

# Assessing the impact of major land reforms on livelihood opportunities for the poor

Paper submitted to the New Directions in Impact Assessment Conference

*(Draft - not for citation)*

*Julian Quan Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, Chatham, Kent,  
Edward Lahiff, Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) University of  
Western Cape, South Africa  
Su Fei Tan, International Institute for Environment and Development, London*

## Abstract

A major historical weakness of redistributive land reforms has been their frequent failure to create conditions for sustainable farm and other enterprises managed by land reform communities, as a result of problems of integration with wider local social, economic and environmental planning. However the methods of impact assessment currently applied to land reforms by governments and development agencies have not been designed to enable improvements in land reform policies and planning.

In seeking to evaluate and assess programmes impacts, governments and development agencies have generally applied quantitative, statistical methods in order to assess the rate and costs of land transfers, and measure changes in incomes, or welfare of beneficiaries. These approaches, however, neglect two critical dimensions:

- the perspectives of land reform beneficiaries themselves, and those of the civil society organisations involved in advocating for and delivering land reforms; and
- the need to assess the linkage and follow up of land access programmes with programmes to deliver basic infrastructure, services, plus technical and marketing support.

By way of background, this paper reviews briefly the development significance of land reform in socially unequal countries, and the main features and current context of land reform programmes in Brazil<sup>1</sup> and South Africa. We then examine and critically assess the methods applied to assess impacts of land reform programmes in each country, and the broad findings and results that recent studies commissioned by the respective governments have delivered<sup>2</sup>. In each case we contrast these with the approaches deployed by independent civil society evaluations of the same programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> The general discussion of land reform in Brazil is based primarily on the principal author's direct experience and project literature collected and generated through work in Brazil by DFID.

<sup>2</sup> The discussion of Monitoring and Evaluation of land reform in South Africa is drawn substantially from applied research by PLAAS, University of Western Cape to assess the progress of land reforms, and review the government M&E systems and studies commissioned by the Department for Land Affairs. For Brazil, the authors did not have access to parallel information about government based monitoring, and the discussion is based largely on available Brazilian literature, including that commissioned by government for evaluation purposes.

The paper then explores how participatory approaches to land reform impact assessment might be further developed, involving beneficiaries themselves, land reform movements, rural unions, NGOs and other local actors. The paper concludes by considering how participatory approaches to impact assessment might be integrated into more formal governmental systems for monitoring and evaluation of land reforms, and the benefits that this can bring in terms of sustainable social and economic impact at local level, together with stronger social accountability and control.

## **1. Introduction: the development significance of land reform**

Land is a fundamental source of livelihoods for many of the poor and a basis for wealth creation and economic development. Inequitable land distribution is both a cause, and a product of continuing poverty, in Southern Africa, Latin America, and the Indian sub-continent. When ownership of land is inequitable, economic growth delivers less benefit for the rural poor, in terms of incomes, employment and direct access to the fruits of the land.

Land reforms have been actively pursued by governments in each of these regions but in practice have shown mixed results, in large part because of failures to link land redistribution to the creation of sustainable livelihood opportunities. In a post liberalisation context, the capacity and resources of the state to deliver land reforms are limited, and agricultural policies have become more oriented towards trade in regional and global markets. Nevertheless, there are continuing social and political pressures for land redistribution in countries characterised by inequality, and renewed interest by governments and donors in improving land access as a poverty reducing and potential growth generating measure. In South Africa and Brazil, and various other countries in southern Africa and Latin America, rural and urban landlessness, and the under-employment of agricultural workers is a principal source of social exclusion and vulnerability to food insecurity. Unequal land distribution constrains local economic development, social mobility and contributing to social and political conflict.

During the mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century re-distributive land reform was pursued actively by modernising, egalitarian and socialist oriented governments, and as a pre-emptive anti-communist measure intended to achieve greater equity within a market system. Historically, re-distributive land reforms were led by the state and in practice have shown mixed results. There have been considerable successes in countries undergoing historical, economic transitions involving agricultural modernisation (for instance in the Pacific Rim, North Africa and the Middle East in the early part of the 20th century) and the sweeping away of politically dominant but economically backward traditional land owning classes. But land reforms have also proved difficult to sustain, for instance in much of Latin America, both for political reasons, and because they have not been linked effectively to agricultural development strategies which provide real opportunities to land reform beneficiaries.

Donor support for land reforms fell away during the era of structural adjustment and emphasis shifted towards the consolidation of privately held land rights, land markets, in order to create the conditions under which private sector led development could prosper. This approach has not reduced poverty, inequalities in access to land assets

have persisted, and the policy environment as a whole has constrained the opportunities available to small farmers and landless rural workers.

In a context of globalised markets, large commercial farms, with strong vertical linkages to input, output, export and retail markets, have significant advantages. Nevertheless, within liberalised and global markets, robust development of family or smallholder farming sectors offers enduring advantages, both in terms of equity, and efficiency, in particular as regards the effective use of labour and generation of employment. Economic evidence suggests that more equitable distribution of land assets amongst small farm households can lead to higher rates of agricultural and overall economic growth. Egalitarian land distribution safeguards against poverty and food insecurity, and provides a basis for access to and investment in livelihood opportunities by the poor in small scale farming and other activities. (DFID 2002, World Bank 2003)

The importance of land distribution as a means of promoting pro-poor development is being re-examined by development agencies. Recognising enduring problems of land access by the poor, and the associated risks of socio-political conflict and economic instability, but operating within a paradigm of market based development and private property rights are paramount, the World Bank has developed and promoted so-called market assisted approaches to land reform (MALR). Approaches piloted in Brazil, operate largely independently of the state by disbursing land acquisition credit packages for self-selecting beneficiary groups to access land by market purchase direct from landowners willing to sell. The approach has proved highly controversial politically and is actively opposed by organised civil society in pilot countries, linked in part to wider resistance against policies perceived as imposed by IFIs. The Bank has sought to convince governments and partners of the advantages of MALR, relying primarily on economic evidence that indicates the relatively low costs of market based land transfers, but overall success and widespread applicability of the approach has not yet been demonstrated.

At the same time a number of governments, alongside civil society movements continue to assert a role for the state in land and more comprehensive agrarian reforms, in acquiring land for re-distribution, or enabling market based or negotiated land transfers to the poor, and putting in place a policy and institutional environment in which smallholder farming can succeed. In the wake of events in Zimbabwe, both South Africa and Namibia have abandoned the willing seller willing buyer principle and intend a pro-active state role in a new wave of land transfers. Current policy debates risk ideological controversy in relation to market- and state-based mechanisms for improving equity in land distribution, but do not address the critical issues of how to link land access with sustainable livelihood opportunities.

In practice, however, the success of both state and market led approaches has been constrained by failures to systematically target impoverished regions and the landless poor as a group, by linking land reforms to more comprehensive development of social and physical infrastructure, credit, production and marketing support which can enable them to convert improved land access into sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Today, the wider policy context of land reform is characterised by a number of features:

- a) continued demands from civil society and poor people's organisations for improved land access and more equal land distribution, and attempts by governments to address this;
- b) a recent history of disagreement and controversy about the respective roles of the state and the market in achieving more equal land distribution, and the promotion of market based decentralised approaches, globally (by the World Bank), based on limited evidence from Brazil;
- c) mixed results by recent and current land distribution programmes in delivering sustainable benefits for the poor, including failures in linking land access with service support and livelihood opportunities;
- d) the needs to learn lessons arising from current approaches, understand, document and apply good practice and encourage debate and consensus in strategies for agrarian reform in order to help reduce poverty and social conflict in highly unequal countries.
- e) A context of political change: in Brazil following the election of the PT government, and as South Africa prepares for elections in 2004. Land reform has been a widely voiced political demand in each country, and in each case there is renewed consideration of questions of pro-poor agrarian change, and some re-examination of policies and strategies for land reform and rural development.

Globally, and in each major region, there is a lack of evidence based policy dialogue and clear guidance, in relation to the methods of distributive land reforms, their impacts, and how to link them to practical strategies to link them with pro-poor agrarian change and sustainable local economic development.

## **2. BACKGROUND ON THE LAND REFORMS IN BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA**

### **2.1 Land reform in Brazil**

Brazil suffers extreme social and economic inequality, manifest in highly skewed land distribution and limited access to land and economic opportunities for the poor. Poverty in Brazil is most severe in Northeastern Brazil where human development indices are comparable to those of heavily indebted poor countries in Africa and Asia. Land distribution in the Northeast is highly concentrated and large areas remain under-utilised, despite high rural unemployment and low incomes.

To all intents and purposes the history of re-distributive land reform in Brazil dates from the late 1980s, following the collapse of military dictatorship, election of democratic government and the development of a democratic constitution. This constitution incorporates the plural values, of Brazil's emergent social and democratic movements, and of interest groups in society at large. The constitution protects the enjoyment of private property, but also determines that property and land must fulfil social functions of productive and equitable use, empowering government to expropriate unproductive land in the public interest and for re-distribution to the landless.

#### *Expropriation by the state*

The principal method of land reform in Brazil is expropriation of underutilised or illegally occupied land by INCRA (*Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma*

*Agrária*), a large, autonomous federal government agency under MDA, which transfers the land to landless groups who ultimately acquire title. INCRA is also responsible for co-ordinating post-settlement and development support to land reform communities, but as a large federal institution poorly linked with service providers and planning processes at state level, delivery has proved slow, costly and inefficient, beset by poor coordination, and a lack of capacity. Land reform is also constrained by organised opposition from landowners, associated political and sometimes violent conflicts, and long delays in the courts where landed interests frequently succeed in raising the compensation paid by INCRA for expropriated land and the costs recoverable from the beneficiaries.

#### *World Bank supported land acquisition credit*

The World Bank has supported two subsidised credit schemes for the establishment of new farm settlements by poor farmers and landless workers in Northeastern Brazil, the poorest region: initially (1997-2001) a pilot programme, *Projeto Cedula de Terra* (PCT), and subsequently (2002 onwards) the expanded *Projeto Credito Fundiário* (PCF).

The PCF programme, with a current budget of US\$200 million (and a total pipeline of US\$1 billion) is scaling up the “market-assisted” approach to land reform initiated in the late 1990’s in Ceara and elsewhere in the Northeast through the PCT Project. The programmes have operated independently of INCRA, and is managed by state level development agencies in conjunctin with Banco de Nordeste, who provide a grant and subsidised credit package for land purchase and service support to qualifying community groups to establish new farm settlements.

#### *The state-led / market based land reform controversy*

The approach has proved contraversial because of its reliance on direct purchase of land from landowners by the beneficiaries, in a context in which the poor have very limited access to highly distorted land markets, and because it alone can have very little impact on the extremely unequal patterns of land distribution in Brazil. Together with the federal *Banco da Terra* programme (which operates along similar lines, primarily in then south of the country where land prices are higher and more limited areas available for redistribution) PCF is regarded by MST and others in the land reform movement as an attempt to substitute “traditional” expropriation of underutilised and illegally aquired land by INCRA. The World Bank and outgoing federal government stress that this is not the case since PCF is designed to transfer land areas below a certain size <sup>3</sup>, whereas only larger land areas can be targeted for expropriation. The Bank also prefers to emphasise the decentralised and community based aspects of the programme, although it relies on market acquisition of land directly by the beneficiaries. While there is clearly room for both approaches, PCF and market based approaches have undoubtedly been used as a way of pursuing land reform without arousing land owner opposition and in an attempt to break the grip of MST over the land reform movement<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, CONTAG, the major national rural workers union, and a number of NGOs and community based organisations in the northeast have taken the

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<sup>3</sup> 15 *modulos fiscais* officially defined land units reflecting minimal sizes for viable production nits accodring to agro-ecological contitions encountered in different regions

controversial decision to collaborate with PCF, judging that it presents real opportunities to benefit their members. WB and Government have been willing to learn the lessons of *Cedula de Terra* and now actively seek the collaboration of civil society in more systematic training, awareness raising and service delivery for beneficiary groups.

PCF is coordinated at federal level by a national technical unit, under the *Secretaria de Reordenamento Fundiária* of, Brazil's Agrarian Development Ministry (MDA) and is managed at state level the project by state technical units, comprising representatives of the state agencies involved in project delivery. Despite controversy within the land reform movement, CONTAG - the national confederation of state level rural union federations and the largest small farmer / farmworker union in Northeast Brazil now collaborates with the programme. CONTAG has appointed coordinators (*articuladores*) as technical focal points in each state, linking between beneficiary groups, programme management and local rural unions. The programme's technical units also commission NGOs to provide support to project delivery, by training beneficiary groups and providing organisational support and agricultural extension to settlement projects.

Although the land acquisition credit approach demonstrates some advantages, in terms of speed of delivery of land transfers, linked to production projects and infrastructural support for new settlers, it has been criticised in civil society for benefiting landowners, political manipulation at local level, causing indebtedness amongst beneficiaries, and its lack of impact on the extremely unequal patterns of land distribution.

#### *Livelihood opportunities for land reform beneficiaries*

Both of Brazil's these land reform models have suffered from a lack of sustained support to the farmers organisations and communities involved, and in terms of prospects for sustainable longer term farm livelihoods, land reform settlements and the family sector as a whole suffer from inadequate technical, financial and marketing support. There is no federal agricultural extension system for the family sector, and support from state governments is very weak and largely privatised. A limited network of independent service providers exists, but small farmers have to buy in technical assistance using available credit. Although credit provision through PRONAF has expanded in recent years take up for small and medium scale farm investments, largely because of over-complex bank procedures. Technical support and agricultural market development remains overwhelmingly oriented towards the needs of agribusiness, and generally follows high technology, green revolution models. By contrast the support required in the family sector involves the application of predominantly low external input technologies, together with support for community based planning, market development and business management.

#### *Current political context of land reform in Brazil*

At the beginning of 2003 MST and other land reform movements through the Forum for Agrarian Reform and Rural Justice sought a government commitment to settle an estimated 80,000 families involved in land occupations, by expropriation of large unproductive landholdings. Currently, however a provisional legislative amendment (*medida provisória*) passed in 2002 prevents expropriation of land under occupation by land reform movements. The land reform movements have jointly petitioned

government for a constitutional amendment to limit total land holding size, and a Bill to this effect is now proposed to parliament by a PT deputy.

Brazil's Agrarian Development Ministry has now embarked on the development of a new National Agrarian Reform Programme, as a key instrument, to transform the structure of land ownership and revitalise development of vulnerable regions. Expropriation of under-utilised and illegally acquired land by INCRA, in the public interest, remains the primary mechanism. It was proposed that the new programme should include an emergency action programme, and earlier this year government announced its intention to settle 60,000 of the landless families living in temporary roadside settlements and occupied land during 2003. The Ministry for Agrarian Development (MDA) is prioritising the inventory and release of public land for settlement, but the budget allocation announced in August is enough to settle only 10,000 by end of year, and numbers demanding land have since grown. Medium term resourcing of land reform depends on longer-term (2004-07) budget / PPA (*Plano pluri-annual*) decisions by Congress due in November. While government's political priority is to support expropriation of land by INCRA, a key debate revolves around division of funds between INCRA and the World Bank supported land purchase credit programme, PCF.

## **2.2 Land Reform in South Africa**

Land dispossession during the colonial era and the decades of apartheid rule produced a highly unequal pattern of landownership and widespread rural poverty in South Africa. The democratically elected government which came into power in 1994 adopted a land reform programme to address the problems inherited from the past and the challenge of development in the rural areas. This programme has three components: land restitution, tenure reform, and land redistribution. Restitution deals specifically with historical rights in land, tenure reform with forms of landholding, and redistribution is specifically aimed at transforming the racial pattern of land ownership (Jacobs et al 2003)

### *Land Restitution*

This programme aims to restore land to those people who were displaced as a consequence of such acts as the Natives Land Act of 1913, and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936. Those black households who owned land outside the reserves were initially exempted from the provisions under the 1913 Act, however, from the 1950s up until the 1980s these households or 'black spots', as government called them, were subjected to forced removals (FARM 2003).

This programme only considers those communities that can prove that they were forcibly removed after 19<sup>th</sup> June 1913. A Land Claims Court and Commission that was established under the *Restitution of Land Rights Act*, 22 of 1994, is the body responsible for adjudicating these claims. By March 1999, the closing date for submissions, the Commission had received approximately 69,000 claims made by groups and individuals (FARM 2003).

### *Land Tenure*

The White Paper on Land Policy explains that until the early 1990s, it was government policy that black people should not own land. The form that land rights took in the homelands and townships was permit based or held in trust. In most cases

the land was registered as the property either of the government or of the South African Development Trust. In many areas of the country, the administration of the land was confused and chaotic, and while households may have occupied land for many years, they had no legal right to that land. This uncertainty was the cause of much conflict as land could be confiscated, redistributed or sold by others who claimed to own it (FARM 2003).

The White Paper aimed to tackle these issues by introducing a tenure reform programme that would develop new systems of land holding, land rights, and forms of ownership. To this end, the government passed a number of Acts that aimed to help people to obtain stronger rights to land they live on, and to land which is situated nearby (FARM 2003).

#### *Land Redistribution*

The purpose of this programme, as outlined in the White Paper on South African Land Policy is to redistribute land to the landless poor, labour tenants, farm workers, and emerging farmers for residential and productive uses, to improve their livelihoods and quality of life (FARM 2003).

The programme involves a single yet flexible redistribution mechanism that aims to be as inclusive as possible so that it can react to the needs of a range of people: from poor female-headed households to better off entrepreneurial black farmers. Land transactions are voluntary, and are based upon a 'willing seller' and a 'willing buyer' (FARM 2003).

In 2001, the Minister introduced a new sub-programme of the land redistribution programme called Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD). In essence the government has identified this programme to meet a number of key objectives such as contributing to the redistribution of 30 per cent of the country's agricultural land over 15 years; improving nutrition and incomes of the rural poor who want to farm on any scale; decongesting over-crowded former homeland areas; and expanding opportunities for women and young people who stay in rural areas (FARM 2003).

Redistribution of land is widely seen as having the potential to significantly improve the livelihoods of the rural poor and contribute toward economic development. Nine years into the transition to democracy, however, the underlying problems of landlessness and insecure land rights remain largely unresolved. Agricultural land remains overwhelmingly under white ownership and millions of poor people continue to eke an existence out of agriculture and other land based activities (Jacob et al 2003).

### **3. ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF MAJOR LAND REFORMS**

Given the continued difficulties and challenges faced by these programmes for land reform how do Governments, donors and other players learn from experience in order to develop programmes which are more effective? Monitoring and evaluation has a twofold role:

- Firstly, on-going monitoring and periodic programme evaluations are essential for providing reliable information and generating knowledge required to measure



progress and assess impacts and results from the point of view of those engaged, as a basis for improved management, delivery and targeting of land reform programmes.

- In addition M&E provides a basis for informing national and global public policies in relation to land reform and agrarian matters. In this respect, evaluation processes are particularly useful if they are able to capture impacts of land reform programmes, understand the wider policy context, and promote active learning by and amongst the groups and institutions engaged.

In both South Africa and Brazil, monitoring of land reform has been conducted by the government agencies responsible for programme delivery, with data collected at state (Brazil) or Provincial (South Africa) level and forwarded to the Federal (Brazil) or National (South Africa) level. The purpose of ongoing monitoring has been to provide statistical data to management on land reform projects, settlements and beneficiaries, together with data on costs, and for purposes of formal reporting to government and in some cases to donors.

The two governments have made greater investments however in more systematic periodic evaluations of their land reform programmes, conducted by research institutions reporting to government and in some cases publishing their findings. These have concentrated, although not exclusively, on developing a statistical picture of progress made by programmes' progress, but have also enquired to a greater or lesser degree into impacts. Independent land reform evaluations have also been conducted by civil society groups and research institutions in each country, in order to provide a counterpoint to formal government assessments. These have generally used a combination of assessment of secondary data, provided by government and other sources, some limited formal data collection and greater use of qualitative analysis. In general they have enquired more deeply into impacts, and in doing so sought to reflect the beneficiaries' point of view.

In this discussion we concentrate on the principle evaluations conducted of land reform programmes in the two countries, focussing on the redistributive components. Although South Africa is attempting to tackle the critical issue of tenure reform in the Communal Areas (i.e. the former apartheid homelands), and Brazil has a number of programmes for tenure regularisation of informal settlements, the monitoring and evaluation of these aspects of land reform is beyond the scope of the paper.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.1 Evaluations of land reform in Brazil**

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<sup>5</sup> To obtain a full picture of land reform impacts, tenure reforms should also be considered, since they can distribute secure rights to the poor, and thus begin to level the playing field between large and small landowners, where the former are generally in possession of secure, and formally recognised rights but the latter are not. Tenure reforms can have impacts in terms of social inclusion, and economic empowerment for poor beneficiaries, by enabling them to acquire a legal identity and to access basic services, education and health care as well as financial services such as collateral based credit. There are those who argue that land reform should concentrate primarily on tenure aspects by extending secure title to all, to the neglect of redistributive issues

### *The INCRA programme*

There is a considerable Brazilian literature devoted to assessment of progress and impacts of Federal government land reform programmes from the late 1980s and during the 1990s. There is a highly developed capacity for collection and analysis of statistical data in Brazil, and a decade's experience has enabled considerable data to be amassed by INCRA and government has commissioned a number of major studies which have the status of large-scale evaluations (notably Schmidt et al 1998, and Sparovek 2003). In addition land reform and the land reform movement has attracted widespread academic interest, within the disciplines of geography, economics, political science and agronomy. A large number of studies have been published, many of them qualitative and polemical in nature. We review some of the principle findings here<sup>6</sup>.

According to Sparovek (2003), in spite of the advances of recent years, indices of land concentration have not undergone significant change in the direction of easier land access for small scale farmers, and land concentration remained, in 1995 / 96 amongst the highest in the world.

There exists great diversity amongst land reform settlements, according to the origin of the settlers, the processes and forms of struggle which led to their establishment, and the level and types of engagement in the process by federal and state government. Work by Medeiros and Leite (1999) presents case studies in six Brazilian states revealing great diversity, from the rural-urban character of agrarian reform in Rio de Janeiro, to the struggles of rubber tappers in Amazonia to establish their rights over extractive reserves.

There are divergences in relation to the cost/ benefit assessment of land reform settlements. In relation to the incomes generated by land reform settlements, FAO and UNDP (1992) calculated average family earnings ranging from 2.33 times the minimum wage in the Northeast, to 5.62 times the minimum wage in the South. In either case, if most beneficiaries' incomes prior to land reform were around or below the minimum wage, this represents a significant benefit. Bergamasco and Ferrante (1998) however, point to various methodological difficulties in establishing income generation in land reform settlements, including controversies about how to include and value subsistence production. Data from the first national census of land reform projects (Schmidt et al 1998) calculated the average family income at 2.5 times the minimum wage. Palmeira and Leite (1998) observe that many analyses suffer from implicit political bias, given that they have been undertaken in order to affirm the success or failures of land reform and settlement policy. Navarro (1997) criticises the technological models followed by most rural land reform settlements, which have been either subsistence-oriented or intensive in external input utilisation, leading, the author suggests to mere "survival" by participating families, either as a result of low income generation or growing indebtedness.

The relatively recent character of rural land reform settlements and the influence of *a priori* positions are principle factors explaining the limitations of available data on the results of agrarian reform. The majority of available studies focus either on specific

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<sup>6</sup> We are grateful to Alicia Ruiz of the Agronomy Faculty, Federal University of Bahia, Brazil for providing a historical account and literature review of the agrarian question in Brazil from which some key points are reproduced in this section, translated from the Portuguese by Julian Quan.

quantitative indicators, as do land reform censuses, or they are case studies focusing on qualitative aspects of specific settlements.

Some studies, however, do focus on the regional impacts, and point to some interesting results. The creation of “hotspots” can be observed, in which the density of land reform projects is more pronounced, not because of deliberate policy, but rather of the territorial strategies adopted by land reform social movements. Case studies in these areas reveal significant regional impacts in terms of employment generation, dynamic development of local economies and changes to local power relations (Leite 2003). This study also shows that in some cases a greater diversification of production has developed, together with emergence of new commercial channels and agro-processing capacity, together with changes to the landscape and the pattern of population distribution.

The study by Sparovek (2003) emphasises the importance of qualitative aspects in evaluating agrarian reform, suggesting that qualitative criteria should be included in defining the objectives of land reform. The study underlines the need for refinement of selection criteria for land reform and of methods for assessing land suitability, environmental improvements, incentives for cooperative action and the definition regional strategies.

In summary (Ruiz 2003), the Brazilian literature which assesses the progress and impacts of land reform demonstrates:

- Existence of strong demand for land in all regions of the country, amongst landless rural workers, organised through different movements
- Strong arguments to justify the importance of land and agrarian reform from the point of view of social inclusion and sustainable development;
- That government policy in recent years, although largely in response to the demands of social movements, has successfully implemented programmes to facilitate land access
- That existing evaluations of the impacts of these policies are insufficient, and that there is a need to apply dynamic and participatory methods
- These approaches could enable refinement of policies, as well as generating lessons for new programmes

#### *Evaluating World Bank supported Land Reform credit*

The experience of land acquisition credit in Brazil is more recent dating from 1997. Nevertheless, two substantial formal evaluations of have been undertaken (NEAD 2000 and 2002). Both of these aimed were to evaluate the socio-economic impact of the PCT, review the programme’s governance structures, identify constraints to improved performance and suggest ways forward. Both studies were commissioned by NEAD, the Ministry of Agrarian Development’s Agrarian and Rural Development Studies Unit, with funds from the World Bank and coordinated by the University of Campinas, Sao Paulo with the collaboration of university researchers throughout Brazil. Both studies relied on collection of quantitative data as a basis for quantitative analysis using econometric models.

The methods are well documented in the 2001 evaluation, but the instruments (questionnaires) are not appended to the reports. The use of questions that referred to

the past (to construct a baseline) as well as the present (for analysis of change) means that the quality of the responses needs to be carefully verified for bias. The analysis relies heavily upon regression as a basis for identifying the key component of household livelihoods, and the determinants of change within and across the programmes (including PCT, INCRA and amongst non-beneficiaries), in an attempt to isolate the differential impacts of the land acquisition credit project's approach. Whilst this provides a considerable amount of descriptive information, and a number of lists of key determinants, very little analysis is provided on causality - whether or not changes can be associated to Programme activities, nor the reasons for change. Further, whilst it is suggested in the 2001 evaluation that qualitative analysis could provide useful supporting information, no qualitative analysis appears to have been carried out.

The 2000 evaluation provides a lot of detail on the characteristics of beneficiary households and the functioning of certain aspects of the programme, namely the Land Acquisition Sub-project (SAT) and the Community Investment Sub-project (SIC). The findings are mixed, stating that whilst considerable differences can be found between states, this reflects the strength of the decentralised structure of the programme. Particular problems highlighted focused on the limitation of resources vs. the number of households to be supported with adequate land. Associations (the main vehicle for implementation) were found to be new, and in need of strengthening. Further investigation of the functioning of local land markets was suggested. The 2001 evaluation was considerably larger, and provides a detailed picture of the PCT, disaggregated in-part into the five states in which the Programme has been running.

Analysis is also provided of the comparative success of the PCT against the INCRA programme, and in relation to those that have benefited from neither initiative (a control group). The heavy use of econometric models to assess change does provide some analysis of the performance of the programmes- suggesting broadly that PCT has performed better than INCRA. The socio-economic characteristics of the control group did not appear to match those of the programmes beneficiaries, with considerably higher income/ livelihood status. Thus, this aspect of the analysis was of little use. Whilst the positive change identified in programme beneficiaries was highlighted across the various aspects of each programme, the findings from the analysis of the key PCT projects (SAT and SIC) suggested that beneficiaries have experienced a reduction in funds, particularly over the period 1998-2000. Little attempt was made to link these two sections of the analysis, questioning the validity of the earlier information.

There are two main reasons why these evaluations have provided relatively little performance and impact information of value. Firstly, the evaluations have been structured to highlight determinants of change, to explain what changed for the beneficiaries and why. As a result they focus less on assessment of overall performance and impact and lessons. Secondly, the use of a solely quantitative approach does not adequately capture the views of the beneficiaries, or shed much light on processes and causal explanations from which lessons can best be derived.

The evaluations do provide detailed information on the socio-economic profile of beneficiaries, the determinants of change gained through regression analyses, and the information disaggregated by meso-region (state) and micro-region (intra-state),

providing area-based detail of the socio-economic, environmental and to some extent programme governance characteristics.

The first study faced a major constraint in the short-time period between the initiation of the Programme and the study (about 1 year). Thus, many of the Programme's activities were in their initial phase, and the beneficiaries in transition (from landless to land ownership), The climatic conditions, with a drought affecting the Programme target area. Not only did this restrict the Programme's activities, but also led to the refocusing of attention onto emergency support which took up a portion of the allocated funds

Data from the study was used to generate a profile of household income, which was drawn upon quite heavily despite the revelation of constraints including income estimate for 1998 drawn from one survey conducted in 1999, difficulties of estimating animal sales, changes in the situation of beneficiaries, multiple sources of income, variance caused by seasonality and irregular employment, and the drought of 1998 making it an atypical year

The development of a statistical model appears to be a basis for the identification of future Programme beneficiaries. This appears not only complex (how can beneficiaries be identified on the basis of these multiple variables), ethically dubious, and against the principle of the approach outlined as beneficiary self-selection.

The data tends to be drawn from a single household survey and questionnaires administered to association leaders. There is no evidence of formal or informal surveys conducted with other stakeholders, nor specifically of the views of beneficiaries which may give a clearer indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the Programme at this early stage.

As regards the findings, the evaluation found the Beneficiary selection process to have been somewhat chaotic, caused primarily by the lack of an effective campaign at the start of the Programme. Each state managed the process differently, ranging from very hands-on (Pernambuco) to relatively hands-off (Ceará). Whilst this difference was seen to be a strength by the evaluators (through illustrating the Programme's decentralised approach), the more controlled/ interventionist approach appears to be against the principle of self-selection outlined in the Programme theory. The evaluation of this process concludes weakly, stating that it was not in a position to say which State's approach was best, but that overall the process was conducted adequately, without citing clear evidence.

The study revealed that the beneficiaries (self) selected fit the 'target' profile: young families, largely landless, largely rural-based, with lower than national minimum wage incomes. The information generated a fairly thorough picture of household livelihoods.

The members of beneficiary associations were found to be more numerous than envisaged, leading to smaller parcels of land available per household. Supporting resources were found to be insufficient in this context. Where bigger areas of land were being made available, they were found to be in more marginal areas, with poorer

soil quality and poor access to necessary infrastructure. This raises questions as to the viability of enterprises established on this terrain, and thus the ability to pay off the loans.

A relatively hands-off approach during the Programme's first year meant that many associations are not sufficiently developed or structured to be appropriate vehicles for land acquisition. The majority of beneficiary associations were formed explicitly to participate in the Programme, which raises issues about the subordination of these associations to the Programme, with many exhibiting little independence and autonomy (thus questioning the nature of decision-making processes and longer-term sustainability). Few association presidents were able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge about the conditions for accessing loans, stating that loan repayment would only be possible if either supported by the government, or good rains arrived (bearing in mind 1998 was a drought year). Consequently, most were pre-occupied with the viability of their productive activities and the ability to pay (or pay back loans) for land.

The conclusions, emphasise the need for strengthening beneficiary associations, and to conduct detailed studies of local land markets, with investigation into the apparent distortion in land prices (variable by size of land, size of association, region and strength of negotiation). Bearing in mind the constraints on productivity in the semi-arid Northeast, it was suggested that various options need to be explored (including multiple use of land plots, diversification and the creation of networks to reduce risk-although no detail is provided as to what this could entail).

In view of the objective of the Programme (to benefit 15,000 poor families during the first phase, lasting 3 years), little attempt was made in the evaluation to assess the extent of achievement at this early stage. Without more clarity about the methods used, little can be said about the confidence in the results obtained. Despite this, the review/ evaluation raises important questions regarding component of the Programme in a way that could have been followed up.

The second evaluation study was broader in scope and contains much more detail about the methods used. Sampling appears to have been carried out rigorously. However the attempt to compare the situations of PCT beneficiaries with those of INCRA and with non-land reform beneficiaries suffered from significant difficulties: the identification of non-beneficiary households whose locational, demographic and socio-economic profile match those of the beneficiaries was highly problematic; and the INCRA projects selected were initiated largely before PCT was initiated in 1997, making like-with-like comparison. difficult.

Once again, the extensive use of econometric models throughout the evaluation study reflects the aim to identify the determinants of patterns identified. Whilst this does provide a useful list of 'key indicators', it says little, about the impact itself, and less about processes or causation. However valid the models themselves, reliance upon them questions the purpose and approach of the study. To determine how both the relative effectiveness of PCT and INCRA, and the lessons to enable them to move forwards successfully, attention should have been paid to process and causation. This requires more participative investigation of cause behind consequence, and other prevailing factors.

Some interesting differences between the beneficiaries of the two programmes emerged, but are not fully explained. A higher percentage of PCT beneficiaries were found to be association members than INCRA beneficiaries, but the latter were found to be better informed about the potential benefits of association. In terms of *land area owned*, little difference was found between INCRA and PCT beneficiaries, but more *consumer and productive assets* were owned by PCT beneficiaries than INCRA beneficiaries. However INCRA beneficiaries had experienced a greater increase in value of assets over the period 1997-2000 identified as due to greater investment, particularly in livestock. Asset value increases amongst PCT beneficiaries were found to be due to the consolidation of associations, and the direct contributions of the programme itself, not available to others. *Income* was found to be slightly higher amongst INCRA beneficiaries than for PCT over the period August 99 to July 2000 (R\$2290 compared to R\$2166), whilst the non-beneficiary income was considerably higher at R\$7000. Both PCT and INCRA beneficiaries were found to be rural workers, typically without land, with some (variable) experience of migration and non-agricultural employment. Further, prior to selection, the beneficiaries were considered to be poorer than those not selected, thus justifying the poverty-focused targeting.

Overall the second evaluation study presents a number of strengths and weaknesses. Amongst the strengths are the fact that the report is very detailed (c.400 pages), with the emphasis placed firmly on the profile of beneficiaries and the effects of the Programmes (PCT and INCRA). Detailed descriptions are also provided on the five states within the PCT, highlighting the determinants of difference and change with respect to PCT. Similarly, the determinants of land acquisition and prices are investigated and presented. The evaluation describes and analyses considerable data which provides a strong basis upon which to plan, review and assess change. Overall, the report suggests broadly that PCT has performed better than INCRA, in terms of the benefits for the participants. Although it does not clearly assess why this is the case, it is likely to be result of the way the programme delivers land and investment projects in a single package, which INCRA is unable to do. As regards the study's weaknesses, the analysis is heavily model-driven, producing a plethora of determinants, but little or no analysis of their implications in terms the processes and causes of change. Much of the analysis of the characteristics of beneficiaries appears to have little future application, but presents a justification for the beneficiary selection process. The final conclusions provide few points of use, other than to state a trade off must be made between the number of families supported and the level of investment provided. Despite the weaknesses of the evaluation, it does provide a basis for further, qualitative investigation.

### *Independent evaluations*

The first PCT evaluation report (NRAD 2000), in particular, became embroiled in controversy, because civil society land reform movements charged that it was being used by the World Bank and the then Brazilian government to defend the record of the programme, which, it was suggested, government intended to develop as a substitute for "traditional" state led land reform by expropriation, and to sue this to undermine the land reform movement politically. The truth of the former

governments' intentions may never become clear, and is now a matter of historical conjecture. Nevertheless, it is the case that although researchers amassed a large amount of evidence and documentation the programme, detailed annexes of the study were never published, and the release of the summary report was delayed for a number of years. The reasons for this are likely to be connected with some of the problems identified, and resulting editorial and presentational problems. The issues, which varied from state to state, included problems relating to lack of clear information for beneficiaries, inadequate provision for training, political manipulation and patronage by local government, and dispersed impacts.

As a result of problems identified by civil society land reform movements, political controversies surrounding land reform methods and the findings of the formal evaluations, the national Forum for Agrarian Reform and Rural Justice, carried out an independent evaluation. This project was carried out by university researchers working in collaboration with NGOs and civil society groups. Information came from interviews with families living in 16 different PCT projects, together with interviews with technical officials responsible for the project and analysis of official documents in the five States. The team had difficulties in accessing official data. (Sauer 2003)

Respondents reported that the most significant change was that now there were "owners" of land, but not that this had so far improved their standard of living. Problems were reported in accessing inputs (technical assistance, access to agricultural inputs) and poor infrastructure (access to water and electricity, transportation, schools, sanitation, health etc) to enable production. One important indicator of the hardships and precarious living conditions faced is the high rate of families who abandon the land. In the areas studied visited there were high "drop-out" rates, with up to 60% of the families having given up in some cases. However it was not possible to obtain comprehensive official data of drop-out rates.

The survey led to the conclusion that very few families covered by the Cedula da Terra earned enough to eat and survive. Most could not harvest enough to feed their families, and were unable to save money or to make a reserve for their loan instalments.

Sauer (2003) who coordinated the study, summarises the advantages of the market based approach to land reform:

#### Advantages

- cheaper and faster market-facilitated settlements
- peaceful negotiation of land acquisition between beneficiaries and landowners
- the programme contributes to the decentralisation process by devolving responsibility was at the State level.

#### Disadvantages

- land available for sale at accessible prices is often cheap low quality land with severe limits on production and consequently a farmers ability to meet repayment obligations
- families had little or no influence over the choice of farms or in the negotiating process to set the price of land, as this was done by government officials who



negotiated according to funding limits and could have been influenced by personal relations and questions of patronage

- Lack of access to information is also a problem. Respondents revealed that they had no information on the projects basic elements – no one know way the interest rate would be or even the amount to be paid in the first instalment, much less the alternatives available if they were unable to pay (Sauer p 65).

### **3.2 Understanding the progress and impacts of land reform in South Africa**

Monitoring and evaluation of the South African land reform programme has, to date, been somewhat limited, and as a consequence the impact of land reform on livelihoods or on general economic development remains largely unknown. What little is known comes mainly from the three Quality of Life surveys carried out on behalf of the Department for Land Affairs (DLA) but, as shown below, all of these come with their own limitations. In addition to these general surveys, a number of case studies have been carried out on individual land reform projects, which can suggest more general trends. Frequent reports of project failures, and occasional reports of outstanding success, add to the somewhat impressionistic picture of the impact on intended beneficiaries.

The need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of a major national programme such as land reform has been widely recognised from the outset. As the scale and complexity of the land reform programme developed, however, the M&E by government has not kept pace, with the result that information gaps now exist across the land reform programmes. This raises concerns about the reliability of statistical information coming into the public domain, the possibilities of determining the impact of reforms on intended beneficiaries, and ultimately about capacity to manage programmes. The difficulties facing official M&E are exacerbated by a lack of systematic study or analysis from outside government, although a range of academics, NGOs and private sector organisations have also contributed to the field.

Information on the progress and impacts of land programme in South Africa has been drawn together by PLAAS, the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of Western Cape, South Africa, based on government reports, secondary data, discussions with implementing agencies and field based assessment conducted with a wide range of civil society groups and NGOs involved. Based on these findings, Lahiff et al (2003) have provided an assessment of current Monitoring and Evaluation practice for land reform in South Africa. The principle findings are summarised here, with reference to the findings principle sources.

#### *Land Reform monitoring by Government*

The M&E function within DLA was established in 1994 and is now known as the Directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation, which falls directly under the office of the Director General. A range of donor support was provided to the unit from an early stage, mainly in the form of technical assistance, notably from DANIDA.

Since its inception, the M&E directorate has dealt mainly with programme areas under the direct control of DLA national and provincial offices, namely redistribution and tenure reform. Restitution, under the control of the Commission on Restitution of

Land Rights and seven Regional Land Claims Commissions, has up to recently conducted its own M&E, but this has been limited to periodic collection of statistics on numbers of restitution claims lodged, numbers of claims settled, number of beneficiaries and various financial indicators. An official with particular responsibility for restitution has now been appointed to the M&E directorate of DLA. As far as can be ascertained, no systematic monitoring of the implementation of the restitution programme, or qualitative study of the impact of restitution on beneficiaries, has been conducted within the CRLR. The integration of the M&E functions of DLA and the Commission (i.e. across all areas of land reform) would be useful in the longer term, especially as more land reform projects move into a phase of post -settlement support. However, both DLA and CRLR appear to face problems with basic data collection and analysis.

DLA's M&E unit has experienced considerable staffing and structural changes, involving successive changes in leadership. Staff are based in Pretoria, and not all provinces have Provincial Monitoring and Evaluation Officers (PMEOs), and poor communication between national and provincial offices causes difficulties for the land reform M&E function. Budgets for M&E have fluctuated: R1.25 million in 2002/03 (excluding donor funds), R1.8 million in 2003/04, R1.2 million in 2004/05 and R1.5 million in 2005/06<sup>7</sup>, but remain in the order of 0.1% of the overall DLA budget, or 0.4% of the land Reform component, not including the costs of personnel.

Since 1994, M&E within DLA has concentrated on two main activities- the creation and management of a system for monitoring the performance of land reform programmes in terms of quantitative indicators such as time, cost, size and number of projects, and the assessment of the impact of land reform on intended beneficiaries using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative measures.

The routine collection, processing and reporting of basic statistical information regarding the various aspects of the land reform programme has faced numerous difficulties. For many years no reliable or standardised systems were in place for recording data in provincial offices, or for reporting such data to national office. Attempts have been made to create a computer-based system to capture key information on all land reform projects and to allow for monitoring of implementation against objectives. A Critical Project Data (CPD) system, now referred to as LandBase<sup>8</sup>, was established in 1997. This appears to have had difficulties in its usability and reliability, and with inconsistent data from different offices. DLA is planning to update the LandBase, with donor support, aiming to improve quality and accuracy of reporting and to integrate the data with the National Statistical System.

Hall (2003a) illustrates some of the problems with the collection, analysis and reporting of statistics in relation to land restitution.

*The Commission for Restitution of Land Right announced in late 2002 that 10,836 rural claims had been settled -over half the estimated total of rural claims lodged - and that the vast majority of these (9, 756) had been settled by restoring the original land or securing alternative land. On investigation, it seems that a far lower*

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<sup>7</sup> DLA Medium Term Strategic and Operational Plan 2002-2006 p.37

<sup>8</sup> Interview with C. Goodwin, 17<sup>th</sup> July 2002

*proportion of the, original claims have been settled, since settled claims are counted differently to claims submitted. Some of the ways in which settled claims have been counted include the number of settlement agreements signed, the number of claimant households and the number of properties acquired, which may differ greatly from the number of claims originally lodged. For example, the Doornkop claim in the North West was originally lodged as two claims but, following investigation, each of the 300 households involved is now reported as a separate claim. The net result is that the number of claims as settled over-represents the number of lodged claims that have actually been completed.*

*The Commission and the M&E directorate of DLA are both unable to report on the details of rural claims lodged, nationally and provincially, the number settled in each province, and the number outstanding. They do not have access to a list of settled projects, as this information is maintained by Regional Land Claims Commissions in the various Provinces. Information officers in the various RLCC are similarly unable to provide such a list and have referred researchers to individual project officers to collect information on a project-by-project or claim-by-claim basis. In many cases, project officers have left the commission and current staff are unable to provide details of the claims they settled.*

#### *Evaluation studies*

Measurement of the wider performance of the land reform programme, and its impact intended beneficiaries, began with the Mid-Term Review of the land Reform Pilot programme in 1997. With the move from a pilot programme to a full-scale national programme of land reform in 1996-97, the M&E directorate initiated what was intended to be a series of annual surveys of the impact of land reform, known as the Quality of Life (QOL) surveys. The first of these (QOL I) was conducted by DLA itself, with some external input, in 1997-98, and was reported as the *Annual Quality of Life Report* (DLA 1998). This report was widely criticised for its limited scope, its questionable theoretical assumptions and its methodology.

According to May and Roberts (2000), an independent assessment of the report concluded that the study was not sufficiently detailed to permit the assessment that was required by DLA, questioned the sampling procedures used, and their application, raising the concern that the study may not be representative or sufficiently rigorous for the purposes of monitoring"

Subsequent collaboration between DLA and a Technical Advisory Group of international land reform specialists sought to redesign the research process, and to build capacity with the M&E directorate in DLA. This led to a more elaborate study, for which fieldwork was conducted in late 1998 and the results of which were published in June 2000 (QOL II) (May and Roberts 2000). This was the most significant study of its kind up to this point, although it was seen by its authors as a very tentative step with many weaknesses.

It was envisaged that the Quality of Life survey would be repeated (and refined) every two to three years, and a third QOL survey was commissioned in 2001. The research was contracted to a Cape Town-based social survey company, with no experience in the land sector and major problems have been reported with sampling, with the

redesign of the research methods and with the analysis of the data, and difficulties in locating original respondents in the sample provided by DLA (Ahmed et al 2003):

*"Information relating to the land reform grants beneficiaries was at times incomplete. As a result, none of the households in the sample originally drawn by DLA off the LandBase were surveyed because land reform grants beneficiaries were not contactable either because they had moved off the land or had never moved onto the land after transfer. As shown by the Department of Home Affairs, some beneficiaries' names and ID numbers were either invalid or non-existent. One of the anomalies that we encountered related to the beneficiaries being unaware that they were in fact land reform grants beneficiaries."*

Changes in research design between QOL II and QOL III have also created severe difficulties in comparing the results from each. QOL III, in particular, also identified key weaknesses in DLA's internal systems and made recommendations for improvements to the M&E function. Recommendations from QOL III, with particular relevance for M&E, included (Ahmed et al. 2003: xxxii).

- Integration of baseline household level information collection into project cycles so that information on the quality of life of beneficiaries prior to the transfer of land is recorded, as a basis for monitoring and evaluation; improvement of the LandBase data system of M&E and capturing of more extensive beneficiary and project information during the project approval stage.
- Production of QOL reports on an annual basis, using a standard set of survey instruments to reflect the impact of land reform over time; assessment of the resources committed to the delivery of land reform, including staff capacity, capital and operating budgets, and contributions from other government departments, parastatal and local government institutions.
- Inclusion of a control group of rural households and communities that have not benefited from land reform to enable future reports to compare improvements in the quality of life of land reform participants to other rural populations. Existing macro data sets are outdated and not appropriate for this comparison; nor are National Census data, which are only every five years with long delays in the release of results.

Apart from the QOL reports, other outputs from the M&E directorate have included periodic Diagnostic Evaluation Studies (DES), in-depth studies of particular aspects of land reform. These have included studies of commonage in Namaqualand and of the Mier and Khomani San restitution case in the Northern Cape. It has also produced approximately three editions of the M&E Newsletter every year since 1999. While early editions presented national statistics on land reform, recent editions have tended to deal with specific case-studies or general issues such as HIV/AIDS.

*Impact assessment by government studies*

Despite their various limitations, the three Quality of Life Reports remain the most substantial statement available on the impact of land reform on beneficiaries. The first such study (QOL I), which was very limited in scope, presented little direct evidence regarding the direct impact of land reform projects on livelihoods, which was attributed to the early stage of the process: "Land reform projects have not yet begun to 'show fruits' as most of them are in the initial stages (production planning stage). Those that have started operating tend to re-invest all the profits back into the projects to make it grow and become stable" (DLA 1998: 51). A particular problem identified by the 1998 study was the lack of post-settlement support to beneficiaries from government and other agencies: almost half of the projects surveyed, for example, had never been visited by an agricultural extension officer.

The second Quality of Life Survey, published in 2000, presented much more detailed findings, based on a rigorous methodology. The final report (Deininger and May 2000: 10) summarised the results of the survey as follows:

"Main results are that (i) the programme was generally well targeted; (ii) establishment of economically viable projects did, according to the available evidence, not conflict with the objectives of reaching the poor; and (iii) successful projects were characterized by beneficiaries making an own contribution, often taking out credit from other sources, and adopting a more streamlined management and decision-making structure than those that were initially envisaged by the program administration".

Other key findings were that 75% of beneficiaries fell below the poverty line, levels of participation by female-headed households were high (31% nationally), and more than 20% of household heads were unemployed. Beneficiaries were also found to have worse access to infrastructure than non-beneficiaries which, taken together, "allows us to reject the hypothesis that program benefits are appropriated by non-poor or non-eligible beneficiaries" (May and Roberts 2000: 12). There were, however, major differences between provinces, both in terms of beneficiary characteristics, economic achievements and design of projects. For example, the average number of households per project was 25 for the country as a whole, but this varied from 8 in the Western Cape and the Free State to 81 and 95 in Limpopo and Mpumalanga, respectively (May and Roberts 2000: 13). Of particular concern must be the high proportion of projects judged to be delivering no, or negligible, income to member&- only 16% of projects were found to be delivering 'sustainable' revenues (May and Roberts 2000: 14 ). Economic sustainability was not found to be correlated with any observable member characteristics or size of projects, but was positively correlated with the level of contribution made to the project by individual members (May and Roberts 2000: 17).

On a number of grounds, the third Quality of Life Survey (Ahmed et al. 2003) would appear to be a step backwards from the methodological rigour and depth of analysis of the previous survey (which was supported by an international team of specialists). Nonetheless, the 2003 survey confirmed the findings of the 2000 report that land reform was successfully targeting the poorer sections of rural society. Another key finding was that, despite the clear orientation of the land reform programme in recent years towards production for the market, most beneficiaries were in fact focussed on

production of staple food crops for own consumption: "survey data show that land is primarily used for subsistence production" (Ahmed et al. 2003: xxx).

The 2003 QOL report (QOL III) also attempts to draw comparisons with the 2000 report (QOL II), although this is hampered in some cases by incompatibilities between the survey instruments used, and by the fact that QOL II drew heavily on the October Household Survey to enable comparisons across land reform beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. This survey has since been discontinued. Where comparisons are made between the results of the two surveys, however, a series of dramatic differences are reported which raise further questions about the validity and representativeness of one or both surveys. For example, QOL reported (based on data collected in 1999) that households in the Free State had the highest household income of all the provinces, while QOL III (based on data collected in 2001) found they had the lowest household income (Ahmed et al. 2003: 219). Over the same period, illiteracy levels across the sample; rose from 48% to 61% (Ahmed et al. 2003: 196) and households with cash savings jumped from 48.4% to 64.2% (Ahmed et al. QOL 203: 223).

The impression that emerges is that sample of households surveyed in each study was different, which raises questions about the sampling methods used in the two studies, and the possibility of reliable comparisons.

Of the three Quality of Life reports, QOL II would appear to be the most methodologically rigorous and therefore the most reliable. This report, based on fieldwork conducted in 1999, provides a strong indication that redistribution was, at that time, successfully targeting the rural poor and was having a positive impact on their quality of life, and these conclusions do not appear to have been widely disputed. A recurring theme throughout the various studies is the emphasis, by beneficiaries, on small-scale agricultural production for home consumption ('subsistence'), and the need for enhanced support to this sector. Yet, subsequent shifts in policy do not appear to have taken this into consideration, and can even be seen as hostile to subsistence producers, which suggests that the link between evaluation and policy within the South African land reform process.

#### *Independent studies*

Outside of DLA, little systematic monitoring or evaluation of the land reform programme has taken place. A limited amount of more specialised work has been carried out on topics related to land reform, such as the TRANSFORM project on community-based natural resource management in the context of certain land reform projects (Turner and Meer 2001 ), but these cannot be considered as evaluations of the land reform programme itself. Overall, no independent body has been in a position to verify the statistical claims made by government for the land reform programme and none have attempted a systematic evaluation of the impact of land reform. No systematic evaluation of the land reform programme as a whole has been carried out to date either from within or from outside government.

A range of qualitative case studies of land reform projects provide some indications of progress and problems in land reform, but such reports are generally insufficient in number and depth of analysis to allow any firm conclusions to be drawn. Major studies published around the inception of the programme in the mid-nineties, such as

van Zyl, Kirsten and Binswanger (ed. 1996), Lipton, Ellis and Lipton (ed. two vols. 1996), Marcus, Eales and Wildschut(1996), Levin and Weiner (ed. 1997) and Bernstein (ed. 1996) all focus on theoretical, or background issues, or on the very early days of implementation, and have relatively little to say about the impact of the land reform programme. Later studies (e.g. Cousins ed, 2000, Wildschut and Hulbert, 1998, Aliber and Mokoena, 2002, Zimmerman,2000, Graham and Lyne, 1999 and Turner and Ibsen 2000) have provided insights into the process of land reform, but none of it is longitudinal in nature and the general focus is on initial access to land rather than post-transfer livelihoods. The impact on livelihoods or on local economic development remains almost entirely unexplored within the literature.

The majority of academic studies have emerged from PLAAS, including a study of the implementation of the Communal Property Associations Act in KwaZulu-Natal (Cousins and Horn by 2002), an evaluation of restitution and redistribution at Riemvasmaak in the Northern Cape (Cousins and Cousins 1998, two vols.) and a detailed set of studies of redistribution at Gallawater in the Eastern Cape (Mokgope 2000; Vetter, Goqwana, Bobo and Marsh 2000). A number of other substantial studies are currently underway in various institutions, and are due to report in the near future. These include *Monitoring the Evolution of the Government's New Land Redistribution Programme*, and *Joint Venture Options between Farmers and Farm-workers*, managed by HSRC; *Promoting Long-term Tenure Security for Farm Workers in the Western Cape*, managed by the Centre for Rural Legal Studies (CLRS, Stellenbosch); and *Evaluating Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa*, managed by the Programme for land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS)

Further sources of information on developments in land reform are to be found in media reports, some originating within the Department of Land Affairs, which tend to stress progress with delivery of land, and some within the independent newspapers, which largely report on land transfers and, occasionally, on the collapse of land reform projects. Reports typically celebrate handovers of land rather than detailed analysis of the impact of the programme. Information on various aspects of land reform implementation is also contained in a range of NGO newsletters, but these, again, tend to be focused on news stories rather than detailed investigations or analysis.

Taking all of these sources together, however, does not allow us to draw detailed conclusions about the impact of land reform policy on beneficiaries or local economic development. Indeed, the great majority of land reform projects remain unresearched and unreported. Major efforts will be required in order to capture, analyse and report on data that adequately represents experience on the ground.

#### *Land reform and local economic development*

While some limited attention has been focussed on the impact of land reform on intended beneficiaries, far less has been paid to the integration of land reform within local economic planning and development, either among implementing agencies or among researchers. The early years of South African land reform policy were marked by a lack of integration between the different aspects of land reform (that is, restitution, redistribution and tenure reform) and between land reform and wider processes of rural development. A Rural Development Framework document released by DLA in May 1997 was widely ignored by government and has since been replaced

by an Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy. The ISRDS, launched in 2001, focuses largely on the achievement of synergies between government agencies in their routine functions and brings neither a new vision nor additional funding to the rural development sector. The ISRDS is conspicuously silent on land reform and is unlikely, in its present form, to contribute much in the way of strategic direction to rural development policy. The Spatial Development Initiatives launched in various parts of the country in recent years have also failed to address land issues leading, as Kepe (2001) demonstrates with regard to the Wild Coast SDI, to major policy failures.

Since the late 1990s, aspects of land reform policy have begun to be integrated with other areas of policy, especially in terms of greater involvement of local government in land reform projects. Under LRAD, provincial departments of agriculture are also being drawn into project implementation and support to beneficiaries, although continuing cuts in agricultural extension services negate much of the benefit of this involvement. What remains elusive, however, is a comprehensive rural development strategy that links land reform and rural livelihoods to national and sectoral economic policies. Macro economic planning, in the form of the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (Gear), tends to treat land reform as a drain on resources rather than as a basis for economic growth. National agricultural policy focuses overwhelmingly on large-scale enterprises producing for national and international markets, and for the small minority of black farmers capable of competing in such an environment. Thus, while implementation of land reform appears to be becoming more efficient, and involving more actors at the local level, the crucial horizontal links to other areas of national policy have yet to be consolidated. A national policy vision that integrates land reform with poverty reduction, rural development and redistribution (in the wider, economic, sense) in a holistic manner has yet to emerge.

Local government structures throughout the country are required to develop Land Development Objectives and Integrated Development Plans which should, in theory, indicate how land reform projects (whether redistribution, restitution or tenure reform projects) will be integrated into local processes. The general experience to date has been that local government structures have not been closely involved in the planning and implementation of land reform projects and have tended to view them as the responsibility of provincial and national government departments. As a result, land reform matters have tended to be entirely excluded from local development plans, especially in areas where land transfers have not yet occurred. Since the reorganisation of local government in December 2000, however, both the Regional Land Claims Commission offices, and the provincial offices of the Department of Land Affairs, have begun to work more closely with local government structures, particularly with regard to planning for post-settlement support, although the extent of such cooperation varies considerably across provinces. Nonetheless, major problems of integration between different institutions remain, as illustrated by Lahiff (2002) for the Eastern Cape.

*Enormous disparities exist between local government structures in the Eastern Cape. Land reform has not been a priority for most structures up to now, and has not even been considered by many. Well-established structures such as Amatole District Municipality, with experienced staff, a substantial revenue base and a range of*



*successful programmes, have been able of late to take on 'non-traditional' functions such as land reform. Indeed, in terms of its Land Reform and Settlement Plan for the Central Sub-Region, land reform, which hardly featured in local government thinking up to recently, has become a key activity around which a range of other services and programmes -including water, housing and agricultural development- are now being organised. Such an approach, which links integrated delivery of services by a range of state institutions with productive activities, involves a range of private-sector and NGO participants, and is driven by close consultation with and participation by local communities, is probably the closest the Eastern Cape (and, indeed, South Africa), comes to a large-scale sustainable livelihoods programme.*

*Close involvement by local government, in both the planning and implementation stages, has also been a feature of other (relatively) successful land reform projects. These are in contrast to other projects where local government has been relatively uninvolved or has become bogged-down in disputes with rival institutions. What is most notable about land reform projects in former homeland areas is that they have proceeded outside of any clear local development plan and have not been integrated with other activities at a local level. Where local government is weak -in terms of skills, experience and financial resources -land reform tends not to be seen as a priority, and local government structures tend to be drawn into projects more as observers, or to provide a token local presence, rather than to give strategic direction.*

*The creation of effective and accountable local government is clearly a mammoth task and is still in the earliest stages. Some municipalities are focused on provision of 'traditional' local government services, such as water, roads and electricity, and have yet to address wider issues of local economic development or land reform. They are also locked into a power struggle with traditional leaders within the communal areas, where control of land is one of the key areas of dispute. Given the enormous demands on these councils, operating as they do in some of the poorest areas of the country, their very limited capacity, and the absences of clear national policy on reform of communal land, it is perhaps not surprising that these councils steer clear of land issues. (Lahiff 2002)*

Probably the most active involvement of local government is to be found in the Amatole District Municipality (ADM), in Eastern Cape Province. Like most other local government structures in the country, Amatole District Municipality completed its integrated development plan (IDP) in 1998-1999, a strategic planning document intended to provide a blueprint for development within its area of jurisdiction over a five-year period. Unlike most other councils, however, the Amatole IDP placed considerable emphasis on land needs and the potential for land reform, something that was implied in the IDP process but was widely ignored in other areas. The attention given to land issues in Amatole can be attributed to a range of factors, including a sympathetic, committed and well informed council that was already attuned to the land issues in its area, pressure from experienced NGOs such as Border Rural Committee, both at council and community level, and well-organised and articulate communities that were able to take full advantage of the public consultations that were part of the IDP process.

Arising out of the public consultation process, Amatole undertook the formulation of a 'Land Reform and Settlement Plan (LRSP) for the Central Sub-Region of the council's area of jurisdiction, in order to provide a comprehensive plan for the future development of land reform and settlement in the central sub-region. Funding of R33 million over two years has already been provided by DLA, and the programme is expected to benefit 12,000 households.

While it is too early to judge the success of this innovative approach to land reform, the progress to date is certainly impressive and is already beginning to influence DLA and local government structures in other parts of the country. DLA in the Eastern Cape has a goal of transferring 50% of its budget to local government for implementation of land reform projects and says that it could also envisage transferring staff to local government structures to assist with implementation.

Overall, we can conclude that the land reform programme has been implemented to date without an effective M&E function operating within the programme, and external attempts have been few and extremely limited. Both the quantity and the quality of information on all aspects of the land reform programme available to decision makers, beneficiaries and the general public alike is highly questionable, and is not conducive to an efficient and effective programme or to an informed public debate.

#### **4.0 Alternative Approaches**

A variety of observers and practitioners of land reform in South Africa and Brazil have concluded that there is a need to develop official M&E practices and to link them with qualitative studies and more participatory approaches

Participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation (or PM&E) places emphasis on who initiates and undertakes the process, and who learns and benefits from the findings. The departure of PM&E from so-called 'conventional' M&E approaches therefore reflects the actors involved, moving away from a pre-determined, extractive process run by project managers and/or outside experts, to one which engages all key stakeholders in the determination, implementation and utilisation of information. However, in order to assess and to better understand the impacts of different programmes, and improve their effectiveness, broader approaches involving not only beneficiaries but a wider range of stakeholders involved in the programmes, and assessing the wider policy and development context.

Given that the ultimate success of land reforms depend upon opportunities for the participants to improve their livelihoods, any assessment of impact must also consider whether or not, and how effective linkages are made between programmes to transfer land and a wider range of services and factors. In particular it is necessary to assess delivery of basic infrastructure and services, together with access to markets and to technical support and training.

#### ***Territorial Development***

A new strategy adopted in Brazil is to bring about change in the planning and delivery of opportunities for small scale producers in an integrated way through a focus on Territorial Development. This involves strengthening social participation, overcoming local political obstacles and promoting more dynamic local and regional economies.

A newly created secretariat – *Secretária de Desenvolvimento Territorial* – within MDA is charged with strengthening horizontal planning within MDA and across other sectors, by re-configuring the role of stakeholder councils for sustainable rural development at federal, state and municipal levels to strengthen both vertical and horizontal, and by focusing on priority “territories” or sub-regions in each state, selected in consultation with state agencies, and with civil society groups and movements. Participatory M&E, involving actors and beneficiaries at local level, is fundamental to the piloting and further development of this approach.

Proposals are under development for an action research approach to monitoring programmes for land distribution and land access, together with those for agrarian development and infrastructure and service support, linked to strengthened horizontal coordination and cross-territorial lesson learning by the organisations involved, in both South Africa and Brazil. Participatory assessment, on a local basis, of the effectiveness of various government and donor supported programmes, offers opportunities to improve coordination and prioritisation according to local conditions and to contextualise wider programmes territorially under greater social control. In relation to land reform

A participatory diagnosis and assessment process under discussion in Brazil would involve stakeholder dialogue at different levels linking with federal, state and local (territorial) planning processes. The focus would be on qualitative and participatory assessment of a representative range of areas and social groups, with attention to specific needs in relation to gender, race and generational diversity.

Stakeholders would identify sites and micro regions in the focus states in the Northeast where both PCF and land expropriation by INCRA are active, seeking to understand their dynamics, opportunities, constraints and linkages to wider rural development planning and anti-poverty programmes. Arrangements for longitudinal monitoring and evaluation of programmes would be established in direct partnership with landless and farmers’ organisations, rural unions, NGOs, state implementing agencies and INCRA.

In the case of the areas and land reform settlements selected for assessment, the process would involve enabling stronger participation and local / regional learning by providing supplementary support to training programmes, workshops and participatory monitoring processes through an action research approach.

Participatory research teams, including researchers, social and union movements and government stakeholders would organise field assessments and establish standing arrangements for participatory monitoring and feedback, and organise area-specific debates on planning for agrarian reform and post-settlement support, documenting findings and outcomes in various forms for feedback to land reform settlements themselves and to other stakeholders. As monitoring on the ground continues, the teams would organise exchanges and comparative analysis and through existing fora, organise debate of findings and proposals at state and subsequently regional level.

Such a programme would add value to ongoing land access and agrarian reform programmes by:

- a) strengthening strategic collaboration, debate and learning on agrarian change and diversity to enhance the inclusiveness and responsiveness of land reform programmes and policies to gender racial and generational diversity.
- b) enhance opportunities for participation and training by the poor, women and racial minorities, and by poor people's organisations and farmers associations in the focus areas, and more generally by feeding back to wider planning processes at state and federal levels

By producing detailed information on the progress and impacts of land reform programme at local level in the study areas, and bringing together local stakeholders involved in delivery, such an approach would strengthen planning and coordination and highlighting opportunities for integration of land reform in local social and economic development. Comparative assessment across the different focus areas in collaboration with INCRA, state agencies and land reform movements will in turn enable development of recommendations and proposals for improved delivery at state level, for instance in relation to: improved targeting and complementarity of INCRA and PCF programmes; strategies for scaling up technical assistance and scaling to beneficiary groups; infrastructure provision, education and health services for land reform settlements, credit supply and market development opportunities for the family sector.

Within a few years the results would contribute to wider debates about the convergence and compatibility of market and state - led approaches to land reform, and how to strengthen their linkages with poverty reduction and economic regeneration of poor rural areas.

Participatory impact assessment can highlight cases of good practice, assess how they might be applied more widely, and develop policy recommendations for agrarian reform and development, initially at local and subsequently at regional and national levels, through organising exchange visits, training events and seminars involving participants and stakeholders. Participatory approaches should also support public policy debates on agrarian reform, and through alignment with governmental planning cycles and engagement with donors and financing institutions to develop stakeholder collaboration in the design and planning of future agrarian reform and development.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. Policies for re-distributive land reform globally, particularly in Brazil, and to some extent in South Africa, remain clouded by political and ideological controversies about the respective roles of the state and the market in achieving more equal land distribution. At present there are no opportunities for systematic lesson learning and debate amongst stakeholders or mechanisms for more integrated, socially accountable planning to ensure complementarity of land access programmes and linkages with wider processes to promote sustainable local economic development and poverty reduction.
2. Because claims about the impacts and effectiveness of land reform programmes, and about the validity and legitimacy of the methods used to transfer land have been contested between government and civil society in both Brazil and South Africa, land

reform evaluations, and their findings have been used to criticise or defend the approaches used. Because of ideological and stakeholder-interest based controversies about the respective roles of the state and market in facilitating land reform, and how far reaching it ought to be, the evaluations themselves and the methods used have also tended to be contested.

3. In terms of comparative assessment of market and state based approaches to land reform, available studies illustrate very little difference in impacts. Where differences arise, these are largely attributable to differences in the design and implementation of the programmes, although these aspects have not been explicitly addressed by the studies. Neither method is inherently superior to the other, and choice of method in practice is a function of pragmatic and political considerations, and the resources available, as well as the desired goal – to improve access to land and / or impact significantly on overall patterns of distribution of land and economic opportunities. In practice, state, market and civil society can all play a role in land reforms, and some state and market led approaches can co-exist. However, reforming countries lack effective guidance in resolving the practical problems which arise. There is insufficient evidence and debate in relation to the appropriate mix of state and market based mechanisms required to enhance land access on a longer term, large scale basis, so as to reduce poverty and promote agricultural growth in different contexts. There has been no systematic examination of the roles that civil society organisations can play, and the transferability of experiences between different contexts

4. Most land reform programmes and agencies continue to focus on the land transfer process itself, and there has been limited focus on overall impacts, which requires cross-sectoral engagement in post-transfer livelihoods support, or development of a policy and institutional environment in which new land holders and small farmers as a whole can prosper. Evaluation and impact assessment has neglected this critical factor.

5. In neither Brazil nor South Africa have we found evidence of systematic or significant use of monitoring data to review, adjust or revise methods and procedures for land reform delivery, or to appraise land reform programme or policy objectives. Rather policy, has been settled, and continues to be debated, in the political arena. In Brazil at least, however, greater use has been made of evaluation studies to assess impacts and inform programme design and management. (It is doubtful however that existing monitoring systems could lend themselves to this sort of purpose, since the routine collection of statistical data for monitoring purposes has not been combined with the use of qualitative or beneficiary / agency generated information about programme progress.)

6. There are serious difficulties with excessive reliance on quantitative methods to the exclusion of others, which fail to shed light on causal processes, and thus to attribute positive or negative impacts to factors inside or outside the control of programme design, delivery or policy choice. In addition quantitative impact assessment has suffered from difficulties in sampling comparable groups between programmes and over time. The cost benefits and feasibility of attempting to apply sophisticated quantitative techniques also need to be properly considered.

7. Participatory approaches to assessing the impacts of land reform have the potential to add value to ongoing and new programmes so as to:

- a) enhance opportunities for participation and training by the poor, women and racial minorities, and by poor people's organisations and farmers associations
- b) strengthen strategic collaboration, debate and learning on pro-poor agrarian change, linking federal, state and municipal levels and involving civil society partners from NGOs, rural unions and land reform movements, alongside government.

8. However there have been significant problems in both Brazil and South Africa in achieving effective collaboration and dialogue between state and civil society in relation to land reform programme impacts. These problems need to be addressed if government is to benefit from the comparative advantage of civil society in participatory assessment and for civil society to gain effective voice. Innovative participatory approaches and broad understanding of impacts require stakeholder collaboration.

9. Evidence suggests that there is significant potential in constructing and using stakeholder and expert reference groups to help design effective M&E and impact assessment processes and to develop successful methodologies, combining quantitative, qualitative and participatory methodologies.

10. Greater use can be made of both traditional and digital communication media to access and network information both for purposes of impact assessment and analysis and to promote broader stakeholder understanding and awareness of programme impacts.

11. Since land reform is often a medium to long term process, a longer historical view of what different programmes have achieved in different countries and under what conditions is helpful to contextualise impact assessment studies and methods.

12. In addition to obtaining budget resources for major land reforms and building institutional capacity to deliver, Governments seeking to achieve reductions in poverty and inequality and to respond politically to social demands for land reform, need wider strategies to bring about pro-poor change in the rural economy. In both Brazil and South Africa this requires realignment of resources for technical support, agricultural credit, market development, application of appropriate technologies and provision of infrastructure in favour of the rural poor. At the same time, both governments (through their Ministries of Agriculture) will need to balance land reform with sustained support to large-scale agri-business, which make important contributions to economic growth and foreign exchanged revenues. This in turn requires a stronger understanding of the past current and likely future impact of different policy options and combinations

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