

# ANNUAL GENDER STUDIES CONFERENCE (AGSC '96)



## BIG AND SMALL: CHANGES IN TANZANIAN AGRICULTURE

Marjorie Mbilinyi

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## Notes

Marjorie Mbilinyi

TGNP

### INTRODUCTION

1. Liberalisation, privatisation and the removal of government supports for smallscale farmers has contributed to major changes in Tanzanian agriculture. This paper explores key issues arising from the restructuring of agriculture, and calls for a reexamination of macroeconomic policies.

### PAST AND PRESENT

2. The substance of changes which have occurred in agriculture during the last 10 years -- i.e. increased export orientation, increased commercialisation and monetisation, expansion of largescale modern agriculture and agrobusiness at the expense of smallscale indigenous agriculture, increased patriarchal relations, the creation of an increasingly impoverished group of labourers (casual labour), increased dependence on external resources -- are rooted in the past. During the 16th-19th century, the territory became increasingly part of the Indian Ocean Complex, and the global economy. By the early 19th century, many societies were partly dependent on production of ivory, grains and other goods for export, especially slaves, in exchange for imported cloth, guns and ammunition, and other commodities. Omani rule extended inland on the slave routes, and culture flourished throughout the Zanzibar Kingdom. The gap between rich and poor widened, as slavery deepened, and patriarchy as we know it today was born.
2. European colonialism facilitated the growth of capitalist relations, and the development of dependent social relations between Tanzania/Africa and 'the North'. Foreign capital invested mainly in largescale and middle scale agriculture and agroprocessing. The territory developed elements of a labour reserve economy, dependent on the 'export' of migrant workers to South Africa and then-Northern Rhodesia to work on the mines, and from the south and west of Tanganyika to work on sisal, coffee and sugar cane plantations on the mainland, and the clove plantations on the isles. The colonial state created a system of racial apartheid, using the same state measures adopted in South Africa, which favoured first the European, second the Asian and Arab, at the expense of the indigenous African (then 'native') population. White settler farmers and corporations received preferential treatment in terms of pricing policy, tariffs, farm support systems, markets, research and development, extension services and the like.
3. The gender division of labour as we know it today in agriculture is rooted in changes which took place during the centuries described above, crystallised in the colonial era.

In labour reserve areas, young men were drawn into migrant labour to secure funds for taxes and bridewealth, leaving women to pick up the slack, and old men to seek alternative forms of power in control over women, bridewealth and marriage/inheritance.

4. Where export or commercial crops flourished, often in resistance to the colonialists, male labour was drawn from food production for local use, into cash crop production over which men had control. Women worked on both domestic and export crops, food and cash crops, but their control over resources differed in the different crops. They worked basically as unpaid labour on export crop farms controlled by husbands or fathers-in-law, while retaining a margin of autonomy with respect to food farms. However, the responsibility to provide basic food needs for their households circumscribed whatever economic independence women had.
5. Women joined the migrant labour system in many areas, as wives and independent women, and others moved to settle in towns, mining centres and on the borders of plantations so as to seek a living as prostitutes and informal economic actors.
6. The colonial state, in alliance with most chiefs, clan leaders and elders, began to move against the interests of women's autonomy, to subjugate women to native authority rule and to male dominant patriarchy relations, in response to the efforts by many African women to free themselves, or to participate in more emancipatory aspects of new, albeit colonial, relations. Local bye-laws were used, along with notions of custom and tradition, to try and keep women in the countryside, on the farm and in 'native' marriage. Why was this necessary? Because many women were leaving their homes or that of their husbands, to seek a new life on plantations, mines and in towns. So what? Colonial law and order partly depended on the semblance of local native authority vested usually in chiefs, and chiefly rule depended a great deal on their control over marriage, inheritance, and women. The colonial economy also had become dependent on the cheap reproduction of migrant labour and cash crops, vested in the labour of women smallscale farmers. Women's work in reproduction and production was the backbone of the colonial economy. Cheap reproduction was not natural nor inevitable - rather, the result of state policy, which channeled capital investment into production of commercially valuable crops such as sisal, coffee and tea, not domestic food crops, horticulture, and other sectors in which women now prevailed.
7. An alliance was thus created between the state and African men which has persisted to the present, and undermines efforts to transform society. The alliance is founded on the contradiction between production oriented to the market, and that oriented to reproduction of the individual, household, family and community. Women were forced then, as now, to remain within patriarchal farming systems as unpaid family workers. Whatever support systems developed for smallscale farmers, were focused on male farmers growing cash crops for export, in particular: extension, research, improved seeds, fertilisers, markets, crop payments - even cooperative societies, ostensibly for the interests of indigenous farmers, were the domain of men, not women.

## RESTRUCTURING OF TANZANIAN AGRICULTURE - THE PROCESS

8. Policies associated with 1967 Arusha Declaration led to positive changes, from the perspective of indigenous smallholder farmers, and women, in many areas, particularly in the labour reserve areas. For the first time, specific farm support systems were oriented to smallscale farmers: extension, markets, farm subsidies, markets, all weather roads, crop schemes. These were backed up by the rapid expansion of social services such as education, health and water. Women farmers benefited in many ways, along with men, by expanded opportunities in education, employment and self-employment. Many took advantage of state support systems to create women's shops, women's farms, and women's cooperatives.
9. Villagisation was a contradictory process, and very different, depending on location. Authoritarian methods were used to forcibly resettle people in many lowland areas. In the highlands, where individualisation and commercialisation was already well developed, local people effectively resisted major changes in settlement and ownership patterns. Elsewhere, in some locations, farm workers rose up and took control of plantations or large farms, and small growers moved in on the property of large farmers. Young men, and women, found ample employment opportunity at home or nearby in most labour reserve areas, which contributed to a labour crisis in all plantation sectors by the late 1970s.
10. The different outcomes of Azimio policies can be measured in crop output figures during the 1970s. Contrary to mainstream myths about 'the collapse of agriculture' at this time, in fact, smallscale farmers flourished in many areas, as shown by increased output in maize, rice, cassava and other root crops, in coffee, smallholder tea and tobacco. The major declines were in sisal - a plantation crop owned by a few largescale corporations, largely foreign - and cotton, a smallscale farming crop grown by people who had shifted to rice and other crops -- they did not withdraw from the market!
11. Who were the winners and losers in the post-Arusha era (1967-1978)? Winners included local smallscale farmers, youth and women in particular, at least in many areas, able to access resources for the first time: farms, markets, farm implements and inputs... Yes, these still favoured the highlands areas, and export crops in particular, but the more well-to-do local farmers in all places. But contrast the pattern of resource allocations in the 1970s to the 1950s, when nearly all resources went to white settler farmers! That is our measuring baseline.
12. The barriers created by the colonial state to keep women in the rural areas and in marriage were also broken down, at least partially, at this time. The rate of urbanisation rose tremendously during this time, as shown by census data, especially for women, many of whom moved to rural and urban towns and entered the informal economy. A growing number of women chose to walk out of oppressive marriage

transformation of patriarchal relations at every level of our society. Many women, and young men, refused any longer to work as unpaid family labour on household farms and grazing, and other economic activities, and sought alternative employment in their own food/export crop production, in wage employment on nearby farms and plantations, or elsewhere, or they moved to towns and plantations to seek an independent source of income - independent, that is, of the old household patriarch! Women often entered another form of bondage, as part-time wife and mistress in informal conjugal relations, but they usually accessed independent sources of cash income.

13. At the same time, in the long term, women and men, small and big farmers, became increasingly incorporated into the national and global economy. Reproduction was more and more dependent on money! money for food, for farm labourers during peak seasons, for clothing and school uniforms, for medicine, for bridewealth, ... Social relations became ever more defined by the money economy in a growing number of locations in our society. Power became defined by money wealth, and money brought power, locally and nationally.
14. The financial and economic crisis which heightened from 1978 on, led to a severe reduction in state supports for smallscale, and largescale agriculture. Government dependence on donor financing, and debt, undermined efforts to resist demands for a reversal of social and economic reforms, that came from several quarters: donors, themselves, increasingly pushed 'back home' to defend the interests of big capital; corporations and large farmers with investments in plantations and large farms; local businesspeople and large employers hurt by Mwingozo policies; and, yes, a growing number of smallscale producers, traders and working people, increasingly dissatisfied with the failure of the state to deliver, and the growing poverty they faced.
15. The restructuring of agriculture according to SAP, to me, is a backlash against Azimio reforms and the real changes which took place, then, in the Tanzanian political economy. SAP in Tanzania has a particularity not found in everyother African nation, because of the specificity of Tanzanian history. To understand the struggles going on now in the agriculture sector, we need to examine past and present, so as to clarify what kind of vision the conflicting actors have of the future.
16. What has happened in agriculture since 1986, when IMF conditionalities began to be implemented in earnest? Resources (land, credit, markets, subsidies in the sense of control over forex, extension systems, other farm supports) have been effectively shifted away from the smallscale sector to largescale capitalist farmers, both local and foreign. Big growers (increasingly private) export crops overseas directly, and control all or part of their forex earnings. Small growers sell to local traders/merchants, to cooperatives and sometimes to parastatals, in exchange for local currency - their payments continue to be delayed in many cases, which means they sometimes earn less than half of the value of their crops, due to rising inflation.

17. The agricultural rehabilitation programme funded by donors, linked to import support programmes, mainly benefitted largescale growers. Private corporate growers like George Williamson (Tukuyu Tea Estates) were able to borrow from overseas development sources in the late 1980s, so as to access imported tractors and trucks and farm machinery, for example! Rural credit was shifted from small growers to large growers, by abolishing soft loans in the commercial banking sector, by imposing high interest rates and other fiscal policies.
18. The abolition of panterritorial pricing, and privatisation and deregulation of trade, has benefited growers in locations near markets, but harmed those in isolated or distant areas - including maize growers in the big four regions of Rukwa, Iringa, Ruvuma and Mbeya. These areas have actually had to import grains during past years, as local farmers shift from maize to coffee, tobacco or other cash crops. The implications for national food security should be self-evident.
19. Plantation owners no longer complain about a labour crisis! They can take advantage of a surplus of women, in particular, and men of all ages, seeking casual work, to keep their wages as low as possible. Smallscale farmers can no longer subsist as fulltime farmers, and have to send at least some members of the household out in search of off-farm employment. The sudden flow of young men and women onto the streets of Dar es Salaam and all major cities from the countryside at this moment of time is not accidental. That youth and women may find this to their advantage, should they access independent income, does not deny the fact that smallholder farming is in crisis, and along with it, the rural economy of Tanzania!
20. Who are the winners and losers of SAP in agriculture? The winners are large growers, both local and foreign. Agriculture officials admit that the increased crop output and export earnings from agriculture are mainly due to largescale production, for example. The losers are smallscale growers, both men and women.

#### **PATRIARCHAL STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN AGRICULTURE**

21. Patriarchal social relations have heightened during the ever-deepening crisis in the rural - and urban - farming systems. Below are a series of hypotheses about what is happening, that require further documentation:
  - the distinction and conflict between reproduction and production is growing, as state (including donor) resources decline for reproduction, to the benefit of market-oriented production
  - costs of reproduction have risen (due to eg cost sharing in health, education, water; rising costs of basic needs; decline of public social services, normally less expensive in the past, though never ever free)
  - women's work has increased as a result in reproduction activities

- women's work has also increased in market-oriented production, so as to provide for basic needs, partly in order to make up for the drop in male incomes arising from falling crop prices, decline in formal wage employment
- small farmers, including women, depend increasingly on unpaid family labour in household economic activities (on- and off-farm), unable to afford wage costs of casual labour
- the reproductive squeeze on the smallfarm sector has increased the female ratio in farm production and farm employment, while ejecting a growing number of men, and women, out of the sector -- leaving an increasing amount of work and responsibility for farming, and raising the young, in the hands of women elders
- hard work, low incomes, dismantled public health systems and stress have increased the rate of disease and malnutrition among women, in particular of data on rising maternal mortality rates
- SAP-induced poverty has induced a growing number of women into commercial sex work, in the rural areas, and led to increased rate of HIV/AIDS infection.
- women farmers and processors are being denied access to farm supports, training, information, farm inputs, equipment, credit, improved agriculture eg irrigation systems, and other support systems, because of the bias towards high valued commercial crops, for export
- efforts to open up land to capital investment has endangered the rights to land of women, who formerly depended on communal systems of land tenure, however imperfect
- most women, even more than men, have been denied the possibility to participate in decision-making about allocation of resources at all levels; women are discriminated against in terms of political power at all levels
- women, more than men, have been denied their rights to participate in decision-making about macro- and micro-economic policies affecting agriculture, and other sectors
- the local environment is being imperilled by the push for commercial production, not only in farming and livestock keeping, but in forestry, mining, fishing and other spheres, thus depriving women in particular of their past access to the products and byproducts in the waterways, forests and land.

## **WOMEN'S RESISTANCES**

22. Many women have developed methods of resistance, struggle, or sometimes, mere survival, which need to be supported, while encouraging a stronger movement which links organisations at all levels. Examples of resistance to be generated at the workshop:

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