

5.1 CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Status

- a) **Wages:** It was common among all the countries that farm workers were the least paid and formed the majority of population living under the poverty datum line. Wages ranged between US\$25 to US\$100 creating a vicious circle of poverty, as generation after generation of farm workers cannot work themselves out of the prevailing situation. - Child workers
- b) **Poor social amenities:** This was relatively poor across the board characterized with over crowded houses, poor sanitation, limited access to clean water, and limited access to quality education and medical health services.
- c) **Gender inequality:** Women in farm working communities were identified as being more marginalized than their male counterparts. Women not only tend to be seasonal workers and thus receive limited rights, they are forced to compromise on many fronts, especially in regards to their gender roles as child bearers and care givers.
- d) **Power relations:** It was noted that there is a general fear and big margin of divide between the Farm Worker and the Farm Owner- the servants – master divide is very pronounced. The workshop was informed that the situation gets worse in Lesotho where there is the existence of the of herd boys
- e) **Retirement:** The retirement age of farm workers was also highlighted as an issue by workshop participants. Whilst the ranges differed from country to country e.g. Zimbabwe 60, Zambia 55, it was noted that this was too high considering the kind of labour being provided. Due to the high retirement age, most farm workers do not get terminal benefits since they hardly attain this age while they are still working in the farms. Terminal benefits can only be accessed once one reaches the retirement age.
- f) **Unions/NGOs:** Unions and NGOs in the sector have tried to lobby for increased wages and improved conditions for farm workers. These efforts have had a varied level of impact, with some farm owners accepting to dialogue with the unions, the challenge has been that the farms are private land and thus the union can only access the limited number of farms where they are allowed in, secondly the geographical spread of the farms makes it very difficult for the unions to mobilize the farm workers. Thus despite the changes that may have occurred through interventions of unions and NGOs, the status of the farm worker as compared to other workers in other sectors remains low.

Emerging Issues:

Powerlessness: The workshop participants noted that there is a general powerlessness that exists among farm workers; this was attributed to a variety of issues among them the low wages and lack of alternatives that exists among the farm working community. Important to note is the fact that farm workers receive subsidized food and are housed by the Farm owner, this situation compromises their ability to question anything, because it may mean homelessness.

Still on the issue of powerlessness, the workshop noted that the farm workers were not an empowered community and tended to depend a lot on other organizations to assist them to address their issues.

Recommendations:

The workshop called for an urgent need to develop a new farm worker and farmer relationship, a relation of mutual respect and understanding. Key to note under this recommendation was the need for openness and dialogue between the two parties. For example it was important for the farmer to be more transparent on issues of productivity and profits, so as to enable practical contributions and negotiations on remuneration. The participants noted that as much as they may advocate and lobby for better wages and conditions for farm workers the demands have to be within a realistic framework.

It is critical that a process that would ensure employers adopt workplace policies be put in place this would be monitored by both the NGOs and government. The issues to be addressed within this policy would not only cover social security programmes, but also include legal and gender issues. If possible an incentive programme for farmers who have best practices need to be considered and sanctions for those who make no changes.

The workshop felt strongly that there should be educational programmes for all stakeholders to enlighten them on the situation and the plight of the farm worker. There was a general feeling that most people know about the land, but nobody cares to go further to analyse who tills the land.

Education was highlighted as being a major empowering tool, thus the participants recommended that government has got to take and make strong commitments to ensuring quality education is provided on the farms. To support the formal education sector, the participants recommended that education on HIV/AIDS was critical and had to be incorporated in activities that take place on the farms.

That the respective governments have to play a greater role in providing and protecting the rights of farm workers just like any other citizen in the respective countries. Issues related to health, education and access to social amenities. Here again trade unions were called upon to spearhead the process.

There is need for capacity building for unions and NGOs working in the area of farm workers. This capacity will enhance their capability and ability to address issues related to farm workers.

5.2 CITIZENSHIP AND CITIZEN RIGHTS

Status

Origins: The delegates to the workshop confirmed that farm workers in most of the countries happen to be migrant workers, the pattern of movement has been determined by the level of development of the countries e.g Zimbabweans moved to South Africa; while Malawian, Zambians and Mozambicans moved into Zimbabwe. It is a historical fact that in the early years, there was hardly any restriction to movement in the region and not many formalities were required, this has however changed with time, meaning that the above individuals find themselves marginalized since they do not have legal papers(birth certificates, passports).

Identity: It is a fact that farm workers remain in a precarious identity crisis despite some countries like Zimbabwe stating in their constitution that farm workers after 1980 were legal citizen and in South Africa the farm workers have work permits but they still face imminent expulsion. Farm workers do not have security of tenure and are liable for eviction/displacement any time- events in Zimbabwe and more recently South Africa serve to illustrate this point.

Literacy: Due to the low levels of literacy in the farms, farm workers tend not to be exposed and thus have limited knowledge of their rights. Compounded to this is the inaccessibility of the farms by union or NGO organisations that would enlighten and provide legal protection to the workers. This isolated situation makes farm workers more susceptible to discrimination.

Mobilisation/unionise: The delegates from all countries confirmed that there was a general resistance of farm worker organization by the farmers. And in some countries entry into the farms is totally prohibited. FCTZ emphasised the above point, stating that they only work with farmers who have allowed them entry into their farms. The above situation coupled with the geographical spread of the farms, makes mobilisation of farm workers a big challenge.

Power relations: The situation on the farms show that the power relations between the farmer and the farm worker have not changed despite the end of the colonial era. There is evidence to show that the rules of "domestic government" prevail over that of the rules set by the official government.

Emerging Issues

- a) Delegates to the workshop questioned the inability of the postcolonial state to adequately address the issues affecting farm workers. Some delegates attributed the above scenario to the kind of development criteria adopted by the state e.g willing buyer willing seller, capitalism which has private property rights; limited funds available to the state to deliver on services and to some extent the political will.
- b) The delegates expressed concern over the inability by states in the SADC region to provide citizenship rights to farm-workers in spite of having lived and worked in respective states for many years(third generation) and in spite of having contributed to the economic development of these countries.
- c) Delegates recognized the fact that agriculture in the region is influenced along racial lines, this being the case, delegates called for a comparison of conditions of farm workers in the different ownership- white farmer, black farmers, government farmers. This

analysis will enable informed decision making regarding whether the old master/servant system has only been replaced by a new system but status remain the same.

Noted with concern is the growing xenophobia in the region. The delegates attributed this scenario to the ambiguity of rules and rights governing the different countries, which are not enforced. Delegates also questioned how democratic civil society organizations working in the area are.

Recommendations:

That farm workers are a key stakeholder in issues related to land and land reform/distribution, and thus the need to review legislation to be all inclusive in it's address of issues of the different stakeholders.

That livelihood and tenure security are critical elements for farm workers in any land reform process, thus the need to ensure that any process takes this into consideration. Options of farm workers having their own farms beside that of the farmer and living out side the farm were areas that could be explored.

That a regional identity of members of the SADC be considered so as to allow for the free flow of labour. Participants wonder why money should be allowed to cross borders and not the people.

That countries that are not yet facing a crisis like Zimbabwe take the opportunity to learn so as to avoid the challenges the country is going through. It is critical that they implement or initiate processes when they the political climate is right.

That gender be mainstreamed in all the legal processes so as to ensure that the rights of women and children are protected. The women should be allowed to enjoy same rights as other farm labourers.

That legislation be put in place that will allow for the free movement of unions and NGOs into the farms.

That government should take a more central role in monitoring and ensuring that the rights of farm workers are enforced. Unions and NGOs should work together to support government

There is need for tripartite forums where farmers, government, unions come together to share and discuss issues related to the conditions of farm workers.

There is a need to review the funding conditions of farm worker unions, firstly due to the little contributions the members are able to put forward and secondly a re-examination of the labour relations act, which does not encourage members to pay, since those who do not pay subscription to unions, still benefit from their negotiations.

5.3 GLOBALISATION

Status

Liberalisation: The meeting recognised the fact that the economic trends advocate for market forces and thus opening up of borders and integration of markets through production, investment and trade. This process in itself has an impact of farm workers as the farmer tries to adjust to fit and survive in the current environment. When prices plummet, farmers cushion themselves by among others the reduction of wages for the farm-workers. Some of the offshoots are the increased mechanisation leading to reduced manual labour, more competition and in some instances shrinking production due to inability to compete.

Labour standards: Increasingly, consumer preferences are taking centre stage in dictating on products on the shelves. Some of the labour standards focus on the child labour, protection and security,

Emerging Issues

The participants noted with concern the inability to cushion farm workers from the global changes taking place. Fear was also expressed of the possible infiltration of the local farming by multinationals who may drive out local production capacity.

The growth of a liberalised market also results in sourcing for cheap labour, and children may fall victim of the same.

Liberalisation also sees the withdrawal of the state and in some long term reduced income from loss of revenue collection. This means cuts in social amenities that can be provided, in addition, the state is helpless as retrenchments take place.

Recommendations:

There is need for labour standardisation in the region, bearing in mind that in most cases it is the same trans-national companies operating.

It was recommended that issues related to privatisation be observed keenly by government, who should lay grounds to enable locals and farm workers rights are not compromised in the process.

Government should ensure that they put in place legislation to cushion different key stakeholders in the sector. This will include creating an environment for local producers.

Regionalisation: The governments in the region should consider seriously working together to improve their stake in the world. It is only by addressing the issues from a regional stands can the countries hope to survive the forces of globalisation. E.g having joint sales of products having agreed on a regional price, so as to ensure no country loses out.

There is need to carry out capacity building for farm worker unions, and organisation, so that they can understand and articulate issues relating to farm workers. The same groups should be able to engage and create awareness in the SADC organ.

5.4 LAND REFORM:

Status

The conference noted that the issue of land reform was pertinent in the region and that some countries were taking a step to address the imbalances that exist within the region stemming from the past colonial period. The delegates noted the manner in which land reform is taking place in Zimbabwe and called upon other countries to learn from the experience and try avoid the same mistakes.

The delegates noted that the land reform processes taking place did not consider the farm worker and that the processes either marginalized the same or displaced them, leaving them with no homes and sinking further into poverty.

Emerging Issues:

Delegates to the conference said that land reform was a necessary process that was long over due in the region and that this would be the only process that would ensure long term addressing of poverty and legal justice to the indigenous people. They however stressed the need for a clear and transparent process that identified the needs of all stakeholders and supported the same to enable the continuous economic returns from the land.

Delegates to the conference noted that land reform needed to be carried out professional so as to avoid environmental degradation. Again, reference was made to some incidences taking place in Zimbabwe.

Noted with concern was the limited information and data available regarding the farm working community. Organisations were noted to be giving generalised information on the situation. This was regarded as a major handicap, for it is difficult to influence policy if persons are not well informed and do not have data to support their assertions.

Recommendations:

That the governments implementing land reform should review their policies to ensure and include the rights of farm workers.

That governments should ensure that their land redistribution process is backed by capacity building and resources provision for the persons being resettled. This is to ensure productivity and prevent any environmental degradation.

That land reform be carried out under the rule of law of the respective countries and should avoid party politics that can promote corruption and tribalism,

That land reform should protect the cultural values of the people and consultation of key stakeholders in the process is paramount.

That organisations working in the sector, carryout research and document relevant information regarding the farm workers. This information is to be used of advocacy and lobbying in the region.

5.5 **FARM VISITS**

Some of the participants visited farms in the Goromonzi and Macheke areas to physically observe and relate some of the experiences they had shared with the Zimbabweans about the plight of farm workers. Below are the observations of the participants.

Goromonzi

Generally the participants were impressed by the developments at the farm. The participants made the following observations.

- **Issues of citizenship:** most of the farm workers were non-Zimbabweans and were not full citizens of Zimbabwe.
- **Wages:** although the wages were within the stipulated rates by government (i.e. Z\$1 800 per month) these could not cater for the basic needs of the workers especially with spiralling costs of living and harsh economic conditions characterising Zimbabwe.
- **Occupation Health:** Use of chemicals without adequate protective clothing seemed rampant
- **Social Problems:** Young girls were observed loitering around the farms. Although some of them attended the farm school and those nearby. It was common to have the girls sent back from school due to lack of payments of school fees. This made them easy targets of child labour
- **Division of Labour:** More women were observed in the grading shades rather than in the fields. Most of the women did not seem to have a voice as the manager answered most of the questions from the participants. Some participants observed that women were usually placed in certain labour tasks because they were paid less. The participants urged farmers to change attitudes towards the feminisation of women's work. The managers and supervisors were men not women. Although it was explained that the farm was an equal opportunity employer the participants questioned this assertion.

Macheke Farm Visit (Farm One)

The following observations were made:

- **Wages:** Participants noted that the wages of the farm workers could not sustain a family as the wage was not a living wage
- **Workers committees:** These were non-existent raising questions representation of workers grievances to the employer and vice versa. Unions were urged to look into the issue
- **Feminisation of Labour:** Women worked in the shades grading flowers whilst the men were in the fields. The managers and supervisors were all males raising questions about the claims of equal opportunity for both males and females. Generally women were not free to speak to the visitors leaving the manager and the supervisors speaking on their behalf.
- **Child Labour :** Many children especially young girls were loitering leaving them to be targets of child abuse as labourers or as sex victims.
- **Living conditions:** The accommodation at the farm was good but there was need to improve the toilets

Macheke Farm Two

Housing Facilities: The accommodation was good

Recreational Facilities: A nursery school for the farm children were in existence. There were no recreational facilities for women

Security of Tenure: Some of the farm workers were not permanent employees and some commuted from the surrounding areas

Performance Bonuses: These applied to the farm managers only

Burial Rights: The Farm had a cemetery where the workers buried their children with adults buried in their respective rural homes

School Fees Scheme: The farmer contributed 70% of school fees for Secondary School children

Farmer/Community Relations: the farmer had good working relations with the land occupiers led by the war veterans, the rural people in the surrounding communities. The farmer was also engaging with the community on how best to tackle the issue of landlessness through land redistribution

General observations

- The Farm Community Trust was commended for their work within farming communities and how they were encouraging farmers to move away from the paternalistic master-servant relationship to a relationship which stressed a community of purpose between the farmer-farm workers and the surrounding communities.
- Within the spirit of community of purpose, delegates observed that it was important to ensure that there was transparency in the operations of the farm. The organisations working with farm communities were urged to include economic literacy in their awareness for farm workers so that they were aware of labour inputs-benefits-profits and losses.

5.6 WAY FORWARD

The delegates having explored in details the individual country situations and challenges facing farm workers and them as organisations representing farm workers, made a commitment to continue with activities that would lift the standard of living of the farm workers. To enable this, the delegates identified to areas that they would have to consider so as to enhance their activities, these were-

- Networking and linkages
- Advocacy and lobbying

Networking/Linkages: Strategic networking was singled out as a critical element in the above process of trying to address the issues related to farm workers. This was emphasised due to the fact that the issues were not limited to one country, but the fact that the farm workers are coming from the different countries and thus there is interdependence. For example the threaten expulsion of 16 000 farm workers of Zimbabwean origin from South Africa will have a great impact on Zimbabwean families and the displacement of farm workers taking place on farms in Zimbabwe will impact heavily on Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. This interdependence means that the countries have to join forces in addressing the questions from a regional perspective. Bodies like the SADC and SATUC were identified as key entry points to regional strategies.

Advocacy and Lobbying: The delegates realised that there was a lot of ground to be covered in regards to addressing issues and that this could not be carried out by one group, thus the need for NGOs and farm worker Unions to join hands to address the issues related to farm workers and thereafter lobby government, parliamentarians farmers and all relevant SADC bodies for a change in policy.

Action: To address the above situation, the delegates divided themselves into groups based on the kind of organisation. i.e NGOs and Unions and in the above groups deliberated on how to take the process forward. The NGOs agreed to start a regional network that would concentrate on highlighting and addressing issues related to the farm workers and the Union agreed on a strategic way of collaborating. The results of the following deliberations are annexed in this report.