

Criteria Specification in Land Reform Evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper argues that the mixed results of evaluations of land reform programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is perhaps more a product of design imperfections in research execution rather than a true reflection of realities on the ground. Based on a survey of literature on SSA for the period 1960-2011, the findings of this literature are compared in terms of whether a clear specification of evaluation criteria is provided. The results indicate a persistent confusion between policy, objectives, implementation, and performance in the way land reform programs are reported. A specification of what is meant by effectiveness, efficiency, success and failure remains critical. The tendency for making generalisations on SSA derived from a few countries is noted. There is an urgent need for research work with a focus on the evaluation of land reform programs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

INTRODUCTION

A significant volume of literature is reported for Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) on land reform. The dominant theme in contemporary literature is a portrayal of Africa as a continent with unique tenure diversity and hence which requires place specific interventions that should ideally be built on traditional and customary land tenure systems that have served the people for many years. Attempts at imposing the neo-classical economic theory that sees the western model as applicable to Africa have produced mixed results leading to a questioning of the basis for land tenure reform. Land reform objectives vary across different countries. These objectives often change in focus through time; land reform is implemented at different rates depending on the government in power and its priorities. Budgetary allocations for the land reform program vary across time and countries; often the objectives of land reform get overtaken by socio-economic developments forcing a rethink-slow-down and often abandonment. No single yardstick can be applied to all land reform programs across SSA. It is necessary to distinguish between the compo-

nents of a land reform program. These include legislation, implementation, monitoring, performance, evaluation and management. Reporting the performance of the land reform program in SSA (Blarel 1994; Golan 1994; Borras 2006; Aliber and Hall 2012) becomes problematic because of the diversity in the individual programs from country to country. Existing literature often reports dubious performance criteria where authors are either unconscious of the role of specification or are more comfortable with making sweeping generalisations based on few so-called case studies. Overgeneralizations based on a set of few countries also create problems of interpretation because land reform conditions vary between such countries.

The criteria for evaluating program performance require specification so that there is a common standard on which the measurement of variables is performed, making it possible for inter-country comparisons to be carried out. Existing literature (Kariuki 2009; PLAAS 2011b; Lahiff 2007; Kleinbooi 2011; Tatwangire and Holden 2009) report measures of efficiency, effectiveness, failure and success without reference to actual measurement. Is it success or failure when a program is able or unable to meet all or some of its original objectives? When a program is reported as a failure and or a success, what actually is being measured? Does effectiveness, does this refer to the procedures for implementing the program or the fiscal discipline in allocating resources as per budget guidelines? Is it governance structures that fail and or succeed or is it the program itself? Are success and

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failure and all those possibilities in between measures sensitive to time? How is evaluation affected where there are changes in the original objectives of the program but such changes take place during the period of observation? At a second level, the concepts-efficiency, effectiveness, success and failure- need to be re-defined, specified and expressed in measurable units –if the results of such an evaluation are to be compared across time series. A single program can show various levels of failure, success, effectiveness and efficiency in different parts of its operations during a given time span. In essence then, the problem is not so much as a distinction between failure (F), success (S), effectiveness (E) and efficiency (Y) of land reform in SSA but rather, on whether studies that report evaluations are actually utilizing an approach that is built on criteria specification. To my knowledge, no studies to-date on Sub-Saharan Africa have addressed the issue of criteria specification with regard to land reform. The purpose of this paper is to report on the state of contemporary research on land reform performance in Sub-Saharan Africa in the context of how far these studies depart from or come close to embodying specification as defined here. Three objectives are advanced. The first is to assess the extent of specification in land reform literature on SSA. The second is to comment on the implications thereof while the third is to generate lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa. The rest of this paper is structured around five sections. Section two- on Specification of measurement- indicates the criteria for evaluating land reform, section three- on Methodology- provides a description of the research design while section four- on Results- deals with research findings from contemporary literature for the period 1960-2011. Section five – on Discussion- provides the implications of the findings while section six –on Conclusion- presents a conclusion and lessons thereof.

Specification of Measurement

Every policy (**P**) is built around a set of key principles and from such a policy, is generated programs (**G**). A program therefore is a subset of a policy statement. Each program has stated objectives (**O**) and is once again broken down into projects (**K**) which are the focus of implementation (**I**). (Pratt et al. 2000; Nimon and Zi-

gami 2011; Bhatt and Koedel 2012). Clearly, it is difficult to understand a program like *land reform* without recourse to the policy that gave rise to it in the first place. The same applies to the individual projects that constitute a program. These have to be understood in the context of the applicable program. Implementation, then, becomes a practical deployment of inputs in line with the project plan which by necessity has to be dictated by the nuances of the objectives of the program. Policy analysis focuses on the first phase of this conceptual model and addresses issues of relevance, capacity and potential impact. A policy can be declared a disaster long before programs evolve! A program is built on the underlying philosophy and theoretical base of the policy, since a poorly articulated policy cannot generate sound programs. Implementation deals with the translation of policy and program into action. It is possible to measure the success or other wise of implementation. Monitoring (**M**) deals with keeping track of developments to ensure that they do not deviate from the pre-determined plan of action and, where such deviation is detected, advice on corrective measures. The various components assume an understanding of planning at various levels of government. Evaluation (**V**), as a process guided by a set of widely established procedures, can apply to the policy, to the program and to the project, and the mechanism for implementation. But the parameters of evaluation for each of these four (4) components are not the same. This distinction is critical because it provides a roadmap of what is and what is not applicable.

Effectiveness is the speed with which critical inputs in the program are mobilized, synchronised and deployed into projects to achieve pre-determined outputs in line with the action plan of implementation. Efficiency can be defined within the domain of production management to mean the amount of money spent in effecting a specified change to a resource status, an organisation, process or part of a process that meets the requirements earlier specified before the application of financial resources. It is similar to a measure of returns on investment because the lower the money spent to effect such a change, the higher the level of optimization in financial deployment. In economics, efficiency extends beyond this base to consider whether such an expense was the most optimal in making use of a scarce resource (in this case- money). It is noted that measuring efficiency of a land reform pro-

gram using the latter definition encounters problems of specification. The debate on the advantages and limitations of land privatisation and titling programs tends to be bogged down with the pre-occupation with the inverse farm-size relationship (Kariuki 2009) and the role of the market in land allocation (Tatwangire and Holden 2009) rather than concerns with equity in the agrarian economy (Lahiff 2007).

But contemporary literature (Pratt et al 2000; Kariuki 2009; Nimon and Zigami 2011) show diversity in the way the concept is applied. It includes aligning funding to the individual requirements of projects that fall within a program. It will be noted later that this conceptual definition misses other applications of the term. These concepts generate an organisational structure set up to deliver the program. Is this structure designed to achieve this effectiveness? Assuming that output possibilities for any land reform program can be scored from zero (0) translating to a complete failure, to 100% (translating to a situation where all predetermined objectives (outputs) are achieved as per action plan), then the space 0-100 defines a possibilities frontier in which different levels of failure and success are possible. This being the case, it follows that failure and success as widely used in monitoring and evaluation research are ambiguous except if these concepts are tied to a specification, defining targets along some kind of spectrum. Effectiveness can also be used as a measure of the social and material impact (Holden et al. 2009) of a program on a given population. Impact here can be quantified through changes in income per capita, employment, and value of household assets, mean household income, extent of access to services and status of infrastructure. It will be noted that effectiveness and efficiency on one hand and, failure and success on the other are in effect descriptions towards the totality of the object of measurement. This being the case, measurement constitutes a core component of any program evaluation if the outputs of such processes are to be objective, comparable and provide a base for policy review. The specification of the criteria used in evaluations of land reform programs in SSA falls within this wider context.

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, Sub-Saharan Africa refers to all the countries in Africa locat-

ed south of the Sahara Desert. Two sources of information are used in this study. Through desk top research, secondary data was extracted showing, and where possible, the most common objectives of land reform across SSA countries. The second source deals with research reports, peer-reviewed book chapters, working papers, policy statements and peer review research articles specifically dealing with the performance of land reform programs between 1960 and 2011. A selection criterion is specified to indicate the type of sources that are included in the study. The sources must meet the following conditions: (i) inclusion of an assessment of the performance of a land reform program of a single country or a selection of countries or Sub-Saharan Africa or developing countries (ii) provision of assessments on the success or otherwise of such a program, and (iii) must have been published between 1960 and 2011. The research findings were then tabulated and elements of evaluation as used by the authors indicated. Using the specifications explained under 'specification of measurement', new tables are generated in which - measurement precision inherent in each source is indicated and departures from the specifications earlier made. Analysis involves a classification of sources in terms of the focus either on efficiency/implementation or failure/success or on both and, establishing what percentage of sources actually report evaluation outputs in terms of specifications.

RESULTS

The first objective was to assess the extent of specification in land reform literature on SSA. Land reform programs and their constituent focus on redistribution, restitution and agrarian transformation are underlain by a set of objectives. These have been extracted from government policy statements and the literature. They appear in Table 1 indicating in which regions these objectives are pronounced. Mainstream objectives (*M) are those that are common for the entire SSA area. In Table 2, those objectives indicated as mainstream are perhaps the most difficult to measure because they are part of a more comprehensive package of critical and variable inputs in the development equation. Objective 3, to address inequality in land access, appears in all regions in policy documents of individual countries but hardly appears at the level

of implementation. In terms of changes in land tenure status, Kleinbooi et al. (2011) reports that in the period 199-1945, countries with settler populations (Olowu and Wunsch 2001: 4) were governed through 'indirect rule' and customary tenure lacked security of tenure to spur investment modernisation (Peters 2004: 217). In the period 1946-1965, a post war shift by colonial administrations led to local government structures based on elected officials. In some countries the recognition of limitations of tenure saw the promotion of some form of individual and family land ownership. The cold war era, 1966-1977 did not witness any changes in land policy but 1978-1989, with the IMF's structural adjustment policy (SAP), there were increased attempts at enhancing property rights. The period of globalisation, 1990-2000 saw a change in the thinking of the IMF and donor agencies to accommodate customary tenure (Deininger 2003). Since 2001, the approach of European countries (EC 2007) has emphasized devolution of power to elected governments, local governance, support for local economic development (LED) and the modernisation of the state. But this position has not had any noticeable influence on rising inequality and differential access to land.

In Table 1 a set of common policy objectives for land reform are presented that cumulatively aim at transforming population-land-relations in order to spread the benefits of access and simultaneously address inequality and tenure security. It will immediately be noted that with a few exceptions, most of these objectives lack specificity which in turn creates problems of implementation and measurement during evaluation.

In Table 2, a total of thirty (30) literature sources are indicated as per criteria of selection earlier specified in section 3-'Methodology'. In the last column, under specification, each source is classified in the context of efficiency (E), the effectiveness of the implementation mechanism (I), failure (F) and success (S). This classification is an attempt to answer the question: Does the evaluation, on the basis of which land reform is judged based on a specification of the internal variables inherent in each class? Is land reform being evaluated as a policy per se or in terms of its implementation or in terms of the entire program and its impact in meeting the original objectives.

In Table 2, the sources indicate the focus of the research and findings and a classification

Table 1: Common objectives of land reform, 1960-2011

<i>Specific objective</i>	<i>L¹</i>	<i>Specific objective</i>	<i>L¹</i>
1 Improve tenure security of land owners	SOA,WA, ECA	13 To create land governance structures	*M
2 To streamline the legislative environment	SOA,WA, ECA	14 To facilitate land registration systems	*M
3 To address inequality in land access	SOA,ECA	15 To give land to the landless	SOA
4 To protect the poor and vulnerable against possible dispossession	*M	16 To facilitate access for to resources for on-farm and off-farm production	SOA
5 To improve agricultural production	EA,SOA	17 To facilitate entry of the masses of the rural people into the market economy	SOA
6 To facilitate the creation of rural land markets	*M	18 As a critical component in rural development	*M
7 To ensure food security	SOA,ECA, WA	19 To protect resources against possible abuse	*M
8 To alleviate poverty	*M	20 To create a stable democratic system of governance	SOAECA
9 To initiate re-distributive forces with regard to land	SOA,ECA	21 To contribute to rural development	*M
10 To remove discrimination and historical injustices in patterns of land access and ownership	SOA,ECA	22 To appeal to populist sentiments after independence	SOA
11 To stimulate agrarian transformation	SOA	23 To contribute to political stability	ECASOA
12 Contribute to social stability and cohesion	SOA		

Source: Author

L¹=Location SOA=Southern Africa, ECA= East and Central Africa, WA= West Africa, *M= across entire region

Table 2: Distribution of sources and specification

Author(s)	Year	Area	Focus of findings	Specification			
				E	I	F	S
Feder G and Noronha R	1987	SSA	Land rights systems and agricultural development	*			
De Klerk M (Ed)	1991	SA	Land question in South Africa: inequality		*		
Platteau JP	1992	SSA	Security of tenure is equated to absence of risk of loss of land	*			
Shipton and Goheen	1992	SSA	Land mortgage systems have failed in Africa for nearly a century and are likely to continue failing	*			
Berry S	1993	SSA	Land tenure was never a constraint on African agricultural development, but labour	*			
Smith RE	1994	RWA	Tenure security	*	*		
Bruce et al.	1994	SSA	Titling and property rights, predicts greater productivity due to tenure security	*			
Carter et al.	1994	KA	Tenure security	*			
Matlon P	1994	BKF	Indigenous land use practice	*	*		
Migot-Adhola et al.	1994	KA	Security of tenure and land productivity	*			
Place et al.	1995	ZA	Customary tenure status imposes limitations on production	*			
Binswanger et al.	1995	DC	Power and reform in agricultural land relations	*	*		
Binswanger et al.	1996	SA	The market mechanism and policy are critical	*			
Aliber M	1996	SA	Land redistribution, policies and markets	*	*		
Quan J	1997	SSA	Land tenure and poverty eradication			*	*
Hansungule et al.	1998	ZA	Tenure insecurity	*			
Delgado et al.	1998	SSA	Agricultural growth linkages	*			
Adams et al.	1999	SSA	The belief that rural people are universally happy with communal systems and that legal confirmation of rights brings no benefits is certainly misplaced.	*			
Palmer R	2000	SSA	Policy and tenure reforms		*		
Okoth-Ogendo HWO	2000	EA	Reform of customary tenure		*		
Deininger K and May J	2000	SA	Growth with equity in land reform?			*	
Quan J	2000	SSA	Economic growth, land reform and poverty			*	*
Peters P	2000	SSA	Security and equity in land systems			*	*
Platteau JP	2000	SSA	Smallholders may fail to apply for loans because they perceive the high risk of losing their land through foreclosure	*			
Hunt D	2001	SSA	Titling debate re-visited	*			
Smith R	2001	ZA	Tenure reform	*			
Werner W	2002	NAM	Land reform and poverty alleviation			*	*
Bernstein H	2002	SA	Land reform and agrarian change in the long term			*	*
Berry S	2002	SSA	Debating the land question-comparative country studies	*			
Smith RE	2003	SSA	Defects in the empirical testing of the neoclassical model	*			
Thwala WD	2003	SA	Land reform and agrarian transformation			*	
Werner W	2004	SOU	Ownership in land reform			*	
Andrew et al.	2003	SA	Evaluating land and agrarian reform	*	*	*	
Hall et al.	2003	SA	Evaluating land reform	*	*	*	
Van dan Brink R	2003	SSA	Land reform confusion and controversy		*		
Pender et al.	2004	UG	Poverty and land management		*		
Saruchera M	2004	SSA	The sharp divide between customary and statutory law further exacerbates inequity			*	*
Hall R	2004	SA	Status of impact as of 2004			*	
Peters P	2004	SSA	Inequality and conflict over land		*		
Sender J and Johnson D	2004	SSA	Mass production and questioning the role of land reform			*	

Table 2: Contd...

Author(s)	Year	Area	Focus of findings	Specification			
				E	I	F	S
Goebel A	2005	SOA	Forceful land seizures			*	*
Wiley L	2006	SSA	Tenure reform	*			
IMF	2006	DC	Empirical evidence for 'success' in land reform is quite limited, and drawn from a small number of possibly exceptional countries.			*	*
Borras SM	2006	DC	Redistribution to the poor and landless, rather than the contribution to the broader economy.			*	*
Lahiff E	2007	SA	Efficiency arguments are rarely concerned with equity <i>within</i> the agrarian economy.	*			
Zikhali P	2008	ZIM	Land reform and agricultural productivity		*		
Holden et al.	2008	SSA	Tenure reform		*		
Kariuki S	2009	SOU	The limits to the program success are attributable to the discord between mechanisms to implement, policy objectives and actual outcomes.	*	*	*	
Tatwangire and Holden	2009	UG	Land, whether accessed through the market or non-market ways, is an important determinant of household welfare.	*			
Pasensie K	2010	SA	Land reform problems		*		*
Greenberg S	2010	SA	Government failure in policy, lack of consistency		*		
PLAAS	2011b	SA	The commercial model on which land reform is based fails to address the small holder farmer		*		
Ruhiiga TM	2011a	SA	Failure of land reform to alter the status quo in land access, tenure rights & poverty alleviation	*			
Ruhiiga TM	2011b	SSA	Land reform and settlement re-organisation		*		
Kleinbooi et al.	2011	SOA	Decentralized governance systems		*		
				23	24	13	9
				42	44	24	16
				%	%	%	%

Source: Author

Where, E= Effectiveness, I= Implementation, F=Failure, S=success, SSA=Sub-Saharan Africa, ZA=Zambia, SA=South Africa, EA=Eastern Africa, SOA=Southern Africa, KA=Kenya, RWA=Rwanda, ZIM=Zimbabwe, NAM=Namibia, BKF=Burkina-Faso, UG=Uganda, DC=Developing Countries, E*=Efficiency, I=Implementation mechanism, F=Failure, S=Success

for which the four criteria apply- shown in the column under specification. The frequency distribution of these entries appears as percentages at the bottom of each column. The information Table 2 shows that none of sources attempt a specification of a set of criteria for each of the four classes of evaluation; since only 45% address efficiency with regard to the applicability of the neoclassical economic model and the search for empirical evidence; 40% say something about the implementation mechanism and the underlying effectiveness thereof; 20% address the entire system in terms of success and 20% failure without a specification of criteria. The implications of this distribution are addressed in the discussion section. At least 40% of the sources in Table 2 focuses on the entire SSA while the remaining sources either cover a specific region or individual countries. But the

critical issue here deals with the role of generalisations in research work. It is neither feasible nor necessary to carry out observation in each country in SSA. What is common is to pick a sample of countries sharing characteristics that are, ostensibly, representative of the entire region. The results from studies of this nature can then be extrapolated to the entire population. The limitations of this approach are that with reference to the status of tenure systems at the level of nation states, common universals are hard to come by. This means that in order to address the individuality of countries (Hunt 2004) and the diversity of ecological-political-economic-legislative contexts, a relatively large sample is called for. Not a single source in Table 2 reports work based on more than 10 countries which would translate to roughly 25% of the sources. The result is that the bulk of the litera-

ture on land reform in SSA is actually based on a few countries and the majority of countries do not actually appear in research literature. This means that our knowledge vis-a-vis the state of land reform in SSA remains limited and sketchy. It is doubtful the extent to which generalisations based on a few countries can be advanced as representative of the entire SSA.

DISCUSSION

Land reform cuts across issues of land access, land ownership, equity, redistribution, restitution, tenure security, customary tenure, statutory systems and the need to streamline governance systems for land. The findings of this study in the context of evaluation highlight certain critical shortcomings that impact on overall assessments of the performance of the policy and program. Policy analysis deals with the application of a set of criteria to measure feasibility, relevance and potential appropriateness in addressing the ecological, legislative, political and economic context of an intended development. Evaluation, on the other hand- as used in this paper- is concerned with specific components: policy, strategies, program, implementation mechanism, projects and impact. A strategy is a comprehensive outline of the techniques of mobilizing resources and organisation while the program describes the phases of an intervention and the organisational structure for funding, control and management. The practical delivery on the ground of a program becomes implementation but such implementation is normally broken up into constituent projects, each hopefully integrated towards a final predicted outcome. The diversity of the objectives of the land reform program appearing in Table 1 still does not capture variability at the level of the individual nation state, nor at the level of regions within a single country nor at the level of variability at lower scales in terms of administrative units. Superimposed on this is the fact that at the initial launch of the land reform program, the state of customary and statutory tenure systems is not captured and the differentiation is not factored into the planning process.

Sources that focus on changes in production as a result of the land reform program are essentially part of a wider debate about the pros and cons of the commercial production model against the smallholder model in terms of effi-

ciency. These sources raise issues of the market mechanism in allocating land versus the traditional systems of inheritance, issues of property rights, issues of the advantages and limitations of the customary tenure in improving agricultural productivity, limitations of land privatisation, and transformation of the agrarian economy and, the limitations and advantages of individual titling. Common in this type of research is the search for empirical evidence to support the underlying neoclassical theory of production either using secondary data or primary data sources. Essentially, the focus of this research is on how to achieve greater efficiency in production systems. The outcome of this research commonly falls into four categories: the findings are not conclusive (Smith 2001), the results are mixed due to a diversity of other multiple variable and empirical evidence is inadequate for testing the model (Smith 2003), empirical evidence supports the success of the market system in allocating land (Tatwangire and Holden 2009) and that no single system of tenure reform is appropriate for a country (Bruce et al. 1994). Note, however, that on the basis of the objectives of the land reform program in Table 2, such a focus is basically looking at land reform in the narrow view of facilitating greater agricultural production in the rural countryside; it does not address the integrated package of long-term objectives of the program. Such objectives go beyond simply agricultural production. Thwala (2009) is of the view that generally five economic criteria are used to judge the efficacy of policies and decisions regarding resource allocation. Vollrath and Erickson (2007) link land distribution to the development of appropriate financial systems.

Four of the criteria relate to efficiency of the economic system, while the fifth one is for equity considerations. Thus, land can either be redistributed for purposes of efficiency or equity. Mafeje (2003) for example talks of the 'agrarian question with reference to land access. These two are economic terms, which are often confused in many writings. Efficiency in land reform measures the extent to which resource allocation (land) achieves optimum outputs compared to other potential use. Equity on the other hand is more concerned with distributive justice where land reform aims at increasing access to land for all citizens. Both cannot always be achieved at the same time. In the long term, declaring a pro-

gram as having failed the efficiency criteria is often problematic except for countries where evaluation is intended to measure the impact on agricultural production and the agrarian economy. A specification of the criteria for measuring efficiency is necessary. Does it apply to the success of the market system in quickly allocating land to the best users? Does it apply to the speed at which land reform quickly lowers inequality in land access and ownership? Does it measure how fast a country following a land reform implementation is able to expand production over time? Does it measure the returns on investment in land resources before and after the implementation of the program? Each of these individual cases would still require a specification of the criteria for measurement because a basic requirement deals with specifying which variables enter the computation and which units of measurement apply to each of these input variables. The fact that input variables for analysing efficiency in terms of agricultural production are not yet widely standardised and the fact that the neo-classical model of production is incomplete in addressing the complexity of production, a position echoed by Smith (2003) means that much still needs to be done in this area of research.

A significant number of sources report findings on customary tenure, problems of modernisation, the resilience of indigenous land systems and its adaptability (Okoth-Ogendo 2000; Place et al. 1995; Matlon 1994). The general position is that customary tenure, in spite of limitations, has adequate inbuilt flexibility to create room for agricultural modernisation and improved security of tenure. The viewpoint of this class of research is that land reform should instead appreciate this internal flexibility, be resilient and build on these systems to improve tenure security instead of replacing these indigenous systems. The status-quo should be maintained for it promises the best conditions for sustainability. For example, Deininger (2003) asserts that debates on tenure systems in Southern Africa may be turning full circle. Many governments and multilateral institutions were dismissive of or even hostile to customary tenure systems in past decades.

Sources that report some form of specification with regard to policy and program implementation appear in column (I) in Table 2. One result was that practically all the sources say something about inherent shortcomings in the

implementation of the policy and program. Yet, it was reported in the results that only 40% of sources specifically focus on some aspect of implementation. This is expected since the bulk of the research on land reform experiences not just in SSA but in the rest of the developing world consistently emphasise policy design weaknesses and implementation, a position echoed in Ruhiiga (2011a). But for purposes of this study, the focus is on whether when looking at evaluation, the criteria for assessing the implementation of the program are laid out first. This is important because only through this is it possible to test the concept of *effectiveness*, defined in section 1 of this paper. Is the organisational set up in terms of personnel, financing, budgeting, control, responsibilities, protocols, monitoring, autonomy, legislation and political support adequately configured to sustainably deliver the program? Perhaps because of problems of scale, almost all sources cited in this paper fail to address this component adequately. Today, perhaps only the work of PLAAS (Lahiff, 2007; PLAAS 2011b) comes close to this with regard to South Africa. What does this mean? Contemporary literature reports the slow pace of land reform across SSA, the lack of consistency in political support for the program, the failure to develop support institutions and legislative frameworks, the inadequate funding of the program, contradictions in the land policy, confusion as to the mechanisms necessary for successfully delivering the program (Adams et al. 1999), dogged persistence in the pursuit of policies that have consistently failed to deliver expected outcomes (PLAAS 2011a), possibilities of accommodating customary tenure and changing priorities of government. Effectiveness in evaluations of land reform program is not specified and hence understanding of management and governance structures (Wiley 2006) at the level of individual countries in SSA remains limited. Access to land can only be one component of a broad set of solutions and interventions. Land access and land rights, in other words, need to be understood to play a poverty reduction role as one of a set of policies supporting sustainable human settlements and communities (PLAAS 2011b).

Sources that report the land reform program as a failure or success appear in columns (F) and (S) in Table 2. These are sources which focus on profiles of the land reform program at the

level of a region, group of countries and individual countries and develop profiles of policy-characteristics-problems-outcomes and conclude that the program has failed to deliver as per expectations. The standpoint of most international organisations involved in development work falls under this class of literature. These organisations believe that the empirical evidence for success in land reform, however, is quite limited, and drawn from a small number of possibly exceptional countries. Others declare that the program has failed to address inequality and justice and is basically a waste (Kariuki 2009) while yet others believe that since the future of mankind lies in the city, land reform should instead focus on urban areas. The truth or otherwise of these positions is not being questioned. From an evaluation standpoint, the need to define failure and success and to isolate criteria for measuring each of these concepts becomes critical. Assuming that each land reform program has a set of objectives each with a time span for delivery, it is necessary to specify criteria for measuring whether the objective has been achieved. Assuming that the time-span for each objective is not constant across the program, it follows that at the time of evaluation, some objectives will have run through the allocated time while others should still be in process. Measuring the performance of an intervention in process before it runs through its normal cycle of expectation encounters a different set of problems. Nevertheless, a five year or ten year period is common for carrying out an evaluation of a project to allow for review and the initiation of corrective actions. In the absence of an initial clear specification of criteria against which each objective is measured, several outcomes are feasible. The evaluation may fail to capture the entire spectrum of objectives as appearing in the program statement; the evaluation may fail to report the variability in the implementation results of individual objectives; evaluations represent generalisations in time and geographical space which are often oblivious of the actual legislative-ecological-economic-political-governance climate within which individual programs must operate; the focus of the evaluation may skip some of the objectives because these are assumed to be subsumed in other ostensibly more important objectives and, most evaluations may suffer from pre-conceived subjective beliefs that are not necessarily representative of conditions

on the ground. The South African government, for example, has also admitted that over 90% of the transferred land has not been farmed productively. The failure is as much a result of the market-led program based on a 'willing-seller, willing-buyer policy' as it is a result of the government's lack of planning and institutional support for the beneficiaries. Government, opposition parties, NGOs and academics all agree that the land reform program has failed those who hoped that the legacy of apartheid's racial land laws would by now be only a distant memory. However, budgetary constraints, the ineffective implementation of progressive land laws, institutional incapacity, and a general lack of political will on the part of the government, have ensured that 16 years into South Africa's democracy, millions of landless people are still landless.

A common thread running through this discussion has been the concept of criteria specification as applicable to research on the land reform program in SSA. Consistent in this section has been the fact that the criteria used in carrying out the evaluation of programs at various scales is not adequately specified and is often not even mentioned. The result is a lack of consistency in the way land reform programs have been so far evaluated and continue to be evaluated. Where evidence of specification exists, this more often has concerned only a limited set of components of the program. This has direct implications for the final judgements made of the program because such evaluations are in themselves defective in the underlying design. What are the lessons for Africa from these findings? There is so far no scientific basis for the view that SSA is unique and hence land reform can only be dealt with by fiddling with the existing confusion between statutory and customary tenure systems without changing the status quo of land access, ownership, property rights and security. While specific problems of policy articulation have been identified across a significant number of sources, the more serious problem appears to relate to the discord between policy objectives on one side and their implementation on the other. A second discord relates to the contradictions between policy standpoints of government on land reform and lack of commitment and consistency in government financial and political support for the program. Given that the bulk of the literature on land reform programs

does not meet the most basic conventions of evaluation research, the key findings of such sources may not appropriately provide insights that normal evaluation studies deliver.

CONCLUSION

The limited state of proper evaluation research in contemporary literature on the land reform program has been noted. The findings of this study indicate that research literature cited here reports what is equivalent to judgements of the land reform program often without recourse to the underlying methodology for evaluation research. Because the criteria used in carrying out evaluations is not actually specified, the implication is that common judgements generated from research effort of this type in which land reform is generally reported to have been either a failure or has produced mixed results becomes problematic. This is made worse by the common practice of basing conclusions on a small number of countries. Ultimately, this raises doubts as to the reliability of such evaluations as a source of reference for policy review and implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is ample justification for the application of conventional techniques in evaluation research to measure the performance of the land reform program in SSA. Such an approach would, hopefully, generate research results at the level of individual countries and in the process provide insights conducive to comparative analyses. This remains a neglected aspect of land reform experience in SSA.

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