



Natural Resources
Institute



Nkuzi Development
Association



Human Sciences
Research Council



Universidade
Federal da
Bahia

CETRA

Centre for Workers
Studies and Support



Department for
International
Development

Land access and participatory territorial development in South Africa and Brazil

A DFID supported policy research project 2004 – 2006

The impasse in land reform

Current debates about rural development in Brazil and South Africa are marked by struggles by civil society struggles and efforts by government agencies to implement redistributive land reforms. The scope for major improvements in access to land assets by the poor have great significance for the possibilities of achieving greater equality and more inclusive economic development in each country.

The context in which programmes to improve land access are designed and implemented is often difficult. Major constraints include: policy environments favouring large scale agriculture; restricted government budgets, weak institutions at local level; political conflicts over land rights; and limited interest and support from developed countries. To date, land access programmes have frequently failed to link land transfers to the poor with provision of basic infrastructure and services. With lack of support to production, marketing and human development, livelihoods opportunities can be stifled and poverty often persists. At the same time, constructive academic and political debates on land reforms have been overshadowed by ideological division about whether the state or the market should take the lead in transferring land to the poor.

Changing perspectives on rural development

A new research project, undertaken by the Natural Resources Institute (NRI) in UK, in collaboration with university and NGO partners in both Brazil and South Africa, seeks to break the mould. We look ahead and consider how new, more holistic and area context-oriented approaches could link land access to sustainable opportunities for the landless and socially excluded, and to more equitable economic development in the longer term.

Throughout Latin America, an emerging paradigm for rural social and economic change, ***Territorial Development*** is

rapidly gaining ground. The approach focuses on the common cultural identities of specific territories (frequently larger and less clearly bounded than the administrative units of local government), their unique characteristics and comparative advantages, and dynamic markets and patterns of urban-rural change.

Territorial development seeks to reconfigure decentralised institutions and delivery of investment programmes so as to enable more equitable and participatory planning, facilitate civil society and private sector partnerships, and build social capital and competitiveness. Integral to this approach are efforts to open up space for dialogue and democratic control by stakeholders in a given territory, recast the role of the state as enabler, and strengthen the voice of the poor in prioritising use of limited resources

Research context and objectives

The key question is “*What can territorial development offer to the landless poor?*” In Brazil, the Agrarian Development Ministry (MDA) is pioneering a new programme to set land access and support to land reform communities in territorial context, and strengthen horizontal coordination and popular participation. In South Africa, government has promoted local economic development and created new democratic local authorities, aiming to integrate former black and white areas. So far however, this has not hastened land access and economic inclusion for the black majority, and South Africa’s limited land reforms have been largely centrally planned and delivered.

Through empirical assessment and participatory debate in case study territories, our research aims to:

- Understand the diversity of land occupation - by peasant farmers and farm workers, land reform settlements, indigenous groups, women and men, old and young - and the opportunities for livelihood improvement and political participation available to them.

- Track the progress of the territorial development initiative in Brazil, and its impacts on land access programmes and on the landless poor.
- Support the progress of an area based land reform initiative by Nkuzi Development Association in South Africa, working in partnership with local government to assist land restitution, promote social ownership of farm enterprise and defend farm workers rights
- Identify how social mobilisation can contribute to equitable territorial development, alongside the roles of local government and the private sector.
- Examine the progress and impacts of different land access and agrarian development programmes, identifying opportunities to strengthen public policies and improve planning, delivery and coordination.
- Assess the growing territorial development literature, debate and experience in Latin America, and similar approaches emerging in South Africa, examining their cross regional lessons and their transferability in the light of the practical findings.
- Promote policy debate and institutional learning amongst stakeholders on linking land access with sustainable and socially inclusive economic development.

Research Partners

NRI, at the **University of Greenwich**, in Kent, UK, a centre of scientific expertise in rural development, involved in advisory support to DFID and global debates on land and natural resources policy and the rural economy.

In South Africa: **Nkuzi Development Association**, an NGO working to support the landless poor in gaining secure access to land and land based economic empowerment; and the **Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)**, a leading policy research institution, working on integrated rural and regional development.

In Brazil: geographers and economists from the **Federal Universities of Bahia, Ceara** and **Pernambuco**, working in partnership with landless movements and official agrarian reform at local level; **CETRA** (Centre for Workers Studies and Support), an NGO active in networking for sustainable development in Brazil's semi-arid Northeast, based in Fortaleza, Ceará. **NEAD**, the Agrarian and Rural Development Studies Unit of the Agrarian Development Ministry is taking a close interest in the work.

Alongside DFID's support, the partners are contributing their own resources and expertise to the project.

Focus territories

- ❖ In South Africa: *Makhado District* in Limpopo and *Eliot District* in Eastern Cape.
- ❖ In Brazil: *Médio Sao Francisco* in Bahia, *Sertão de Pajeú* in Pernambuco and *Sertão Central* in Ceará.

Research Outputs

- Working Papers on concepts and approaches to land access and territorial development, drawing on new thinking and practice in Latin America, South Africa and Europe
- Diagnostic Reports on land access, social inclusion and economic development in each case study territory
- Country Policy Papers with recommendations to improve public policy and practice in delivery of programmes for land access, rural territorial development and democratic institutional change at local level.
- A Cross-regional Policy Paper: to highlight and disseminate key findings, lessons and recommendations for government and international agencies on territorial approaches and their potential to enable land access, reduce poverty and inequality, and help build local economies.

With support from interested partners, and the translation of publications into different languages, we aim to disseminate key findings and lessons in each country and in Southern Africa and Latin America more widely

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