Re-Thinking the Value of Land-based Livelihoods in Former Bantustans of Post-Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

This paper explores the value of land-based livelihoods in former bantustans of post-apartheid South Africa. South Africa, particularly the former bantustans continue to endure massive inequalities with respect to economic opportunities and poverty remains highly prevalent in the former bantustans. However, agriculture-based livelihoods (crop and livestock production) contributes to sustenance of female headed households. This study applied in-depth interviews and questionnaires to a sample of female headed households, selected using a purposive non-random sampling procedure using Cala, in Eastern Cape province of South Africa as a case study. Findings indicate that, besides farming economy dwindling in the rural areas, land-based livelihoods continue to provide a safety net for households for both consumption and generation of income. This contribution cannot be underestimated as households continue to hang on in face of ever-increasing poverty. The study concluded that it is important for the government and civil society to build on the current farm livelihoods and augment their economic value.

Keywords: livelihoods, female-headed household, bantustan, sustainable livelihoods

Introduction

South Africa has inherited a legacy of inequality particularly in the distribution of wealth and access to decent services. Poverty is mainly experience in rural areas which include the former Bantustans-'reserves'. Rural economies are underdeveloped in most southern African countries and depends primarily on the urban industrial economy. The communal lands supports the majority of the rural populace-majority whom live in abject poverty, 24 years later after the end of apartheid. Studies have shown that communal lands and livestock rearing play a crucial role in the livelihoods and household economies of rural inhabitants (Shackleton, Shackleton & Cousins 2000; Cavendish 1999). Rural-urban migration has reduced the agrarian base creating a heavy reliance remittances. (Shackleton *et al.* 2000). However, the assertion by Shackleton *et al.* (2000) does not dismiss the fact that the communal lands in South Africa continue to provide livelihoods for direct household maintaining and well-being as well as supplementing household income, food security, and networking. The rural livelihoods are complex and are ever-changing such that the lives of rural populace are typified by multiple activities which are and not limited to causal labour, social welfare grants, crop production, livestock rearing, and small businesses. These activities are no small in any way as they provide household sustenance.

Livestock farming is common in communal areas, albeit differences on the number of live-stock owned between female headed households and men headed households. Small livestock which are goats, sheep, pigs and chickens are owned by the majority of communal households (Lahiff 1997). Although the size of livestock is relatively small especially within poorer households of rural areas, the value attached to it is significant. Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins (2000: 586) argues that the 'benefits are more widely distributed through a number of mechanisms, including bride-wealth payments, loaning of animals, cooperative ploughing arrangements, meat and milk sharing, and hiring out and selling of goods and services'. Within the livelihood discourse, such benefits are underestimated, and there has not been much documentation of the benefits that are derived from livestock ownership. Shackleton *et al.* (2000: 2) argues that 'contributions of livestock in rural areas is undervalued both in economic and livelihood terms for several reasons, including: a focus on productivity, limited consideration for non-monetised products or services, and a neglect of small stock such as goats or poultry'.

Similarly, Cousins (1996) argues that the significance of ‘multi-purpose livestock systems’ in rural areas is seldom valued (see Shackleton’s 1999 study in Bushbuckridge, South Africa). Studies that have been conducted across southern Africa highlights that the goods and services attained from livestock farming are analogous, but their significance are different from one to another. The differences are as a result of different factors for example the environmental conditions, grazing land, size of the herd and income.

Crop production is also pertinent in the rural areas. It takes form in arable field cultivation, and homestead cultivation (which includes gardening). With the precarious nature of rural livelihoods, a number of households cultivate homestead gardens. The purpose is to reduce expenditure on things that can be grown. In many instances, the agriculture production system involves crops such as leafy vegetables, maize, sorghum, millet, bean pumpkins, melons, tomatoes, onions and sweet potatoes. The crop yields are comparatively lower than commercial agriculture production system. Ardington and Lund (1996) critiqued the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD) for underestimating the importance of agriculture-based livelihoods to sustenance of rural households. This is because ‘yields estimates often do not capture substandard or infected produce that may be used as animal feed, nor good quality produce that is kept aside as seed and Plots or fields often have an irregular shape, and often contain small uncultivated areas which are difficult to measure (e.g. grave sites, kraals, pathways’ (McAllister 2000). The net effect is that crop production as part of livelihoods for rural population is undervalued, yet it lessens vulnerability and augment security (Cousins 1999). Similarly, Andrew, Ainslie and Shackleton (2003) argues that ‘agriculture provides an important supplement, especially those with little access to wage income and a vital safety net in times of crisis’. The much talked about South African land reform has not yet made significant transformation and bearing on rural livelihoods (Hall, Jacobs & Lahiff 2003). Land-based livelihoods activities will continue to suffer as the government prioritises a creation of black commercial farmer bourgeoisie at the expense of the rural poor who with the support of the government can have their livelihoods transformed significantly.

Rural livelihoods are multi-varied and dynamic. The outcomes of rural livelihoods are depended upon geographical location, gender, access to resources and other factors. Rural areas are populated by vulnerable groups including women (also female headed households) as such due to patriarchal

existence, their livelihoods are often constrained. Agrawal (1997) argues that rural communities are complex, and are characterised by unequal distribution of power. Women are always on the receiving end, their access to key resources, for example land, and access to inputs are regulated by formal and informal rules-majority set by patriarchy. Although these regulations conserve save a purpose to which they are created for, they also destabilise livelihoods which are based on natural capital (land-in a loose sense).

It is against this background that this study seeks to unpack the significance of agriculture-based livelihoods to female headed households in the Communal areas of Cala in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

The Present Study

Much research on land-based livelihoods and reduction of vulnerability has focused on the entire rural populace without a specific focus on gender. Rural populace is characterised by different groups; women, men and children. However, their livelihoods cannot be seen through one lens or be treated as a homogeneous. A sizeable number of studies have looked at land-based livelihoods. Cousins (1999; 1996) wrote on the contribution of communal rangelands to rural livelihoods in South Africa, and livestock production and common property struggles in South Africa agrarian reform. There has been attempts by Shackleton *et al.* (2000) to re-value communal land of southern Africa. Shackleton *et al.* (2000) showed the significance of land-based livelihoods including crop and livestock production. Although their study cuts across all gender, it falls short of documenting how livelihoods of female headed households are transformed as a result of crop and livestock production. Although there are overwhelming debates around the shift from agriculture-based livelihoods to non-agriculture-based livelihoods; with agriculture-based livelihoods being labelled as insignificant to well-being of rural livelihoods. This present study is built upon studies which argues for recognition of agriculture-based livelihoods. This study is important for a number of reasons. It fills an empirical lacuna by generating fresh and current literature on female headed household livelihoods. It does so by providing a gendered examination precisely looking at female headed households in Cala communal areas. This study utilises explorative approach in its quest to understand the value of agriculture-based livelihoods.

This study borrows from the sustainable livelihood and resilience

approach. The central values of the sustainable livelihood approach are that it helps to understand how communities and individuals use different forms of capital; natural, physical, social, human and financial to maintain household well-being (see Scoones 2000).

Methods

The study utilized a purely qualitative design (via in-depth interviews and focus group discussions) to allow for in-depth understanding of the importance of crop production and livestock rearing in Cala communal areas of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi in a manner which captures their socially-structured context of their existence. A quantitative method was also adopted to complement the qualitative techniques in form of a questionnaire. To choose the female headed households, a purposive non-random sampling technique was used. Purposive sampling increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data, whereas random sampling tries to achieve variation through the use of random selection and large sample size (Muruviwa, Nekhwevha & Ige 2013). From population of female headed households in villages of Sifonondile, Mnxe, and Lupapasi a total of 36 female heads (14 in Lupapasi, 12 in Mnxe and 10 in Sifonondile) were interviewed. The sample size was determined using the concept of saturation (Mason 2010), where it was felt that beyond 36 respondents, there was no generation of new knowledge. Each of the interview took approximately 80 minutes to complete. All the interviews were conducted by the researcher's and assistants. A total of 65 questionnaires were also distributed in the different villages of Cala. Using content analysis, the qualitative data collected was post coded and sorted to determine common themes, shared by the female heads with respect to agriculture-based livelihoods. The collected quantitative data was analysed using SPSS. In upholding research ethics, the names used in this article are not pseudo names to protect identity of participants.

Results and Discussion

The majority of South Africa's rural population resides in the former Bantustans (homelands). Cash from urban areas and government grants often form the mainstay of the rural economy in most of the former Bantustans, now

called communal areas (including in Cala). Nonetheless, this should not distract from recognition of the diverse livelihoods that rural households pursue (including agriculture) and the contribution of these livelihood activities to overall livelihood wellbeing.

Crop Production

There is evidence of some agricultural crop production in the villages surveyed in the communal areas of Cala, and this takes the form of homestead cultivation and arable field cultivation. In the case of homestead-based cultivation, female heads (and households generally) engage in gardening or cultivation of land in the vicinity of their house. A variety of crops were grown in Cala and these differed from household to household and from village to village. Overall, evidence elicited from the survey indicated that eight main crops were grown around the homestead, namely, beans, groundnuts, pumpkins, spinach, tomatoes, cabbages, onions and maize. The majority of leafy vegetables were grown year round while groundnuts, pumpkins and maize were grown during the rainy season starting from October, November and December.

Homestead gardens are patches of land just a few metres away from the homestead and are from 1 hectare to 5 hectares in size. In the villages of Sifonondile, Mxne and Lupapasi, 93.8% of female heads practiced homestead gardening (or at least had access to land for this purpose) and 6.2% did not have access to land for homestead cultivation. Female heads practicing homestead gardening were not though making full utilisation of the land available due to a number of constraints including but not limited to lack of inputs (notably seeds), destruction of crops by livestock and non-availability of water. The vast majority of female heads (88.3%), when they practiced homestead production, did so over an area of about 50 metres by 50 metres (less than a hectare). Other female heads (10%) reported gardens of between 2 and 3 hectares, while a small number (1.7%) spoke about between 4 to 5 hectares under cultivation.

Female heads were clearly only partially utilising the available land around their homestead and, indeed, there is evidence showing that some of the land has not been ploughed and cropped for a number of years at the time of my fieldwork. From the in-depth interviews with female heads, it became apparent that the size of the gardening venture at the homestead depended in part on the size of the plot available for gardening. The older female heads of

Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi generally have the bigger homestead plots available to use for gardening because they have lived in the villages longer and, at the time that their household stands were demarcated, the population in the villages was smaller than it is currently. As the population increased over time, the pegging of homestead stands involved the demarcation of increasingly smaller plots. The case of Nqobile, one de jure female head from Lupapasi, serves as an example of how homesteads were located and demarcated in the past:

1961 as usual the land was allocated by the headman Mtuzile and there were very few Xhosa people living in the area of Lupapasi. Land allocation for both housing and cultivation was in abundance. I still remember when my late husband was allocated this homestead, the headman counted his footsteps until my husband shouted to him to stop. Between homesteads there was a lot of space because they were very few families in the area; it changed later on around the 1980s if I remember well. Our recently married sons started their families and it meant they have to take some land from their parents; that's why these 1980 and 1990 villagers have small pieces of land around their houses. Even our cattle, goats and sheep did not have to travel far to graze but now livestock travel far to graze (Life history, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Thus, subdivision of plots because of new families (through marriage) being formed in Cala has led to smaller areas available for homestead gardening and this of course affected the older generation which has lost some of its land in the process.

Evidence from the study highlights that the main reason for cultivating gardens around the house is for consumption purposes, particularly because female heads lack sufficient income to purchase foodstuffs and hence they grow crops to reduce food expenditures (particularly on those crops which they can grow). This concurs with the findings of Statistics South Africa (1999) which found that 93% of small farmer households engage in this form of agricultural production primarily to produce food for own consumption. In Cala, 53% of the female heads specifically indicated that they cultivated gardens for consumption, while 6.7% alluded to the production of some surplus, with surplus crops being sold on local markets to obtain extra income

for immediate household purposes. Further, 18.3% of the surveyed female heads said that the main reason for homestead gardening was to improve food access, and 13.3% indicated that gardening was undertaken to improve food supply and nutrition. Both of these reasons though relate back to homestead gardening for household consumption. The spirit of ubuntu (meaning togetherness) is still prevalent at times in Cala as some female heads (8.3%) donated garden crops to family members outside their household, as well as to friends and neighbours, in acknowledgment of kinship and community ties. This finding corroborates what McAllister (2001) found, namely, that community ties and assistance become important at least during times of crisis.

One female head (aged seventy) spoke of the overall importance of gardening and how it saved her some money to use on other expenditures:

Money is a problem nowadays because I am no longer working and none of my children support me. On my monthly grocery I do not include vegetables that I grow and it saves money that I can use to buy electricity and other things. At times when I run out of meat, I substitute meat with spinach to eat with pap...I grow onions and pumpkins so I do not buy these. At times I sell spinach at a cheap price of R7 a bundle (Focus group discussion, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Of importance to note is that female heads in times of extreme crisis substitute meat with available grown crops such as spinach, and this is testimony to how central land-based livelihoods can be, at least potentially, to female headed households. Selling the crop produce does not yield much income per month. In a good month, more than R100 was gained by certain female heads depending on the demand for a specific crop such as leafy vegetables (spinach and cabbage). These were often in demand at the middle of the month when the majority of households had exhausted their food supplies (meat in particular).

Crop production under homestead cultivation is not an easy activity, as it is time consuming. Several hours per day were spent on gardening although the time involved differed from one household to another. The majority (64.1%) of female heads spent 2 to 3 hours in this activity, while 20.5% spent 1 to 2 hours, 12.8% spent 4 to 5 hours and a small number of female heads (2.6%) reported to be spending more than 5 hours per day in gardening. Female heads spending a significant number of hours tended to hold

larger sized plots. However, the yields of crops grown by female heads, as measured in quantitative terms, were limited due to the lack of inputs, water challenges and the absence of support services (as there were no agricultural extension services in the villages).

Besides homestead gardening, female heads in Cala also pursued agricultural activities in arable fields (or *amasimi*). Compared to homestead cultivation, though, relatively few female heads cultivate arable fields. In the Cala villages of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi, there is certainly no pronounced evidence of demand for arable land to cultivate. Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins (2001), in citing several studies, indicate that demand for arable fields is often greater than the supply of available land. In contrast, my study found that cultivation of land in the villages in Cala is limited, with vast tracks of land unutilised. In this respect, McAllister (2001) provides evidence that, in Transkei, communal farmers have been abandoning cultivation of their fields and investing all their agricultural efforts in the homestead plot (which can be up to 2 hectares), with the focus of production activity being household consumption or commercial sale. Something similar seems to be happening in Cala, as arable fields are in abundance but often underutilised or unutilised.

Evidence collected from Cala revealed that, in terms of utilising the arable fields, the majority (69%) did not utilise them while 31% of the female heads did. Arable fields in the Cala villages varied in terms of distance from the area of residence (or homestead), as some were located close to the homesteads and other arable fields were located a few kilometres away. The major crops grown are maize (*imbona*), beans and pumpkins. Maize is for home consumption and is eaten as green cobs though some female heads reported to occasionally enter local markets (in Cala) to sell maize cobs at a fixed price of R6 to R7 a cob. Other female heads indicated that they sold cooked cobs at a price of R10 each. It is quite revealing that female heads sold maize cobs to earn extra income in the context of their precarious livelihood situation and, like selling crops from homestead gardening, this was meant for acquiring cash to meet basic household needs.

Cala has a long history of arable land cultivation which dates back to the colonial era and before. Hence it is an old practice carried over and evolving through generations, though disrupted at times because of apartheid agricultural engineering such as betterment schemes. Currently, the practice is proving to be difficult and its prevalence seems to be on the decline for various

reasons. Female heads for instance indicated that destruction of crops by livestock, changing rainfall patterns, lack of inputs (money, seeds and fertilisers) and labour shortages are major challenges forcing them to abandon or scale down arable cultivation. Data gathered through the survey indicate that a significant majority of female heads (78.1%) lack seeds, 12.5% reported to be lacking draught power and 9% lacked actual physical labour to work on a day-to-day basis in the fields. In terms of size of the arable fields (as evidenced by transect walks), they are relatively large. And a significant majority (69.2%) reported that they owned (or possessed) 6 to 10 hectares of land while a smaller number (30.8%) of female heads owned up to 5 hectares of land. Thus, if the challenges are addressed, there is considerable potential for arable land cultivation in Cala.

From the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, though, there was overarching agreement that, despite the land distribution programme of the government, little or nothing was being done by government specifically to support and bolster subsistence farming in Cala communal areas (for example, with regard to input acquisition notably seeds and fertilisers). Compounded by lack of household income among female heads (and other households in Cala), a significant majority (92.3%) of heads reported that they retained home-grown maize seed for maize production while 7.7% borrowed maize seed. This reliance on own seeds however has reduced the size of land cultivated, subsequently reducing the yields. As such, relatively-small areas are cultivated because of inadequate resources and lack of inputs (Fenwick & Lyne 1999), despite people's access to pieces of arable land beyond the homestead. This is also consistent with Francis' (2000) finding that underutilised arable land is primarily due to that fact that people in rural areas, particularly in the former Bantustans, lack the agricultural means, including equipment, fertilizer, and credit, to work the land.

The land in communal areas like Cala is state-land, but households tend to treat it as private property with security of tenure. The arable fields in Cala are inherited and are passed on from generation to generation, and are subject to subdivision because of new families emerging. Kinship and lineage therefore are very significant factors in access to and possession of arable fields. Some of the arable land is divided among sons, but most of these young men are not using the land, either because they are staying in urban areas or, even in cases where they are residing in the village, they lack inputs and sufficient labour to work the fields. With specific reference to the female heads

in Cala and their acquisition of land, a slight majority (53.8%) inherited their land and these consisted of de jure female heads who retained the land for usage after the death of a husband. For other de jure female heads (46.2%), the land held by them was formally allocated by the headman in the different villages. For the de facto female heads, they alluded that the land belonged to their husbands. No female head indicated either invading or purchasing the land.

Unlike homestead cultivation, arable land cultivation is practiced over the rainy season in the soils that potentially store moisture until the dry season. Field cultivation is carried out from October or November with harvesting taking place from March to April depending upon the hybrid maturity of the maize seed used (see Table 1).

Table 1: Timetable for crop production (homestead and arable fields)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leafy vegetable are grown all year round											
							Land preparation				
									Planting in arable fields		
Weeding		Harvesting									Weeding

Source: In-depth Interviews, November 2014.

Value of Crop Production in Cala Communal Areas

Shackleton *et al.* (2001:592) describe previous studies as underestimating agricultural production and its contribution to communal area livelihoods in South Africa and, in the case of Zimbabwe, it is argued that agricultural activity accounted for approximately 50% of total income to rural households in communal areas of Zimbabwe two decades ago (Bradly & Dewees 1993). Whereas many studies measure the importance of commercial agricultural production (Nattrass & Nattrass 1990, May 1996) with reference to South

Africa, I seek to understand the significance of crop production in former Bantustans and specifically in Cala.

Broadly speaking, subsistence crop production in former Bantustans is of some significance despite the limited level or scale of production and even though it rarely contributes to household income through market sales. As highlighted earlier, homestead crop production (and field production) is mainly for consumption with very little or no surplus for sell. In cases where surplus is sold, and this is done on a seasonal basis, household income is not increased substantially. But this does not invalidate the monetary contribution of crop production which rural households obtain from their land, though this contribution is difficult to measure accurately. The benefits derived from crop-based livelihoods are critical to the survival of many female-headed households in Cala, particularly the very poor, and thus crop production at times reduces household vulnerability to risks such as death.

Using the survey for Cala, it is estimated that the contribution of homestead crop production and arable land production is on average between 15-21% of total female-headed household income. In monetary value, after selling the grown crops, female heads on average spoke about an amount of more than R1200 in sales every two months making it over R7,000 per annum. These findings are consistent with Makhura *et al.* (1998), although my findings are slightly lower than their projection that income generated from selling agricultural produce represented 27,7% of total measured income to the household. It is also critical to note that crops, which in the main are for own consumption at household level, provide a non-cash contribution by supplementing foodstuffs purchased on the goods market. Hence, own-consumption crops reduce household food expenditure.

Nonetheless it is not every female-headed household which earned income through crop sales, and there are several factors which affect the quantity of sales including the size of homestead land available, and the availability of inputs and labour. Some earn much less than R7,000 per year while others earn considerably more. The case of Sibongile, a *de jure* female head aged fifty-five, is revealing in as far as earned income is concerned.

Since the death of my husband in 2005 I learnt how to use my hands and earn a living for my family. Almost everyone in the village has access to land but some people do not use the land because of different reasons, some you have seen are too old to cultivate land. I am not yet qualified

for an old pension grant as other female heads so I have entered into a deal with people who run food outlets in Cala town, like Mama Zakele who is a good and constant customer. All my produce is purchased by these customers ranging from onions, beetroot, beans, spinach and at times tomatoes but they are always affected by a disease. The amount of money that I get over a year is more than R7000 in a very good year. This money is very important to me to support my children. It is not easy though; it requires a lot of effort from fetching water, spending many hours weeding and constantly guarding goats and cattle from entering the fence (Life history, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

In a different vein, another de jure female head aged sixty-eight indicated the following:

Gardening is important to me and my grandchildren because sometimes I take time to go and collect my old age pension and child support grant so I always make use of spinach in the garden to eat with pap and if I do not have money for transport I always sell in advance before the day for collecting the grants...I do not get a lot from selling the spinach only R7 a bundle but if I have imbona [maize cobs] I get R30 for a dozen. It is not always the case because crops are at times destroyed by goats and owners of the goats do not compensate (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Clearly, crop production is not an easy task, particularly for older female heads, yet they persevere because it complements other livelihood activities at times (for example, old age pension) or even becomes a more crucial source of household sustenance when other activities are not possible. The crops produced were either marketed in the local village or neighbouring villages, as this reduced transport costs. However female heads indicated that, during month end, crops were sold further away in Cala town when they go and receive their monthly pensions or child support grants. The income generated varies across households, but coming to exact monthly amount through crop sales (per household) was not possible because female heads do not record their sales. The crop income is used for immediate household consumption purposes and income generated (let alone profits made) was never recorded.

In conclusion, although female heads in this study were unable to

clearly quantify the monetary value of their crop production sales, or the value of crops consumed directly by the household, the fieldwork evidence in Cala indicates that the contribution of crop (homestead and field) production should not be underestimated. Although there is evidence of abandoned land (particularly the arable fields), this does not necessarily reflect a declining importance of crop production in the livelihoods of female headed households. Certainly, to a level difficult to determine statistically with any fine-tuned precision, crop production increases the self-provision of foodstuffs and generates sporadic cash income.

Livestock Production

According to Cousins (1996), a number of studies have investigated the role and importance of livestock in communal systems in southern Africa. Livestock ownership in Xhosa culture in the Eastern Cape Province, including Cala communal areas, is critical as it acts as a stock of wealth and a safety net in times of crisis. Livestock in the Cala communal areas of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi ranged from cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and poultry (chicken). Like in many communal areas (in South Africa and elsewhere), cattle regularly form the main component of livestock and the more the cattle a household owns the wealthier and financially stable it is deemed to be. Although ownership of cattle is mainly attributed to men, female heads in Cala reported that they inherited livestock (in the form of cattle, goats, pigs and sheep) after the death of their spouses, while others have bought livestock. Data collected for this study indicates that a significant majority (95.8%) (see table 1) of the female heads claimed to be actual owners of livestock of some kind while 4.2% of female heads do not own livestock. Those female heads who are owners of livestock are mainly *de jure* female heads (given the absence of the spouse) while those who not own livestock are *de facto* female heads. In *de facto* households, and despite the absence of the husband for extended periods, livestock is owned by the man (spouse). *De facto* female heads indicated that they played stewardship role in keeping livestock while spouses are away. The livestock numbers varied across the three studied villages and differed from household to household depending upon capacity to build up stock levels and the benefits derived from keeping livestock.

The significance of livestock in communal area households is not always directly and clearly recognisable. Overall, female heads under study

revealed that despite having relatively small herds of cattle (and other livestock), these play a significant social and financial role (almost an investment portfolio for savings and security) in their lives. This finding tends to demystify any perception that communal livestock rearing is unproductive as compared to commercial livestock especially with regard to cattle. Many Cala female heads thus spoke as if their livelihoods centred on cattle because of the range of goods and services obtained thereby. In fact, better-off *de facto* female heads and *de jure* female heads revealed that they have invested in cattle rearing despite the drought that recently killed a significant number of Cala cattle.

Table 2: Total number of livestock surveyed in Cala

Type of Livestock	Cala Communal Areas under survey			Total of Livestock surveyed
	Sifonondile	Mnxe	Lupapasi	
Cattle	40	15	44	99
Goats	70	25	12	107
Sheep	34	15	108	157
Pigs	12	8	20	40
Chicken	140	60	191	355

Source: Baseline Survey, November 2014

Livestock provides goods and services to female heads in Cala communal areas which are easily ignored and under-valued, including being a source of bride-wealth. At the time of the fieldwork in 2014 almost every household had some form of livestock and female heads stressed the importance of livestock especially when adverse circumstances arose (such as the loss of alternative livelihood sources). Cattle play a crucial role in bringing income to female heads. For instance, evidence gathered through in-depth interviews uncovers that female heads who owned sufficient cattle (or had cattle available at the time) ploughed for cash the homestead gardens and arable fields of other villagers (although this happened only seasonally in the case of arable fields). Comparing with the price charged for a local tractor, female heads revealed that their cattle were ploughing for others at a very competitive rate and that, because most households planted homesteads gardens perennially, this served as a fairly regular source of income. In 2014, a tractor was charged at R400 to

R450 per acre (which is 70m x 70m) whereas using animal draught power cost only R250 to R300 (and at times because of the spirit of *ubuntu* and local networks of social obligation, the price was even much lower). As well, this kind of cooperative ploughing increased food security for female-headed households which did not have cattle or money to hire a tractor.

Given the general inadequacy of household income in the Cala communal areas of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi, most households relied on substituting meat with milk (locally known in Xhosa language as *ubisi*) particularly at critical times (mainly relating to mid-month until the month end). In general, Xhosa people as part of their culture attach milk production as very important for their food dishes. Data from the field work uncovered that female head's milk production was mainly for home consumption, such as for eating with pap (known as *umvubo/ umphokoqo*, which is a traditional Xhosa meal involving a mixture of crumbed pap and sour milk). Fresh milk was also used for tea while at the same time for emergency sale to the villagers at a cost ranging from R10 to R12 per litre.

The significance of particularly cattle came out clearly in the interviews with the female heads, notably as a safety net when adverse circumstances befell a household. Also, better-off female heads used cattle as a source of income perennially. This is clear from the following quotation:

Owning cattle is very important to me; when my husband died he had just retired and part of his retirement package went to purchase cows in Elliot [Elliot is a town located approximately 28km east of Cala town]. I am very thankful to him, I do not work permanently I work for the community works programme [CWP] under [what is called] Mngcunube. I have entered into a deal with butcheries in Cala and Queenstown [a town located more than 150km away from Cala town]. I sell one cow at a price of R5000 and more depending on the size of the cow; in a month I can sell 2 to 4 cows but I never slaughter a cow for my family...I buy calves as well so that I sell them in future otherwise my business will go down...Yes this money is very important especially tuition for my daughter at Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha and buying food and clothes for my children (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

The above sentiments from Sibonelo (a *de jure* female head) are revealing in

highlighting the importance of livestock in the form of cattle as an income generating activity, compared to selling cattle in the face of adverse circumstance. In this context, one female head from Mxne village said the following

I was forced to sell my cows at a very low price when my son was admitted at Cala Hospital. Because I have no one to help me, I had to do what it takes to get money in order for my son to have a leg operation...a very low price...R1500 and another one was R2000 (In-depth interview, Mnxé Village, November 2014).

The selling of livestock therefore takes place under different conditions. In the first case, it becomes a means of generating income (of converting livestock into cash) at a favourable market price. In the second case, livestock is sold under desperation and often at below-market value, particularly in households where there is no stable income. Thus, for the vulnerable female head from Mxne, private buyers effectively ripped her off and this served to deplete her household assets over at least the short-term. Cattle though were central in both cases, and specifically the selling of cattle. In this respect, female heads argued that slaughtering a cow for own (household) consumption was like ‘eating capital’. Additionally, it was noted during focus group discussions with female heads in Mnxé that cattle were used as an alternative to money in the case of fines levied by traditional courts. In the case of Thokozani, she paid a cow to another family because her grandson Simphiwe had impregnated a niece in the family (locally known as *muzukulwana*).

Besides cattle, households had some form of small livestock during the study period including the following: sheep (18.2%), pigs (18.2%), poultry (36.4%) and goats (7.6%). During interviews and focus group discussions, it became apparent that some female heads kept small livestock (goats, sheep and pigs) not mainly for consumption but for selling. However they slaughter when the need arises particularly during festive seasons when their sons and daughters visit the village. Hence the significance of rearing small livestock differed from house to house, and the significance was also seen in total numbers of small livestock. Female heads who were selling their small livestock were rearing above ten (across all small livestock) while those who reared for social obligation (such as festivals) would have less than five. In terms of selling, female heads argued that at times they slaughtered the

livestock to sell the meat rather than selling the beast live. The market price per kilogram varied depending with the market demand in villages or in Cala town. If slaughtered, female heads sold the meat to villagers at specific prices: during the time of the fieldwork, goat meat was priced at R40 per kg, sheep (mutton) was priced at R45 per kg and pig meat (pork) was priced at R40-R50 per kg. Poultry generated a significant amount: R45 for a chick, while medium to large chickens ranged between R100 to R110 depending on size. Additionally, eggs were sold at R1 each. In addition, there was the case of a *de facto* female head (Thokozani) in Lupapasi Village who owned over thirty sheep and earned much of her household income through small livestock rearing. She claimed that over a three to four month period she receives over R6,000 after selling wool to a company in Port Elizabeth. Broadly speaking, the money generated by female heads through small stock sales was channelled towards purchasing groceries and covering school fees and medical bills.

As with crop sales, it was difficult to estimate the average monthly household income generated through small stock sales. Accurate records were not normally kept. And sales were uneven across the calendar year (with good and bad months), with the timing of sales depending upon household need as well as specific events during the year, with festive seasons being particularly important in this regard. During festive season, for example Easter and Christmas holidays, goats and sheep were priced at between R500 to R700 while pigs were priced at R600 to R900, depending on the size of the animal. For female heads who did keep reasonably accurate records of their sales, an estimated R3000-6000 a month was gained from small livestock, but this is likely an overestimate as better-off households were more inclined to keep records.

Non-owners of livestock (both cattle and small stock) or those households with limited stock levels also have access to and are given products and services from livestock. This is important for such resource-poor female heads as they receive meat, milk, dung and ploughing services through kinship and neighbour relationships. Dung is used as manure for the homestead gardens, as well as a source of energy especially at times of crisis when poor female heads cannot afford to purchase electricity for preparing food. It is also used on floors and as a binding and for plastering houses. Therefore livestock rearing is not simply a household level asset but has implications at neighbourhood and village level as a source of community aid and assistance.

One other source of land-based activity in Cala relates to the long-

standing practice of fishing both as a source of income through fish sales and for household consumption. Fishing is undertaken along the nearby Tsono and other rivers and mainly during the rainy season. A significant number of female heads practiced fishing themselves while others revealed that their grandchildren were directly engaged in it. In some cases, female heads practiced barter trade with other village members especially during mid-month when food shortages begin to arise. For instance, two fish would be exchanged with another household which has rice or mealie meal. Households also directly sold fish at a price ranging from R10 upwards depending on the size of the fish. Further, market forces of supply and demand affected the pricing of fish within Cala communal areas. During the rainy season (October to February) when this livelihood activity is mainly pursued, the price of fish is low as compared to the months between March and September when the supply of fish is very limited.

Conclusion

This article discussed a recent study on the significance of the agriculture-based livelihood in former bantustan of post-apartheid South Africa, with a focus on female headed households. Literature acknowledges the importance and contribution of agriculture-based livelihoods to sustenance of rural households (including female headed households). However, due to rural transformation, non-farm and agriculture-based livelihoods contributes to sustenance of households. There is a need for further reflection and research to ascertain which of the activities, non-agriculture and agriculture activities contributes to rural households. This study apotheosises crop production and livestock rearing in bantustans as offering household sustenance, precarious employment, and security through generation of food for consumption and money despite the dwindling of farm economy in the former Bantustans. Therefore, there is a good reason for the government and other civil society organisations working in former bantustans to promote agriculture-based livelihoods among female headed households. It is clear from the findings of the study that crop production and livestock rearing has an impact on the female headed households and it is important for the government and civil society to build on the current farm livelihoods and augment their economic value.

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