

Land, youths and 'radical economic transformation': Whither South Africa?

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Objectives
2. Background
3. Youths and land reform in South Africa (SA)
4. A case for enhanced youth land rights in SA
5. Pathways to enhancing youth land rights towards an inclusive land reform process
6. Concluding Remarks

OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To outline the context in which current debates and contestations on land in SA are happening
- ❖ Discuss these current contestations using youth unemployment and youth land rights lenses
- ❖ Present the case for enhanced youth land rights in post-apartheid SA
- ❖ Advance policy propositions for enhancing youth land rights in the context of the land reform process and current 'economic transformation' debates in South Africa

BACKGROUND

- ❖ The land issue has moved to the centre of political and economic discourses in SA in recent years, e.g.:
- ❖ 2015 - Formation of the 'Black First Land First' (BLF) political party
- ❖ Mid 2016 - Ruling African National Congress (ANC) starts placing the land issue at the centre of its current push to 'radical economic transformation'
- ❖ Feb 2017 - Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), 3rd largest political party, tables a motion in the Nat. Assembly calling for expropriation of land from white minority without compensation

BACKGROUND cont...

- ❖ Youths very much part of current contestations around the land issue and economic transformation
- ❖ ANC pushing for its youth wing to be the vanguards of 'radical economic transformation'
- ❖ EFF and BLF predominantly led by youths
- ❖ Current heated contestations happening in the background of slow pace of land reform, marginalization of youths in the land reform process and increasing youth unemployment
- ❖ Perfect opportunity to raise issues around enhancing youth land rights which will help address persistent problems of youth unemployment, poverty & widespread inequality

YOUTHS AND LAND REFORM IN SA

- ❖ Land reform in SA has proceeded from 3 angles i.e. land redistribution, land restitution and land tenure
- ❖ Been widely acknowledged that land reform programme in SA has largely failed so far – only 9% of land transferred from the white minority since 1994, against a government target of 30% by 2014
- ❖ Major debating points and policy initiatives on land in post-apartheid SA – mainly centred on race, class and gender dynamics, with the generational dimension largely ignored
- ❖ Result has been few youth beneficiaries of land and agrarian reform – since 1994, only 13% youth beneficiaries as at March 2014 according to official figures

A CASE FOR ENHANCED YOUTH LAND RIGHTS

- ❖ Centred on the land redistribution aspect of land reform towards beneficiary control & ownership of land for farming and agricultural purposes
- ❖ Enhancing youth land rights will assist in dealing with the persistent problems of youth unemployment and associated poverty
- ❖ SA youth unemployment rate currently at an all-time high of 55%; averaged 51% between 2013 and 2017 – a ticking socio-economic time-bomb if not addressed
- ❖ At 37% of the country's population, enhancing youth land rights will catalyse employment for the biggest age category in the country & lead to economic growth
- ❖ National Development Plan (2012) – agricultural sector has the potential to create 1 million jobs by 2030

A CASE FOR ENHANCED YOUTH LAND RIGHTS

cont...

- ❖ Land inequalities also carry a profound political charge in South Africa
- ❖ Serves as a glaring symbol of generalised oppression and dispossession
- ❖ In the context of high youth unemployment, poverty and widespread inequality, issue may lead to political rhetoric & instability if not properly addressed
- ❖ Enhancing youth land rights – a major step towards clearing an apparent ‘political minefield’

PATHWAYS TO ENHANCING YOUTH LAND RIGHTS IN SA

- ❖ Specifically targeting youths in land reform by **discarding the 'one-size-fits-all' approach** to the land redistribution exercise
- ❖ **Anchoring this youth-targeting on a value-chain approach** – which encompasses the provision of adequate input support, extension training, & facilitation of access to credit & high value markets
- ❖ Deliberately spearheading **initiatives towards changing perceptions of farming & agriculture among the youth** – presenting these activities more as a viable business opportunity
- ❖ **Accelerating the land redistribution exercise** particularly through a radical shift in current government priorities

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ❖ Land and land reform – important components of social and economic transformation in SA
- ❖ Current heated contestations around land and ‘radical economic transformation’ - a perfect opportunity to raise critical points around youths in the land reform process in SA
- ❖ Youths – not bystanders, heavily engaged in the current debates and contestations
- ❖ Enhancing youth land rights - a major step towards an inclusive & progressive land reform process which will simultaneously help deal with problems of youth unemployment, poverty and inequality

THANK YOU!

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