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**Making National Reforms Work by Building on Pan African Exchange – The Africa Forum  
Contributing to the Land Reform Process in Namibia**

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**Abstract**

Commitment to pro-poor rural growth is a vital factor to ensure sustainable development in African Countries. The Africa Forum, which was established in 1997, brings together representatives from the government, the private sector, NGOs, civil society, regional economic communities, and donors, in order to provide a platform for discussion to lay the foundation for a more specific sector analysis of the drivers affecting pro-poor rural growth. During the annual Africa Forum meetings, African decision makers exchange experiences on policies and programmes in agriculture and rural development. Findings of these “peer-learning” discussions represent a valued contribution to the international debate on programmes in agriculture and rural development.

As a result of last year’s Africa Forum held in Accra, Ghana, four priority issues driving pro-poor rural growth could be identified for Namibia: political commitment and government perception towards the private sector, harmonizing and aligning donor support, local capacity development, and infrastructure investments. In Namibia the existing Land Reform Action Plan serves as the guiding programme and the discussion at the Africa Forum revolved around how to support its implementation. A Country Team with representatives from the different ministries involved in Land Reform as well as representatives from the farmer unions and NGOs was established. It is committed to address the priority issues discussed during the Africa Forum in order to foster process towards Land Reform in commercial and communal areas and in support of pro-poor rural growth.

In Southern Africa, where 60% of the population depends on agriculture, the access to land represents an issue of livelihood. Using the example of Land Reform in Namibia, this paper will focus on how the priority issues identified during the Africa Forum are put into practise and which policies have been developed in order to ensure that the land reform will lead to pro-poor rural growth.

## 1. Problem Definition

Like no other continent Africa depends on agriculture, since 60% of the population is working in this sector. Therefore, rural growth is often closely interrelated to agricultural development and the support of Agricultural Sector Programs represents a key issue towards poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. Most of this Poverty Reduction Strategies build on Program Based Approaches (PBA) rather than standalone projects. This new approach of delivering aid has made considerable progress in sectors such as health, education, and transport, hence in sectors where government is the main service provider.

In agriculture, however, the performance of these programs was often poor or even considered as an utter failure. Thus, support of agricultural sector programs has been steadily declining for the last 15 years. Therefore, since its establishment in 1997, the annually held Africa Forum is dedicated to finding an effective way to support PBA in the agricultural sector.

## 2. Africa Forum 2007 in Ghana

The Africa Forum 2007 was held in Accra, Ghana, and focused on identifying *Drivers for Pro-Poor Rural Growth*.

In former Africa Forums, participants were almost exclusively members from governmental and donor organizations. Countries used to determine their representatives at the Africa Forum on a “first come, first serve” basis. Thus, many institutions and stakeholders involved in agricultural progress were not represented at the Africa Forum.

This time, however, the Africa Forum broadened its perspective to an analysis of the sector as a whole in order to listen to all stakeholders involved in rural growth. Therefore, countries were asked to form “Country Teams” that would participate in the Africa Forum. Country Teams consisted of representatives from the (a) private sector, (b) civil society, (c) regional organizations, (d) government, and (e) donor organizations.

The idea was to look at *drivers* first and second at countries. Thus, in a first workshop, members of the Country Teams were split up into six groups according to their function: (a) private sector, (b) civil society and academia, (c) regional communities and organizations, (d) central and sector government, (e) donors, and (f) local government. Hence, across borders, members of the different sectors were able to analyse the influence and potential of their sector regarding agricultural growth. They had to define their role concerning the rural sector and hindering factors that kept them from becoming a driver of change for pro-poor rural growth. As a result of their discussion, each group had to present three issues that need to be addressed in order to increase the influence of their respective sector on rural development.

Afterwards, people gathered in their Country Teams again in order to discuss which of these issues identified during the first workshop are relevant for an implementation in their home country. Precise actions that are needed to support drivers of pro-poor rural growth were formulated into a so called “Country Action Plan”. That way, each country developed its own Country Action Plan.

### **3. Namibia – What has to happen and how do we get there?**

#### **3.1 The Namibia Country Team**

Due to late Apartheid structures, agricultural land is still unequally distributed in Namibia, since the majority of the population has no access to land yet. Therefore, Land Reform represents a central issue concerning rural development.

The Namibia Country Team is working according to the Land Reform Action Plan that forms the guiding document for Land Reform in Namibia. It was jointly developed by all important stakeholders involved in Land Reform. The Action Plan formulates concrete actions that need to be taken in order to implement those issues in Namibia, identified during the Africa Forum. It will focus on (a) Political Commitment and Government Perception Towards the Private Sector, (b) Harmonization, Alignment and Coordination of Donors and Donor Support, (c) Local Capacity Enhancement, and (d) Infrastructure Investments.

#### **3.2 Political Commitment and Government Perception Towards the Private Sector**

The private sector occupies a central role towards rural growth, because it fosters economic progress and entrepreneurship. The government has to perceive the private sector as a development partner. Therefore, it is important to build bridges between this sector and the government by providing a conducive regulatory framework that strengthens the potential of the private sector. Moreover, the dialogue between public and private sector needs to be encouraged to ensure a better understanding of each other's actions.

As a first step towards this goal, in Namibia, the “Negotiated Land Reform Forum” was established providing a platform for dialogue for all stakeholder groups. Issues like “land redistribution and resettlement”, “land resource tenure reform”, and “land use planning” will be discussed by the forum. Like this, uncertainty can be reduced and in the long-term, this platform is expected to improve investors' confidence in Namibia.

Furthermore, it was proposed that the private sector should be represented in the “Technical Committee on Lands and Social Issues” in order to be able to gain more influence on the Land Reform Process.

#### **3.3 Harmonization, Alignment and Coordination of Donors and Donor Support**

The growing number of donors and development partners requires sound planning and coordination of financial funding and activities.

The Action Plan is creating awareness among governmental institutions about the importance of this issue. Therefore, the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) is supposed to develop a donor coordination strategy. Land Reform support will also be clearly aligned to the activities established in the Strategic Plan and the Business Plan of the MLR.

Donors on their side will review possibilities how to improve disbursements.

### **3.4 Local Capacity Enhancement**

Making reforms work nationwide highly depends on retaining and developing high quality staff and having the right people at the right spot. According to the Land Reform Action Plan, it is planned to assess present capacities in order to decide where further support and development is needed. Additionally, future involvement of various actors and projects in Land Reform needs to be evaluated.

### **3.5 Infrastructure Investments**

Enabling economic growth and “opening up” remote areas, infrastructure development is a key factor for rural growth and the progress of the private sector.

In Namibia a coordination committee was put into place that will develop physical infrastructure for small scale farming units such as water supply, fences, and roads.

## **4 Conclusion**

The creation of a Country Team and the formulation of a Country Action Plan has been an important step towards actually putting the outcomes of discussions into practise. The Land Reform Action Plan represents a sound guideline to bring forward the process of Land Reform. It not only states certain actions that need to be taken, but it also explicitly names people responsible for the implementation of these actions. Thus, planned activities are more likely to be realized.

Nevertheless, since the Country Action Plan demands deeds of different organizations across the spectrum, it is vital for the acceptance of the plan that its proposed activities are actually incorporated into the own plans of the respective organizations as well.