

Advances in African Economic,
Social and Political Development

Adeoye O. Akinola · Henry Wissink
Editors

Trajectory of Land Reform in Post-Colonial African States

The Quest for Sustainable Development
and Utilization

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Introduction

One of the decisive contradictions of colonialism in Africa was the distortion of use, access and ownership of land. Land related issues and the need for land reform have consistently occupied unique positions in public discourse in many developmental states, and particularly in Africa. The post-colonial African states have had to embark on concerted efforts at redressing historically grounded land policies and addressing the growing needs of land by the poor, and previously disadvantaged persons who lost access to land during the colonial eras. However, agitations for land continue, while evidence of policy gaps abound. Consequently, land has assumed a major driver of structural violence and impediments to human and rural development in Africa. Thus, the need for holistic assessment of land reforms in post-colonial African states will be imperative in order to alleviate growing needs for access to land and in particular to ensure that while post-colonial states evolve, a more equitable dispensation can be created for farmers who come from previously disenfranchised and disadvantaged contexts can be provided with access to enough land to farm and compete commercially.

The realities of land reforms across Africa have been wrought in mass agitations and socio-political crises; from Rwanda to Ghana, and from South Africa to Zimbabwe, cases of land hunger and conflict persist. Land policies have failed to meet public expectations and governments' targets. Many of the hitherto agrarian economies, like that of South Africa, that had relied on land as the most important factor of production have become industrial; hence, diversification of African economies, and its attendant rural-urban surge has dwindled the importance of land to human livelihood. However, in Africa, access to land, is fundamental to most households, and remains the means of livelihood, 'centre of gravity' to communities, as well as sources of natural capital, social sustainability and spiritual fulfilment. Despite the importance of land resource, women continued to be denied land rights and exempted from access and use of land. In general, land stands at the foundation of countries' productivity. Therefore, land is germane to individuals and societal survival and prosperity.

The central objective of this book is to identify post-independence and current trends in land reform and address the grievances in relation to land use, ownership,

distribution and tenure system in Africa. The book presents a critical perspective to the reform agenda of African states and queries the adoption of liberalism to resolving the land conflict and inequality created by the promoters of liberalism. Chapter contributors were carefully selected based on their expertise and active involvements in land research and land-related community development.¹ The book draws strength and uniqueness from its adoption of country-specific case studies, and utilization of qualitative and quantitative research methods, which generates 'new' knowledge on the Africa's land reform schemes. Finally, the text proposes practicable policy options towards addressing the land hunger and conflict that pervades many African states, which could derail the 'moderate' socio-economic achievements and political stability recorded by post-colonial African nation-states.

Aside from the introductory section, the book is divided into several chapters. Chapter 1, *Africa and the Land Reform Question*, presented by Akinola locates the Africa's land schemes in context. It presents the argument that colonialism engenders the distortion of land arrangements, which places huge responsibilities on post-colonial African states to immediately initiate land reform schemes and effect changes in the inherited land tenure system. Land reforms, as implemented by many African states, became the instruments to redress the skewed land patterns and effect socio-economic transformation on the continent. The chapter draws on historical experiences as well as contemporary realities and explores how state policies on land reform affect African states, economies and societies.

In Chap. 2, *Land Reform and the Calculus for Power in Zimbabwe's Democratic Transition*, Chitunga locates the Zimbabwean land reform within the broad spectrum of sustainable development. The chapter examines the intersection of land reform and domestic struggles for democratic transition, and evaluates the motivations and interests of stakeholders within the broader socio-economic and political debates over land reform. The chapter argues that the colonial legacy of land reform and the inescapable logic for addressing such injustices has shielded authoritarian politics that sought to stump democratization in Zimbabwe. Based on unstructured interviews, this chapter examines the convergence of land reform and democratic transition in the country. He concludes that the survival of electoral hegemony rests on a strategic manipulation of land resource and hegemonic coercion to attain political goals.

Chapter 3 focuses on *Food and National Security in Nigeria: A Study of the Interconnections*. Yagboyaju draws the interconnections between land, land use, food production and national security in Nigeria. He maintains that land is the primary source of food, and food is a basic necessity for human existence, thus its access impacts on Africa's peace and security. Despite Nigeria's huge arable land area; one of the biggest in Africa, and the country's enormous human population coupled with favourable climatic conditions, the country evidently suffers food insufficiency which, by extension, threatens national security and even the corporate existence of the country. He concludes by emphasizing the fact that sustainable food production and national security depend on the emergence of a transformational

¹This book was subject to a rigorous peer-review processes from the editors, and publisher.

leadership and effective public institutions, which would drive the developmental agenda of the country.

In Chap. 4 – *Transforming the Bodi from Pastoralists to Outgrowers: Land and State Capitalism in South Omo, Southwest Ethiopia* – Gebresenbet engages on the broad land question in Ethiopia, presents how sugar industrialization has accelerated the pace at which villagized Bodi households are incorporated into a monetized, capitalist system by making them out-growers and by advancing a more exclusive land tenure system. The chapter examines the prevalent state projects, sugar industrialization and villagization, and the resultant policy changes the agropastoral conceptions of land, land governance and economic life. It finally presents the implications of the policy changes on land tenure, property rights and production relations.

Chapter 5 – *The Struggle of Land Restitution and Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa* – by Wissink, employs a historical approach to presenting the process through which the colonial powers took dominance of land in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries. The necessity to redistribute land in post-colonial Africa explains the adoption of land reform. Thus, this chapter provides an overview of the existing policy framework that proposes to deal with the vexing problem facing South Africa. The chapter particularly found that land reform has become complex and difficult in the continent and particularly in South Africa. The complexity does not only have to accommodate the land hunger problem, and agitation for land ownership, but the drafting and implementation of land tenure, restitution and redistribution policies to address the diverse challenges confronting land reform in South Africa. Furthermore, it is required in the context of a democratic constitution that was moulded to transition peacefully into a democratic state or much desired “rainbow nation”, and to prevent post-apartheid conflict and in particular “land-grabbing” actions that would have the potential not only to destabilise the state, but also that of the very buoyant agricultural economy.

In Chap. 6 – *Land Policies in Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria and Zambia* – Mowoe evaluates how land policies are directed at re-adjusting the structural landscapes of rural and urban areas that were distorted by colonial powers, and offers a comparative analysis of the realities of land reform in the two countries. The chapter recognizes the importance of land as veritable political and economic resources, explores how the countries’ initiated the conversion of customary lands into leasehold lands, in order to increase the existing land markets under the ideological dispensation of industrial capitalism. The chapter emphasizes the need to use land reform as an instrument to redress inequalities and denials of land resource to the poor and advocates for a more flexible approach to land policies in Nigeria and Zambia.

Chapter 7 – *Land Governance in the Context of Legal Pluralism: Comparative Cases of Kenya and Ghana* – by Fayth Ruffin examines African indigenous modes of land governance and opposing scholarly arguments in terms of ontological and epistemological standpoints on land governance and ownership, and assesses comparative land governance in environments of post-colonial legal pluralism in the two countries. Furthermore, it explores the convergence of African Indigenous

Knowledge Systems (AIKS) and contemporary epistemological approaches to land governance, and highlights its implications for gender construction. The chapter identifies how concurrent legal system impedes land governance and concludes by recommending how such legal tensions could be approached to benefit all the stakeholders in the land schemes in Kenya and Ghana.

Eniola and Akinola present their thoughts on *Cultural Practices and Women's Land Rights in Africa: South Africa and Nigeria in Comparison* in Chap. 8. The chapter reiterates the prevalent poverty, gender inequalities and socio-economic underdevelopment that characterised Africa and explores how gender inequality in land policy has aggravated Africa's socio-economic crisis. This chapter examines the reality of women's land rights in two major powers in Africa - Nigeria and South Africa. It reveals the traditional practises that acts as impediments to gender inequalities in terms of land ownership and rights and argues that denials of women's land rights explain land-related problems. In conclusion, the chapter calls attention to the urgent need to enhance gender parity in the land sector of the economy.

In Chap. 9 – *The Chasm Between Sexes in Accessing Land and its Produce: The Case of Rural Women in Mwenezi District, Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe* – Yingi draws attention to the patriarchy nature of Africa's society and the resultant discrimination against women in respect of land ownership and use. The author decries women's denials of decision-making power and of property rights over the produce of their own toil; thus access to land in Zimbabwe is highly gendered. Based on data generated from field study, the Chapter reinforces the contradictions between land reform and gender equality in Zimbabwe, and attributes this to the continual denials of the womenfolk's access to the means of production. He submits that to evade structural violence and underdevelopment in Zimbabwe, land rights should be extended to the female gender.

In Chap. 10 – *Land Conflicts in Southern Ghana: A Reflection of Multiple Ownership of Land and Usufruct Rights to Land Use* – Adu-Bempah examines the land disputes that have bedeviled southern Ghana, and in particular, Accra for ages. It engages the disconnection between pervasive commodification, monetization and commercialization of land and their implications for multiple ownerships of land and the usufruct rights to land use in Ghana. Based on primary data, he reveals the linkages between the aforementioned variables and multiple ownerships of land. The chapter recommends the establishment of 'Land Bank' and 'Land Banking' as policy option to deregulate the land resource as part of the measures to curtail land conflict that continue to threaten peace, stability and development of Southern Ghana.

Chapter 11 – *Land Tenure and Family Conflict in Rwanda: Case of Musanze District* – by Rukema and Khan delves on how colonialism, which distorted traditional land arrangement in Africa, impacted negatively on traditional structures that sustained land ownership and its use in Rwanda. It advocates for a return to customary prescriptions for achieving land security amidst rising land hunger precipitated by urbanization and commercial agriculture. As part of its post-conflict peacebuilding processes, land tenure in Rwanda is now perceived to be a gateway towards peace building and social stability. Founded on focus group study, the chapter

explores the extent of family conflict over land ownership, the causes of land-related family conflicts and the nature of community and government mechanisms for settling family disputes over land, especially in the Musanze District. Rwanda, noted for family conflicts over land, land relations threaten social cohesion and sustainable peace in the country.

The last, Chap. 12 – *Land Reform in Africa: Towards Resource Utilization and Sustainability* – Akinola and Wissink- intellectually confront the policy implication of land reforms in Africa, and reconciles the trends in land reform to the developmental realities of the modern states in Africa. Although African states has seen the land reform as veritable means to redress post-colonial land grab and dispossessions; it is important to consider the social-economic implications of demands to ‘give us back our land’, amidst the widespread concerns of the lack of productivity of vast tracks of land, food insecurity and other land-related human rights violation and underdevelopment issues that has confronted the African states and societies.

Adeoye O. Akinola

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This book is an examination of post-colonial land reforms across various African states. One of the decisive contradictions of colonialism in Africa was the distortion of use, access to and ownership of land. Land related issues and the need for land reform have consistently occupied a unique position in public discourse in Africa. The post-colonial African states have had to embark on concerted efforts at redressing historical grounded land policies and addressing the growing needs of land by the poor. However, agitations for land continue, while evidence of policy gaps abound. In many cases, policy change in terms of land use, distribution and ownership has reinforced inequalities and affected power and social relations in respective post-colonial African countries. Land has assumed major causes of structural violence and impediments to human and rural development in Africa; hence the need for holistic assessment of land reforms in post-colonial African states. The central objective of the text is to identify post-independence and current trends in land reform and to address the grievances in relation to land use, ownership and distribution. The book suggests practicable policy options towards addressing the land hunger and conflict, which could derail the 'moderate' socio-economic achievements and political stability recorded by post-colonial African nation-states. The book draws its strength and uniqueness from its adoption of country-specific case studies, which places the book in context, and utilizes field studies methodology which generate new knowledge on the continental land question. Taking a holistic approach to understanding Africa's land question, this book will be attractive to academicians and students interested in policy and development, African politics, post-colonial development and policy, and conflict studies as well as policy-makers working in relevant areas.

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