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**Towards achieving food security in South Africa:
stakeholders, institutional structures and power relationships in land reform
– A case study**

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7 Summary

This study is part of the larger research project "Food security and right to food in the context of land and agrarian reform in South Africa" by Dr. Stefanie Lemke, at the Institute Gender and Nutrition and the Research Centre Gender and Nutrition (KGE), University of Hohenheim. The larger research project explores the impact of land and agrarian reform on food and nutrition security, in particular the impact on local sustainable food systems and marginalised groups.

In particular in South Africa, land reform is regarded as having the potential to contribute to food security and livelihoods, especially among previously disadvantaged groups. To date, a growing body of literature on land reform exists and it can be concluded that the land reform program in South Africa has failed to improve the livelihoods of the majority of poor people in the rural areas.

The presented study focuses on beneficiaries of restitution projects within South Africa's land reform program and their livelihood strategies as well as interactions with other stakeholders. Special emphasis is being laid on demand for land, power relationships and support and empowerment in order to increase the bargaining position of the beneficiaries.

The study refers to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and applies qualitative methodology, namely participatory action research, qualitative interviews, and observations. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework helps analyzing sustainable livelihoods by acting as a simple checklist of issues to explore what the livelihood resources, institutional processes and livelihood strategies are, which are important in enabling or constraining the achievement of sustainable livelihoods for different groups of people.

The field study took place in Limpopo province, Makhado municipality, bordering the former Venda homeland, and studied four case studies from March to August 2010. Data collection was carried out in collaboration with Nkuzi Development Association. Nkuzi is a land sector NGO involved in policy engagements, capacity enhancement and agrarian transformation. Nkuzi aims at supporting rural poor to access land, and achieving restorative justice for land lost during apartheid, security of tenure and sustainable growth for land reform beneficiaries.

Food security is one of the primary determinants of the well-being of people directly affected by land reform. It is widely accepted that improved access to land has positive effects on food security. Agricultural production can provide livelihood strategies and a path out of poverty. However, particular in areas of former homelands issues around severe land scarcity and land-related conflicts are especially pregnant.

The field study brought to light that all studied restitution projects face major challenges regarding access to land, land allocation and security of land rights. Demand for land for agricultural as well as residential purposes is high. However, contradicting land use objectives and power struggles result in conflicts over land up to the point of divided communities. The would-be legal owners of the land, communal property associations, fail to provide support to the beneficiaries and in cases engage in power struggles over land use and rights.

Agricultural production objectives of the studied beneficiaries are to supply the formal market and achieve economic benefits. However, access to the formal market mostly fails due to lack of knowledge, skills, and produce quality. The government identifies cooperatives as a key organizational form to integrate small-scale farmers into formal value chains and link them with markets. The studied restitution beneficiaries partly lacked interest in such cooperatives due to lack of time for networking and financial constraints to pay the membership fee.

Government institutions fail to provide post-settlement support and adequate extension service. This is highlighted most dramatically by the fact that none of the studied restitution projects have received their restitution grant or the title deed for their restituted land.

Nkuzi Development Association is linking restitution beneficiaries with relevant stakeholders like government institutions or market actors. Further Nkuzi is providing support through training, access to information and extension service as well as equipment, like building materials, pipes and other implements for vegetable gardens, pigsties or poultry houses. The organization experiences a shift from providing financial support to offering process facilitation. This shift is not taken on by all beneficiaries and the organization is in danger of losing the trust of the communities. However, Nkuzi plays a major role in the empowerment of beneficiaries and development of communities.

The study concludes that the design and implementation of restitution projects renders the achievement of economic viability and a sustainable livelihood impossible. The newly established democratic institutional structures of communal property associations are dysfunctional and need support in community conflict resolution. Further the provision of post-settlement support is crucial for sustaining the restitution projects. Without financial and land rights security the beneficiaries will remain with no hope to improve their livelihoods through land reform.