

# Problems and solutions to kenyas land reform issue under current politics essay e...

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Poverty is a problem, in one sense that has stricken humanity since it's beginning. In every society there are those who barely get by, or fail to get by because of a lack of resources. The issue " is complicated in that there is no single origin of it." (Payne, 78). The purpose of this essay is to explore poverty through one instance in one country to gain a greater understanding of why poverty exists. (Kristoff, 46).

Kenya is one of the largest countries in Africa with 40 million people. The rural population is high, at 31 million. The estimated number of rural poor is close to 16 million. In Kenya, land is necessary to grow food for many to make a living. Without land, it is likely that a family will be impoverished. Two months ago weeks ago Kenya elected it's forth president Uhuru Kenyatta. He is the son of the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta. The last time the country went to the polls certain regions of the country descended into a violent chaos that it is still recovering from. Dubbed The 2007/2008 Post Election Violence, across the country thousands of Kenyans lost their lives and 600, 000 were displaced in ethnic clashes. A quarter million are still living in refuge camps or with friends and relatives away from where their native soil.

Uhuru Kenyatta is set to go on trial at The Hague April 11, 2012 for his alleged involvement in causing the violence. His running mate, the president elect William Ruto is also wanted on the same date for the same crime. The leaders will have to run the executive branch of government while at the same time defending themselves in person against charges being heard by an international legal body.

Uhuru's presidency being a social problem extends beyond the charges

against him. Kenyans polled agreed that land, most specifically; land reform was one of the most important issues to them in this election. As the son of Kenya's first president, Uhuru is the inheritor of vast tracts of land that his father, then the president of Kenya, acquired after the British government relinquished their hold on them. Instead of returning to the land to the people whose families have inhabited upon them for generation, their land is in the hands of Uhuru Kenyatta, president elect.

The primary cause of the problem is the disruption of land ownership that the British colonizers enacted justified by their right to acquire the land. The problem exacerbates the existing problems and tensions of the country. Kenya, prior to the British drawing arbitrary lines on the map at the Berlin Convention in 1885, was not a country before that.

The modern Republic of Kenya is composed of forty-two tribes that also have had tradition disputes with regard to tribal land. Uhuru, who has a clear vested interest in the outcome of laws enacting governing land, and this is going to prevent a problem as voters continue to demand equitable reform on the issue.

One fact remains that Kenya has one of the best economies in the region so it comes at somewhat of a paradox that they have the poverty levels that they do. About 79 percent of Kenyans live in rural areas and rely upon agriculture to make their living. The economy is a smallholder subsistence agriculture economy, and this procures 70 percent of the total output. The land issue is not the only issue causing the poverty. There are in fact other problems such as HIV, disease, droughts, etc, but the equitable land distribution is one of the primary drivers of inequity which leads to poverty.

Each distinct tribe has its own language and traditions. Looking at this under the symbolic interaction theory, it could be said that language, and different traditions of how meaning is conveyed further muddles the issue of achieving national consensus on governmental decisions despite competing interests and distinct needs.

One solution of the problem is either already in place or being implemented. Under its previous president, Kenyans voted yes on a referendum that passed a new constitution. This constitution moves power from a centralized bureaucracy to more regional control governments. It also calls for an independent land commission. These changes will prevent, or at least impede, the incoming president to be able to become a de facto dictator in the office of president as previous presidents have been able to do in Kenya. As stated, this land is not just a political issue. It is a social issue because people who have been kicked off of their land or no longer own their land are impoverished as a result. The solution, at this point must be a political solution. And in order for that to happen there would need to be more political will to solve it. Currently, this does not seem to be the case. But with the new constitution, the country appears to be moving at least in the right direction.

## References

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