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**“We Are All Friends Here”:
The Social Dynamics of a
Development Project**

Andrew Ainslie

Working Paper No. 60

Rhodes University

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I would like to express my gratitude to all BRN 152966
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by

Andrew Ainslie

For her unwavering support and assistance in me, a special word
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All the names which appear in the body of this report are
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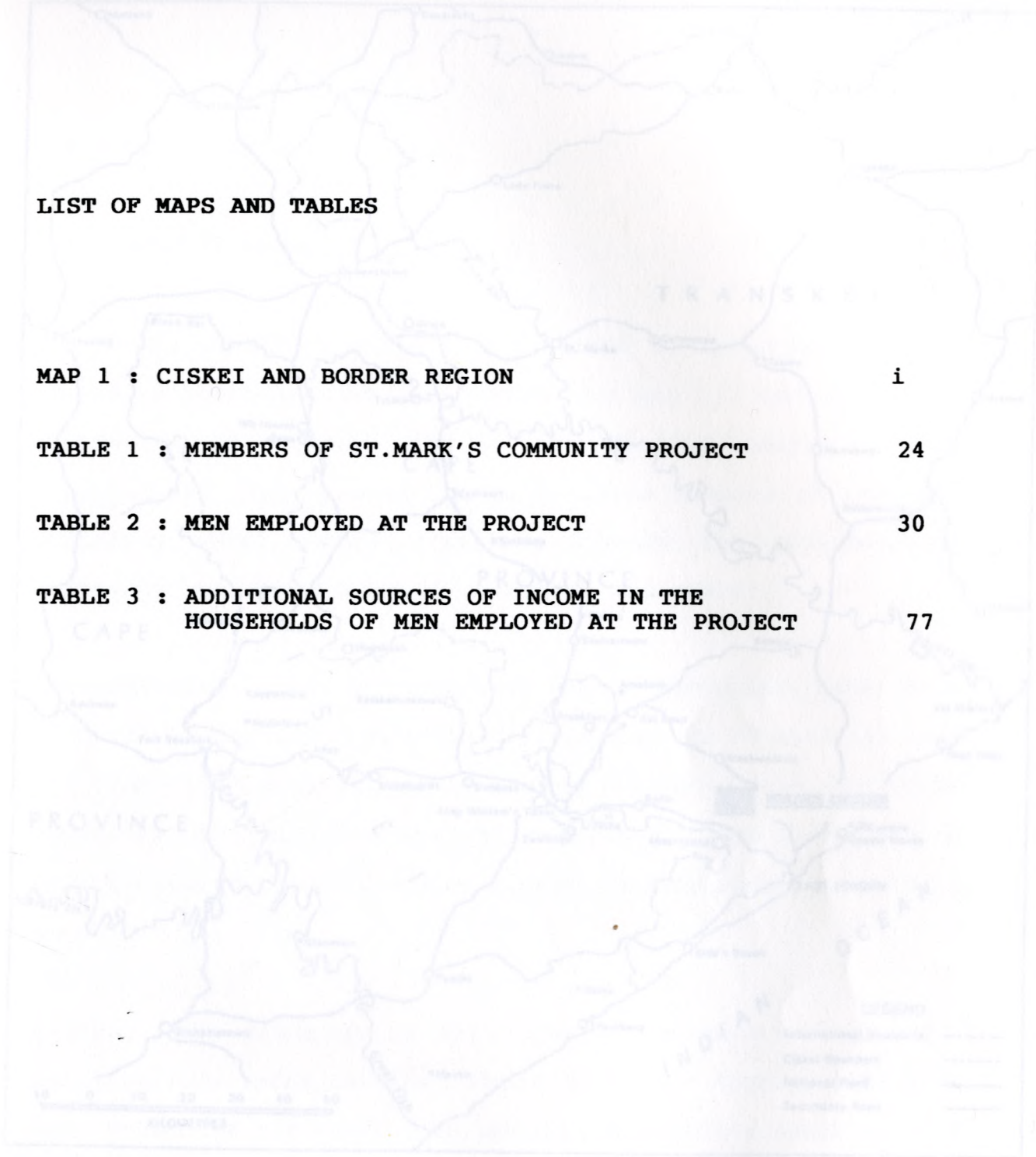
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MAP 1 : CISKEI AND BORDER REGION
(Source : Cook and Opland, 1989 :vii)



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1(1) INTRODUCTION :

1.1 Newlands Location

St. Mark's Community Project is situated in Newlands Location, some 30km north-west of East London (see Map 1). Newlands has a population of between 20 000 and 30 000 people and is experiencing rapid social change as large numbers of poverty-stricken, rural people gravitate towards the periphery of Mdantsane and East London in search of employment.

The Newlands area is separated from Mdantsane (the huge "dormitory township" outside East London) by the N2 national road and by the railway line running to King William's Town, but these "barriers" are permeable and most residents of Newlands Location have contact with relatives or friends in Mdantsane, some 10 km away.

Although not situated in the Ciskei, residents of Newlands Location fall under Ciskeian administration. These people have been scheduled for removal to the Chalumna-Kidd's Beach area in the Ciskei throughout the 1970's and into the 1980's. Land insecurity has been a major and recurring issue in this particular area of the Eastern Cape for over twenty years and has served to retard infrastructural improvements. (Kenyon and Du Toit, 1989:448ff)

As elsewhere, this insecurity of tenure has led to community mobilisation, in the form of residents' associations, to oppose threats of removal. It has also resulted in short-sighted land utilisation. (The SPP Reports Vol. 2,1983 ; Moss and Obery,1987:466)

Newlands Location is bisected by the Nahoon river and falls within the primary drainage system of this river. The landscape consists of rolling hills and a few broad valleys. The highest point is 445 metres above sea level and the land slopes gradually southward to the Nahoon river, which is 160 metres above sea level. Dryland farming potential is limited because of the shallow soil (of clay-loam texture and derived from Beaufort shales), the shallow rock levels and the depth of the water-table in this area, but irrigated vegetable-farming does occur along the banks of the Nahoon. (DDA Planning Report,1989:12)

The influx of people to Newlands has put enormous pressure on subsistence activities, although cattle and goats are still herded and grazed communally, and all available, relatively flat ground is planted to maize and other crops. Careless ploughing methods across contours, coupled with the debilitating effects of a prolonged drought, has led to severe cases of soil erosion and a further decline in soil fertility. (ibid,1989:7)

The Location consists of 9 settlements, although the steady stream of new arrivals blurs the settlement boundaries and is

transforming the area from rural to peri-urban. There are no tarred roads in the Location, nor has electricity been introduced. Pigs wander around in search of scraps, while big lorries from a nearby quarry and other traffic on the gravel roads leave everything coated with a thick layer of dust. The slow, inevitability of life hangs thick in the air too, and the hot, dry sun bakes down on the homes of old people who talk about the days when it used to rain, while close by a recently arrived family might be engaged in the construction of their wattle-and-daub "home".

Unemployment runs high and most people in Newlands rely on State pensions, whether old-age or disability, or on the salary of a family member employed in East London, Mdantsane, or at Mpongo Park. The latter is a game reserve which borders on the north-eastern side of Newlands. Wedged between Newlands and Mpongo Park is a white-owned farm which produces vegetables using intensive irrigation methods and also offers employment to a limited number of local residents.

1.2 The History of St. Mark's Mission

The original St. Mark's Mission was established near Fort Waterloo in the territory of the Ndlambe chief, Mhala, in 1854. The Great Xhosa Cattle-killing of 1856-57 reduced the numbers of people in this area as people either succumbed to the famine and hunger, brought on by the wide-scale destruction of livestock and crops,

or dispersed, pouring into the Cape Colony in search of food and livelihood. (Peires,1989:263)

Chief Mhala had been a foremost supporter of the cattle-killing and the population in the neighbourhood of St.Mark's suffered greatly. The Cape government refused to send funds for relief efforts to Anglican missions on the frontier, Governor Grey making it clear that he disapproved of some Anglican missionaries, particularly a William Greenstock at St.Mark's, whose relief work presented an obstacle to the settlement of whites in Mhala's country. The Mission had to be abandoned and the work was transferred to a new site at the edge of the Nxaruni (Nahoon) river in 1858, which is the site of the present-day mission. (Peires,ibid:264 ; Levick,1953:10,33)

1.3. Getting started at St.Mark's Community Project

The Anglican Church owns (freehold title, in the name of the Bishop of Grahamstown), about 219 hectare of land, called St.Mark's Mission, in Newlands Location. A church was built at the Mission which serves the people of Newlands Location. Over the years, most of Mission land has been leased out in small plots to members of the surrounding community for a nominal fee of R4-00 per annum. This brought in a small income for the parish, but the land was badly farmed and decreasing yields were a cause for concern. (Wigley,1984:1). In a letter to the then Archdeacon of East London, a former Bishop of Grahamstown

remarked that, "St.Mark's is a pretty seedy place, I'm afraid". (DSR records on St.Mark's, 1973)

In 1978, a Rev. John Galela, then a minister at St.Mark's, launched a project which included pig-farming and the growing of vegetables for human consumption and to feed the pigs. With a grant from the South African Council of Churches (SACC), a pump was installed on the banks of the river and vegetables were grown under irrigation on 2,4 ha of land.(Wigley,1984:1)

This pilot project did not affect the leasing arrangements mentioned above. The project apparently enjoyed the approval and support of the local community, until the chief, Chief M.D. Feketha (an influential member of the Ciskeian cabinet at this time), came to hear of it and forbade the people of Newlands, who fall under his "tribal" jurisdiction, to participate in the project.

Galela's opposition to the Ciskeian administration (which was not delivering any services to Newlands or allowing any free political activity), had alienated him from the Chief, but residents of Newlands credited Feketha for resisting the removal of "blackspots" like Newlands to locations like Chalumna or Peddie, and heeded his call to boycott the project.

Rev. Galela pressed on with the project by employing three people to work the plot and feed his pigs. One of these people was a certain Mr. Dlamini, who was to feature prominently in the future

St. Mark's Community Project. Rev. Galela would market the produce (both pigs and vegetables) in Mdantsane. By 1980, he had run out of funds and the project was clearly not economically viable, nor had it been able to secure the support of the community. Galela approached various organisations for funding and World Vision responded. (Diocesan DSR minutes, 1980/03/08 :2)

Meetings were held at the Mission during 1980 with the 26 people leasing the approximately 30 ha of Mission land. The families of some of these people had been leasing land here since the Anglo-Boer War. The most pressing issue raised at these meetings was that of decreasing soil fertility. It was agreed, (according to World Vision staff, by consensus), that each person should renounce his/her claim to a leased plot so that the whole area could be combined and farmed co-operatively. This was the condition set by World Vision which had to be met before it would assist the project financially. The prospect of soil rehabilitation (and thus better yields) through improved soil utilisation and crop rotation, linked to the possibility of incoming funds from potential sponsors of the project, no doubt made this decision easier for the lessees. (Wigley, 1984)

To increase the legitimacy of the project and to make it something with which the community of Newlands could identify, the co-operation of the local Tribal Authority and of the chief (Feketha) was sought. In early 1981, a meeting of the Tribal Authority and members of the community was held. After much persuasion by the World Vision co-ordinator, who argued that a

co-operative farm run by residents of Newlands was "far more desirable than a white farmer who would make a mint farming with vegetables under irrigation, but would not empower the people", Chief Feketha - who had wanted the land to be farmed commercially - finally gave his permission for the project to commence. (Wigley, 1984:2) There were, however, those in Newlands who felt that the Mission had stolen the land from "the people" of Newlands and they were opposed to any measures, including the proposed project, which they felt made the land even less accessible to them than before.

Nevertheless, by April 1981, a committee had been formed at St. Mark's, chaired by a Rev. Bekwa from the Mission, and with Rev. Galela and several men who had formerly rented land at the Mission as committee members. World Vision had arranged for someone to co-ordinate the project, 240 pockets of fertilizer and lime had been bought and poles and wire fencing had been erected. At the same time, an application to SACC for funding for a tractor for the project had been approved. (ibid:2)

The project began with the 26 people who had been leasing land from the Mission. No rent would be charged for the project's use of the land, rather the Church was to retain half of what was produced. Money from this would be paid into a separate fund and be used to defray the costs of rehabilitating/developing the land and improving the infrastructure at the project. Once a large enough sum had been retained in this manner, the costs of maintenance and improvements to the land could be undertaken

without external funding. When this stage of self-reliance was reached, full control of the co-operative would be given over to the members and "some means of compensating the Church as land-owner would be negotiated". (ibid)

In the years that followed, the project was faced with numerous challenges and problems. Political turmoil in the region and a sometimes uneasy relationship between the project and the Church at St. Mark's were just two of the issues that had to be faced. Severe drought in the region also affected the performance of the project. Although water is usually pumped from the Nahoon river, even this source practically dried up at the height of the drought.

Furthermore, during the drought, irrigated green vegetable plots and pastures stood out against the barren surrounding areas and attracted great numbers of birds and also the attention of hungry residents from Newlands, both of whom did considerable damage to crops and the morale of the members at the project. Nonetheless, vegetable crops were grown, a dairy herd was slowly built up and various experiments with poultry farming were attempted. Buildings were constructed on the project and farming equipment bought, the funds for this coming predominantly from World Vision.

World Vision also offered formal support in the person of a co-ordinator-cum-fieldworker for the project and a monthly cheque to cover costs at the project. Also promoted were neighbourhood

gospel groups in the settlements from which the project drew its membership, while the building of ferro-cement water storage tanks at the homes of members was undertaken.

The composition of the project members slowly changed : whereas most of the original lessees were men, it became clear that even with external funding, the project as a co-operative did not pay a wage and that a great deal of work was required to make a success of this venture. The result was that the men, most of whom were ageing and only interested in planting their rented plots with maize, gradually began to lose interest. Three of these men, Mr. Dlamini, Mr. Deliwe and Mr. Noko, persevered longer than the other men, and helped in the construction of the buildings on the project. Mr Deliwe passed away in about 1989, after bringing in his young brother, Vincent, who works at the project as an assistant. The aged and ill (but still lively) Mr. Dlamini, who had been responsible for growing vegetable seedlings and operating the irrigation system, finally left the project in 1990. He visits the project occasionally, but he is no longer involved in work there. After all his years of work there, he says, "I don't see ten cents [in compensation] from this project". Mr. Noko is also ill and no longer comes to the project.

A Mr. Mabhena, former Headmaster of the local school and a former committee member at the Project, is now a wealthy man who owns three cash stores in Newlands. In an interview he expressed his sympathy with the problems of the Project, but said that he was

"very busy" and had no time to spare in which to help them. The result is that by 1993, none of the bona fide members of the project are males.

* * *

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(2) LITERATURE REVIEW :

2.1. Co-operatives

Since the 1960's, co-operatives have been established with great enthusiasm in most countries in the so-called "Third World". It is widely recognised, however, that the performance of the vast majority of these co-operatives has been, at best, disappointing. (Braverman et.al.,1991:3)

Although Barratt (1989:29ff.) enumerates eight "types" of co-operatives, Harper (1984:140) makes the useful distinction between service and producer co-operatives. The former consist of individual businesses co-operating in a limited context to secure a particular service, and these co-operatives will not concern us here. It is rather the producer co-operatives, with their less individualistic, more socialist-oriented approach that are relevant here. (hereafter, "co-operative" will refer exclusively to producer co-operatives.)

Producer co-operatives are expected to achieve several complex economic and social goals, some of which are that they must :

- (1) increase production and mobilise under-utilised resources ;
- (2) increase social justice and equality of opportunity; and
- (3) reinforce social solidarity by (re)building communities fragmented by the impact of colonial regimes

urban migration and rural under-development. (Attwood and Baviskar,1988:2 ; Lele,1981:55)

In order to achieve these goals, co-operatives usually embrace "romantic-socialist" ideals of egalitarianism, democratic control, self-help, voluntarism, mutual assistance and a communal spirit of sharing. (Widstrand,1970:17)

Two fundamental principles of co-operative organisation, namely democratic administration and -decision-making, and the equitable distribution of income, highlight the differences between a "normal", commercial business, which is motivated primarily by economic considerations, and a co-operative which, as mentioned above, has wider goals. (Barratt,1989:12).

These two principles, however ideologically desirable, account for the structural weakness and failure of many co-operatives, because they create tensions concerning : (a) the nature and exercise of authority in co-operatives and (b) the allocation of rewards from co-operative endeavours, which often involve differential (real and perceived) inputs from individual members. (Mayoux,1988:13)

Worsley (1971:23) notes that a further difficulty exists in inducing co-operative members to accept "institutionalised suspicion", i.e. the necessity of competent accounting and wider kinds of accountability and inspection. This can be particularly

difficult where traditional ties of kinship and of neighbourhood militate against strict economic rationality. Barratt (ibid:45) points out that the problem is compounded by the lack of adequate training with regard not only to basic literacy skills, but also to the principles of co-operative theory and practice. Training in management skills and marketing analysis are also required, particularly where members have had no previous exposure to these. (ibid:48)

2.2 Defining "development"

Definitions of development are usually embedded in specific ideological discourses, such as theories of modernisation, dependency or of under-development, all of which weight the various aspects of the development process differently. (see Verhelst, 1987, Whisson, et.al., 1982:2ff.)

The United Nations Development Programme describes "development" as

"..... a process of socio-economic change involving the transformation of agrarian society in order to reach a common set of development goals based on capacities and needs of people ; these goals include a nationally determined growth process that gives priority to the reduction of poverty, unemployment and inequality, and the satisfaction of minimum human needs, and stresses self-reliance and the participation of all people, particularly

those with the lowest standard of living."
(Erskine,1985:370)

This definition of development stresses the economic and social nature of the process, but also recognises the political component of development in which, as Pottier (1993:7) observes, every intervention is a political statement which either supports or undermines existing power relations between local role players.

World Vision, the agency funding the St.Mark's Community Project, has its own definition of "development" :

"Christian development is a process through which people enhance their ability to understand what is happening in the world. People are empowered to challenge that which is unjust to people or damaging to the environment. At the same time, development is a process through which people become more creative and resourceful about improving their quality of life in a way that neither damages the environment nor diminishes the possibility of other people also realising their full potential."

This view of "development" accentuates the empowerment of people so that they can assert more control over their lives. It recognises that recipients of development funding are active participants in their own destinies, capable of making goal-directed decisions with due regard to available information, rather than view these people as passive or helpless. It also

places environmental sustainability on the development agenda and addresses issues of justice and the focussing on felt needs, with a distinct evangelical thrust.

Clearly, the way an agency defines "development" is an indication of the nature of the intervention that it will attempt in specific projects. St.Mark's Community Project is no exception here and World Vision, through its successive fieldworkers, has prioritised the empowerment of project members and the rehabilitation of local environmental conditions, particularly soil fertility. Both of these goals present problems in terms of operationalising and evaluating, simply because neither is easily quantifiable and thus measuring the success of the intervention becomes highly subjective and problematic.

2.3 Addressing issues of gender in co-operatives

Charlton (1984:9) asserts that the seemingly straightforward goal of integrating women into development projects is actually a complex one, because it challenges local social and political structures, the distribution of wealth, and cultural mores.

Mayoux (1988:3) notes that top-down development in Africa has frequently resulted in an increase in women's unpaid work and the erosion of their traditional land rights. Women frequently participate in co-operatives in addition to their unpaid work in the family. This participation can greatly increase their work burden while conversely, their domestic work can limit their

contribution to co-operative production and thus affect their income from this source.

(African Women In Co-operatives, 1989:13).

Even for older women, such as those who are members at St. Mark's, domestic responsibilities can affect their productivity with respect to the goals of the co-operative. An example of this is the washing of large bundles of clothes, brought to the project from their respective homes, during the working day. The ready availability of water from the project reservoirs, coupled to the absence of a supervisor at the project makes this a viable option, but limits their contribution to the productive output of the project.

It is argued that for many women, co-operative working is one of the few means of overcoming isolation. For poor women in particular, co-operatives can form an important network for support in hard times (ibid:3). It has been noted, however, that even producer co-operative groups have seldom been linked to wider movements for change in gender relations, or integrated into the mainstream economy and have therefore had a very limited effect on helping women overcome their gender-specific problems or on significantly increasing their incomes. (ibid:2). Also, within co-operatives themselves, as Barratt (1989:45) has indicated, certain skills, including basic literacy, are required. Poor, rural women, the very group for whom the co-operative structure offers some economic security and a chance to determine their own futures, seldom have the necessary skills.

Exploitative gender relationships underlying co-operative activities are likely to be a major cause of failure. Male attitudes towards the participation of women in co-operative projects can jeopardise success : husbands may try to restrict the participation and mobility of their wives ; men in the community may fear women's increased economic strength and their increased access to land, or resent the fact that women are employed before them. (Mayoux,1988:70)

Moser (1993:29) argues that,

"In examining the different roles of women and men, the gender division of labour provides the underlying principle for differentiating the work men and women do. It also provides the rationale for the difference in value placed on their work. This accounts for the link between the gender division of labour and the subordination of women."

Moser also asserts that it is now accepted that gender divisions of labour are not rigid and universal. Rather, divisions of tasks at any time vary from one country to another, and as a country undergoes economic change and the nature of work changes, so does the distribution of work between men and women. (ibid:28). The same argument can also be applied to changes that occur in a specific region or area, such as Newlands Location, where demographic movements can and do affect the gender division of labour, as discussed below.

Most co-operatives are planned without any real knowledge of how, and under what circumstances, village people co-operate informally with each other. (Attwood and Baviskar,1988:10).

Hyden (1986:22ff) uses the term "economy of affection" to denote networks of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups that are connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities, such as religion. He claims that "in most African countries, productive and reproductive processes are embedded in the economy of affection,..... with members of each household generally co-operating with each other, presumably to safeguard physical and social reproduction under conditions where the margin of survival may be small." (ibid:22)

Palmer (1985:48) notes that besides substituting for traditional arrangements of production and distribution, co-operatives "also substitute for wider kinship relations, support systems, and act as channels of appeal against family patriarchy."

Other sources (Mayoux,1988 ; African Women in Co-operatives Conference,1989) refer to the need for more research, and a more refined understanding of, inter alia, women's existing networks and associations and how these tie into co-operative groups.

* * *

(3) RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

3.1. Introduction

I first visited St. Mark's Community Project in December 1991, when I stayed for 15 days on the farm of World Vision's regional co-ordinator in order to acquire some first-hand experience of development work. During this time, I visited several projects sponsored by World Vision in the Border region and spent four days at St. Mark's, which I found to be an fascinating place. I asked questions, helped in the removal of pests from citrus trees and in the making of feeding trays for the fish dam.

3.2. Getting a foot in the door

In February 1993, I re-established contact with World Vision and asked whether they would allow me, with the consent of the members of the St. Mark's Community Project, to undertake a study of the dynamics of the project. Both parties agreed and I was able to visit the project on five occasions (once staying overnight) before June 1993.

In June, I spent 10 days living on the project and doing participant observation, interviewing individually all active (female) members and all wage labourers at the project. No-one resides at the project, but two men, employed as security guards, usually spend the night there. While staying at the project, I also conducted group interviews with the project members. I held

in-depth discussions and interviews with World Vision staff and was allowed full access to all documents and files concerning the project. I also interviewed the former sub-Headman of the settlement nearest to the project, a Mr. Madoda, who now serves on the local Residents' Committee or "Civic" and Messrs. Dlamini and Mabhena. I visited the project and World Vision offices again in October 1993 for one day to see whether the recent good rains had increased the morale of members at the project, as well as to tie up some loose ends in my research data.

Throughout this study, I enjoyed the assistance of a young, Xhosa-speaking woman - herself a resident of Newlands but not a member of the project - whom I paid to interpret for me where necessary. (I have studied IsiXhosa for a year at undergraduate level but I do not speak the language fluently)

3.3. Aims of this research

What this report will attempt to do is to :

- (1) offer an explanation and analysis of on-project gender relations, networking and coping strategies,
- (2) show how these affect the day-to-day functioning of St. Mark's Community Project, and
- (3) offer an evaluation of the "success" of this development intervention.

3.4. Problems

Firstly, St. Mark's Community Project is 13 years old and the number of members has fluctuated, with individual members having come and gone. A study such as this one, because of time-constraints, cannot trace all these developments over the entire period and must be content to offer instead an analysis of the more current events and activities at the project, relying on records and oral testimony to reconstruct the past.

Secondly, World Vision has a policy of funding community projects for five year periods only, but has remained committed to St. Mark's Community Project for 13 years. This year, 1993, is to be the last year of this funding and members were constantly reminded of this fact by the World Vision fieldworker. The presence of an outside researcher may have been interpreted by members as a sign that other funders might be found to support the project. An element of this persisted although it was made clear to members on several occasions that this particular researcher was not connected to a funding agency and was not in a position to influence the future of the project.

Finally, a quotation from Hastrup (1992:119) highlights an important point which was borne in mind when this fieldwork was done :

"All ethnographers are positioned subjects
and grasp certain phenomena better than

others (Rosaldo, 1984:192). The position is defined by age, gender and outsider's status, but it also refers to the ethnographer's lived experience which enables or inhibits particular kinds of insights. (ibid:193). This is another way of stating that the ethnographer cannot remain external to her object of study."

Constantly reminding oneself of this fact allows one to offer a critical and honest analysis of one's subject.

* * *

(4) SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE PROJECT :

4.1. Background data on members

A total of 12 members, none of whom are related to each other, arrived for work at the project at various times during the study period. Within this group, some members came to work at the project far more regularly than others, (for reasons that should become clear later). These members claimed that several other members were absent either because they were ill or because the latter believed that the drought made coming to the project to grow vegetables a futile exercise. As mentioned above, all members of the project are women who live in the settlements that make up Newlands Location.

Eight of the 12 active members are widows who rely on State pensions to maintain their households (See Table 1). Of the remaining four members, another widow, (Noanna) relies on the salary of her youngest daughter who is employed at a shop in East London. This woman's own contribution in support of a household of 11 people, is to buy and sell paraffin and sell firewood, which she gathers at the project. The only other source of income in her household is the irregular wage of her one son, Peter, who is employed seasonally by the project to plough the lands using a team of horses.

Name	Marital status	Income	No. of Household members
Nolungile	widow	pensioner	5
Nomkangiso	widow	pensioner	7
Nothando	married	mother's pension	5
Nomalizo	widow	brother's pension	4
Nomsa	widow	pensioner	12
Liziwe	widow	pensioner, daughter's salary	8
Noanna	widow	daughter's salary	11
Nokhaya	widow	pensioner	7
Nomhle	widow	pensioner	13
Thandiwe	married	husband's wage	5
Rosa	widow	pensioner, son's salary	12
Sarah	widow	pensioner	?

Table 1 : Members of St.Mark's Community Project.

Another woman who does not receive a pension is Thandiwe. She is the youngest member of the project. She joined two years ago, mainly because her husband, Mark, is employed to look after the dairy herd on the project, and they were actually resident on the project, while building themselves a wattle-and-daub house about four kilometres away. They now have three children, the youngest one only three months old. This latest addition to their family has effectively put Thandiwe's participation at the project on hold for the foreseeable future.

Two members, Nothando and Nomalizo, do not qualify for pensions. Younger than the other members, they are in their early to mid-forties. Nothando is a stalwart of the project, who joined with her mother 11 years ago. Her mother has since taken ill and no longer comes to the project. Nothando's husband is unemployed and is said by some informants to drink heavily. She stayed away from the project for three months during the research period and other members said that her husband had forbidden her to work there. On her return, however, she claimed that her daughter had given birth and that she had needed help with the baby. The household of (now) five people is reliant on her mother's pension.

Nomalizo has been at the project for a year. She used to work in the pineapple fields at Kobile. It is not clear why she left that job. She is a widow with a household of four, all of whom are supported by her brother's pension. She says,

"I have no experience of this project, so I'm making no interference here. I came with no ambitions to the project, only to feed my family."

The mean average size of members' households is 7,6 people, which includes unemployed adult children, the spouses of these people, and their offspring. The project member's State pension (old-age or disability), where she qualifies for one, is the main source of income for all these people.

Only two members (Sarah and Liziwe) can read and write to some extent, but it is four specific members, Nomhle, Liziwe, Noanna

and Nothando, (in that descending order of frequency) who are called upon by the book-keeper/secretary to sign their names on the receipt of the monthly cheque from World Vision.

Literacy classes are supposedly held on a weekly basis, by a literacy teacher from another development agency, but these classes took place infrequently during the research period. When asked about the teacher's absence, one member (Nomsa) jokingly said that "our school term has ended", meaning that they were having a "holiday" from their classes which coincided with normal school holidays. When this teacher does arrive, however, most of the women are eager pupils.

All members of the project are now also members of the committee, (this was not always so, see Section 1.3.), which is supposed to take all decisions concerning the project, including the planting, growing and marketing of produce, as well as the hiring of labour during peak periods. In reality, several women make little contribution to the running of the project. Although members are supposed to attend a weekly meeting (every Tuesday), not all of them do so and some, like Sarah, the oldest member of the project, are less punctual than others, arriving well after the meeting has started, and then interrupting proceedings by shaking everyone's hand before sitting down. The meetings are dominated by a small group of women who act as spokespersons for the group - particularly in response to questions put to the group by the World Vision fieldworker and by the secretary/book-

keeper, who is charged with co-ordinating project expenditure. (see Section 4.2.)

Since the project is run as a co-operative, members only earn a wage when produce has been sold. When this occurs, the actual producer gets half the income and the other half goes to the project to cover overhead costs. This is the system currently being used after members expressed frustration with the previous system which pooled all incoming money from sales of produce and then distributed these monies evenly to all members. The more active members felt that the former system was not fair because it allowed "some" members who only worked irregularly to get the same benefits from the project.

For a number of reasons, including the severe drought, present production is very low and the amount of money accruing to individual members, even those who work hard, is extremely low, often less than R10-00 per month.

Membership of the project appears to provide, besides the small income from vegetable sales, non-monetary benefits to members and their families, although, as will be shown below, indirect monetary benefits are also enjoyed by project members.

4.2. People employed at the Project

The project has employed a young woman (Nombeko) as both book-keeper and secretary for the past four years. This woman lives

in Mdantsane, but grew up in Newlands and has several relatives in the Location. She is about 34 years old, with a twelve year old son whom she sometimes brings to the project.

Her brother, Mark, is also employed at the project as dairyman, and she says it was Mr. Dlamini, who is her mother's brother, who told her about the job at the project. Mr. Dlamini also suggested that Mark, who was unemployed at the time, should speak to the project committee when the job as dairyman became vacant a year later.

World Vision deposits R3500-00 per month into the bank account of the project and it is Nombeko's job, in liason with the World Vision fieldworker, to manage the finances of the project, i.e. she does the necessary banking, account payments, as well as paying the wages of people employed by the project. She visits the project once a week on a Tuesday for the meeting (more often if the need arises, but only if this was arranged during the previous weekly meeting). During the week, she must go to East London to pay the accounts of the project, do the banking and make purchases of any items that are not available at the nearest of Mr. Mabhena's cash stores. Her project-related transport costs are paid for by the project.

At weekly meetings, Nombeko does the Bible reading, sometimes with help from Mark, who can read albeit with some difficulty. She also takes the minutes of the meeting, and discusses the finances of the project with the project members and the World

Vision fieldworker. Although Nombeko is, theoretically, employed by the project to do its book-keeping and in that capacity she must take her instructions from the project committee, in practice, she is accountable to World Vision for the way in which the latter's funds are utilised at the project. This makes her job a sometimes lonely and unpleasant one, because she must, on occasion, face the members when World Vision makes a decision that is unpopular with the members. The decision to stop construction on the fish-pond wall (discussed in Chapter 5.) was one example of this.

In any event, Nombeko is paid R240-00 per month by the project and seems to be on reasonable terms with the members. She admits to sometimes having to steer a narrow course between what the members would like and what World Vision will allow. Interviews with World Vision staff indicated that they find her to be competent and honest and that they were satisfied with the work she was doing at the project.

The project also employs 6 men on a permanent basis to perform various tasks, (See Table 2 below), and it is here that matters become interesting : Members, all of whom are women and some of whom have been at the project for all of the 13 years, do not get any wages because the idea is that the project must produce and sell enough to pay the members a wage. In stark contrast to this, men who are not members of the project, are employed to do tasks which are considered, by the women and by the men, to be too

strenuous, too technical, or traditionally outside the realm of "women's work." These tasks include caring for- and milking the dairy herd, operating the irrigation pump, mending fences, and acting as security guards for the project.

Name	Employed as	Wage	H/hold size
Mark	Dairyman	R170-00	7
Vincent	Assistant	R70-00	4
Makhosi	Security	R170-00	3 (*)
Mpondo	Fence-mender	R170-00	2
Fezile	Irrigation	R170-00	7
Fani	Security	R170-00	3

(*) Other incomes support a total of 13 people here.

TABLE 2 : Men employed at the Project.

For its part, World Vision would rather see far less money being spent on wages to pay men than is presently the case, but it is conceivable, at least to this researcher, that successive, (male) World Vision fieldworkers may be party to this gender division of labour in the way that they have tacitly assented to the hiring of men to do certain tasks on the project.

The contention of World Vision staff is that this project was not conceived as a women's project, but developed that way simply

because women "stuck it out" longer than men. World Vision would prefer to see men join the project as members, rather than drain away its cash resources by being employed at the project, but that it (World Vision) is trying to foster independent decision-making by the project members and so prefers to offer advice and conduct workshops with the members concerning the latter's utilisation of funds, rather than to dictate how funds ought to be spent.

As will be seen below, this does at times make the response of World Vision to specific problems at the project seem contradictory and perhaps confusing to the members, one of whom admits,

"My children are astonished that we don't get any money, [at the project], but we are old and we will never have a job even in East London. I don't know how much money World Vision brings here, or how much is left after things like wire and feed have been bought. We do ask Nombeko, but we don't know [cannot be sure] if she says it is finished."

4.3. Networks and the control of resources

As mentioned above, however, a small group of women is able, to a certain extent, to manipulate the distribution of the incoming World Vision money and other, non-monetary benefits from the project, often to the detriment of their fellow-members. These

women are : Nomhle, Noanna, Nolungile and, to a lesser extent, Nomkangiso.

Noanna and Nomhle live in the same settlement in Newlands Location and invariably come to the project together. Nomhle claims that Noanna and Nomkangiso are her friends at the project, while Nomkangiso named Nomhle and Nolungile as the friends she visits socially.

Of the other members, four come from the same settlement in Newlands, which lies on the opposite side of the project to the settlement in which Nomhle and Noanna live. The four who live in this second settlement are : Liziwe, Nomsa, Nomalizo and Rosa. The first three worked on pineapple farms in the region and then, at different times, joined the project. One of the men who is employed as a security guard at the project, Fani, also lives in this settlement. Fani claims that he is not related to these women in any way.

Notwithstanding the fact that the women say that they are all friends at the project, most members are unwilling to challenge Nomhle or Noanna. Their authority stems from two sources : A World Vision staff member, who has known both women for about 13 years, says that fear of witchcraft definitely plays a role at the project in the way decisions are reached.

Mayer (1971:161) argues that Xhosa witchcraft is "conceived of as a manifestation of the tensions and conflicts which are an

integral part of living together in the close, face-to-face relations of a rural community. Xhosa witchcraft is predominantly a women's affair". The project, with a membership comprising mostly older women supposedly co-operating, but actually competing for resources in subtle ways, offers fertile ground for the development of underlying tensions.

Noanna, a woman in her fifties, used to reside on a farm neighbouring the farm of the World Vision co-ordinator. A young girl on the latter's farm died in apparently mysterious circumstances and Noanna was suspected by the other farm labourers of having caused her death by witchcraft. She left the farm shortly after this and moved to a settlement in Newlands Location.

Members of the project were extremely reluctant to discuss the issue of witchcraft, so evidence to support the above claim is only circumstantial. Even though the subject was only broached in individual interviews, it is apparently a factor which influences the relationships between members. For instance, Nothando, who has been at the project for 11 years, is outspoken in interviews about the problems at the project, but she is far less inclined to speak out in front of these older women, even though she is not young herself, (about 40 years old), and has two children and one grandchild. Her silence cannot be explained wholly by alluding to the deference she shows towards the older women. Her resentful reticence, punctuated at times by outbursts of frustration in the absence of these women, is indicative of

her disapproval of the way in which the dominant women are manipulating the resources of the project.

Similarly, but with reference to Nomhle, Mark says that when he mentions in a meeting that her son, Makhosi, has been absent without excuse from his security job at the project, "Nomhle glares at me and I am afraid for my family, so I just keep quiet". On another occasion, a Saturday when only Mark, Noanna and this researcher were at the project, Mark avoided the company of Noanna and refused the lunch of mealie meal and relish which she offered to both of us. He told her he was not hungry, but shortly after she had left, he proceeded to cook his own mealie meal and to eat it heartily.

But this source of power does not, I think, tell the whole story. Nomhle, Noanna, Nolungile and Nomkangiso are the last remaining, original members of the project. This in itself affords them greater authority than the other, more recent members and the men in the employ of the project. Since the departure of Mr. Dlamini from the project, the status of these four members has increased, and what they say usually holds sway when decisions are made. Their status is thus achieved, in a sense, through sheer perseverance, but it is also earned on a daily basis :
Nomhle invariably signs the receipt of the monthly World Vision cheque, a symbolic act of authority, because she has no real control over these funds. She is the one who, once the minutes of the previous meeting have been read out, proposes that they be adopted. She will be summoned by the members when other women

from Newlands arrive to cut grass or collect acorns at the project, so that these people can be told where they may do so. If she is not present, then Noanna will preside here.

Nomhle and Noanna are in charge of the poultry unit, making them responsible for feeding the chickens over the week-ends, when no other members are present. This ensures that they are involved in- and informed about everything that happens at the project. Nomkangiso volunteered to go to a meeting in King Williams Town for all those involved with the literacy classes run by this particular agency. When she reported back to the other members, she said she was glad that Nomhle had decided to go with her at the last minute, because she was "scared of all those clever people." This was yet another of Nomhle's attempts to ensure that she remained involved, and was seen by the other members to be involved, in all the affairs of the project.

Nolungile, a small and old woman, is also part of this group of long-standing members. She takes an active role during meetings, leading prayers to open and close meetings. She is also the hardest working member and is always first to arrive at the project. She gathers wood on the project, which she sells in Newlands. When questioned about her unstinting attendance, she says, "I come here everyday, because it is my routine", but she lives in hope : "We are waiting," she says, "for something from World Vision." Nolungile, Nomhle and Noanna are often the last to leave the project together at the end of the day with loads of firewood on their heads.

Nomkangiso is respected by other members because she has been at the project since the beginning. She is a likeable person who seems to get along with the other members. She is not as dominant as the above-mentioned three members and has less to say during meetings.

Two other members, Nothando and Liziwe, are also influential and make a contribution during meetings, particularly when Nomhle or Noanna is absent. Both of the former are stalwarts of the project, with Nothando having been at the project for 11 years and Liziwe for 7 years. When Nomhle is absent, Liziwe signs the men's wage cheques. A tall, gracious woman, Liziwe is younger than most of the other women (about 52 years old) and although she does not qualify for an old age pension, she does receive a disability pension. It is her strong character and sense of humour that make her popular with the other members. She is able to read and write (but not confidently), and is not afraid to voice her grievances during meetings. After the theft of vegetables from the project, she questioned Nomhle's son, Makhosi, at length and wanted to know what he as security guard had done to apprehend the thieves. (Nomhle was present at the time.) Liziwe seems to have the clearest understanding of what the goals and constraints of the project are and is adamant that things will improve when the drought is broken. When asked in an interview about the future of the project, she replied emphatically, "Hayi, asifuni ukuyeke !" [No, we don't want to leave the project !].

The ability of these women (particularly Nomhle, Noanna and Nolungile) to maximize the benefits they draw from the project accounts, in part, for the variable attendance of the other women, outside this group. The weaker members, who are not inclined to challenge the dominant women, stand to gain less by maintaining a visible presence at the project. The other reason is, as mentioned above, that the adverse weather conditions make vegetable farming, non-viable in terms of return on effort expended, except to those who stand to gain in other ways by attending the project.

Two consecutive case studies illustrate the ways in which gender relations, networking, kin obligations and economic marginality become interwoven in the day-to-day coping strategies employed by people involved with this co-operative.

* * *

(5) CASE STUDIES :

5.1. The case of Mpondo the fence-mender

5.1.1. Placing Mpondo in context

Mpondo is definitely of pensionable age, although he says that he does not know how old he is. He is employed by the project committee to repair fences. He does not receive a pension because he does not have an identity document. He used to milk the cows on the project but complained that his arms were getting "tired" (possibly from arthritis) and asked to be given a different job. Another informant's version of this story is that Mpondo, as a former farm labourer, knew all the tricks of the trade and that when he wanted some meat, he would put tobacco up the nostrils of a cow, thereby killing it in a way that made it impossible for novices to ascertain the cause of death. It is not clear whether he was actually confronted with this story of the dying cattle or whether his old age convinced the members that he was no longer suitable to look after the cattle, but Mpondo was finally replaced as dairyman by a younger man, Mark, the brother of Nombeko, the secretary/book-keeper.

Now Mpondo is employed full-time as a fence-mender. This entails repairing fences so that livestock from the Location cannot destroy the vegetable gardens. It also involves replacing sections of fencing that have at times been stolen

by thieves to fence their properties in the Location or to sell. It is, however, inconceivable that a job of this nature can warrant the full-time employment of even one person, because the amount of actual work involved is negligible.

The committee was eventually challenged by the World Vision fieldworker concerning the full-time employment of Mpondo. His continued employment was also questioned by one of the younger members of the project (Nothando) who is in a dire economic state with her husband unemployed and her family reliant on the pension of her mother. Nothando rightly observed that Mpondo's performance was unsatisfactory, suggesting that a younger man (perhaps her husband) should be employed to mend fences. This was rejected by the women (Nomhle and Noanna) who currently dominate the functioning of the project and all they would assent to, was the closer supervision of Mpondo's work, although even this is seen by all the members as undesirable, because as Noanna asserted, "people don't like to be watched or questioned when they work." Others, including Nothando and the World Vision fieldworker, pushed for the hiring of Mpondo only when specific fences needed repairing, but this too was rejected by the dominant group.

The outcome of this was that Mpondo's work would be monitored by members to ensure that he was not an unproductive drain on the resources of the project. The monitoring, it was decided during the same meeting, would be done by Nomhle, the very person who least wanted to see Mpondo dismissed from the project, because

this would place an increased strain on her own resources (see below). Thereafter, not only did Nomhle "monitor" work done by Mpondo, but she also found work for him to do on Saturdays when no other members, except those in charge of the chicken coop (herself and Noanna), were present. This arrangement freed Mpondo and Nomhle from the embarrassing attention that other, disgruntled members had begun to pay to this matter.

Mpondo, under the new arrangements, is supposed to keep members informed of his progress in repairing fences so that they can evaluate his performance and keep a mental record of the number of days he turns out for work. By allowing him to work when other members are absent and backing up his claims as to how many days of a particular month he has worked, Nomhle effectively neutralises the ability of other members to question Mpondo's continued employment without simultaneously challenging her. The result is that Mpondo, for the moment, still manages to get his full monthly wage although his continued full-time employment at the project seems unlikely in the future.

Two important facts help to explain how it is that Mpondo can be retained and paid a wage of R170-00 per month as fence-mender: Firstly, Mpondo resides with a woman, both of them having lost their spouses, who had been a forceful and influential personality at the project until she was struck down by tuberculosis. This woman is very ill and no longer comes to the project. Members were adamant that this woman does not receive a pension either. It is probably partly through her influence

that Mpondo managed to secure his present job and partly because the other members want to support her now that she has taken ill, that they are prepared to keep Mpondo on even if his performance can only be described as lacklustre. It is perhaps no surprise that this woman was a friend and an ally of Nomhle when the former was still an active member of the project.

Secondly and more importantly, one of the two most powerful woman at the project (Nomhle), has the same clan-name (isiduko) as Mpondo and, living close to him, has a certain obligation to support him when he is in need. Nomhle, a widow, receives an old-age pension and has managed to secure for one of her sons a job as security guard on the project. Even so, there are 13 people in her household who rely on these two incomes. The difficulty she experiences feeding and clothing those in her extended family, is compounded by the requests by her friend and Mpondo for support when their resources run low.

For this reason, it is in her best interests to ensure that Mpondo continues to receive a wage from the project. Her strong position in the membership hierarchy is maintained by her consistent attendance which allows her to always know about, and have a say in, what is happening at the project and by her confident participation (relative to other members) in weekly meetings.

Mpondo does not only still "milk" the project (this time for money), but also draws other benefits from his employment here.

The first thing he mentioned was being able to fetch water in drums (by wheelbarrow) for his household from the reservoir at the project. This, he said, frees him from a long walk and the tedious waiting in long queues for water which is delivered by lorry (during the drought) to a big tank in the property of the (former) sub-Headman in the settlement closest to the project.

Mpondo also mentioned the midday meal prepared by members at the project for all those engaged there. It seems his strategy is to arrive at the project around noon, collect his tools and some wire and disappear for a while, re-appearing in time to enjoy this meal and then claiming a full day's wages. The possibility of Mpondo selling fencing materials to people in Newlands was mentioned by some informants, but could not be verified as it is difficult to establish who is responsible for stripping the fences around the project.

For his part, Mpondo seemed aggrieved that members could suspect him of not being productive. He was at pains to point out in meetings that he had spotted sections of the fencing that needed replacing and also to report back on the sections he had repaired. No-one seemed to take these reports too seriously, but it seemed that had the World Vision fieldworker not challenged them about the matter, most members would not have minded continuing to pay Mpondo his monthly wage if only because he and his roll of wire were part of the scenery at the project.

5.1.2. Conclusions

The case of Mpondo is a rich example of the complex gender issues that are often at the very heart of rural development projects. The idea that fence-mending is a job for men, because it involves the use of tools and (arguably) requires a certain amount of strength for the tensioning of wire, is accepted by both the women and men at the St. Mark's.

This acceptance of a definite gender division of labour is borne out in all the tasks performed at the project and makes the hiring of male labour necessary. For a project which is structured as a co-operative, this apparent need to hire several people who are not committed members of the project, and who are a major drain on its cash resources, to ensure that essential tasks are done, rests on three premises :

- (1) the acceptance that some jobs fall exclusively into the domain of "men's work",
- (2) the extreme reluctance shown by men towards work which does not pay a wage and, most importantly,
- (3) the acknowledgement by (female) members that men "cannot work for nothing."

Having said this, it is also clear that the hiring of women from the community to do the more arduous work, if this were possible (bearing in mind the constraints mentioned above), would not be acceptable to the women who are members. They are adamant that any women who want to enjoy the benefits of the project must join

the project to do so. The main supporters of this idea are Nolungile, Nomhle and Noanna, although several other members also voiced this sentiment. The obvious explanation for this attitude is that these women are protecting their control over a scarce resource, in this case, a regular inflow of cash, even though they have not perfected ways of ensuring that they have direct access to this cash.

For its part, World Vision will not allow money to be paid or given to members (except under certain conditions, discussed below in Chapter 6). While this matter is entirely non-negotiable, World Vision is also opposed to the use of funds to pay wages, but is flexible in allowing the members to make decisions in this regard, although its position is often spelt out to the project members. The implication of the World Vision position is that whatever arrangements concerning wages currently prevail at the project, these should be regarded by all as interim, because ultimately the project must be able to support itself, without any external funding.

To take this analysis a step further, it is because the women know that as members they must sell their produce in order to receive an income, that they are reluctant to do strenuous tasks, not directly related to this, for which they will not be paid. For this reason, it is in their interests to support a gender division of labour, because it releases them from the more arduous work and also allows them to devise strategies to direct the flow of money in their direction, such as bringing in their

male kin for "special tasks" (see Section 5.2 below) to earn a wage which then finds its way into their respective households.

Although they know that World Vision does not support their using project funds to pay men's salaries, they will continue to do so until they are informed flatly that this practice is unacceptable. One member commented,

"We want the men to join the project so that they can help us to build it up. We, the members, get nothing. We only look and see the money coming and going."

Another member, Liziwe, says,

"World Vision said that the money is not for the men, but we do it [pay them], because we employed those men and no-one can work for nothing. World Vision wants the men to be members, to work with the women and not to be paid. But the men want money or they will leave this project. It hurts us, because we need money."

Until it is made clear by World Vision to members that no money may be spent on paying wages to men, except perhaps for "special tasks", this practice will continue. The members say that if the men are not paid, they will go elsewhere in search of employment. If the men leave the project, then it is not clear to the members who will do the tasks now performed by these men, nor how long

the project will or can continue without them. World Vision staff also recognise the "catch-22" situation here, and this explains their apparent inability to resolve this problem.

Although they know that they have not got support from within the church, they will continue to do so. They are aware that this practice is unacceptable. The members demanded that they should join the project so that they

* * *
We were the one to join the project so that they
for its own sake. The money coming and
given to them for the money coming and
which is mentioned in Chapter 11.

to them to see the design of the church building
Another member of the church at the time was
The church staff said that the money is not for the
because we are not employed
World Vision staff and we work for nothing. World
Vision staff are not to be members to work with
the church and not to be paid. The church staff
money or that will leave this project. It is
because we need money.

members of the church at the church staff and asked of
that it is made clear by World Vision to members that no money
may be spent on paying wages to men except perhaps for special
cases. This practice will continue. The members say that if the
not to be paid. They will go elsewhere in search of employment.
If the church staff say that it is not clear to the members
who will do the work for the church, they will not be paid.

5.2. Building the fish-pond wall :

5.2.1. Introduction

The project has already had one fish-dam built, which was dug into clay. The result is that the water is milky and the fish, which are all visual feeders, will mature very slowly. An official from the nearby State fish-farm, brought in by World Vision, suggested that the banks of the natural depression alongside the fish-dam be built up as an alternative site for the fish-pond. This area, he explained, was already a "vlei" that held rain-water in season and had sufficient ground cover to prevent the suspension of clay particles, which was causing the milky colour in the first dam.

The project members had been enthusiastic about eating fish from their own dam. To forestall their disappointment at the relative failure of the first dam, the fieldworker suggested that they begin building up the banks of the "vlei". Instead of increasing the height of the banks with stones and mud, as suggested by the official from the fish-farm, it was decided in a meeting to build a wall around the "vlei". This wall consisted of poles, flanked on both sides by chicken-mesh wire. Stones were to be packed inside the mesh and both sides plastered with cement. The wall around the "vlei" would collect rain-water and so form a new fish-pond. This particular method of construction had been used to construct the buildings on the project, was thus familiar to members and had proved to be durable.

When it came to the actual construction of the wall, things did not go so smoothly. Since the job entailed a good deal of physical labour, the members decided to employ men from the community to do the work, with the consent of the World Vision fieldworker. Those men already employed by the project in other capacities, could assist when they were not needed elsewhere and so increase their wages.

It soon became clear that men not from the community, but from the households of the members themselves, were being employed to do the building. In total, 7 men worked on the wall at various times. These included 3 of Nomhle's sons (one of them a security guard at the project), the otherwise unemployed husband of Nomthando, 2 sons of Noanna (one of them the occasional plougher), and Mark, the young man in charge of the dairy herd.

These men were paid by the day and not, as suggested by the World Vision fieldworker, on a piece-work basis. The inevitable result was that they did not over-exert themselves to complete the job and paying their wages quickly began to drain the funds of the project.

5.2.2. Dissension over wages

The men had been earning R7-00 a day to bring stones by horse-and-cart up from the river to the site of the fish-pond. They quickly decided that R7-00 was insufficient payment for such strenuous work and requested a wage increase to R10-00 a day.

This was discussed during a weekly meeting and the increase was granted. This put the wage earned by these men on a par with the wages earned by the men permanently employed by the project. With the fieldworker present, the decision was duly recorded in the minutes of the meeting by the secretary/book-keeper.

Once the fieldworker and the secretary had left, the women changed the decision so that all men employed by the project received an increase to R20-00 a day with immediate effect. Members, though clearly uncomfortable about disclosing the information, admitted that Nomhle, supported by Noanna, had initiated the second increase.

When, at the later meeting the men demanded their inflated wages, the frustrated fieldworker pointed out that the project would never survive if the men were paid R20-00 a day. The members reluctantly agreed that R10-00 a day was a more realistic wage. This was true particularly since the men were working very slowly. The wage was duly re-adjusted to R10-00.

The men seemed to accept this latest adjustment in wages, but they apparently felt that it was the fieldworker who had demanded that their wages be decreased. The upsurge of resentment towards the fieldworker in this case serves to highlight how difficult it is to facilitate development by allowing people to make their own decisions through the fostering of an "enabling environment", but in a situation where they are totally reliant on incoming funds.



The case took a further turn when four men borrowed R50-00 each in advance of their wages. They then worked for 5 days on the fish-pond wall to pay off their debts (@ R10-00 a day). A while later, one of these four men, Nomthando's husband, arrived at the project and demanded R80-00, claiming that this amount was still owed to him by the project. The World Vision fieldworker was not present at the time. The book-keeper informed the members that no money was owed to him. He became irate and the women decided to pay him the money to avoid a confrontation.

Sure enough, the other three men heard of this and also wanted to be paid R80-00., fully aware of the fact that they had not earned this sum. When two of them arrived to claim "their" money, members again instructed the book-keeper to pay them to avoid a confrontation. When asked why she had given in to the demands of the men, Nombeko said, "I am afraid of the knives that will kill me," suggesting that the threat of violence played a role here, even if the men did not have to resort to violence to get their way.

A final, telling detail was Nomhle's request that, since her son (the third man) was away and would not be able to collect his cheque, this last cheque be written out in her name.

5.2.3. Conclusions

The saga of the fish-pond wall construction has not yet ended, because the St.Mark's funds ran out before the wall could be completed. When questioned about it, members say that the World Vision fieldworker told them to stop the building because their bank account was empty and they would be unable to pay the men's wages. Remarked one member, " The money to pay the men is finished, so we are resting from that job."

The fieldworker suggested that his intention had been to bring home to members the fact that they would have to exercise much tighter control over their finances if the project was ever to be economically viable, especially since this was to be the last year of funding. Subsequent monthly cheques were not directed towards the construction of the fish-pond wall, but towards building up the bank balance of the project.

This case-study serves as an illustration of how the different interest groups and individuals on the project manipulate the situation so that it most favours them :

- (a) The dominant women were quick to enlist their sons as labourers to build the wall. This ensured an injection of cash into their households from a previously untapped source, (at the expense of the project's viability) ;
- (b) The men doing the work had no interest in finishing the job simply because they were being paid by the day with no-one



to supervise their progress. "They worked so slowly ", one member remarked, without seeming to take exception to this.

(c) The rather opportunistic attempt by the dominant women to push through an increase which doubled the wage of all the men can be seen as an effort to syphon off the funds of the project : something that World Vision would definitely not accept ;

(d) The book-keeper, intimidated by the men, passed the buck with regard to the bogus demands for more cash on to the members. The members were similarly unwilling to anger the men and gave in to their demands, again to the detriment of the project.

A central problem here is the significant lack of an institutionalised, decision-making process whereby all the members of the project collectively reach goal-directed decisions in the interests of the project and then ensure that these decisions are carried out. Dysfunctional exercise of authority and the unequal allocation of rewards, the principal causes of co-operative failure, (Mayoux,1988 :13) are evidently issues which also feature in the functioning of St. Mark's Community Project.

The response of the fieldworker, particularly as 1993 is the last year of funding, was to advise the members to improve the bank balance of the project before the funding stopped. To this end, he urged the book-keeper not to pay wages to any but the men regularly employed by the project, hoping this would discourage

the draining of funds as the project lurched towards financial "independence."

The possible end of funding meant, as far as the members were concerned, the end of the project as well, and for them an appropriate coping strategy in the circumstances, was to try get as much of the remaining incoming money into their households as possible. The dominant group of women was able to mobilise the men of their respective households, to ensure that these men were employed to build the wall and even to ensure that they were allowed to get away with their bogus claims to wages.

As noted, the participation of the all members in decision-making processes is not satisfactory, since some members make no contribution in this regard. Nevertheless, it would clearly be a mistake to think that these rural, aged and mostly illiterate women are powerless bystanders in the distribution of resources arising from the project. On the contrary, it is obvious that most of them are attempting to maximise their individual gains from the project by manipulating, as far as they possibly can, the ways in which the benefits of the project are distributed.

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(6) UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS AT ST.MARK'S :**6.1. How do the women as members benefit ?**

As mentioned above, a primary goal of the project is to grow vegetables for sale in order to pay its members. Other activities designed to produce an income are the chicken unit which farms with chickens for sale to the community and the dairy herd, which offers milk for sale. None of these activities is a success in strictly economic terms, but all have merit in other ways. What, then, are these non-monetary benefits that keep the women coming to the project when the purely monetary benefits seem to be rather insignificant ?

6.1.1. Material Benefits :

Members say that other people from Newlands, when discussing the project with them, are astonished to hear that the women work at St.Mark's for practically no remuneration. The members are quick to point out that they each have a rain-water storage tank at their respective homes and that their gardens at home are enclosed with fencing and poles, courtesy of the project. This was one of the first decisions taken by the co-operative, simply because water is so scarce and because the collection of rain-water and the fencing-in of gardens would allow members to pursue their vegetable gardening for their household consumption at home. The building of rain-water tanks also allowed World Vision

to transfer skills to individuals in Newlands who could then be employed by others to build tanks for them. One member, Liziwe, remarked :

"I had been working at the pine-[apple]-fields at Dubulani. When that firm fell down [closed], I heard about this place where you get your land and grow your crops. They [members] said that you receive a water tank, wire and poles for your garden."

Fezile, the man employed for the last three years to plant seedlings and take care of irrigation on the project, said :

"I would be happy if I could get a water tank at my house."

As a wage earner, i.e. not a member, Fezile is not entitled to a rain water tank and it is unlikely that he will get one built at the project's expense.

Although members do not receive wages for work done at the project, they do draw not inconsiderable financial advantage from their membership of the project.

Firstly, all members may make cash loans from the project for domestic emergencies and are merely required to pay these back, interest-free, over whatever period they can manage to do so. In this way, one member made a loan of R350-00 from the project in order to pay her doctor's fees. She then paid back this loan, using her old-age pension income, in amounts that were convenient to her. In addition to this, the project pays the funeral costs

in the event of a death in a member's immediate family. This also helps to alleviate concerns over monetary resources in times of emergency, again with the interest-free payback scheme.

Concerning creditworthiness, it is true that poorer members will generally not loan money from the project unless they are experiencing a major domestic crisis, because they know that they will have difficulty repaying the loan at all. This is because any money coming into their households is immediately directed towards satisfying basic subsistence needs against which the repaying of a loan must compete. Noanna, who has a large household and who does not receive a pension, said,

"I haven't loaned money here, because I know that I cannot repay it. You must be sure to repay money loaned from here. So I can't borrow money here."

Secondly, as evidenced in the two case-studies above, wage payments to men employed by the project, find their way into the households of some of the members, albeit sometimes indirectly. (as with Mpondo, where his financial insecurity is a burden on Nomhle, her ability to ensure that he has an income takes some pressure off her own resources). As shown above, male labour is deemed necessary for any strenuous, technical tasks and ensuring that one's son is hired in such cases is an obvious coping strategy and means of increasing the amount of money coming into one's extended family household. Again, Noanna throws light on the simple logic of this strategy :

"There's no money to support us here, except when my son gets paid by the project [to plough the lands]."

A further material benefit is that of a daily meal, prepared by members and consisting of mealie meal and spinach, onion or any other available vegetable as relish. In households where hunger is an ever-present reality, the provision of a meal to members means one less mouth to feed in their respective households. Besides this meal, provision is made for the buying of coffee, tea and sugar for consumption at the project. Members are quick to point out to Nombeko, the book-keeper/secretary, when these items are finished and they need money to buy stocks from Mr. Mabhena's cash store.

The purchase of calves from the project herd by some members accentuates the fact that these members are better able to negotiate and manipulate the processes and relations which have been set up and are maintained by the project : one member, Nolungile, bought a big bull in 1992 for R550-00, a price well below its market value. The young dairyman, Mark, had been asked what price should be charged for the bull and had recommended R600-00, so the members decided to give Nolungile a R50-00 discount. She has since been paying monthly instalments for the beast, again interest-free. Two other members of this dominant group, Noanna and Nomhle, purchased bull-calves from the project for R20-00 each, as did a member called Rosa. It is interesting to note that members claim that "everyone agreed to sell the calves to these women." It is unclear why other members,

particularly those outside the dominant group, would consent to the sale of calves for such low prices, unless they are hoping to get a chance to do the same in the foreseeable future. (It is true, of course, that bull-calves generally have less value than heifers, which can be used for milking, but this does not account for the very reasonable prices paid). These cattle are then herded and grazed at the project's expense, so that their owners do not have the responsibility of having to pay for this themselves.

The buying of cattle in this way is a more recent phenomenon at the project. It has only started once Mr. Dlamini had left the project and is an indication that, since his departure, certain women have moved to the fore in the manipulation of potential benefits on the project.

The purchasing of cattle is a shrewd investment by members which, while it is not without risk, multiplies in value without any additional expense to the owner. The purchase also reassures certain members that, in the event of the demise of the project, they will have something to show for their years of hard work. A calf bought from- and kept at the project is a continually visible and reassuring justification for their daily toils. From a different perspective, the acquisition of cattle by members of the project allows them to feel that their endeavours have more credibility in the eyes of the surrounding communities, because cattle are prized possessions in Newlands. Lastly, it is significant that only one member, Nolungile, went seriously into

debt because of her purchase. The other three buyers were not too inconvenienced by their respective purchases, (even Noanna, who is chary about making loans from the project). Throughout the study period, Nolungile was linked to cash loans from the project, suggesting that she was making the best use of the project's credit facility, while always ensuring that she serviced these debts in small instalments from her old age pension and from sales of firewood gathered on the project.

Another material benefit provided by the project is the supply of fresh vegetables, albeit mostly small, to members' households. Vegetables are also sold in the area and this allows for a tiny income to members. By all accounts, the harvest of vegetables in those years when the drought was less harsh, were far more substantial and allowed members to, for example, "display" a good harvest of pumpkins on the roofs of their respective houses. (to ripen the vegetables away from the attentions of goats, etc. but in full view of their neighbours.)

The women tell of being "instructed" by their (adult) children to persevere at the project, because their efforts were ensuring a steady supply of fresh vegetables to the members of their households. Noanna commented that,

"My children say nothing about me coming here, because I bring vegetables home and then we can eat. Before [when it rained], we would take big cabbages home. Our children

sold these cabbages and we bought some mealie meal."

Another member, Nokhaya, also remembered better times,

"I [first] came here when there were so many crops. Now I come here because I think I'll get some crops, as I did before."

A story is told of how an earlier year's bumper crop of vegetables had helped a former member, Nothando's ill mother, lure her errant husband back from Mdantsane, where he had been co-habiting with another woman.

Not only do members take home vegetables grown at the project, but they also take vegetable seedlings, cultivated at the project, to plant in their gardens at home. That members still come to the project to grow vegetables suggests that these home gardens are not too productive, but the lack of rain plays a big role here. Nothando's home vegetable garden was particularly well-known in earlier years for its big yields.

Among the other material benefits which members enjoy at the project are : access to firewood, in the form of acacia trees, used as fuel for their own consumption and to sell to other people in Newlands. It is particularly Nolungile who sells firewood in this way, but Noanna also claims to "sell wood that I collect here at the project."

Acorns, which fall from the oak trees on the project, are collected and sold to people in the community as fodder for their pigs. Some members of the project also have pigs at home, and the four long rows of oak trees seasonally yield large numbers of acorns, the usefulness of which apparently outweighs the fear of encountering snakes during their collection. Particularly one member, Nomsa, who claims to support her five school-going grandchildren by selling chickens and pigs in the Location, makes use of this opportunity to collect acorns for her pigs.

Members of the project are occasionally treated to a few combs of honey which Mark draws from a beehive in a branch of a particular tree which overhangs the river. The amount of honey extracted is not large, but the occasion is thoroughly enjoyed by all those present. The time I witnessed these proceedings, I was initially at a loss to explain what was happening : Mark, his eldest son (aged 4 years), and his wife, Thandiwe, carrying their second child, all went marching off in the direction of the river. A few shouts later and Fezile, the man in charge of irrigation and seedling propagation, followed them with a stepladder over his shoulder. After some ten minutes, this group arrived back at the barn, looking very pleased with themselves, and proceeded to tuck into their find, eagerly assisted by those members who were present. Mark pointed out to me that he had not received a single bee sting while extracting the combs, because he "knew about bees."

6.1.2. Non-material Benefits

The non-material benefits which members draw from the project, are not as easy to pinpoint, but their significance becomes apparent when one tries to understand what it is that keeps these old, pensioned women coming to the project through conditions of terrible drought and low productivity, when the material gains for most of them are not matched by the effort involved in walking to the project (up to 4 km's) and spending a few hours a day working in the sun.

Of primary importance in this regard is the increased status which membership of the project affords these women : It is their project, because they have persevered where others have given up trying to make a success of this venture. For people who are politically powerless and are doubly discriminated against on the basis of race (in an apartheid state) and gender (in a patriarchal society), membership of- and even limited control over the affairs of the project, can mean a considerable increase in self-esteem and status. In support of this, members assert :

"It's our project, nobody must tell us what to do."

"Nobody is pushing us here. We work here like this and we like it."

"We like to work here. We can't leave this project."

The project offers its members a legitimate, if not well remunerated, source of employment in times of widespread unemployment in Newlands and throughout the region. It allows them to escape (for a few hours a day), the domestic drudgery and frustration that accompanies high levels of unemployment and gives them a sense of purpose in pursuing their activities at the project. Although many of the members support their extended families by means of their pensions, and in this way already enjoy some status in their respective households, the fact that they are economically active, through their membership of the project, at a time when many other people are unable to find work, further enhances their status in their households and local settlements.

Another way in which the project increases the status of the women is through their hiring of male labour. The (female) members decide who to hire and how much to pay each man who is hired to work at the project. In a society where men are more often in control of scarce resources, including the authority to allocate jobs, it is rare to find women wielding this authority.

Not only do members make decisions about which men to hire and how much to pay them, they also make cash loans and wage advances available to the men in their employ. Residents of Newlands are constantly having to make cash loans to and from one another in an effort to make the small amount of money in circulation in the community go as far as possible. The reliable, monthly inflow of funds to the project, presents the members with the opportunity

to put money into circulation in the community, at no risk to themselves or their families, and in a way that greatly enhances the image of the project. (The case of the fish-pond illustrated that men hired to work on the project, can still manipulate this situation, but only by resorting to threats of physical violence, which must ultimately decrease their chances of being rehired at a later date, itself an indication of the authority of the members.)

Nonetheless, the biggest grievance of the members is that they are not paid by the project for their work. All members spoke of their need for money to fulfil their household responsibilities.

"I want money from the project," said Nothando, "I want to fix my house with cement, to buy some clothes and to feed my family. My son is going to the bush in the future [to be circumcised] and I must help to pay for this."

The project is visited by a literacy teacher from another development agency, although these visits were haphazard during the research period. The literacy classes held at the project are another feature of the project which increases the status of these women and improves their self-esteem. An interview with the literacy teacher brought to light that she had initially requested that other residents of Newlands be invited to the literacy classes at the project but this had been rejected by the members. The sentiment expressed by members was that these classes were for the benefit of project members only and that

those people who wanted to participate in the classes had better join the project. One of the oldest woman at the project, Nokhaya, when asked whether she could write her name, confidently replied, "I haven't learnt that yet."

Although the classes have been running for some years now, it is not clear how much the women have learnt : most can write their names only if they are copying directly from the example on the board, some can do the basic arithmetic that forms part of the weekly lesson, but what is clear is that all (but two) members attend the classes, laughing at themselves and each other and participating enthusiastically throughout the short lesson. The two who do not actively participate do, however, attend the classes and enjoy the good humour that prevails. One of these two says she is too old to learn and the other, the oldest member of the project, claims to be able to read and write after her "long years" of working in Johannesburg.

Another non-material benefit which can be said to enhance the status of the women working at the project is that they receive visitors from other projects, such as those in Peddie and Whittlesea, at which time they are given the opportunity to explain what has been achieved at St.Mark's and what goals they have for the future. Not only do they receive visitors, but they have in the past also been invited to attend workshops on community projects elsewhere, where they have shared their experiences with the members of other projects.

The most recent opportunity to attend such a workshop, saw the project select four members to represent them and report back to the others. When pressed about whether all the women should attend such workshops, Nolungile said, "As before, we will choose some women to go to the workshop to represent us." The four who attended the Peddie workshop, claim to have enjoyed the exercise and learnt "many things" there, but it is not clear how well their experiences were recounted to the other members. Significantly, the four members who attended were : Nomhle, Noanna, Nothando and Thandiwe. (The latter is the young wife of Mark, the man who looks after the cattle. She only joined the project two years ago and, although wary of the older members, is quite outspoken in her opposition to some of the decisions taken at the project. Hopes expressed by World Vision staff that she would take on a more central role in the decision-making process at the project, came to nought when she fell pregnant with her third child and so rarely comes to the project.)

Another manner in which membership of the project increases the status of these women is by vesting in them the authority to allocate certain resources found on the project to residents of Newlands. In this way, members of the project, (usually Nomhle or Noanna but occasionally others), will direct women from the Location to sites on the project where they may cut grass for the thatching of circumcision huts (**amaphempe**) for young males who are about to undergo circumcision. The women need not pay to take grass growing on the project land, but it is required of them to ask permission from the project members before they do so. It is

usually the prerogative of the men of the community, who control access to land in Newlands (beyond the perimeters of the Mission land), to allocate areas from which certain resources may be extracted. At the project, however, this authority is vested in the female members, in a way which challenges the local gender stereotypes.

Lastly, through the attention given by World Vision to issues of soil rehabilitation and the emphasis placed on fostering ecologically-sound farming methods, the project members have been the recipients of new farming skills and techniques of crop production. The transfer of an awareness for the environment and principles of permaculture as a method of farming, is yet another way in which the project has enhanced the abilities and self-esteem of its members and given them the confidence to instruct the men in their employ concerning the activities on the project.

6.2. What do the men say ?

The men, for their part, consider the project to be a source of income only and are deprecating in their comments about the project :

- » "These women are powerless. They are old and cannot work hard." (Mark)

"These women don't want a leader here. They come when they like, because they get no pay and there is no-one to push them to do this and that."

(Peter, Noanna's son)

"The women get disability [pensions], so they don't care for the men working here." (Peter)

"Nobody in charge means people don't work. The scheme has no direction." (Mr. Mabhena)

"The women of the project won't be worried about the land when the funding ends. it won't matter what they say, because the majority of people are suffering and looking to this land, which is either empty or eaten by cattle." (Mr. Madoda)

"I don't mind what work I do, any work is okay as long I am employed. After the project has ended [funding has stopped], I don't know what I will do. I will have to look for a job somewhere else, otherwise my family will starve." (Fani)

The men do not attend the literacy classes, seemingly having no interest in being taught by a woman. Mark can read and write, but not the other men. They all attend the weekly meetings and discuss their work with the women and the World Vision fieldworker. At these meetings, the book-keeper/ secretary,

Nombeko, sits on a bench, usually next to Mark, who helps her with the Bible reading. The World Vision fieldworker sits next to them, while the other men present sit on other benches. The women all sit together on the floor of the barn. After the meeting and the closing prayer, everybody shakes hands and then disperses outdoors.

Mark claims that, in an attempt to improve the management of the co-operative at one stage, he, Noanna and Nomkangiso were chosen as an overseeing "committee". When they decided that a certain field needed weeding, they informed the other members, but they were ignored and Mark was told not to start acting "like a foreman". Since then, Mark says, he decided to "leave the women to do what they want to."

This example is illustrative of the position of the other men as well, who can see things that need to be done at the project, but, because the members do not want to be told what to do, will not say anything. Here, Fani stands out : he is the most recently employed man, and has no experience at the project. This shows when, after staying awake most of the night as security guard, he spends time (for which he is not remunerated) working in the project's vegetable gardens, weeding and turning over the soil. The other men think this is ludicrous behaviour, but Fani is evidently trying to ingratiate himself with his new "bosses".

The other men know that as long as they perform their respective jobs reasonably well, the women will not trouble them. The

exception here is Makhosi, the other security guard, who is unashamedly taking the project's money under false pretences, because he very seldom arrives for work. His attitude arises from his knowledge of the dominant position of his mother, Nomhle, among the project's membership. Even he, though, is instructed by his mother to help in her plots, at times when she is turning the soil before planting maize. This is a task he is very reluctant to perform.

The biggest threat to the men comes from the World Vision fieldworker and his continual exhortations to the members to monitor more closely the work done by the those they employ. He also frequently suggests that the members pay for piece-work as far as possible, but this falls largely on deaf ears, mainly because those members making the decisions stand to gain most from the status quo.

The men are obviously concerned about the proposed end of World Vision funding, and are making alternative plans with regard to other sources of income. Mark is already receiving his disability pension for which he applied at the beginning of the year, but he is adamant that he will stay on after the funding has stopped. He says he will arrange with the women that he milk the cows for himself one week and for the project's benefit the next. He is sure he can increase the yield of milk, implying that right now, it is not worth his effort to do so, as he will receive his wage irrespective of the performance of the dairy unit.

The one security guard, Fani, is concerned about the future of the project, but only because he is in a desperate financial situation, having been made redundant from his former job as a labourer and without too much prospect of securing another job.

Fezile has told the women he will not be coming to the project if it does not pay him. The same applies for Makhosi who hardly manages to arrive for his security work even now, while he is being paid. Mpondo will not come to the project either, once the funding has dried up. Vincent was unsure about what he would do once the funding ended.

* * *

(7) CONCLUSIONS :

7.1. Contextualising St.Mark's Community Project

McIntosh and Friedman (1989:439) found in their analysis of women's producer groups in KwaZulu, that rural economic activities usually supplement existing incomes (pensions and remittances), rather than being self-sustaining enterprises, mainly because of the local shortage of cash for capital investment in the rural economy.

Another reason for this phenomenon is that most rural residents are those left behind when the more able workers move to cities in search of employment. These relatively economically powerless, rural residents include the aged, the young and women, married and widowed, a fact which affects the potential for development in rural areas. (Kenyon and Du Toit, 1989:447)

Newlands Location cannot be regarded as a typical example of a rural area, in that it lies on the peri-urban fringes of a metropolitan centre, i.e. the Mdantsane/East London complex. This entire region is experiencing very high levels of unemployment in the current economic recession. This being the case, it is still apparent that the male residents of Newlands gravitate towards this complex in search of work as there is no work and little money in circulation in Newlands. World Vision funding, miniscule in terms of the number of people in Newlands,

is one reliable source of incoming cash which, within the constraints of the project, can be utilised by some residents of the Location.

Although members of the project rely on other sources of income to secure their livelihoods, such as State pensions, a wage from the project is the only income for 3 men and their 5 dependents. A further 18 people, comprising the household members of the other men employed at the project are supported in part by their respective wages. Another 95 people, the household members of the (female) project members, derive some benefit from the project practically on a daily basis, usually in the form of vegetables brought home from the project, but also indirectly by the way of financial security.

This means that a total of 121 people benefit from the project in various ways, at a cost of R3500-00 per month. These people still struggle daily to make ends meet well below the poverty line, but their position would be that much more precarious without the monthly cash injection of the project's funders.

In terms of what has been done "on the ground", by practising crop-rotation, allowing fields to lie fallow, and using manure on the fields, the fertility of the soil has increased. The planting of orange and guava trees, as well as pecan-nut- and even banana trees has been undertaken more recently in order to provide members with fresh fruit, without the seasonal costs of

ploughing and planting. The guava trees have begun to bear fruit.

The planting of trees at the project has also helped to arrest soil erosion, to hold water in the soil more effectively and provide wind-breaks for other crops.

Physical infrastructure developed at the project includes the installation of an irrigation pump and piping accessories, the construction of a barn/meeting hall, a tool-shed, two chicken runs, two pit-latrines and three water tanks. A cattle-kraal and several fenced pasture lands for the dairy herd are to be found at the project. The construction of the first fish-dam, alluded to in Chapter 5, was completed some years ago.

7.2. Analysing issues of gender and networks at the project

This report set out with the goals of : trying to gain some understanding of the complex gender- and network relationships which exist at St.Mark's Community Project, to show how the coping strategies involved here affect the daily functioning of the project and to explore, linking notions of development through co-operative endeavours with issues of gender, a broader definition of "success".

The case studies presented are illustrative of the sorts of episodes common at the project and are not extra-ordinary. Recurrent issues in the gender relations on the project include

the commonly held notion of gender-specific types of work. On the one hand, the members (all women) grow vegetables, weed the vegetable plots and care for the chickens. On the other hand, the waged men are exclusively responsible for :

- (1) the dairy herd, including dipping the herd and ensuring that at no time does the herd get into the vegetable plots;
- (2) the operation and maintenance of the irrigation pump and the irrigation of vegetable plots ;
- (3) the mending of fences ;
- (4) security at the project at night ;
- (5) collecting chicken feed from the general dealer some 2 km's from the project and ;
- (6) the more strenuous, "special" tasks which are of a temporary or seasonal nature, such as building the fish-pond wall or ploughing the fields.

The two original principles of the project were that members should be remunerated from the income generated from the sale of their produce and that funds from the sponsors should be used to pay for overheads and not towards paying wages to members. These principles are still adhered to, but in a way that could not have been predicted 13 years ago.

Firstly, because of the drought and low productivity, the remuneration received by members from sales of produce, is disappointingly low. Secondly, the funds from World Vision are

not used to pay members, but to pay, inter alia, men who are hired to perform the more arduous tasks on the project.

The latter arrangement frees the members who are, with two exceptions (Thandiwe and Nothando), all old women, from having to do this work themselves. By hiring men to do these tasks, instead of attracting younger members who might be prepared to do this work, the members can ensure that they maintain a measure of control over the functioning of the co-operative, because they are the ones who make decisions as to who to hire and how much to pay the hired men. Furthermore, this arrangement allows them to ensure that some of the incoming funds actually do find their way into their households, via the men, rather than the households of other residents of Newlands.

The notion that men are the sole breadwinners in their households, making it incomprehensible that they can work without payment, is prevalent at the project. An analysis of the facts dispels this : of the six men in the full-time employ of the project, three fall into this category. The other three live in households which enjoy second incomes, which often match or exceed their own. (see TABLE 3, below) The men consider the project to be a source of income only and do not concern themselves with the broader goals of the project. Their interaction with the women is informal but minimal. Once the funding stops, they say they will leave in search of other jobs, except Mark, who has

a secure income (his disability pension), and who says he will stay on and try make something of the dairy herd.

Name	Household size	Additional H/hold incomes
Mark	7	----- (*)
Vincent	4	Grandmother's O/A pension
Makhosi	3	Wife's disability pension
Mpondo	2	-----
Fezile	7	Wife is a gardener in East London
Fani	3	-----

(*) From July 1993, Mark receives a disability pension.

TABLE 3 : Additional sources of income in the h/holds of men employed at the project.

It is apparent that an analysis of issues of gender and networks at St. Mark's can only be seen as occurring within a particular, localised system of interactions. A central variable influencing these interactions is the approach taken by the funders of the project. Much of what has been described in this report stems, at least in part, from the condition laid down by World Vision when it undertook to fund the project, i.e. that members be remunerated from the income of produce sales. The attitudes of the people, both female members and male employees, engaged at the project, towards their respective domains of work, is another important variable here.

7.3. Measuring "success" at St.Mark's

A problem frequently encountered in the evaluation of development projects is whether a project can claim to be a "success" when it seems to attain the goals it initially set out to achieve. The latter does not take into account the possibility that the intervention could have other, unintended and detrimental effects on the lives of people it was designed to help or that the benefits of the intervention are not shared, to the same extent, by all recipients. This problem is compounded when the expressed goals of the intervention are of a qualitative nature, such as the "empowerment of people" and "the rehabilitation of the soil" goals of St.Mark's. Neither of these goals can be measured with any degree of precision.

Barratt (1989:60ff) lists seven criteria, cited by an organisation called SHADE (Self Help and Development Economics), and suggests that these form a basis for the evaluation of co-operative enterprises :

- (1) Process - do the groups see themselves within a process of change for which they have developed a plan of action ?
- (2) Financial Management - is the co-operative able to maintain and analyse its own finances and -planning ?
- (3) Economic Viability - is the project capable of earning a living wage for its members ?
- (4) Product Development - does the product meet a market need and what is the quality of the product ?

(5) Co-operativity - is the group actually functioning as a co-operative ?

(6) Community Links - is the co-operative membership aware of and engaged in community issues ?

(7) Education - how effective is the education programme at the project ?

With respect to the first criterion, it is apparent that the project members see themselves as engaged in a process, in which they are developing the land, its soil fertility, while learning to make decisions as members concerning the day-to-day functioning of the project. What is also clear, however, is that the members do not see the work done at the project as part of a larger process of change in Newlands, mainly because elements in the community are opposed to the project, which they see as having dispossessed them.

Regarding the criteria of economic viability and financial management, Dore (1971:46) gives a useful definition of a successful co-operative as one which achieves, for its members, benefits derived from economic activity of the kind intended when the co-operative was created, in so far as the economic and natural environment makes this possible. These benefits should be distributed as intended among members in a way which does not do violence to the principles of the co-operative. By these criteria the project would not be labelled a success, because it is, at present, still totally reliant on incoming funds from World Vision while, as has been illustrated in the case-studies

above, the benefits of the project are not distributed in an equitable fashion, as was originally intended. Moreover, the ability of the project members to manage their own financial matters is severely impeded by their lack of literacy and numeracy skills.

The products of the project are vegetables, milk and chickens, and it is clear that a ready market exists in Newlands for these products, providing that : (1) they can be supplied on a regular basis so that a reliable clientele can be built up and, (2) they are reasonably priced. So far, particularly the first of these conditions is not met satisfactorily by the project.

Barratt's fifth criterion deals with whether the group itself actually functions as a co-operative. Here, the project could be criticised because of the low levels of participation by some of its members. Also, the need for a (World Vision) fieldworker to ensure that the project is adequately managed, suggests that the members do not exercise as much control as might be expected in a co-operative. The prevalent domination by some project members, who derive more benefits from the project than other members, is to be expected, but also detracts from the ideals of a co-operative.

Since the members of the project are predominantly middle- to old aged, illiterate widows, their links to the political life in the Location are not well developed. Another reason why these links are not strong is because a certain body of opinion in the

Location, and more particularly in Mpundu Village (the closest settlement to the project), does not recognise the Anglican Church's title to the Mission lands. This is a vague argument, with apparently no legal basis, that goes back to the founding of the Mission in this area (see Chapter 1), but which still causes resentment to flare periodically. To avoid any confrontations with people who harbour resentment toward the Church or the project, members keep a low "political" profile in their respective village settlements. They do, however, send a representative to Residents' Association meetings so that they can be informed of any news or developments (political or otherwise) in Newlands or further afield.

Barratt's final criterion when measuring the success of a co-operative, deals with the effectiveness of the education programme being pursued. As already suggested, the literacy classes are eagerly attended by most members, but these classes occur irregularly and are of short duration. It is evident that members have not progressed very far in basic literacy and numeracy skills, nor have they acquired a noticeable degree of management/book-keeping skills through other "capacity building" exercises and workshops.

That the results achieved at St. Mark's are of a qualitative nature, was shown in the previous chapter, where it was suggested that the benefits gained by members are largely confined to increased financial security and status, rather than a clear increase in per capita income. This begs the question whether an

alternative form of intervention (rather than a co-operative) would have made more inroads in terms of quantitative, and even qualitative, improvements to people's living standards.

With regard to Barratt's seven criteria, which deal thoroughly with the various aspects of co-operatives in qualitative terms, it would seem that the project cannot be considered a success. Similarly, an economic cost-benefit analysis of the project could only conclude that, with an input of R3500-00 per month and a negligible output, particularly in times of drought, the project is an unmitigated economic failure.

Viewed, however, from the perspective of the main participants in this project, some of whom have voted with their feet for the past 13 years for the project to continue, merely by coming to the project on a daily basis, the conclusion could be somewhat different. The transfer of gardening skills, the increased status of women on the project, who have grown in self-esteem through their active participation in the project and the material benefits which are gained as members, must all be accommodated in a broader evaluation of the project, beyond a "hard" economic balance sheet.

There is a need for more research into the nature and degree of success of similiar projects in the region, so that a realistic evaluation, based on comparative data, can be made of St. Mark's

Community Project. The central questions which need to be addressed are :

- (1) what other interventions are being carried out in similiar community projects in the region ?
- (2) At what financial costs to funders ?
- (3) And with what visible results with regard to the improvement in the quality of life for aid recipients ?

To paraphrase Mayoux (1988), "We need to know what works [with respect to rural development projects], and why". To pose the same question in the context of St.Mark's Community Project, "Could R3500-00 a month be going further if it was utilised differently ?" To arrive at an answer to this question, a comparative evaluative approach, and thus the support and commitment of other development agencies, is essential. A critical and unbiased analysis of economic costs and social benefits on a project-by-project basis could be the starting point.

APPENDIX A :**Questionnaire schedule for members and wage-earners**

Name and surname :

Lives at :

Married :

What does husband/wife do ?

How many people in the household and ages ?

Does s/he get an old age pension ?

Who does this pension support ?

What must s/he buy in the home ?

Who else in the household is employed ?

How long has s/he been at the project ?

What before that ?

Who else at the project lives in the same settlement ?

Who are your friends at the project ?

Whose home do you visit after hours/ on weekends ?

Who would you loan money from here ?

Why do you here for no pay ?

What would you like to get from this project ?

How much money would you satisfy you ?

Besides the rain, what are the problems here ?

Should World Vision tell the members exactly what to do ?

Why does the members committee not work re. planning ?

Are people here scared of each other ?

Can you read and/or write ?

Do you listen to the radio/watch television ?

Do you go to Mdantsane ? How often ?

What do you think of Mdantsane ?

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Development Studies Unit

Institute of Social and Economic Research

The Development Studies Unit (DSU) at Rhodes University is located within the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER).

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Rhodes University
6140 Grahamstown
South Africa