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Land redistribution in post-apartheid South Africa: a historical evaluation of the Department of Land Affairs' redistribution division

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ABSTRACT:

Land redistribution is an issue that has concerned nations for centuries. On democracy's eve, South Africa broadly conceded that the massive unequal distribution of land resulting from colonialism and apartheid was to be addressed. The democratic government adopted land reform (restitution, redistribution, tenure security) as enshrined in section 25 of the South African Constitution of 1996. The Department of Land Affairs was established to fulfil the redistribution mandate. Land redistribution has dismally fallen out of the 30% target of redistributing white owned agricultural land by 2015, merely achieving 5.46% by 2015?. The aim of this study is to investigate through an institutional lens how South Africa ended up with the current land redistribution outcome. I achieve this by reviewing the evolution of the Department of Land Affairs from 1999 to 2015, and evaluating various phases of land redistribution, and institutional mechanisms that were enforced to implement the program. By specifically reviewing three policies (SLAG, LRAD and PLAS), I present major factors resulting in the present land redistribution outcome (policy inadequacies, cumbersome bureaucracy, weak political commitment, marked-led redistribution and opposing cultures). The study concludes by presenting further research questions: How can land redistribution in South Africa be efficiently and effectively executed to sustainably address inequality? What should be the new role of markets and government in land redistribution? How can institutions fit for purpose regarding land redistribution be developed, implemented and evaluated? Who should participate in land redistribution? And how should resources for land redistribution be made available?