

## Review Articles

**Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe**, Gibbon, Peter (ed), Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, 1995, ISBN 91-7106-369-2, 283pp, (p/b). Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International, P O Box 4627, S-116-91 Stockholm, Sweden.

*"Zimbabwe's real wages in the non-agricultural sector fell by about 40% in the past 10 years, with the civil service sector experiencing an even more severe cut in real wages, says the National Merchant Bank..." (Financial Gazette, 14 November 1996).*

*"For two and a half weeks last month, public service workers in Zimbabwe went on a nation-wide strike... the strike highlighted a more disturbing fact: that as the government prepares to enter the second phase of its Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, life for the majority of Zimbabweans had become unbearable, threatening the same stability the country needs to achieve its development goals" (SAPEM, September 1996).*

*"... Before embarking on the second phase of ESAP, let us critically examine unemotionally our past achievements and failures before sending our people to the economic gallows..." (Letter by B A Mapuranga of Chegutu, Sunday Mail, 17 November 1996).*

*"President Mugabe has over the past 16 years heralded his country's public health sector as one of his government's success stories since it came to power in 1980. But that success is fast losing its glow after unprecedented strikes by health workers which they say signal mounting frustration over deteriorating standards in government hospitals and government inaction to stem the slide." (Financial Gazette, 14 Nov 1996).*

*"The People's Voice attacked the ZCTU for its stance in the ongoing labour crisis. It said the ruling ZANU (PF) had actually worked hard to establish the ZCTU at independence... But this organisation has now been hijacked by some leaders who pursue personal political interests..." (Sunday Mail, 17 November 1996).*

*"Students expelled for SDF delay in releasing fees" (Herald, 23 October 1996).*

*Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe* has quite a history; the three studies are the result of several years of research and discussion, dating back to a research programme launched in 1990, entitled "*The Political and Social Context of Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa*," based at the Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. The studies first came to light at a workshop jointly organised by the Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and the School of Social Work in Harare in March 1992. This workshop represented the conclusion of the first phase of the programme. Amongst other aims, the programme "... seeks to play a catalytic and supportive role in relation to work on adjustment-related issues by African-based scholars, complementing initiatives by the Africa Economic Research Consortium, CODESRIA, SAPEs, UNRISD and others."

Phase one was published as a book entitled *Social Change and Economic Reform in Africa*, edited by Peter Gibbon (1993). The chapters in this book comprise the papers presented at the Harare workshop and are briefer, covering a broader range of issues in Kenya and Tanzania as well as Zimbabwe. The third study in "Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe" (*Health and Structural Adjustment in Rural and Urban Settings in Zimbabwe*, by Leon Bijlmakers, Mary Bassett and David Sanders) has also been published as a Nordiska Afrikainstitutet research report (No 101, 1996). Results of the third phase of the study (all three chapters) will be published in a forthcoming book.

This contextualisation of the studies – mentioned in the first book – has for some reason been dropped in the current one. The title of the programme is only mentioned briefly in the "blurb" on the back cover, and the role played by those whose assistance is acknowledged is also not mentioned.

Without knowing this background one might not appreciate the amount of work which has gone into – and is going into – these extended studies. They have all three been worked and reworked, discussed and sometimes rewritten. They have been reviewed by the eminent scholars mentioned so briefly in the Acknowledgements, and by the wider scholarly community.

So, how have they developed?

### ***Effects of ESAP on the Labour Movement***

The first study, by Lloyd Sachikonye, deals with the effects of ESAP on the labour movement. His first paper was written in 1993, and is descriptive and introductory in nature. The second is the result of a more in-depth and empirical research programme, and includes a more complex view of the issues behind the introduction of ESAP. The first study was also hampered by being written in the aftermath of the 1992 drought, following which many called for a suspension of the economic reforms (McGarry, 1994).

In his introduction, Sachikonye states that the core objective of the study is to ascertain whether or not there is emerging a new or modified labour regime as a consequence of liberalisation measures under ESAP. The formal sector working class has always been very small. In the 1993 study, Sachikonye noted that of the 1.1m workers, those engaged in production-related processes had not increased significantly in the previous 12 years. The weakness of the Zimbabwean proletariat is compounded by its lack of disengagement from the countryside. Despite the land shortage, most men still have a plot of land, however small, often managed by a wife, which lessens any commitment to formal worker organisation. The emphasis on the effects of ESAP on the working class itself, rather than another description of deteriorating economic and social conditions is an important departure.

The study was carried out by means of interviews with workers in different sectors of the economy – textile and clothing, the heavy industrial sector, and the agro-industrial and beverage sectors.

In all sectors studied, investment in new equipment and technology is cited as evidence that ESAP is not causing de-industrialisation. However, evidence published in the recent ZCTU publication (*Beyond ESAP*, 1996) contradicts this assertion. For example in the clothing and textile sector, the number of clothing firms registered with the CZI fell by 21.4% from 280 in 1991 to 220 by 1995. One of the companies investigated by Sachikonye – Cone Textiles – has closed down resulting in a loss of more than 6 000 jobs, despite investment in new equipment.

ZCTU also cites the tariff structure as contributing to de-industrialisation, with firms no longer manufacturing products using some imported parts, because it is cheaper to import the finished product.

De-industrialisation aside, is there, then, a new or modified labour regime as a consequence of liberalisation measures under ESAP? ESAP is definitely conditioning relations between the labour movement, employers and the state. As Sachikonye has found, managerial control has been enhanced – he found stricter supervision and enlarged job tasks, and employment insecurity. Workers' perceptions of labour relations seem to be inconsistent – why is this? Sachikonye mentions the effects of drought-relief measures at the time of his study: it would be interesting to question workers today, particularly in the light of recent labour unrest. As unrest widens, the state continues to interfere in labour relations: it is currently attempting to undermine the ZCTU by establishing a rival trades union coordinating body – the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions. We look forward to the next update of Sachikonye's fascinating and topical study.

### ***Structural Adjustment, Women and Informal Trade in Harare***

Structural Adjustment Programmes ignore the micro – they create no opportunities

for smaller enterprises or communal farmers. Policies emphasising export-led growth have not produced results mainly due to constant devaluation of local currencies. Real value of exports in terms of foreign exchange earnings has in fact declined at a rate of 2.7% a year as opposed to 9% annual growth during the period 1985-90 before ESAP (Gonçalves, in SAPEM, Vol 9 No 12).

The first study on this topic, by Veronica Brand, Rodreck Mupedziswa and Perpetua Gumbo, was published in 1993. It provided a background – definitions of informal sector, its history in Zimbabwe dating back to pre-independence days, gave an introduction to problems faced by women and described the types of activities undertaken in the informal sector. It presented case studies to illustrate the lives of some women.

This study narrows the focus from women informal sector workers in general to women and informal trade. It is already known that retailing is the least profitable area of informal sector activities and the least capable of development. What are the possibilities of moving women away from trading – especially given recent South African restrictions on entry which will seriously affect women cross-border traders – and into the more viable activities of the final goods- and services-producing sector? Aryee and Mhone (1990) conclude that “... once those activities which possess identifiable comparative efficiency vis-a-vis some formal sector activities are separated from those that are mere cushions for surplus labour, viable employment and income-generating alternatives could be identified and promoted, *and this is desperately needed given the secular stagnation in Southern Africa*” [my italics].

Possibly, then, this study is useful in separating off the retail sector, revealing just how little hope there is in pursuing these kinds of activities, and what the problems are for women who attempt to survive by these means.

As in the study by Sachikonye, the authors mention the difficulty of ascribing the causes of hardship solely to ESAP, in a time of severe drought. More emphasis is placed on this aspect than in Sachikonye's study, and arguments are advanced to support the contention (of all the women studied) that it is indeed ESAP which weighs more heavily against them.

One interesting finding which emerged from the study, which may merit further investigation, is the extent of separation of many of the women studied from their rural areas. Are we seeing here a process of proletarianisation? As Sachikonye noted in his 1993 study, the oscillation of workers between town and peasant sector affects their capacity for organisation and their class consciousness – indeed there will never be an effective working class in Africa while this phenomenon persists.

So if life as a trader is untenable, what then? What are the possibilities for retraining and re-directing women's activities to more sustainable activities? We hope that some of these issues will be addressed in the next phase of the study.

### ***Health and Structural Adjustment in Rural and Urban Settings***

We now have three studies dealing with health and structural adjustment. The first, published in 1993, was written by Frances Chinemana and David Sanders, entitled "*Health and Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe.*" Chinemana subsequently left and the following studies were continued by Sanders together with Leon Bijlmakers and Mary Bassett. The chapter reviewed here presents "some interim findings," the final report being published separately as a Nordiska Afrikainstitutet Research Report in 1996.

The 1993 paper presents the correlation between economic growth and health status in a more theoretical way. Sustained economic growth over the long run does lead to improved health and nutritional status; the paper illustrates the complexity of this relationship, and maps the rise and fall of health service provision from colonial days to 1993. The paper omits to mention the factors of drought and AIDS, but this is rectified in the study being reviewed here.

The study points out that, "*...it has been a concern for those involved in the project that the outcome of the research be both meaningful and useful.*" It hopes to affect policy decisions at the highest levels. This emphasis on research being applicable is very laudable, and moreover, the study itself could not be more needed at this time of acute crisis in the health sector.

The study presents the results of the first eight months of a baseline household survey conducted from May-June 1993 in one urban area (Chitungwiza) and one rural area (Murehwa). The second part presents the results of a series of focus group discussions held with nurses and community members in the same areas, in which the main focus was on survival and professionalism amongst health workers and the quality of care. Although health manpower issues have been discussed before (School of Social Work, 1989), the problem of attitude and professionalism of nursing care has not been a focus, yet this is a major aspect of the current crisis.

Although this study, unlike the first, does emphasise the difficulty of disaggregating factors such as drought and chronic disease, AIDS is still mentioned only in passing. At the time of writing this review, every second bed in hospitals is occupied by a patient with AIDS (Hansen, 1986). Surely this cannot but be an important factor? AIDS is a disease of poverty. Does AIDS incidence affect provision of health services through the burden it places on them, or does ESAP and poverty through the erosion of health services affect the incidence of AIDS?

Among the findings of the study were a presentation of the problems faced by nurses – poor conditions of service were a major complaint. Economic hardship was given as a major cause of nurses' change in attitude towards their jobs (many have had to take up other activities to supplement their incomes): as one said, "*today it is no longer a calling. It's a means of earning bread.*" This situation in

1996 has reached crisis point, with a long drawn out strike by both nurses and junior doctors still unresolved as I write. The recommendations put forward in this excellent and conscientious study urgently need to be applied.

A final remark: why no index? Since the studies are inter-linked in many ways it would be most helpful to refer between them to related subjects.

***Other publications studied for this review:***

Aryee, George A & Mhone, Guy C Z (1990) **Employment Promotion in the Informal Sector and the Current Economic Crisis - the case of Southern Africa**, ILO/SATEP, Lusaka.

Bijlmakers, Leon A; Basset, Mary T; Sanders, David M (1996) **Health and Structural Adjustment in Rural and Urban Zimbabwe**, Research Report No 101, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala.

Gibbon, Peter (ed) **Social Change and Economic Reform in Africa** (1993), Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala.

Hansen, Kristian (1996) **The Costs and Quality of Community Home Based Care for HIV/AIDS patients and their Communities in Zimbabwe**, paper presented at a seminar on AIDS and Poverty, UZ, IDS, 21 November.

McGarry, Brian (1994) **Double Damage**, Mambo Press in Association with Silveira House, Gweru.

SAPEM (1995) "Trade Unions and ESAP: who is winning?" (1995) in **Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly**, Vol 9, No 2, Nov.

SAPEM (1995) "Poverty: who benefits from Structural Adjustment?" (1996) in **Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly**, Vol 9, No 12, Sept.

School of Social Work (1989) **Health Manpower Issues in Relation to Equity in and Access to Health Services in Zimbabwe**, Harare, 8-9 June, Journal of Social Development in Africa, School of Social Work, Harare.

Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (1996) **Beyond ESAP: framework for a long-term development strategy in Zimbabwe beyond the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)**, ZCTU, Harare.

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