



Land-redistribution beneficiaries,
Elliot District, Eastern Cape.

CASE STUDIES OF RESTRIBUTED LAND REVEAL PATCHY RESULTS

THE THREE AREA-BASED CASE STUDIES seek to understand the significance of land reform in economic contexts in Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality in the eastern Free State, Theewaterskloof Local Municipality in the Western Cape, and Sakhisizwe Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape (see map).

The Maluti-a-Phofung (MaP) Local Municipality was formed out of the former Harrismith and Witsieshoek (Qwa Qwa homeland) magisterial districts during the municipal amalgamation of 2000. Historically, the economy relied heavily on state subsidies to Qwa Qwa. The withdrawal of these state subsidies in the post-apartheid period led to a general decline of the local economy.

The RDP boldly asserted that a national land-reform programme would be the central driving force behind rural development. Over a decade later, this doesn't appear to be true. Were the RDP's expectations fundamentally ill-founded, or has land reform failed to realise its potential, asks MICHAEL ALIBER.

Most rural land in MaP is owned by white farmers. However, a large area of formerly white-owned land, purchased by the South African Development Trust, was transferred to black farmers, known locally as the '114 farmers'. Despite the high demand, there is only a small number of recent land-redistribution projects on state land, which are typical of land reform projects in their early phases.

The '114 farmers' afford a glimpse of what newer land reform projects might look like in another 10 to 20 years. Based on the research, one can venture a number of observations. Firstly, the cause of failure among black farmers can be traced, at least in part, to inconsistent government policies and/or the absence of appropriate support. Secondly, a sizeable fraction (more than a quarter) show remarkable resilience, even

showing positive growth over time. Finally, there is no evidence that even the most successful of the land-reform farmers have been able to integrate into the commercial farming sector.

Maluti-a-Phofung: The cause of failure among black farmers can be traced, at least in part, to inconsistent government policies and/or the absence of appropriate support”

While state support for the '114 farmers' makes some sense, there are however very few new land-based livelihoods being created in MaP.

Theewaterskloof Local Municipality (TLM) is located in the Overberg region of the Western Cape, and was formed in 2000 when various transitional rural councils and local municipalities were amalgamated. Agriculture is the major economic activity in the area and also the main employer. The southern part of the region focuses on deciduous fruit farming, while the central and northern parts of the region specialise in wheat and livestock farming.

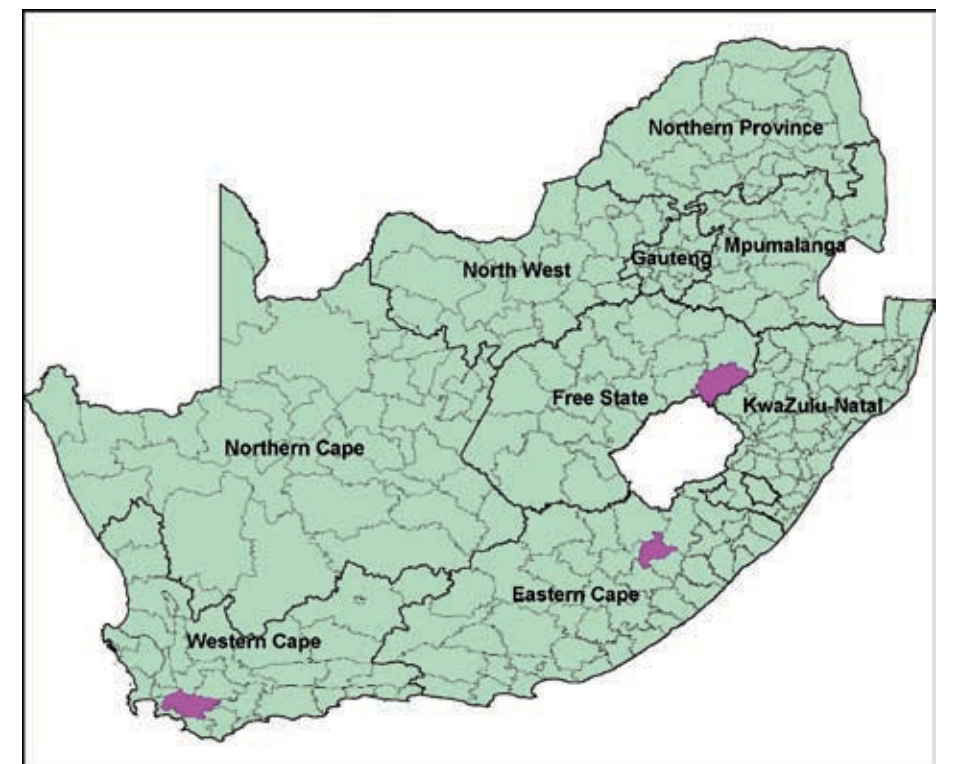
There are ten land reform projects on commercial farms in Theewaterskloof. These can be divided into equity schemes of various sorts and tenure projects relating to farm housing. Equity schemes show a variety of ownership arrangements, ranging from Geelbekslei (5% worker-owned) to Vuki and Destiny (100%). All of the equity schemes show strong continuity in production because land reform has not led to any subdivision of land or change in land use – with the partial exception of Thandi, which has seen former forestry plantations converted into vineyards.

While the scale of land redistribution is too modest to have a discernible impact on the number of livelihoods or the local economy, there is broad agreement that evictions from commercial farms have reached worrying proportions, resulting in visible pressure on housing and services. Evictions are often in breach of what tenure reform – a key aspect of land reform policy – is seeking to accomplish.

Whether land reform has significant potential to promote economic development in Theewaterskloof is difficult to say, but at the present rate it will not. According to government officials, high land prices (which are roughly twice the national average) are the reason why there are so few willing-buyer/willing-seller projects. However, an alternative explanation is that Land Affairs has not identified a model which reconciles high land prices with its grant system and the economic potential of beneficiaries. Except for share equity schemes, the nature of commercial farming in Theewaterskloof is unattainable for land-reform beneficiaries,

reform will remain a marginal activity. In the meantime, the evictions are having a negative impact on the municipality's attempts to improve access to housing and services.

Sakhisizwe Local Municipality has enjoyed one of the largest concentrations of redistribution projects in the country, in particular since 2002. As of 2004, over 10% of the commercial farmland of Sakhisizwe had been redistributed via land-reform projects. Thus Sakhisizwe offers an opportunity to examine an instance of unusually rapid delivery within the willing-buyer/willing-seller context, as well as a good base from which to extrapolate to the 30%



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and yet there are low-income households for whom land access is an important component of their livelihood strategy.

Theewaterskloof is thus a good example of the mental hurdle land-reform policy faces: there is an active land market on which plenty of land can be acquired for a price; but until one accepts the value of providing it to people who have little prospect of resembling white commercial farmers, land

target in asking the question whether land reform can make a contribution to rural development.

As elsewhere in South Africa, commercial farming in Sakhisizwe has undergone dramatic change in recent decades. The number of operational units has declined from 141 in 1988 to 61 in 2002, while average farm size and average hectares per farmer have increased commensurately. ▶

When farmers purchase additional farms, they rarely keep on the farm workers from the newer farm. By 2004, farm employment was around 38% of its 1988 level, with an especially sharp decline from 1999.

The main explanation for the rapid pace of land-redistribution delivery in Sakhisizwe was the robust strategy adopted by the Eastern Cape Land Reform Office to sensitise local farm owners. Interviews with key informants and recent sellers support the conclusion that land reform managed to tap into a 'pent-up supply' of land, but that this pent-up supply is limited, and indeed was largely exhausted by 2005.

The estimate is that there has been a net creation of 132 livelihoods to date through land reform in Sakhisizwe. If one extrapolates to the 30% target, this would amount to about 400 livelihoods. This represents about 5.5% of the 2001 total unemployed for Sakhisizwe Local Municipality, but only 2% of the unemployed from the area served by land redistribution in Sakhisizwe, which includes Engcobo. Although a success in some ways, the local economic impact of land redistribution in Sakhisizwe is not encouraging.

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The three case studies show that land reform is presently having a very limited impact on rural development. Ostensibly the reason is that the scale of land reform – even in areas which have seen a relatively large amount of it – is too limited, in particular in that it involves relatively few people. A second reason is that land-reform projects tend to involve a de-intensification of land use. Thus, although labour use on land-reform land may be steady or even modestly greater, it is far from the significant increase that the RDP envisaged.

One possible response is therefore to redouble efforts to give land-reform beneficiaries a better chance at competing on equal terms with commercial farmers. There may be some opportunity for doing this, but presently the gap between beneficiaries and established commercial farmers is so vast that it is not clear that this is a strategic route to pursue on the whole. At any rate, what can be said with some certainty is that land reform does not appear to have workable models according to which it can make the economic contribution it is meant to. The economic case for land reform remains highly problematic. ●

The Maluti-a-Phofung case study was undertaken by Stephen Greenberg and Ann Eveleth of Praxis Development Facilitation; the Theewaterskloof case study was undertaken by Karin Kleinbooi, Edward Lahiff and Boyce Tom of the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape; and the Sakhisizwe study was conducted by Michael Aliber, research director at the HSRC, Patrick Masika and Julian Quan, of the HSRC, the University of Fort Hare and the University of Greenwich, respectively. Michael Aliber was the overall project coordinator.

For a draft copy of the report, e-mail media@hsrc.ac.za

FET COLLEGES set to become 'FIRST CHOICE' to skill youth

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, Naledi Pandor, recently called for further education and training (FET) colleges to become institutions of 'first choice' for young people. The Department of Education (DoE) has embarked on recapitalisation funding of colleges, which provides a much needed national impetus for renewal.

Against this background, and sponsored by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DANIDA, as part of their Support to Education and Skills Development (SESD) programme, the conference provided an opportunity for all involved in FET to share information on the initiatives by the Departments of Education and Labour. Participants included representatives of all 50 FET colleges, provincial FET directorates, the Department of Labour and other education and training stakeholders.

In her address to the conference, Pandor stressed the intention to build and sustain a well-designed, responsive set of FET institutions that offer flexible programmes.

Penny Vinjevold, deputy director-general for FET in the national DoE, outlined plans to develop a new FET curriculum in 13 critical sectors identified by the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA). These plans balance fundamental skills (reading, writing, calculating and IT), theory, applied theory and workplace experience.

The new curriculum, to be phased in from 2007, evoked considerable debate, as it will be a significant departure from the colleges' current National Education Department courses (the N1–N3 certificates that have been criticised in the past for being outdated and obsolete) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) type programmes.

Professor Michael Young of the Institute of Education at the University of London presented a paper on the importance of professional education for FET college lecturers, particularly significant in South Africa in the light of the proposed new curriculum change.

Four models of professional development were proposed, which informed small group discussion the following day to draw on the expertise and concerns of participants. A 'college-university partnership' model of professional development enjoyed broad support, but it was recognised that it may not be possible to implement such a model immediately.

Mounting a coherent programme of professional development may require a coordinated national response. The suggestion was that a

A joint conference by the HSRC and the Department of Education earlier this year explored current practices and fresh possibilities for the further education and training (FET) college sector. GLENDA KRUSS reports.



national institute for FET college professional development should be established in a reputable university of technology, with the remit to kick-start the process.

As the process gains momentum, responsibility can be devolved to a number of regionally based professional development units, which are independently situated but premised upon close working partnerships between universities and colleges that reflect joint ownership and involvement of both institutional types and simultaneously cater for DoE and Department of Labour (DoL) interests.

The DoL has strengthened relations with FET colleges in the roll-out of learnerships. Sam Morotoba, acting deputy director-general, presented an overview of proposed improvements to the learnerships system, highlighting the role and contribution to be played by FET colleges in the National Skills Development Strategy.

Morotoba proposed that the central vision is for FET colleges to become a seamless interface between basic schooling and workplace learning, and a bridge to higher learning. Like the minister, he emphasised the vision that FET colleges become the automatic and first choice of young people in any community to become skilled workers in any occupation.

HSRC researchers contributed to the discussion of future possibilities by presenting key trends and recommendations from research conducted over the past three years to evaluate DANIDA-funded interventions in pilot FET colleges.

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shift in the nature of the student base. The SESD programme succeeded slightly better in achieving its objectives for institutional capacity building than it did for its programme delivery objectives.

One research project developed a framework for organising academic support within courses that have large numbers of students at risk of dropping out or failing, taking into account the specific FET college sector context and the nature of vocational education and training programmes. A key recommendation pertinent to the successful implementation of new curriculum plans is that student academic support should

be planned as part of overall institutional development and systems, within the context of a concern for quality.

A second research project considered the role of Linkages and Programme units in enhancing the responsiveness of FET colleges and the employability of their learners as they proceed to the world of work. This project stressed that FET colleges are diverse and do not act uniformly, determined by the historical and external socioeconomic factors that shape their identity, by the distinct organisational ecology of the college, and by the current curricula resources of colleges and the curricula needs of external stakeholders.

A third research project investigated the organisation and effectiveness of pilot marketing and communication units in colleges located in metropolitan, urban and rural settings. Here too, a wide range of approaches was found, reflecting diverse strategic marketing priorities, provincial visions, college resources and leadership approaches, given the legacy of the past. It is recommended that colleges need to determine strategically which model is most suitable for adoption in their own institutional context, but that the question of available resources is fundamental to the sustainability of the units.

The conference offered an excellent opportunity for all in the FET college sector to take stock of the achievements of the past few years, and to consider policy, plans and practice to inform future progress. ●

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