

Women Working for Wages: Putting Flesh on the Bones of a Rural Labour Market Survey in Mozambique

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The life stories of six women working for wages are analysed together with quantitative data from the first ever large-scale rural labour market survey undertaken in Mozambique. Quantitative data from three provinces are used to emphasize the heterogeneity of the characteristics of women working for wages, as well as to examine hypotheses about dynamic processes suggested by the life stories. It is argued that there are important methodological advantages to be gained if researchers can cross-check their own quantitative survey data with qualitative data they have collected themselves, as well as with a wide range of historical and secondary sources. The policy implications of the findings concerning the extreme deprivation suffered by many rural wage workers, the intergenerational transmission of poverty and the relative success of some rural women are discussed.

Introduction: Methods, Context and Significance

In 2002/3 a detailed questionnaire was completed for 2,626 people (1,232 women and 1,394 men) working for wages in the rural areas and small district towns of three provinces in Mozambique. This was the first ever large-scale survey of the rural labour market in Mozambique. The research aimed to fill an acknowledged gap in the literature on Mozambique and sub-Saharan Africa.¹

The respondents provided a great deal of information, not only about themselves but also about the additional 16,311 people who were members of their households, their spouses, parents, children, siblings, grandchildren, and others.² Preliminary tabulations of the survey

* The survey on which this article is based was carried out between May 2002 and April 2003. It was funded by the National Directorate of Planning and Budget of the Ministry of Planning and Finance in Mozambique. The authors acknowledge André Noor's help in data entry programming, as well as the work of the research team in Mozambique, led by Claudio Massingarella, Virgulino Nhate and Araujo Martinho. 24 enumerators were involved in the provinces of Manica, Zambezia and Nampula. These provinces were selected because they are among the most populous provinces in the country; because initial exploratory work suggested they would reveal precisely the range of economic activities that the purposive sampling aimed to capture; and because, both recently and historically, there has been far less attention paid by researchers to rural labour markets in these provinces than in some other Mozambican provinces. There is a considerable literature on wage employment in some of these other provinces: see references cited in B. O'Laughlin, 'Through a Divided Glass: Dualism, Class, and the Agrarian Question in Mozambique', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 23, 4, (1996), pp. 1–39. The stories presented in this article come from Manica, where the work of our enumerators was outstanding. We especially thank Orlando Bulamo, Sheila Palma, Gonçalves 'Guinda' and Ricardo Celestino.

1 'Research has cast little light on the role of wage labour in rural income strategies; we know of no empirical study that has explicitly focussed on this issue...': D. Tschirley and R. Benfica, 'Smallholder Agriculture, Wage Labour, and Rural Poverty Alleviation in Mozambique: What Does the Evidence Tell Us?' (Maputo, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Directorate of Economics Research Paper Series, 41, 2000), pp. 2, 7. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) also stresses the lack of reliable statistics on waged agricultural labour: ILO, 'Decent Work in Agriculture' (Geneva, ILO, ILO-Bureau for Workers' Activities Background Paper, International Workers' Symposium on Decent Work in Agriculture), p. 42.

2 The definition of the 'household' included all people who made a contribution quite regularly to the survival of the household. This definition aimed to capture the most important economic relationships between a group of people, rather than focusing on 'residential' criteria, kinship, or eating habits.

data were an indispensable guide to framing and selecting new types of questions to ask in informal, longer discussions with some respondents about their lives and those of their children. For example, initial tabulations showed that a very high proportion of the female respondents working for wages in rural Mozambique (40 per cent) were divorced, widowed, or separated³ and proved that this type of worker had been relatively unsuccessful in the labour market, suffering low wages, irregular employment and harsh working conditions. This made it possible to identify those particular women who, relative to other poor rural women in the survey, were experiencing the greatest difficulty in surviving through participation in rural labour markets.

In the course of completing the questionnaires, field supervisors and enumerators were also asked to make special note of women who appeared to be 'very successful', when their living standards and working conditions were compared to other women of a similar age and living in the same area. The purpose of this exercise was to facilitate 'contrastive exploration'. This involves selecting cases where different outcomes emerge from conditions that might be expected to generate similar outcomes.⁴ Several of the divorced, widowed and separated women, who were identified through preliminary tabulations of the survey data and the enumerators' notes, agreed to spend many hours talking to the researchers about the history of their relationships with their parents, their children, men, and employers. The stories they told about their lives suggested new lines of analysis, new explorations and criticisms that should subsequently be made of the quantitative data recorded in the formal questionnaires.

This research follows a trend in social research towards combining various forms of quantitative and qualitative methodology.⁵ Approaches to 'multi-strategy' research methods differ according to whether one method is given priority and according to the sequencing of applying research methods.⁶ Here, the quantitative survey was given priority. The qualitative life histories followed on from the survey, and cases were selected from survey participants. The two methods were combined, in three ways. First, the survey questionnaire design evolved from an iterative process, building partly on both pilot interviews and more open qualitative discussions with a small sample of rural Mozambicans. Second, the two methods were complementary in supporting research into rural women's labour market experiences in particular. Third, the life history interviews and analysis allowed for triangulation with the survey findings and with secondary data.

This article will present little quantitative analysis and no econometric modelling of the data collected in the questionnaires. The main focus is on presenting archetypal life stories that dramatically highlight themes raised in the stories told by women working for wages.⁷ They are not statistically 'representative'. However, the personalities of six of the women concerned, their evident desire to explain their circumstances in detail to the female research assistants, and their ability to answer clearly cross-cutting and repeated questions, all meant that the stories of Tomasinha, Maninha, Rita, Amalia, Anita and Chinasse deserve detailed examination. Moreover, because these life stories have been written in the specific context of

3 One of the very few recent surveys covering female rural wageworkers in Mozambique also found that a high proportion (38 per cent) of female workers were divorced or widowed. The survey covered workers dismissed by two privatised cashew-processing factories: C. Vijffhuizen, C. Braga, L. Artur and N. Kanji, 'Gender, Markets and Livelihoods in the Context of Globalisation: A Study of the Cashew Sector in Mozambique' (London, IIED, Main Report, Phase 1: Nampula Province, 2003), p. 15.

4 T. Lawson, 'Modern Economics: A Problem and a Solution', in E. Fullbrook (ed.), *A Guide to What's Wrong with Economics* (London, Anthem Press, 2004).

5 H. White, 'Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Poverty Analysis', *World Development*, 30, 3 (March 2002) and contributions to the 'Qualitative and Quantitative Poverty Appraisal: Complementarities, Tensions, and the Way Forward' Workshop, Cornell University, 15–16 March 2001.

6 A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

7 A total of fourteen life stories were collected in the three provinces.

a broader, quantitative research project into rural labour markets in Mozambique, they will, it is hoped, have greater policy relevance than the anecdotal material contained in the text ‘boxes’ that the international aid agencies so often include as popularising afterthoughts in their glossy publications. Iteratively combining large-scale, quantitative survey techniques with purposively selected micro case studies is a method designed to avoid ‘the kind of rural rapid appraisals that do not add up to much more than quick hit-and-run missions which fall short on adequate quantification as well as qualification’.⁸ The aim is to present high quality evidence rather than exclusively ‘qualitative’ or ‘quantitative’ data and, where possible, to compare the primary research results with the secondary literature on Mozambique.

After presenting the life stories of four extremely poor women who are working for wages in Manica Province the second part of the article uses survey data, covering a much larger number of both female and male workers in three provinces, in a comparative analysis of degrees of deprivation. One aim is to suggest how quantitative data may be used to examine hypotheses about dynamic processes suggested by the life stories, especially hypotheses concerning the mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of poverty. However, the quantitative data are also used to emphasize the heterogeneity of rural female wage workers and to warn against the dangers of assuming that all members of ‘rural communities’ in Mozambique or rural women have similar needs and prospects. For example, it is shown that a group of 120 divorced, widowed or separated women have succeeded in obtaining the type of job that transforms the quality of their lives. The third part of the article expands on this theme, by briefly telling two additional life stories. The widowed women concerned, Anita and Chinasse, also work for wages in Manica Province, but their living standards have improved dramatically through their participation in the labour market.

The article concludes by outlining priorities for the future analysis of research material and by suggesting some policy initiatives that might allow much larger numbers of women to achieve at least as much success as Anita and Chinasse from labour market participation in rural areas. These new policy initiatives are urgently required because of the overwhelming evidence in this research that poor rural women are very unlikely to avoid recycling of poverty by means of smallholder farming and self-employment financed by micro-credit agencies.

Successive political changes over the past century or so brought about dramatic changes in Manica Province, shaping all the life stories presented in this article and forging particular patterns of work. Large-scale male labour migration across the border to the west into what was then Southern Rhodesia,⁹ and also further south to South Africa, dominated the social life of many families during the colonial period. Portuguese colonial hut taxes and labour *corvées* – generating a labour supply to plantations in the province – were another defining feature of the period. After independence, the ruling Frelimo party’s endeavours to organise production around large state farms and communal villages shaped many people’s lives but, increasingly, the major fact affecting people’s survival, their work and their mobility was warfare. The post-independence war was intense in Manica Province where, for extended periods, the Renamo rebels controlled large rural areas. Renamo’s tributary system pitched many people into an entrenched defencelessness.¹⁰ Migration across the border into Southern

8 J. Breman and G. Wiradi, *Good Times and Bad Times in Rural Java* (Leiden, KILTV Press, 2002). Rushed ‘hit-and-run’ data collection has been a feature of a great deal of NGO work in rural Mozambique: see B. Pijnenberg, ‘Keeping It Vague: Discourses and Practices of Participation in Rural Mozambique’ (PhD thesis, Wageningen, 2004), p. 145.

9 See E. Allina-Pisano, ‘Borderlands, Boundaries and the Contours of Colonial Rule: African Labor in Manica District, Mozambique, c.1904–1908’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 36, 1 (2003), pp. 59–82, p. 67.

10 D. Hughes, ‘Refugees and Squatters: Immigration and the Politics of Territory on the Zimbabwe–Mozambique Border’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25, 4 (1999).

Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, during the colonial period and after independence, was a constant feature, mixing straightforward flight with a bid to find waged work. However, in the past few years a dramatic reversal of migration flows has come about, as Zimbabweans, and people living in Zimbabwe but with some claim to Mozambican forebears, have crossed into Manica in search of wage labour in the expanding commercial agriculture sector.

Wage labour has historically been seen as almost exclusively a male activity. Even recently, in one description of Manica it was claimed that: 'Even if a woman is able to free herself from childcare and household responsibilities, there are virtually no wage-earning opportunities except for a handful of government jobs in health, education, and agriculture.'¹¹

However, the evidence from the labour market survey carried out in 2002/03 suggests that large numbers of women enter the market for wage labour and that this is extremely significant in determining the ability of many households to survive.

Four Women's Life Histories

Tomasinha

When she was about fifteen years old, Tomasinha's father stopped living with her mother and no longer provided any support to the family. Tomasinha's mother then survived by finding casual wage work on farms belonging to her neighbours (*ganho-ganho*). Her three daughters also did *ganho-ganho* from an early age, or were paid some cash for pounding maize at the homes of their neighbours.¹² Tomasinha did not complete primary school, because her mother did not have enough cash to allow any of her daughters to continue at school.

When she was eighteen, Tomasinha married.¹³ Her husband refused to allow her to continue to engage in wage labour, probably, she said, because he was jealous of the men she might meet when working. Ten years later, her husband left her and travelled to Beira and Maputo, although he did return briefly in 1997, when Tomasinha became pregnant with her last child. He married another woman in Maputo and provided no support at all to Tomasinha or their children in the six years before he died in 2003.

Tomasinha tried to survive by doing *ganho-ganho*, by growing some food on a field 'borrowed' from friends, and by trading in bananas. Buying bananas and re-selling them at the side of the road generated hardly any net cash income, while trading in charcoal at the roadside was even less remunerative. Her crops, principally maize and sorghum, regularly failed on the borrowed plot and, in the rare seasons that the crops did not fail,¹⁴ Tomasinha faced pressures from the owners of the land to hand over a considerable share of the proceeds.

Her attempts to find unskilled 'formal' employment in a government office failed, because she was said to be too old (at 35) for these jobs. Eventually, with the help of a classmate from her school days who was working at the local offices of the Ministry of Education, she obtained a permanent job as a domestic servant for a Ministry official in mid-2002. But this job proved to be barely superior to *ganho-ganho* employment.

11 J. Pfeiffer, 'Cash Income, Intra-household Cooperative Conflict, and Child Health in Central Mozambique', *Medical Anthropology*, 22 (2003), p. 102.

12 In the quantitative survey, 78 per cent of those female respondents who had experienced desperate episodes of hardship reported that, in attempting to overcome their difficulties, they were most likely to resort to casual wage labour. The Participatory Poverty Assessment carried out in 2001 confirms that the practice of *ganho-ganho* was always associated with the very poorest households: MPF, *Avaliação Participativa Da Pobreza: Relatório de Síntese* (Maputo, Government of Mozambique, 2001), p. 22.

13 In the social context of the provinces visited most marriages were reported as *união marital*, which normally corresponds to 'traditional marriages' that are not sanctioned by the civil registry.

14 In the quantitative survey, 67 per cent of all respondents had experienced crop failures over the previous two seasons.

When she was interviewed in March 2003, Tomasinha had not received any wages at all for three months. In fact, both the husband and wife who employed her as a servant were experiencing delays in the payments of their own salaries from the state,¹⁵ which not only meant that they could not pay Tomasinha's wages, but also that their own diet deteriorated, with the result that Tomasinha was no longer able to eat any meat with her meals at their house. In the week before her formal interview, Tomasinha and her children did not eat any meat, chicken, eggs, milk or fresh fish at home.¹⁶ Tomasinha said that, if she had been paid the MT250,000 per month that she was promised (equivalent to just over \$10),¹⁷ the job would have been better than *ganho-ganho* agricultural labour but, later in 2003, she was forced to abandon her full-time employment as a domestic servant to seek again the more casual forms of wage work that actually generated cash. After a few months of *ganho-ganho* combined with banana trading, she succeeded in finding a two-month cleaning job with a construction firm, which paid MT5,000 per hour. This job required Tomasinha to leave her house at about 5:30 am, returning between 6 pm and 7 pm, a slightly shorter working day than she had experienced as a domestic servant.

These long hours of work, inadequate and irregular pay, combined with periods of unprofitable self-employment, had serious consequences for Tomasinha's children. She had given birth to six children, one of whom had died at the age of ten months. While she was being interviewed, it was clear that her youngest child was extremely ill, running a high fever, but Tomasinha did not have any cash (MT5,000 would probably have been sufficient) to take him to the clinic. The oldest living child, G., was seventeen years old and had only been able to complete Grade 5 at primary school.¹⁸ While still at school G. had become pregnant. Her baby was now just over a year old, living with G. and the baby's schoolboy father in the provincial capital, but the baby had not attended the clinic for about four months and had not been putting on enough weight prior to that date.¹⁹ G. had never been able to attend school regularly; she was often sent home because her mother had no money to buy her a pen or an exercise book. Besides, she had been working alongside her mother doing *ganho-ganho* since she was ten years old. Her mother would not have been able to pay for her to stay on at primary school and enter Grade 6.²⁰ Tomasinha said that G. had married because she felt that no one at home would ever be able to take care of her, rather than out of any real desire to marry.

15 Reductions in expenditure on public sector wages clearly have knock-on effects on the real wages of female domestic servants in rural areas. These effects are rarely recognised when assessing the impact of orthodox fiscal policies on the rural poor.

16 Most of the female respondents in the quantitative survey reported that no-one in their households had eaten these high value foods in the last seven days. The proportion of these households never consuming meat was 81 per cent, chicken 70 per cent, eggs 78 per cent, milk 88 per cent and fresh fish 64 per cent.

17 The median wage of the female servants in the quantitative survey was MT150, 000.

18 Primary education in Mozambique consists of seven years of schooling divided into two levels: Level 1 (EP1) ends at Grade 5 and Level 2 (EP2), which consists of Grades 6 and 7.

19 Attendance at mother-child clinics in Manica is costly, even when the services are officially free. See R. Chapman, 'Endangering Safe Motherhood in Mozambique: Prenatal Care as Pregnancy Risk', *Social Science and Medicine*, 57 (2003), p. 365. The chances that a child from a poor rural family will be immunised or treated appropriately for diarrhoea are relatively small: S. Chao and K. Kostermans, '*Improving Health for the Poor in Mozambique: The Fight Continues*' (Washington, Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series, World Bank, 2002), p. 18. The differences between the immunisation rates of poor and wealthy households in Mozambique are very large in comparison to most other sub-Saharan African countries, only exceeded by the gaps in Niger and Chad: see D. Gwatkin and G. Deveshwar-Bahl, 'Immunization Coverage Inequalities: An Overview of Socio-Economic and Gender Differentials in Developing Countries' (<http://poverty.worldbank.org/library/view.php?id=8970>, in *Poverty Net: Recent Papers on Poverty, Health, Nutrition and Population* by World Bank Staff, World Bank, September 2001), p. 18.

20 In 2004, the National Director of Planning in the Education Ministry reported that although 731,000 children were enrolled in Grade 1, only 197,000 pupils could enrol in Grade 6. He also said that the average pupil:teacher ratio was 64:1. See AIM Reports, www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/aim268.html, AIM Reports, 19 January 2004.

It is also unlikely that G's younger sisters will be able to complete primary school. One of them has to take care of the youngest daughter and son, aged eight and five, while Tomasiha is at work.²¹ More importantly, all three of them, like their older sister G., have to help their mother in *ganho-ganho*, and in her attempts at farming and trading. Tomasiha had no money to buy her children pens, exercise books or school uniforms and saw no prospects of being able to find the cash to pay school fees.²² The youngest child had started school, but had only attended for two weeks, partly because he refused to go if he had not eaten and there was often no food for him to eat at the beginning of the day. The class sizes in the local primary school were large, over 60 pupils per teacher, and during September 2003 the teachers were on strike because they had not been paid. It was hardly surprising that M., Tomasiha's ten-year-old daughter, had not yet managed to complete Grade 2 and could not read.

When Tomasiha's two-month contract with the construction company came to an end in September 2003, she invested over MT40,000 in producing some small cakes that her 10 year-old daughter M. then tried to sell by the side of the road. It took M. a whole day to sell the cakes. M.'s efforts, as well as the day spent by her mother in preparing the cakes, resulted in a net cash return of MT6,000. In general, the returns to the trading activities undertaken by Tomasiha, G. and her other daughters rarely amounted to MT10,000 per day, which was approximately the amount Tomasiha normally received as the daily wage for *ganho-ganho* labour.

However, G. was receiving no cash at all for the strenuous domestic labour she was performing while living away from her mother. She lived in a very small two-roomed shack with her husband and four of his male cousins. Her husband's uncle allowed G. and her husband to stay in the house and bought them food with the salary he earned as a carpenter. In return, G. cooked, cleaned and did the laundry for the five men living in the house, sleeping on the floor of the kitchen while the men, including her husband, shared the beds in the other room. G. was not confident that her relationship with her husband would last, but knew that Tomasiha and her grandmother had no funds to support her if she returned to their home. Although she no longer had to rely on her mother for food and accommodation, she appeared depressed and more dispirited than many of the other women interviewed.²³

G. and her mother had never had any contact with any of the many NGOs operating in the province, nor had they received any production credit for farming and trading.²⁴ When in desperate straits, Tomasiha had received gifts of food from other members of the Jehovah's Witness Church that she tried to attend, if she had no prospects for *ganho-ganho*, which always took priority over church attendance. Tomasiha had no debts, because neither shopkeepers nor relatives had provided her with loans. Her only source of credit was an advance on wages that she was occasionally able to obtain from the people who employed her as a casual agricultural labourer.

21 Two thirds of the female respondents in the quantitative survey had children younger than ten years old. About 40 per cent of these women reported that their children either had no one to look after them while they were at work, or that they were cared for by an older sibling.

22 The amount of cash required to send a child to primary school in rural Manica is approximately MT5,000 per year for the fees, plus another MT280,000 for a uniform and around MT 40–50,000 to buy schoolbooks etc. With four children at primary school, Tomasiha will have to find the lump sum equivalent of almost six months' wages to meet these costs, if uniforms become compulsory.

23 Adolescent fertility rates (15–19 years) are very much higher in poorer than in wealthier households in Mozambique and probably more than half of rural girls aged between fifteen and nineteen in Mozambique are either pregnant or mothers (Chao and Kostermans, *Improving Health*, p. 5; UNICEF, 'Provincial Data. Mozambique 2004' (http://www.unicef.org/mozambique/est_geral.htm). See also A. Granja, F. Machungo, A. Gomes and S. Bergstrom, 'Adolescent Maternal Mortality in Mozambique', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 28 (2001), pp. 303–306.

24 The only state-operated agricultural credit programme in the area, GAPI (Small Investments Support Office), concentrated on lending to rather large businesses and had only approved a total of 15 loans in 2003, few of them for farming. The average size of these loans was about MT500 million.

Maninha

The story of Maninha, a woman about fifteen years older than Tomasinha, has some important similarities. She too has never had any contact with NGOs, nor has she obtained food relief or loans, not even in the form of an advance payment by one of the people who employ her for *ganho-ganho*. She has insufficient cash to gain access to healthcare and she has suffered from the death of several children, underpayment by an employer, and her inability to find the resources to educate her two surviving children. These children are now unable to provide her with any significant help. Maninha, like Tomasinha, depends on finding *ganho-ganho* employment on small neighbouring farms and no longer lives with an adult male who might support her. Her efforts at farming on her own fields do not provide her with a reliable source of cash income (or food). In her best ever cultivation season, she was only able to sell crops to the value of MT20,000 (equivalent to about \$5 in 2002).

Maninha's parents did not go to school, and although they sent her brother to school for four years, she did not attend. Both Maninha and her brother helped their parents to obtain food by working with them as *ganho-ganho* labourers. When her parents died, Maninha married. Her first three children died and this precipitated her migration from Tete to her present home in Manica, at Macadeira on the Tete Road. Another child died after the move, leaving Maninha with a surviving son and daughter. There was not enough money for these two children to complete primary school. Maninha's daughter is now 25 years old and has had three children, one of whom died at the age of two.

Many years ago, Maninha's husband found some employment for wages near Macadeira, as a casual agricultural worker for a Portuguese farmer and doing *ganho-ganho* for neighbours, but her husband died when Maninha was about 24 years old. Later Maninha entered a relationship with another man, bearing a child that died as an infant.²⁵ Maninha later became pregnant again with the same man, but he beat her severely and, as a result, she had a miscarriage and consequently decided to leave him. She said that she was frightened he would kill her and that she had been hospitalised as a result of his violence.²⁶

Understandably, Maninha now had no desire to form a relationship with a man. She was not prepared to risk further episodes of the violence she had experienced at the hands of both her husband and her second partner. The latter had refused to allow her to seek *ganho-ganho* employment, unless he accompanied her. However, the joint wages were a source of dispute, sometimes because her partner took all the cash and got drunk. Alternatively, if Maninha insisted on taking some of the joint earnings, she risked being accused of giving money to other men and being beaten. She was also beaten if her partner saw her talking to any male neighbours. Maninha was pleased to report that her daughter was only being beaten 'a little' by her husband, and that her daughter was sometimes able to do *ganho-ganho* without her husband accompanying her.²⁷

25 Mozambique has one of the highest rates of infant and under-five mortality in the world and these rates are very much higher in the poorest households, such as Maninha's, than in richer households: see Chao and Kostermans, *Improving Health*, p. 5. The risks of post-neonatal and child mortality have also been shown to be very significantly higher in Mozambique when, as in Maninha's case, a child's father has not been to school: G. Macassa, G. Ghilagaber, E. Bernhardt, F. Diderichsen and B. Burstrom, 'Inequalities in Child Mortality in Mozambique: Differentials by Parental Socio-Economic Position', *Social Science and Medicine*, 57 (2003), pp. 2,255–64.

26 Maninha's fears were not unreasonable. Research at Maputo Central Hospital suggests that violent deaths make an important contribution to Mozambique's high maternal mortality rates. See A. Granja, E. Zacarias and S. Bergstrom, 'Violent Deaths: The Hidden Face of Maternal Mortality', *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, 109 (2002), pp. 5–8.

27 These abuses do not only take place in rural Mozambique. A woman working for wages in an urban garment enterprise had her nose cut off by her husband when she refused to agree to stop working and remain at home: K. Sheldon, *Pounders of Grain: A History of Women, Work, and Politics in Mozambique* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 2002), p. 156.

Together with a group of about ten other widows, Maninha regularly provides unpaid labour to the local OMM (Organização das Mulheres de Moçambique) secretary. However, her work has not resulted in any direct benefits, such as a share in relief distribution or contacts with NGOs. Indeed, when she was seriously ill in the week before the last interview, nobody helped her with the funds necessary for a visit to the local hospital – she needed MT15,000 to MT20,000 for transport and fees.

One of the many employers that Maninha relies on for *ganho-ganho* often sets tasks for MT10,000 that are so strenuous that they cannot be completed in a day, especially if Maninha takes a break for a meal. Maninha is then obliged to return the following day in order to complete the work and earn the MT10,000. In contrast, a larger farmer has paid her MT50,000 for a task she could complete in a day.²⁸ On the last day that the researchers met Maninha, they were introduced to her daughter who had spent the previous day walking, together with her husband, for six hours to reach a farm offering *ganho-ganho*. Their payment for a 15-hour day had been one bar of soap each.

Rita

Many other women have migrated more than once from one rural area to another in search of better economic opportunities and in an attempt to escape from war and crop failures.²⁹ Thus, Rita, who lived in Messica, described the impact of the war between Frelimo and Renamo where she lived in Messica in terms very similar to those used by Maninha. She frequently had to run away from her house and sleep for days in the bush. When she returned, she found that her house had been ransacked – there was nothing left. Partly to escape an earlier period of warfare, prior to Independence, Rita, her parents and four siblings had migrated from Messica to join a great many other Mozambicans working for wages on tobacco farms in Zimbabwe.³⁰

Rita's parents did not think it appropriate that girls should go to school. Rita worked on the tobacco farm in Zimbabwe for two years and then got married to a Mozambican migrant worker from Messica. She stopped working for wages in the tobacco fields immediately after her marriage. She gave birth to six children in Zimbabwe and three of them died there as infants before she returned to Messica in 1974.³¹ After her return, her other three children also died; the last death occurred a month before she talked to the researchers in 2003.

Earlier, in 1975, her husband had died and ever since that date she had been dependent on her income from *ganho-ganho*. Now Rita lives with her grandchildren and great grandchildren. The oldest grandchild is a 20-year-old man who sometimes finds *ganho-ganho* work and there are also two teenage grandsons (aged 16 and 14) who help her to produce a little on her farm. All of these young men failed to complete primary school. Rita has not considered another marriage, in part because she would then lose the house built by her deceased husband in Messica, but also because she preferred to retain access to her children and did not believe that a new husband would allow her to support them.

Rita's last remaining child died at home after three visits to the hospital in Vila Manica. Bus fares, hospital charges and food costs for these visits amounted to more than MT150,000.

28 The research team interviewed a large number of employers and found that task and time rates vary between very similar employers and from season to season, as well as within seasons and between specific tasks and workers.

29 About 20 per cent of all the female respondents in Manica covered by the quantitative survey had migrated from other districts and/or provinces, and many more described episodes of rural–rural temporary migration.

30 Migration by Mozambicans in search of agricultural wage employment in Zimbabwe allowed some Mozambicans to escape from poverty, as will be suggested below, although others have experienced brutal discrimination and, as in the case of Rita, have little to show for their work across the border: see B. Rutherford, *Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Postcolonial Zimbabwe* (London, Zed Books, 2001), p. 126; Human Rights Watch, 'Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe', *Human Rights Watch*, 14, 1A (March 2002), pp. 1–44.

31 The formal questionnaire did not attempt to investigate the causes of child deaths and this issue was not pressed during interviews for the life stories.

She did not have enough money to take her child to the hospital during her final illness. All of the cash earned by Rita and her grandchildren comes from casual agricultural wage labour, since they have never managed to make any cash at all by selling crops and, like all of the other women discussed above, Rita has no livestock of any kind.³² Rita has never been able to find as much *ganho-ganho* as she needs. She usually works for about ten different small farmers. She competes for these jobs with a large number of other women, most of whom are not living with a man. Although Rita's three grandsons once succeeded in obtaining three days of better remunerated employment at a nearby large-scale floricultural enterprise, they could not obtain further employment there because they lacked the right contacts with those hiring and could not afford the required payment/bribe (of about MT500,000) to be considered for a permanent job.

Rita has never been able to obtain a loan from a local shopkeeper or an employer. Although she did get some help from her church to cover her daughter's funeral expenses, Rita claims that when the church receives food aid or other gifts from 'visitors', these are only distributed to 'big' people. She agreed that it might be possible for her to make some money by producing *nipa* (alcoholic drink), but she lacks the cash to purchase the large amounts of sugar that she would need. Occasionally she buys bananas and then spends two days trying to sell them alongside the road. If she is successful, then the net daily return on her labour is MT5,000. In the competition for *ganho-ganho*, which is obviously more remunerative than banana trading, Rita is facing increasing problems because she has a bad back, which makes it difficult for her to weed, and because she has been suffering from bronchitis and asthma. Her own labour, even when combined with the efforts of her grandchildren, is insufficient to farm her own field effectively. Rita estimates that to prepare her land adequately would require hiring four oxen and two men for three days, at a cost of about MT500,000.³³

The three women whose life stories are outlined above have spent most of their working lives participating in a similar segment of the casual labour market. When men did not prevent them from doing so, they usually worked for small employers. They never migrated on their own initiative in search of wage employment. These women lived in households that were small, relative to other rural households; but they did not live on their own and had experienced or could envisage some support from their children, grandchildren, or other household members. Their employment characteristics were well represented in the quantitative survey of the rural labour market, since over half of all workers claimed that their wage incomes were fluctuating and unreliable (64 per cent of female wage workers); over 43 per cent of all respondents worked in enterprises that employed only between one and ten workers at the peak of their operations (over 46 per cent of female respondents); and over one third of all respondents (more than 38 per cent of female respondents) worked for small local farmers or neighbours, the majority of them employed by farmers who never employed more than six workers.

Amalia

In contrast, Amalia had been employed for many years by very large-scale enterprises. She lived on her own in housing provided by her employers. Her relationships with men and her reproductive history illustrate a different aspect of poor rural women's migration experience and residential arrangements, although like Tomasiha and Tomasiha's daughter G. her initial entry into the labour market was precipitated by her father's refusal to support her.

32 About 95 per cent of female respondents in the quantitative survey lived in households that owned no cows; 77 per cent owned no goats or sheep; and more than 42 per cent did not even own any chickens.

33 In 2003, a very small proportion of all the 30 micro-finance initiatives in Mozambique provided credit for farming (AIM, www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/aim247.html, *AIM Reports*, 25 February 2004). Less than one per cent of the respondents in the quantitative survey claimed to have received any credit at all from an NGO, a Co-operative, or a Government Office.

As a young teenager, Amalia was forced to leave her father's home in Dombe. When she lived in Dombe, Amalia was married twice, but both her husbands left her and when she returned to her father's house she was the subject of abuse that became intolerable, provoking her migration. Amalia's father was a relatively wealthy man, who employed wage workers on his own fields and had been paid by the Portuguese to act as a *capitão*, enforcing cotton cultivation. Yet Amalia did not attend school because of the disruption caused by the war. Amalia said that she could not stay at her father's house after her husbands had abandoned her, because her stepmother accused her of being a witch, responsible for the deteriorating health of her father and stepmother.

She travelled to Chimoio (a distance of about 100 km) where she immediately obtained wage employment on a large tobacco farm (Tabacos de Manica). She became pregnant in Chimoio, but the child's father was a soldier who left for Maputo before she gave birth. The baby died at the age of three months. In Chimoio, Amalia was made redundant in 2000, after the privatisation of the Tobacco Company. She had worked there for eight years.³⁴ She did receive a redundancy payment which she used to travel to Zonue (50 km), where she knew there was a large-scale tobacco farm. There she managed to secure seasonal employment, as well as company housing and a field from the 'chief' of the local community. However, in common with many other large-scale agricultural enterprises in Manica Province, her employer provides very few permanent jobs to female agricultural workers, many of whom, like Amalia have been employed on a series of short-term contracts over a period of many years.³⁵ Amalia regularly works for more than five months a year for the company, averaging 26 days work per month. Her working day is about eleven hours long and she earns about MT18,000 per day.³⁶ However, like the other women discussed above, Amalia finds it difficult to survive on the wages she earns, even though she also does *ganho-ganho* for small local farmers as often as she can, whenever she is seasonally laid-off by the company. The daily return from *ganho-ganho* is lower (MT15,000), yet she would do it more often if it was available. The most she has ever received from the sale of the annual harvest produced on her own field is MT200,000.³⁷ Unlike most of the many other divorced and widowed women working on the Zonue tobacco farm, Amalia lives on her own and seems very isolated. She has no access to emergency credit from friends, relatives or employers.

34 The literature that judges Mozambique to have achieved a successful privatisation programme does not pay a great deal of attention to those poor rural women who have borne the costs of the disposals of state assets in the 1990s: C. Cramer, 'Privatisation and Adjustment in Mozambique: A "Hospital Pass"?' , *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 27, 1 (March 2001), pp. 79–103.

35 Permanent workers are legally entitled to various benefits, including the right to paid annual holidays. A typical employer strategy is to lay-off casual workers on the 25th of the third month of employment (for three days) and then to offer them a new written casual contract. Large-scale and foreign-owned agribusinesses adopt this practice to prevent female workers demanding permanent status after three months' continuous employment. Amalia had been working as a seasonal worker at Zonue for a period of more than three years without achieving the status of a permanent worker. Less than 4 per cent of all female wage workers in the survey were given paid holidays by their employers, and less than 10 per cent were given paid sick leave or any medical benefits. About 3 per cent had paid maternity leave.

36 This means that she would have had to work for 29 days per month to achieve the legislated minimum monthly wage of MT514,000.

37 The very limited cash earnings that women can achieve through self-employment on their own plots is confirmed in the quantitative survey as well as in another survey in the Sussundenga district: J. Pfeiffer, 'Cash Income', pp. 96, 115, 117. In the month preceding the interview, 35 per cent of the respondents in the quantitative survey had purchased maize, and almost 90 per cent had not managed to sell any of the produce grown on their plots during the past year or only 'very little'. An estimate of the returns to maize production using recommended levels of inputs indicates that, depending on the timing of sales, returns per labour day in maize production can be lower than the local average daily wage rate. See J. Howard, E. Crawford, V. Kelly, M. Demeke and J. Jeje, 'Promoting High-Input Maize Technologies in Africa: The Sasakawa-Global 2000 Experience in Ethiopia and Mozambique', *Food Policy*, 28 (2003), p. 342.

Comparative Indices of Poverty and Processes Affecting Degrees of Poverty

505 The absolute levels of deprivation suffered by Amalia and by Tomasinha, Maninha, Rita and their children are severe. A high proportion of their children have died. Those that survived have, like their mothers, not been adequately educated. They have not had decent access to health services, nor to other services provided by the state or NGOs. The financial rewards they earn for backbreaking and low-status work are very small indeed and their diets are monotonously poor. They have been badly treated by employers and by their fathers and husbands.

510 The degree of poverty experienced by these four women, relative to the poverty suffered by the other rural wage workers covered by the survey, was obvious to researchers almost as soon as they entered their homes. A cursory look at their living conditions was enough to make it clear that these women were making do with fewer material assets than other rural wage workers. A comparative examination of the responses made by these four women to the survey questionnaire confirms this impression. Table 1 lists the components of a simple Household Asset or Possessions Score calculated for each household in the survey.³⁸ Data are given for all of the households surveyed (2,638), and for the households of female respondents (1,232). A frequency distribution of the possessions scores for all of the households surveyed (male and female respondents) is shown in Figure 1.

520 It is clear from Table 1 that female respondents are *less* likely than other respondents to live in homes that contain the most basic household assets, while Figure 1 shows that the female respondents' households are relatively concentrated in the two lowest Possession Score ranges (-1 and 0). The households of the male respondents are much more likely to have possessions scores of 3 and above. The average Possessions Score for the households of female respondents is 1.19 (median = 1); significantly lower than the average Possessions Score for the households of male respondents of 1.69 (median = 2). The standard deviation is larger amongst female respondents, suggesting a significant degree of heterogeneity across female workers.

530 About 40 per cent of the female respondents (480 women) are, like the women in the 'life story group', divorced, widowed or separated from their husbands. The average Possessions Score for these women (1.12) is lower than the average for other female respondents (1.24). However, the quantitative data do not capture an important feature of the misery experienced by divorced and separated women. Survey questionnaires are rarely an effective means of acquiring information on the violence suffered by women.³⁹ In contrast, several of the life stories provide a detailed description of the brutality women experienced before they started to live without a male partner. Two additional points should be stressed. First, compared to the average female respondent, the 'life story' group of women live in rather poorer households, lacking beds, shoes, clocks or watches and latrines. The mean Possessions Score for the life stories narrated above is only 0.8. Second, the surveyed households are highly differentiated in terms of possessions scores (Figure 1), implying that some workers and women had achieved a degree of success, judged by the simple metric of the Possessions Score, that was impressive relative to other women.

540 Additional data from the quantitative survey help to emphasize those characteristics shared by the many women at the other end of the spectrum, the most deprived women living

545 38 Asset indices are a useful and more robust guide to poverty analysis than poverty lines based on dubious expenditure *per capita* data. See the references in J. Sender, 'Women's Struggle to Escape Rural Poverty in South Africa', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 2, 1 (January 2002), p. 13; also D. Gwatkin, S. Rustein, K. Johnson, R. Pande and A. Wagstaff, 'Socio-Economic Differences in Health, Nutrition, and Population in Mozambique' (Washington, HNP/Poverty Thematic Group of the World Bank, May 2000), Annex. A and B.

550 39 On the under-reporting of intimate partner violence in surveys, see L. Heise, A. Raikes, C. Watts, and A. Zwi, 'Violence Against Women: A Neglected Public Health Issue', *Social Science and Medicine*, 39 (1994), pp.1,165–1,179; and R. Jewkes, J. Levin, and L. Penn-Kekana, 'Gender Inequalities, Intimate Partner Violence and HIV Preventive Practices: Findings of a South African Cross-Sectional Study', *Social Science and Medicine*, 56 (2003), p. 131.

Table 1. Components of a Simple Household Asset or Possessions Score (Range = 5 to -1).

| Household Characteristics | Component Weight | Percentage of Households With | |
|------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| | | All | Female Respondents |
| Radio Cassette | 1 | 25 | 19 |
| Lamp (Paraffin) | 1 | 67 | 64 |
| Clock or Watch | 1 | 35 | 29 |
| Bed (with Frame) | 1 | 20 | 18 |
| Shoes for All Adults | 1 | 45 | 40 |
| Bush for Latrine (No Toilet) | -1 | 45 | 50 |

in conditions similar to those described in the life stories above. The quantitative data are also used to highlight the scale and patterns of differentiation amongst rural workers, since one aim of this article is to begin to attempt to understand the processes that cause and perpetuate rural inequalities. It is also important to describe in some detail and to emphasize the huge differences among the living standards of rural households and the widely divergent experiences of rural women, because so much of the literature on Mozambique continues to discuss 'rural people', 'peasants', 'smallholders', 'family farmers' and 'rural communities' as an undifferentiated and homogeneous mass, all facing similar problems.⁴⁰

The low levels of educational attainment of the female respondents, as well as the limited education achieved by members of their households, may be expected to be quite closely associated with other aspects of deprivation and several indices of poverty. Although the female respondents as a whole had very few opportunities for education, and far fewer opportunities than the male respondents (as shown in Figure 2), some female respondents did, nevertheless, complete primary or higher levels of schooling. The small number of female respondents who had at least completed primary school, as well as the somewhat larger number of female respondents who lived in a household containing a literate educated adult, have very much *higher* possessions scores than other female respondents, as shown in Table 2.⁴¹ Moreover, low possessions scores are also a characteristic of households that were unable to educate their children.

The surveyed households contained children of different ages and, in rural Mozambique, different age-cohorts have certainly not had the same opportunities to attend school. Since the early 1990s, there has been a rapid increase in the number of schools constructed in rural areas, which has obviously had a positive effect on rural enrolment rates.⁴² Other things being equal, respondents' children who are now more than 25 years old (and were of primary school age in

40 R. Galli, *People's Spaces: Land and Governance in Mozambique* (Lanham, Maryland, Lexington Books, 2003), pp. 10–11. The persistent tendency to define Mozambique's peasantry as 'a (more or less) homogeneous mass' has been emphasized elsewhere: M. Wuyts, 'The Agrarian Question in Mozambique's Transition and Reconstruction' (Helsinki, WIDER Discussion Paper, 2001/14, 2001), p. 1. The high degree of economic inequality *within* localities (villages and neighbourhoods) in Mozambique, which accounts for most of the inequality in the country as a whole, is shown in MPF, 'Mapeamento Da Pobreza Em Moçambique: Desagregação das Estimativas de Pobreza e Desigualdade Aos Níveis de Distrito e Posto Administrativo' (Maputo, Government of Mozambique, 2003), p. 3 and C. Elbers, P. Lanjouw, J. Mistiaen, B. Ozler and K. Simler, 'Are Neighbours Equal? Estimating Local Inequality in Three Developing Countries' (Helsinki, WIDER Discussion Paper 2003/52, 2003), pp. 11 and 14.

41 Female literacy was found to be an important determinant of standards of living in Mozambique in a model using 1996–7 IAF data: see K. Simler, S. Mukherjee, G. Data and G. Datt, 'Rebuilding After War: Micro-Level Determinants of Poverty Reduction in Mozambique' (Washington, DC, International Food Policy Research Institute, Research Report 132, 2004), p. 47.

42 S. Handa, 'Raising Primary School Enrolment in Developing Countries: The Relative Importance of Supply and Demand', *Journal of Development Economics*, 69 (2002), pp. 103–28, p. 110; C. Lloyd and P. Hewett, 'Primary Schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa: Recent Trends and Current Challenges' (Washington, DC, World Bank Policy Research Division Working Paper 176, 2003), Appendix, Table 2.

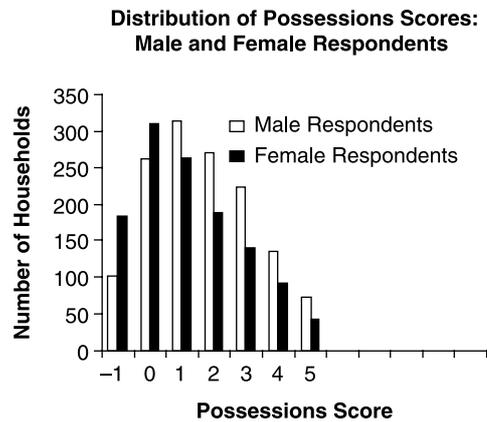


Figure 1. Distribution of possessions scores: male and female respondents.

the mid 1980s) are less likely to have had access to primary schools. Therefore, the analysis here concentrates only on those female respondents who have children *less* than 25 years of age and older than 16 years, by which age they are old enough to have completed primary school. A total of 342 female respondents had given birth to children who are now aged between 16 and 25 years. However, only one-third of these respondents had been able to send *all* of their offspring in the relevant age group to school for long enough to enable them to complete their primary education. Table 2 shows that the possessions scores for female respondents whose offspring had *not* been able to complete primary school were significantly lower than the scores for women who had been able to educate all their offspring to at least the end of primary school.

The remarkable association between poverty, as indicated by a simple Possessions Score, and the failure of children to attend school can be further illustrated by examining the characteristics of a larger subset of 446 female respondents' households, all containing girls and young women between the ages of 10 and 25 years. About 21 per cent of these households contained a girl in this age range who had never attended school at all. The possessions scores for these households were significantly lower than the possessions scores for the other households in this subset that had been able to send, at least for a few years, *all* the girls in the relevant age group to primary school (see Table 2).

The life stories provide some insights into the many factors preventing the poorest women from attending school, or sending their daughters to school. The tables and figures above not only confirm that the 'life story' group shares important personal and household characteristics with large numbers of the most deprived rural women in Mozambique, but can also be used to direct attention to the characteristics of those women who have been more successful in improving their standards of living and in educating their younger household members. The following analysis of the quantitative data picks up on other important themes in the life stories.

Early Marriage

The experience of teenage marriage described in the life stories, and common to so many of the poorest women and their daughters in rural areas, appears to be one of the key processes in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and educational deprivation. Young women who do *not* marry as teenagers are more likely to attend school and to complete a larger number of years of schooling than teenagers who marry or cohabit. Figure 3 provides information on marital status and educational attainment for 1,060 young women in the survey, aged between 13 and 20 years. About 42 per cent of these girls are married,

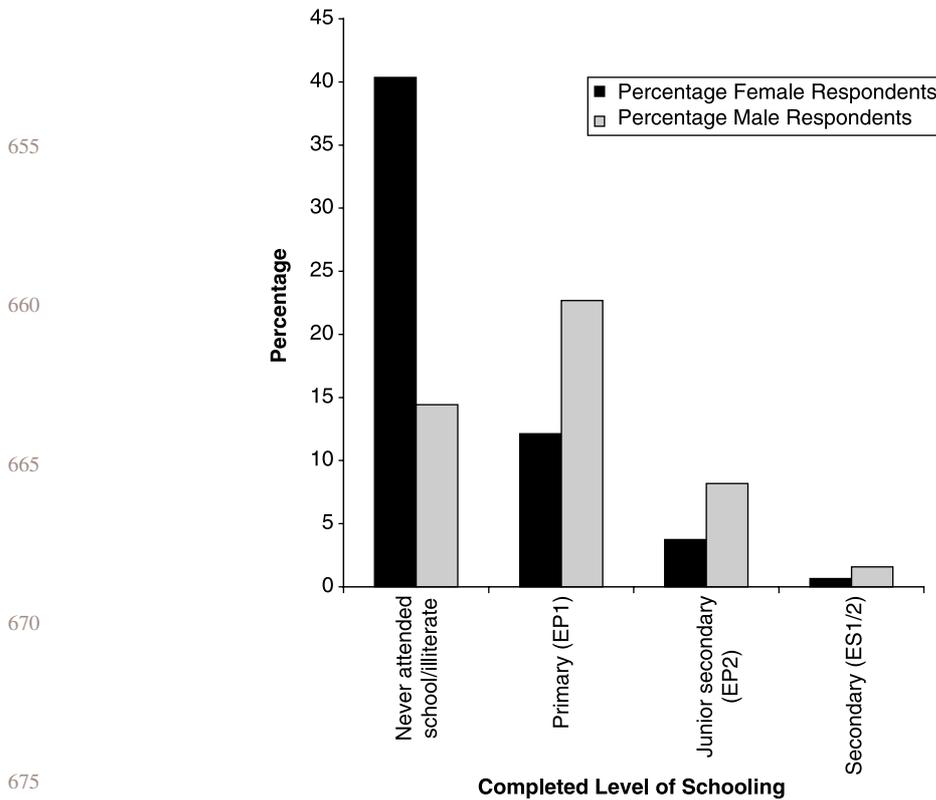


Figure 2. Gender gap in respondents' completed education.

cohabiting, divorced or separated, and they are much less likely than unmarried girls to have attended school. Only a third of unmarried girls achieve less than four years of education, compared to almost two-thirds of the girls who are married, cohabiting, divorced or separated.⁴³

The quantitative survey data not only confirm the relationship between early marriage and low levels of educational attainment, but also indicate that inadequate education is associated with higher fertility rates and higher child death rates. Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the number of children born to female respondents who have never been to school or failed to complete primary school (4.76) and the number of children born to more educated female respondents (3.06). One consequence of the higher levels of fertility experienced by poorly educated women may be that they face a much greater risk of child deaths (Table 3), although high fertility rates and inadequate education may also be expected to constrain women's access to the more remunerative forms of wage employment, limiting their income and, therefore, their ability to raise healthy children.⁴⁴ Thus, an understanding of

43 A total of 213 female respondents were 20 years old or younger. Of these respondents, 90 had become pregnant as teenagers and had already given birth to one or more children. The median years of education completed by these respondents was three, whereas the median for the remaining 122 female respondents in this age range (who had not given birth as teenagers) was significantly higher – four years of completed education. Female respondents who became pregnant as teenagers lived in households with low possessions scores.

44 Estimates of the factors affecting young children's nutritional status in Mozambique (using data from a national survey) show that maternal education has a positive and significant effect on height-for-age Z-scores: see J. Garrett and M. Ruel, 'Are Determinants of Rural and Urban Food Security and Nutritional Status Different? Some Insights from Mozambique', *World Development*, 27, 11 (November 1999), pp. 1,955–75.

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Table 2. Education and possessions scores: female respondents.

| Household Characteristics | Number of Respondents | Mean Possessions Score | Median Possessions Score |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Illiterate ^a Respondent | 1,016 | 0.96 | 1.00 |
| Literate ^b Respondent | 202 | 2.38 | 3.00 |
| All Adult ^c Household Members Illiterate | 777 | 0.85 | 1.00 |
| One or More Adult Household Member Literate | 382 | 1.89 | 2.00 |
| Not All Children ^d Completed Primary School | 226 | 0.65 | 0.00 |
| All Children Completed Primary School (or Higher) | 112 | 1.04 | 1.00 |
| Females Aged 10–25 Years with No Schooling | 92 | 0.64 | 0.00 |
| Females Aged 10–25 Years with Some Schooling | 350 | 1.72 | 2.00 |

^a Illiteracy defined as failure to attend school or failure to complete primary school

^b Literacy defined as completing primary school or higher levels of education

^c Adult defined as a person more than 25 years old

^d Children are defined as offspring of principal respondents, aged between 16 and 25 years

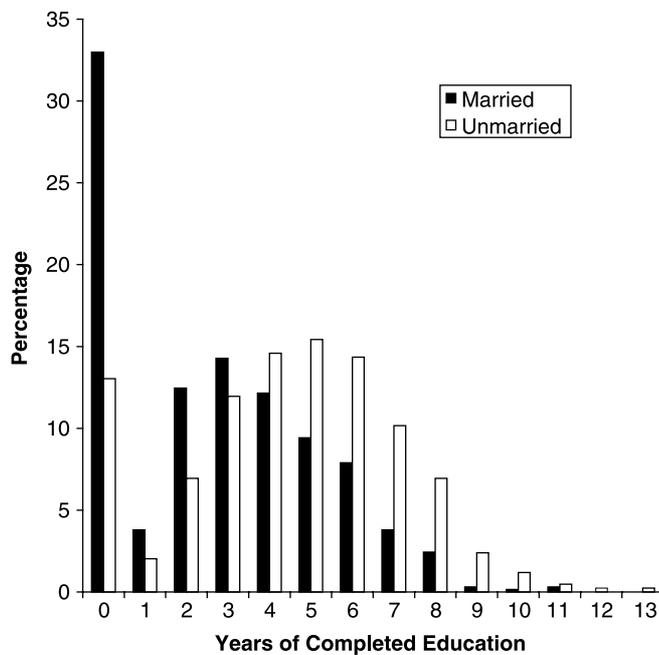


Figure 3. Education and marital status: females > 13 and ≤ 20 years.

the explanatory power of the different underlying causal mechanisms obviously requires more detailed analysis than that provided in Table 3.⁴⁵

Labour Market Participation

The women in the ‘life story group’ never succeeded in obtaining regular and decently remunerated employment or the status of permanent wage workers. The characteristics of a larger group of divorced, widowed or separated female respondents (138), who have also been confined to the least remunerative jobs and have possessions scores very similar to that of the ‘life story’ group, can be compared with those of other divorced, widowed or separated (DWS) female respondents, who have been much more successful in the labour market. These comparisons, in Table 4, suggest that the small number of DWS women who have obtained better jobs unsurprisingly enjoy much improved living standards (higher possessions scores and more frequent consumption of higher value foods); in addition, they have fewer children and their children are less likely to die or to grow up illiterate. ‘Better jobs’ are defined simply as jobs on longer-term employment contracts, paying a monthly wage that yields a regular, as opposed to a fluctuating or irregular monthly income. A group of 120 DWS female respondents over 20 years old has succeeded in obtaining these ‘better’ jobs and, in Table 4, their characteristics are contrasted with those of 138 DWS women who are employed in less satisfactory, or ‘inferior’, jobs. It appears that the ‘better’ jobs are more likely to be offered by foreign companies or individuals and by large-scale enterprises, employing over 100 workers, rather than by local farmers or the workers’ neighbours.

Therefore, it is appropriate that the two remaining life stories selected for inclusion in this article concern women who work for large-scale and foreign-owned enterprises. The life stories

45 Some of the complexities involved in attempting to establish the underlying causal processes are discussed in J. Sender, ‘Rural Poverty and Gender: Analytical Frameworks and Policy Proposals’, in H-J. Chang (ed.), *Rethinking Development Economics* (London, Anthem Press, 2003).

Table 3. Education, fertility and mortality: all female respondents aged ≥ 20 years.

| | No Schooling or Incomplete Primary ($n = 839$) | Completed Primary or Higher ($n = 144$) |
|--|---|--|
| 805 | | |
| Mean number of children born | 4.76 | 3.06 |
| Percentage of women with > 4 children born | 48% | 22% |
| Mean number of children died | 1.66 | 0.74 |
| Percentage of women with > 1 child died | 41% | 16% |

810 of these relatively successful women show how decent wage employment can transform the lives
of poor rural women and children in Mozambique. They also highlight certain positive
consequences of migration, since the two women concerned would not have obtained their
current jobs if they did not have the experience and skills they acquired through residence and
work outside Manica Province. Some rather complicated details of their migration histories
815 emerged during informal discussions. The questionnaire format used in the quantitative survey
was less successful in elucidating the significance of the full migratory history of respondents.⁴⁶

Two Contrasting Life Histories

820 *Anita*

Anita's father joined the large flow of Mozambicans migrating from Manica Province to find
employment in Southern Rhodesia in the 1950s. Both her father and mother were literate.
They sent Anita, who was born in Southern Rhodesia in 1962, to school in Harare where she
825 completed Form 1 and became fluent in English. Anita is also fluent in Portuguese, Shona and
local variants; her current employers initially recruited her because of her linguistic skills.

Her Mozambican husband fought as a soldier in Manica in the 1980s. He died in 1990, leaving
Anita with five children to support. Anita then used her connections with Zimbabwe to make some
money through illegal cross-border illegal trade. She had no passport and used mountain tracks at
830 night to transport bulky items such as bread and soft drinks to sell in Mozambique, but this was
risky – the goods were often damaged or lost – and in her most successful month of trading she only
made MT500,000, equivalent to a third of her current monthly wage. She traded because she was
desperate, finding it difficult to survive before she eventually found waged employment in 1999. In
fact, she was so short of cash during the 1990s that her eldest child, a daughter (M.), could not stay
835 on at school beyond Grade 6. M. became pregnant as a teenager and Anita is now taking care of her
four year-old granddaughter, who lives with her while M. works in Vila Manica.

While Anita still makes some effort to earn additional income through various sideline
enterprises, such as rearing chickens, renting out her livestock for ploughing, growing vegetables and
selling biscuits and drinks to other wage workers, she feels that she could never rely on these sources
840 of income, but needs full-time, regular wage employment to finance her children's education. One of
the reasons she gave for her refusal to get married again was that a husband would not allow her to go
out to work for wages. She was eloquent on this issue, citing many cases of divorced and deserted
women who had obtained casual wage employment at the farm where she worked, only to become
involved with one of their male co-workers, who then insisted that they stop working.

845 She works as the cook and housekeeper for the Australian managers of a large-scale agro-
mining corporation farming an area of several hundred hectares located about 17 kilometres
from Vila Manica. In addition, she acts as the supervisor of the farm's eight security guards,

46 Moreover, even open-ended questions concerning the reasons for household members' move to their present
homes failed to elicit responses concerning witchcraft. However, as seen in the case of Amalia, witchcraft
850 accusations and threats could be decisive in explaining patterns of mobility.

Table 4. Characteristics of divorced, widowed and separated women^a with 'superior' and 'inferior' jobs.

| | Superior ^b Jobs (N = 120) | Inferior ^c Jobs (N = 138) |
|---|---|---|
| 855 | | |
| Mean Possessions Score | 2.28 | 0.47 |
| Median Possessions Score | 2.00 | 0.00 |
| Percentage in Lowest Possession Score Group (poorest) | 17% | 59% |
| Consumes Chicken Once per Week | 32% | 17% |
| Consumes Beef Once per Week | 18% | 9% |
| Mean Number of Children Born | 3.56 | 5.49 |
| 860 | | |
| Median Number of Children Born | 3.00 | 5.00 |
| Percentage Respondents with >4 Children Born | 29% | 58% |
| Mean Number of Children Died | 1.00 | 2.35 |
| Median Number of Children Died | 0.00 | 2.00 |
| Percentage with >1 Child Died | 26% | 53% |
| Mean Percentage Children ^d Not Completing Primary School | 41% | 66% |
| 865 | | |
| Median Percentage Children Not Completing Primary School | 0.00% | 100% |
| Percentage Respondents Employed by Foreign Enterprises | 35% | 6% |
| Percentage Respondents Employed by Large ^e Enterprises | 38% | 7% |
| Percentage Respondents Employed by Neighbours/Local Farmers | 3% | 69% |

^a Only women \geq 20 years of age are included.

^b Defined as jobs on longer term contracts paying monthly wages (more typical of longer contract periods at higher daily rates) and by the respondents' claim that their income is regular.

^c Defined as casual manual agricultural jobs involving less than fifteen days work in a month, for short periods of time, usually some form of *ganho-ganho*.

^d Respondents' children aged between 16 and 25 years.

^e Defined as enterprises employing more than a hundred workers at peak times.

the payroll clerk and company shop manager. These last two responsibilities mean that she effectively manages the employer's credit advances to workers and knows a great deal about their lives. She was recommended for employment by a female relative who worked as a waitress in a restaurant frequented by the Australians.⁴⁷ Her relative knew that the Australians only spoke English and that they needed someone who could help them manage a permanent labour force of 65 workers, rising to about 250 workers in the peak months.

Anita has used her wages to accumulate an impressive array of assets and to finance her younger children's education. Her oldest son is now in Grade 8 and plans to complete Grade 12 and to become a teacher. The house provided by her employers has electricity, but Anita has several other houses of her own and owns a far longer list of assets, equipment and furniture than included in the Possessions Score, including a bicycle purchased for her sons to travel to secondary school, as well as three head of cattle and two goats. To help look after her youngest children and to serve in her small shop, Anita employs her own domestic servant.⁴⁸

47 The quantitative survey data indicated that by far the most important channel for obtaining employment was through 'relatives and friends'. This recruitment process has obvious cost and disciplinary advantages for employers in rural labour markets characterised by excess supply. See M.J. Wells, *Strawberry Fields: Politics, Class, and Work in California Agriculture* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 153, 163. Anita has recently recruited her divorced sister to become the maid/cook for the farm manager.

48 The magnitude of the demand generated by other wage workers for domestic servants in rural areas is rarely discussed in the literature on Mozambique, or in other sub-Saharan African countries. However, this type of labour market multiplier is undoubtedly important, as suggested by the finding that over 100 of the female respondents in the quantitative survey were paying someone to look after their young children while they were at work, either in cash or kind. The quantitative survey excluded numerically very important categories of higher-status female employees in rural Mozambique, such as teachers, nurses and other state employees; most of these workers employ maids. The number of women working for wages as domestic servants in rural Mozambique is likely to be very large and severely underestimated in all official labour market statistics.

Chinasse

Chinasse's mother, unlike Anita's, did not go to school, while her father was functionally illiterate. However, Chinasse too has been promoted to a supervisory position within the permanent 'core' of the labour force of a large agri-business producing roses for the export market, partly because she had relevant experience as a young woman living with her migrant family in Zimbabwe.⁴⁹ There may have been other reasons for her employers to single out Chinasse from the 40 female employees who are paid the basic wage. When she was initially appointed in November 2002 her monthly wage was the same as all the other female manual workers (MT560,000), but she was soon elected by the workers to the *sindicato* (a twelve-person workers' committee), as one of only two female members. She articulated the workers' complaints concerning overtime payments, compensation for working on public holidays, gender discrimination in the allocation of boots and working clothes, and unfair dismissals. Management warned her that those who complained most vociferously would be the first to be laid-off when work got slack. Nevertheless, most of the complaints were eventually resolved to the satisfaction of the workers, an offending manager was dismissed, and Chinasse has recently been appointed as the Chief Grader/Supervisor in the packing shed at a monthly wage of MT1 million. It is not clear whether this promotion was in recognition of her skills and experience, or should rather be seen as move to co-opt and neutralise someone with the capacity to express workers' demands forcefully. Shortly after her promotion, Chinasse successfully recommended one of her younger sisters for a job; two of her brothers are already employed by the same enterprise.

When Chinasse was twelve years old in 1983, her family migrated to Zimbabwe to escape the war that had already claimed the lives of two of her uncles. Chinasse completed Junior Secondary School in Zimbabwe but, when her father died in 1985, she found a job on a large-scale flower farm in Old Mutare. She lived and worked on this farm for four years, producing roses and other flowers, and learning a great deal about capital-intensive floricultural production systems. At the end of the 1980s, she returned to Messica, in Manica Province with her mother and seven younger siblings. Together with one of her sisters, Chinasse set up a kiosk in Messica to sell snacks and drinks to the workers who were constructing the main road to Zimbabwe in the early 1990s. However, the construction of the road was completed by the mid-1990s and the sister with whom she shared this enterprise died at the end of the 1990s. Her funeral expenses absorbed all the remaining assets of this dwindling roadside enterprise.

Chinasse married in 1996, at the age of 24. She migrated with her husband to Tete Province, but left him after two years to return to Vila Manica, where an uncle found her a job in a photography shop. She had various disputes with her employer, left her job and then tried to make a living in Vila Manica by trading in agricultural products. With the death of her sister it became Chinasse's responsibility to provide for her sister's two daughters, who were orphaned because their father had also died the previous year, as well as for her widowed mother. Even at the minimum wage, the opportunity to work at the recently established flower export company at Messica was far more attractive than the struggle to continue to trade or to manage the roadside kiosk on her own. She was selected from amongst the many applicants because of her relevant work experience in Zimbabwe.

Chinasse now has a male partner, but she lives on her own in a well-constructed room provided rent-free by her employers. Her partner is employed by a security firm in Chimoio and visits her occasionally at Messica, when his work is slack. Chinasse is using her own and her employed sister's wages to pay a maid to look after her orphaned nieces and the children of her surviving sisters. The 14 year-old maid, who has never attended school, is paid MT100,000 per month. Chinasse also meets all the school costs of the orphaned nieces and is the only source of

49 'In Manica province on the border with Zimbabwe, at least 60 white Zimbabwean farmers who lost land in Zimbabwe are opening farms to produce tobacco and flowers for export': J. Hanlon, 'Renewed Land Debate and the "Cargo Cult" in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 3 (September 2004), p. 609.

financial support to her widowed mother, since her brothers refuse to contribute. However, she does not stay with her mother and the children, preferring the autonomy (and relative comfort) of living, surrounded by her many possessions, in her own home.

955 Conclusions

A very large number of people working for wages in rural Mozambique are the victims of processes of deprivation and humiliation that can more readily be appreciated through reading life stories than by scanning the familiar statistics on expenditure *per capita*. Nevertheless, Figure 960 1 and Tables 3 and 4, as well as the lives of Anita and Chinasse, show that a decent job can make a huge difference to the lives of these Mozambicans and to their children's prospects. It would be very misleading to conclude that 'wage-earning households are better-off than non-wage households', since so many desperately poor people currently depend on wage incomes.⁵⁰ However, what can be concluded is that an increase in the number of decently remunerated rural wage earning opportunities would be likely to have a dramatic effect in reducing poverty.

The precise number of rural Mozambicans who share the characteristics of the poorest people covered in this research and are similarly dependent on wage labour, as opposed to own-account small farming, may be estimated through a comparison of the results obtained in recent random, representative household surveys with the labour market survey's tabulations of household demographic and other characteristics. These rough estimates will be discussed in a forthcoming article. However, the research for this article highlights some of the limitations of such large-scale survey data for the analysis of deprivation. These include the difficulties involved in obtaining information about the violence inflicted on women and the impact of inter- and intra-household conflict and envy. The important issue of the timing of migration, both short- and long-term, seasonal and in response to violent conflict, is also difficult to cover in formal questionnaires. In addition, informal interviews frequently reveal serious errors that even the most carefully selected, best trained and rigorously supervised enumerators commit under the pressure to fill in the boxes of survey instruments.⁵¹

These errors may cancel each other out in large surveys if they are random, as usually assumed (like filling in the wrong code for marital status) but they are highly problematic if more systematic biases arise. In conventional large-scale surveys, poorly paid and insufficiently supervised enumerators with excessively long questionnaires are likely to pay less attention to more demanding questions. For example, they may be satisfied with listing fewer rather than more members of a household, which would lead to biased estimations of household size and a failure to collect relevant information concerning all household members. These errors in compiling household rosters have extremely important implications for the interpretation of commonly quoted statistics expressed in *per capita* terms.

If even simple variables concerning the demographic structure of rural households are prone to measurement error, researchers should be extremely cautious in their use of variables

990 50 Tschirley and Benfica, 'Smallholder Agriculture', p. 4. An earlier article co-authored by Tschirley and Benfica provides some evidence from rural Mozambique to suggest that the poorest tercile of households are *more* dependent on 'net sales of labour' than the richest tercile of households: H. Marrule, R. Benfica, P. Strasberg, D. Tschirley and M. Weber, 'Reflections on Poverty and Prospects for Growth in the Mozambican Rural Sector' (Maputo, USAID/Mozambique, Policy Synthesis for Cooperating USAID Offices and Country Missions, 44, 1999), Tables 1–3.

995 51 Non-sampling errors in our own survey included filling in the wrong code for marital status as well as undercounting the number of household members in those households with unusual residential patterns. Although, in theory, large samples may attenuate the significance of sampling errors (which can be calculated) and some non-sampling (measurement) errors, the key question is what we can possibly assume about other measurement errors, their magnitude and randomness: A. Deaton, *The Analysis of Household Surveys: A Microeconomic Approach to Development Policy* (London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 99–101; 151.

based on data that are much more difficult to verify, such as the area cultivated and crop yields, or monthly expenditure.⁵² One clear advantage of combining detailed case studies with survey data is the opportunity to crosscheck the work of the survey enumeration team and to refine the questionnaire instrument and its interpretation.

1005 In future articles, the quantitative results of a survey of 124 small- and middle-scale rural
employers,⁵³ as well as the results of lengthy, informal interviews with purposively selected
large-scale employers will be analysed to provide a more detailed assessment of the
determinants of the wages and employment prospects of poor Mozambicans. However, some
1010 of the constraints on expanding the demand for workers were immediately obvious in the
early tabulations of employers' responses and are relevant to the policy conclusions of this
article. It is clear that neither donors nor the Government of Mozambique have succeeded in
directing credit or infrastructural investments directly towards those farm enterprises
employing large numbers of wage workers. Donor policy, as well as recent New Partnership
1015 for Africa's Development (NEPAD) agricultural policy proposals, remains fixated on support
to *small* farmers, who are unlikely to generate large numbers of regular or well-paid wage
employment opportunities, and on micro-credit provision for self-employment. Most of the
literature ignores the potential for rural wage employment to reduce women's poverty.⁵⁴
Indeed many proposals for agricultural development, even those that do pay attention to such
1020 wage labour intensive crops as cotton, fail to mention the importance of the income earned
through rural wage employment for the survival of the poorest Africans.⁵⁵ It is hoped that the
new evidence on the Mozambican rural labour market discussed in this article will make it
more difficult for researchers and policy makers to continue to ignore the importance of rural
wage labour and working conditions in discussions of trends in poverty in African economies.

1025 Less controversially, it is also hoped that the results concerning the intergenerational
transmission of poverty and the high social costs of teenage pregnancy will lend additional support
to recent econometric work on poverty reduction in Mozambique that stresses the importance of
concentrating resources on the education of girls.⁵⁶ More specifically, expenditure on education
needs to be focused on the most vulnerable rural girls, who are not supported by their fathers and
whose mothers are illiterate. Although most donors now accept the case for investment in female
1030 education, arguing that such expenditures constitute an investment in 'human capital', they do
not recognise the need for developing the organisational capacities of wage workers or, for expenditures
to educate rural workers to enable them to defend their legal rights in labour markets. However,
Chinasse's experience suggests that the skills required to articulate workers' demands and to defend
women against workplace discrimination can yield significant benefits not only for the individuals
1035 who lead workers, but also for large numbers of other women on low wages.

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1045 52 There appears to be 'a considerable degree of measurement error for a number of variables on which data were
collected in the IAF survey': Simler *et al.*, 'Rebuilding After War', p. 78.

53 These are defined as employing less than ten workers in the peak season.

54 Sender, 'Rural Poverty'.

55 See D. Boughton, D. Tschirley, B. Zulu, A. Osorio Ofico and H. Marrule, 'Cotton Sector Policies and
Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons Behind the Numbers in Mozambique and Zambia', (Conference
Paper, 25th International Conference of Agricultural Economists, Durban, AEA, 16–22 August, 2003); and
NEPAD, *Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme* (Rome, FAO, 2003).

1050 56 Simler *et al.*, 'Rebuilding After War', p. 80.