

Partnerships, commitment key to driving successful land reform

All stakeholders need to play their part to ensure the success and long-term sustainability of land reform programme partnerships. This is according to Peter Setou, chief executive of Vumelana Advisory Fund.



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Vumelana is a non-profit organisation that works with land reform beneficiaries to make their land productive by facilitating partnerships between communities and investors who have, amongst others, access to capital and markets.

Commercially sustainable activities

Speaking about the importance of partnership in the land reform programme, Setou says that successful partnerships should be anchored on commercially sustainable activities where the benefits are clearly defined for everyone, the risks are carefully allocated, and the agreements entered into can withstand legal muster.

“As a pioneering organisation that delivers the services that we do in the land reform programme, we have amassed a lot of institutional memory over the last 10 years that has given us the opportunity to fine tune our offerings. We believe that community-private partnerships could contribute immensely to successful land reform and our proven model could go a long way to bucking the trend of land reform failures and help the programme to turn the corner,” says Setou.

In addition, Setou says asymmetry in power in these partnerships should be properly managed and oversight should be decisive.



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Elizabeth Hull 18 Oct 2022



Finding workable solutions

Referencing the factors that are cited as the primary drivers for the collapse of partnerships in the land reform programme, Setou notes that it is incumbent on communities to find workable ways of managing conflict and implement effective governance structures to oversee these partnerships.

Setou adds that government can improve the success of the land reform programme through implementing unambiguous and clear policies and enhancing speed of execution.

“Government at all levels should demonstrate political will and improve the level of commitment to the land reform programme,” highlights Setou.

He argues that investors and other private partners can help or hinder the success of the land reform programme, depending on the level of social commitment, the extent of experience, the attractiveness of returns and the appetite to go with the process.

“Advisors, on the other hand, depending on their level of experience and the degree of support they provide, can also hamper or stimulate the success of the land reform programme,” he says.



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No one solution to implementing successful land reform

Sharing insights from Vumelana’s experience and work in the land reform programme, Setou highlights that there is no one solution that can be singled out to change the trajectory of the land reform programme.

“Land reform is a complex, multi-stakeholder programme that calls for a fine balancing act of various interests, some of which may be in direct contradiction with one another. As challenging as this process can be, the failure of the land reform programme is something that this country and other African countries cannot afford politically, socially, and economically. Successful land reform is crucial for stability, social cohesion, and food security for the region,” Setou said.

The Vumelana Advisory Fund urges potential investors, claimant communities and interested stakeholders to work with the organisation to help in supporting initiatives to drive the success of the land reform programme as part of efforts to drive a partnership-driven model for land reform at scale.



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Financial resources needed

“We are of the view that our work can be replicated and upscaled to contribute towards a more sustainable land reform. However, to do this we need financial resources to support the communities and facilitate partnerships between communities and private partners. To this end, government, the private sector and the donor community can contribute towards ensuring that we expand on our reach to support communities, and in turn enable the creation of much needed jobs, income, skills and social cohesion,” concluded Setou.

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