



## Creating inclusive communities: The results of resettlement in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's land reform and resettlement programme in the early 1980s resulted in the formation of highly inclusive communities where the poor were not excluded from any of the groups set up to address communal problems. This is the conclusion of a study of nineteen of the villages that were established in the programme. While men and women tended to separate into single-sex groups, this was not due to a lack of trust between the sexes, and female-headed households were not excluded from community-based organizations (CBOs) either. Family, clan and religion all played an important role in bringing together neighbours who did not know each other prior to resettlement and these social ties provided the basis for the trust that has been essential for them to act collectively. It remains to be seen whether the current land reforms and resettlement programmes will be as successful.

### *Implications for practitioners*

These findings will come as good news to development practitioners who, as supporters of community-based development initiatives, engage existing CBOs or encourage people to form new groups and organizations to take part in interventions. However, it should be recognized that this study focused on a particular type of village. Unlike most rural Zimbabwean and other African communities, these resettlement villages are not made up of kinsmen but of people who generally knew few, if any, of their new neighbours before they were resettled. In many ways, they reflect refugee settlements in their organization.

That the tendency for men and women to separate into single-sex groups is not the result of a lack of trust between the sexes will be of particular interest to practitioners in the African microfinance sector. It would also appear that religious beliefs create trust between the sexes and provide a foundation for holding each other to account.

### *Research project design*

This *Infosheet* presents the results of a collaborative research project entitled 'An Experimental Analysis of Network and Group Formation for Collective Action' that was developed by the Centre for the Study of African Econo-

mies (CSAE) at the University of Oxford and the African Study Centre (ASC) in the Netherlands. The project used data from a social experiment and a lab-type field experiment to investigate group formation for collective action in nineteen resettled Zimbabwean villages that are part of the Zimbabwe Rural Household Dynamics Study (ZRHDS).



*A group of men singing at the closing of one of the research activities in their village*

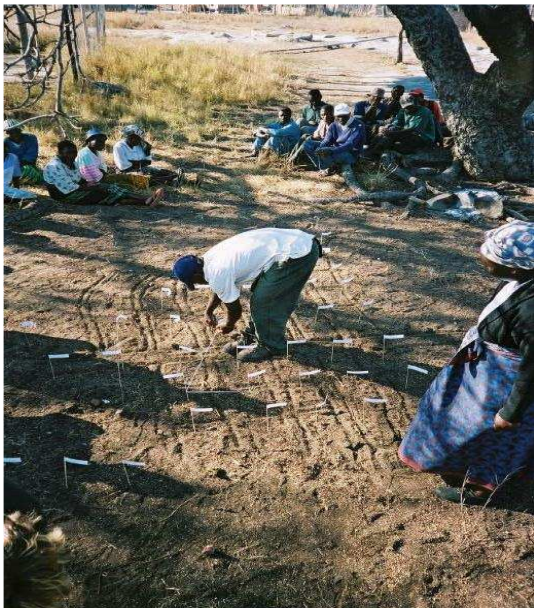
The social experiment came about as a result of the Zimbabwean government voluntarily resettling people in new villages made up of unrelated and often unacquainted households in the early 1980s. To survive and prosper, the villagers had to solve their problems through collective action and, with varying degrees of success, the villages in the study did this by forming CBOs.

The lab-type field experiment involved a 'group-formation' game that mimicked situations in which development agencies, non-governmental organizations or government bodies invited villagers to form groups to address a shared problem or to take advantage of mutually beneficial opportunities. This 'game' was played out in 2001, some twenty years after resettlement had taken place, in resettled villages established in the early 1980s and in a few non-resettled villages located nearby and from where some of those who resettled had originally come.



Male participant in the field experiment

The study analyzed data on the composition of the groups formed within the field experiment and the CBOs set up in the new villages in the 1980s that were still in existence two decades later. Information on village geographies (the distance between households), kinship networks (lineage, kinship and marriage ties) and household characteristics (the age, education and sex of the household head and wealth status) were used to investigate the reasons why certain groups had been formed.

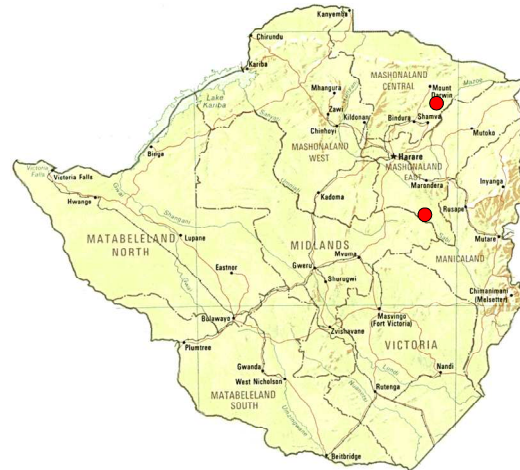


A group meeting to collect information on village kinship networks

The study villages and the resettled households were followed over two decades. More recent information was available for a subsample of the households that incorporated the effects of the harsh political and economic environment in the 2000s. The villages are

part of two resettlement schemes and communal areas adjacent to the schemes (see Map).

Map of Zimbabwe showing the research locations



*The findings in more detail*

*The poor are not excluded.* Analysis revealed no evidence of the poor being excluded or choosing to exclude themselves from village groups, or of the rich grouping with the rich and the poor with the poor. Indeed, the villages in which average wealth was lowest at the time of resettlement had better networks of CBO co-membership throughout the subsequent two decades. In these villages it was the wealthier households that were instrumental in setting up the CBOs, possibly because land clearance and homestead-building was easier and faster for them. Initially, the poorer households would have had little time for anything but land clearance and building but by 1985 they appear to have been just as engaged as the wealthier households. The finding that CBO co-membership networks were denser in poorer villages could indicate that there was a greater need in such villages for collective action.

*Place and time matter.* In the early years of resettlement, CBO membership was more likely between households that were geographically close, i.e. neighbours as compared to co-villagers living half to one km apart. Given the time constraints mentioned before, it may have been easier for them to connect and collaborate with people who lived close at hand. People who arrived five to ten years later tended to either be excluded from or to choose not to

join existing CBOs in the village and to set up new ones with other later settlers instead.

*Women and men tend to separate into single-sex groups but this was not due to a lack of trust.* It will come as no surprise to anyone who has convened meetings in Sub-Saharan Africa that when women and men were invited to form groups during the field experiment, they tended to separate into male and female groupings. However, this was not because women find it easier to trust other women and men other men. In fact, when trust was important, there was less separation of the sexes. Further analysis indicated that trust is stronger within families and among people who belong to the same religious group, and family or religious ties are not organized along gender lines. Although female-headed households are marginally less likely to connect via a CBO network, they were not excluded and did not choose to exclude themselves from associating with male-headed households



*Female participants during one of the research activities*

*Religions and families support the informal enforcement of collective agreements.* As well as supporting the formation of mixed-sex groups when mutual trust is important, families and religious organizations provide a context in which people hold each other to account. Those who attend the same church or are connected through kinship or marriage ties (such as brothers, fathers-in-law, uncles and nieces) were more likely to form groups during the game in the field experiment.

*Relationships formed by belonging to the same CBO are valued.* Co-members of CBOs were more likely to group together when invited to do so during the field experiment *except* when the agreements holding those groups together could be socially enforced. At first glance, this finding appears odd. However, it is consistent with CBO members want-

ing to protect their on-going valuable relationships from harm that could be done to them if one or other party was tempted to pull out of the agreement. When the grouping agreements were enforced by the organizers, there was no such risk. When they were supported by trust alone, they could be broken but no one would ever know. On-going relations would be unharmed. To make informal social enforcement possible, the game was set up so that people who wanted to pull out of their grouping agreements had to tell everyone what they were doing. So a renegade could upset on-going relationships and this represented a risk. Not grouping was the easiest way to avoid this risk. That CBO co-members did not group together in the last method is an indication of the value they placed on co-membership.

### *Future research*

These findings are based on data collected over two decades in resettlement schemes that were established in the early 1980s. It remains to be seen whether the current land reform and resettlement programmes, which started in the late 1990s and early 2000s, will do as well. In addition, while population movements, cash constraints and other deteriorations in economic conditions in the 2000s probably increased the very need for collective action, many CBOs and other networks were badly affected by these same events. Preliminary results from recent work in a sub-sample of six villages showed that almost 75% of the non-religious CBOs from the study's 2000 data were no longer operating in 2008. Only time will tell if the structures established over two decades will be revitalized when the economy picks up again.



*Women from the Chitenderano Club preparing groundnuts for processing*

**Recent academic papers**

'The formation of community based organizations in sub-Saharan Africa: An analysis of a quasi-experiment' by A. Barr, M. Dekker & M. Fafchamps  
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'Status and egalitarianism in traditional communities: An analysis of funeral attendance in six Zimbabwean villages' by A. Barr & M. Stein  
<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2008-26text.pdf>

**Previous publications on these communities by members of the research team**

Barr, A. (2004), 'Forging effective new communities: The evolution of civil society in Zimbabwean resettled villages', *World Development* 32(10): 1753-1766.

Barr, A. & G. Genicot (2008), 'Risk sharing, commitment and information: An experimental analysis', *Journal of the European Economic Association* 6(6): 1151-1185.

Dekker, M. (2004a), 'Risk, resettlement and relations: Social security in rural Zimbabwe', Amsterdam: Thela Thesis, Tinbergen Institute Research Series, no. 331.

Dekker, M. (2004b), 'Sustainability and resourcefulness: Support networks during periods of stress', *World Development* 32(10): 1735-1751.

Dekker, M. & B. Kinsey (2011), 'Coping with Zimbabwe's economic crisis: Small-scale farmers and livelihoods under stress'.  
<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Pdf/workingpaper93.pdf>

**Key publications on the ZRHDS data**

Hoogeveen, J. & B. Kinsey (2001), 'Land reform, growth and equity: A sequel', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27: 127-136.

Gunning, J., J. Hoddinott, B. Kinsey & T. Owens (2000), 'Revisiting forever gained: Income dynamics in the resettlement areas of Zimbabwe, 1983-1997', *Journal of Development Studies* 36(6): 131-154.

**Supplementary material**

Scripts and protocols for the group formation game:

<http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/resprogs/eangfca/csa-eangfca-field-scripts.pdf>

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*Photos: Abigail Barr & Rob van der Kolk*