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INSTITUTE FOR POVERTY, LAND AND AGRARIAN STUDIES (PLAAS)



# Politics matters! Changing land reform policies in an uncertain political terrain

Never mind the research piece! Communicating in  
policy environments, Webinar, 18 March 2014

Rebecca Pointer

A place of quality,  
a place to grow, from hope  
to action through knowledge

# About PLAAS

The Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) focuses on the relationship between poverty and the food systems (including the impact of land rights & agriculture), with the aim of bringing about social change.

PLAAS is most well-known for its research & policy-engagement on land reform.

# What is policy?

Over-arching ideology

Written statements  
of intent

Practices of delivery

# Web of power



# SA political climate in 2014

Government led by the African National Congress

20 years of  
democracy

New  
black  
elite

Increasing  
inequality

Increase  
in  
service-  
delivery  
protests

Increase  
in state  
violence

Limited transformation

General election in May

Corruption

New pro-  
poor  
political  
party to the  
left of the  
ANC

# Land reform terrain in 2014

## History

- Dispossession of indigenous populations
- Mass-relocation of indigenous populations
- Huge government subsidies for white farmers until mid-1980s
- 87% of land white-owned

## Post-1994

- Property rights enshrined in the constitution
- Target: redistribute 30% of land
- 'Willing buyer – Willing seller' policy
- Restitution limited to dispossession post 1913 Land Act

## Today

- After 20 years only 7.5% of land has been redistributed
- About 50% of land reform projects have failed due to lack of state support
- Elite capture of transferred land
- Govt proposes to reopen restitution claims
- Govt proposes to redistribute only to proven farmers
- Govt again cut the 2014 land reform budget

# Key messages on land reform

- Land reform should be pro-poor
- Land reform beneficiaries need state support to get farms off the ground as they usually do not have capital to invest in equipment, seeds, irrigation, etc
- Land reform should support subsistence farmers and farming entrepreneurs
- Government systems for delivery and monitoring need improvement
- Budget for land reform must be increased to speed up redistribution
- Government should target specific areas for land reform not just undertake ad hoc redistribution – area-based planning

# Tools of engagement

Face-to-face (events, meetings, workshops, training etc)

Publications

Digital dissemination

Media



# PLAAS Communications Strategy

With the new Restitution Bill on the cards, PLAAS had a direct opening to speak to government, however the Minister and Director General of Rural Development and Land Reform have said that they are not willing to listen to critical voices. Nevertheless PLAAS continued to participate in the policy forums, public hearings on upcoming legislation, and direct discussion with officials in the department, while recognising that this on its own is not enough.

# PLAAS Communications Strategy (cont)

While we could have tailored messages to be less critical, we chose to stay critical, by engaging other players to influence other strands in the web of power. For example

- organised and participated in meetings with civil society organisations and NGOs to share ideas on responses to policies, and support dissemination of their responses to the policies
- used the mainstream media and social media to air our critical views and inform citizens
- disseminated fact sheets to highlight key issues
- trained unions and journalists on key issues
- engaged agri-business & farmer's organisations in debate

# What's sticking?

- The terrain is extremely complex and achieving policy impact is proving difficult
- Nevertheless we have been approached by other political parties to help shape their land reform policies
- Land reform is a key issue on the election agenda
- Citizen insistence for pro-poor, widespread land reform continues to grow and strengthen