

Youth urged to participate in land reform succession planning

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5%.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Although the graduate unemployment rate remains relatively low in South Africa compared with those of other educational levels, unemployment among the youth continues to be a challenge, irrespective of educational attainment. The survey concludes that year-on-year, the unemployment rate among young graduates (aged 15-24 years) declined from 40,3% to 32,6%, while it increased by 6,9 percentage points to 22,4% for those aged 25-34 years in Q1: 2022.

Using land to improve lives

Restored land could, if used productively, contribute towards creating inclusion and jobs for the youth.

For this to happen, it is critical that post-settlement support should be provided to beneficiaries of land reform. Government, the private sector and non-profit organisations like Vumelana Advisory Fund should work together to support communities and ensure productive use of the land. As an example, Mamahlola Communal Property Association, based in Limpopo province, which has benefitted from support provided by Vumelana, is making steady strides in its efforts to empower youth through land ownership as well as food production.

Its chairperson, Masilu Modiba, is adamant that land reform is a driving force behind socio-economic development and that the youth are critical stakeholders. He adds that South Africa is a youthful nation, therefore youth involvement is generally critical in the broader community.

The CPA members have realised this, and in their own way are trying to draw young people into land reform and food production. Modiba maintains that by and large this will also go a long way in curbing social ills such as social exclusion, crime, substance abuse and social disorder. However, in the main young people will respond to food security as well as make a dent in youth unemployment.

Peter Setou, chief executive of the Vumelana Advisory Fund, a non-profit organisation that helps beneficiaries of the land reform programme to make their land profitable, concurs that if more young people are exposed to opportunities that come with land production and ownership. "The sector can absorb a lot of young people with no or limited skills and they can grow and develop from this position."

He adds: "We should also not lose sight of the fact that there are other indirect jobs that are created in sectors supporting agriculture, such as the transport sector and the IT sector, among others. This can go a long way in absorbing the youth."

The current CPA chairperson says that it is for this reason that they are continuously appealing to young people to get involved and not lose hope. Their efforts, among others, include consistently organising roadshows, workshops and seminars wherein the youth interact with experts in the agriculture sector.

Including younger people in land reform matters is beginning to yield results, because Vumelana has observed that there is a steady increase in younger people participating in CPA activities. They have started realising that there is an opportunity to use land to improve their lives as well as earn income and develop skills.

Putting restituted land to productivity

The long-term view is to ensure that the youth realise that land reform can contribute toward social economic development. "Most importantly, we want young people to realise that agriculture can be a lucrative career choice that could sustain them and their families. Land ownership is the cornerstone of our economy, and therefore we cannot downplay the youth's involvement," Modiba adds.

According to Setou, the reality is that CPAs are largely comprised of older people who mostly had lived experiences of past discrimination practices, including losing their ancestral land.

As a result, there has been limited participation of the youth in CPA activities, particularly in the initial phase where the land was claimed. "CPAs also do not always have programmes in place to attract the youth in their activities, including succession planning," Setou adds.

It is important to note that young people have a role to play towards ensuring the sustainability of restituted land, "because we should realise that farming as we knew it, 20 to 50 years ago, has significantly changed. Most of it is technology-driven as the sector has in many respects been mechanised, and this may appeal to the youth," he argues.

Setou cautions that it is essential to note that when we talk of land use we are not only talking of agriculture. "Not all land that has been transferred is arable land. Some of the land parcels transferred are not suitable for agriculture but can be used for other purposes such as eco-tourism.

"Therefore, this broadens the scope for young people to get involved in putting restituted land to productivity.

"In general, South Africa, like many countries," Setou adds, "has experienced migration to urban areas. It, therefore, means there are fewer people who reside in the rural areas, which form the bulk of restituted land, especially agricultural and land for ecotourism purposes.

"It is therefore important that CPAs and other land-owning structures should adopt an inclusive approach in managing restored land. They should include younger people in key positions and areas of their work to ensure that the baton can be passed from older people to the youth over time. Failure to do this will impact on the future use and sustainability of restored land so that it can benefit future generations," Setou remarks.

Another challenge that the organisation needs to tackle is how to sustain good governance, as well as encourage young people to contribute towards this area. Therefore, says Setou, there needs to be an assessment of the type of training and qualifications one would need to be able to perform tasks that enable good governance practices.

Modiba is certain that land reform and youth involvement present strategic opportunities for young people. The CPA manages the Mamahlola tribe's land, which is occupied by over 400 families who were previously removed from Tzaneen before being relocated to Hammanskraal, Pretoria.

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