Chapter 11
A Youth Perspective to Participation and Local Governance in Zimbabwe’s Post–Fast Track Land Reform Farms

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ABSTRACT

The chapter provides a youth perspective to participation and local governance in Zimbabwe’s post-Fast Track Land Reform farms. The chapter provides a sociology flare to youth participation by incorporating the ‘sociology of youth’ dimension. Factoring in the youth perspective is a major contribution in addressing the lacunae in understanding and improving land reforms in Zimbabwe. Broadly, scholarly debate and professional practice on Zimbabwe’s post-FTLRP have been informed by four ideological and empirical approaches namely, the neopatrimonial, human rights, livelihoods and political economy. However, in all four approaches, specific and deliberate focus on the youth is low. Based on the understanding that the youth are the future of societies, the central argument in the chapter is that the youth should be positively developed to practice their citizenship. This can be achieved through proactive incorporation of the youth in development and local governance. At a micro level, the ‘new’ farm communities and how they are locally governed should also be a turf for the youth, not only for the ‘gerontocrats’. The starting point for that noble departure is to understand the lived experiences and situated meanings pertaining to the achievements, opportunities, challenges and failures in youth participation in development and local governance of the farm communities. Beyond lip service articulation and application of a youth perspective in the farm communities, and broadly at the national level, are recommended.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9388-1.ch011
INTRODUCTION

Youth are a vital group in any country hence, the central argument that youth bear the future of society. The continued existence and improvement of societies can be guaranteed through positive youth development. This can broadly be achieved through enhancing the participation of youth in development and governance at both micro and macro levels. The significance of youth participation is emphasised by various renowned scholars. These include but are not limited to Kurebwa (2017, 2015, 2013), Chipenda (2018) and Kwenje and Sichone (2017). Despite the nobility of youth participation, a plethora of latent and manifest obstacles have been documented. Emphasis is on adopting a youth perspective yet commitment and progress are constrained (Adesina and Favour, 2016; Kising’u, 2016; Food and Agriculture Organisation, Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation & International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2014). In this chapter, youth participation in development and local governance are contextualised in the ‘new’ farm communities of Zimbabwe that emerged due to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP).

The FTLRP led to major reconfiguration of the rural landscape. Interest emerged at national, regional and international levels to understand the motives, outcomes and trajectories of the reform (Moyo, 2013). Such interest on the FTLRP arose due to its nature, scope and impact. Several scholars engaged the FTLRP from various standpoints and were initially polarised along various ideological and epistemological standpoints. Raftopolous (2009) argues that the FTLRP has created an academic rupture. This indicates the level of division among scholars focusing on the FTLRP. Scholars argue from livelihoods, political economy, human rights and neo-patrimonial approaches (Chibwana, 2016, p.33; Scoones, Marongwe, Mavedzenge, Mahenehene, Murimbarimba & Sukume, 2011). Contestations are common among the scholars due to diverse value systems, ideological persuasions and situated experiences. However, the limited vigour of a youth perspective to the FTLRP and their participation in its post phase is agonisingly a major lacuna.

Overall, literature that emerged in post-FTLRP era mainly concentrated on the motives behind the land reform, the role of the state and war veterans, land allocation, land use and production patterns, social organisation and agency, social policy outcomes, farm level institutions, gender and so forth. However, interestingly, the youth perspective in terms of participation and governance in the post fast track farms is low and under-emphasised. Accordingly, lacunae exist pertaining to the participation of youth in agriculture as a central driver of development in Zimbabwe and generally, the local governance of the farm communities after the FTLRP. Such gaps in literature and policy practice cannot be left unaddressed. This chapter therefore, addresses the youth gap by engaging the lived experiences and situated
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