

# Land Redistribution in Limpopo Province: A Case of Greater Letaba Municipality

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to show the challenges that the land redistribution programme in Limpopo Province is faced with. Furthermore, the paper tries to show whether the policy of land redistribution can be effective or not. In addition, it will be established whether the land redistribution might benefit the Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs) as the department's mandate. Blacks were dispossessed of land which disadvantaged them to access land for residential and agriculture. The paper used the qualitative approach with primary and secondary data together with literature. The data for this paper was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The sample for this paper was collected from land beneficiaries of Greater Letaba Municipal area, members of traditional councils, members of municipal council and government department officials for both Department of Agriculture and Department of Rural Development and Land Reform in the area. The paper revealed the need for coordination amongst the state departments to ensure maximum support of the land redistribution beneficiaries. The Department of Agriculture should support the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform with extension services. The paper concludes that the level of organisation within the land redistribution projects needed to be improved with some constantly experience conflicts amongst beneficiaries. This reflects the lack of organisational skills amongst project beneficiaries.

**Keywords:** Historical imbalances, Land redistribution, Land reform, Land dispossession, Landless, Previously disadvantaged communities

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## 1. Introduction

South Africa has land ownership disparity that exists between Blacks and Whites. The disparity results from the dispossession of land from black South Africans by the Dutch and British settlers. This land was dispossessed at a large scale in South Africa than in African countries. The South African government, noting this disparity, initiated the redistribution of the land in an attempt to afford the people in need with agricultural land and confirmation of ownership, that is, tenure security (Van Der Waldt & Helmbold, 1995:179). The new democratic government in South Africa found it suitable to redistribute portions of land to the landless masses as necessary in redressing the inequalities of the past. It is argued by Land Bank that the thought for land redistribution and create a category of black smallholders assisted in avoiding both social and political instability and encourage rural development (Hall, 1998 cited in SA Labour Bulletin, 2004:36). When the government enacted the land laws, its intention was to redistribute land in order to benefit the PDIs. There is a need to investigate the government's progress on land redistribution. The number of hectares distributed to the PDIs and the number of beneficiaries assist to establish the progress. Land redistribution is a

part of the land reform programmes that the South African Government has come up with.

Land redistribution is defined as the land reform component that is meant to better the quality of live for previously disadvantaged individuals (PDIs) and communities by receiving both residential and commercial land for farming purposes. The mechanism for acquiring the land was to be market assisted with state subsidy through grants by the state to beneficiaries and demand-led, that is, applicants do initiate the projects and not the state. In addition, the community-based in groups would pool their efforts and resources to acquire the farms collectively (High Level Panel, Parliament of South Africa, 2017). In state of affair, there seems to be a problem on acquiring land. This paper investigates the challenges or obstacles the government is facing to acquire enough land for the PDIs. As a result of the challenges, the land redistribution programme could not significantly benefit the poor, either in qualitative or quantitative terms. It was noted that after 25 years of the democracy in South Africa, only a small quantity of land got transferred to the land redistribution beneficiaries. To this effect, Lahiff (2008:1) notes that the land redistribution programme has since its commencement, went through challenges. These challenges affected the

programme not to achieve its objectives of dealing with the historical imbalances, wealth redistribution and opportunities for communities.

Noting that the land redistribution programme has to date not delivered as expected since its inception 25 years ago, the government of the day intends to expropriate land without compensation. The intention was preceded by political parties' discussion before the 6<sup>th</sup> national parliament. The public participation consultative process was extensively conducted in 2018 to establish whether South Africans were for land expropriation without compensation or not. The report was tabled before the portfolio committee on land in parliament and it got a thumbs up. The report was further tabled in both Houses of Parliament during 2018 and they both resolved that the Constitution should be amended to allow for expropriation without compensation. Following the approval by the Houses of Parliament, the Draft Expropriation Bill of 2019 has been passed for further inputs and comments by the public (Government Gazette, 21 December 2018).

The problem is that blacks were dispossessed of land which disadvantaged them to access land for both residential and agriculture purposes. There has been debates and resolutions by the National Land Summit held in 2005 on the slow pace of the land reform programme and its inability to achieve the numerous objectives stated in the White Paper on South African Land Policy (1997). The land redistribution programme in South Africa and Limpopo Province, in particular, has come across many challenges, which Cousins (2009: 421) refers to having failed to overcome. This failure relates to the implementation of the land redistribution programme (Greenberg, 2010:4). The Black Land Act 27 of 1913 was introduced by the apartheid government to regulate land access by South African Blacks. This prohibition for Blacks to access land ensured that they could not participate in any form of agriculture and livestock for their own livelihood. Van Der Waldt and Helmboldt (1996:179) maintain that people of colour were the victims as they were left without land and poor without land for farming and residential purposes. In a way to address this issue, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform got mandate to provide the disadvantaged rural individuals in rural communities and the poverty stricken persons with land acquisition and land redistribution (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Report, 2016:17). The research question to be

answered in this study are: How has the land redistribution benefited the Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDI's) in Greater Letaba Municipality (GLM), Is the policy effective about land redistribution and What are the challenges facing the land redistribution to the PDIs in GLM?

## 2. Literature Review

Market-Led Agrarian Reform (MLAR) also referred to as the willing-seller willing-buyer approach as opposed to redistributive land reform was adopted by the South African government (Fraser, 2006:301). The approach's success hinges on the market's willingness or property owners availing their land at a given price. In South Africa, land redistribution is viewed as a mechanism that can alter the patterns of holding land (Lahiff, 2002:44). This came out as a thought by the policy makers and its intention was to benefit the PDIs in the country. The new democratic government in South Africa introduced legislative measures to deliver the land reform programmes' important components. The Provision of Certain Land for Settlement Act, 126 of 1993 and the Development Facilitation Act, 67 of 1995 where the adopted Acts to deliver land redistribution programme. The Acts applied measures to accelerate development of land and assist the previously disadvantaged individuals and communities to acquire land for both residential and agricultural purposes (Cliffe, 2000:274).

South African land reform programme faced numerous issues to address, as Cousins (2009:421) maintains could not be overcome. The perceived failure was in accordance to the implementation of the land redistribution programme and the maximum support by the new owners to productively utilise the acquired land for enhancing their livelihoods (Greenberg, 2010:4). By 2014, the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, has already distributed 24.6 million hectares of agricultural land to the previously disadvantaged individuals and communities (PDIs). The assertion means that the government should have distributed the average of 1.23 million hectares per annum in 20 years (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Strategic Plan, 2009-2012, 2009:16). In addition, Ghyoot (2008:180) asserts that in April 2006, Black people have acquired 4 million hectares, which was made of 3 million in redistribution and 1 million land restitution, respectively. This was perceived as a slow pace in view of the high cost of land that the willing-seller and the state had to accept (Greenberg, 2010:4). Other

**Table 1: Land Redistribution Output Between (2003-2010)  
Land Redistribution to Various Beneficiaries**

Time frame	Envisaged Ha	Exact Output	% Output Against Year Target
2008-2009	660 000	240 000	<40
2007-2008	2.5m Later reduced to 608, 060	450 000	<70
2006-2007	2.5m	350 000	<20
2005-2006	2.5m 500 000	260 000	<20
2004-2005	110 000	200 000	<140
2003-2004	772 000	130 000	<20

Source: Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Reports (2005-2010)

challenges that were noted included the opposition that the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform encountered especially when valuable land for agriculture was available to be considered for land redistribution programme. The oppositions amongst others, AgriSA would delay the transfer process to the Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDIs). The challenges of land reform in South Africa were seen even by institutions of international stature such as The International Crisis Group (ICG) in (Department of Land Affairs, Land News, 2004) that warned of tensions over land issues. The institution called for speedy address to the question of unequal ownership of land to avoid the invasion of land and grabbing of land as was the case in Zimbabwe. The institution further raised argument that government, farmers and donors have capacity to address landlessness and mitigate the poverty by accelerating the land reform programme in the country (Department of Land Affairs, Land News, 2004:7). There were numerous observations reported of the challenges that land reform projects face. In some instances, 90% of the land reform programme projects suffered financial challenges which called for drastic recapitalisation. Other challenges identified by the then Minister of Land Affairs included:

- that the willing-seller willing-buyer principle should be changed as it resembles the inability of a purely market-driven model for acquisition land.
- that restrictions on managing land subdivision were complex, especially when dealing with large groups of beneficiaries.
- that rural areas be neglected there be an exclusive focus on urban areas which further impoverish the rural and agrarian economy (Report of the National Land Summit, 2005:34).

In the process of these constraints, the land reform beneficiaries experienced frustration. Lahiff (2005:3) notes the landless' frustration as a result of the willing-seller willing-buyer model. The model required the landless to identify the available land for sale and enter into negotiations with the land owner. That came as an identified weakness of the policy with its regulatory framework that called for it to be reassessed. Similar observations were made by Hall (2004 in May & Lahiff, 2007:286) who opined that less than 45 white-owned farms were being transferred to Black people. There was observation which resulted in great dissatisfaction and an outburst of popular anger.

Table 1 shows a bit of struggle from 2005 to 2010 of the Department's actual performance. In 2005 the Department achieved land transfer target of 120 128 ha when it was given the annual target of 72 687 ha of land which was better. However, in 2010, an achievement of 239 990 ha of land when it was given the targeted of 659 000 ha cannot be accepted. This achievement gave the department 37% performance against the annual target. These figures are an indication of the programme that has challenges to meet its objectives. Would this be capable of benefiting the PDIs who are in desperate need for land?

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform allocated the Land Reform Programme R2.7 million for the 2016/17 financial year. In addition, it planned to increase the amount to R4.6 billion during the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for use to acquire 1.14 million hectares of strategically located land and create 1 107 profitable and productive farms. These were budgeted under Land Reform's sub-programme called Agricultural Land Holding Account. As of 2014/15

**Table 2: Programme 5: Land Reform**

Strategic Objective Indicator	Departmental target plan	Performance (Audited/Actual)			Performance Estimation
		2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Figure showing Ha obtained through equal redistribution of land	Approximately 1.8m	Approximately 160 000	Approximately 160 000	Approximately 360 000	Approximately 76 000
Number of support interventions provided to farmers through Recapitalisation and development Programme	8 624	621	1 704	657	1 325

Source: Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Performance Plan (2016/17)

**Table 3: Land Reform: 5<sup>th</sup> Program**

Purpose	KPI	Baseline 2015	Output versus Estimate		Why Variation?
			Estimate (2016)	Exact (2016)	
Promote equitable Land redistribution and agricultural development by acquiring located land by 2020	Required Ha	354 802ha	370 000ha	242 556 ha	Reorganisation of budget to Strengthening the Relative Rights (SRR)
	Total Ha for emerging farmers	Measure	185 000ha	247 385ha	Much funds provided for emerging farmers
	No. of Ha reserved for labourers and farm tenants	Measure	37 000ha	3 910ha	Small Hectares got reserved for land redistribution beneficiaries

Source: Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Report (2016:31)

the Agricultural Land Holding Account acquired 665 944 hectares of land with 895 farms under Recapitalisation and Development Programme and this cost the department R1.9 billion (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Performance Plan, 2016/17:36)

The figures displayed in Table 2 show how difficult it is for the department to acquire as much land as possible. When one looks at the target of 1.8 million hectares which is the strategic plan target versus 76 000 hectares estimated for achievement in 2016/17, it become challenges that are faced by department to ensure land redistribution beneficiaries get land.

Table 3 above shows how the department battles in reaching its estimates. This is evidenced when the department sets a target of 37 000 ha to allocate to farm dwellers and labour tenants but only managed

to allocate 3 910. This is a huge difference that suggests the challenges that the department faces. It should also be noted that these figures account for the whole of South Africa as a country that suffered the injustices of the apartheid government through the Black Land Act 27 of 1913. The targets achievement remains a challenge when one looks at the table, except for the hectares that were allocated to small household farmers which exceeded the set target i.e. 185 000 ha (set target) to 247 385 ha (actual achievement) in 2016. However, even when the 2016 target was exceeded, there was a decline from what the department actually achieved in 2014/15 (354 802 ha actual output). This raises the question as to whether land redistribution really benefits the PDIs at this pace. The land issue is currently taking the centre stage in South Africa when the economic transformation subcommittee in government took time to look inward at the reasons

for the African National Congress's poor performance on land reform. The Committee's Chair Mr Godongwana, argued against the land expropriation with no compensation saying this shows lack of political will and not the Constitution which stand as a barrier or obstacle to effective land reform (Mail & Guardian, 17 to 23 March 2017:12). This came when some people started to call for radical economic transformation (RET) and contemplating that this could best be achieved through the expropriation of land without compensation. These are indeed reflections of whether the current policy remains effective to achieve land redistribution objectives as set by the responsible department.

Land redistribution projects indeed experienced challenges as reflected in the report by the High Level Panel. Some of the Panel's findings were that 1/3 of projects in the North West Province account for many project members who are no longer participating in the projects and had in principle left the projects. In some instances, 55% of projects had no implement for production. There are some projects about a quarter that had not produced anything since awarded. The report found issues pertaining to the relevancy of business plans that were used to approve the project. It is maintained that these business plans were widely ignored after the projects were approved and handed to the beneficiaries (High Level Panel, Parliament of South Africa, 2017).

### **3. Methods and Materials**

This paper adopted a qualitative research and considered both primary and secondary data. In addition, books, journals, reports, policies, legislation from government, and articles obtained from newspapers got consideration. Examination of literature helped to establish the land redistribution programme that succeeded at the international level. Questionnaires and interviews helped in collecting data to ensure the paper becomes intensive and comprehensive to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the results. Questionnaires were used to measure how land redistribution impacted on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. Interviews were also used to help the researcher to get the truth (Alvesson & Karreman, 2011:99) because it was easier for the respondents to state their challenges to the researcher. The sample size was divided into four (4) categories and 30% was selected from each of the categories. Those categories were Council members of the municipality who deal with Land

issues, Traditional Authorities, Land Reform beneficiaries from four (4) Land Reform projects in the GLM and officials of government working in the Agriculture Department as personnel that deals with agricultural issues including those in District offices of Department of Rural Development and Land Reform.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The study probed the PDI's benefit from land redistribution, effectiveness of land redistribution, role of legislative frameworks, improving people's livelihood, support by agricultural extension officers, motivation by community members to participate as well as access to information regarding land. Results are presented as follow:

### **4.1 PDIs Benefit from Land Redistribution**

2/3 claimed to have acquired farming skills. 59% argue that land redistribution reduced unemployment, though still a challenge. 3/4 could not receive income from land redistribution projects. When beneficiaries were asked whether they received any income from the land redistribution projects, 27% said they got money enough to meet their needs from the land redistribution projects, while 73% reported that it was not the case. This 27% of the land redistribution beneficiaries that receive income from the projects indicates that the land redistribution projects are incapable to uplift the people's standard of living. The results could be because of the beneficiaries withdrawing from the projects which results in projects collapsing.

### **4.2 Effectiveness of Land Redistribution**

The respondents showed that land redistribution has failed due to lack of necessary resources, lack of access to farming machinery, no up to date production training afforded to beneficiaries and acquisition of funding impeded by lack of collateral security.

### **4.3 Role of Legislative and Regulatory Framework to Fast Track Land Redistribution**

The legislative frameworks are there to ensure that land is fast tracked. More often, the legislative framework seems to prohibit land reform. Respondents were of the opinion that legislative framework needs to be reviewed to fast track land

reform. 75% of respondents were in favour of fast-tracking land redistribution which permits the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform to get land with no assistance from the Land Claims Court. This 75% percent of people confirm that the legal frameworks that are in place should be reviewed in order for them to become effective. When the respondents were asked whether the legislation formulated to address land reform programme were effective in the GLM, majority (51%) thought the legislation and regulations were appropriate, while 43% disagreed. This suggests that the challenge could be with the lack of dissemination or implementation of legislation on the part of the officials and not the legislation or regulations *per se*.

#### 4.4 Improving People's Livelihood

Land reform is meant to improve the livelihood of the community. To most of the respondents the land reform Program does not sufficiently improve people's livelihood.

#### 4.5 Support by Agricultural Extension Officers

Land beneficiaries are to be supported by allocated Agricultural Extension Officers. The function of the Agricultural Extension Officers is to support land beneficiaries so that they can use land profitably. Thus far respondents showed that 51% confirmed that extension officers visited land redistribution projects. This shows that the Department of Agriculture gave attention to the land redistribution projects. The figure suggested that minimum resources were allocated as some projects could not be visited. In a similar situation, the Zimbabwe Ministry of Land and Agriculture stepped up the extension services as well as availed resources to build capacity for personnel in land reform issues during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (African Renaissance, 2006:51). Such Extension Officers' were stretched as they could not visit all projects.

#### 4.6 Motivation of Other Community Members to Participate in Land Reform Projects

Not many are motivated or convinced about the success of land reform. Many see it as a process with little chance to succeed or benefit the targeted beneficiaries. Responses show that 81% could motivate others to consider land redistribution. The land reform beneficiaries maintain that they would

encourage other people to take part in the projects. Furthermore, 19% responded positively that they might recruit others to partake in the land redistribution projects. The 81% which is a high percent considered these projects as beneficial.

#### 4.7 Access to Information Regarding Land Redistribution Information to People in Greater Letaba Municipality

Access to information about land reform is critical. Virtually, not all South African are aware of their rights to ownership of land through restitution. The information though widely publicised but not all can claim to be informed. It is however that 70% of the respondents in the study area maintained that people knew about land reform programme. Therefore, it can be concluded that Government land reform communication reached people in Greater Letaba Municipality. More than 70% of the respondents maintained that in the GLM, people were informed about the land reform programmes of restitution and land redistribution, while 30% dissented the view. The 70% showed a significant proportion which makes one to conclude that government communication was adequate in GLM.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion it should be noted that most authors regarded obtaining land as an appropriate way to deal with the land redistribution challenges in South Africa. Thus, this study concludes that the shortcomings in addressing the land reform have affected the achievement of the purpose in land redistribution. In view of the discussed research findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

- That the government needs to provide capacity building, particularly project management and financial management for land redistribution beneficiaries.
- There is need for financial support for land redistribution projects. This will ensure that the land redistribution makes a contribution to the local economy.
- That land redistribution programme needs to be incorporated into Municipal Integrated Development Plans. This approach will ensure that Municipalities ensure commitment to the redistribution projects.

- There is a need for aftercare service to ensure land redistribution projects become sustainable. This service will ensure that requisite skills such as operational and financial management are taken care of to avoid the projects' collapse.
- Land redistribution beneficiaries need to be afforded training in agricultural production. This will ensure their continuous exposure to in-service training in crop and livestock farming.
- There is a need for extension officers in the Department of Agriculture to be increased, because the redistribution projects are handed over to them upon project approval. This will help the current staff not to be overstretched.

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