

maximize economic benefits and hence survival chances. Migration is a survival strategy that strengthens rather than undermines rural-urban links, which are beneficial to both urban and rural inhabitants.

The volume ends with an interesting section on urban agriculture as a survival strategy for different groups of people. It is a part of the strategy for meeting basic food needs as shown by Drakakis-Smith in Harare. The same themes are repeated in Gutu (Nigeria), Mlozi, Luponga and Mvena (Tanzania). In spite of the many problems the poor face in urban contexts they are quite innovative and resourceful when it comes to meeting their food requirements. On the other hand, Binbangambah (Uganda) argues that the ruralization of urban centres through agriculture is a reflection of the extent of rural poverty and urban decay.

This book is a useful addition to the literature on the rural-urban interface in Africa.

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**The Legal Situation of Women in Southern Africa** Edited by Julie Stewart and Alice Armstrong. Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1990, xiv, 241 pp., ISBN 0-908307-15-2, Z\$11.

This book comprises contributions by scholars from Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe on the legal situation of women in their respective countries. These six countries are included in a Research Project on Women and Law in Southern Africa.

The book opens with an introduction by Maboreke on the concept of women's law. She points to the need to understand how the law has perceived women and responded to their lives and to uncover the extent to which the law itself is biased towards a particular view of life. She explains that the distinguishing feature of women's law is its insistence upon the factual knowledge of the effect of the reality of women's lives upon their access to formal rights.

In Botswana, Molokomme touches on laws relating to women's legal capacity, marriage, inheritance, maintenance, divorce, health and abortion. She argues that the legal situation of women should be studied within the context of socio-economic realities and recommends a multi-dimensional approach in which lawyers work with sociologists, economists and other social scientists in the study of women's law.

In Lesotho, Seeiso *et al.* state that although women are *de facto* heads of households due to labour migration, they nonetheless continue to be subject to legal disabilities. One such disability is the absolute authority given to the husband to act on behalf of his wife in marriages in community of property. In such marriages the legal capabilities of wives of migrants are severely restricted until the husband's return. The writers also present an overview of other laws affecting women in the area of health, employment, commerce, and education.

The Mozambican section by Casimiro *et al.* focuses in particular on the role of women within the judicial system. With regard to the overall

legal situation of women, they warn against the limitations of colonial research. They point out that this research failed to analyse forms of exploitation, class relations and their transformation. They also highlight the need for a thorough investigation of the forms of family organization and the cultural reality.

Nhlapo analyses the legal situation of women in Swaziland in the context of a duality of cultural institutions, political and civil arrangements, economic spheres and legal institutions. He discusses the importance of the family in the perpetuation and well-being of society. He further notes that women's role in the family makes the issue of women a value-laden topic and tends to circumscribe the parameters of discussion.

In the *Zambian case*, Himonga *et al.* also cast the legal situation of women in the context of legal dualism, particularly with regard to marriage, land, and succession. The writers see a need for further research on the evolving customary law in the areas of marriage maintenance and customary property rights. They also emphasize the need to study the effectiveness of rights conferred by general law on *Zambian women*.

On *Zimbabwe*, Stewart *et al.* give a comprehensive picture of the legal position of women as regards citizenship, legal capacity, marriage, divorce, inheritance, delict, health, education and employment. They note that the legal situation of women is often understood in terms of the law as it is in the books. They emphasize the need for research on the application of the law, its relevance, the extent to which women know about their rights and the issues which the women themselves consider important.

The concluding chapter by Gay discusses the range of people who need to know about women and the law such as top-level development planners, middle-level development workers, legal aid workers, counsellors, health workers and ordinary citizens both rich and poor. She also examines research needs and emphasizes the necessity to place these within a sociological context. An example is given of the recurring need in the previous chapters to research into the sociology of the legal profession in each country. Methods of data collection such as case studies, ethnographic studies, workshops, and documentary research are discussed.

The book provides a useful overview of the laws in each of the six countries and will be of use to students, scholars and researchers interested in gaining an overall perspective of the legal situation of women in Southern Africa.

The book is, however, essentially rooted in the law. It mentions though neglects the analysis of other dimensions that have a bearing on women's lives.