



THE MIGRATION-LIVELIHOODS NEXUS: EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES, EMERGING CHALLENGES IN RURAL ZIMBABWE

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Since 2000, when white-owned land was redistributed to indigenous blacks under a Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP), issues such as financial and political crises, hyperinflation, unemployment, international sanctions, and political animosity between two major political parties are affecting migration patterns in Zimbabwe. Theoretically, FTLRP would have enabled the agrarian nation's previously disadvantaged blacks to improve their livelihoods through agricultural activities. However, areas that have been resettled under the FTLRP, such as the Sangwe farm, are now experiencing an increase in migration. Rooted in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and drawing from in-depth interviews, this paper explores how migration has impacted the livelihoods of households on this farm. The argument is that while problems such as loss of labor, brain-drain, cultural disruption, and gender issues have emerged, migration has also created opportunities for the rural community. These opportunities include remittances, the acquisition of affordable farm and non-farm assets outside the country, access to much-needed foreign currency to purchase inputs, and the acquisition of knowledge on the production of plants that were not common in the lowveld.

Keywords: *Challenges, livelihoods, migration, opportunities, Zimbabwe*

Introduction

Because of its close link to human survival strategies, migration is one of the oldest phenomena in human history. The pursuit of livelihood opportunities motivates humanity to migrate. Migration is also linked to other categories of human security,





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namely political, socio-economic, environmental, health, community, and personal.¹ As a result, it has become one of the issues currently dominating the international development agenda. In developing countries, where industrial and economic development remains slow, migration produces long-term solutions to poverty and dependence on the state, particularly in rural areas. Consequently, numerous recent development interventions focused on how to ensure the safe, regular, and well-managed movement of people, in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Empirical evidence shows that some people would not have chosen to migrate had it not been for their need to meet basic standards of living (food, education, medical care, or clothing).²

In a country like Zimbabwe, where about 47 percent of the population is undernourished,³ increased human flows are explained by financial challenges (hyperinflation and unemployment) and political instability. Migration, which is no longer confined within the country's borders, has taken on an international character, with both rural and urban dwellers crossing borders to make a living. This migration has generated various opportunities alongside a number of economic challenges for the country.⁴ This article seeks to understand whether farms that were acquired for livelihood development under the government's Fast Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP) are similarly affected by migration. We (1) explore how migration has impacted the livelihoods of A1 households (Zimbabwe's smallholder farmer category), (2) identify the opportunities for and constraints on livelihoods development through migration patterns on the farm, and (3) put forward context-specific recommendations.

The article focuses on the Sangwe farm, which is one of the A1 farms that were acquired under the FTLRP. Through the program, both peasants and the state could reclaim lands that were previously controlled by white monopoly capital. The government program was developed because of the country's increasing poverty level. In fact, 60 percent of Zimbabwe's population, most of them black, lived on less than a dollar in the 1990s,⁵ and 75 percent of the population could no longer afford

1 Ana Devon, "Human security concept in political and academic circles," *Technical Journal* 8, no. 3 (2014): 309-313; Des Gasper, "The Idea of Human Security," in *Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security*, eds. Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 23-46.

2 Clayton Hazvinei Vhumbunu, "Boosting food security and restoring local food systems in Zimbabwe through Staple Crops Processing Zones (SCPZs): A prescriptive approach." Paper presented at the Symposium on 'Food Security, Migration and Innovation in Senegal and Zimbabwe: Lessons for Africa,' (Dakar, June 2019); Susan Fratzke and Brain Salant, "Understanding the impact of livelihood opportunities and interventions on migration patterns" (UK: Department for International Development, 2018).

3 Vhumbunu, "Boosting food security."

4 Ibid.

5 Sam Moyo, "The Land Question in Zimbabwe" (Harare: SAPES Trust, 1995).



basic food items during the same period.⁶ Before the FTLRP was implemented, a total of 11.8 million hectares of land was owned by a few large-scale commercial farmers producing for export, while over 70 percent of the indigenous population scrambled on 16.4 million hectares, most of which located in the dry lowveld region of the country.⁷ By October 2003, the FTLRP had replaced a problematic bi-modal system with an expanded tri-modal system which included about 150,000 A1 land beneficiaries and 20,000 middle-to-large-scale A2 farmers operating alongside agro-industrial estates.⁸ By the time the program was completed, land ownership by the large-scale commercial sector had reduced from 30 percent to 12 percent, and the small-scale agricultural sector had expanded from 54 percent to 71 percent.⁹

In Sangwe, unlike in most nearby farms in the Chiredzi district where the recuperation of lands was led by war veterans,¹⁰ the Gudo local community led the reclamation efforts on the basis of a long-standing dispute with Mr. Otterson. Mr. Otterson was a white commercial farmer whose Wildlife Conservancy had fenced off the indigenous people's traditional sacred sites (used for circumcision and rain rituals), the burial site of traditional leaders, as well as a sacred pool which provided fish as a supplementary source of food.¹¹ However, just like other farms across the country,¹² the Sangwe is now experiencing outward migration, which raises questions about the sustainability of household livelihoods on the farm. Some – mostly Westerners – have already argued that the FTLRP was an economic disaster which produced unplanned migration because of farmers' declining livelihoods.¹³

The following section discusses the nexus between migration and sustainable livelihoods. In the third section, the article focuses on the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) as an important approach for understanding the

6 Gregory Elich, "Zimbabwe under siege" (African Business, 2002).

7 Raymond Wuta Mugandani, Amos Makarau, and Bryen Chipindu, "Re-classification of agro-ecological regions of Zimbabwe in conformity with climate variability and change," *African Crop Science Journal* 20, no. 2 (2012): 361-369.

8 Sam Moyo, "Changing agrarian relations after redistributive land reform in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38, no. 5 (2011): 939-966.

9 Government of Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform Program* (Harare, 2001).

10 Emmanuel Ndhlovu, "Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Program," *Africa Insight* 47, no. 4 (2018): 72-87.

11 Ibid.

12 Newman Tekwa and Jimi Adesina, "Gender, Poverty and Inequality in the Aftermath of Zimbabwe's Land Reform:

A Transformative Social Policy Perspective," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 19, no. 5 (2018): 45-62.

13 Medicine Masiwa and Lovemore Chipungu, "Land Reform Program in Zimbabwe: Disparity between Policy Design and Implementation," in *Post-Independence Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Controversies and Impact in the Economy*, ed. Masiwa M. (Harare: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Institute of Development Studies, University of Zimbabwe, 2004); Brain Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister, "Zimbabwe Now: The Political Economy of Crisis and Coercion," *Historical Materialism* 12, no. 4, (2004): 355-82.

impact of migration on the Sangwe farm's household livelihoods. The fourth section presents the methodology of the study; the fifth section describes the results. The last section proposes policy recommendations.

Examining the Migration-Livelihoods Nexus

The literature on the migration-livelihoods nexus has grown in the past decade,¹⁴ and academics and practitioners now agree that livelihood matters should be part of the migration and development agenda.¹⁵ If livelihood opportunities are not secured, development is impossible. Today, there are numerous features to the migration-livelihoods nexus that are accepted by the academic community. These have become standard approaches for practitioners, donor agencies, and policy institutions seeking to address how migration is linked to livelihood development. For instance, most agree that people would not migrate if their needs and wants had been met in their country or place of birth; these include proper medical care, education, clothing, shelter, and so on. Thus, migration possibly allows for people to fulfill these needs and wants elsewhere.

Literature suggests that migration is a widespread and acceptable part of existence.¹⁶ According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),¹⁷ migration contributes to the development of today's societies, and, thus, is an acceptable part of our shared history as it acts as a livelihood broadening strategy. Although an increasing number of migrants leave their homes due to conflicts, especially in Africa, the majority are pursuing better livelihood opportunities. Crush notes that many people today migrate to study, to find work, and to support their family members back home.¹⁸ Gasper suggests that migrants are sustainable livelihood development agents, as they send remittances back home which allow for their family members to either meet or improve their needs (whether financial, physical, social, human, or natural).¹⁹ Remittances enable family members to buy food (financial), buy property and farm equipment (physical), participate in social events (social), access education and medical care (human), and acquire resources such

14 Alexander Betts, *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013); FAO, *Migration, agriculture and rural development. Addressing the root causes of migration and harnessing its potential for development* (FAO: Rome, 2016); Asma Seemi Malik, "Rural urban migration; socio-cultural changes in Pakistan- preventive measures taken by government and civil society to control it," *Professional Med J* 22, no. 6 (2015): 674-682.

15 Jonathan Crush, *Linking migration, food security and development* (Cape Town: Southern African Migration Program, 2012).

16 Malik, "Rural urban migration."

17 FAO, *The linkages between migration, agriculture, food security and rural development* (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2018).

18 Crush, *Linking migration, food security and development*.

19 Gasper, "The Idea of Human Security."

as land and water (natural). An increasing body of literature also points out that while conflict or lack of protection²⁰ can create a desire to migrate, it is usually the 'greener pastures' (better livelihood opportunities) argument that acts as a trigger.²¹ According to Zickgraf et al., the socio-economic position of an individual as well as their resilience capabilities determine their migration aspirations and patterns.²²

The FAO reports that more than 75 percent of the people who are food insecure across the world and whose livelihoods need urgent attention often live in rural areas and rely on rainfed agricultural activities.²³ Estruch, Schwebel, Suttie, and Hussein argue that conflicts, violence, and natural disasters drive migration and increase food insecurity.²⁴ However, many migrants, particularly from rural areas, are also forced to move due to factors that hamper livelihood development. In the absence of alternate strategies (i.e. credit, training, or financial services) that could improve livelihood and farming practices, people in rural areas migrate because of poverty and food insecurity. Lack of employment and other income-generating opportunities also result in migration from rural areas; this echoes the neoclassical theory's argument that migration (rural-to-urban) is a result of income inequalities between rural and urban areas and that should full employment be achieved, migration would cease.²⁵ Furthermore, inequalities between rural and urban areas in terms of basic services (health, education, and social protection) force rural community members to migrate in search of these services as they find it tough to manage risks (social, economic and environmental) within their own settings. Environmentally, extreme adverse weather conditions expose rural dwellers to increased livelihood challenges and motivate them to migrate.

The neoclassical theory was later supplemented by the human capital theory, which revealed the importance of individual preferences in migration decisions. Classical scholars such as Lewis postulate that in the context of similar average income between origin and destination countries, people may show different

20 FAO, "Migration, agriculture and rural development."

21 Catalina Herrera and David Sahn, "Determinants of internal migration among Senegalese youth," Social Science Research Network (SSRN Scholarly Paper; No. ID 2229584) (2013); Maria Hernández-Carretero and Jorgen Carling, "Beyond 'Kamikaze Migrants': Risk Taking in West African Boat Migration to Europe," *Human Organization* 71, no. 4 (2012): 407-416.

22 Caroline Zickgraf, Sara Vigil, Florence de Longueville, Pierre Ozer, and Francois Gemenne, "The Impact of Vulnerability and Resilience to Environmental Changes on Mobility Patterns in West Africa" (KNOMAD Working Paper 14, 2016).

23 FAO, "Migration, agriculture and rural development."

24 Elisenda Estruch, David Schwebel, David Suttie and Kathmandu Hussein, "Dynamic rural-urban linkages for decent rural employment" (FAO: Rome, 2017).

25 Allna De Brauw, Valerie Mueller, and Hak Lim Lee, "The Role of Rural-Urban Migration in the Structural Transformation of Sub-Saharan Africa," *World Development* 63 (2014): 33-42.

migration tendencies depending on education, skills, experience, and occupation.²⁶ This argument is extended in the expectancy value approach²⁷ as well as the planned behavior theory,²⁸ which argues that movement is the result of a decision process based on an individual's assessment (through expectations, values, and rules) of alternate locations.

Conventional interpretations of the link between migration and livelihood focus on the impact of migration on places of origin,²⁹ as well as on destination places in terms of livelihoods.³⁰ In the context of the places of origin, opportunities associated with migration include pressure alleviation or reduction on local labor markets, prospects of higher wages in agriculture, the emergence of female household heads who are empowered and are likely to prioritize food crop production, education, and health.³¹ The remittances sent home by migrants can potentially act as safety nets, relax liquidity restraints that exist in rural credit, and provide financial protection in the face of dysfunctional insurance markets.³² Remittances can generate investment in agriculture and other rural economic activities that have positive outcomes on livelihood. Migration also facilitates skill and technology transfer and can also create social networks beneficial for rural livelihood outcomes.³³

Regarding challenges in places of origin, scholars agree that migration often results in the loss of a younger, dynamic, and productive workforce whose agricultural labor is crucial for livelihood development.³⁴ Migration also contributes to brain drain, where vital skills and knowledge leave a community to develop in other areas.³⁵ Migration also leads to the emergence of default female household headship. According to Carvalho et al., it is usually the men who are first to leave,

26 Arthur W Lewis, "Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour," *The Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies* 22, no. 2 (1954): 139-191.

27 Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Belief, attitude, intention, and behaviour: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading (USA: Addison-Wesley, 1975).

28 Icek Ajzen, *Attitudes, personality, and behaviour* (Chicago, USA: Dorsey Press, 1988).

29 Betts, *Survival Migration*.

30 Allna De Brauw, Valerie Mueller, and Hak Lim Lee, "The Role of Rural-Urban Migration."

31 FAO, "Migration, agriculture and rural development."

32 Malik, "Rural urban migration."

33 Anna Knoll and Andrew Sherriff, "Making Waves: Implications of the irregular migration and refugee situation on Official Development Assistance spending and practices in Europe. A study of recent developments in EU institutions, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden" (Brussels: European Centre for Development Policy Management, 2017)

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

thereby leaving women to be default heads of households.³⁶ Consequently, household livelihoods are threatened as most women, particularly those located in the patriarchal countryside, unfortunately lack the resources to make productive investment and improve on or sustain livelihoods. Migration can also generate a culture of over-dependence on remittances to the detriment of local productive livelihood systems.³⁷

According to the FAO, the international community must recognize the potential of agriculture and rural development for reducing human flows as well as the potential for migration flows to impact agriculture and rural development.³⁸ The FAO believes that intervention must focus on agricultural activities; the development of rural areas of origin; the building of displaced people's resilience (crisis context); the prevention of conflict; and the promotion of stability, safe migration (non-crisis), and the development potential of migration for food and nutrition security (remittances, skills, diaspora investment, and so forth).

Academic literature also informs us that migration and remittances do not necessarily represent solutions to agricultural transformation and to the much-needed livelihood development of the countryside.³⁹ Additionally, some scholars argued that policies designed for livelihood development have had minimal success in reducing either rural-urban or international migration⁴⁰ and that economic development can actually increase migration when a certain economic threshold is reached.⁴¹

In the context of A1 farms in Zimbabwe, the public generally perceives that migration resulted in stunted livelihood development. Accordingly, the 'new dispensation' government regime, which emerged on November 24, 2017, encouraged citizens to come back home and contribute to various aspects of this area, from the agricultural sector to nation-building. Government policies, such as the 'Zimbabwe is Open for Business' mantra, also attempted to lure foreign direct investment towards the country's agricultural sector. As mentioned above, many believe that a lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas significantly contributed to migration. Presumably, if citizens were to come back, much of the challenges (including food insecurity) could be resolved. This assumption, however, ignores the fact that although migration presents various challenges, it also offers attractive livelihood opportunities for those resettled A1 households, such as in the lowveld, where low amounts of annual rainfall as well as high temperatures continue to

36 Ana Carvalho, Ulrich Schiefer, and Stephan Dünwald, "African peasants on the move: Turmoil between global dynamics, migration and food insecurity," *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* 29 (2015).

37 Knoll and Sherriff, "Making Waves."

38 FAO, "Migration, agriculture and rural development."

39 Betts, *Survival Migration*; De Brauw, Mueller, and Lee, "The Role of Rural-Urban Migration."

40 FAO, "Migration, agriculture and rural development."

41 OECD, *Perspectives on Global Development 2016. International Migration in a Shifting World* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017).



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undermine households' efforts to develop their livelihood activities around agricultural activities. Literature focusing on the district Chiredzi shows that harsh agro-ecological conditions have encouraged citizens to adopt non-farming activities, conducted both within and outside the district as a way of supplementing household livelihoods.⁴² Migration has been one of the off-farm livelihood development strategies deployed by A1 households in the district. This study uses the SLF to understand the impact of migration on household livelihoods on the Sangwe farm.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)

The SLF is defined by Conway as the capacity of a system (a communal system, for instance) to be resilient and to be able to preserve its production or survival levels regardless of the level of disturbance it might have experienced.⁴³ In order to withstand the shock or disturbance, the system needs to be resilient rather than sensitive.⁴⁴ The 'resilience' aspect of the SLF refers to the capacity of a livelihood structure to 'bounce back' from disturbances (one example, in this case, would be unplanned migration from areas reclaimed under the FTLRP, such as the Sangwe), while sensitivity refers to the extent to which a system can endure antagonistic conditions.⁴⁵

Numerous early cross-disciplinary studies focusing on farming systems⁴⁶ as well as household and village studies influenced the SLF. However, the term 'sustainable livelihoods' was popularized in the 1990s.⁴⁷ The need for poverty reduction and practices that would guarantee human welfare, including food

42 Joseph Chaumba, "Opportunities for and Constraints on crop Production within Zimbabwe's fast track Resettlement Program: A Case Study of Fair Range Estate, Chiredzi District, South-Eastern Zimbabwe" (unpublished Masters of Philosophy Thesis, University of Western Cape); Hilda Muregerera, "The importance of communal rangelands: A case study of three districts in Zimbabwe" (unpublished PhD diss., Fort Hare University, 2009); Ndhlovu, "Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach."

43 Gordon Conway, "The properties of agro-ecosystems," *Agricultural Systems* 24 (1987): 95-117.

44 Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts of the 21st century" (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1992);

45 Nathan Bennett, "Sustainable livelihoods from theory to conservation practice: An extended annotated bibliography for prospective application of livelihoods thinking in protected area community research," *Protected Area and Poverty Reduction Alliance*, Working Paper (2010).

46 Norman Long, *Family and work in rural societies: Perspectives on non-wage labour* (London and New York: Tavistock, 1984); Joyce Mook, *Understanding Africa's rural households and farming systems* (Boulder: West View Press, 1986).

47 Bennett, "Sustainable livelihoods."



security, brought attention to livelihood frameworks.⁴⁸ A number of studies and reports by policy institutions and scholars shaped the canvas from which livelihoods approaches developed.⁴⁹ Firstly, people-centered approaches emerged in response to the inadequacy of the top-down, bureaucratic, and market-oriented approaches that defined development from the 1950s to the 1970s.⁵⁰ Arce argues that the SLF was established because policymakers and analysts considered the state to be ineffective in engendering development when compared to markets.⁵¹ Secondly, the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations' Brundtland Report entitled *Our Common Future* (1987) provided a guideline for a people-centered, bottom-up development approach. From the report emerged the concept of 'sustainability,' a crucial term that continues to dominate the rural development discourse.

Although the origins of the SLF are found in the Brundtland Report and in Robert Chambers' collaborative works with Conway, the framework actually stemmed from previous studies that explored the differential capacity of rural folks to endure crisis (floods, droughts, pest outbreaks, and diseases).⁵² In fact, Hussein notes that people-centered development values, which are now part of the SLF, had been deployed in action operations (particularly food security interventions) by institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.⁵³ Singh and Gilman claim that food security was at the center of livelihoods mechanisms long before the concept was formalized.⁵⁴ Chambers and Conway, however, are reputable for their construction of a development thinking framework that placed sustainable livelihood within an actor-oriented approach of development.⁵⁵ Their framework was both normative and practical⁵⁶ and could be applied wherever the welfare of the poor was prioritized.

48 Conway, "The properties of agro-ecosystems"; Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods"; Bennett, "Sustainable livelihoods."

49 Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods"; Gordon Conway, "The properties of agro-ecosystems"; The Institute of Development Studies, *Assessment of development results: Evaluation of UNDP contribution, Botswana* (United Nations Development Program, 2009).

50 Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods."

51 Albeto Arce, "Value contestations in development interventions: Community development and sustainable livelihoods approaches," *Community Development Journal* 38, no. 3 (2003): 199-212.

52 Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods."

53 Kathmandu Hussein, "Livelihood approaches compared: A multi-agency review of current practice" (London: DFID, 2002).

54 Naresh Singh and Jonathan Gilman, "Making livelihoods more sustainable," *International Social Science Journal* 162 (1999): 539-542.

55 Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable rural livelihoods."

56 Bennett, "Sustainable livelihoods."



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The idea behind the SLF is to support the relations between various livelihood aspects so that households can benefit from their effect when interlinked and when in unison. These aspects include the assets owned by households and the activities which allow households to maintain an acceptable living standard and to withstand the factors that assist or hamper their acquisition of assets and services. This framework is, therefore, more important in the livelihood discourse than it is in any other field. Hence, Farrington writes: “A livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household.”⁵⁷ Importantly, the subject of the SLF is always the household. This article focuses on how households have been impacted by migration.

For livelihoods to be sustainable, living standards must be improved. The disastrous effects of turbulences, such as unplanned migration, must also be mitigated. This can be achieved through asset base creation. How, then, has migration impacted the assets of households? In this article, these asset categories are related to the five capitals of the SLF, namely the physical, financial, natural, human, and social capitals.⁵⁸ Since the production of A1 farming is usually directed to household consumption (although surplus might be sold), the SLF provides much help to our understanding of the livelihood status of the Sangwe households.

Research Method

Data was collected between October 2016 and February 2017 from a sample of 72 households. The total population slightly exceeds 215. The study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. Because of its in-depth nature, only qualitative data will be presented in this article. To fill the gap created by the exclusion of quantitative data, supplementary *ad hoc* interviews with key informants were conducted between February and March 2019. The aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of migration on the livelihoods of the Sangwe households. The various opportunities and challenges resulting from migration were identified, evaluated, and analyzed. Data was categorized using the SLF and is summarized in the next section. Permission to conduct the study was given by communal leadership institutions as well as by the participant A1 households on the farm.

Data Presentation

This section presents the findings of the study. Divided according to the five capital categories described in the SLF, the data exemplifies the opportunities and challenges of migration for the A1 households of Sangwe, resettled under the FTLRP.

57 John Farrington, “Sustainable livelihoods, rights and the new architecture of AID,” *Natural Resource Perspectives* 69 (2001): 10.

58 Ndhlovu, “Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach.”



Human capital

Human capital includes the health (physical or mental), skills, and knowledge, which allow A1 households to develop or sustain their livelihoods either through farming or other non-farming activities.⁵⁹ Participants revealed that migration, both internal (within the country) and external, enabled household members to acquire new knowledge, such as the production of plants (beetroots and potatoes, *madhumbé* or yams) that are not common in the lowveld. Participants often chose to grow these crops around their wells, where the crops could be watered by the wasted water. Almost every households had these crops; an indication of knowledge sharing that has the potential to improve livelihoods on the farm. It was revealed that both educated, and less educated members migrated from the farm, particularly towards South Africa, in search of off-farm livelihood opportunities.

However, migration can have a negative impact on the human capital of areas of origin.⁶⁰ This negative impact is greater if the area of origin engages in labor intensive activities, such as agricultural activities, as is the case on the Sangwe farm. On the Sangwe, participants complained about the loss of younger, dynamic, and productive community members whose labor was crucial for agricultural production. Most of the participants headed households on behalf of children or relatives who migrated for employment or other activities. Participants were generally older, with the majority ranging from the age of 61 to 70. Considering the importance of human labor in subsistence farming on this A1 farm, this situation was detrimental to livelihood development. Moreover, mainly male members are migrating, creating cultural and family disruption within this traditional Shangane-dominated community. Increased unpaid female labor that is meant to subsidize the social reproduction of male labor-power in towns represents challenges not only for individual household livelihoods, but also for the rural economy. In this context, instability and political conflicts are likely to arise. Migration can thus become an obstacle for families that rely on subsistence farming, since human labor is critical for ploughing, weeding, harvesting crops, and looking after the livestock and flocks. In an agro-ecological dry area like the Sangwe, where all members are expected to engage in some form of livelihood development activity, the departure of the household's able-bodied members becomes a real challenge.

Natural capital

Natural capital consists of natural goods (land, soils, geology, air, water, and all living organisms). Natural capital is crucial to the success of A1 farming as it provides households with free services and goods, also referred to as ecosystem services. Land (and what can be produced on it) is vital to sustainable livelihoods, particularly for rural households. Because land can also be offered as collateral for loans, which

59 Ibid.

60 Knoll and Sherriff, "Making Waves."



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provide households with financial capital, the land value extends beyond its direct use in productive activities. Importantly, all the households interviewed owned their land under the A1 model.

According to the agro-ecological classifications of Zimbabwe, the Chiredzi district, in which the Sangwe farm is located, belongs to Region V. The region is characterized by low rainfall, poor soils with low agricultural potential, and high temperatures.⁶¹ Annual rainfall ranges from 450mm to 650mm per year, and the climate is commonly classified as hot and dry. Consequently, where irrigation systems are not used, crop production is not sustainable. Livelihood diversity in the region is highly limited by these conditions, and migration has emerged as one of the strategies adopted by the population to respond to the challenge. One participant mentioned:

*This place is problematic. It is difficult to make a harvest. It is a dry place without water. Without irrigation, we will all leave quietly one-by-one because we cannot die as we watch.*⁶²

Because of the absence of family members, less pressure is put on fertile soil, and less water is consumed. With smaller families to feed, crop spacing was increased to reduce competition for water and nutrients. The elderly family members also had more freedom to grow sorghum and *rapoko*, which are disregarded by other members of the family due to their taste and color but nevertheless are drought resistant. This guarantees that the household is always properly fed. Surplus sorghum was sold at the Grain Marketing Board for extra financial capital. Participants also indicated that the farming of smaller lands ensured that enough grazing land was left for livestock, which improved households' livelihoods.

In the absence of competition, participants also harvested *mopani* worms from the forest. The worms are eaten, and surpluses are sent to family members in towns and cities to sell, which brings extra revenue for the households. However, although migration reduced pressure on natural capital, recurrent droughts in the areas remain a challenge for food security.

Financial capital

Financial capital refers to the savings, loans, and credit that Sangwe's A1 households have access to. As a result of the current financial and political crisis, numerous community members are either in town or out of the country to pursue economic activities and build their financial capital. This peculiar situation mirrors that of the whole country, where the magnitude of migration has increased since the beginning of the 2000s. On the Sangwe farm, where almost every A1 household had an

61 Mugandani, Makarau, and Chipindu, "Re-classification of agro-ecological regions."
62 Participant, 05/11/2016.



average of two members away from home,⁶³ remittances became the most crucial capital used to meet household livelihood requirements. One participant reported that:

*The entire national reels today under currency shortages, and we do not know when and how it will end. Our family members in South Africa give us help beyond finance. Most people of this area migrate to South Africa. Besides cash, they also send food stuff (cooking oil, canned foods, rice, etc.) as it is either hard or crazy expensive to get most of the food items in the country at the moment. We also use the cash to obtain foods that can be acquired locally.*⁶⁴

Households used migration remittances as a strategy to expand their financial capital and invest in new livelihood strategies. Migration on the farm could thus be seen as an economic strategy. The belief that financial capital could improve household livelihoods raised migrants' aspirations on the Sangwe. Those with relatives in targeted destinations moved more quickly, much to the benefit of their households back home. One participant mentioned that:

*Many people in this eastern part of the country work in South Africa more than anywhere else due to the availability of job opportunities in that country. As a result, their relatives also migrate towards that country because of the support they already have from their relatives.*⁶⁵

It seems necessary to increase financial capital that motivates people to migrate and develop their household's livelihood. Additionally, remittances are used by family members back home to migrate and further contribute to the development of household livelihoods. Fratzke and Salant argue that the extent to which someone has access to finance, including remittances, is likely to determine whether he or she is able to migrate and meet the expenses of traveling.⁶⁶

The study also found that households used remittances to acquire additional inputs (fertilizer, seeds, and chemicals), develop farming technologies, and pay for extra labor needed for livestock care, land cultivation, weeding, and harvesting. In addition, remittance money was used to meet further household basic needs: education, clothing, housing and medication, paying bride price (*lobola*), circumcision and transport. Participants revealed that they had no access to loans or credit and that they often used their own money for farming, which made remittances indispensable. Thanks to the assistance of migrant relatives, some households also acquired the various types of assets and livestock listed in Table 1. For the A1 farmers

63 Informant D, 09/02/2019.

64 Informant C, 17/02/2019.

65 Informant D, 09/02/2019.

66 Fratzke and Salant, "Livelihood opportunities and interventions."

on the Sangwe, livestock is not only used as productive capital. Not drastically different from money or bank deposits, livestock represents a form of saving for the households. Participants reported that they used cellphones to communicate with relatives, other farmers (with whom they might engage in cooperative activities), and suppliers. The assets listed in Table 1 are often important modern-day farming requirements. However, most of the participants maintained that the money acquired from remittances was used to acquire immediate basic items rather than invested on the farm. This indicates that, since the 2000s, A1 households on the farm have not managed to secure sustainable and sovereign means of survival. Consequently, as others have argued in the past, one could claim that the FTLRP's primary goal was not to develop rural livelihoods, but to fragment communities who, if kept intact, would likely have pushed the current government out of office.⁶⁷ The absence of loan and credit facilities for A1 households, and the high dependence on remittances is indicative of the unplanned character of the reforms, which became somewhat of a burden on households already suffering.⁶⁸

Table 1: A1 migrant-related accrued assets and livestock

Farm Equipment	Non-Farm Equipment	Livestock, Flocks, Poultry
Ox Ploughs	Motorcycles	Cattle
Ox ridgers	Cars	Donkeys
Ox harrows	Bicycles	Sheep
Ox cultivators	Televisions	Goats
Harrows	Radios	Pigs
Scotch carts	Sewing machines	Poultry
Wheelbarrows	Table and chairs	
Hoe/shovels	Sofas	
Tractors	Solar panels	
Lorries	Cell phones	

Physical capital

The physical capital comprises transport, roads, markets, water supply, education, and health facilities which all enable A1 households to achieve a certain standard of living. Poor infrastructures are likely to affect human capital (poor education and health outcomes) or prevent farmers from accessing markets (e.g. lack of information or transportation). This study shows that remittances allowed household members to dig wells and drill boreholes to access water; some households grew cotton. However, because of bad road conditions, farmers had no way to sell their product. Using their own tractors (most of which transported from South Africa by migrant relatives), households were able to transport their cotton bales and livestock

67 Chaumba, "Opportunities for and Constraints on crop Production."

68 Ndhlovu, "Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach."

to nearby markets in Fare Ranch, another farm with better infrastructures. There were also no schools on Sangwe farms. Consequently, some parents sent their children to boarding schools and others took them to South Africa so that they can receive a better education – educators were often protesting in Zimbabwe. Sending your children away secured the future livelihood of the younger generation. One key informant stated:

*Most of the parents in this area have taken their children to South Africa for better education. This enables the children to receive a better education. Those are some of the advantages of migration. We have a good number of degree holders now on the farm. Most of them were acquired outside the country as university education is cheaper in other countries than here at home.*⁶⁹

Thus, migration enables community members on the farm to access physical facilities and infrastructures that cannot be found at home. Thanks to the migration of relatives, those remaining could also get medicine for various diseases. In extreme cases, some migrants transported relatives to South Africa or larger cities for medical care. Medicines and chemicals for crops and livestock were also transported mainly from South Africa. Solar panels sent by members from the diasporic community were also used by participants mainly for lighting and charging cellphones. All these tools improved sustainable household livelihood on the farm.

Social capital

Migration trends created various networks which improved livelihood opportunities. On the Sangwe farm, these networks include political and communal-based cooperatives rooted in cultural beliefs, religion, and other social attributes which constitute social capital. Social connections with returning migrants (*majoni-joni*) also gave rise to migration aspirations as livelihood success stories and migration experiences were communicated. Families also migrated to reunify with those already abroad and migrants were reported as ‘facilitators’ who provided financing (through remittances) or information on migration opportunities to those who aspired to migrate. All these activities were important for livelihood development on the farm.

This study also found that migrants formed transport cooperatives which allowed for them to send goods back home. Some households on the farm had received valuable groceries from relatives through Small Business Enterprises such as *Paisa* and *Courier24*, while others received goods through *malaichas* (informal goods transportation businesses). Cross border buses, but, more importantly, taxis had also become important for the transportation of goods, especially from South Africa. Through these transportation networks, migrants shared information with their relatives about food scarcity and prices, types of chemicals needed on the

69 Informant B, 14/02/2019.



THE MIGRATION-LIVELIHOODS NEXUS 39

farm as well as information on remittances, which contributed to the efficiency of production activities on the farm. A key informant mentioned that:

People in the diaspora share information on how to send money back home to ensure that their members are fed. This enable livelihoods to be resilient. The situation is currently very bad in the country.⁷⁰

Currency shortages in Zimbabwe – both foreign and national – remain acute. Only the emergence of initiatives such as the *Eco-cash mobile* allows for many A1 households to access basic livelihood needs, such as food. A number of digital banking services, such as the Western Union, *Mukuru.com*, and *mama money* (based in the diaspora) also enable migrants to send remittances back home. Whether the current government (which promises a ‘new dispensation’) will build up on these available developments and invest in other technology-driven solutions that enable economic revival and speed up social development remains to be seen.

Lastly, members who migrated to towns and cities within Zimbabwe often tried to develop relationships with political leadership structures which have to potential to help their relatives back home secure seeds, fertilizers, and affordable equipment. Because of their migrant relatives’ relations with politicians, some A1 households received recommendation letters for access to assets (inputs, free maize seeds, and fertilizers) from authorities involved in the government’s rural development program. Such connections were important in ensuring the development of household livelihoods, especially in 2016 when there was a drought across Southern Africa.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Migration in Zimbabwe has increased in recent years, including cases that start from resettlement areas. There have been competing interpretations about the 2000s land redistributions, with the international community (that is, mainly European and American countries) arguing that redistributions equated to an economic disaster which produced food insecurity, unemployment, lack of agricultural production, and declining livelihoods. Increasing migration patterns – as many seek to escape hunger, poverty, and underdevelopment – appears to give value to this interpretation. On the Sangwe farm, every household had at least two members that had migrated, either to nearby towns, to South Africa, Botswana or beyond. In this specific case, migration appeared to produce both negative and positive livelihood outcomes for the community, which is in accordance with reviewed academic literature. Nevertheless, further analysis is needed to fully understand the implications of rural-urban migration on A1 household livelihoods. From the analysis, it can be concluded that livelihood development opportunities can be a key motive for migration in reclaimed households of the drier and drought-prone district of Chiredzi, where frequent droughts and economic meltdowns have affected crop production and animal rearing.

70 Informant E, 10/03/2019.





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Instead of discouraging migration, intervention strategies should promote and design policies that make migration a pillar of the livelihood development system in agro-ecologically dry areas, such as the Sangwe. There is also a dire need for the adoption of sustainable livelihood development approaches that are migration and nutrition sensitive. Additionally, intervention should focus on infrastructure development and encourage migrants to invest in farming as a livelihood development strategy. Irrigation farming and other sustainable livelihood capitals, including financial capital (loans, savings, credit, and so forth) should also be prioritized. Water supply facilities, such as dams and boreholes, could therefore be built and diaspora capital, secured. Moreover, interventions should focus on supporting digital banking services, such as the *Western Union*, *Mukuru.com*, *Eco-cash* and *Mama Money*, which enable migrants to send remittances back home. Likewise, networks such as *Paisa* and *Courier24*, which deal with the cross-border transportation of goods from South Africa, should be strengthened. Finally, there is a need to mobilize Sangwe farmers around the production of more drought-resistant crops such as castor beans (for sale) and cassava and sorghum (for consumption). Considering that men are more inclined to migrate, future research should focus on the leading role of women in household sustainable livelihood systems. Perhaps another methodology would be better suited to such research.

