

Can restitution change lives of farm beneficiaries? Case of Waterberg district municipality, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Despite interventions by South African government to implement land restitution after 1994, land ownership, unsustainable livelihoods, poor agricultural extension services, lack of funding, lack of farm implements and poverty among restituted farm owners remain a major challenge, hence, farmers' livelihoods have not improved since they occupied the farms. It has been shown that, for example, in countries such as Estonia, Latvia, Brazil, Zimbabwe and South Africa, land restitution has been a failure, therefore, this article wants to provide answers to the issue why ownership of the farms has not changed the livelihoods of the farmers. Stratified random sampling was used to select study participants while qualitative data from key informants was collected through group discussions, photo-voice sessions, non-participatory observation, and interview methods while a questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from farm beneficiaries. Thematic content analysis was used with the qualitative data, while the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for quantitative data to compute descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations. Almost (98.5%) of the respondents, 73.0% of whom were men and 25.5% women agreed that the livelihoods of farm beneficiaries in Waterberg district are still the same. It is therefore imperative to develop an intervention strategy to ensure enhancement of beneficiaries' livelihoods.

Keywords: Farm benefits, Farm beneficiary, Land reform, Livelihoods, Land compensation

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1. INTRODUCTION

Around the world, millions of people have either been pushed out of their land and their chosen livelihoods because of conservation programs, dams, or other projects (Holt-Gimenez, William & Hachmyer, 2015:22). The ownership and control of land remain highly sensitive in Africa, particularly, in countries with a history of settler colonialism (Pilosof, 2016:32). In Estonia, restituted farm beneficiaries who took over the land of their forefathers experienced problems, such as insufficient agricultural extension services in starting agricultural production on their farms and old farm buildings that were generally in ruins or unserviceable, therefore, useless for farming process on the restituted farms (Holt-Jensen & Raagmaa, 2010). It is a fact that new land-restitution owners who do not know anything about farming, cannot start agricultural production without the guidance of agricultural extension officers. In Mexico, land reform was implemented by distributing more than 100 million hectares of land. About 50% of arable land from large commercial farms was given to rural landless people organised in *ejidos*, however, this revolutionary land reform programme failed to improve lives of rural land recipients, hence, did not result in greater income equality (Deininger, Lavadenz, Bresciani & Diaz, 2001:39; Lenti, 2018:1). In Namibia, the Ministry of Land and Resettlement (MLR) implemented land reform programme through the “willing-buyer-willing seller” principle that put commercial farms on the market to be accessed by successful land applicants, to promote economic empowerment and land ownership (Werner & Odendaal, 2010:1). The efforts of land reform have not, however, yielded substantial results in socio-economic development of landless people.

In South Africa, land restitution was embarked upon in 1994, to allow communities or individuals who lost their land through previous discriminatory legislation of Natives Land Act of 1913 to receive their land or be compensated for the loss of land (Spierenburg & Brooks, 2014:157). Land restitution has been criticised for not transforming the socio-economic status of farm beneficiaries who were given land. For example, in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces, restituted farms are operating but significantly below their full commercial potential, with a strong bias towards subsistence agriculture (Dawood, 2017:88). Agricultural extension officers also do not put efforts to guide the beneficiaries, because in most cases they do not show commitment in farming. Added to this, Mabuza (2016:18) mentions that agricultural extension services in South Africa are insufficient because of the small numbers of extension advisors and the lack of necessary skills which should be conveyed to farm

beneficiaries. In Limpopo Province, Hall, Wisborg, Shirinda and Zamachiya (2013:56-57) report on the unsuccessful outcomes of the performance of the Malamula citrus fruit farm and Timongo subtropical fruit and nuts farms where land was restituted to two communities that initiated co-operation with a strategic partner to use the land. Unfortunately, the restitution process with its extended period of uncertainty and manoeuvring caused an estimated 40% decline in employment of the existing workforce (Hall *et al.*, 2013:58). The performance of the restituted agricultural land projects has failed to attain the economic objectives for the beneficiaries (Golele, 2016:2).

The objective of the study, therefore, was to determine reasons for the ineffectiveness of the current land restitution process in enhancing rural livelihoods of the restituted-farm beneficiaries in Waterberg District, since the lives of most farm beneficiaries have not changed since they took ownership of the farms. The statement above was supported by Lahiff (2012:1) and Mabuza (2016:2) that even where land has been transferred, it appeared to have had minimal impact on the livelihoods of beneficiaries, largely because of factors, such as inappropriate project design, a lack of necessary agricultural extension support services and underutilization of land.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Waterberg District Municipality (Figure 1). The district shares boundaries with Botswana to the North-west and to the North-East, is Capricorn District Municipality while to the East is the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality. Gauteng Province is to the South of Waterberg District, and the Northwest Province is at the South-western side (Waterberg District Municipality IDP, 2018:31). The average annual rainfall is 600 with 650 mm occurring in January and December, while the major soil patterns include uplands, rocky areas, weak developed soils on mountainous catchments, with the agricultural potential associated with topographical soils (Waterberg District Municipality IDP, 2018:76). The study used transformative design on the qualitative data focusing on 26 research participants who were key stakeholders using focus group discussions (FGDs) and face-to-face interviews. A quantitative approach was also applied to 289 farm beneficiaries who were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. This research design allowed the participants to articulate the problem of the community, hence, show relevance with community members (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:69). The results, therefore, presents empirical evidence on

whether restituted farms have contributed to an improvement of livelihoods of the farm beneficiaries in Waterberg District.

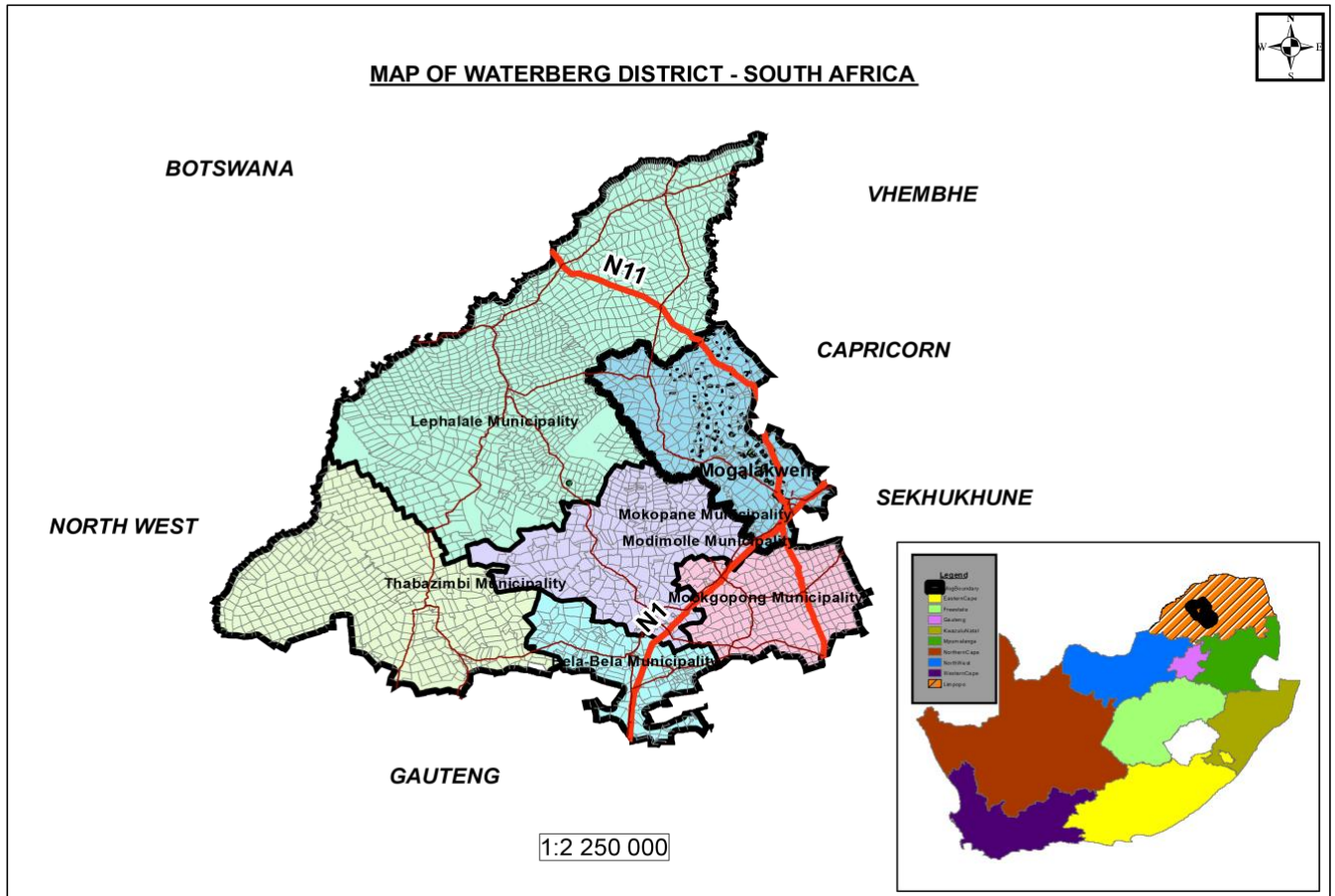


FIGURE 1: Map of the study area, Waterberg District. Source: Waterberg District Municipality IDP (2018)

2.1 Population and sampling Methods

Twelve Ward Councillors were sampled from a total of twenty-one and six traditional leaders were sampled from a total of eight traditional to provide their views about livelihoods of the farm beneficiaries. Two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were constituted with councillors and traditional leaders; these participants were selected on the basis that they reside in the area where restituted farms are located. Seven Agricultural Extension Advisors instead of six were interviewed one-on-one, from each of the six local Municipalities. The seventh Agricultural Extension Adviser from Belabela Municipality volunteered to provide information that she knew about restituted farms. One Department of Rural Development and Land reform (DRDLR) official was also interviewed one-on-one at Limpopo DRDLR Provincial office

(Table 1). Finally, data was collected from 289 farm beneficiaries through the questionnaire to understand their views and perceptions about land restitution and its impact on their livelihoods; 26 other stakeholders also participated in the study. In total 315 research participants were sampled using stratified sampling from seven categories of restituted farms that are in Waterberg District.

TABLE 1: Key Informants / Research Participants who were selected for the Study

Key informants	Organization	Population	Total number of research participants	Percentage
Ward Councillors	Local Municipality	21	12	57%
Traditional leaders	House of Traditional leaders	8	6	75%
Agricultural Extension Advisors	Department of Agriculture	6	7	100%
DRDLR Official	DRDLR	1	1	100%
Total		36	26	72.2%

2.2 Data collection procedure

Data was collected between July and October 2016 from the 289 farm beneficiaries and 26 stakeholders who were mainly key informants, such as ward councillors, traditional leaders, and government officials from the Department of Agriculture and DRDLR. The reason to include responses of both farm beneficiaries and key stakeholders and of using different tools was for triangulation purposes regarding participants' views pertaining to the influence of restituted farms on the livelihoods of farm beneficiaries. Prior to data collection, arrangements with key stakeholders and farm beneficiaries were made in writing to inform them about the date, venue and time the data would be collected. The farm beneficiaries were also interviewed using the photo-voice method; during this data collection process, advanced computers fitted with cameras were given to the farm beneficiaries as instruments, to enable them take photos on their own. Thereafter, the beneficiaries discussed the photos of their farms as a group to reflect on challenges they face and how they can solve them. Through the photo-voice method, the researchers were able to check whether the photos and voices recorded do correspond with

what the respondents had said during the interview with regard to their livelihoods within their farms. Finally, non-participatory observation method was used to observe different situations within the farms, actions of the farm beneficiaries, physical settings and the current status of the restituted farms.

2.3 Data analysis method

The qualitative data gathered from the 26 key informants was analysed using Atlas. ti to highlight segments of the text, quotations from the respondents and written notes, codes and memos indicating key ideas; this enabled the establishment of connections or networking of the views. Verbatim quotations used from key stakeholders whereby certain words that were frequently repeated by the interviewees during data collection were also transcribed to get more understanding about the views of the stakeholders about how restituted farms have benefitted the new owners. SPSS version 25 was also used to compute descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations of the views of the farm beneficiaries within the restituted farms. Photo-voice data was transcribed using transcribing analysis, so that the farm beneficiaries could analyse photos and voices on their own and bring meaning or suggested solutions about their challenges. Data collected through non-participatory observation at the field was also transcribed to understand the practices and insights of the farm beneficiaries, to translate the data through observations, and provide meaning to the insights of the farm beneficiaries.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

During data collection ethical principles were adhered to and these were but not limited to respect, avoiding harm to respondents, confidentiality, avoiding deception during research, security of data storage and permission to publish the study. Institutional ethical clearance was secured from the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee for permission to conduct the study (SARDF/16/IRD/06). Permission, in writing, was secured from the DRDLR, WDM, Department of Agriculture and House of Traditional leaders to be allowed to conduct the study and to gain community-entry; the locally acceptable protocols were adhered to when meeting with the relevant structures in the communities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2 below clearly indicates the linkages between the restituted farms utilisation by the farm beneficiaries and rural livelihoods in Waterberg District. The Figure depicts that if farms

are not utilised at all, livelihoods of the farm beneficiaries remain the same, or if portions of farms are utilised, production decreases and the status of livelihoods of the farm beneficiaries, within the restituted farms remain unchanged; this results in beneficiaries remaining dissatisfied with the performance of the farms (Figure 3). When farm beneficiaries utilise the whole farms, then production increases with more benefits from the farms. Basically, if the livelihoods of the beneficiaries were changed, then beneficiaries were satisfied with the performance of the farms (Figure 3).

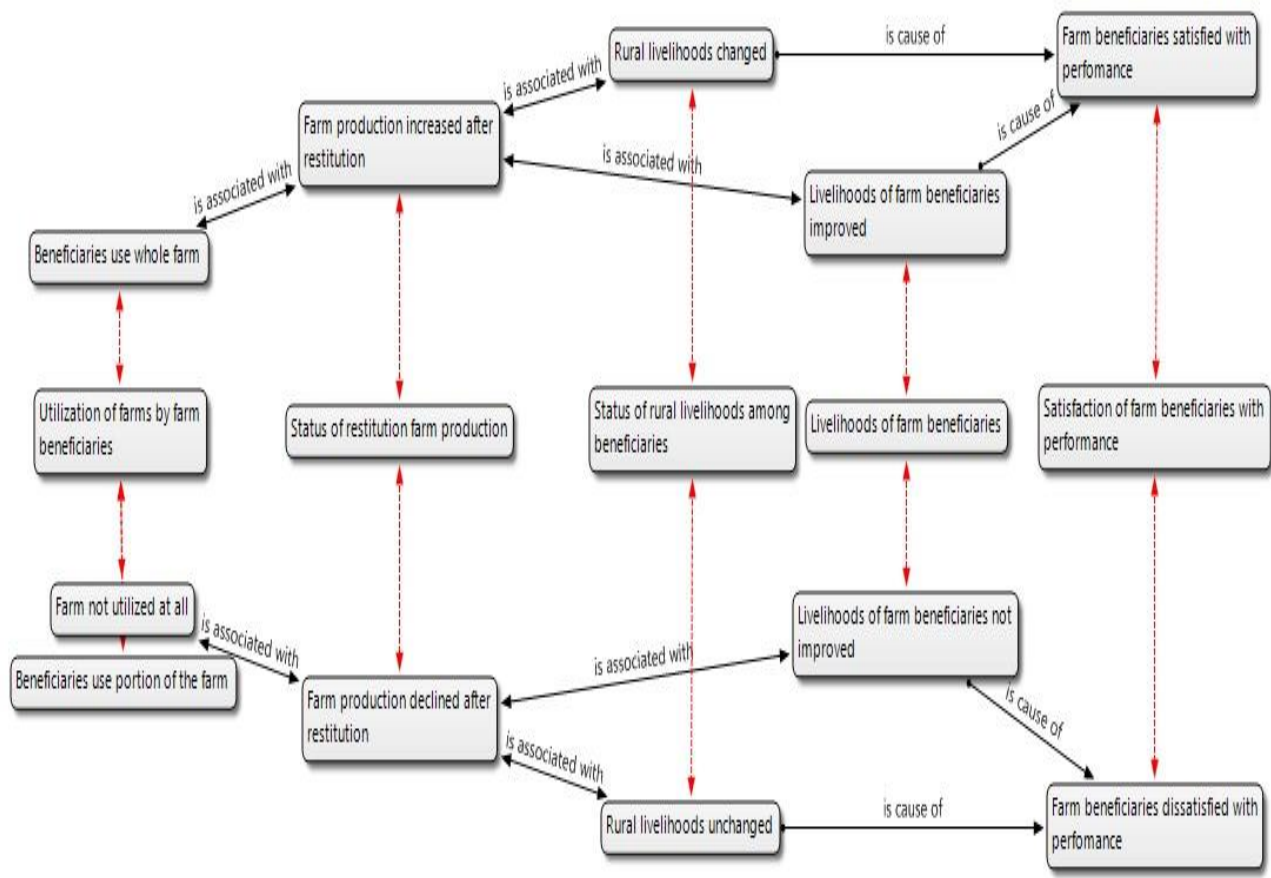


FIGURE 2: How Utilisation of Restituted farms were affecting beneficiaries’ livelihoods

3.1 Utilisation of Restituted Farms by the Farm Beneficiaries

Majority (54%) of the stakeholders supported by majority of farm beneficiaries indicated that beneficiaries use a portion of the given land for farming purposes citing the reason of financial constraints (Table 2). Participants amounting to 54 % with 14 respondents representing 5 Agricultural Extension Advisors, 6 Councillors, 2 Traditional leaders and 1 official from DRDLR confirmed the above statement of the beneficiaries utilising only portions of the farms.

In the session arranged for the Councillors and conducted at Mogalakwena Municipality on the 23rd of September 2016, Councillors confirmed that most farm beneficiaries utilise portion of the farms because they are not befitting from the farms, due to lack of skills and resources to farm. While (30.8%) 8 of the respondents, 4 Councillors and 4 Traditional leaders indicated that the farms are lying fallow (unutilized) citing the reason that they do not have the required skills for production of agricultural produce. Based the data from the focus group discussions arranged for the Chiefs at Waterberg District Municipality on the 18th August 2016, majority of the traditional leaders also emphasised that farm beneficiaries do not benefit from the farms because farms were not being utilised due to continuous conflicts. One of the chiefs said, *“The same farm members do not have farming attitude at heart because they stay far away from the farm that made beneficiaries to ignore farming as their primary source to improve their livelihoods.”* Most of the farm beneficiaries (41.2%; 119 respondents) used portion of the farm due to challenges pertaining to finance and lack of farming production inputs. About 34% of the respondents used the whole farm while 25% indicated that they are not utilizing the farm at all because of lack of start-up capital. About 15% of the respondents who indicated that beneficiaries used the whole farm come from Bela Bela (Table 2).

TABLE 2: The Proportion (%) for the Utilisation of Restituted Farms

Variables	N	Percentage
Utilise portion of the farm	14	54%
Farm not utilised	8	30.8%
Utilise the whole farm	4	15%
Total	26	100

Despite interventions brought by land reform restitution programme to deal with utilization of farms, to transform the socio-economic status of the restituted farm beneficiaries, the current study revealed that majority of stakeholders and farm beneficiaries confirmed that land restitution has not been effective in changing the lives of the farm beneficiaries. Stakeholders such as Agricultural Extension Advisors, Councillors, Chiefs and DRDLR official agreed that farm beneficiaries use portions of the land; the whole farm is not utilized because of lack of farming skills, lack of proper management and continuous conflicts. One farm beneficiary of the Machikiri farm during the interview said *“the DRDLR ignores the committee that is*

constitutionally elected and listen to the concerned groups. There are two big locks on the main door, one is for the beneficiaries to enter the farmhouse, while the second lock was put by the concerned group to block beneficiaries not to enter the house.” Traditional leaders further maintained that *“conflicts and concerned groups that delay progress on the farms; these are caused by vocal beneficiaries who act as if they are the owners or bosses of other beneficiaries and end up taking decisions on behalf of the majority.”* The Chiefs in particular, appealed to the government to decentralise land administration to local authorities whereby traditional leaders can have full control and manage the land effectively.

3.2 Status of restitution farm production after land was given to new owners

About 77% (20 of the respondents) who are 5 Agricultural Extension Advisors, 9 Councillors, 5 Traditional leaders and 1 official from DRDLR indicated that production levels have declined since land was given to the new farm owners; this was a result of challenges of lack of skills, lack of implements and government subsidies to farmers (Table 3). About 8 % of the respondents who are Ward Councillors were not sure whether there was an improvement or not, in the livelihood of the beneficiaries since they were recently appointed Councillors in Mogalakwena Municipality; these were only appointed three months before the study was conducted. Participants amounting to 15% who represent 2 Agricultural Extension Advisors, 1 Councillor and 1 Traditional leader indicated increased farm production, on particular farms that were supported by recapitalisation and development programme fund, and where farm beneficiaries were already trained in farming. In support of stakeholders who were in the majority, about half, 44.3%, 128 farm beneficiaries, indicated that they strongly agreed, while 22.8%, 66 farm beneficiaries, agreed with the notion that the production levels of the farms declined after land was restored and given to the new owners.

Poor performance of restituted farms was also experienced in other countries, such as Colombia, Ghana, Brazil, Latvia and Zimbabwe where many of the beneficiaries had limited ability to manage resources and make entrepreneurial decisions, consequently, farm operation gradually deteriorated, leading to unproductive land use and abandonment of the land (Evaluation of the Recapitalisation and Development Programme, 2013:10; Nyawo, 2014:42 & Parsova & Kapostins, 2015:3). This decline of production at farms has also affected employment opportunities in the agricultural sector.

TABLE 3: Theme 1- Status of farm production after land was given to new owners

Responses	Reasons provided	Agricultural Extension Advisors (n=7)	Councillors (n= 12)	Chiefs (n= 6)	DRDLR Official (n= 1)	Total Tallies
Farm production declined after land was given to the new owners	Farm production has declined because of lack of farming implements, skills, and subsidies to the farmers	11111	11111 1111	11111	1	20
Farm production increased after land was given to the new owners	More support was provided by DRDL as well as Department of Agriculture to restituted farms that have potential to grow	11	1	1	-	4
Not sure	Some respondents were born prior 1994, hence they do not have sufficient experience of land utilization of the past	-	11	-	-	2

Reddy, Goga, Timol and Molefi (2016:17) asserted that employment in the agricultural sector has declined in South Africa from 1.1 million in 1992 to 706 000 in 2013. There is, therefore, a need for the Department to provide inputs and resources that would enable the beneficiaries to kick-start the production processes. Based on the photo-voice discussion at Koka Matlou

farm, the photos clearly indicated the poor farming skills as well as declined farm production. One of the Agricultural Extension Advisor emphasised that *“farm beneficiaries who have received their land got surprised when they were supposed to start farming, because they do not have the technical know-how in farming.”* Failure to provide skills to the farm beneficiaries will lead to poor production on the farms; this will ultimately affect their livelihoods negatively because of the poor quality of products from restituted farms.

3.3 Satisfaction of beneficiaries with benefits from the restitution farms

Majority (77.2%, 223) of the farm beneficiaries were not satisfied with the benefits and support received from the different service providers, while only 22.8%, 66 of the respondents, were satisfied with the performance of their farms. This fact was supported by majority of 65.3%, 17 of key stakeholders, who indicated that farm beneficiaries were not satisfied with their progress so far. Majority of the beneficiaries agreed that their livelihoods have not improved, and rather they worse off than before they received the farms. Emanating from the photo-voice discussion of the farm beneficiaries at Koka Matlou farm, the majority of them agreed that they are not benefiting from the farms allocated to them (Figure 4).



FIGURE 4: Photo of Koka Matlou farm in Sterkwater in Mogalakwena showing poor farming skills that negatively affected production

In general, most of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their progress so far, citing infighting among members as those in leadership positions want the farms to benefit them only. Five respondents indicated that they were not sure about their progress because they have not been monitored by government officials, and this has contributed negatively to the enhancement of livelihoods of the farm beneficiaries. It is a fact that if livelihoods of the farm

beneficiaries are not improved, they will send complaints to the government indicating that they are not satisfied with the performance at the farms. Shortage of funds is one of the main challenges that the farm beneficiaries are faced with. Farm beneficiaries in several farms forming part of this study have been promised recapitalisation and development programme fund by the DRDLR, but nothing has been given to them to develop their farm. During a feedback session with farm beneficiaries of Modimolle, the beneficiaries indicated that three to six years have passed since they applied for Recapitalization and Development Programme with no answers. This lack of funds has contributed to the dissatisfaction of beneficiaries since their livelihood concerns are not being addressed by DRDLR.

3.4 Challenges of the restituted farmers

Figure 5 below clearly indicates the main challenges that were experienced by restituted farms. The same challenges were also highlighted by the key stakeholders and farm beneficiaries in their responses; in order of priority, these are challenges surrounding dilapidated farm infrastructure, pesticides, machinery, water pipes for irrigation, tractors and funding for the farms. These were mentioned as the major obstacles towards the development of the farms. These negatively affected the production potential of the land and the quality of the produce. During the interviews, respondents indicated that funds required would be used basically to renovate the infrastructure such as water provision, buy seeds, repair fence and machines for the farms. Some respondents indicated that technical support from the local Agricultural Extension Advisors is inadequate; it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that the Agricultural Extension Advisors play a central role in providing the beneficiaries with that technical know-how and to mentor them.

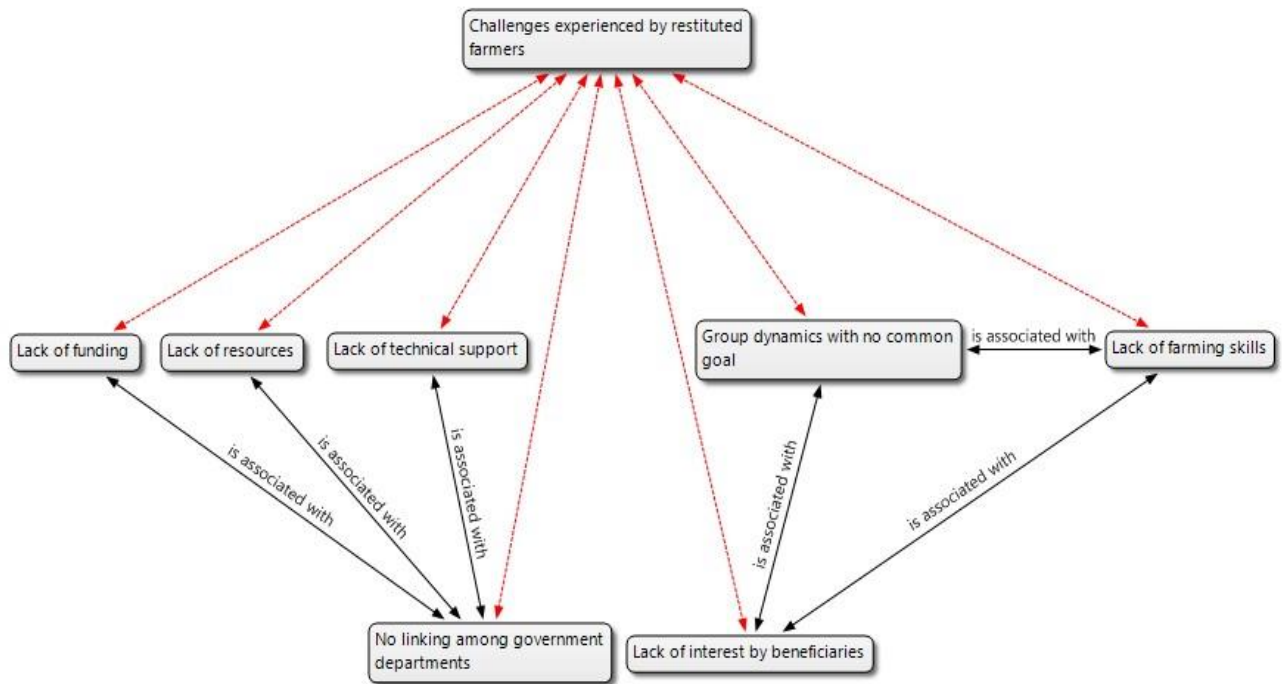


FIGURE 5: Challenges Experienced by Restituted Farmers post settlement

The same challenge of lack of funds was also experienced by farmers in Ngaka Modiri Molema District in North-West Province whereby majority of farmers had financial problems that prevented them from buying production inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and farm implements (Mapholi, Antwi, Ravhuhali & Lefophane, 2014:64). It is obvious that it is impossible for the farm beneficiaries to take advantage of the available market if they do not have financial muscles to produce more quality products as per market demand. Some beneficiaries had, at some stage, received funding from the government, however, there is need for the private sector to help in this regard; the government should also speed up its Recapitalisation and Development Programme to benefit a broad-spectrum of restituted farms to improve livelihoods of the people. The other challenge tormenting beneficiaries was infrastructure development. Mafora (2014:49) mentions that infrastructure can become a serious challenge to agricultural production if it is not developed appropriately on the restituted farms, and this can ultimately hamper any productivity increase. Lack of agricultural farming resources, consequently, will lead to the situation of restituted lands lying fallow.

Passion to do farming is critical for land recipients who want to use their land effectively for their benefit, however, majority of farm beneficiaries were not committed to the activities on the farms, yet they wanted equal share during profit sharing. This discourages committed individuals who work hard for the success of their allocated farms. Based on the observation conducted on most of the farms, for example Nosijeje farm in Belabela Municipality, Seema farm in Mogalakwena Municipality, Matabane farm in Modimolle Municipality, Madisha farm in Mookgophong Municipality, the indication was that most farm beneficiaries are not committed at all to working on the farms. One of the Agricultural Extension Advisors in Lephalale said, *“farm beneficiaries fail because they do not practise sustainable farming. They always depend upon the government to provide them with everything which is impossible for the state.”* The Agricultural Extension Advisor further said, *“farms have everything but beneficiaries are not committed to change their lives through farming.”* Dawood (2017:80) indicated that the purchasing of land by beneficiaries as a collective led to the formation of dysfunctional groups that were driven by the need to make up the numbers rather than to bring individuals with know-how, complementary resources, and similar objectives. This affected the performance of the farm negatively because more time was spent on resolving conflicts than working on the land (Golele, 2016:71). There is also a need to change the mind-set for better management of group dynamics, thereby resulting in fewer challenges within the restituted farms. There is also a need to have linkages with various service providers or government departments, in particular Agricultural Extension Advisors, to transfer knowledge from technical and scientific perspective, and farmer-to-farmer.

The study findings revealed poor performance on most of the restituted farms, however, there are some farms that are successful in Waterberg District, for example, Belabela Community Property Association (CPA) and Mawela farm which are situated in Belabela local Municipality. Both restituted farms are successful because of commitment from farm beneficiaries who have made these farms the best land-restitution models. Belabela CPA consists of 155 farm beneficiaries on 5000 hectares farm while Mawela CPA has 10 beneficiaries on 1400 hectares farm. The two farms have wild animals, such as buffalos, giraffes, kudus, springbok and gemsbok and many heads of cattle, sheep, and goats. From both farms, beneficiaries are receiving a monthly salary of R1000 and above. Additionally, Belabela CPA has a lodge with 10 chalets, bush camp comprising of five tents and a kitchen (Nawa, 2012:110). Different from other restituted farms that are not functioning, these two farms are

successful because the beneficiaries were trained in livestock and financial management; these have enabled them to run the farms effectively. In addition, these farm beneficiaries receive extension services such as vaccination of cattle, goats and sheep. One other factor was that the Agricultural Extension Advisors supported these farms by monitoring the farm twice per month and provide extension services. From the researcher's observation, beneficiaries seem to be satisfied with their livelihoods since, their human, financial, social and physical situations have improved since they received the farms. This was indicated by the photo-voice discussions (Figure 6).



FIGURE 6: Photo of successful Bela Bela CPA and Mawela CPA in Bela Bela

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lives of most farm beneficiaries have not changed since they took ownership of the farms. More challenges have been experienced by farm beneficiaries as compared to successes. The production of the restituted farms has declined because of the non-utilisation of the farms, lack of relevant skills, and poor support system by Agricultural Extension Advisors to beneficiaries, poor infrastructure, government interference and continuous conflicts among the farm beneficiaries. The study also found that there was poor management of the restituted farms in Waterberg District due to lack of resources and support from the government. It was also discovered that out of the 32 studied farms, two were successful and the beneficiaries were satisfied with the farm performance. It is, imperative, hence, to conduct studies to develop intervention strategy to ensure socio-economic transformation of lives through land restitution in South Africa and beyond.

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