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HOW HAS SOUTH AFRICA'S LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROGRAM IMPROVED WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS?

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ABSTRACT

The issue of access to land has been a dilemma for most women especially those who depend on it for their livelihoods. Often access to land has been denied to this group due to the inequalities that exist in some societies that rendered women inferior to men or lacking rights to own land. Despite the limitations, women have been working and depending on land for centuries as a means to secure their households' livelihoods. In South Africa, some of the post-apartheid policies aimed at affording equal access to land thereby using the land redistribution program to ensure that women farmers can equally access land. Although the land policy has been well researched much attention has not been given to how the redistribution process has influenced women farmers' livelihoods and their sustainability. This paper reviews how the land redistribution program has contributed to the livelihoods and sustainability of women farmers in the Buffalo City Municipality. Explorative qualitative research was conducted to understand the effects of the land redistribution program on the livelihoods of women farmers. The findings of the paper revealed that access to land has contributed to the expansion of livelihoods of women farmers and community members. This was enabled by increased outputs resulting from working from big farms compared to what they could access initially before participating in the land redistribution program. However, the absence of natural, financial, and physical capital proved to affect the sustainability of women's farms as lack of ownership of land threatens future livelihoods.

KEY WORDS

Land redistribution, land ownership, women in agricultural activities, sustainable livelihoods, South Africa.

Agricultural activities have for many centuries contributed to livelihoods and gross development products of countries. Their contribution to the world's economies is immense especially now in the globalised world where nations are co-dependent on the agricultural products of other countries. This puts pressure on governments and farmers to produce to meet the global demand for their produce. Of the contributors to the food production ecosystem, is women. The participation of women in the agricultural sector dates back to eons ago though with limited economic acknowledgements as their outputs were not properly recorded (Comanne, 2010), and in some circumstances, they mostly participated in subsistence farming (Sebata et al., Sithole, 2014).

Access to land and ownership is another challenge that women have been grappling with for centuries (McDade and Spring 2005; World Bank 2008; Emmanuel et al., 2021) though with possibilities that it is nearing its end for some countries as it will be revealed in this study. Other studies have also proved that affording women access and control over land gives rise to improved economic conditions for women (Bakesha et al., 2010; Sebata et al., 2016). Access and control over land enable women to be economically active, secure livelihoods for themselves and communities around them, as well as secure bright futures for their families. The ripple effect of supporting women-owned activities, especially in Africa, trickles to a far more audience such as extended family members, the elderly who are mostly under the care of women, and the education of children. However, as argued by Shackleton

(2021), we cannot ignore the fact that good proceeds from agriculture are dependent on access to productive land, inputs, and tenure security.

Agriculture is one of the sectors that contribute to South Africa's economy, though the sector's contribution to GDP has been declining since 2002 (RSA 2010). According to Statistica (O'Neil 2021), this sector contributes about 2.4% to the GDP of the country. Similarly, Statistics South Africa (RSA 2020), recorded a low employment rate by the agricultural sector in 2020, although skilled agriculture was one of the sub-sectors that recorded gains in employment for the last quarter of 2020. It should, however, be noted that some of the agricultural activities may be classified under the informal sector especially for farmers who are not formally registered. It is also known that this sector is one of those that employ more women (Astatika and Gazuma 2019; Sanusi et al., 2016). This sector has the potential to absorb youths as both employees and employers, especially in cases where there is interest in agri-preneurship as posited by Nade and Malamsha (2021).

However, issues of access to land and other important resources pose a threat to some. The topic of land is a contentious issue in South Africa and the historic legacies have left most previously disadvantaged groups without access to land and ownership (Hall and Williams, 2003). In efforts to manage issues of land access, the South African government has devised policies and programs to improve and enable access to land. Therefore, land redistribution is one of the vehicles of ensuring equal access to land. This paper's objective is therefore to determine how land redistribution has contributed to sustainable livelihoods of women-farmers in the Buffalo City Municipality, in the Eastern Cape.

Following on this introduction is the literature review examining issues related to land redistribution and the role of agriculture in securing rural livelihoods, and theoretical framework guiding the study; this is followed by the methodology section; results and discussions; and the paper is concluded by providing implications of the results and recommendations are shared.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The world's biggest challenges that we have been battling to overcome before the emergence of COVID19 has been poverty and hunger, which are at the top of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN). The UN (2021) has confirmed that the world is not going to meet the goals of alleviating poverty and hunger by 2030, as it happened in 2015 where the millennium development goals were not met. The UN (2021) estimates that by 2030 about 840 million people will experience acute hunger. These developmental challenges mean that more needs to be done to ensure that there are adequate sustainable means for people to secure livelihoods for their households and other individuals out of normal family structures (such as those living in the streets). However, natural and unnatural disasters such as COVID19, droughts, and climate change fuel the imminent issues threatening food security and livelihoods of mankind (Emmanuel et al., 2021; Shackleton 2021), which may affect both the poor and wealthy. This is evident from the World Food Program statistics, which indicated that 230 million people's lives and livelihoods in the global South are at risk (Anthem 2020). The agricultural sector, like many other sectors, is bearing the brunt even harder as it is at the heart of food production. Anthem (2020) reported that the countries that have been relying on food imports are more at risk as the global crisis will impact the pricing of food. Moreover, countries like Somalia and South Sudan are at risk because they import 40 000 tons of cereal around the world.

According to Essay (2021) investment in agriculture provides opportunities for improving food security; contributing to job creation; and wealth creation which may lead to a reduction in poverty. This is evident in Ethiopia where Astatike and Gazuma (2019) assert that 84% of the rural population relies upon the agricultural sector for a living, and the sector contributes 43% to the country's GDP. However, they argue that the sector has been failing to provide a safety net for these rural communities and they have to rely on non-agricultural activities to earn a living. Essay's (2021) position to invest in this sector provides opportunities for those who prefer to work in the agricultural sector to secure earnings.

Essay (2021) further notes that some of the challenges facing this sector, especially for South Africa, include land reform, weather changes, and COVID19. The land reform policy in South Africa is based on three pillars, namely; land restitution, land rights/tenure, and land redistribution (Dada, 2015; Hall & Williams, 2003). According to Buys (2012), Cousins (2016) land restitution was meant to restore the dispossessed land of blacks; land tenure is about land rights and security for tenancy; whilst land redistribution is concerned with enabling access to those who need farming land. Land tenure is not unrelated to land redistribution but goes further to examine the quality of land accessed and its feasibility to ensure good production (Hall & Williams, 2003). Cousins (2016) argues that land restitution and redistribution has to date settled an estimate of 9% of farmlands. Moreover, the pace has been slow in the commercial sector where the target of 30% was missed (Cousins, 2016). Muswaka (2019) argues that land tenure security plays a critical role in securing livelihoods and ensuring the empowerment of women globally. According to (Dirlik 2018), land reform policies have failed to address racial and gender differences in land ownership and have led to Land Expropriation Without Compensation (LEWC).

This paper is focusing on land redistribution as it is an important driver in addressing the debacle of poverty in that it provides initiatives that can be used towards mitigating factors that may lead to this condition. As postulated by Shackleton (2021) the phenomenon of poverty can be addressed through mitigation and reduction. He explains that poverty mitigation is about preventing poverty by using strategies and actions (e.g. job retention for the under-employed to ensure that income security is not lost), whilst poverty reduction focuses on initiatives and practices that lead to sustainable livelihoods (e.g. community food gardens linked to markets). The latter exposes the poor to opportunities of growing food for consumption and selling excess to a wider market and can provide employment. Moeng (2011) is of the view that positive highlights of the land redistribution are that it has increased production which in turn would ensure continuous food security and sustain the livelihoods of those who have been allocated land.

The agricultural sector comprises commercial and non-commercial farmers with the former enjoying asset securities in the form of access to land and financial assistance which enables these types of farmers to secure human and physical capital compared to those without securities. Essay (2021) states that there are 32000 commercial farmers in South Africa with about 6000 of them producing 80% in agricultural outputs, the number of commercial is quite small. This is despite the fact that 70% of the rural population in Southern Africa is dependent on agriculture as conveyed by the UN (2021). The underperformance of this sector is also noted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2021) as this affects Africa's economic growth and livelihoods. Issues of such poor performance have been linked to poor farm productivity, poor exposure to markets, and agro-processing facilities (Sanusi et al., 2016; USAID, 2021). Soeker, Lusinga, and Chigona (2021) argue that unequal access to supporting infrastructure like information and communication technologies among black and white farmers also contributes to some of the challenges. Technical knowledge is imperative in this sector to enable farmers to harness other opportunities and diversify earnings when faced with challenges. However, technical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills have been outlined as a problem faced by farmers (Buys, 2012; Emmanuel et al., 2021). The literature reviewed for this study shows that women's access and control over productive resources is important in ensuring women's rights to equality and for securing sustainable livelihoods. However, little is known of how female beneficiaries of the land redistribution program have utilized the land as a livelihood strategy, especially in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The challenges associated with accessing productive resources such as land are best explained by the Marxist theory as it explains how patriarchal systems coupled with capitalism favoured men over women (Comanne, 2010). In South Africa, the legislative framework has been pivotal for the land reform policy. According to Muswaka (2019), there is

a debacle of access to land and tenure security, and the legislative framework provides means to ensure quality and security on the existing land right. However, the legislation has been cited to not be effective (Cousins, 2010), as such this paper explores other theories such as Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to assess the effectiveness of the redistribution pillar in land reform in promoting women's farming activities.

Issues of sustainability can be assessed and analyzed using the SLF with a focus on some of the assets namely; natural, financial, physical, human, physical, and social capital (DFID, 1999). The SLF uses assets such as natural capital (e.g. land), financial capital (financial resources), human capital (labour or skills), physical capital (agricultural equipment), and social capital (use of relatives to save on labour costs) to assess the availability or lack thereof on how it affects the success of women farmers. Chambers and Conway (1992) assert that the SLF is underpinned by equity, sustainability, and capabilities in framing development from a micro level. Therefore this study assessed the use of land (natural asset) on how it has contributed to improved livelihoods. In doing so physical, human, and financial assets are evaluated to see how they have enabled women farmers to be sustainable. It is imperative for a study devoted to livelihoods to examine these three tenets holistically in both theoretical and practical terms. SLF is therefore relevant to determine how the available assets, in this case, the provision of land have influenced the business operations of women in the Buffalo City Municipality.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employed an explorative research design to understand how women involved in agricultural activities are accessing and using the land. This design involved the use of semi-structured interviews which allowed detailed conversations and interactions with the researched sample (Harrel and Nash, 2009). The conversations resulting from such qualitative data collection enables researchers to have a deeper understanding of the researched phenomenon. A sample of 10 women who were the beneficiaries of the land redistribution program residing in the study area of the Buffalo City Municipality in the Eastern Cape was used. In addition, an informant from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) was included in the sample to ascertain the procedures and participation of the sampled group. The sample was used in line with the saturation rule wherein qualitative studies can reach saturation (Guest et al., 2006).

Before conducting the research permission was sought from three different parties. Firstly, permission to conduct the research was sought from the Nelson Mandela University (NMU) to ensure that the researchers adhere to the ethical standards and the study can be identified with this ethics number: (H20-BES-DEV-125). Secondly, the DRDLR was also approached to seek permission to interview its beneficiaries and an informant from the department. Lastly, the beneficiaries who are women involved in various agricultural activities were approached to seek permission to interview them. The data were collected in the native language of the participants (isiXhosa) and were later transcribed into English by the researcher who is fluent in both languages.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis where the researcher identified emergent themes. According to Maguire and Delant (2017), themes present patterns that capture significant results emanating from the data. The themes were thus used to discuss the identified issues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through land redistribution, women interested in farming applied to DLDR to participate in the program. This policy allowed women farmers to increase their farm sizes. Women-farmers who participated in the program were matured aged between 35 and 52 years. The participants' profile (Table 1) illustrates the agricultural activities that women-farmers in this study were involved in including the sizes of their business.

Table 1 – Women farmers' profile

Beneficiaries	Age of participant	Farming activities	Number of employees on the farm
Participant 1	40	Crop Farming (Potatoes, Chickens)	7 full-time employees (FTEs)
Participant 2	36	Livestock (pigs and chicken)	15 FTEs and 23 part-time workers
Participant 3	45	Livestock (goats, sheep, cattle)	10 FTEs
Participant 4	55	Crop (cabbages, spinach, beetroot tomatoes) Livestock (chickens, goats, sheep)	5 FTEs workers
Participant 5	35	Livestock (pigs, chicken, and sheep, Crop farming (tomatoes)	4 FTEs workers
Participant 6	62	Citrus Farming	8 FTEs and 12 part-time workers
Participant 7	42	Livestock (pigs, cattle, goats chickens, Crop farming (potatoes)	6 FTEs and 3 part-time workers
Participant 8	52	Livestock (Pigs, goats) (Deciduous crops (green beans), and Cannabis).	15 FTEs and 20 part-time workers
Participant 9	40	Crop farming (Potatoes)	5 workers FETs
Participant 10	45	Citrus Farming	20 FTEs and 50-70 pickers (part-time workers)

The findings of the research confirmed that the land reform policy has three pillars namely; land restitution, land tenure and land redistribution (Dada 2015). The policy was established with the purpose of redressing the gross imbalances in land holding in South Africa which is the result of apartheid discriminatory practices. A number of legislation items were used to dispossess people of their land, and one of the most significant one was the 1913 Native Land Act. This Act supported the forceful removal of black people from their land in accordance with racial legislation. The law further restricted black people from buying or occupying the land except as employees of a white farm owner. The key informant highlighted that this historical dispossession resulted in the majority of agricultural land being owned by the white minority in South Africa. The main themes that emanated from the study and participants' extracts are showed in Table 2 and the results as will be expanded in the discussion below.

Employment creation and livelihoods. The allocated land was utilized mostly for commercial farming and their produce sold in formal and informal markets. These women therefore have taken the responsibility of ensuring food security at both household and community level through regular food production. The allocated farms are operated as registered businesses and are the main source of income for all the women in this study. The sizeable farms increases agricultural production which results in more profit made from the farming businesses for some of the beneficiaries. The amount of money that is generated from the farming operations determines the amount of money that will be invested back into improving the yields for the future, and increasing the number of employees. The profit aspect also determines the ability of the farm to pay rentals, to reinvest into the business and pay for labour costs. An increase in profit margins also means that farmers are able to meet some of their household needs (Sebata et al., 2014).

Being commercial farmers means that the farmer can export their produce to international markets. Participant 10 who is a citrus farmer reported that 80% of the produce is exported to counties such as China, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Russia and the UK. This confirms Cousins' (2016) views on the impact of commercial farming. Those that sell their produce at the international market also benefit from currency fluctuations because a weaker rand stimulates exports. However, they also felt that owning a bigger farm comes with more responsibilities and the need for more money to invest back into the business.

The findings of the study revealed that the land redistribution process has contributed to employment creation where community members and family members of women who participated in the study were employed. The highest number of employees on one of the citrus farms was 20 staff members who are employed on a full time basis and 70 additional seasonal employees are hired during harvest time. However, employment in this sector is not

always sustainable as farmers are sometimes forced to reduce the number of employees depending on the season and how well the business is doing.

Table 2 – Themes and participants excerpts

Themes	Participants' stories
Improved livelihoods	<p>"On the previous farm we had for example 500 chickens so you can imagine the profit from 500 chickens and even the space and structure was limited but now because we have more space and livestock we can make extra profit and live off the profit we make." – P3</p> <p>"We can make a living from the money we make at the farm. I can pay for my kids' education and do other things, but we do not have a fixed salary." – P9</p>
Employment creation	<p>"As we speak, we have 15 permanent staff. Every 8 weeks we hire 23 people for 4 days for cleaning the site where we keep our chickens and also prepare for the site for chickens, those people are employed temporarily and comprise of both men and women." – P3</p> <p>"We started making cannabis tea, we have pickers and trimmers who were 10 ladies per day. At times we would have about 20 of them but due to covid-19 regulations, we had to reduce the number of people on the farm." – P8</p>
Access to resources	<p>"I lost 70 pigs to death because of lack of the technical know-how so the training I think and believe that as farmers we need it so that we can enhance our skills." – P5</p> <p>"We were told that the farm had everything, water and everything else, when we got here those things were not there, for instance, they told me there is a second borehole and the other one quickly ran out of water soon after we arrived. You know one cannot operate a farm without water. On my previous farm I did not have this problem as I had running water all the time." – P4</p>
Challenges	<p>"When we received funds from the department we only managed to renovate 5 houses (which we use as a shelter for the chickens) it was not even enough to renovate the 5 houses fully; ..we had to use money obtained from the profit for completing the sides..., we took a decision to temporally close the hydroponics and the dairy then we take one enterprise and boost it." – P2</p> <p>"The problem is the transportation and being forced to maintain social distance. Instead of the truck collecting people making one trip we had to go two times because the police could stop us and ask why we have so many people in one truck. Due to transportation costs, we had to cut down the labour force." – P10</p>
Sustainability	<p>"I don't want to depend on the government forever. I want to be able to go to the bank and get a loan so that I can expand my business but unfortunately banks do not give us loans" – P7</p> <p>"...If you give a black person land and you say this is yours; you will see maintenance and improvement but if you say to the person you only have 30 years on this farm, then that person will not give it their all knowing that the farm may be handed over to someone else. We believe in inheritance, we believe in passing assets to the next generation, the 30-year lease makes it impossible to do that." – P6</p>

Access to resources. The grounding of this study in SLF was motivated by the framework's use of available assets/resources to meet livelihoods, but also to ascertain if the chosen mode of living is sustainable for these female farmers, their households, and the communities that they work with and serve. Whilst land was made available through the redistribution process, other necessary assets were not (Cousins, 2016). The participants highlighted the need to be supported with skills training, technical advice on production, and farm management for the projects to be successful and fully functional (Emmanuel et al., 2021). These are the human capital assets that not all beneficiaries will have. Financial capital was another noted hurdle. As established by Buys (2012) that agricultural growth cannot be attained without access to support services such as grants as well as credit. The majority of the women in this study have been given 30-year leases with an option to buy the property from the government at any point of the contract tenure which makes it difficult for farmers to obtain credit. This means the farms that have been allocated to the participants are still state-owned property and cannot be used as surety to access financial loans.

Challenges faced by women farmers. The lack of funds to invest in the farming business is one of the major constraints that impede beneficiaries from using their land efficiently, which in turn hinders the economic and social development of the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the women in the study also reported that they experienced difficulties in accessing key agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, machinery, seedlings, and veterinary services (Shackleton, 2021). This is linked to financial constraints confronted by some women farmers. Such limitations affect their productivity. Participants also reflected on the

challenges they face when applying for loans at the bank. The possession of a title deed is one of the important criteria that the banks consider before one is deemed eligible for a loan, as such the leasing agreement disqualifies them. The findings resonated with Shackleton (2021) that COVID19 contributed to their challenges as women-farmers reported that they were greatly affected by COVID19 and therefore many of the employees on the farms lost their jobs.

The evaluation of the land redistribution process showed a need for additional assistance for farmers due to the high failure rate of some projects. This led to the DRDLR further introducing a post-settlement support program named the Recapitalization and Development Program (RADP) to assist those who have acquired farms. The majority of the participants in this study had benefited from RADP in that they received a grant in addition to the land that was allocated to them. The grant was meant to ensure that enterprises are profitable and sustainable in line with the business plan which stipulates comprehensive development requirements of the farm. As stipulated in the contract between the department and the beneficiaries, the grant is to be received for the first 5 years after land had been allocated to the beneficiaries. However, all the participants that had received the grant were only paid a once-off payment for one year and have not received any form of financial assistance from the government thereafter, which is consistent with Cousins' (2016) observations. This disbursement was supposed to assist with capital to ensure that farmers can build a credit record that they could use with the long-term lease to be able to source additional funding where needed. Inadvertently, the participants in this group were still unable to secure loans from financial institutions.

Sustainability. The findings indicate that an increase in farm sizes meant that women farmers' production increased which amplified their yields and earnings. They had an opportunity to participate in commercial farming and had options on where to market their produce. The wellbeing of the participants as well as those of their communities improved due to this land policy as they were able to fend for themselves and provide jobs for community members as well as ensure food security in Buffalo City and the surrounding areas, corroborating Moeng's (2011) assertion that land redistribution helps in increased production and livelihoods. However, the sustainable livelihood framework analysis purports that livelihoods are derived from and sustained by the combination of all relevant assets which include human, financial, natural, physical and social capital (Moeng, 2011). All the participants in this study had limited access to financial, human, and physical capital which are key to ensure the sustainability of their farming activities. The natural capital, which is land was only available for the leased period. As such sustainability of their agricultural activities is not certain given that none of the participants were confident that they would qualify to buy the land from the government.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study revealed that the land redistribution program has enabled women farmers in the Buffalo City Municipality to secure livelihoods for their own families. Access to land has assisted these farmers in ensuring food security in their communities as well as serving the international communities. However, it was also revealed that the shortfall with the land redistribution process is that provisioning of land without access to funds to maintain and grow investments into the available land creates problems for the beneficiaries. As indicated in the theoretical framework section that human and physical capital is imperative for the land to be fully productive. The findings of this study proved that the sustainability of the women farmers in Buffalo City Municipality is under threat due to not owning the land used for their farming activities. The sustainability threat is based on the inability to access credit to fund physical assets required for substantive production in their farms; as well as not being able to up skill on the necessary skills required to remain competitive.

Whilst there is good coverage on land issues and agriculture, little has been documented on the experiences of beneficiaries of the land reform programs, particularly

women. This paper, therefore, contributes to the body of knowledge in terms of rural agricultural activities and their influence on the sustainability of livelihoods and food security. It further provides reflective narratives that may help policy developers and implementers on the practical aspects of the impacts of existing policies. It further provides development practitioners with developmental issues on the ground to ignite discussion on how rural development may be approached inclusively whilst fostering gender mainstreaming.

The qualitative nature comes with limitations as the reported results only reflect experiences of women in a particular area. Therefore future studies are encouraged to conduct a countrywide study to uncover how the policy reform has impacted the livelihoods of rural communities.

The following recommendations are proposed:

- Women farmers should be supported with financial and non-financial backing to ensure that farms become sustainable;
- Given the nature of land leases the government should also find internal funding streams as options for leasing farmers;
- Training should be provided for as long as beneficiaries are under the program so that farmers and their employees can have technical skills to promote sustainability;
- Monitoring and evaluation should be included in the program so that both farmers and the department responsible for this program can be evaluated continuously to ensure accountability and transparency.

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