

# **An Evaluation of Land Reform Implementation in the Vhembe District, South Africa: A quest for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the link between access to land and its mediating influences on rural household sources of livelihoods in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province of South Africa. The main objectives are: the evaluation of the extent to which land reform policy implementation addresses the question of rural poverty and development issues; to conduct an asset mapping exercise to establish the levels of human, social, financial, physical and natural capital assets by different households in the Vhembe District; identify the various vulnerability factors, assess impacts and households resilience mechanisms; and examine institutional arrangements that act as constraints or enhance household access to livelihood capital assets. Thus, to study the causality relationship, a combined quantitative and qualitative research method was adopted. The conceptual frameworks for data collection instruments for the study were drawn from established livelihood impacts assessment approaches; Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) and the Livelihood Assets Status Tracking (LAST) methods. These included focus group discussions; key informant interviews; questionnaires; surveys and observations. The analysis was based on a sample of 546 households identified from the Provincial Land Reform Office database using stratified sampling method. The descriptive and inferential statistics from the Statistical Package for Scientific Solution Software (SPSS) version 17.0 were used to analyse study quantitative data while the study qualitative data were analysed thematically.

The findings suggest that despite the land delivery challenges in the district, policy implementation could address poverty and the unemployment of rural youth and women. The income generated from the land restitution policy implementation enhances poor livelihoods capital assets growth and reduces vulnerability at household levels. To maintain the household livelihood gains, the research has established that some features of the land reform policy is creating barriers to effective and efficient land delivery and need to be addressed in order to achieve sustainable rural development in the district. To address these challenges, a strategy for a new pro-poor land reform policy framework was developed.

**Key words:** Rural poverty; land reform, pro-poor land reform; sustainable rural livelihoods; rural development and livelihood assets