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
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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