

## Why not creating farmworker villages? - Klaus Schade

The Second Land Conference held last week in Windhoek has covered a vast array of different land-related topics. Access to urban land, title deeds in communal areas, flexible land tenure systems, and the plight of farmworkers were just some of them. Farmworkers and their families often face uncertainties regarding a place to stay when they retire, resign or are being retrenched. Farm owners have to decide whether to allow them to stay on the farm even if they are no longer employed or to drop them somewhere. A solution could be to create farmworker villages:

Farm owners of two adjacent farms along major gravel roads could donate for instance one or two percent each of their farmland along the border with their neighbour, to develop a settlement area for their farmworkers. Farm owners on the opposite side of the road could donate land as well, while other farmers in the neighbourhood could contribute through investment in the necessary infrastructure, such as fences, water, sanitation, (off-grid) electricity. These areas will be reserved for farmworkers who have been employed for a minimum number of years on the farms that are participating in the scheme and for their immediate family members. They will receive a plot and title deed in this settlement area, where they can build their own house over time. The areas will also make provision for crop and livestock farming as well as public spaces, and some reserved areas for other facilities, such as clinics, kindergartens, pre-primary schools etc. Family members who are not employed on the farm, but stay with the farmworker could choose to continue staying on the farm or move already to their allocated plot in the settlement, while the farmworker could join them during off-times.

Family members can get involved in small-scale farming activities (livestock and or crop farming) or other business activities, such as shops where they sell basics including farm produce to other residents and passers-by. Over time the demand for other services will increase and these services can be provided more efficiently because of the higher population density. A mobile clinic can visit the place on a regular basis, while financial institutions will have an incentive to provide mobile ATM and other financial services, since cash is starting circulating. Depending on the number of children, a kindergarten could be set up and expanded to pre-primary and perhaps junior primary level over time.

Such farmworker villages can ease access to and cost of delivering basic services in rural areas, create additional business opportunities for family members, but most importantly provide a place to stay for farmworkers that they can call 'home'. They will be enabled to create assets and wealth that they can pass on to the next generation.

Published in Business 7 – 10 October 2018