrued to farmers as a result of structural reforms, fuelled the economic disparities between the irrigation farmers that had existed since time immemorial even further. The renewed struggle to survive between the resource poor and their richer counterparts in the context of the increasingly market-based pricing policies for agricultural commodities and growing inequality in access to irrigation equipment exacerbated the competition for ownership of diminishing socio-economic resources. In fact, Zimbabwe's economic adjustment process has intensified rural disparities by creating a class of poor plotters on the one hand and very rich ones on the other. The richer plotters emerged in spite of the constrictive framework within which they operated.

ESAP promoted increased rural economic differentiation among Sanyati's dryland and irrigation farmers. This differentiation was caused by unequal accessibility mainly to local markets for crops like maize and beans since external markets were not always accessible to these frontier farmers. ESAP did not quite lead to uneven capital accumulation in the rural sector as far as the proceeds from cotton were concerned. This was so because greater commercial crop production and marketing were directly threatened as cotton became increasingly unpopular. From the 1960s to the 1980s, it was the most profitable crop to grow in Sanyati, but in the 1990s a number of factors made it to be progressively associated with abject poverty than ever before. For example, it was extremely difficult for farmers to obtain inputs and ARDA tractors were not provided on time despite the insistence that farmers should plough and plant at the same time. In fact, at a meeting with the tenants, the Settlement Co-ordinator, Mutsvairo, advised farmers to plant at the right time for optimal yields. However, the farmers complained that "services given to them are very late every year," and crop prices are also announced late every time but the Co-ordinator said "It is due to late payments from the financiers because ADA cannot authorise operation to the farmers before credit facility is provided."<sup>1374</sup> Thus, ARDA was reaffirming the fact that mechanical equipment was neither made available on time nor were crop prices determined before the marketing season as will be illustrated later in the chapter. The marketing environment was made increasingly unpredictable for the farmers and there was little inducement to put a particular crop under cultivation given the numerous price uncertainties that prevailed throughout this decade. Trade liberalisation, exchange rate devaluation, domestic agricultural market

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<sup>1373</sup> For a detailed examination of the socio-economic and political consequences of ESAP in the Mashonaland Provinces of Zimbabwe see Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 11-176.

<sup>1374</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, "Minutes of Settlement Co-ordinator and Settler Farmers Meeting Held at Gowe Offices on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1993," 1.

deregulation and agricultural export promotion <sup>1375</sup> had far reaching effects on smallholder irrigation as these ESAP-induced measures did not always guarantee success. Not all rural agricultural products found a niche in the new and global markets that emerged with the inauguration of ESAP. This led to constant erosion of rural incomes.

Responses to declining farm incomes and poverty never really reached popular proportions but resentment of ESAP-induced difficulties was clear. As already noted, this was particularly so because Gowe plowholders did not have access to the export-oriented markets that the new economic programme was trying to promote. This was contrary to the fact that ESAP, initiated in 1990/91 by the Government of Zimbabwe, promised to improve rural livelihoods through improved productivity and higher prices via market processes. Zimbabwe's liberalisation programme promised dramatic agricultural growth beyond 5% per annum and reduced poverty through employment and incomes growth and accelerated rural development. <sup>1376</sup> The specific policy thrust was that the concentration of agricultural production or land use on new non-traditional exports such as horticulture, wildlife and related tourism land uses would yield positive environmental and socio-economic benefits. <sup>1377</sup> Nonetheless, this policy benefited other regions that were endowed with such exports and not Sanyati. Sanyati and other areas' disadvantage did not influence any change in policy. Liberalising domestic markets and encouraging exports were, thus, considered the main paths to the growth of Zimbabwean agriculture. However, a fundamental problem with the ESAP framework was that it did not directly address the key constraints which confronted the small-scale or communal area farmers prior to the programme and after, in their efforts to respond to new market incentives. Key amongst these smallholder constraints were the narrow and discriminatory land and financial markets, distorted water rights which favoured the large-scale commercial farmers, and the lack of access to essential infrastructure such as dams and irrigation field equipment and transportation which could make for more effective land use. <sup>1378</sup> ESAP did not favour large-scale investment in water development as had been recommended by some analysts (including the then PM, Mugabe, in his 1982 declaration) <sup>1379</sup> in order to tackle the problems of low agricultural productivity and employment development. <sup>1380</sup> It was only after realising the strain on the national economy exerted by the 1992 and 1994

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<sup>1375</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 12.

<sup>1376</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>1377</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, 1990, cited in Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 51.

<sup>1378</sup> Moyo, 1989, cited in Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 51-52. For a similar discussion of the impact of lack of water rights on small-scale farmers see also ZFU, "Meet The President Programme," Harare Sheraton Hotel, International Conference Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1994, 3 and The Association of Rural District Councils, "Meet The President Programme," Harare Sheraton Hotel, International Conference Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1994, 1. N.B. Because irrigation water rights on all rivers have been fully subscribed by large-scale commercial farmers it is very difficult for smallholder farmers to benefit through tapping natural flowing water resources in national rivers.

<sup>1379</sup> Mugabe had declared 1982 as the "Year of National Transformation" in which more emphasis would be placed on developing water or irrigation infrastructure. For detail see chapter one of this study, 24-25 and ILO, 1989 and Moyo, 1989 cited in Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 52.

<sup>1380</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 52.

droughts<sup>1381</sup> that Government of Zimbabwe policy shifted its thrust towards mobilising more finance for dam construction in communal areas to increase the small farmers' share of water rights and to encourage private dam development.

In this policy context, the ESAP period (1991-1995) offered no concrete resources for smallholder export-led growth in commodities such as horticulture and tourism, as had happened in Kenya, due to the restrictive land, water and infrastructural conditions of communal areas.<sup>1382</sup> Government effort to promote irrigation especially by small farmers was, therefore, derailed by high water tariffs and the ever-escalating costs of acquiring and maintaining equipment. The long-standing skewed distribution of these resources in favour of the large-scale commercial farmers suggested that it was only the latter that could effectively respond to new ESAP incentives. Thus, export incentives, forex (foreign exchange) allocations and accounts as well as inherited fiscal biases in favour of the large-scale commercial farmers encouraged their responsiveness to land use diversification, intensification and export orientation.<sup>1383</sup> For instance, forex was allocated mainly to large farmers with a history of given scales of output to purchase imported large-scale farm machinery.<sup>1384</sup>

These developments meant that, at the end of the programme, ESAP had remained a potential rather than a real instrument of change for the greater contingent of small-scale farmers like those found in Gowe and Sanyati as a whole. Government, which shifted dramatically from the protective regime of the 1980s to the SAP regime of the 1990s, was largely to blame for increasing rural farmers' poverty instead of increasing their wealth. By accepting ESAP with all its prescriptions it was actually helping small-scale farmers to remain poor. For Mupawose the programme did not bestow tangible benefits to Gowe and other small-scale schemes because "the ESAP entity got clouded in politics and failed to make sense [economic sense]."<sup>1385</sup> Thus, the experience with ESAP between 1990 and 1995 produced the combined impact of the steady devaluation of the Zimbabwe dollar, the freeing of agricultural commodity markets from parastatals, and agricultural commodity price decontrol as well as the shift in the real and nominal prices of the entire range of agricultural commodities.<sup>1386</sup> For example, by 1995, all the major commodity markets had been liberalised, opening the marketing to private buyers and contractors, while by 1996, three of the agricultural parastatals were ready for privatisation. Massive devaluation against the US dollar occurred first in 1991 at over 90%, followed by a decline of over 20% in 1993 and 1994, and steady declines of around 10% each year up to 1996 occurred.<sup>1387</sup> As already indicated, devaluation also meant increasingly moving away from the era of direct grants and subsidies (i.e. 1960s-1980s) which was central to bailing out the Sanyati core estate and its outgrower component both in good and bad times. In fact, from the 1960s right up to the 1980s the image of vulnerability in Sanyati irrigation was not so apparent. Funds were more readily available and subsidies helped

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<sup>1381</sup> Coinciding with ESAP, Zimbabwe suffered a series of droughts between 1990 and 1995.

<sup>1382</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 52.

<sup>1383</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1384</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>1385</sup> Mupawose, Personal Interview.

<sup>1386</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 55.

<sup>1387</sup> *Ibid.*

TILCOR, which subsequently became ARDA, to hide the now all too familiar image of vulnerability. The advent of ESAP, the withdrawal of subsidies and the malperformance of the economy changed the operational viability of many State enterprises<sup>1388</sup> not least ARDA. Perpetual losses on the part of ARDA as will be illustrated later in the chapter seriously threatened their survival. This picture has not changed since the turn of the new millennium because there is no huge injection of funds coming from Government to bail them out. According to the ARDA Chief Executive Officer (CEO), J. Z. Z. Matowanyika,

The long-term productivity of the Authority started deteriorating in the 1990s. In direct response to ESAP we [ARDA] were privatising and not allocating resources to parastatals. Since 1993/94 there was no investment in irrigation. The last investment was in 1992/93. The support and production base of the Authority including the support from the major investor (the Public Sector Investment Programme/PSIP) were declining.<sup>1389</sup>

The dire state of ARDA is worsening and recently it has led to its failure to raise salaries to pay its workforce.<sup>1390</sup>

During the TILCOR days, some services to the parastatal's schemes, for example, tillage, discing and planting "were going for free"<sup>1391</sup> due to heavy government subsidisation. However, with the advent of ESAP the same services and a host of others dried up. ARDA no longer got government grants or subsidies. The new arrangement was that the Estate was to provide services to plottolders and plottolders, in turn, were to pay for the services. A significant change from the past was that ARDA was called upon to operate on a commercial basis and generate funds from its own resources, that is, "ARDA was now required to make profit whilst TILCOR was allowed to function as a developmental agency."<sup>1392</sup> The IMF and WB emphasised that Zimbabwe's budget deficit would be reduced not only through the phasing out of subsidies to parastatals such as ARDA but also through a cut in the size of the civil service and the introduction of cost-recovery measures for social services such as education and health. The end of subsidies marked the beginning of problems for ARDA, which for years was accustomed to huge government subsidisation of their scheme operations and throughout ESAP the Sanyati Estate was operating at a loss. It had always operated at a loss but between 1991 and

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<sup>1388</sup> Some of the State enterprises or parastatal organisations which include ARDA whose lack of viability and persistent bungling is bleeding the fiscus are Air Zimbabwe and the Civil Aviation Authority of Zimbabwe (CAAZ), Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO), the District Development Fund (DDF), Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings (ZBH), Zimbabwe United Passenger Company (ZUPCO), Cold Storage Company/Commission (CSC) and Hwange Colliery. Given the scarcity of funds these parastatal institutions can hardly justify Government's huge injection of limited funds to bail them out. Nevertheless, apart from ARDA the others are outside the scope of this study.

<sup>1389</sup> J. Z. Z. Matowanyika, (ARDA Chief Executive Officer), Personal Interview, ARDA Head Office – Harare, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

<sup>1390</sup> "ARDA Fails to Pay Workers," *The Standard*, 16 October 2005, 6.

<sup>1391</sup> Mapondera, Personal Interview.

<sup>1392</sup> *Ibid.*

2000 the extent of loss assumed enormous proportions. Invariably, problems of the Estate reflected on the performance of the smallholder scheme adjacent to it.

### **Irrigation performance: Merits and demerits of ESAP (1991-1995):-**

Due to financial hardships wrought by ESAP, during the 1991/92 season only the 70 ha making up Gowe II were under cotton and the entire Gowe I (50 ha) was fallow. This necessitated the cropping of this section of the scheme by the Estate from mid-February 1992.<sup>1393</sup> ESAP and a severe drought in 1992 adversely affected agricultural production. One of the Gowe plottolders, B. Jongwe, recalls that his “first bean crop” was affected by this drought.<sup>1394</sup> He, however, did not quantify the extent of loss. In fact, the 1991-95 reform programme was “greeted by the most economically devastating drought ever experienced in the history of the country,” which resulted in some sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, witnessing a serious decline in productivity.<sup>1395</sup> The Zimbabwean economy, heavily reliant on the agricultural sector for growth, suffered a 7% decline in 1992 due to the crippling drought, and only registered a marginal growth of over 1,6% in 1993.<sup>1396</sup> The manufacturing sector, which depended on agriculture for its success, was also experiencing problems. Thus, the disastrous 1991/92 season had an adverse impact on the economy because of the linkages of the agricultural sector with the manufacturing industry. The situation was worse for arid zones such as Sanyati. Its dryland farmers were hardest hit. Due to a combination of drought and capital deficiencies the ARDA irrigation schemes in Sanyati were not spared from the problems. For example, Gowe bean yields were very low because of the following constraints: (a) shortage of irrigation water due to the drought; (b) daily power (electricity) cuts due to economic hardships; and (c) a viral disease which was worsened by water shortage<sup>1397</sup> leading to low plant populations, minimal flowering and podding.<sup>1398</sup> Only four AFC-financed farmers managed to establish a winter crop and “the rest could not secure loans [despite submitting their claims] on time due to the rather bad financial position of AFC.”<sup>1399</sup> In the same year (1992), one female plotholder, M. Mungofa, could not secure a loan

<sup>1393</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, Settlement Officer’s Monthly Report for January 1992, N. K. Kamudzandu.

<sup>1394</sup> B. Jongwe, (Plotholder and Chairman of the Gowe Irrigation Committee), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997. N.B. It was his first crop because he joined the scheme in 1992 from Bikita in Masvingo Province. His arrival at Gowe in 1992 coincided with one of the worst droughts to hit the country in recent years.

<sup>1395</sup> Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme*, ix.

<sup>1396</sup> *The Farmer: Zimbabwe Farming News Magazine*, 64(12), Harare: Modern Farming Publications, (March 24, 1994), 3.

<sup>1397</sup> Today the relationship between the Estate and Gowe has become increasingly circumscribed because Gowe does not have its own water supply. It relies on Main Estate infrastructure to deliver water to the plottolders, but that infrastructure is now too archaic to deliver efficient service.

<sup>1398</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Production,” RDPU Monthly Report for September 1992, R. Mhindu (Section Manager).

<sup>1399</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Financial Matters,” RDPU Monthly Report for September 1992, R. Mhindu (Section Manager). See also NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “1992 Winter Input Costs Bean Crop First Claim,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati) to the Manager (ZIMBANK Sanyati), 9<sup>th</sup> September 1992 and NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “1992 Winter Input Costs Bean Crop First

from the AFC for operations, as her yields were always low.<sup>1400</sup> As a result, her plot was declared vacant and was subsequently advertised for occupancy by other applicants.<sup>1401</sup> Furthermore, problems of fusarium wilt (a disease that withered the cotton crop) were experienced in Gowe I in the 1992/93 season and no cotton could be grown there. Maize was therefore grown as an alternative summer crop and wheat was planted in winter,<sup>1402</sup> but still as indicated earlier yields remained low. In fact, there were poor harvests not only in Sanyati but also in many parts of the country and this dampened economic recovery prospects in the period after this drought. Reduced harvests affected the spending power of many rural people. This very difficult season also witnessed the transfer of Kamudzandu (Settlement Officer), and Gowe Irrigation Scheme had to be run by one of the Section Managers from the Estate.<sup>1403</sup> In the absence of a trained settlement officer production declined even further. For instance, some plottolders reaped less than 7 bales per ha for cotton, others produced far less than 1,8 tonnes per acre for maize and wheat production was virtually abandoned.<sup>1404</sup>

A combination of other factors also aggravated the situation. For example, by 1993 breakages and shortages of pipes and sprinklers were alarming. Besides, the maintenance budget could not cover these expenses, as there was little money on that budget.<sup>1405</sup> In this regard Matowanyika openly admitted that “We [ARDA] have not revamped our irrigation systems since the 1960s. Sprinklers, pumps [and other equipment] need replacement. We need massive investment by the shareholder [i.e. Government].”<sup>1406</sup> In fact, irrigation systems at ARDA Sanyati had become too obsolete and, therefore, too expensive to maintain. In 1993 only 30 hectares were under wheat at Gowe I because of pump problems. A good yield had been anticipated, but due to water shortage, the yield estimate declined.<sup>1407</sup> J. Chikowore, an “immigrant” female plottolder from Mhondoro Ngezi, who joined the scheme on the 29th of September 1979 who has been quoted by the then Estate Manager (Gwerengwe) as an example of “a struggler and a very unsuccessful farmer” testified that one pumping engine broke down in February 1995 and

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Claim,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati) to the Branch Accountant (AFC Chinhoyi), 9<sup>th</sup> September 1992.

<sup>1400</sup> The figures to illustrate how low her yields were, however, have not been provided.

<sup>1401</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Advertisement and Resettlement of Settler Farmers’ Vacant Plots,” D. Mtetwa (Settler Programmes Co-ordinator) to the Secretary (Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development – Attention, S. S. Musodza), 9<sup>th</sup> December 1992.

<sup>1402</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Gowe Irrigation Scheme 1992/93,” R. Mhindu (Section Manager) to the RDPU Co-ordinator.

<sup>1403</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Production,” RDPU Monthly Report for September 1992, R. Mhindu (Section Manager).

<sup>1404</sup> Gwerengwe, Personal Interview, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005

<sup>1405</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “RDPU Monthly Report for the Month Ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager, Sanyati).

<sup>1406</sup> Matowanyika, Personal Interview.

<sup>1407</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “RDPU Monthly Report for the Month Ending 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager, Sanyati). N.B. The report compiled by the then Estate Manager, Gwerengwe, however does not say what the estimates and the yield expected were, but the report underscores general agricultural decline in the 1990s.



was only repaired towards the Easter Holidays in April the following year.<sup>1408</sup> Most of the delays in fixing the pump station problems were worsened due to the continued lack of spare parts or lack of foreign currency to import these at the peak of ESAP. She contends that this could have severely affected crops, especially maize and cotton, had it not been for the good rainy season in 1995/96.<sup>1409</sup> Nevertheless, even in a good year production was sometimes hampered by high tractor charges.

Alson Tami Chishiri, another plotholder who joined Gowe from Glendale in December 1994, feels that ARDA's tractor charges of \$528,00 per hectare for ploughing and discing were too exorbitant compared to those charged by the District Development Fund (DDF), which was \$100 per hectare.<sup>1410</sup> This settler, who has been described by the former Estate Manager (Gwerengwe) as "a good farmer,"<sup>1411</sup> sees the DDF as "almost providing free service"<sup>1412</sup> in relation to ploughing and discing and therefore more preferable than ARDA. This view is shared by many plotholders some of whom argue that the farmers did not only resort to using the cheaper DDF tractors but also started indulging in panning activities in the valleys of the Munyati river in order to supplement their income. However, gold panning along the river also intensified the siltation woes and the local police were working hard to rectify the problem, which according to J. Chikowore, had largely been wrought by the harsh economic climate under ESAP.<sup>1413</sup> The Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) was also concerned by the increasing siltation of rivers through gold panning activities and was imploring government to enact strong laws to curb this catastrophe to the country's river/water systems.<sup>1414</sup>

Clearly, due to the hardships brought about by ESAP, the people were trying to find alternative means of survival. One activity that flourished due to the hard economic times was side marketing of plotholder as well as dryland produce. Black marketing of produce assumed endemic proportions during the ESAP era as plotholders grappled to make ends

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<sup>1408</sup> Chikowore, Personal Interview and Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, "Minutes of Gowe Farmers Meeting Held in the Estate Manager's Office on 3 December 1996 at 9.00am," S. Mapondera (Chairman and Estate Manager). N.B. The dilapidated state of most of the irrigation infrastructure was due to neglect and incomprehensive maintenance services. For an assessment of pump breakdowns in another part of Zimbabwe, namely Masvingo, see E. Berejena, J. Ellis-Jones and N. Hasnip, "Gender-sensitive Irrigation Design: An assessment of the implications of pump breakdown and community participation in irrigation schemes, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe," *Report ODI43*, Part 5, (Howbery Park, Wallingford, UK: HR Wallingford Ltd.), 1999.

<sup>1409</sup> Chikowore, Personal Interview.

<sup>1410</sup> A. T. Chishiri (Plotholder and Gowe Irrigation Committee Member), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1996. N.B. This plotholder assumed occupancy of his plot almost two years after the Land Settlement Board had approved him in January 1993 as one of those allotted land at Gowe-Sanyati. See also NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 349224, Location R24.10.11.11F, File: ADA/SET/8 Agricultural Land Settlement Committee, "Lists of Approved Applicants Recommended by the Agricultural Land Settlement Board: Agricultural Development Authority Irrigation Plots," G. J. Makombe (Land Administration - Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development) to Liberty Mhlanga (the General Manager, ARDA), 28<sup>th</sup> January 1993, 3.

<sup>1411</sup> Gwerengwe, Personal Interview.

<sup>1412</sup> Chishiri, Personal Interview.

<sup>1413</sup> Chikowore, Personal Interview.

<sup>1414</sup> ZFU, "Meet The President Programme," Harare Sheraton Hotel, International Conference Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1994, 3.

meet by bypassing the official marketing channels (the GMB and COTTCO) because of the generally low prices they were offering. This was in spite of the warning to farmers by the Settlement Co-ordinator [Mutsvairo] to rely on one financier and to stop black marketing produce. He insisted: “Any farmer who does it [black marketing] again will be evicted from the scheme.”<sup>1415</sup> Nevertheless, side marketing of produce continued as low commodity prices made it impossible for poor irrigation tenants like M. Mjoli, D. Mjoli and E. Munengami to pay back loans owed to the ZIMBANK. In March 1991, D. Mjoli and Munengami owed \$8 793, 61 and \$7 185, 61, respectively. Mafumana Mjoli’s outstanding balance had within a year escalated from \$7 695, 66 in the winter of 1990 to \$13 175, 94 by March 1991.<sup>1416</sup> As at 10 July the same year (1991), this farmer’s bank overdraft stood at \$16 728, 85.<sup>1417</sup> It was so heavy a debt that paying it in one season by a farmer of his means was impossible. N. Mavengere, a plotholder who hailed from “Tsetse Fly Line” under Chief Wozhele and who joined the scheme in August 1970, recalls that ZIMBANK was advancing loans to him since 1993, but in the 1995/96 season, he could not secure a loan from the bank because his cotton crop which had been affected by a viral disease, *Fusarium/Fusarium*, better known to the locals as “vatsome” wilt,<sup>1418</sup> had made him unable to pay back the previous loan. It was at this juncture that he and other plotholders had to seek alternative assistance from COTTCO, Sanyati.<sup>1419</sup> These were not the only ones in this sort of predicament. The list is almost endless, but these examples taken from the top-four most indebted farmers illustrate the ever-growing plight of the irrigators at Gowe in the 1990s. Many tenants became increasingly ensnared in the albatross of credit in this period and it confirms the general failure of agriculture due to SAPs not only in Zimbabwe but also in other countries. For instance, Peter Gibbon clearly illustrates agricultural decline in such countries as Kenya and Ghana due to liberalisation wrought by ESAP.<sup>1420</sup> One major similarity, of course, is the widespread poverty it engendered

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<sup>1415</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Minutes of Settlement Co-ordinator and Settler Farmers Meeting Held at Gowe Offices on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1993,” 1.

<sup>1416</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “ADA Sanyati RDPU: ZIMBANK Loan Account Schedule,” Settlement Officer’s Report for March 1991, N. T. K. Kamudzandu.

<sup>1417</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Gowe Scheme Schedule,” S. Buzuzi (Accountant in Charge, ZIMBANK) to the Estate Manager (ARDA Sanyati), 11<sup>th</sup> July 1991.

<sup>1418</sup> N. Mavengere (Plotholder and Gowe Irrigation Committee Chairman), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997; Chishiri, Personal Interview, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997; and Grey Maturure (Plotholder and Gowe Irrigation Committee Member), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997. N.B. To prevent heavy infestation and extensive damage to cotton by *Fusarium* wilt it is imperative to exercise proper weed control, as dirty fields are often more vulnerable to the disease than clean fields. It is also important to implement a strict pest management programme, which entails spraying, inter alia, for red bollworm, heliothis, jassids and aphids. For more detail on this see NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “N. Kamudzandu: Cotton Production - Settlement Officer’s Quarterly Report for November 1989 to January 1990.”

<sup>1419</sup> Mavengere, Personal Interview, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997 and Ennie Nyandoro (Wife of Plotholder and Gowe Irrigation Committee Member), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1420</sup> A discussion of the consequences of liberalisation in Kenya and Ghana is outside the scope of this study. For a more detailed examination of the effects of ESAP on African agriculture in general and Kenyan and Ghanaian agriculture in particular see Peter Gibbon, “A Failed Agenda? African Agriculture Under Structural Adjustment with Special Reference to Kenya and Ghana,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20(1), (October 1992), 50-96.

and its failure to implement reforms that would help raise the productivity of African agriculture if not that of the developing countries in general.

ESAP made it very difficult for outgrower farmers particularly the less-to-do or resource-poor to secure credit. Continued occupancy of a plot depended on a farmer's ability to access a loan to finance his irrigation activities. The penalty for incapacity to obtain a loan was eviction from the scheme. The former Estate Manager, J. K. Gwerengwe, made it very clear that membership of the Gowe Settlement Scheme<sup>1421</sup> and use of its facilities was only guaranteed to those who had secured the necessary finance from either ZIMBANK or AFC. In a letter collectively addressed to C. Mhara, E. Chirandata, M. Mjoli, S. Mushonga, D. Mjoli, M. Mungofa and K. Chipala he said:

You failed to secure finance to pay for land rent and to operate your ... allocated plots. You are therefore de-facto no longer part of the Scheme. I am giving you until the end of March to secure finance or get out of the Scheme. In the meantime you will have no rights to the plots and gardens and any piece of land or equipment that belongs to the Scheme. There should be no gardens as you no longer qualify to operate them. Surrender all the field equipment that might be in your possession to the Settler Committee [Gowe Irrigation Committee]. The Committee will hand [it] over to pump house staff.<sup>1422</sup>

Insisting that the farmers should be productive on their plots was important, but in the absence of credit for inputs, it was equally important for the Estate or the Government to help the farmers with inputs for a stipulated period so that they could build a cash flow base before they could be left to their own devices. The Estate had a social or moral obligation to do this for the Gowe community, but sometimes the community expects rather too much from the former, which means that a reduction in Estate resources has a very direct impact on Gowe plotholder performance.

### **ESAP: The “winners” and “losers”:-**

Prior to ESAP there were weaknesses that were already apparent in the scheme. These included limitations in production as a result of the smallness of the plots, lack of adequate financial support to the farmers, growing indebtedness on the part of resource-poor tenants in particular and technical problems. The impact of ESAP on Sanyati irrigation as demonstrated in this chapter deepened the problems. This differed from the earlier weaknesses of the project in the sense that input loans were either difficult to get or were unavailable during and after ESAP. In the SAP and post-SAP periods most smallholders could not afford to purchase essential inputs such as fertiliser from their

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<sup>1421</sup> There are a total of eight settlement schemes adjacent to ARDA farms at Chisumbanje, Middle Save, Tsovane, Sanyati, Antelope, Ngwezi, Rusitu and Katiyo. See ARDA Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 October 1992, 4 and ARDA Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 October 1993, 4.

<sup>1422</sup> NAZ (RC), ARDA, Box 348041, Location R24.9.6.1R, File: SET/10 Gowe Pools Settlement Scheme, “Membership of Gowe Settlement Scheme and Use of its Facilities,” J. K. Gwerengwe (Estate Manager – ARDA Sanyati) to Gowe Plottolders, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1994.

own coffers because the prices were prohibitive. From the mid-1990s up to the beginning of 1997 individual plotters paid prices approximately higher than \$64,00 for maize seed and fertiliser per bag and roughly more than \$112,00 for cottonseed, fertiliser and other chemicals.<sup>1423</sup> These prices far exceeded the 1969 costs for the same inputs. Hence the use of chemical fertilisers was extremely low and as a result yields were also low. Some farmers save for the top performing ones (the rich or more fortunate) actually no longer applied any chemical fertilisers. On the one hand, this hampered agricultural growth because optimum yields of hybrid seeds could not be realised without fertiliser.<sup>1424</sup> On the other hand, the low loan repayment rates and termination or non-availability of agricultural loans were inextricably tied to the ESAP era. During this programme, it can be noted that marketed produce was a key aspect of the Sanyati project. Thus, the lack of market outlets (i.e. a new problem created by ESAP) during these reforms reduced the economic viability of the project. The problem of marketing channels for inputs presented similar limitations.

In little of this are the “winners” as both the resource-rich and their poorer counterparts found themselves at the mercy of a programme that emphasised foreign markets to the detriment of local ones. The intermittent droughts and the drying up of government subsidies that punctuated ESAP worsened the plight of the farmers. Therefore, a crucial point worth emphasising is that the fragile or limited processes of social differentiation which this study has been tracking up until the 1990s, proved incapable of withstanding the subsequent crises, whether ESAP-induced or otherwise.

On the whole, the Gowe plotters emerged the biggest “losers” during and at the end of ESAP. Hardly could they recover after that. Neither could ARDA nor the state resuscitate their earlier support to the outgrower section. Indeed, the impact of ESAP on the people’s lives and the operations of the scheme was more negative than positive. The programme worsened their plight.

As already illustrated in this chapter, ESAP worsened the position of outgrowers due to its encouragement of the market system. After the opening up of markets, some buyers (e.g. National Foods) “came with cash on the spot and bought all the maize and wheat.”<sup>1425</sup> GRAFAX, FSI and some private individuals also enticed the growers to sell their cotton and realise immediate cash returns. This forced the irrigators to avoid the traditional buyers namely COTTCO and Cargill. Ready cash lured farmers into side marketing their produce but in the process evading paying ARDA loans. In this instance, ARDA were the biggest “losers” because the Authority did not have a standing contract with the new players on the market to enable them to recover their money disbursed to plotters in the form of inputs and other services. Loan evasion, however, did not entitle the growers to another credit facility in future, which subsequently affected their performance. Clearly, ESAP affected farmers differently. Poor farmers’ situation was aggravated by the lack of further support from either ARDA or the state. These farmers also took time to shift their focus from cotton, which was no longer as remunerative as

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<sup>1423</sup> E. Munengami, (Gowe Plotter), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1424</sup> Djurfeldt et al, *Addressing Food Crisis in Africa*, 4.

<sup>1425</sup> Bvunzawabaya, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

other crops such as maize and beans, and this meant that they struggled throughout ESAP. As one outgrower put it, “The ESAP reality was that failure at the beginning meant failure throughout,”<sup>1426</sup> and those who did not recover became “losers.” Nevertheless, already rich or more successful tenants were doing relatively better during economic liberalisation. They quickly diversified their production by adopting the cultivation of beans, green mealies and horticultural crops like tomatoes. These did not completely abandon cotton in spite of its low market price. They were the “winners” since most of them (e.g. N. Mavhengere) were capable of paying off their loans and could retain a “surplus of about 3 bales for sale to best advantage [i.e. to cash buyers].”<sup>1427</sup> Nonetheless, the deleterious effects of this programme on society as a whole could not be denied.

### **Social impact of ESAP:-**

ESAP ushered in an era of retrenchment and forced retirement, thereby raising in an unprecedented manner the levels of unemployment. As a number of industries were rationalising and scaling down their operations, it was clear that irrigation in Sanyati could not absorb all the victims of retrenchment being offloaded into the area, and even if it could, for some retrenchees, it was not the sort of alternative they were seeking. What retrenchment and forced retirement did, in effect, was to serve as a rite of passage into a life bereft of social supports and the personal and social identity that a person hitherto had enjoyed. It is true, as testified by the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, that society is usually divided into classes or strata in accordance with the degree of power, status and wealth that each controls and ESAP has contributed in no small measure to widening the gap between the social strata.<sup>1428</sup> It has increased poverty in the lower stratum, for example, by the higher costs they pay on food, water charges, irrigation equipment, farm inputs and other essentials. Although Gowe is no longer paying land rent since 1999 the plottolders are still paying water rates to ARDA. ARDA in turn pays to ZESA on behalf of all plottolders. ARDA keeps the Gowe ZESA card and levies each plotholder according to the hectrage he/she has under irrigation. M. Mjoli remembers paying in one month a water rate of \$1 572, 30.<sup>1429</sup> Mjoli’s working sons (one of his sons works in South Africa) sometimes remit money to help their father purchase inputs and pay the water rate. If the water rate is not paid ARDA prohibits a plotholder to irrigate or grow crops<sup>1430</sup>. Some plotholders who are failing to break even and pay their bills are Muzanhamo and Vambe due to old age; Simon Mushonga because he owns both a dryland and an irrigation plot, so there is no proper management and Muponda who is polygamous. His two wives do not co-operate with each other and their frequent bickering is hindering farming progress.<sup>1431</sup> Another

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<sup>1426</sup> Charles Mhara, Personal Interview, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1427</sup> Bvunzawabaya, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

<sup>1428</sup> Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER), *Social Impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme*, (Ibadan: Social Development Department, NISER Monograph Series (1), 1988), 8.

<sup>1429</sup> M. Mjoli (Plotholder and Chairman of the Gowe Irrigation Scheme), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1430</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1431</sup> M. Mjoli, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

reason for their failure is that the four farmers do not have working children who assist them with remittances.

Apart from these individual handicaps, there was a general air of social and economic insecurity. In fact, Gowe plotters feel they are no longer doing better than dryland farmers. This is because the latter use their oxen for draught power and they do not know the effect of engine breakdowns because they do not use the conventional electricity-powered irrigation systems, which are expensive. Thus, dryland farmers do not pay extra costs for tillage and water like their irrigation counterparts.<sup>1432</sup> In a good season, dryland farmers produce three to four times more on their communal fields, which are also larger than irrigation plots.<sup>1433</sup> Gowe though has great potential to produce more if engines and pumps are fixed or if new ones replaced the obsolete ones. Nevertheless, the fortunes of ARDA (the Authority that was supposed to attend to these problems) had also plummeted due to the spiralling effects of adjustment. Hence, cotton, which needed watering at crucial stages of its growth, suffered. This coupled with the difficulties of low prices and lack of markets imposed by ESAP aggravated the situation of the smallholder scheme and caused serious anxieties among the tenants. As already indicated, confronted with these problems, some farmers opted to quit the scheme and went back to their dryland holdings.

The problems of cotton growing were further reflected in the increase in the number of cotton suicides. Suicides were not new but their incidence seemed to increase with an increase in intensity of the economic crisis in the 1990s. Field research in Sanyati indicates a pervasive pattern of dubious selling arrangements that led to cotton suicides especially by aggrieved spouses of peasant farmers. Cotton money or cotton cheques that were not taken home after encashment were a cause for divorce and numerous suicides not only in the irrigation schemes but also in the surrounding communal areas.<sup>1434</sup> According to Headman Lozane, the period 1990 to 2000 marked the peak of “cotton deaths” in Sanyati.<sup>1435</sup> On average, two deaths were recorded per week at the Sanyati Baptist Hospital and this was the trend almost every cotton season.<sup>1436</sup>

Cotton suicides afflicted male-headed households more than households that were headed by women. Clearly, there were few female-headed households in Sanyati irrigation. The women who headed their own households were fairly independent. Farming as household heads helped them exert more control over resources and benefits, but they suffered disparity in their ability to access services (e.g. tillage and input loans), water and advice. They produced and marketed their own crops. Just like male-headed households, they used agricultural proceeds to make farm improvements, pay school fees for their children as well as buy food and clothes for themselves. However, their female counterparts who were not household heads often found the going tough in that they lacked autonomy and their operations were mainly directed by their male folk. They always helped farm the

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<sup>1432</sup> Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1433</sup> J. Gwacha, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1434</sup> N. S. Gwacha, Personal Interview, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1435</sup> Headman Lozane, Personal Interview.

<sup>1436</sup> *Ibid.* N.B. Lozane sounded very authoritative in giving these statistics because during this period (1990-2000) he was responsible for death registry in the Health Information Office of the Sanyati Baptist Hospital.

plot but only in return for no meaningful payment or they were given an exploitation wage. Thus, such women who carried out what Ingrid Palmer has called “women’s unremunerated work in household-associated tasks” sometimes benefited from the provision by their husbands of “a social wage.”<sup>1437</sup> Because it was a mere pittance, women in irrigation’s social status hardly rose above that of men save for those who leased their own plots like J. Chikowore, M. Muparuri and M. Mungofa. Those who were not allocated plots in their names were in an unenviable position especially during the cotton-selling season. Some husbands did not come back home for some days after getting the cheque. Confirming this, Chancellor says: “husbands who sell the crop at a distance often return home without a share of the profit for the wife and her children and for next season’s planting.”<sup>1438</sup> Chancellor was citing occurrences at small-scale schemes in Africa in general but there is very close resemblance with the issues that led to cotton suicides in Sanyati. The woman would have played an invaluable role in ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting the crop but it was the husband who controlled the cheque and had a big say in how the money would be expended.

Some women challenged men’s privileged access to cotton profits,<sup>1439</sup> but these were a minute fraction and sometimes they risked being assaulted or divorced. Most of them felt powerless and could not wrestle the money from their extravagant husbands some of whom used it to marry new wives. This was in spite of what Ruth Weiss observed in another context that “its their sweat and blood that’s mixed into that soil.”<sup>1440</sup> Indeed, women worked the land and it is an undeniable fact that “... they are the people who keep agriculture going in the rural area ...”<sup>1441</sup> but according to Weinrich, they “were exploited and [the] surplus value they produced was appropriated by the men.”<sup>1442</sup> In fact, married women complain that while a crop is in the ground and needs their care, relations with their husbands are amicable, but when the crop is harvested and ready to sell, attitudes harden against them. Therefore, the triple blow of tilling the land, not getting the money and learning that the husband was marrying or flirting with another woman forced a number to despair and commit suicide. However, Jacob Mukwiza maintains, “Cotton income did not cause as many cases of suicide in Sanyati as in Gokwe.”<sup>1443</sup>

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<sup>1437</sup> Ingrid Palmer, *Women’s Roles and Gender Differences in Development: The Impact of Agrarian Reform on Women, Cases for Planners Prepared Under the Auspices of the Population Council*, (West Hartford, Connecticut, USA: Kumarian Press, 1985), v.

<sup>1438</sup> Chancellor, “Women Irrigators and Operation and Maintenance of Small-Scale Smallholder Schemes in Africa,” in Sally and Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 82.

<sup>1439</sup> For a detailed discussion of how some peasant women in Zimbabwe challenged men’s privileged access to agricultural land and other resources in general and how they demonstrated their active resistance to exclusion from rights to land and crops they produced see Donna Pankhurst and Susie Jacobs, “Land Tenure, Gender Relations, and Agricultural Production: The Case of Zimbabwe’s Peasantry,” in Jean Davison (ed.), *Agriculture, Women, and Land: The African Experience*, (Colorado, USA: Westview Press, 1988), 202-227.

<sup>1440</sup> Ruth Weiss, *The Women of Zimbabwe*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Nehanda Publishers (Pvt) Ltd., 1986), 127.

<sup>1441</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1442</sup> A. K. H. Weinrich, *Women and Racial Discrimination in Rhodesia*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1979), 14

<sup>1443</sup> Mukwiza, Personal Interview.

The cases of cotton suicides or the fact that some women challenge men's control of cotton profits should not be viewed in isolation to the general lack of security of tenure by rural women. Land tenure is often cited, as limiting women's access to resources, and it is true that, in the majority of government smallholder schemes not least Gowe, land "ownership"<sup>1444</sup> is vested in male household heads. Because ownership and permits to occupy or use land are often in male hands, this restricts the rights of women to realise cash from crops they grow. Nonetheless, women secure user rights to utilise irrigated land and are major users of irrigation, often relying on it exclusively to feed themselves and their families. Two major issues illustrate the disparity between men and women in relation to land in Sanyati. Firstly, user rights for men are not secure because of the terms enshrined in the irrigation lease agreement. User rights for women are not only insecure because of the strictures imposed by the lease but also they are less secure because they depend largely on the relationship of women with husbands and male relatives. This limits women's motivation to maintain and invest in irrigation land. Secondly, production is limited by resources for both men and women but the latter's access to resources such as land, loans and extension advice is even more limited because the irrigation plots are often registered in the name of the husband and not the wife. Loan providers, therefore, do not recognise the wife but the husband under whom the plot is listed and from whom they can recover the loan. With the availability of resources production, which determines the value of land as a livelihood asset, is therefore guaranteed. Men because of access to resources can therefore produce and women because of lack of resources cannot produce on their own account. This is painful for women who more than their husbands toil in the fields for long hours almost throughout the year. In addition to working in the fields they have to fulfill domestic obligations such as child rearing, cooking, washing and other chores so regarded as feminine in traditional African culture. Thus, even if the plot is registered in the name of the husband most of the productive work is done by women, hence irrigation intensifies the drudgery in their daily routine.

As Gowe is demanding that the scheme be handed over to plotters, these differences between men and women must, therefore, be considered when developing strategies for irrigation turnover or irrigation management transfer (IMT) which is far from being accomplished at Gowe-Sanyati. However, the situation is gradually changing. Women are increasingly allocated land, and more women now hold plots at Gowe compared to the DC's time although the number of female plotters is still a far cry from the figure expected by the women themselves.<sup>1445</sup> In fact, in Sanyati women decry the absence of NGO activity. After observing the work of the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (NANGO) in other parts of the country, J. Chikowore feels the coming on board of an NGO could elevate the status of women in Gowe.<sup>1446</sup> Her

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<sup>1444</sup> The irrigation tenants do not actually own this land. They farm it on a lease basis. ARDA or the government leases out this land on condition that the settlers abide by the terms of the lease agreement.

<sup>1445</sup> There are still more male than female plotters at Gowe. For example, only 6 plots out of a total of 36 are in female hands.

<sup>1446</sup> Chikowore, Personal Interview. N.B. Because Chikowore often experienced problems to secure loans in spite of being a plotter at Gowe she always thought the reason had something to do with her being a female holder of an irrigation plot. Her sentiments in support of NGO involvement/participation in Sanyati stemmed, therefore, from her awareness of the existence and role of NANGO in championing the rights of women to land and other agricultural resources.



observation could be right judging by how these institutions have been operating to address female developmental needs in other countries of Africa. Clearly, in many countries NGO developments often favour women, and private donors promptly respond to women's requests. Entire schemes are often dedicated to women for food production. In Eritrea, for instance, women have influenced local land allocation by proving themselves capable in both operation and maintenance of commercial irrigation activity.<sup>1447</sup> In some parts of Africa, working as groups, they have been granted rights to cultivate that are better than those currently available to local men.<sup>1448</sup> Although women in Zimbabwe have demonstrably shown similar qualities they are not always allocated land and entire schemes as happened in Eritrea. Gowe in particular is still grappling with trying to convince the Authority (ARDA) to transfer management to the outgrowers. However, if this were to materialise, management is likely to be transferred to male plotters who are not only in the majority but also the tenure system seems to be tilted in their favour. Hence, the women are likely to lose out. This analysis, therefore, illustrates that there are land tenure differences between men and women in Sanyati irrigation.

The issues of tenure were among the problems that contributed to poverty in ARDA outgrower schemes and the surrounding non-irrigated areas. Due to the disproportionate disbursement of loans and other irrigation services there is a lot of poverty in Sanyati irrigation especially among the resource-poor plotters. ESAP led to its entrenchment in the dryland and irrigation sectors of the area. This poverty manifests itself in general failure by women to access plots and failure by both female and male plotters to access inputs and other farming needs since the beginning of the 1990s. Women are among the poorest irrigators. As already noted, women's poverty relative to the whole group of irrigators in Sanyati is generally a result of social norms, particularly those relating to land tenure<sup>1449</sup> and that women's bargaining position within households is comparatively weak. Poverty affects Sanyati irrigators in two major ways. Firstly, poverty among irrigators reduces the potential for production and, secondly, poverty in the surrounding communities reduces the potential for profit. Hence poverty is threatening to arrest the process of differentiation that had gathered so much momentum prior to the 1990s. In addition, structural adjustment (ESAP) has already significantly raised the costs of inputs, affecting women disproportionately because they are among the poorest irrigators, in relation to accessibility to both cash and other resources.<sup>1450</sup> The impact of adjustment has been severe on those who were already poor, but a number of men were doing relatively well in comparison to women because the former were privileged in that plots, agricultural loans and other resources were often allocated in their favour. The ability to command resources, therefore, differentiates Sanyati male and

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<sup>1447</sup> Felicity Chancellor, "Women Irrigators and Operation and Maintenance of Small-Scale Smallholder Schemes in Africa," in Sally and Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 79.

<sup>1448</sup> European Union (EU), *Draft Sector Report on the Potential for Irrigation Development in Eritrea*, EU, (1998).

<sup>1449</sup> The status quo is supported by strong traditional views in the community at large, but ARDA and the government are worsening the plight of women by refusing to budge to calls to revoke the lease agreement which largely determines who owns an irrigation plot at Gowe and who does not.

<sup>1450</sup> Chancellor, "Women Irrigators and Operation and Maintenance of Small-Scale Smallholder Schemes in Africa," in Sally and Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 81.

female peasants. The ability to control resources has been one of the bases of differentiation since the introduction of ESAP and it continues to be the case in Zimbabwe in the post-ESAP period. On the Gowe irrigation scheme there is a range of wealth among the farmers although the level of affluence has declined due to ESAP, post-ESAP and drought-related hardships. Drought and structural adjustment, as already indicated, militated against agricultural production.

ESAP on the whole ushered in an era of poverty and disproportionate benefits among the farmers. Indeed, poverty is closely related to social inequality and it is less startling, therefore, that it was aggravated by this programme. The impoverishment of many peasants created by ESAP has resulted in their failure to constantly produce and, subsequently, this led to many school dropouts due to peasant parents' inability to pay the school fees of their children.<sup>1451</sup> Whether in rural villages or in urban centres, many students withdrew from schools both at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. By 1995 the impressive gains made since independence in the agricultural, educational, health and other sectors were steadily eroded mainly as a result of ESAP, which Zimbabwe began implementing in 1991. As the smaller scheme was counting its social and economic losses, the Estate also was finding it difficult to withstand the problems posed by liberalisation. As a result, it failed to achieve optimum yields.

#### **Estate production (1991-1995):-**

It was not only the smallholder entity that was tottering under the effects of structural adjustment. Estate production also plummeted during ESAP. Tables 6: 1 and 6: 2 below show the differences in crop yields for the Estate for a 4-year period. They are representing the major crops only.

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<sup>1451</sup> This can be contrasted with the period after independence when there were no dropouts largely because the government had adopted measures to expand education facilities to service those areas that had hitherto been neglected by the colonial administrations. In this period among the social reforms adopted by the Mugabe government were the provision of free primary education and free health services to benefit the poor majority most of whom live in the countryside.

**Table 6.1: ARDA SANYATI ESTATE: CROP YIELD ANALYSIS FROM 1991/92 TO 1993/94**

Crop	1991/92		1992/93		1993/94	
	Ha	Total Yield	Ha	Total Yield	Ha	Total Yield
Cotton	500	598 816	500	768 916	172	297 353
Bananas	5	15 375	20	35 400	20	122 182
Tomatoes	3	37 000	2	72 000	2	109 000
Maize	10	106 062	20	399 400	15	445 786
S/Beans	150	2 099	65	12 500	-	-
G/nuts	157	215 500	-	-	-	-
Wheat	-	-	150	300 000	82	394 000 <sup>1452</sup>

Table 6: 1 indicates that the Estate devoted 500 ha to cotton in the two seasons 1991/92 and 1992/93, revealing an increase of 170 100 kgs in cotton production in that period. There was an increase in production at the beginning of ESAP because of relatively high prices and the availability of foreign markets for cotton. The hectrage and the yield (agricultural production) dropped markedly and quite predictably during the peak of ESAP between 1993/94 and 1994/95 because of increasingly low prices and lack of external markets to absorb the local product. Bvunzawabaya has pointed out that “International markets were not open to Gowe farmers and the estate” since certain criteria had to be met first.<sup>1453</sup> Essentially, an “export permit” had to be obtained by a farmer intending to sell his/her produce on the foreign market. Thus, it was “difficult to sell directly outside because of the need for a permit from the National Cotton Council.”<sup>1454</sup> In addition, a farmer had to be in possession of a contract indicating his market, which entitled him to sell outside Zimbabwe. It should be pointed out that in a good season, ARDA Sanyati produces about a third of the country’s cotton in terms of quantity,<sup>1455</sup> but in this period productivity sank to a very low level as reflected in the table.

The table also shows that total cotton, banana, tomato and maize yields for 1991/92 were lower than those for 1992/93. This was largely due to the effects of drought, which together with the problem of pump breakdowns, led to a reduction by 328 ha in the hectrage sown to cotton in 1993/94. Since 1992 the Estate was not growing groundnuts as the crop needed a lot of labour and the market for groundnuts was not good. No wheat was grown in 1992 and 1995, but a total yield of 394 000 kgs for wheat in 1993/94 was the highest for this period. All maize that was not intended for seed was sold as green mealies. Seed maize was only tried in the 1993/94 season. It was grown on 30 ha, yielding a total of 87 800kgs and an

<sup>1452</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Crop Yield Analysis as from 1991/92 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1453</sup> Bvunzawabaya, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

<sup>1454</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1455</sup> Gwerengwe, Personal Interview, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1996.

average yield per hectare of 2 900kgs.<sup>1456</sup> The drought, financial problems and frequent pump breakdowns did not lead to the attainment of very high yields. However, without these problems, it can be argued that crop yields can go up manifold with irrigation as compared to dryland enterprise, and smallholder irrigation schemes such as Gowe can be reliable sources of income especially given the advantage they have to double crop.

Table 6.2: ARDA SANYATI ESTATE: CROP YIELD ANALYSIS FOR 1994/95

<u>Season</u>	<u>Crop</u>	<u>Ha</u>	<u>Total Yield</u>	<u>Ave Yield Per /Ha</u>
1994/95	Cotton	150	269 956	1 740
	Bananas	30	115 069	3 835
	Tomatoes	5	88 000	18 000
	Maize	30	223 992	7 466
	Sugar Beans	-	-	-
	Groundnuts	-	-	-
	Wheat	-	-	- <sup>1457</sup>

In the 1994/95 season, an even smaller hectrage was devoted to cotton and the yield was also low. The high cost of chemical inputs and the lack of markets during ESAP did not promote the cultivation of a crop whose demands on labour were also phenomenal. Because the Estate is approximately 1 000 ha in size this means a paltry 215 ha were cultivated and 785 ha were fallow in this season, signifying real viability problems for ARDA Sanyati. In fact, agriculture for Zimbabwe, normally a surplus food producer, declined as reflected in the two tables not only because of ESAP but also as a result of droughts between 1991/92 and 1994/95. This also partly explains why the Main Estate registered considerable losses of \$475 376,00; \$976 759,00; \$382 818,00; \$318 371,00 and \$742 831,00 in 1990/91, 1991/92, 1992/93, 1993/94 and 1994/95 respectively.<sup>1458</sup>

Thus, the economy of Sanyati and that of Zimbabwe in the 1990s continued to be adversely affected by the devastating droughts and by an economic environment characterised by falling commodity prices, rising protectionist barriers and heavy debt service burdens. After the 1992 drought a dry spell continued to linger around the country as another “horrendous drought” occurred in 1994.<sup>1459</sup> Following this drought, economic reforms suffered a major setback. Hence, according to Mlambo, the programme (ESAP) that opened with a drought was also “bade farewell [sic] by a second drought in 1994/95.”<sup>1460</sup> Because of drought and

<sup>1456</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Crop Yield Analysis as from 1991/92 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1457</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Crop Yield Analysis as from 1991/92 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1458</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “Sanyati Estate Profit/Loss Analysis for the Past Seven Years 1990/91 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1459</sup> *The Farmer: Zimbabwe Farming News Magazine*, 65(17), Harare: Modern Farming Publications, (April 27 1995), 1.

<sup>1460</sup> Zimbabwe, “Programme for Economic and Social Transformation, 1996-2000,” [Draft] (Harare: Government of Zimbabwe, May 1996), 1 cited in Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment*

other export-oriented difficulties one of the problems during ESAP were mounting “parastatal debts.”<sup>1461</sup> As a consequence of these debts,<sup>1462</sup> ARDA was not able to extend its usual services to Gowe. In the words of Liberty Mhlanga, “ESAP was a parallel activity. It did not help ARDA. It did not benefit outgrowers [as] we [ARDA] continued to operate on Ministry of Agriculture funds.”<sup>1463</sup> Reinforcing the same point Matowanyika asserted “The Agricultural and Rural Development Authority was pushed into a survival mode by ESAP. Structural adjustment denied ARDA the resources to support the smaller scheme [Gowe].”<sup>1464</sup> Because the Authority was not able to assist its smallholder section this caused a lot of indignation and anxiety among the plottolders who wondered how, under the circumstances, their plight was going to be ameliorated. They were being weaned off rather prematurely. It was partly out of this anxiety and partly out of sheer need to carve out new accumulation prospects that some Gowe farmers embarked on the invasion of Estate land starting in 1992.

### **Invasion of Estate land (1992-2000):-**

Demands for fertile or bigger pieces of land in Zimbabwe by the peasantry date back to the colonial period. In Sanyati such demands were more clearly articulated after the passage of the NLHA when land-hungry farmers resorted to numerous strategies, which ranged from outright purchase to clandestine seizure of land through the informal *madiro*<sup>1465</sup> system. In Edziwa Village to the South of the Main Estate, *madiro* practice was quite rife. Edziwa Village was established when the remnants of the Rhodesdale evictees were settled there by the colonial government in 1954 under Headman Virima.<sup>1466</sup> In 1992 people from different surrounding areas such as Lozane, Mudzingwa, Dubugwane and the Gowe Irrigation Scheme invaded the Estate area adjacent to the village, which is now headed by Village Head, Edziwa. With the coming of these people, the village was extended and subsequently divided into the “Old Line” (comprising the 1954 settlers) and the “New Line” which was established by the new settlers who came in 1992.<sup>1467</sup> The “New Line” now surpasses the older settlement in size. It has 75 households whereas the “Old Line” has 30.<sup>1468</sup> The inhabitants of the “Old Line” were

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*Programme*, ix. In short, this new programme, which succeeded ESAP, became known as ZIMPREST. ESAP’s successor, the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST), was launched in 1997. It was aimed at correcting the deficiencies of ESAP, but it continued the same thrust of macroeconomic policies as ESAP with more focus on economic and social issues. However, this new programme was never really implemented.

<sup>1461</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1462</sup> The debts accumulated because ARDA was not operating at a profit throughout this period (1991-1995).

<sup>1463</sup> Liberty Mhlanga, (Chairman of Land Settlement Board in the Ministry of Lands and Land Resettlement), Personal Interview, ARDA Head Office, Harare, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

<sup>1464</sup> Matowanyika, Personal Interview.

<sup>1465</sup> Africans in Sanyati, in opposition to the NLHA, were extending their cultivations outside the original demarcated lands in a process that came to be known locally as *madiro* or freedom ploughing. This process entailed self-allocating themselves land in order to boost their prospects for accumulation.

<sup>1466</sup> Hlalisekani Dube, (ARDA Sanyati Estate Administration Clerk and Edziwa Communal Farmer), Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 19<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1467</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1468</sup> *Ibid.*

not affected by the removals in 1974 to pave way for the Sanyati Main Estate.<sup>1469</sup> They did not fall within the boundary demarcated for that project. However, the people who form the “New Line” are illegal settlers because they invaded Estate land. Hlalisekani Dube who now occupies a 5½ ha plot left Lozane Village, Ward 24, for Edziwa in April 1993. He and his father embarked on this move because they argued that they had accumulated a lot of cattle and therefore wanted “a big place” to farm and keep their cattle.<sup>1470</sup> They were also driven by what they called “very fertile soil for any type of crop, for example, cotton, maize, groundnut and sorghum which do very well even without the application of chemical or artificial fertilisers.”<sup>1471</sup>

In 1994 Edziwa people from “New Line” were forced by the government to vacate Estate space they were illegally occupying. They refused to be moved and in this year, in typical Rhodesdale style, all their homes were set on fire by ZRP forces from Chegutu to force them out.<sup>1472</sup> After this incident some of them left whilst others did not move out as they simply moved their homes to different locations but still within the ARDA Estate. However, they all returned during the major land invasions in 2000 and to this day they continue to stay on Estate land.<sup>1473</sup> The official silence surrounding their illegal stay coupled with the length of time they have stayed there seems to be giving their tenure some legitimacy. Clearly, the matter has now assumed political dimensions. It is now politically sensitive to resuscitate the idea of evicting or in their case re-evicting these people from Estate land. Several but intermittent meetings have been held since 1992 involving the local MP, Estate Manager and other stakeholders over this issue. However, all these meetings confirm the difficulties of taking the route of eviction particularly after repeated warnings by successive MPs in the area that “ARDA should not arbitrarily evict people.”<sup>1474</sup> Thus, ARDA is “failing to regularise things [deal with the invasion of their land] because of political connotations behind this issue.”<sup>1475</sup>

As already indicated, some people from Gowe took part in the invasion of the Estate in 1992. At the Gowe Irrigation Scheme, demands for more land or bigger plot sizes have also been voiced for many years since the inauguration of the scheme. Plotholders are not happy about the size of plots they hold. They feel plots of 3 ha (7½ acres) or 4 ha (10 acres) are small and not viable. They have been proposing 10 ha (25 acres).<sup>1476</sup> Confirming this escalating demand for land, the Estate Manager, Henry Chiona, asserted:

People are demanding a share of the Estate. They are actually farming or growing cotton on Estate land. Now we [ARDA] have illegal settlers on

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<sup>1469</sup> The 1974 removals mainly affected Mudzingwa Village.

<sup>1470</sup> Dube, Personal Interview.

<sup>1471</sup> Dube, Personal Interview.

<sup>1472</sup> Alexander Machicha, (ARDA Sanyati Estate Accounts Clerk), Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1473</sup> Dube, Personal Interview. See also Machicha, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1474</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, “Address by MP, Z. Ziyambe,” - Stakeholders’ Meeting on ARDA Compound Tenure Problem Held in Council Boardroom: Sanyati on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2004 at 1345 Hours, 1.

<sup>1475</sup> Bvunzawabaya, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

<sup>1476</sup> Petros Bvunzawabaya, (Former Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, ARDA Head Office, Harare, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2004.

the Estate. About 30 such settlers are staying on the Estate. Another chunk of Estate land was taken over by the [Johan Marange] Apostolic Church who have been holding their annual church meetings here since 1977. To date, they have built a permanent centre fully installed with electricity.<sup>1477</sup> Some of the land claimants are offspring of Gowe plottolders. Others are from the business community in the Sanyati Township. Estate land to [sic] them looks more lucrative. Because of irrigation they think if they get this land irrigation facilities will be extended to them. The problem, which started in 1992, got worse in 2000/2001. The problem needs to be politically settled. The Chief [Wozhele], Headman Lozane, the DA and the local MP have been informed about the problem. The Chief together with the Headman have told the illegal settlers to move out. The MP said ‘let the problem be resolved after elections [March 2000].’<sup>1478</sup>

The stance by the MP was not only a bad precedent for the future but incapacitated Estate management whenever confronted with the same problem. Failure to deal with the situation decisively has extended these settlers’ illegal tenure. Their status has reached near permanency. Edziwa and Gowe people’s action in 2000, although illegal as stipulated in the country’s statute books, was not a novel phenomenon. The 1992 land seizures of part of Estate land to the south by the same people preceded the main land invasions of 2000. Frustrated that the Land Acquisition Act passed in 1992 did not address their hunger for land, these people unilaterally invaded Estate land. ARDA has tried and is still trying in vain to jettison them from the said land. As already stated, political intervention has failed to yield the result desired by ARDA. It seems to have complicated the whole process. Fresh land invasions in 2000 made it even more difficult for government to force Edziwa people out of ARDA property. It was not only difficult for government to do so but it was also politically untenable for government to evict these people at a time invasions on a much wider scale were being carried out elsewhere in the country with government saying nothing about it. How could the same government, which had remained mum about other invasions, denounce the land claims of Edziwa people? Thus, without government making any firm official statement to the contrary the invasions were bound to spiral. The land invasions of 2000 in their broader sense, however, are beyond the scope of this study.

## **THE POST-ESAP ERA**

The financially cumbersome situation up to 1995/96 set the developmental tone for the remaining part of the decade. ARDA owed its financiers large sums of money. The parastatal found itself so much in dire financial straits that it was difficult for it to fulfill its obligations towards Gowe. This has also influenced the relationship that exists

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<sup>1477</sup> The Estate Manager, Henry Chiona, calls them “squatters,” but there is evidence that the parishioners sought permission from the then Estate management to build their centre near the Munyati River and hold annual meetings there. It is believed they chose this site because of the abundance of firewood and free-flowing water from the Munyati. The permission was duly granted, and the Johan Marange centre they set up in Sanyati (right on the ARDA Estate) is the second largest in Zimbabwe after the one in Macheke. It is, thus, a misnomer to call them illegal settlers.

<sup>1478</sup> Henry Chiona, (Estate Manager, ARDA Sanyati), Personal Interview, Sanyati Estate, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

between the two where the latter perceives itself as having been abandoned by the Estate and has to strive to fend for itself. There has been a nominal weaning process. In fact, the weaning process is not being transparently done. To a certain extent, it seems logical to argue that Gowe had long been weaned off in the late 1980s when support to the outgrower section fundamentally dwindled. It diminished to the extent that the Estate was no longer supplying certain essential services to its “smaller brother,” for example, inputs, mechanical equipment and advice. This can be attested to by the fact that the Estate was now recruiting labour from outside<sup>1479</sup> – a sign that the symbiotic relationship had broken down. Ideally, Gowe should be supplying the Estate with most of its labour requirements, but because most of the outgrowers had prospered from cultivating and selling their own crops and even employed labour on their irrigation plots they shunned Estate labour. Furthermore, the differential gap in income between plotholders and Estate employees makes this impossible. For example, the lowest paid Estate worker realises the same income with the least successful plotholder. The most successful Gowe farmer is better off than the lowest paid Estate worker and this explains why the Gowe tenants do not want to work for the Estate.

As already noted, instead of work for ARDA the most successful Gowe plotholders, just like the most successful dryland farmers, invariably employ labour in their own right. Because most of them are growing cotton, it is also difficult for both the plotholders and the Estate to get labour during the picking period because almost everyone will be concentrating on harvesting their own crop. Both ended up involved in searching for pickers at the same time. For the plotholders the task of procuring labour was not easy either because *humwes* (traditional voluntary work groups/parties to assist each other in the fields) were no longer as popular. Since ESAP they had become very expensive to host. Therefore, in the 1990s, as work parties (*humwe*) gradually went into oblivion, it was only possible for irrigation tenants and dryland farmers to get the labour of very close friends and their own children. This can be contrasted with the mid-1970s when *humwes*, *nhimbes* (rotational work groups or a variant of work party) and *machangano* (a variant of work party) made labour relatively abundant as agriculture was flourishing.

### **Agricultural recovery or decline (1996-2000):-**

In spite of the difficulties of the earlier period, some farmers seemed to have emerged from the crisis unscathed. An exceptional case of success in the post-ESAP period was Munengami who, for the 1995/96 season, sold 18 bales of cotton and obtained a cheque for \$21 000,00.<sup>1480</sup> Of the amount he received, he paid out COTTCO a sum of \$12 000,00 for fertiliser, pesticides and seed. A further \$4 000,00 went to AFC in loan repayment. This gave Munengami a profit of \$5 000,00.<sup>1481</sup> He made this profit despite the generally poor market prices for crops. However, a substantial part of this profit was swallowed by land rent which had been hiked from \$72,00 in 1987 to \$1 300,00 per plot in 1995. Such an exorbitant charge affected farmers’ plans for the following season.

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<sup>1479</sup> S. C. Pazvakavambwa, (Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Rural Housing and Social Amenities), Personal Interview, Munhumutapa Government Offices, Harare, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2005.

<sup>1480</sup> E. Munengami, (Gowe Plotholder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1481</sup> *Ibid.*



Production was affected by other factors too. For example, there was a decline in crop production due to soil exhaustion. According to Ivy Nyamutova, “the soil is now too exhausted to yield much.”<sup>1482</sup> She went further to demonstrate her point by saying: “In 1970, 0,7 ha could yield between 11 and 15 bales of cotton but now [i.e. since the mid-1990s] 1 ha yields 7 to 8 bales.”<sup>1483</sup> Yields of between 5 and 8 bales per hectare were achieved in 1996. Commodity prices remained not only unstable but also unpredictable. From a financial point of view, therefore, the 1995/96 season was disappointing. This is so because crop yields are perhaps the most common measure of agricultural productivity and cotton yields were not the best in many years as will be demonstrated later in the chapter.

On the whole, cotton in the 1990s contributed little to plottolders’ progress because the soils had become exhausted thereby needing more fertilisers to yield increased output. Inflationary prices made cotton farming an unprofitable undertaking. Water rates rose incredibly. Water charges, for example, had risen from \$1 572, 30 per month in November 1997 to about \$200 000, 00 per annum for both winter and summer cropping in 2000.<sup>1484</sup> Frequent pump engine breakdowns meant infrequent supply of water and because of lack of water the growth and development of cotton balls was strained. The major cotton buyer, COTTCO, was also not paying handsomely for plottolders’ crop at a time when input (seed and fertiliser) prices had soared beyond sustainable levels. Furthermore, after plottolders had delivered their cotton, this parastatal body continued to make “ruthless deductions”<sup>1485</sup> (i.e. debited plottolders) to recover the cost of inputs it had supplied for that particular season. Massive deductions on their net income obviously impeded accumulation and occasionally provoked some response. Neuso farmers, in particular, sought government intervention to stop a nefarious practice where “companies that gave loans sometimes confiscated property which was not even bought with cotton money in order to recover their loans.”<sup>1486</sup> Cotton in Sanyati, contrary to the earlier years, now resembled a commodity in crisis because making a living from the “white fibre” has, according to Job Gwacha, become “a hopeless, hurting game.”<sup>1487</sup> The farmers - both dryland and irrigation - berate the main buyer of their commodity, COTTCO, and insist, “We are getting nothing out of cotton. We are losing too much money on it. We got families to feed. We are getting back to maize.”<sup>1488</sup> The switch to maize seemed to be encouraged by government who told farmers to devote more hectares to maize especially in the face of the severe and protracted droughts up to 2000. Thus, cotton and its lack of profitability made a number of farmers to concentrate on crops such as green mealies and beans that required fewer inputs.

Opportunities for side marketing maize and beans to try and get a better price from surrounding dryland farmers or other buyers existed whereas cotton selling was mainly a COTTCO monopoly. Indeed, for a long time “cotton led to general development of the

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<sup>1482</sup> Ivy Nyamutova, (Wife of Plottolder), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1997.

<sup>1483</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1484</sup> T. Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005 and M. Mjoli, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1485</sup> M. Mjoli, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1486</sup> Chief Neuso, Personal Interview.

<sup>1487</sup> J. Gwacha, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1488</sup> *Ibid.* See also Shayamiti, Personal Interview.

rural population in Sanyati, but there is not very rapid development today because of low returns. Farmers even suspect high profiteering by Cotton Companies.”<sup>1489</sup> Clearly, between the 1960s and 1980s cotton, (dubbed as the farmers’ “cash cow,”)<sup>1490</sup> was largely responsible for differentiating rural farmers in Sanyati, but from the 1990s through to 2000 green and dry mealies as well as beans were more responsible for differentiating plottolders into rich and poor. An example of a successful farmer in this period was E. Chiwombe who bought cattle from the sale of maize and beans. His herd now stands at 18. He also built a good home, neatly fenced his homestead, and bought a car and a tractor. His farming operations were made easier by the fact that he had a fat bank account and had all the farm implements that he needed, for example, ploughs and harrows. By 2000 he no longer relied on ARDA for tillage.

Another plotholder who owes his affluence to the cultivation of maize and beans and, to some extent, cotton is B. Jongwe who originally came from Bikita in Masvingo Province. Between 1992/93 and 1996/97 he sold green mealies to “Harare lorry owners,” and sold dried beans to Blue Ribbon Foods (Harare) “because they were the highest bidder buying at \$400,00 per kg. GMB Sanyati was buying at \$290, 00 per kg, so it didn’t make [economic] sense [for him] to sell in Sanyati.”<sup>1491</sup> As at 2000 he owned a retail shop combined with a bottle store at the small business centre situated within the Gowe Irrigation Scheme. He bought this shop in 1998. In 2000 he was the only plotholder running a grocery store at the Gowe Business Centre.<sup>1492</sup> The rest of the shop owners at this centre are not Gowe farmers. Local dryland farmers own most of the shops and grinding mills here. These are people who have accumulated wealth at different stages from both farm and off-farm activities in various districts throughout the country.

T. Nyamutova used sales of green mealies to build a beautiful brick but grass-thatched hut in 1998 and a magnificently plastered brick and asbestos-roofed house in the same year. He started concentrating on green mealies and beans in 1995 because “it cost a lot of money to produce cotton for very little return.”<sup>1493</sup> Nyamutova who has always been critical about the benefits of cotton cultivation since colonial times, however, accepts that, between 1980 and 1990, farmers got better return from cotton because it was planted when the buying price had already been announced. Thus, it gave farmers the opportunity to decide what quantity to grow and how much inputs like fertilisers and seed to buy.<sup>1494</sup>

Nevertheless, he complained: “Since 1995 Gowe plottolders are just growing cotton and other crops before the selling price is known and this does not motivate farmers.”<sup>1495</sup> Responding to a request to announce producer prices in advance which was made by the Chairman of the Commercial Grain Producers’ Association, Tok Arnold, at a CFU

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<sup>1489</sup> Chikombingo, Personal Interview.

<sup>1490</sup> J. Gwacha, Personal Interview, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1491</sup> Bernard Jongwe (Gowe Plotholder and former Chairman of the Gowe Irrigation Committee), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>1492</sup> E. Chiwombe (Plotholder and Vice Secretary of the Gowe Irrigation Scheme), Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005. See also Jongwe, Personal Interview, 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

<sup>1493</sup> T. Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1494</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1495</sup> *Ibid.*

Congress in August 1994, the then Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development, Kumbirai Kangai, confirmed Nyamutova's complaint when he told delegates: "Government will not revert to announcing a pre-planting producer price as this was in conflict with current economic reforms which require market forces [to] determine prices."<sup>1496</sup> At a press conference following his announcement of the 1993/94 prices and marketing policy, Minister Kangai also rejected Tok Arnold's call for government to return to an announcement of a maize pre-planting price to enable farmers to plan for "the forthcoming season [1994/95]."<sup>1497</sup> In this instance Kangai replied, "what he's doing is inviting me and government to go again into the control (situation) which we are trying to get away from."<sup>1498</sup> He then reiterated: "We are saying market forces should determine exactly what is going to happen. I don't set pre-planting prices or selling prices. We want the market itself to determine these prices."<sup>1499</sup>

It is, therefore, true as Nyamutova argues that "farmers knew the price of their cotton when their bales were being offloaded from the scotch carts or hired lorries at the COTTCO depot."<sup>1500</sup> To avoid the obvious inconvenience of taking produce back home, farmers were forced by this catch 22 situation to sell their cotton to the state agency (COTTCO) even if the price offered was not attractive. Because produce had to pay for the previous year's loan, delivering to COTTCO was the only guarantee that they would get next season's inputs. This was typical exploitation of farmers and, because cotton is not an edible crop, farmers were forced to "leave it there [in COTTCO hands]"<sup>1501</sup> in return for a pittance. Therefore, after 1995, instead of cotton making farmers prosper, it made them poor through low prices and limited loans. Those who were denied loans could not afford inputs for the following season. It should be pointed out, however, that some plottolders failed because of their own poor management and also because they sold cotton inputs instead of using them for the purpose they were intended.

In this period, the unresolved issue of settler lease agreements and low crop prices were some of the major problems stifling efforts at recovery. The tenants maintain that the conditions of lease should be revisited if progress is to be achieved, but ARDA has persistently closed its ears to these demands, which at their worst have a tendency to hamper productivity. For instance, the agreement of lease prevented the lessee (Gowe settler farmer) from owning irrigation equipment such as pipes and risers (sprinklers). These were the property of the lessor (ARDA). They were merely loaned out to the tenants during the currency of the lease, but upon expiration of the agreement, they had to be returned in their original state to the lessor. The lessee would pay for any damage or loss suffered to the irrigation pipes and risers. In addition, he/she paid for the services of

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<sup>1496</sup> *The Farmer: Zimbabwe Farming News Magazine*, 64(31/32), Harare: Modern Farming Publications, (August 4/11, 1994), 16. N.B. Announcing pre-planting prices had become the norm since independence. The era of price controls came to an end with the implementation of ESAP.

<sup>1497</sup> *The Farmer: Zimbabwe Farming News Magazine*, 64(12), Harare: Modern Farming Publications, (March 24, 1994), 3.

<sup>1498</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1500</sup> T. Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1501</sup> *Ibid.*

the pump minder and for any administration overheads that the lessor raised.<sup>1502</sup> The last two clauses placed an unnecessary financial burden on the tenants considering that they could carry out some of the responsibilities they were being asked to pay for on their own. The lease arrangement, therefore, had some negative effects on settler performance, as it had remained unresolved for rather too long. This, among other farming inconveniences, has led outgrowers to demand the handover to them by ARDA of the smallholder component and its infrastructure. ARDA, on the other hand, has resisted moves intended to achieve this irrigation management transfer.<sup>1503</sup> Granting the settlers autonomy or full independence would endanger Estate interests especially those linked to the supply of labour. Continued bickering between the Estate and the outgrowers does not promote production either. A lot of things needed to be put right to boost irrigation performance. One of them was the need to improve commodity prices, which had tumbled during structural adjustment.

In an effort to resuscitate cotton production, which had apparently declined due to no or few real incentives during ESAP, Quton Seed Pvt Ltd, a company interested in promoting a new seed variety for commercial purposes, came up with an offer of a more attractive price than the ruling price. Inviting farmers and farmer organisations (including ARDA) to help boost its seed stocks, the company's General Manager (GM), R. F. Jarvis, appealed to the farmers to deliver their Albar SZ 9314 variety grown in the 1998/99 season to nearby COTTCO Depots. He promised: "The Company will [in turn] purchase all ... A and B Grade deliveries for seed purposes at a premium rate of \$1,44/kg over and above the ruling producer price."<sup>1504</sup> In addition the GM informed growers that the SZ 9314 commercial variety was "released recently" and management intended "to bulk up as much seed as possible of this 'cultivar' in an effort to expedite commercial plantings in the 1999/2000 season."<sup>1505</sup> He further assured them: "This is a very high yielding variety with great potential, and therefore, it is management's desire to afford as many growers as possible the opportunity to grow the new variety in the millennium."<sup>1506</sup> This was indeed a rare opportunity for ARDA Sanyati and other cotton growers who were willing to deliver to COTTCO and in the process realise better cash returns on their crop. Such cash incentives coupled with awards given by COTTCO for the "cotton grower of the year"<sup>1507</sup> also helped raise cotton yields, though marginally, as they had the effect of

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<sup>1502</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.8 Gowe Farmers: Gowe Irrigation Scheme 2002, "Agricultural and Rural Development Authority: Farming Lease Agreement," J. Z. Z. Matowanyika (ARDA), 17<sup>th</sup> May 2001, 2.

<sup>1503</sup> Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) has not yet been achieved at Gowe-Sanyati. However, its merits and demerits will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>1504</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Purchase Offer of your Entire A and B Grade Albar SZ 9314 Commercial Crop," R. F. Jarvis (General Manager, Quton Seed Company Pvt Ltd.) to All 1998/99 Season Albar SZ 9314 Commercial Growers, copied to the Chief Executive Officer/CEO (ARDA), 15<sup>th</sup> February 1999, 1. N.B. At ARDA the position of General Manager was changed to that of Chief Executive Officer towards the end of the 1990s.

<sup>1505</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Purchase Offer of your Entire A and B Grade Albar SZ 9314 Commercial Crop," R. F. Jarvis (General Manager, Quton Seed Company Pvt Ltd.) to All 1998/99 Season Albar SZ 9314 Commercial Growers, copied to the Chief Executive Officer/CEO (ARDA), 15<sup>th</sup> February 1999, 1.

<sup>1506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1507</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Cotton

encouraging farmers to refocus on cotton, a crop which in the 1990s had become as unpopular as it had been in colonial times. It should be pointed out that farmers who were not sure of COTTCO's genuineness, however, did not respond to this call as, in their opinion, the parastatal now symbolised low prices. Such sporadic incentives did not boost farmer confidence in the economy. A longer-term incentive package was more preferable to farmers and, in its absence, the long-term effect of this was that cotton yields never really rose to the pre-ESAP levels.

### **Estate performance (1996-2000):-**

After ESAP, management anticipated an improvement in Estate performance. This expectation was predicated on a hope that the macro-economic environment would also have improved to facilitate higher productivity. However, as illustrated by the table below, hardships that militated against an agricultural renaissance in the post-ESAP era still existed because hectares under cultivation and yields never really increased.

**Table 6.3: ARDA SANYATI ESTATE: CROP YIELD ANALYSIS FROM 1995/96 TO 1996/97**

Crop	1995/96			1996/97		
	Ha	Total Yield	Ave Yield/Ha	Ha	Total Yield	Ave Yield/Ha
Cotton	192	220 359	1 148	168	155 116	923
Bananas	30	167 135	5 571	20	65 602	3 283
Tomatoes	3	63 056	21 022	3	102 608	34 202
Maize	26	208 623	7 450	30	344 699	11 489
S/Beans	-	-	-	50	39 050	781
G/nuts	-	-	-	20	44 577	2 229
Wheat	49	182 500	3 724	-	-	- <sup>1508</sup>

Source: Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997).

As in earlier seasons, maize was sold as green mealies. From the table, it can be discerned that the Estate, just like Gowe, was placing less and less emphasis on cotton in order to minimise expenditure on this cash and labour intensive crop. Because cotton prices had fallen, continually growing the crop made the central estate fail to recoup rising production costs. ESAP had ended, but its impact continued to be felt so many years after. This is partly why ARDA Sanyati only utilised 300 ha and 291 ha of its total size in 1996 and 1997 respectively. Generally, Estate land was being under-utilised and yields were low. Low

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Company Grower of the Year Award Presentation Ceremony," C. P. Tamirepi (for Business Unit Manager, Sanyati Cotton Company Depot) to the Manager (ARDA Sanyati Estate), 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1998.

<sup>1508</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Cotton Company Grower of the Year Award Presentation Ceremony," C. P. Tamirepi (for Business Unit Manager, Sanyati Cotton Company Depot) to the Manager (ARDA Sanyati Estate), 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1998.

yields in turn meant that the Main Irrigation Scheme was under performing in the post-SAP period.

Wheat was another major crop whose harvests had also declined due to limited funds, low market prices and pumping problems caused by earlier droughts and moribund irrigation equipment. Due to pumping problems, the irrigated winter wheat crop in 1997/98 continually suffered from water stress hence reduced yields. The table below illustrates the wheat yields for that year.

**Table 6.4: ARDA SANYATI ESTATE WHEAT YIELD (1997/98)**

Block	Hectares	Harvested Kgs	Yield/Hectare
2A	12	11 700 Kg	975 Kg
4A	26	54 400 Kg	2 092,3 Kg
5A	12	8 750 Kg	729,2 Kg
TOTAL	50	74 850 Kg	- <sup>1509</sup>

Source: Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997).

These yields were relatively low. The Estate did not have sufficient funds to devote more hectares to wheat against the background of its worst losses in the two seasons preceding the 1997/98 one. For example, in 1995/96, it incurred a loss of \$1 958 077,00 followed in quick succession by a record loss of \$5 185 648,00 in 1996/97.<sup>1510</sup> Therefore, as the decade wore on, ARDA Sanyati was not operating at a profit hence the core estate continued to perform badly in the post-ESAP period. The Estate, let alone ARDA Head Office could hardly finance their own operations. They always sought assistance directly from government or from other government agencies such as the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe. In 1997 ARDA Sanyati appealed to COTTCO for a sum of \$1, 5 million to finance the cost of herbicides for use on their 300-hectare cotton crop. Because many companies, not least COTTCO, were struggling to make ends meet in the post-ESAP period, only \$400 000, 00 was made available to the central estate. Unable to raise the difference of \$1,1 million from other sources, S. Mapondera, the then Estate Manager, sent a second request to his COTTCO counterpart at Sanyati for more funds to finance the cotton crop. His letter read:

We [Sanyati Estate] do appreciate the assistance of Four Hundred Thousand Dollars received on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 1997. Our requirement still stands at \$1, 5 million; we still have a shortfall of \$1, 1 million. [This] total is for herbicides only. It does not include pesticides and weeding labour costs, which are currently required.<sup>1511</sup>

<sup>1509</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “Sanyati Estate Wheat Yield (1997),” Estate Manager.

<sup>1510</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “Sanyati Estate Profit/Loss Analysis for the Past Seven Years 1990/91 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1511</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, “Request for More Funds to Finance our Cotton Crop 300 Ha,” S. Mapondera (Sanyati Estate Manager) to the Business Unity Manager (COTTCO Sanyati), 4<sup>th</sup> January 1998.

Clearly, they were going to ask for more to cover pesticides and labour costs in future. Why they did not make one comprehensive submission is unclear. Whilst the erratic disbursements made it difficult for ARDA Sanyati to expand their productive capacity, it should be appreciated that COTTCO disbursed loans to the Estate based on the latter's previous performance, which was disparagingly low. Eventually, and seemingly under duress, COTTCO released the remaining \$1,1 million. However, ARDA Sanyati continued to request more funds for their cotton crop and various other needs such as chemicals, fertilisers, and ZESA bills.<sup>1512</sup> The Estate Manager, Mapondera, in particular, suggested that the credit be "disbursed in one tranche because of the escalating input costs due to the crashing Zimbabwe dollar."<sup>1513</sup> Their demands for cash became almost perennial as evidenced by the fact that in early 1999, they approached Fairacres, an ARDA Estate based in Kwekwe, seeking a loan. In soliciting for assistance from this sister estate, Mapondera wrote:

We are desperately in need of crop chemicals mainly grass and lay bye herbicides. The Estate is currently out of cash. At present we have no option but to seek assistance from you. Could you please kindly assist us with funds [\$261 516, 00] to buy ... cotton inputs [Gramoxone, Bladex and Fusilade]? We will pay back in five installments at a rate of over \$50 000, 00/Month starting in February 1999.<sup>1514</sup>

The more the Estate obtained these loans the more enmeshed in debt it became. Mapondera's successor, Petros Bvunzawabaya, was also forced to live off credit because it was almost impossible to overhaul the financial problems created by his predecessors for the Estate overnight. It was because of the inherited financial difficulties that Sanyati Estate under the new manager had to ask for spot payment from COTTCO for their 1998/99 cotton crop. In his communication to his counterpart at COTTCO, the then Estate Manager, Bvunzawabaya, defied the manner of normal business practice when he requested payment on delivery. He wrote:

We are currently facing cash flow problems and this has adversely affected our cotton-picking operations. We need to pay our ZESA bills for irrigation done in [sic] our late crop. Could you please arrange for us a spot payment to the tune of \$400 000, 00 for our deliveries as from 3 May 1999.<sup>1515</sup>

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<sup>1512</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Request for More Funds to Pay for Chemicals, Fertilisers and ZESA Bills - \$1 500 000,00," S. Mapondera (Sanyati Estate Manager) to the Business Unity Manager (COTTCO Sanyati), 28<sup>th</sup> December 1998.

<sup>1513</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Credit Disbursement and Increment," S. Mapondera (Sanyati Estate Manager) to the Land Extension Officer (COTTCO Sanyati), 14<sup>th</sup> October 1998.

<sup>1514</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Memorandum - Request for Funds to Purchase Cotton Chemicals," S. Mapondera (Sanyati Estate Manager) to the Estate Manager (Fairacres - Kwekwe), 20<sup>th</sup> January 1999.

<sup>1515</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.6 Cotton Company of Zimbabwe Correspondence, "Cash Payment of \$400 000,00," P. Bvunzawabaya (Agricultural Development Authority Sanyati Estate Manager) to the

In asking for cash payment on delivery of their cotton to COTTCO, the Sanyati Estate Manager was also reiterating a fact which had become all too familiar since the 1990s that hard times had befallen ARDA. Financial resources were so totally limiting that the Estate was not achieving its production targets. Funds were not only inadequate they were, in fact, unavailable. Matowanyika has testified that the government was not allocating resources to parastatals since 1993.<sup>1516</sup>

It is necessary to point out that the poor performance of the Estate should not be taken in isolation to other factors. For instance, it was a reflection of poor performance not only on the part of the government agency (ARDA) but also the national economy. At a meeting held on 18 February 1998, the ARDA Board itself “expressed great concern about the poor results of the Authority for the [financial] year ended 31 October 1997.”<sup>1517</sup> The Board then resolved to institute an external investigation into the Authority under which a Board Committee was appointed to draw up the terms of reference. Management was requested to identify the causes of the poor performance, which in 1996/97, measured in monetary terms, amounted to \$64 million.<sup>1518</sup> In appraising the Board on their findings Management indicated that during the year under review (1996/97) the Authority<sup>1519</sup> lost sales revenue of \$25, 5 million due to: (a) low yields mainly because of excessive rains; (b) late planting because the rains came late into the season; (c) excessive rains brought with them diseases and pests. Pest control was particularly difficult as maize was affected by gray leaf and soya beans was affected by frog eye disease, and in some cases there was water logging and leaching; (d) lower prices on the market for wheat, cotton and maize against escalating direct input costs such as labour, electricity, water, chemicals and fertilisers among others; and the fact that (e) agronomic practices were worsened by the excessive rains.<sup>1520</sup>

Furthermore, it was observed that the heavy overheads at Head Office contributed to the poor performance of the Authority. These amounted to \$23 million, which represented 7% of the total costs. The estate overheads of \$64 million representing 19% of the total costs also depressed the operating results. Together the overheads amounted to \$87 million representing 26% of the total production costs. The size of the interest on overdraft of \$18 million was alarming and also contributed to the poor results.<sup>1521</sup> This evidence has been corroborated by the Sanyati Estate Accounts Clerk, Alexander Machicha, who says between 1993 and 1998 the Sanyati Estate got overdraft facilities from the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ – now the Jewel Bank of Zimbabwe).<sup>1522</sup>

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Business Unit Manager (Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, Sanyati), 5<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

<sup>1516</sup> Matowanyika, Personal Interview.

<sup>1517</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 1.

<sup>1518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1519</sup> The Authority refers to the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA).

<sup>1520</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 1.

<sup>1521</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1522</sup> Alexander Machicha, (ARDA Sanyati Estate Accounts Clerk), Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.



Deliberately avoiding figures, he went on to say “by 1999 the overdraft advanced to the Estate had become so huge that CBZ converted it into a cash loan facility.”<sup>1523</sup>

After the investigation, Management came up with a SWOT <sup>1524</sup> analysis of their objectives as a way of remedying the situation. The strengths of the Authority were seen to include the following: (a) a large pool of skilled and experienced manpower; (b) free land, adequate water supply and developed infrastructure; (c) abundant wildlife; (d) abundant labour force for some estates; (e) big buying power; and (f) a lot of unused land capacity for such projects as sugarcane. <sup>1525</sup> However, whilst these strengths existed the Authority was beset by numerous weaknesses, which threatened its estates’ viability. Among some of its major shortcomings were: (a) lack of marketing capacity and skills; (b) bureaucracy particularly in relation to capital releases; (c) absence of investigations into variances <sup>1526</sup> reported by estates to management in management reports; (d) top-heavy Head Office; (e) high indirect costs at estates; (f) a sprinkle of incompetent managers/workers resulting in sub-standard product quality; (g) old machinery and inadequate supply of machinery; (h) lack of priority on development projects (sometimes concentrating on non-core business to the detriment of core business); (i) ineffective communication (i.e. mainly top-down and not bottom-up communication strategy); (j) non-indiscriminate remunerations between performers and non-performers (i.e. no performance-related rewards as far as wages, salaries and bonuses were concerned); (k) non-competitive remuneration compared to what the private sector and other parastatal organisations were offering; (l) diluted management on Authority operations; (m) lack of marketing intelligence; (n) lack of modern technology especially on irrigation; and (o) lack of finance. <sup>1527</sup> This was excellent self-introspection by the Authority, but it is surprising that, aware of their weaknesses as they were, they have not fully addressed these problems hence ARDA continues to register losses almost every year. For example, losses ranged from such figures as \$475 376, 00 in 1990/91 to \$5 185 648, 00 in 1996/97. <sup>1528</sup>

Although it can be argued that ARDA were not doing well because they were plagued by such threats as droughts; the unfavourable macro-economic environment; escalating input costs; declining market prices; and competition both local and international, <sup>1529</sup> they still

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<sup>1523</sup> Machicha, Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1524</sup> SWOT is used in Economic analysis where the starting premise is an acknowledgement of the organisation’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

<sup>1525</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 2.

<sup>1526</sup> Variance is used to denote the difference between the projected budget and the actual expenditure. When an organisation operates within budget there is zero variance; when there is over expenditure which was not budgeted for the variance is negative and when there is under expenditure there is positive variance. Variances are thus used to measure profitability or loss. Variances for the 1990s appeared in the negative indicating loss making on the part of the Estate.

<sup>1527</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 2.

<sup>1528</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 2.1 Crop Records: Yields (1997) – “Sanyati Estate Profit/Loss Analysis for the Past Seven Years 1990/91 to 1996/97,” Estate Manager.

<sup>1529</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 3.

had great opportunities at their disposal to overturn these disadvantages. For example, the Authority has potential overseas markets, among other things, for wildlife, horticultural products and tea; down stream industries with value added on Authority products for the local markets; water rights; cheap money from COTTCO, Cargill and other sources; and, last but not least, presence in different ecological zones of the country.<sup>1530</sup> In fact, as already alluded to, after identifying the causes of poor performance Management came up with sound recommendations, which had they been strictly followed through, they were set to help improve ARDA and subsequently estate performance. These were as follows: (a) market at best advantage should be given great attention; (b) appoint marketing agencies according to need; (c) restructure Head Office and reduce it to Chief Executive, 2 Accountants, 6 Auditors, 1 Administration, 2 Human Resources/HR, 3 Secretaries and 3 Front Office Staff/Registry; (d) devolve some administration duties at Head Office to the estates; (e) outsource or subcontract specialist services as and when needed; (f) estate managers to report directly to the Chief Executive; (g) estate managers be put on contract and be given performance targets; (h) pay competitive market related salaries; (i) restructure estates in order to reduce administration overheads; (j) source cheap funds in order to reduce the impact of overdraft interest on operations; (k) have a representative on the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange (ZIMACE)<sup>1531</sup> panel/board; (l) construct storage and drying facilities; (m) upgrade present irrigation facilities and introduce new technology; (n) improve on the management and enforcement of contracts; (o) appropriate training should be given adequate attention; and, last but not least, (p) ensure minimum development on resettlement land (i.e. focus more on core business such as the growing of crops in Mashonaland and the rearing of livestock in Matabeleland).<sup>1532</sup>

These recommendations tried as much as possible to make the Authority's objectives SMART that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reliable and fall within a given Time frame or be Time-oriented. Sound as these objectives appeared, they however lacked implementation. There was no special task force appointed to ensure their full implementation. This limitation coupled with fluctuating prices, administrative and operational problems has made ARDA's task of turning around its fortunes very difficult. Agricultural producer prices were always changing from time to time reflecting a steady rise in nominal terms. For almost all the commodities, the real prices in terms of the United States/US dollar (using end of year exchange rates) never rose enough to reach the price levels of the early 1980s.<sup>1533</sup> These price shifts were accompanied by an average annual rate of inflation of about 30%.<sup>1534</sup> Inflation had a deleterious effect on the incomes of all the farmers in Zimbabwe in general and the low-income or the resource-poor groups in particular.

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<sup>1530</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 3.

<sup>1531</sup> ZIMACE was phased out in 2001.

<sup>1532</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Regional Managers Meetings and Reports, ARDA, February 1998, 3-4. N.B. Investing in non-core business was counterproductive for ARDA at this difficult moment. The parastatal had to refocus its attention on its core business, which was to produce crops and help feed the nation.

<sup>1533</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 55.

<sup>1534</sup> *Ibid.*

David Mjoli made a very illuminating remark about how inflation in the 1990s affected cotton growers' aspirations in Sanyati when he said: "Cotton has a faint challenge [limited prospects of enriching farmers] now as compared to the 1970s and 1980s because of inflationary changes which mean that the price and item [commodity] are at war to meet our [farmers'] commitments."<sup>1535</sup> An additional burden was that farmers could not use the previous season's prices as guaranteed prices for the following season in decision-making. It is disconcerting to note that cotton farmers are invariably reduced to "price takers" who are forced to wait for price announcements after the harvest, regardless of input credits and labour costs.<sup>1536</sup> This means that the "white fibre" is no longer as viable a crop as it used to be in the 1960s right up to the 1980s. Instead of enriching farmers it is now engendering poverty. Government and its marketing agencies should, thus, be urged to set producer prices before the cropping season to facilitate planning on the part of the growers who are not happy about the low prices the cotton crop in particular is fetching on both the domestic and international markets. The very low prices have made some farmers decide not to grow the crop at all. ARDA's distributive or redistributive capacity of irrigation resources (i.e. water, mechanical equipment and inputs) is exacerbating the situation because it has increasingly become unequal and inconsiderate of the needs of the smallholder scheme. This has caused a number of anxieties, which have prompted some farmers to abandon cotton growing or spontaneously decide to leave the scheme in preference for dryland farming. For the Estate, such actions militated against agricultural recovery in the post-ESAP period. This was so because the farmers who usually sold their cotton through ARDA, in addition to providing crucial reserves of labour, had in the past significantly helped to raise the levels of the crop the Authority would in turn sell to COTTCO on its own behalf or on behalf of the outgrowers.

### **The Millennium Recovery Plan: Did agriculture recover by 2000?:-**

Agricultural recovery could only be achieved on the basis of full and sustained production. The harder the times the more government needed to sympathise and empathise with the plottolders. The Estate Managers and ARDA should have sought strategies that ensured continued production and which at the same time took into cognisance the plight of the plottolders which was never ameliorated by the debilitating effects of ESAP. Estate production could have been complemented in a major way had a lasting solution been found to the problem of credit and markets. The Gowe plottolders were prevented from irrigating their crops if they had not paid their debt. For instance a number of plottolders who included A. Badza, G. Maturure, N. Mavhengere, T. Nyamutova, and C. Mhara were in the winter of 2000 refused permission to irrigate their maize due to non-payment of their arrears to the Estate.<sup>1537</sup> Regarding both the winter

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<sup>1535</sup> David Mjoli, Gowe II Plottolder, Personal Interview, Gowe-Sanyati, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1536</sup> "Cotton Farmers Cry Foul Over Low Selling Prices," *The Business Post*, Mutare: (18-24 November 2005), B1.

<sup>1537</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.9 RDPU – Scheme Correspondence, "Stop Irrigating Until You Settle Your Debt," P. Bvunzawabaya (Estate Manager - Sanyati) to A. Badza, G. Maturure, N. Mavhengere, T. Nyamutova, and C. Mhara, 16<sup>th</sup> June 2000.

and summer cropping the then Estate Manager, P. Bvunzawabaya, argued that “because of the current situation [financially difficult period after ESAP] the estate can no longer afford to sponsor people who are not keen to honour their debts.”<sup>1538</sup> This decision was rather harsh. Judging by some of them like G. Maturure and T. Nyamutova’s excellent farming record since they joined the scheme it is imperative to note that failure on their part to pay had been necessitated by circumstances beyond their control. The generally harsh economic climate characterised by few markets and extremely low market prices for irrigation produce was central to their malperformance and resultant failure to redeem their loans. It is clear that this was not a case of willful default on their part. In all fairness to their contribution to the success of Gowe they should have been given a grace period in which to pay their outstanding balances whilst they continued with production. This was not to be. Maturure, Mavhengere and Mhara were only allowed to go ahead with irrigating their winter maize after they had paid a substantial amount of their debt. In granting them permission to irrigate the Estate Manager wrote to the Gowe Irrigation Committee Chairman, B. Jongwe, in July the same year advising the affected farmers to “irrigate [only] one hectare of maize since [they] had paid more than half of their debt.”<sup>1539</sup> The earlier action to suspend production directly militated against the objective of food security, nutrition and agricultural sustainability. However, the Estate continued with its operations in spite of the fact that it was also hugely indebted to service/loan providers such as COTTCO and Cargill to name only a few.

There was little prospect that the smallholder scheme could wave the magic wand and raise productivity when the Main Estate from which it drew so many resources was going through a very lean patch. The “Bigger Brother” was actually struggling to justify its existence. As Mhlanga observed, “The parastatal is overstretched as far as [cash] demands are concerned and it is getting less money from government or it is getting too little too late.”<sup>1540</sup> Indeed, the poor performance of the plotholder farmers was a reflection of the broader financial and economic crisis besetting the state agency (ARDA) and the country as a whole at the beginning of the new millennium. For example, in a monthly report for November 2001 it was noted that crop planting could not start because of “lack of inputs and money.”<sup>1541</sup> The Mechanical or Maintenance Equipment Unit (MEU), which is the hub of Estate operations, was frequently incapacitated by lack of diesel, petrol, engine and gearbox oil for its field equipment. Because of the Estate’s failure to pay fuel providers, the bulk tanks were taken away by Mobil Zimbabwe. Consequently, an appeal was made to “any Estate with drums” to help the Sanyati Estate.<sup>1542</sup> Before new diesel containers were installed, at least 20 drums had to be made available as a stopgap measure. An assessment of mechanical requirements revealed that

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<sup>1538</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.9 RDPU – Scheme Correspondence, “2000/2001 Irrigation,” P. Bvunzawabaya (Estate Manager – Sanyati) to B. Jongwe (RDPU – Committee Chairman), 9<sup>th</sup> November 2000.

<sup>1539</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: 8.9 RDPU – Scheme Correspondence, “Permission to Irrigate One Ha of Maize – G. Maturure, N. Mavhengere and C. Mhara,” P. Bvunzawabaya (Estate Manager – Sanyati) to B. Jongwe (The Chairman, Gowe Irrigation Scheme Committee – RDPU), 6<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> July 2000.

<sup>1540</sup> Mhlanga, Personal Interview, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

<sup>1541</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Monthly Reports (Various Years) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Monthly Report for Month Ending 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001,” B. Chiripamberi (Estate Manager), 1.

<sup>1542</sup> *Ibid.*

by November 2001, the Estate had 1 tractor and 1 plough when it needed about 5 tractors and 5 ploughs. At least 600 sprinklers, complete with river assemblies, were required. In addition, at least \$1 million was urgently required to replace hydrant taps for the irrigation system which had been vandalised. Inputs such as fertiliser, chemicals and herbicides were also in short supply.<sup>1543</sup> The situation was compounded by the fact that most of the irrigation equipment had been taken by other Estates. Cannibalisation of equipment by sister Estates took place during the temporary closure in 2000<sup>1544</sup> and the Estates in question were reluctant to return it. To restore viability to Sanyati such equipment had to be returned or else the Estate had to borrow equipment from a sister Estate, which was untenable if agricultural progress was to be achieved by all the Estates.

Given these facts, how could the small-scale irrigators be expected to do well when the Estate itself was struggling to produce results? For instance, in the face of several economic challenges, although the GMB Manager had promised: “farmers who are under irrigation scheme are going to be given first priority when issuing inputs [for summer cropping],”<sup>1545</sup> it was not to be the end of their problems. For example, in an astonishing turn of events, the Assistant Accountant for ARDA Sanyati, Nyahwa, at a meeting with Gowe farmers, told the farmers “to find alternative ways of ploughing besides using [ARDA] tractors since diesel is very difficult to find these days.”<sup>1546</sup> Vacant plots were also not yielding satisfactory results. Because of this, at the same meeting, farmers were asked to stop illegal cultivation and compelled to surrender vacant plots as these belonged to ARDA. It was argued, “If vacant plots are given to Gowe children, there could be continuous unproductive problems which are already existing between parents and children.”<sup>1547</sup> Thus, it was agreed by the meeting that, in line with the laid down *modus operandi*, vacant plots should be advertised nationally and all those willing to apply should do so.

In fact, since the 1990s there has been a lot of in-fighting over vacant plots among irrigation farmers.<sup>1548</sup> As already alluded to, many plottolders are illegally utilising these plots. Clearly, the issue of vacant plots should be revisited and new people asked to take over the plots in order to promote the regeneration of agricultural productivity at a time when the agricultural industry, on the whole, is going through one of its leanest spells in history. Alternatively, two possible solutions could be considered. On the one hand, the intrusion of Estate land could be curbed if the “invaders” of that land were selected to take up these plots that have been lying idle for a long time. On the other, the long-standing clamours for bigger plots by Gowe farmers could be addressed by re-allocating

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<sup>1543</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Monthly Reports (Various Years) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Monthly Report for Month Ending 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001,” B. Chiripamberi (Estate Manager), 2.

<sup>1544</sup> The closure lasted up to 2001 and was necessitated by numerous viability problems.

<sup>1545</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Monthly Reports (Various Years) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Minutes of Meeting with Gowe Farmers Held at 9.00 am on 19 September 2002 in the Assistant Accountant’s Office,” 1.

<sup>1546</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1547</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Monthly Reports (Various Years) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Minutes of Meeting with Gowe Farmers Held at 9.00 am on 19 September 2002 in the Assistant Accountant’s Office,” 1.

<sup>1548</sup> Chiona, Personal Interview.

these to existing farmers who have the resources and capacity to cultivate an enlarged area. Indeed, a few farmers who have unilaterally allocated themselves vacant plots are realising the benefit. According to T. Nyamutova, “Plot holders who have claimed more land from the vacant plots are performing and progressing much better than those with smaller pieces of land.”<sup>1549</sup> These include Nyamutova himself, E. Chiwombe, B. Jongwe and others who now possess nearly all the essential equipment and cash to “effectively farm” their plots.<sup>1550</sup> The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that initially, land ownership was not the basis of differentiation within the Gowe-Sanyati Scheme, but since 1992 it has become so especially due to plott holders claiming, though illegally, vacant plots and segments of Estate land. Earlier, the DC rigidly enforced the tenets of standardisation of plots and as a result differentiation could not be achieved on the basis of land ownership.

Re-allocating these vacant plots to existing farmers would, of course, increase local disparities in land holding and intensify socio-economic differentiation in Sanyati, but this seems to be a plausible idea instead of maintaining the current decision-making apathy regarding the issue of these plots which, in turn, has adverse implications on the viability of the entire smallholder irrigation project. Indeed, leaving land lying idle is one of the factors hampering development. There are varied perceptions on whether vacant plots should or should not be filled. Three major interpretations have been given to explain the demands for vacant plots by incumbent plott holders. Firstly, it is clear they want more land part of which they can bequeath to their landless offspring. Secondly, the Estate Manager views it as “sheer greed by occupiers of vacant plots because they are not necessarily doing better than those with small plots.”<sup>1551</sup> Perhaps the Manager was not aware how some plott holders had benefited from utilising more land or he was simply echoing official policy, which was predicated on the idea that before these plots were advertised and taken up they belonged to ARDA. Thirdly, plott holders argue, “Vacant plots should be taken over by us [them] because it’s difficult to maintain irrigation that passes through the vacant plots.”<sup>1552</sup> ARDA, the traditional custodian of Gowe, does not even know who the authority to solve this problem of vacant plots is, but plott holders claim it is the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture.<sup>1553</sup> Thus, there is still a lot of confusion surrounding the issue, but in the interests of production, the plots should not go for many years without occupants. That there are many unoccupied plots at Gowe is indicative of the Authority’s own inadequacies.

As already indicated, aware of these weaknesses, ARDA has failed to come up with a turn around strategy that ensures viability hence they have continued to register losses even under the so-called Millennium Recovery Plan. The Sanyati Estate is no longer viable. Estate capacity to produce at sustainable levels has gone down and sales are also low. The irrigation system has become too old to be viable. The Estate Manager, Mapondera, was roundly condemned in the late 1990s for failure to rectify the downward

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<sup>1549</sup> T. Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1550</sup> E. Chiwombe, Personal Interview.

<sup>1551</sup> Chiona, Personal Interview.

<sup>1552</sup> Nyamutova, Personal Interview, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1553</sup> Chiwombe, Personal Interview.

spiral in Estate production. Due to soil problems and serious malperformance by the core Estate, a decision to close shop was made by the Regional Manager, B. Noko, hence ARDA Sanyati ceased operations between November 2000 and October 2001.<sup>1554</sup> The Estate also closed down due to lack of funding, loss making and poor management of parastatal bodies generally. However, during closure the office administration continued operating and a truncated field staff continued to maintain the small hectare of cotton and banana. As stated earlier, it was during the closure that other Estates began vandalising or cannibalising Sanyati equipment. The limited staff that was left on site could not control the vandalisation of equipment by individuals and other ARDA Estates sometimes on the authority of Head Office.<sup>1555</sup> The Estate re-opened in 2002 after the Chief of the area, Wozhele, local Headmen and other Community leaders felt they had been robbed of an entity that was providing a service to them.<sup>1556</sup> By that date, the Estate had not quite recovered from this setback. Suggestions have been made on how to re-launch the scheme on a viable basis again. Within government circles, irrigation management transfer of the smallholder component has been proffered as one of the solutions that could assist ARDA defray some of its production costs.

### **Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT):-**

One of the solutions that has been suggested to improve the performance of schemes is Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT). Instances of successful management transfer in smallholder irrigation systems in several African countries, however, are very few. A number of pre-conditions for successful transfers have been identified. These would entail addressing the following problems: (a) history of dependency on the Main ARDA Estates (b) high irrigation costs (c) absence of credit, input and output markets (d) land tenure issues (e) irrigated holding size (f) institutional support systems for sustainable farmer-managed irrigation.<sup>1557</sup> It is important to note that during the last two decades, countries with sizeable irrigation sectors have been transferring the management of irrigation systems from government agencies to Water User Associations (WUAs), individual farmers or other local non-governmental organisations but it was not quite the case in Zimbabwe especially in the ARDA schemes save for the case of Tsovane Irrigation Scheme.<sup>1558</sup> Irrigation management transfer in ARDA schemes has not emerged as a very strong policy objective. In Sanyati the local committees such as the Gowe Irrigation Committee (which is headed by a chairman) represent a small step in this

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<sup>1554</sup> Alexander Machicha, (ARDA Sanyati Estate Accounts Clerk), Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1555</sup> Chiona, Personal Interview.

<sup>1556</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1557</sup> Sanyati Main Estate, ARDA, File: Monthly Reports (Various Years) – “ARDA Sanyati Estate: Monthly Report for Month Ending 15<sup>th</sup> November 2001,” B. Chiripamberi (Estate Manager), 1. N.B. For similar views on irrigation management transfer see Douglas J. Merrey et al, “Can Irrigation Management Transfer Revitalise African Agriculture? A Review of African and International Experiences,” in Sally and Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 95-104. See also T. J. Bembridge, “Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of Small-Scale Farmer Irrigation Schemes in South Africa,” Paper for the International Seminar on the Performance of Large and Small-scale Irrigation Schemes in Africa, 15-19 November, Abuja, Nigeria: (1999) and D. L. Vermillion, “Irrigation Management Turnover: The Shift from Agency to Local Control,” *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture*, (4), (1994).

<sup>1558</sup> Tsovane Irrigation Scheme is beyond the scope of this study.

direction. Quite evidently, in the 1990s (i.e. during the second phase of the resettlement programme) conflict arose in communal areas under stress for land, for example Save Valley and Sanyati, where ARDA is operating about 7 000 ha and 1 000 ha respectively.<sup>1559</sup> It is the view of communal farmers in these areas that once ARDA has demonstrated what can be done, the potential and possibilities of an area, ARDA should recoil and remain a satellite with infrastructural facilities, equipment and technical training, and the locals take over the irrigation and production programmes. However, at ARDA Sanyati the management maintains that Gowe is not yet ripe for the weaning process to start. It should continue to exist as the Estate's "small brother." Notwithstanding the financial crisis of the 1990s, the Estate always lent assistance to the smallholder scheme. Gowe has relied on the Estate since 1974 in terms of technical and material resources. The Estate Manager, Henry Chiona, maintains, "The farmers are unable to stand on their own. For example, when the Estate closed down in 2000 they also collapsed – they could not sustain themselves. When the Estate re-opened they re-opened too. To this day they remain debtors to the Estate."<sup>1560</sup>

Nevertheless, the Estate Manager accepts that "to reduce the financial burden on ARDA the Gowe plottolders need to be weaned because their 'parasitic dependency' on the host [the Estate] can no longer be sustained" but cautions that "they must be given time to be weanable."<sup>1561</sup> He went on to say "The Estate has given them 5 years to be partially weaned and 10 years to be totally weaned off."<sup>1562</sup> However, ARDA does not seem to be genuine in fulfilling this objective, although the Gowe farmers "want their irrigation scheme to be detached from the Main Estate."<sup>1563</sup> It is clear that the farmers need training to prepare them for the weaning process. In order to efficiently run their scheme they should be given capacity in the area of administration, finance utilisation (bookkeeping) and to have their own equipment or machinery whereas ARDA can assist them with irrigation infrastructure and machinery repairs. Nonetheless, no practical steps in this direction have been taken by the parastatal to date, which implies that the latter is adamant to press this self-destructive button since IMT would exterminate their traditional supply of labour.<sup>1564</sup>

Thus, the evidence for transfer of ARDA schemes to farmers is not strong, but the evidence for reduction of government expenditure given the financial strain the country finds itself in may be the most persuasive item. Although IMT has not quite taken root in Zimbabwe's irrigation sector, it should be pointed out that the programme is being implemented in Asia and Latin America under a variety of labels namely management

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<sup>1559</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, "Issues Arising From the Meet-The-President Session on Land" – Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) Submission, F. T. Maziwisa (for Secretary for Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water Development) to the General Manager (ARDA), 30<sup>th</sup> August 1994, 2. See also ZFU, "Meet The President Programme," Harare Sheraton Hotel, International Conference Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1994, 2.

<sup>1560</sup> Chiona, Personal Interview. See also J. Chide (Maintenance Equipment Unit/MEU – Workshop Manager), Personal Interview, ARDA Sanyati, 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>1561</sup> Chiona, Personal Interview.

<sup>1562</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1563</sup> Mhlanga, Personal Interview, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

<sup>1564</sup> Gowe has been Sanyati Estate's labour repository since 1974.



transfer, turnover, self-management and participatory irrigation management.<sup>1565</sup> A common objective of the various programmes is to curtail the role of government agencies in irrigation management and give farmers more control and responsibility for managing irrigation systems. In most instances, governments pursue management transfer programmes to reduce their recurrent expenditures on irrigation, enhance agricultural productivity levels and stabilise deteriorating irrigation systems.<sup>1566</sup> Clearly, Irrigation Management Transfer, the programme for transferring the managerial responsibilities, including cost recovery and system maintenance, to legalise Water User Associations, is the main mode of decentralisation within the irrigation sector.<sup>1567</sup> IMT is extensive in Mexico, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Turkey and the Philippines and is picking up in countries such as India, Morocco, Indonesia and Pakistan.<sup>1568</sup> While China has a tradition of involving communities in lower level irrigation management, Australia and western parts of the United States have arrangements such as irrigation districts where farmers have far greater and more direct managerial and financial responsibilities.<sup>1569</sup> In Spain, the proposal to grant full autonomy to basin organisations is likely to advance the process of decentralisation still further.<sup>1570</sup>

A question to ask is when will ARDA embark on this programme, which would help defray a huge chunk of unnecessary expenditure? Another question often asked is whether the irrigation schemes that were transferred to farmer management were performing better than under state agency management? This could be a lesson for Zimbabwe. Judging by ARDA attitudes, the answer to the first question is not clear. They have not yet indicated a commitment to transfer management or devolve power to the Gowe smallholder irrigators. In respect to the second question it can be argued that there is very little experience in Zimbabwe with IMT to make a concrete answer. What can be assumed is that devolution of the plowholder scheme could see improved performance as the sense of belonging and ownership it will bestow on the tenants will engender a positive spirit. It is also an important step for the government to take given the non-

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<sup>1565</sup> Madar Samad, "Impact of Irrigation Management Transfer on the Performance of Irrigation Systems: A Review of Selected Experiences from Asia and Latin America," in Sally and Abernethy (eds.), *Private Irrigation in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 139-149. Other studies that reveal the impact of irrigation management transfer in Asia and Latin America include: J. Brewer et al, *Irrigation Management Transfer in India: Policies, Processes and Performance*, (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 1999); W. K. Easter, Asia's Irrigation Management in Transition, *Review of Agricultural Economics*, 22(2), (2001); S. H. Johnson III, "Irrigation Management Transfer in Mexico: A Strategy to Achieve Irrigation District Sustainability," *Research Report 16*, (Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI), 1997); M. Samad and Douglas L. Vermillion, "Assessment of the Impact of Participatory Irrigation Management in Sri Lanka: Partial Reforms, Partial Benefits," *Research Report 34*, (1999) and; D. L. Vermillion and C. Garcés-Restrepo, "Impacts of Colombia's Current Irrigation Management Transfer Programme," *Research Report 25*, Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Water Management Institute (IWMI), 1998.

<sup>1566</sup> D. L. Vermillion, "Impacts of Irrigation Management Transfer: A Review of Evidence," *Research Report 11*, (Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Irrigation Management Institute (IIMI), 1997).

<sup>1567</sup> For detail on the concept of decentralisation in the irrigation sector see R. Maria Saleth and Ariel Dinar, *The Institutional Economics of Water: A Cross-Country Analysis of Institutions and Performance*, (Northampton, Massachusetts, USA: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2004), 180.

<sup>1568</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1569</sup> Saleth and Dinar, *The Institutional Economics of Water*.

<sup>1570</sup> *Ibid.*

availability of public funds to continue supporting Gowe. In fact, without management transfer the outgrowers will continue to view the scheme as ARDA's and not theirs. Such attitudes hinder productivity. Clearly, the smallholder scheme is no longer benefiting much from its association with ARDA largely because the latter has withdrawn or is clandestinely withdrawing the services it used to provide. This lack of openness is despicable and keeps confusing the settlers whether they are still part of ARDA or not. On the whole, the success of IMT in Zimbabwe and the world at large has not been fully documented. What this analysis reveals, therefore, is that although there is extensive literature on irrigation management transfer, no clear analytical paradigm has yet emerged on ARDA schemes. It also illustrates that as long as ARDA does not wean off Gowe and continues to try and support this scheme on its tight budget the Estate itself will not recover. The latter would be a strong case in favour of management transfer.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that in Sanyati socio-economic disparities among the dryland and irrigation farmers were intensified by ESAP and subsequent agrarian crises. The Main Estate and the smallholder scheme never really recovered from these problems, which were accompanied by very serious drought situations. On the one hand, in this period the following features emerged: several structural changes to agriculture wrought by ESAP took place; various socio-economic and political dynamics whose basis was the IMF, World Bank-sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) occurred and further transformations characteristic of the post-ESAP period were implemented. On the other, these developments particularly the ones influenced by ESAP on cotton commodity production had injurious effects on the differentiation process that had gathered so much impetus in the preceding decade. The process was temporarily arrested by an unfavourable economic climate to agricultural growth and development. Gowe irrigators together with dryland farmers struggled to secure credit because of the financial stringency imposed by ESAP. It was also not easy to secure export markets, which were vital for peasant aggrandisement and economic regeneration. Very few commercial farmers penetrated the international market. It was more difficult for irrigation plotters and their dryland neighbours to have an export capacity. The export permit was difficult to obtain. Most small-scale farmers were caught up between outright collapse and survival. However, to emphasise the deleterious impact of ESAP on the poor is not to say that the reform programme impacted negatively on all sectors of the economy.<sup>1571</sup> Clearly, some sections of the economy and society did benefit from the programme. As Mlambo has stated it is, in fact, the very nature of such programmes to promote uneven development.<sup>1572</sup> This is why one of the criticisms against SAPs is that they benefited the big industrial concerns and the already rich members of society to the detriment of the poor.

The context for irrigation development in Zimbabwe was changing rapidly and drastically during the 1990s and 2000s. On the one hand, there is increasing scepticism about the returns to public investment in irrigation development, and a resulting decline

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<sup>1571</sup> Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme*, xi.

<sup>1572</sup> *Ibid.*

in such investment. On the other hand, there are continued serious concerns about food insecurity and economic underdevelopment in Zimbabwe in general and Sanyati in particular. Because episodes of food scarcity continue to occur frequently in the dry northwestern parts of Zimbabwe, the rehabilitation of the Sanyati irrigation facilities is an important way of addressing the issue of low productivity and food security. The core Estate is not in a position to help achieve the concept of food self-sufficiency in the area. Estate performance in all areas has not been commendable. ARDA's technical capacity is inadequate. The parastatal lacks operational capital and facilities for research and seed production. It has limited tillage capacity and lacks critical machinery and equipment to serve the agricultural needs of both the central estate and the outgrower section. This together with the ongoing battle between ARDA and the small-scale irrigation farmers to have the conditions of lease repealed means the latter have been experiencing battered moral which in turn does not help boost production.

What is clear is that there is unfinished business between the Estate or ARDA and the tenants. Some of the farmers continue to put pressure on the government to review the TILCOR/ARDA Act especially the highly detested conditions of lease that impact negatively on settler performance while others are demanding the handover to them by ARDA of the smallholder component and its infrastructure (IMT). These emerge as clear areas of dialogue but the parastatal often stifles any prospect for discussion of these issues. As already indicated, ARDA is finding it difficult to revitalise Gowe but at the same time they are unyielding to calls for Irrigation Management Transfer. If management transfer is properly orchestrated it could bring many operational advantages for both the Main Estate and the outgrower section.

Given the problems highlighted in this chapter, most of which were quite formidable it can be noted that the agricultural landscape in the second decade of independence was very gloomy. It was very difficult for agriculture in general and irrigation in particular to recover at Sanyati by the turn of the new millennium. Because ESAP was externally imposed (not "home grown" as the former Minister of Finance, Bernard Chidzero, once claimed) it was not well adapted to addressing the heterogeneous agrarian needs of Zimbabwe let alone Sanyati's smallholder irrigation system. It has been argued that ESAP-based macro-economic and agrarian policies were intended to curb excessive and irrational state intervention in the economy,<sup>1573</sup> but it is imperative to observe that the state still should play a central role in the development of any country. State role cannot be completely withdrawn. A case in point is the agricultural growth and the considerable improvement in the quality of life of the Zimbabwean peasantry during the first decade of independence as observed in the previous chapter. This success was partly due to peasant initiative and partly due to strong government intervention in agriculture in spite of the numerous socio-economic, environmental and other challenges that faced the country between 1980 and 1990.

From 1991 to 2000 the role of the state in the transformation of agriculture in Sanyati and Zimbabwe as a whole was circumscribed partly by ESAP and partly by rather unclear agrarian policies. The major bases of socio-economic differentiation remained pretty

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<sup>1573</sup> Moyo, *Land Reform Under Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe*, 18.

much the same, although by its very nature ESAP led to the emergence of a small group of well-to-do and a large group of less-to-do irrigation farmers within the smallholder sector. Bigger agricultural concerns were not severely crippled by the programme because for them export permits were not so difficult to access compared to smaller enterprises. Thus, large-scale or commercial irrigators benefited more under the so-called liberalised environment than their small-scale counterparts. ARDA schemes, as epitomes of large-scale or estate agriculture, though, were constrained by the sudden dearth of state subsidies and inept administration. The failure by ARDA Sanyati Estate to adapt to the new situation is reflected in its repeatedly registering operational losses throughout the decade (i.e. 1991-2000). The failure of the Sanyati Main Estate reverberated on Gowe thereby lowering yields and heightening poverty. Poverty manifested itself among women as well as among the hitherto rich irrigators. Women in particular were constrained by a tenure or lease system that disadvantaged them from owning land and other irrigation resources.

The chapter has also illustrated that the considerable benefits the Gowe tenants had derived from the cotton boom were virtually eroded over night with the advent of ESAP and the related socio-economic and political problems it unleashed. The general standard of living was lowered as the traditional cash cow (cotton), was no longer as remunerative as it used to be. Differentiation, which was often spearheaded by the cultivation of cotton, became a rather insignificant process in this period. Thus, between 1991 and 2000 other socio-economic and political developments were more important than differentiation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This study has explored the extent to which rural differentiation emerged at different stages in the history of Sanyati communal lands on the basis of both dryland agriculture and ARDA irrigation. An analysis of the growth and development of peasant agriculture, its transformation and commercialisation has revealed that the introduction of irrigation was a major policy instrument which spearheaded the intensification of existing forms of socio-economic differentiation in the area although differentiation was an unintended outcome of state policy. The study argues that rural differentiation did not occur in the same way under dryland conditions as it did in an irrigation context. There are different intensities of differentiation between dryland and irrigation farming settings. The differences are largely based on the fact that irrigation agriculture is a more intensive activity which promotes greater levels of commercialisation compared to those existing outside irrigation. The opportunity available to irrigation plottolders to double crop (i.e. grow summer and winter crops) assured them of a saleable crop almost all the time which set them as a class apart. The dryland holders practiced extensive cultivation and the absence of irrigation meant that they were not guaranteed steady flows of income throughout the year. Clearly, this made them poorer than their irrigation counterparts.

Chapter two has noted that the TILCOR/ARDA irrigation idea had not yet been hatched by 1964. Serious debate on this issue was fundamentally a UDI initiative. Sanyati had never been considered irrigable due to its poor soils and inhospitable climate until investigations leading to the establishment of Gowe irrigation started in 1965 two years after a visit to South Africa by a Ministry of Agriculture team that attended a conference there on the “Regulations for the Control of Irrigation Schemes in Bantu Areas.” However, before the advent of irrigation this study has shown how farming was organised around the Native Land Husbandry Act and how the richer peasants made a mockery of NLHA dictates. The reordering of rural life advocated by the Act was not in line with what the well-to-do peasants perceived to be the foundations of prosperity. In a nutshell the NLHA did not support the ownership of large herds of cattle (i.e. 10 head of cattle were considered to be an optimum/maximum number per holder) neither did it sanction the allocation of more than 8 acres of arable land for the Sanyati farmers. These limitations were staunchly resisted especially by the “immigrant” category of farmers who kept relatively larger herds of cattle and were used to ploughing bigger pieces of land in Rhodesdale. It has been demonstrated in this study that the tradition of resistance they imported into Sanyati was instrumental in weakening the power of technocratic interventions. The Act actually produced some “reserve entrepreneurs” who were not only fighting against its adverse prescriptions but also for their own economic betterment. It has been noted that over-emphasis on the negative aspects of the Act has led to the underestimation of the extent of differentiation among the Sanyati peasantry. However, the study has revealed that the rural elites withstood the pressure unleashed on them by the Act; hence differentiation could not be halted. The more authoritarian the Act became the stronger the resistance and the more farmers devised clandestine methods of furthering accumulation.

In fact, it has been demonstrated that, while writings on the NLHA have tended to see the Act as having had a restrictive effect on rural differentiation and accumulation because of its tendency towards equalisation of resources, the outcome was a skewed pattern of access to land. The contradictions inherent in the Act itself made it possible for the better-off to take advantage of these loopholes to enhance their accumulation prospects. While on the one hand, the Act disadvantaged the women, especially single women, and the young men, on the other, it produced a small class of rural accumulators. The ability of this small class of rural entrepreneurs to engage in further accumulation was greatly curtailed by stipulations in the Act (e.g. regarding size of land) but they always sought to fight its stipulations. Although literature on the NLHA has emphasised that bitter opposition to the Act came from the landless young men, this study has demonstrated that fierce opposition also came from immigrant “reserve entrepreneurs” who saw the Act as a constraint on further accumulation. Thus, it is this study’s contention that conventional wisdom on the effects of the NLHA may have overstated the actual impact of the Act, while ignoring the extent of differentiation that emerged among the Sanyati peasantry.

The study has further argued that the adoption of cotton in 1963 was responsible for stepping up the tempo of differentiation in rural Sanyati. By and large it cannot be refuted that the unfolding rural differentiation process was more clearly recognised at the beginning of the 1960s as more and more peasants embraced the values and virtues of cotton growing at a time the government had been forced to abandon the NLHA which was hindering accumulation. Although social inequalities existed in the early twentieth century, as cotton became firmly established, major and intractable forms of differentiation based on commodity production set in. The intrusive effects of a market economy whose basis was cotton gave rise to a differentiation between rich and poor farmers which tended to alter the existing social and economic structure. Old economic forms were quickly giving way to new ones. The local staple crop, maize, was still being grown but greater emphasis was now placed on cotton by many households in Sanyati.

It has also been demonstrated in this study that differentiation, as a process was not an irrigation phenomenon alone. Even in the decades prior to the inception of irrigation technology socio-economic differentiation had started to manifest itself in Sanyati quite clearly in spite of the onslaught by the colonial state machinery to “flatten” or eliminate it particularly at the high watermark of the implementation of the NLHA during the 1950s and early 1960s.

By focusing on development and differentiation the study has helped to disprove conventional wisdom of a unitary and undifferentiated peasantry in Sanyati agriculture as portrayed in the literature of certain scholars on rural development. Indeed, rural communities based on commodity production are not unchanging or static entities. They are fluid and dynamic societies and to say they are undifferentiated is to agree with disproved notions that: “Agriculture in the developing world will continue to limp and stumble as long as its backbone is the peasant [and that] everything is wrong with the peasant ...”<sup>1574</sup> The study challenges these theories and misconceptions about the

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<sup>1574</sup> C. M. Arensberg, “Upgrading Peasant Agriculture: Is Tradition the Snag?” *Columbia Journal of World*

peasantry as a whole and the Sanyati peasants in particular and argues that whilst the farmers were constrained by colonial legislation such as the NLHA and also by the lack of loans/credit and small plots some of them managed to become relatively wealthy or better off than others.

It has been noted in this study that resistance to state measures such as the NLHA was informed by rural farmers' own inclinations towards accumulation which were invariably compromised by such pieces of legislation. The study has shown that the "immigrant" farmers who took up plots at Gowe had earlier resisted forced eviction from Rhodesdale and the implementation of conservationist procedures such as destocking and contouring. Among them were also the most vociferous plotters who still embodied the culture of resistance since the Rhodesdale days. These frequently used the various official channels open to them to demand bigger irrigation plots. Sometimes they used informal methods to gain access to more land, for example, clandestine seizures of vacant plots, ploughing in areas designated for grazing and the invasion of estate land became commonplace features.

Cotton irrigation in Sanyati has produced very diverse and distinct forms of differentiation in the area. Literature on peasant cotton production in colonial Africa has demonstrated that wherever cotton was grown, it generated significant social inequalities. This has been confirmed by this study but it goes further to illustrate that irrigated cotton produced even greater disparities among irrigators themselves and between plotters and the rainland farmers. Irrigation was vital for the plotters in cases where the rains came late or during intermittent dry spells falling within the rainy season (i.e. intra-season dry spells). The opportunity of artificially applying water to crops during such dry spells during the growing season was not available to dryland peasants. Within the irrigation sector some plotters were deprived of access to irrigation water due to unresolved farming offences. They also suffered from inadequate capital and lacked other resources to produce at an optimal level. Invariably, they became poor. The main beneficiaries of the cotton programme in ARDA's schemes were the resource-rich peasants of "immigrant" extraction who had ample access to essential productive resources, the Estate and of course the state. The estate was actually developed more with the interests of the state in mind than of the Gowe tenants.

Various scholars have documented how differentiation has emerged in many peasant economies emphasising the importance of land and labour as its major determinants in the dryland, but this study argues that in the irrigation era the bases of differentiation became more diversified. An array of factors (not only confined to land and labour) ranging from the plotter's relationship with the Estate, the DC and his capital base which was also a function of his ability to meet land rent and water rate obligations among other irrigation-related charges increasingly became important bases of differentiation. Plotters paid water rates and some nominal charges as part of their contribution towards maintenance costs whereas development costs were paid for through subsidies. Subsidies were justified on the grounds that government viewed schemes situated in the communal areas as entities that were socially desirable for food security

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*Business*, 2(1), (January/February 1967), 63.

and employment creation but lacking the financial potential to enable farmers to finance capital development, operation and maintenance costs. The literature assumes that these factors are insignificant causes of differentiation, but this study demonstrates that inability to pay these charges incapacitated many less-to-do irrigators. Conversely, ability to pay enhanced the richer farmers' march towards greater production hence the intensification of income gaps between the two categories of farmers.

On the whole, however, increasing irrigation charges affected the economic potential and welfare of farmers who were allocated small plots with restricted crop choice. This study suggests that the increase in irrigation charges affected farmers with smaller plots more adversely since their total net incomes were low. This reinforced farmer tendencies to rely on dryland cultivation because it promised more security and no such charges. Because under the ARDA system plottolders could not decide what to grow and how to grow it on those small plots this lack of choice and participation in decision-making weakened their position at the same time as it strengthened that of the estate. Therefore, progress was sluggish for Gowe farmers who had small plots as their absolute incomes were also low. In a number of instances as illustrated in chapter five this handicap forced farmers to periodically relinquish their plots in preference for dryland or other non-irrigation activities. For the majority of the Gowe tenants, however, participation in large-scale cotton growing was constrained by lack of adequate land, lack of sufficient productive resources, big enough loan packages and other agricultural support services, which were so generously availed to their white commercial counterparts by the government and agro-finance houses such as the AFC. This disadvantage on their part though did not completely derail the process of differentiation. Thus, while irrigation was riddled by many problems the forms of socio-economic differentiation it engendered in Sanyati are significant. Clearly, in the period after 1967 irrigation differentiated peasant farmers more than the system of agriculture in the 1930s and the early 1960s.

While it is acknowledged that differentiation is an age-old process and that it predated the irrigation era, the study has demonstrated that the introduction of both cotton and irrigation in the 1960s exacerbated socio-economic inequalities among the plotholding households and the dryland farming households in Sanyati. Differential access to inputs and other state provided resources such as extension advice led to the emergence of categories of rich and poor within the irrigation environment. Outside the ARDA schemes farmers were also differentiated into rich and poor, but in comparison it has been shown that irrigation farmers were better off than their dryland counterparts not only because they grew crops throughout the year but also because state assistance in relation to agricultural advice, inputs, tillage and transportation services was concentrated in the irrigated area more than in the rainland area.

Furthermore, this study has shown that crop yields achieved on the ARDA-Sanyati irrigation schemes were higher than those achieved by the surrounding dryland farmers. This is partly why the DC discouraged the dual ownership of dryland and irrigation holdings. For instance, the greater the area under dryland production managed by a plottolder the lower the irrigated crop yields on his/her plot. However, as highlighted in this study some resource-rich plottolders defied conventional wisdom by achieving good



yields even if they had one foot in irrigation and another in dryland. On the other hand, however, the study has also indicated that the sizes of plots allocated in Sanyati irrigation which ranged from 2 to 4 ha per holder did not always deter some enterprising irrigation ploholders who completely shunned dryland farming from doing well.

In addition, this study has explored the rather diverse interests between the core estate and its outgrower section and the various hardships and opportunities available to blacks under irrigation farming in the Gowe Settler Scheme and how all this generated inequalities between the two sectors (i.e. the estate representing the large-scale sector and Gowe the smallholder sector). Although the substantial commercial development of Zimbabwe's rural areas in general and Gowe in particular has been deemed to be of utmost importance and was to a large extent boosted during the cotton boom of the 1980s, success in this area still remains a pipe-dream given the multiplicity of problems besetting the smallholders. Both the DC Gatooma and TILCOR (ARDA's predecessor) were initially tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that Gowe became a self-sustaining enterprise. This was not to be as they became the major facilitators of the growers' exploitation and the entrenchment of settler hegemony in the whole of Sanyati. The estate did not exist for the settlers but the settlers were supposed to exist for the estate. In fact, as demonstrated in this study the ploholders were precluded from seeking any concessions which would give them more say in running their own scheme. This scenario was perpetuated by ARDA, which succeeded TILCOR at Independence. Smallholder farmers continued to experience enormous hardships. The size of their plots, contrary to expectation, was never fundamentally increased. In the majority of cases, the AFC (the major public-lending institution servicing all types of farmers after 1980), has either withdrawn or reduced its lending facilities partly due to loan recovery problems or escalating lending costs it was experiencing. These problems coupled with the unpalatability of the state or scheme management's decision to prohibit cattle rearing on the schemes – cattle for many regarded as a status symbol - always therefore found expression in the voluntary withdrawal from the scheme by some farmers in favour of either dryland communal or dryland small-scale commercial agriculture.

Even after Independence more government emphasis has been put on the development of the large-scale commercial farming sector to the detriment of smallholder irrigation. For example, development was more skewed in favour of the main Estate than Gowe, as the latter continued to be subordinated to the whims of the Main Estate in almost every respect. Clearly, the impact of irrigation at Gowe, if not in the whole country's communal lands, has been extremely minimal. Illustrating irrigation's impact with figures M. Rukuni laments the fact that smallholder irrigation covers a mere 5% of the total irrigated area in Zimbabwe, estimated at 150 000 ha.<sup>1575</sup> Similarly, J. Harvey reveals that the gross output from smallholder irrigation in the 1984/85 agricultural season was only 0,4% of the total agricultural produce.<sup>1576</sup> Under these circumstances, although irrigation

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<sup>1575</sup> Rukuni, "The Evolution of Smallholder Policy in Zimbabwe, 1928-1986." *Irrigation and Drainage Systems*, 2, (1988), 205 cited in Manzungu and Van der Zaag, "Continuity and Controversy in Smallholder Irrigation." *The Practice of Smallholder Irrigation*, 1.

<sup>1576</sup> J. Harvey, D. H. Potten and B. Schoppmann, "Rapid Rural Appraisal of Small Irrigation Schemes in Zimbabwe," *Agricultural Administration and Extension*, (1987), 143 cited in Manzungu and Van der Zaag, *The Practice of Smallholder Irrigation*, 1.

has tremendous developmental potential, it is unlikely to be a major source of agricultural production in Zimbabwe' rural areas, unless comprehensive policy changes are implemented at both state agency and governmental levels. Before that is done the disparities in production capacity and wealth between the core estate and the smallholder component will continue to exist if not widen.

One of this study's major contentions is that to a large extent smallholder irrigation benefited both the local and regional community, and to a lesser extent the national economy. The impact of smallholder irrigation (Gowe) obviously was minimal because of the small size of plots leased out to the irrigators by TILCOR or ARDA. In fact, complex projects like Gowe involving a great deal of administrative control and long-term involvement by the controlling agency (ARDA) were less likely to succeed than small schemes which require low levels of initial capital investment and provide maximum independence to the settlers (tenants). However, the impact of the Main Estate on the development not only of the surrounding community but also of the regional as well as the national economy cannot be underestimated. The impact of the major irrigation estate can be measured against the background that it was responsible for employment creation, provision of housing for its permanent workforce and development of a major irrigation-based growth point in the northwestern part of the country among other things. The Growth Point and the related services that it provides are the brainchild of the TILCOR-Estate irrigation idea which was adopted in the 1960s.

Indeed, there is no doubt that ARDA-Sanyati is contributing to the growth and development of the region it serves by providing employment and technical assistance especially to the Gowe farmers. In fact, ARDA's scheme at Sanyati is a good successful example of a "Growth Point." It serves to illustrate the ARDA strategy of integrated rural development. For example, developments in this area include a fully developed irrigation scheme with settlers and a town with basic commercial and industrial services. As already indicated, Sanyati Town was established as a growth point to be supported by the irrigation production from the scheme as well as dryland production of cotton from Sanyati and Gokwe communal lands. The town is well served with retail shops. Commercial services available at the centre include bakeries, butcheries, a Bata shoe shop, grinding mills, supermarkets and mini-markets, banks, garages and fuel stations. Industrial activity has also been developed on the growth point. Some of the industries that have been established there include a COTTCO ginnery, Grafax cotton depot and ginnery, brewery, fertiliser depot, transport firms and a GMB depot. Social services include a primary school and a clinic on the scheme, the Sanyati Baptist Mission School, the Sanyati Mission Hospital, a post office, beerhall, bottle stores, nightclubs, community hall and a police station in the vicinity of the scheme. However, the ARDA growth point could be offering all these services but original objectives will not be met until the government and other development agencies make a substantial additional effort to alleviate the plight of the less privileged African irrigator at Gowe who suffers from lack of land and capital to enhance his/her performance. The Government should also introduce an efficient and effective monitoring exercise to determine the successful operation and viability of schemes like Gowe and many others. Various monetary levies on the plottolders should take into account their capital base. It can be noted that the sound commercial farming sector

in Zimbabwe is, in contrast, a product of many years of effort and investment.<sup>1577</sup> If the same attention cannot be paid to the development of the small-scale irrigation sector, the government might as well permanently shelve plans to one day, hand over the management of rural irrigation schemes like Gowe to smallholder farmers (i.e. Irrigation Management Transfer/IMT).

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the State has a role to play in creating an environment conducive to enterprise development,<sup>1578</sup> but looking at both the colonial and post-colonial situation, as it affected the livelihoods of the people of Gowe, it is disconcerting to note that “the public sector” sometimes “lies at the core of the stagnation and decline in growth in Africa.”<sup>1579</sup> In this particular regard, therefore, since many operational strategies have been replicated in a number of ways, the manner in which Gowe has been operated, managed and developed illustrates more a case of continuity rather than change.

The major conclusion of this study is that irrigation agriculture precipitated wider forms of socio-economic differentiation than those found under dryland farming. This was partly due to irrigation’s capability to produce both a summer and a winter crop – a very remote possibility in the rain-fed area. It was also partly attributable to the cultivation of a range of cash generating crops such as cotton, wheat, green mealies and beans whereas the communal area farmers mainly depended on maize and cotton for cash. In particular, it has been argued that the decade 1980 to 1990 witnessed broader differentiation processes compared to the two earlier periods because of the cotton boom and the increase in the number of services availed to farmers at independence. As already noted more of these services, for example, credit and mechanical services were distributed on a more intensive though disproportionate basis in the outgrower schemes than in the dry farming area.

This study has further demonstrated that the rural commercialisation process associated with the post-independence cotton boom significantly widened the accumulation gap between plottolders. It also shows that cotton was not the only source of differentiation in Sanyati irrigation. A number of activities ranging from the cultivation of other crops apart from cotton, access to loan facilities and off-farm income made Sanyati farmers relatively wealthy. As demonstrated in this study Sanyati outgrowers were differentiated on the wide basis of (a) personal capacity; (b) political connections; (c) connections with the Estate management and (d) privileged access to vacant holdings, water, irrigation pipes, tillage and extension services. The economic and social status of the plotholder was, thus, determined by how he related to the Main Estate and the state. The relationship with the Estate, though, was a prescriptive one. For instance, a plotholder was told how to

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<sup>1577</sup> R. Whitlow, “Conflict in Land Use in Zimbabwe: Political, Economic and Environmental Perspectives.” *Land Use Policy*, 2(4), (October 1985), 322.

<sup>1578</sup> *Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Role of Enterprises in Development on its First Session*, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, (3 to 7 April 1995), 15.

<sup>1579</sup> World Bank, *Adjusting Africa: Reforms, Results and the Road Ahead*, (Oxford University Press for World Bank, 1994), 99, quoted in E. S. Pangeti, “The State and Manufacturing Industry: A Study of the State as Regulator and Entrepreneur in Zimbabwe, 1930 to 1990,” PhD thesis, Harare: University of Zimbabwe (UZ), December 1995, 1.

irrigate his crops. He would plant, weed and harvest when told to do so. Refusal to obey these instructions was perceived as lack of discipline and co-operation on the part of the tenant and it entailed removal from the scheme.

The study has pointed out that one of the government objectives for establishing Gowe was to use it to achieve sustainable production. However, attempting to achieve sustainable production on the basis of limited access to land and other services such as finance was contradictory. Indeed, insufficient land and finance impeded plotholder progress. The ARDA Settlement Officer only recommended for new loans those farmers who had a proven repayment record. The so-called strugglers often found themselves without financial support. Differentiation was, therefore, enhanced by the selective practice of agricultural extension, whose agents limited credit to those who followed “approved farming practices.” Selectivity of this nature meant one particular class of farmers became more affluent than the other hence the inappropriateness of the term egalitarian classlessness for Sanyati. Thus, although notions of an undifferentiated peasantry abound these do not apply to Sanyati.

The study has also discussed the impact of the liberation struggle (Chimurenga II) on ARDA irrigation. By and large the struggle militated against labour supply for the irrigation schemes as people who provided the bulk of casual labour lived in the surrounding communal areas where a wartime curfew had been imposed. They were not allowed to move out of the keeps (protected villages)<sup>1580</sup> set up by the colonial government before 8 o’clock in the morning and they were required back by 3 o’clock in the afternoon. The curfew was designed to restrict movement of people at certain times and therefore help the white settler forces to monitor the movement of the fighters or guerrillas. However, this adversely affected the ARDA Main Estate because during peak seasons it required labour from as early as 6 o’clock in the morning. Casual labour was often given a target for a task to be accomplished within a stipulated time. Thus, during the war the parastatal’s operations were hindered by the supply of labour which was no longer determined by the estate but by wartime needs. For both the core estate and the smallholder irrigation scheme the general atmosphere of insecurity did not promote production, but for some time arrested differentiation.

This study has shown how significantly the agricultural boom of the 1980s contributed to heightened forms of socio-economic inequalities by demonstrating that the end of the war ushered in an era of prosperity for some peasant irrigators. Others remained in the doldrums of this same prosperity. Outgrower disenchantment with policies that harmed and proscribed their accumulation prospects in this period became very pronounced. The farmers were agitated not only by lease arrangements that deprived them of land ownership but also by other injustices that continually tied them to the Estate. Demands on their labour did not take into account the fact that they also had plots to attend to. Thus, the plotholders clearly laboured under very serious handicaps as they were exploited by the Estate and this lowered their moral.

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<sup>1580</sup> One such village had been established near Sanyati Bridge not far away from the two ARDA irrigation schemes.

Despite the problems experienced by the tenants the relative advantages they derived from independence and the boom period that ensued were considerable. A sizeable number became rich. Proceeds from selling cotton, beans and other crops had a positive effect on their standard of living. However, irrigation did not bestow equal opportunities on the tenants. Some benefited more than others from their participation in this enterprise. Because ARDA still wanted the settler scheme to act as their exclusive labour reservoir it can be concluded that their action was designed to maintain it as such and proscribe the emergence of differentiation. Obviously, accumulation militated against labour supply, but the various tactics employed by outgrowers to challenge Estate authority meant that their march towards accumulation could not be hindered. The post-independence era, therefore, unleashed a flurry of activities that aided accumulation and widened the differential gap between irrigation farmers. In fact, with the cotton boom differentiation as a process transcended any proportions ever witnessed in Sanyati since the 1960s.

In chapter six this study has demonstrated that in Sanyati socio-economic disparities among the dryland and irrigation farmers were intensified by ESAP and a spate of horrendous droughts. The low prices and lack of agricultural markets during ESAP hampered both cotton commodity production and the differentiation process that had gathered so much momentum in the preceding years, but a few plotholders and dryland farmers emerged from ESAP relatively unscathed. Overall, the resource-rich peasants were not as seriously affected as their poorer counterparts.

Although the objective on the part of the IMF and the WB during structural adjustment was to curb state intervention in the economy this study has argued that the state still had a role to play in the development of the country. The period 1980 to 1990 bears testimony to this as it marked arguably the most successful period in the history of state intervention in agriculture in Zimbabwe as the cotton boom benefited many peasants. The study also argues that from 1991 to 2000 when the role of the state was limited by ESAP and post-ESAP policies small-scale agriculture was adversely affected. There were no signs of prosperity for the majority of farmers save for the few well-to-do small-scale irrigators that emerged at that time. The large-scale commercial farmers were the only ones who were not severely crippled by the programme.

The study has also illustrated that the considerable benefits the Gowe tenants had derived from the cotton boom were virtually eroded over night with the advent of ESAP and the related socio-economic and political problems it unleashed. The general standard of living was lowered as cotton was no longer as remunerative as before. Differentiation, which was often spearheaded by the cultivation of cotton, became a rather insignificant process in this period. Thus, between 1991 and 2000 other socio-economic and political developments were more important than differentiation.

The position of women in Sanyati irrigation has always been a precarious one. The colonial government argued that the participation of women in irrigation enterprise was encouraged. In fact, the former DC for Gatooma asserted that female plotters were considered for land allocation at the Gowe Smallholder Irrigation Scheme. However, this study takes issue

with this argument. The fact that at the beginning of irrigation in Sanyati (1967) there was only one female plotholder shows that the selection criteria was discriminatory as it disadvantaged women. As seen in this study minors and women in particular single women were not given the right to farm in the rural areas. Married women could only acquire land through inheritance.

The study has illustrated in chapter six how the burgeoning economic crisis in the 1990s contributed to cotton suicides by aggrieved spouses of both dryland and irrigation farmers. Money that was not delivered home after selling cotton led to divorce or suicides. Cotton suicides afflicted male-headed households more than female-headed ones. This was partly so because there were few female-headed households in Sanyati irrigation and partly because such households were fewer in both irrigated and dryland agriculture because of the colonial tenure system which did not openly promote the ownership of land by women. Women were often categorised as minors who had no right to land. Although women were the major tillers of the land they were not only disadvantaged by not being allocated land but they also hardly accessed extension advice and loans to purchase farm inputs. Women in male-headed irrigation and dryland households were the main victims of cotton suicides because they lacked independence on the holding and sometimes their men did not share the cotton money with them. It was extravagantly spent on beer and other women. This caused women who had not been allocated land in their own right to despair and commit suicide. In government smallholder schemes like Gowe, women are thus disadvantaged because land “ownership” is largely vested in male household heads by the ARDA lease agreement.

However, the situation is gradually changing. Women are increasingly allocated land, and more women now hold plots at Gowe compared to the DC’s time although the number of female plotholders (i.e. 6 out of 36) is still small. The study, therefore, argues that because of the general failure to access land women are among the poorest irrigators. Their poverty relative to the whole group of irrigators in Sanyati is reinforced by the tenure system (i.e. lease agreement), which has not been fundamentally amended to grant more land rights to women. Their male counterparts were in a much stronger position in that land and other resources such as loans were disproportionately allocated in their favour. On this basis the study thus concludes that the ability to command resources primarily differentiates Sanyati male and female peasants.

On the whole, the study has highlighted problems or misunderstandings between farmers, Estate management, the state agency (ARDA) and the government. These problems most of which are centred on a lease arrangement that has not been amended for very long need urgent redress if ARDA irrigation in Sanyati is to succeed. The productive performance of both the Main Irrigation Estate and the smallholder scheme at Gowe can be boosted if the unnecessary bickering between the major players were eliminated. Such an approach would be instrumental in the attainment of sustained irrigation development as well as raising levels of differentiation to much greater heights in the frontier region of Gowe-Sanyati. In this study, therefore, discussion of Sanyati agriculture in the pre-and post-irrigation periods essentially provides an opportunity to explore, in a comparative

manner, how development and differentiation processes have progressed both in the colonial as well as the independence contexts.