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Welfare as a catalyst for
development:
A case study of a rural welfare
programme

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Introduction

Francie Lund & Fiona Wakelin

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A case study of a rural welfare
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&
Fiona Wakelin

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CORD (Centre for Community Organisation, Research & Development) is an autonomous NGO based at the University of Natal in Durban.

CSDS (Centre for Social and Development Studies) is a research institute based at the University of Natal in Durban.

This publication would not have been possible without the experiences of CORDs Social Welfare programme and fieldworkers.

Francie Lund of CSDS interviewed Fiona Wakelin (Welfare coordinator) of CORD

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Introduction

One of CORD's activities is the welfare programme, which started four years ago. It has two features which make it particularly interesting. First, it has introduced a level of welfare into rural areas which has not been there before. Second, it is based on a broad, developmental and holistic approach to welfare — which is what most people agree is needed, but very few actually manage to do.

Welfare projects are often well meaning but small in scale, without the ability to help people out of the poverty in which they are trapped. We believe that this welfare programme acts as a catalyst for other development activities — it shows that welfare can be a wedge, a point of entry, for broader community development. It is one model for a more appropriate welfare system for the future.

Compared to health, there is very little written material about alternative welfare provision. There have been fewer attempts at model building than there have been in health. And it is possible that some small projects have not been written up for others to learn from.

A key aspect of innovative work in the social service and development fields is the training of new kinds of workers. This is almost always based on a recognition that existing professionals (for example, doctors, social workers, irrigation engineers, physiotherapists)

- are expensive to train
- are difficult to move from city-bases, and
- are not necessarily good communicators with the people they are meant to serve.

The South African government and the South African Council for Social Work (the body that finally controls professional social welfare) have agreed that there is a need for a new category of welfare worker — an assistant or auxiliary. The rules surrounding their training and supervision are such that, although it is a step in the right direction, it does not go nearly far enough. For example, every two assistants must be supervised by one social worker. In most rural areas there are no social workers, so there can be no assistants.

When new categories of workers are trained, they often meet with strong resistance from two sides — existing professionals, and people in communities. In the welfare field, the strongest resistance will probably come from the professionals. We think that this welfare programme shows how the work of the professionals can mesh together with the work of people with less formal training, so that they can help each other to deliver better services to more people.

The welfare context

The welfare programme needs to be set against the context of existing welfare services in South Africa. The South African welfare system is inappropriate and inadequate — this is recognised by people in government, people working in the private welfare sector, and is certainly recognised at community level. The problems that are very evident are:

- welfare spending and social services have been biased in favour of white provision
- the system has not been properly planned
- there is a heavy bias in favour of urban areas, and a serious neglect of rural welfare
- where social work posts do exist in rural areas, they are difficult to fill.
- the privatisation of welfare which is being encouraged by government (along with the privatisation of health, education, transport and other social goods) will mean that the well-off people will be able to buy better private services, but poorer people will have less access to even poorer public services.

There is an emerging consensus across the country that if the welfare system is to have a contribution to make to the 'new South Africa' it will have to become:

- more developmentally oriented
- more appropriate to the conditions in which the majority of people live
- more concerned with the welfare of the very poor, especially in rural areas

-
- more accessible to people who need the services, and particularly by women and children.

These principles are accepted internationally as guidelines for the provision of social services such as health, welfare and education. In the field of primary health care in South Africa, we have many examples of model schemes which have tried to learn how to provide appropriate, affordable, accessible health services. Many of these have been written about; some indeed are known internationally. All these case studies are vital to the development of better health services in future.

In most rural areas, and in the majority of peri-urban informal settlements, we are not talking of a situation where services could be improved by adding more professionals — we have a situation where there is virtually no access to welfare services at all.

The interview that follows is presented as a case study of an innovative welfare programme.

F Lund interviews F Wakelin

I understand that you are the coordinator of a number of people in the field — How many fieldworkers are there?

CORD is involved in three areas with this programme — Maputaland, Mabheleni and Groutville. At the moment there are five welfare fieldworkers in Maputaland, who started the programme. There are three fieldworkers in Groutville and four in Mabheleni.

What do the field workers do?

The three areas are all very different, but in each the modus operandi is the same. The fieldworkers don't have an office. They have a designated geographical area, and they visit homesteads every day assessing what the problems are. If there is a welfare problem, they will generally see a client at least three times. For example they may find someone eligible for a pension or grant, who needs to be transported to the district surgeon. They will then make an appointment to return and accompany that person to the magistrate's office or hospital where they act as facilitators in getting the grants. I have a book in which I list all the clients, and I have a date that I set six months hence. Every six months I send a copy of their clients back to them and ask them for follow ups. They then go back and visit their clients to see whether they have got the pension, got the grant, or to see if what they set in motion has actually come to fruition. And if it hasn't, then they go and restart the whole process. One of the fieldworkers in Groutville, for example, made three applications for a disability grant and only on the fourth attempt was she able to get it.

Included in the monthly reports are problems they cannot solve. I then refer these either to colleagues within CORD or to other professionals. For example, we work very closely with the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) if there is a legal problem — it's very important that the fieldworkers have the backup of professionals and training in order to argue the cases for their clients. If the expertise exists within CORD, I would refer the problem to my colleagues, to help for example with a water problem, or a health facility.

A profile of the three areas can be found at the end of the interview

**The
fieldworkers
act as mobile
information
centres**

You said that the fieldworkers are given a particular geographical area — approximately how many homesteads does each one reach?

In every area it is very different. In Groutville there is a large squatter community who live cheek by jowl, whereas in Maputaland the homestead distribution is widespread. But between 1988 and 1991 the five people in Maputaland have accessed about 2 500 individual clients — there might be two or three in a household. This is despite the constraints of weather and transport, and the other activities they do.

Could you give some practical examples of the other things they do?

They do lots of other things because of the lack of facilities and social services in rural areas. They are not just welfare workers; they are kind of mobile information centres.

For example, we have been involved in helping to combat removals. People will inform CORD staff that they are worried because beacons are being put through their homesteads — placement of beacons is usually the start of the removals process. Another example is giving assistance with water problems and co-ops. Fieldworkers go to community meetings, such as water committee meetings and farmers association meetings, just to keep abreast of what is going on in the area. They also pass on a lot of referrals to community health workers.

You can get a good idea of the problems they address by looking at the booklets we have produced.

Community problems informed the contents of the booklets (a full list of these booklets is found at the end). They cover maintenance grants, criminal and civil contract law, how to write an affidavit, insurance, the rights of people when arrested, motor vehicle accidents, PTO's. There are also hire purchase problems, where people get ripped off with credit, unemployment insurance, and workmen's compensation.

The fieldworkers identify community problems in their reports. When I see the fieldworkers once a month, we discuss the problems they are facing. Then it is up to me to put together written information in popular form

that's accessible to people. They then distribute these booklets and because they are free, brightly coloured, and they have illustrations in them, people pick them up and read them. In this way the communities' lack of access to information concerning their rights and choices is being addressed.

The booklets are in English and Zulu?

Yes. The English is mostly for Durban central, and the fieldworkers distribute the Zulu version in the outlying areas.

What other kinds of things do they do?

If they have a problem say with child abuse cases, they work in conjunction with the state social workers in order to get the welfare machinery going, because the magistrate needs a social worker's report.

How many social workers would there be in the areas where the fieldworkers are?

In Maputaland there are two in Ubombo at Bethesda Hospital. They have a Nissan 1600 car. If you are thinking of going into the rural areas with any efficacy, you certainly won't be able to use that kind of vehicle — you need a 4x4 for the outlying areas. The Ubombo social workers will visit homes where the CORD fieldworkers have made them aware of a problem. At Ingwavuma, which is the other sector of Maputaland, there is one social worker at Mossvolt Hospital. He hasn't got a car and he can't drive. There are these three social workers to cover Maputaland (although I believe there may be another one based at the Mjindi cotton scheme — but the fieldworkers have not come across him/her).

There are 3 social workers and one supervisor (who is based in Inanda and visits the area twice a week) located in Stanger who are meant to cover Groutville. At one time I had big problems in trying to get one of the social workers to leave her office and get her hands dirty in the areas, especially the squatter areas. At Mabheleni, I think there are two social workers.

I'll come back to the relationship between your fieldworkers and other social workers later. But now I want to go back to the beginning. This welfare programme works within CORD, which is a relatively large development organisation. Three

The communities' lack of access to information concerning their rights and choices is being addressed

They saw us as a way of trying to redress the rural/urban divide. The people themselves saw the gap, and they took it, and we were the gap!

The accessing of urban-based professionals started in a very organic manner

years ago the welfare programme wasn't there in CORD. Sometimes programmes start because people come in to an organisation with a particular new professional skill, or mission, or talent. Sometimes programmes emerge because a need suddenly becomes really clear. Can you tell me what led to the formation of this programme?

It was actually very organic. What happened was that I was living in Maputaland and on an informal basis people were coming to the house saying they had problems. For example, they would say that they had gone to apply for a pension, but nothing had happened. Because I had the facilities, I would type a letter, say, to the magistrate, or I would phone him.

I think word spreads quite fast in rural areas when there are people who are willing to make their facilities available to the broader public. Because we had a telephone, and because we had a word processor, and because we were able to speak English clearly, and because we could phone the bureaucrats or the companies that had dismissed their workers, people saw this as an opportunity. They saw us as a way of trying to redress the rural/urban divide. The people themselves saw the gap, and they took it, and we were the gap!

That is fascinating. It is something to do with brokerage; it is something to do with advocacy.

Yes. And at the same time people from the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), and LRC were working in the area. They would stay with us, and we would obviously discuss problems with them. So the accessing of urban-based professionals started in a very organic manner.

Now this was, as I say, happening on an informal basis — people would come to the house with various problems, and I would then phone or write on their behalf. At the same time the Mboza Village Project had started up, and CORD staff would also call in at the house. We discussed the problems with them, and the fact that the problems were obviously immense. They suggested that we motivate for funding through CORD to formalise the programme, and to employ fieldworkers who could carry on with what we had started in a small way in Jozini.

When we left the area, the people who had been involved in gathering information for the Maputaland Structure Plan then took over my role. These are the five fieldworkers working there today. When we knew that we were going to leave, we took them up to the magistrates and introduced them. We organised with LRC to speak to them, to give them the legal backup to know that what they are doing has the legal system behind them. That pensions are peoples' rights. It is not something that you have to be grateful for. It is not something you get if somebody is feeling generous. It is actually your legal right. And as such you can fight for it.

Could you describe the training of the fieldworkers, both at the beginning and in a continuing way?

It is not a fixed programme with a beginning and an end. When we located in Durban, I organised an ongoing training programme. It will continue for as long as the fieldworkers tell me what their problems are, and for as long as I am able to access them to other organisations or other professionals who can help them solve those problems.

LRC have been wonderful in that respect and their staff have always made time available to either train the people in paralegal training workshops or to go into the areas to deal with cases there.

The fieldworkers came down for a two week long training programme in Durban. I introduced them to people from the Progressive Primary Health Care Network (PPHC), from COSATU, to other people from LRC and to the Career Information Centre (CIC). I was generally trying to put them in touch with the kinds of people that I thought that they could use usefully for the client out there, which is the community.

In November 1991 we had a three week long refresher paralegal training course. With regard to training, I feel there has been a breakthrough in that the fieldworkers are beginning to identify their own problems to me. One of the things that they would like me to organise is training in communication skills. They feel that when they go to the bureaucracy, there is such a top down feeling about the whole thing. They have got to fight for

The training programme is not fixed but ongoing — as needs are identified training is tailored to meet those needs

**Communication
skills training
is vital for
fieldworkers to
deal with
officials with
confidence**

what they are going in for, and everything is weighted against them — the attitudes of the clerks, the language barriers, the forms. They said that they need to order their information in such a way that when they communicate it, they are completely confident that first, they have given the information in a succinct way and second, that they have given as much information as is needed. They believe that if they learn to do this there will be no reason for them to feel insecure when putting forward these cases. So as part of the para-legal training programme, I will try to organise this exercise in communication skills.

Another thing we organised was a training programme on health in 1990 at Mboza with PPHC. The rationale was that if people are going into homesteads, they are obviously going to come across all the problems that are prevalent in rural areas — children who are left alone at home because there are no child care facilities, people who are sick because of not having the right water, and poor shelter. The fieldworkers face all those problems, so they have to have a holistic approach to welfare. As health is holistic, so is welfare.

I want to stop you there, on holistic health. Within rural primary health care, there is a debate going on at the moment which links to this idea of holistic health and welfare, where people need to be able to respond to a range of needs. When the idea of progressive primary health care emerged, the view of the village health worker was that she would be trained horizontally – each health worker would know about a range of things like oral rehydration, breastfeeding promotion, immunisations, first aid, and so on. While the idea is sound it seems that the workers are more effective and confident if they are trained vertically – if each worker has a narrower band of things she knows about, and which she knows about in more depth. Now, in an area like Maputaland, where distances are so great, and transport is so poor – what model do you work according to? Do you have an option?

I don't know how to answer your question as to the vertical versus horizontal because there are so few facilities in rural areas and it would be hard to prioritise what information the fieldworkers should disseminate. But when we did the evaluation of the PPHC workshop

at Mboza, I got the sense that it had not only been too broad, but it had been too professional. The professionals didn't have the communications skills to pass along their knowledge to the fieldworkers. I think that communication is a problem right the way along, and its importance is underestimated in development work.

So I then organised what I hoped would be something useful that they could put into practice, which was a Red Cross First Aid programme. The fieldworkers came down to Durban for about two weeks. They got their certificates, and now if they go into a house and a child is burnt, they know what to do about it. When they were learning about specialised diseases, it was something that was out of their sphere and they couldn't put it into everyday practice. Not all of the first health training programme was inappropriate – one of the most successful inputs was on AIDS, for example.

As you say, there are no facilities in some of the areas where the fieldworkers work. What kind of support is there for the training they get when they get back home from Durban?

Some urban based professionals do go into the rural areas but this could be backed up by other resources like media — if you could have more of these popular booklets that can be left behind, or maybe with radio — if you have backup services whereby it becomes part of peoples' daily lives that some pieces of information are filtering through about rights and choices — regarding health or welfare, career information or gender — anything that challenges the lack of information in rural areas.

As far as support is concerned, the problems are so vast that community based organisations (CBO) and service organisations are going to have to work together, and think of networking in different ways to try and cover as much ground as possible. I can't answer for community health workers per se but I do know that the problems that the social welfare workers come across include health, child care, water and shelter, and that's what I call holistic. It is not just that people haven't got a pension. That's just one finger on the hand.

Problems that the social welfare workers come across include health, child care, water and shelter

If you have a problem which you cannot solve, you should have a knowledge of who else is doing what, and in which areas.

You are talking about what might be called primary welfare care here. In that context, I want to discuss what difference it makes that the fieldworkers are part of a well-established organisation. They are within an organisation to which a primary welfare problem like water can be referred?

Yes. There is a water team in Mabheleni which then will train other people from other areas in how to combat water problems.

But if CORD weren't there, and if the water team weren't there? I am trying to imagine what it would be like for workers in other areas in the country who do not have a strong organisation like CORD — what would those welfare workers be able to do, apart from being able to identify problems?

Well, they would need a networking backup. If you were a fieldworker, you would need to know what services other organisations provide, and what other community based organisations are doing. If you have a problem which you don't have the ability to solve, you then have a knowledge of who else is doing what, and in which areas. You could maybe send somebody from your village to go to that project for training or whatever.

And Groutville, being more urban-like, probably has more organisations to refer to than, for example, Mabheleni?

Well yes, it is more periurban and sometimes it has been very problematic working there because of the bloodshed. But I think you have missed my point. I think that there seems to be a move towards organisations actually building partnerships. You find that there will be an umbrella body which different organisations will affiliate to and then make their services available to each other, like the Natal Rural Forum. A similar thing has been set up in Transkei: the Transkei Rural Development Forum. So you will get organisations like the Rural Advice Centre (RAC), Environmental and Development Agency (EDA), CORD, Built Environment Support Group (BESG), whoever is interested or has a service to provide in an area, will then work together in a partnership framework. I think this is the only way that we are going to hope to address the problems that exist in any real way.

There is quite a debate going on at the moment in the social policy arena: what is the proper division between state provision and private provision? A couple of years ago the progressive sector was holding out for very substantial state delivery of direct services, not only state subsidies. My hunch is that there is a move away from that at the moment, towards an increasing role for a vigorous NGO or private sector. The government at the moment is putting welfare auxiliaries in place in government departments, and subsidising them in private welfare organisations. What's your feeling about where this kind of category of worker should be?

Are you talking about the people from communities? Barefoot specialists? I think that they should remain outside government circles. It is very important to have NGOs who are able to hold up a mirror to the state. I don't think we can presume that things are going to be marvellous at any time in the future. So it will always be important for people outside the government to be able to hold up a mirror to it so it can see its reflection, and see what it's doing, and see where it is not delivering.

At the same time, though, I do think that the state needs to be challenged to have a serious input into welfare. It is all very well for it to expect other people to adhere to the Christian ethic of care about thy neighbour, but it itself doesn't do it. It must be made accountable for a serious input into welfare. With regard to responsibilities as I see it you would have your NGOs and your community based organisations who would receive outside funding for a programme similar to this so you would have your fieldworkers who would link into your community based organisations.

From the side of the state, if they want to train more professionals — which are needed, we do need professional social workers — I think there should be a kind of internship. They do this in the medical profession — you actually have to serve a certain period of time as a houseman, or houseperson! The same thing should happen in welfare — that the state should make it compulsory for social workers to be interned in rural areas. There should be packages of perks for state social workers to locate in rural areas.

The state needs to be challenged to have a serious input into welfare

The state should make it compulsory for social workers to be interned in rural areas

Social workers should be servants of the community, as opposed to being there just because it's a job

For obvious reasons there is an unwillingness for people to locate there. You are going to have to compensate somehow. At some point the state is going to have to take on the models of welfare work that are coming out from communities. We need to take this type of model and get the state to implement a very different social welfare system in South Africa.

It is up to the government to do that so that the barefoot specialists will have a link in the chain of professionals to refer to. At the moment if a rural fieldworker needs to deal with a child abuse case, or if there is someone who is indigent and needs food parcels, professionals are not there.

I also think that there will have to be a rethink of the whole education of the social workers. Social workers are not there doing people a big favour. Welfare is peoples' legal right which they have paid for through taxes. All social workers should be servants of the community, as opposed to being there just because it's a job — and they have a big responsibility.

So I would see the meshing of foreign funding and community based organisations, with the organisations linking in with more responsible state social workers who are happy to be where they are, and happy to be doing what they are doing.

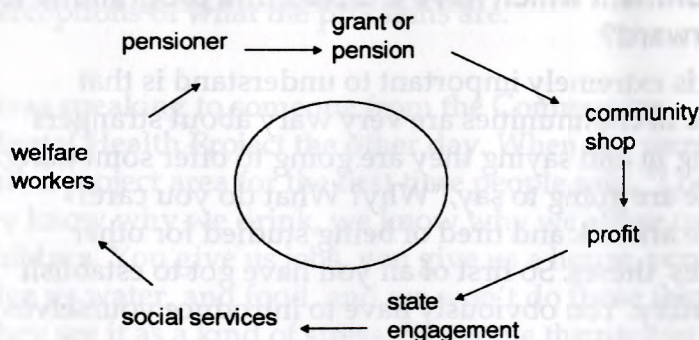
Another one of the great debates of the moment in development is this: in a future South Africa, how are we going to go to scale? Building up model programmes has taught us a number of very important lessons, but often we are not reaching enough people. The problem (and this is not a very popular thing to say) is that many of the models depend on particularly unique individuals who are charismatic, who have got vision, who can win trust, who are quite out of the ordinary. And there are not enough of them around. Can you comment about this, about what would be needed to go to scale, to have more impact over a wider area?

Let me start the answer from a different place. I know that there are many cases where advice centres have closed down, and this has made me wonder about the dynamism of this programme. Where does it come from? I think it is because it's not just about welfare per

se, and it's not just about advice per se. There is a development aspect to it as well, and I think that it's this involvement with people as a whole that has given this programme its dynamism.

Let me explain it differently: A person qualifies for a state grant — in order for them not to become totally dependent on that money, you must be able to access them to a means of involving themselves say in chicken production, or in a co-op, so you are involving people in development as well. You involve them in how to use that money so that they become independent, and they can have some control over their own lives.

In this programme we are using welfare to access people to money, and to information. We then put that in a kind of a broad development perspective. People then use their money to for a sewing group or a chicken cooperative or whatever they would choose to do, or even to put their children through school — that itself has social ramifications for the future. This programme sees welfare as a dynamic force that actually can start other factors moving, which will improve the social fabric generally. For example through a programme such as the Mabheleni Community Shop instead of pensions being viewed as a purely welfarist intervention by the state they become the means of generating further income. The pension or grant is used to buy goods from the shop — the net that feeds the money back into community structures. In other words the input from the community shop is then used to engage the state as well as to provide basic social services — which include the salary of the welfare fieldworkers. So as long as the amount of money from pensions generated in the Gross Geographic Income is greater than the fieldworkers salaries, the net has increased its profit and the circle is repeated.



The dynamism of this programme comes from the fact that it is not just about welfare per se but also about development

Model from Mabheleni

A feature of poverty is that people have no choices

Can I just be quite clear on this? The fieldworkers help people to get an old age pension, or a disability grant, or a maintenance grant. Those clients then are perfectly free to do with their money what they like. But the fieldworker encourages those clients to come and become part of some group, and use part of their money for membership or for materials. Is this an explicit policy?

In Groutville, people started saying that they would like to set up a chicken cooperative. So the CORD person who helped set up the aquaculture project at Mboza, moved down to Groutville. She helped organise and train those people who had expressed an interest in broiler production. CORD prefunded each person R400 to buy the day-old chicks and to set up the structures (chicken coops). But people were able to buy in because they were getting money through pensions. So that is the way it happened. It's just a facility that is available. And because the different people in CORD move around from area to area, and because people from the community also come through to CORD's central office, people are aware of what the possibilities are.

I believe that a feature of poverty is that people have no choices. One of the problems is that they have no information about what choices there are. Once people become aware that there is a choice, that if they want to invest their pension in a cooperative effort, they can, the possibility is there, and it can be done.

Earlier I asked you about problems of going to scale: a closely related challenge is that of replicability — can programmes such as this be copied by others? you have commented before on how this programme grew organically. It can never be organic in the same way to anyone else. Can you try and identify the factors, aside from your commitment, your enthusiasm, your working environment which have enabled this programme to go forward?

What is extremely important to understand is that people in communities are very wary about strangers coming in and saying they are going to offer something. People are going to say, "Why? What do you care?" People are sick and tired of being studied for other peoples' theses. So first of all you have got to establish credibility. You obviously have to introduce yourselves

to and meet with the community structures to begin with. And to establish credibility, for people to see that you are not going to make promises which you can't keep, you have got to go in there with an instant delivery. From there people will be able to say, "Hey, these people are actually quite clear about what they are doing and the end product is community empowerment. It is not just empowerment for this outsider who is doing it!" One possible thing to go in on is water, because that is a given problem in most rural areas, but welfare is also a useful point of entry. If you can go and get some success stories with some old people who have been sitting there dying because there is no one out there to support them, it has an impact. Suddenly these people have a social worth again. It's amazing what an injection of capital to a household can actually do to the worth of the person who is bringing it in.

Once you have started in an area in such a way, then you will get all the classic problems, like health and child care, coming to the fore. People start prioritising those needs, and then you can go forward.

On the other hand, I also think what's happening in Matatiele is particularly exciting, because it's not just ad hoc. The water team has gone in with water delivery to show they are actually serious about what they are doing and at the same time, CORD is employing three town and regional planning interns who are going into the area talking to people to prioritise needs.

Whichever way you go in, you need to go in with the idea of making that community viable. You have to be sure that you have worked with all the other organisations first so that they are prepared to give you backup once people start to throw up their own perceptions of what the problems are.

I was speaking to someone from the Community Mental Health Project the other day. When she went into a project area for the first time people said, "Look we know why we drink, we know why we abuse our children. You give us jobs, you give us a house, you give us water, and food, and we won't do those things". They see it as a kind of stress. So people themselves can

Water and welfare are two useful points of entry into rural communities for service organisations because it is possible to implement quick delivery

It's amazing what an injection of capital to a household can actually do to the worth of the person who is bringing it in

What is important is how you approach the problem, and whether the people are involved

articulate the holistic nature of their problems. And if you are going to be serious about going into an area, you have got to be serious about how you are going to address the problems. And of course you can predict with some surety what the problems will be, the kind of typical characteristics of poverty.

Absolutely. It's not that unique from area to area. Of course there are regional variations, but you can make broad generalisations.

Yes, and you know you are going to come across them. But what is important is how you approach the problem, and whether the people are involved. I think one of the most dreadful development failures that I ever saw was on a programme on the Sudan where people had come in — typical top down stuff — and put in all these windmills, all this machinery for water. Then they left for political reasons, and they hadn't trained one local person to operate the machines. What they left behind are people who are worse off than they were before, because for a little while they had a taste of clean water. And they left behind these obscene structures, lying there with no one able to use them. To me this says: rather don't get involved if you can't do it properly. You will make matters worse.

Welfare grants are not just about getting money — they have social repercussions as well

There is rightfully a lot of concern in the country right now about the breakdown of family life, with particular concern about what is happening to African family life. Can you say something about the effect of your programme, if any, on family life, on the survival of families?

You have to look at the fact that getting welfare grants is not just about getting money. It has a whole lot of social repercussions as well. First of all it gives value to somebody who before had been marginalised because they were just another mouth to feed — they were another albatross around the neck of the household. Where an elderly person or a sick person can get the household access to a grant, the grant will give that person some status which they didn't have before.

Welfare is a kind of investment for the future

That money is then used either for rent or more often than not for education. And with the education crisis and the unemployment crisis today, I see welfare as a kind of investment for the future. It goes further than the household. Some of it is used to pay school fees for

the children who are then educated, and who are then likely to be more employable than somebody who didn't have any primary or secondary education because there was no money to pay for school fees or to buy school uniforms. So a grant can have this kind of social as well as economic multiplier effect.

Getting people the grants can be very frustrating. I am thinking of a woman who travelled miles on foot to get to the fieldworker's home in Groutville. She had been refused a grant before. We had to get all sorts of information like schooling reports and how important the maintenance grant is for schooling.

Why has there been such a difficulty with maintenance grants?

The authorities are just not giving them. People who have had them are being cut off. New applications are not getting through. We have had only one or two success stories with maintenance grants, which are vital to family life. I said to the grant official, "Given the fact that you know of the unemployment problems, given the fact that there are no child care facilities, and that these women are performing a vital function by looking after the children, thereby lessening the propensity for violence in the future, since unnurtured children can grow into angry adults — surely you should be more than willing to provide these women with a grant for the time that their children are at home?" To me it is perfectly logical.

Okay, I want to continue with replication and impact of programmes. CORD pays you, and CORD pays fieldworkers who help people get access to state grants. But in the case of Mabheleni, the fieldworkers are paid by the profits from the community shop. Would you see that as an ideal? As the opposite of a top-down programme? Is it a possible model for replication?

The strength of the Mabheleni welfare programme is that it is truly community based. I do not see why it cannot be replicated in other areas. It is not necessary to have a community controlled shop as the catalyst. It could be organised through any community based income generating programme. You need a broader vision to be able to see the social investment value of the welfare fieldworkers.

Maintenance grants are being cut off by the authorities – we have had only one or two successes in obtaining them

When removing a child from an abuser, you like to know that it is going to a better place – when state social workers don't care, your whole hope for this child is shaken

Can we get on to what you think are problems that the programme has had and is likely to have. You have mentioned the fieldworkers saying they need better communication skills, and you have said how they feel that welfare work has a low status. What other things have been constraints on the programme as a whole?

What we have found absolutely pivotal is transport. In order for people to reach those that are in most need, who are by definition the people furthest away, the fieldworkers need some form of transport to get to and fro. They don't have an office. We are hoping to build an office so that people they are not reaching or are very far away will know that they can come on a certain day and find a fieldworker there. But still, it is vital that the fieldworkers continue visiting homesteads on an outreach basis.

Another problem that is just very basic — the weather. Obviously if it is raining in the rural areas you can't get out, you can't use the roads. That's been a constraint.

Another problem has been the attitude of some rural-based state social workers, who have seen the work of the fieldworkers as a threat. This has two results. First, it leads to a kind of a depression on the part of the fieldworkers: if you are going to take a child away from an abuser, you would like to know that it is actually going to a better place. And if you have got a state social worker telling you that you may as well throw that child back on the street (because that is where he picked it up from), your whole faith for what you are doing for this child is shaken, because your gateway to your place of safety is the social worker.

You can take a case so far, but once you get to the door of the state machinery, you start to get a little bit nervous about what you are doing. You are hoping to improve the chances of this child being properly nurtured, and the gateway to assistance is a person who doesn't care. And then if you consider some of the 'places of safety', you start to think, what am I doing, placing a child in those conditions? So we can do so much, but the state has to start getting its own house in order too.

We can only do so much, but the state has to start getting its own house in order

The second thing that is problematic is that in some instances the government social workers and other government employees feel so threatened by the 'dirtying-of-hands' work that the fieldworkers do. They then put a political complexion onto the work with the intention of getting other people up in arms and destroying the initiative which will then mean they are safe again.

This has been a problem in each of the areas and there have been meetings between various CORD area managers and tribal authorities where we have tried to explain the fact that the fieldworkers take anybody — their client is the poor, the rural poor. They are certainly not biased towards any political grouping.

The programme started in 1988. I am aware that your perspective will be different from the perspective of the fieldworkers. But speaking for yourself, in your role in the programme, can you tell me about the moments when you have thought, "Aha! Now we are getting there! Now we are on the right path!"

One moment would be a time when one of the fieldworkers came down from Maputaland. She told me she had managed to get an old man backpay which ran into thousands of rands. He was so thrilled, and he bought her a two litre cool drink. She was so happy for this man.

Again, the removal of an abused child from Groutville was important for me. We didn't put her in a place of safety. One of the community members took her in, into a better place. Another time I was in Groutville visiting homesteads with the fieldworkers. There was this baby lying on the floor. He was tiny. The mother had no form of income, and the child was just a scrap of humanity. The fieldworker gave this a priority — the mother had to be helped because she was an alcoholic. Both were hospitalised and they managed to get the child onto a drip and to start salvaging him. He has stayed in hospital for about three months. When you can put a face to what you are doing it makes a huge difference.

The fieldworkers' clients are the rural poor – they are not biased towards any political grouping

The problem of the current bureaucracy is that it does not facilitate – one is always up against something

And give an example of an occasion when you felt really frustrated or angry.

There was an old man who is a deaf mute in the squatter area of Groutville. The fieldworker tried three times for a disability grant, so I finally got personally involved. I phoned the official in charge of grants. I told him I couldn't understand why a person who is 100 percent permanently disabled was being refused a disability grant. What he said — that this deaf mute could possibly find work in the cane fields — really horrified me, and put into perspective just what we are up against. This is the problem of the bureaucracy; it is not a thing that facilitates — you feel like you are up against something, a mindset.

I said to him, "Why don't you go out and meet the people who you are disenabling, and then see if you feel good about what you are doing? You are not just sitting neutrally at your computer. Your computer is not the end result of what you are doing. You are pushing buttons there, wiping off sheets of names. Why don't you go and see those people and see what it actually means to them"?

The man's grant came through after the fourth application. It was important to me not just letting it rest, continually going backwards and forwards against the magnitude of this bureaucratic mindset and finally finding this man's pension for him — getting it to him, and it making a difference to his life.

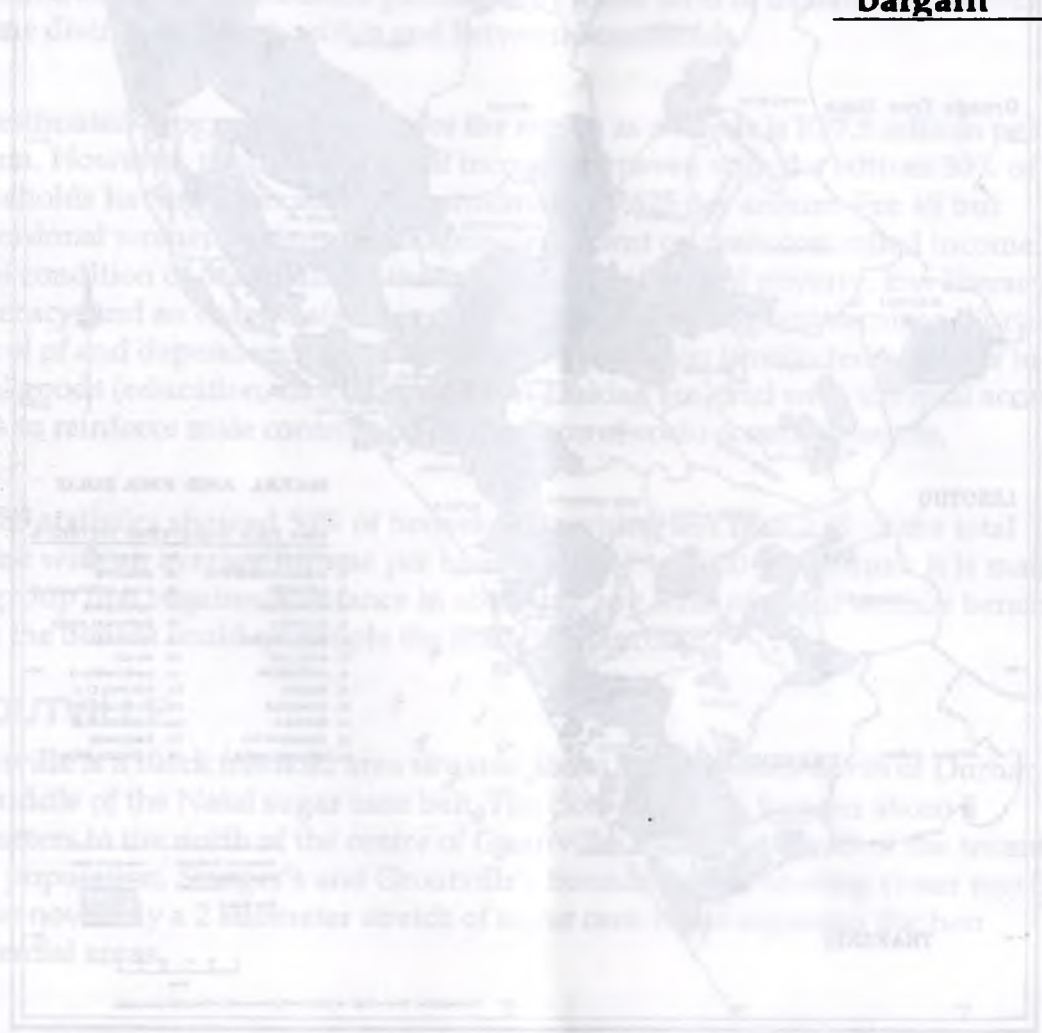
If you had to leave the programme tomorrow, would it go on?

I think you would have to have a link person. I think you would have to have somebody in an urban area who could refer problems to other professionals which the fieldworkers cannot solve. Also, it is a very lonely arduous job out there for the fieldworkers, slogging it out, going from household to household. I believe they have got to have a sense that somebody cares. So whether it's me, or whether it's someone else to come and visit them once a month and talk about their work and to say, "Yes, oh that's great, you've got it" — that kind of positive reinforcement is very important.

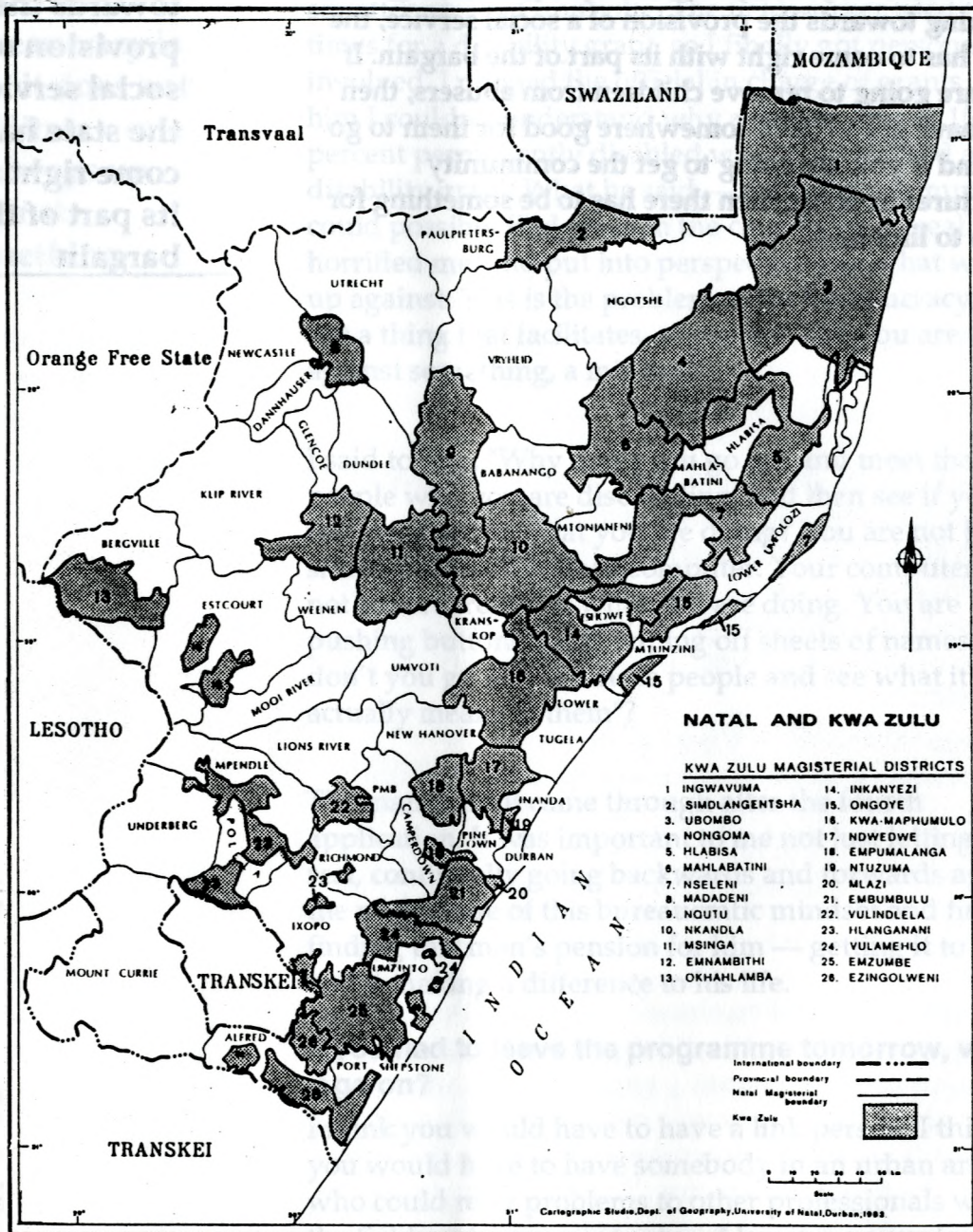
Any last comment you would like to make?

I really do think it is absolutely vital that we don't start organising at the grassroots level and then leading people to an abyss. If you get the people on the ground working towards the provision of a social service, the state has to come right with its part of the bargain. If you are going to remove children from abusers, then you have got to have somewhere good for them to go to. And if you are going to get the community structures in place, then there has to be something for them to link into.

If you get the people on the ground working towards the provision of a social service, the state has to come right with its part of the bargain



The population was initially estimated to be 30 000 by 1960 and 40 000 (Provincial Water Board) in 1970. But official statistics in South Africa are notorious for their inaccuracies and must be treated with caution. More than 80% of the population is under 20 years of age with only some 2% of the population being in the age bracket of 65 years or older. As with other black communities in South Africa, Grahamville is characterised by high levels of unemployment, particularly in the 15-25 year age bracket. High levels of unemployment in this age bracket are of special concern inasmuch as those who will ensure the physical reproduction of society have little or no direct access to social assets.



Brief area profiles

MAPUTALAND

Maputaland is the collective name for the Ubombo and Ingwavuma districts of Northern Natal. The population (212 000) is one of the most economically depressed and least serviced sectors of South African society. This is well illustrated by social welfare indicators such as levels of illiteracy, income status and distribution, and access to State health facilities. Illiteracy levels are exceptionally high, with some 88% of males and 94% of females over the age of 30 having no formal education. A restricted access to education is paralleled by a low level of income and uneven income distribution both within and between households.

The estimated geographic income for the region as a whole is R57.5 million per annum. However, the distribution of income is uneven with the bottom 50% of households having an income of approximately R625 per annum. For all but professional women, women are largely dependent on male controlled income. The social condition of Maputaland, then, is one of generalised poverty, low literacy and numeracy, and an exaggerated dependency upon male migrant earnings. Further, control of and dependency upon male migrant earnings is reflected in access to social goods (education, nutrition, decision-making etc.) and such unequal access tends to reinforce male control and domination of socio-economic assets.

In 1989 statistics showed 50% of households earning less than 20% of the total income with an average income per households of +- R600 per annum. It is mainly this group that requires assistance in obtaining any form of social welfare benefit as often the benefit could quintuple the household income.

GROUTVILLE

Groutville is a black freehold area situated about 75 kilometers north of Durban in the middle of the Natal sugar cane belt. The closest town is Stanger about 8 kilometers to the north of the centre of Groutville. With the growth of the tenant slum population, Stanger's and Groutville's boundaries are moving closer together so that now only a 2 kilometer stretch of sugar cane fields separates the two residential areas.

The population was officially estimated to be 30 000 in 1985, and 90 000 (Umgeni Water Board) in 1990. But official statistics in South Africa are notorious for their inaccuracies and must be treated with caution. More than 50% of the population is under 20 years of age with only some 5% of the population being in the age bracket of 65 years or older. As with other black communities in South Africa, Groutville is characterised by high levels of unemployment, particularly so for those under the age of 30. High levels of unemployment in this age bracket are of special concern inasmuch as those who will ensure the physical reproduction of society have little or no direct access to social assets.

The seriousness of unemployment in Groutville is compounded by the limited employment opportunities within the area and the fact that the vast majority of workers necessarily commute to Durban on a daily basis. Transportation costs are high relative to incomes and research has shown that for poor they can reach as high as one third of household budgets. Disposable income is thus extremely low, and necessarily goes to support those in need. The process of in-migration into Groutville has transformed an agricultural community into an impoverished urbanising area on the edge of a growing small industrial town (Stanger).

The growth of Groutville relative to that of Stanger reflects State bias in Apartheid development. Groutville is hopelessly under-resourced in terms of its access to basic needs. In many ways this is reflected in its lack of access to clean water. While the Umvoti and Ntshaweni Rivers transverse Groutville, they are polluted by human, agricultural and industrial wastes and have been declared unfit for human consumption unless properly treated. Groutville's only access to clean water is through water tankers that deliver from Stanger. Groutville is divided into different 'Wards'. Each ward having its own socio-economic identity. The ward that consists of slum clusters — Ward 5 — is populated by people who are amongst the most disadvantaged in Groutville and who through relocation have had their bureaucratic access dislocated.

MABHELENI

Mabheleni is a rural area situated in KwaZulu approximately 150 km from Durban on the South coast of Natal. The nearest town, Hibberdene, is approximately 40 km from Mabheleni.

The road leading to the area is a winding gravel surface which becomes impassable during the wet weather. The extent of the area that the local people regard as Mabheleni is approximately 16 km in radius. The topography of Mabheleni is steep and mountainous. Thus, for example, the land owned by the Catholic Mission in the area ranges in height from 1 977 meters to 2 386 meters above sea level. There is very little level land in the area. The tributaries of the Mzimhlanga and Quha rivers run through the area.

The only study available is one reflecting the quality of life of tenants living on the farm owned by the Kwa St. Joseph Mission. This study was undertaken by Jean Davidson in 1986 and commissioned by the Bishops of the Zulu Pastoral Region. Although this study is limited in providing a representative view of all the people of Mabheleni in that it was restricted to the 27 families living on the mission property, it nevertheless gives some idea of the social profile of the population of the area. The lack of reliable research information for Mabheleni is equally true of the South Coast of Natal in general, and CORD anticipates addressing this problem in the near future.

There are approximately 20 000 people living in Mabheleni. One distinctive feature indicated by the Davidson study is that the broad base of the population pyramid

are the youth-nearly 70% of those surveyed fell into the 0-30 age bracket, and of those living on the church farm, 50% were children of 15 years or younger.

At least 50% of the population are migrants who work in the Durban and Scottburgh areas. This situation is a result of the limited job opportunities in the area and the rugged topography agricultural endeavour. As with other rural areas, a higher proportion of males as opposed to females are migrant workers.

Of those people who consider Mabheleni to be their home area, the following seems to prevail; most of the children under the age of 15 live in the area; more than half of those between the ages 16 to 30 have left in pursuit of jobs; nearly all males between the ages of 31 and 60 are migrants; most of those above the age of 60 are residents in Mabheleni.

It is difficult to assess the educational achievement of the people of Mabheleni as this would require an intensive study. The Davidson study, although not necessarily representative, gives a good idea of the educational achievements of all the adults on mission farm who are of working age. According to this study 50% of the population had some form of primary school education, 30% had attended secondary school and no one had achieved their matriculation (South Africa's school leaving certificate). What little is known about the rest of the area clearly indicates that the situation outside the mission farm is worse.

In all there ten primary schools and three junior secondary schools and no pre-schools or creche facilities. Recently a clinic staffed by three nurses has been built by the KwaZulu Government. However, the topography of the area makes access to the clinic difficult. The nursing staff acknowledge this and express a keen interest to be involved in any primary health care initiative that will make health care generally accessible.

Level land for building homes is limited and people are forced to cut flat ridges into the steep slopes to build their homes. The poor quality of homes has made people easy victims of floods. Most homes are built of mud with thatch for roofing.

Mabheleni is without an adequate water supply, but is flooded during the rainy season. Water is normally obtained from the streams or from the natural unprotected springs. Many people have to spend an hour or more on a single trip to collect water. The lack of an adequate and protected water supply has forced people to share their domestic water with livestock.

Apart from the clinic and schools the only other service facilities are general dealers who provide a postal service and a restricted access to telephones. Furthermore, the Catholic Church through the St.Patrick's Farmers Association performs a limited outreach activity. It is involved in improving the living conditions of tenants on

church land. However, their outreach activities are not extended to the community at large.

The 3 areas — Maputaland, Groutville and Mabheleni are all very different in terms of topography, demography and concentration of households: e.g. — whereas in Maputaland the households are widely spread; in Groutville there are slum areas and in Mabheleni the mountainous nature of the region makes access difficult.

These differences however do not alter the basic similarities regarding the nature of poverty in rural areas only the priorities change.

The following CORD publications can be ordered from the address below:

Workshop proceedings

Tourism workshop, Workshop Proceedings, Forum for Research in Maputaland, May 1990.

Research and the Environment, Workshop Proceedings, Forum for research in Maputaland, May 1989.

Working papers

Natural Resource Management, Rural Development and Regional Planning in the Natal/KwaZulu Region. Working paper 1. CORD, 1989.

Integrated aquaculture within the Mboza Village Project: A case study of applied participatory research. Working paper 2. CORD, 1990.

Overcoming Apartheid's land legacy in Maputaland (Northern Natal). Working paper 3. CORD, 1990.

The limits of traditional ethnic paradigms in the explanation of rural social organisation and survival strategies. Working paper 4. CORD, 1990.

Technically skilled but unemployed: A neglected aspect of Apartheid education. Working paper 5. CORD, 1989.

Information booklets *

1. Social Pensions
2. Unemployment Insurance Fund and Workmen's Compensation
3. Legal Rights
4. Rural Administration, Contract/Civil/Criminal law
5. Hire purchase, Insurance, Trade Unions

* Note: The Information booklets are available in Zulu and English.

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Welfare as a catalyst for
development:
A case study of a rural welfare
programme

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Introduction

Francie Lund & Fiona Wakelin

**Welfare as a catalyst for
development:
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programme**

Francie Lund
&
Fiona Wakelin

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CORD (Centre for Community Organisation, Research & Development) is an autonomous NGO based at the University of Natal in Durban.

CSDS (Centre for Social and Development Studies) is a research institute based at the University of Natal in Durban.

This publication would not have been possible without the experiences of CORDs Social Welfare programme and fieldworkers.

Francie Lund of CSDS interviewed Fiona Wakelin (Welfare coordinator) of CORD

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Introduction

One of CORD's activities is the welfare programme, which started four years ago. It has two features which make it particularly interesting. First, it has introduced a level of welfare into rural areas which has not been there before. Second, it is based on a broad, developmental and holistic approach to welfare — which is what most people agree is needed, but very few actually manage to do.

Welfare projects are often well meaning but small in scale, without the ability to help people out of the poverty in which they are trapped. We believe that this welfare programme acts as a catalyst for other development activities — it shows that welfare can be a wedge, a point of entry, for broader community development. It is one model for a more appropriate welfare system for the future.

Compared to health, there is very little written material about alternative welfare provision. There have been fewer attempts at model building than there have been in health. And it is possible that some small projects have not been written up for others to learn from.

A key aspect of innovative work in the social service and development fields is the training of new kinds of workers. This is almost always based on a recognition that existing professionals (for example, doctors, social workers, irrigation engineers, physiotherapists)

- are expensive to train
- are difficult to move from city-bases, and
- are not necessarily good communicators with the people they are meant to serve.

The South African government and the South African Council for Social Work (the body that finally controls professional social welfare) have agreed that there is a need for a new category of welfare worker — an assistant or auxiliary. The rules surrounding their training and supervision are such that, although it is a step in the right direction, it does not go nearly far enough. For example, every two assistants must be supervised by one social worker. In most rural areas there are no social workers, so there can be no assistants.

When new categories of workers are trained, they often meet with strong resistance from two sides — existing professionals, and people in communities. In the welfare field, the strongest resistance will probably come from the professionals. We think that this welfare programme shows how the work of the professionals can mesh together with the work of people with less formal training, so that they can help each other to deliver better services to more people.

The welfare context

The welfare programme needs to be set against the context of existing welfare services in South Africa. The South African welfare system is inappropriate and inadequate — this is recognised by people in government, people working in the private welfare sector, and is certainly recognised at community level. The problems that are very evident are:

- welfare spending and social services have been biased in favour of white provision
- the system has not been properly planned
- there is a heavy bias in favour of urban areas, and a serious neglect of rural welfare
- where social work posts do exist in rural areas, they are difficult to fill.
- the privatisation of welfare which is being encouraged by government (along with the privatisation of health, education, transport and other social goods) will mean that the well-off people will be able to buy better private services, but poorer people will have less access to even poorer public services.

There is an emerging consensus across the country that if the welfare system is to have a contribution to make to the 'new South Africa' it will have to become:

- more developmentally oriented
- more appropriate to the conditions in which the majority of people live
- more concerned with the welfare of the very poor, especially in rural areas

-
- more accessible to people who need the services, and particularly by women and children.

These principles are accepted internationally as guidelines for the provision of social services such as health, welfare and education. In the field of primary health care in South Africa, we have many examples of model schemes which have tried to learn how to provide appropriate, affordable, accessible health services. Many of these have been written about; some indeed are known internationally. All these case studies are vital to the development of better health services in future.

In most rural areas, and in the majority of peri-urban informal settlements, we are not talking of a situation where services could be improved by adding more professionals — we have a situation where there is virtually no access to welfare services at all.

The interview that follows is presented as a case study of an innovative welfare programme.

F Lund interviews F Wakelin

I understand that you are the coordinator of a number of people in the field — How many fieldworkers are there?

CORD is involved in three areas with this programme — Maputaland, Mabheleni and Groutville. At the moment there are five welfare fieldworkers in Maputaland, who started the programme. There are three fieldworkers in Groutville and four in Mabheleni.

What do the field workers do?

The three areas are all very different, but in each the modus operandi is the same. The fieldworkers don't have an office. They have a designated geographical area, and they visit homesteads every day assessing what the problems are. If there is a welfare problem, they will generally see a client at least three times. For example they may find someone eligible for a pension or grant, who needs to be transported to the district surgeon. They will then make an appointment to return and accompany that person to the magistrate's office or hospital where they act as facilitators in getting the grants. I have a book in which I list all the clients, and I have a date that I set six months hence. Every six months I send a copy of their clients back to them and ask them for follow ups. They then go back and visit their clients to see whether they have got the pension, got the grant, or to see if what they set in motion has actually come to fruition. And if it hasn't, then they go and restart the whole process. One of the fieldworkers in Groutville, for example, made three applications for a disability grant and only on the fourth attempt was she able to get it.

Included in the monthly reports are problems they cannot solve. I then refer these either to colleagues within CORD or to other professionals. For example, we work very closely with the Legal Resource Centre (LRC) if there is a legal problem — it's very important that the fieldworkers have the backup of professionals and training in order to argue the cases for their clients. If the expertise exists within CORD, I would refer the problem to my colleagues, to help for example with a water problem, or a health facility.

A profile of the three areas can be found at the end of the interview

**The
fieldworkers
act as mobile
information
centres**

You said that the fieldworkers are given a particular geographical area — approximately how many homesteads does each one reach?

In every area it is very different. In Groutville there is a large squatter community who live cheek by jowl, whereas in Maputaland the homestead distribution is widespread. But between 1988 and 1991 the five people in Maputaland have accessed about 2 500 individual clients — there might be two or three in a household. This is despite the constraints of weather and transport, and the other activities they do.

Could you give some practical examples of the other things they do?

They do lots of other things because of the lack of facilities and social services in rural areas. They are not just welfare workers; they are kind of mobile information centres.

For example, we have been involved in helping to combat removals. People will inform CORD staff that they are worried because beacons are being put through their homesteads — placement of beacons is usually the start of the removals process. Another example is giving assistance with water problems and co-ops. Fieldworkers go to community meetings, such as water committee meetings and farmers association meetings, just to keep abreast of what is going on in the area. They also pass on a lot of referrals to community health workers.

You can get a good idea of the problems they address by looking at the booklets we have produced.

Community problems informed the contents of the booklets (a full list of these booklets is found at the end). They cover maintenance grants, criminal and civil contract law, how to write an affidavit, insurance, the rights of people when arrested, motor vehicle accidents, PTO's. There are also hire purchase problems, where people get ripped off with credit, unemployment insurance, and workmen's compensation.

The fieldworkers identify community problems in their reports. When I see the fieldworkers once a month, we discuss the problems they are facing. Then it is up to me to put together written information in popular form

that's accessible to people. They then distribute these booklets and because they are free, brightly coloured, and they have illustrations in them, people pick them up and read them. In this way the communities' lack of access to information concerning their rights and choices is being addressed.

The booklets are in English and Zulu?

Yes. The English is mostly for Durban central, and the fieldworkers distribute the Zulu version in the outlying areas.

What other kinds of things do they do?

If they have a problem say with child abuse cases, they work in conjunction with the state social workers in order to get the welfare machinery going, because the magistrate needs a social worker's report.

How many social workers would there be in the areas where the fieldworkers are?

In Maputaland there are two in Ubombo at Bethesda Hospital. They have a Nissan 1600 car. If you are thinking of going into the rural areas with any efficacy, you certainly won't be able to use that kind of vehicle — you need a 4x4 for the outlying areas. The Ubombo social workers will visit homes where the CORD fieldworkers have made them aware of a problem. At Ingwavuma, which is the other sector of Maputaland, there is one social worker at Mossvolt Hospital. He hasn't got a car and he can't drive. There are these three social workers to cover Maputaland (although I believe there may be another one based at the Mjindi cotton scheme — but the fieldworkers have not come across him/her).

There are 3 social workers and one supervisor (who is based in Inanda and visits the area twice a week) located in Stanger who are meant to cover Groutville. At one time I had big problems in trying to get one of the social workers to leave her office and get her hands dirty in the areas, especially the squatter areas. At Mabheleni, I think there are two social workers.

I'll come back to the relationship between your fieldworkers and other social workers later. But now I want to go back to the beginning. This welfare programme works within CORD, which is a relatively large development organisation. Three

The communities' lack of access to information concerning their rights and choices is being addressed

They saw us as a way of trying to redress the rural/urban divide. The people themselves saw the gap, and they took it, and we were the gap!

The accessing of urban-based professionals started in a very organic manner

years ago the welfare programme wasn't there in CORD. Sometimes programmes start because people come in to an organisation with a particular new professional skill, or mission, or talent. Sometimes programmes emerge because a need suddenly becomes really clear. Can you tell me what led to the formation of this programme?

It was actually very organic. What happened was that I was living in Maputaland and on an informal basis people were coming to the house saying they had problems. For example, they would say that they had gone to apply for a pension, but nothing had happened. Because I had the facilities, I would type a letter, say, to the magistrate, or I would phone him.

I think word spreads quite fast in rural areas when there are people who are willing to make their facilities available to the broader public. Because we had a telephone, and because we had a word processor, and because we were able to speak English clearly, and because we could phone the bureaucrats or the companies that had dismissed their workers, people saw this as an opportunity. They saw us as a way of trying to redress the rural/urban divide. The people themselves saw the gap, and they took it, and we were the gap!

That is fascinating. It is something to do with brokerage; it is something to do with advocacy.

Yes. And at the same time people from the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA), and LRC were working in the area. They would stay with us, and we would obviously discuss problems with them. So the accessing of urban-based professionals started in a very organic manner.

Now this was, as I say, happening on an informal basis — people would come to the house with various problems, and I would then phone or write on their behalf. At the same time the Mboza Village Project had started up, and CORD staff would also call in at the house. We discussed the problems with them, and the fact that the problems were obviously immense. They suggested that we motivate for funding through CORD to formalise the programme, and to employ fieldworkers who could carry on with what we had started in a small way in Jozini.

When we left the area, the people who had been involved in gathering information for the Maputaland Structure Plan then took over my role. These are the five fieldworkers working there today. When we knew that we were going to leave, we took them up to the magistrates and introduced them. We organised with LRC to speak to them, to give them the legal backup to know that what they are doing has the legal system behind them. That pensions are peoples' rights. It is not something that you have to be grateful for. It is not something you get if somebody is feeling generous. It is actually your legal right. And as such you can fight for it.

Could you describe the training of the fieldworkers, both at the beginning and in a continuing way?

It is not a fixed programme with a beginning and an end. When we located in Durban, I organised an ongoing training programme. It will continue for as long as the fieldworkers tell me what their problems are, and for as long as I am able to access them to other organisations or other professionals who can help them solve those problems.

LRC have been wonderful in that respect and their staff have always made time available to either train the people in paralegal training workshops or to go into the areas to deal with cases there.

The fieldworkers came down for a two week long training programme in Durban. I introduced them to people from the Progressive Primary Health Care Network (PPHC), from COSATU, to other people from LRC and to the Career Information Centre (CIC). I was generally trying to put them in touch with the kinds of people that I thought that they could use usefully for the client out there, which is the community.

In November 1991 we had a three week long refresher paralegal training course. With regard to training, I feel there has been a breakthrough in that the fieldworkers are beginning to identify their own problems to me. One of the things that they would like me to organise is training in communication skills. They feel that when they go to the bureaucracy, there is such a top down feeling about the whole thing. They have got to fight for

The training programme is not fixed but ongoing — as needs are identified training is tailored to meet those needs

**Communication
skills training
is vital for
fieldworkers to
deal with
officials with
confidence**

what they are going in for, and everything is weighted against them — the attitudes of the clerks, the language barriers, the forms. They said that they need to order their information in such a way that when they communicate it, they are completely confident that first, they have given the information in a succinct way and second, that they have given as much information as is needed. They believe that if they learn to do this there will be no reason for them to feel insecure when putting forward these cases. So as part of the para-legal training programme, I will try to organise this exercise in communication skills.

Another thing we organised was a training programme on health in 1990 at Mboza with PPHC. The rationale was that if people are going into homesteads, they are obviously going to come across all the problems that are prevalent in rural areas — children who are left alone at home because there are no child care facilities, people who are sick because of not having the right water, and poor shelter. The fieldworkers face all those problems, so they have to have a holistic approach to welfare. As health is holistic, so is welfare.

I want to stop you there, on holistic health. Within rural primary health care, there is a debate going on at the moment which links to this idea of holistic health and welfare, where people need to be able to respond to a range of needs. When the idea of progressive primary health care emerged, the view of the village health worker was that she would be trained horizontally – each health worker would know about a range of things like oral rehydration, breastfeeding promotion, immunisations, first aid, and so on. While the idea is sound it seems that the workers are more effective and confident if they are trained vertically – if each worker has a narrower band of things she knows about, and which she knows about in more depth. Now, in an area like Maputaland, where distances are so great, and transport is so poor – what model do you work according to? Do you have an option?

I don't know how to answer your question as to the vertical versus horizontal because there are so few facilities in rural areas and it would be hard to prioritise what information the fieldworkers should disseminate. But when we did the evaluation of the PPHC workshop

at Mboza, I got the sense that it had not only been too broad, but it had been too professional. The professionals didn't have the communications skills to pass along their knowledge to the fieldworkers. I think that communication is a problem right the way along, and its importance is underestimated in development work.

So I then organised what I hoped would be something useful that they could put into practice, which was a Red Cross First Aid programme. The fieldworkers came down to Durban for about two weeks. They got their certificates, and now if they go into a house and a child is burnt, they know what to do about it. When they were learning about specialised diseases, it was something that was out of their sphere and they couldn't put it into everyday practice. Not all of the first health training programme was inappropriate – one of the most successful inputs was on AIDS, for example.

As you say, there are no facilities in some of the areas where the fieldworkers work. What kind of support is there for the training they get when they get back home from Durban?

Some urban based professionals do go into the rural areas but this could be backed up by other resources like media — if you could have more of these popular booklets that can be left behind, or maybe with radio — if you have backup services whereby it becomes part of peoples' daily lives that some pieces of information are filtering through about rights and choices — regarding health or welfare, career information or gender — anything that challenges the lack of information in rural areas.

As far as support is concerned, the problems are so vast that community based organisations (CBO) and service organisations are going to have to work together, and think of networking in different ways to try and cover as much ground as possible. I can't answer for community health workers per se but I do know that the problems that the social welfare workers come across include health, child care, water and shelter, and that's what I call holistic. It is not just that people haven't got a pension. That's just one finger on the hand.

Problems that the social welfare workers come across include health, child care, water and shelter

If you have a problem which you cannot solve, you should have a knowledge of who else is doing what, and in which areas.

You are talking about what might be called primary welfare care here. In that context, I want to discuss what difference it makes that the fieldworkers are part of a well-established organisation. They are within an organisation to which a primary welfare problem like water can be referred?

Yes. There is a water team in Mabheleni which then will train other people from other areas in how to combat water problems.

But if CORD weren't there, and if the water team weren't there? I am trying to imagine what it would be like for workers in other areas in the country who do not have a strong organisation like CORD — what would those welfare workers be able to do, apart from being able to identify problems?

Well, they would need a networking backup. If you were a fieldworker, you would need to know what services other organisations provide, and what other community based organisations are doing. If you have a problem which you don't have the ability to solve, you then have a knowledge of who else is doing what, and in which areas. You could maybe send somebody from your village to go to that project for training or whatever.

And Groutville, being more urban-like, probably has more organisations to refer to than, for example, Mabheleni?

Well yes, it is more periurban and sometimes it has been very problematic working there because of the bloodshed. But I think you have missed my point. I think that there seems to be a move towards organisations actually building partnerships. You find that there will be an umbrella body which different organisations will affiliate to and then make their services available to each other, like the Natal Rural Forum. A similar thing has been set up in Transkei: the Transkei Rural Development Forum. So you will get organisations like the Rural Advice Centre (RAC), Environmental and Development Agency (EDA), CORD, Built Environment Support Group (BESG), whoever is interested or has a service to provide in an area, will then work together in a partnership framework. I think this is the only way that we are going to hope to address the problems that exist in any real way.

There is quite a debate going on at the moment in the social policy arena: what is the proper division between state provision and private provision? A couple of years ago the progressive sector was holding out for very substantial state delivery of direct services, not only state subsidies. My hunch is that there is a move away from that at the moment, towards an increasing role for a vigorous NGO or private sector. The government at the moment is putting welfare auxiliaries in place in government departments, and subsidising them in private welfare organisations. What's your feeling about where this kind of category of worker should be?

Are you talking about the people from communities? Barefoot specialists? I think that they should remain outside government circles. It is very important to have NGOs who are able to hold up a mirror to the state. I don't think we can presume that things are going to be marvellous at any time in the future. So it will always be important for people outside the government to be able to hold up a mirror to it so it can see its reflection, and see what it's doing, and see where it is not delivering.

At the same time, though, I do think that the state needs to be challenged to have a serious input into welfare. It is all very well for it to expect other people to adhere to the Christian ethic of care about thy neighbour, but it itself doesn't do it. It must be made accountable for a serious input into welfare. With regard to responsibilities as I see it you would have your NGOs and your community based organisations who would receive outside funding for a programme similar to this so you would have your fieldworkers who would link into your community based organisations.

From the side of the state, if they want to train more professionals — which are needed, we do need professional social workers — I think there should be a kind of internship. They do this in the medical profession — you actually have to serve a certain period of time as a houseman, or houseperson! The same thing should happen in welfare — that the state should make it compulsory for social workers to be interned in rural areas. There should be packages of perks for state social workers to locate in rural areas.

The state needs to be challenged to have a serious input into welfare

The state should make it compulsory for social workers to be interned in rural areas

Social workers should be servants of the community, as opposed to being there just because it's a job

For obvious reasons there is an unwillingness for people to locate there. You are going to have to compensate somehow. At some point the state is going to have to take on the models of welfare work that are coming out from communities. We need to take this type of model and get the state to implement a very different social welfare system in South Africa.

It is up to the government to do that so that the barefoot specialists will have a link in the chain of professionals to refer to. At the moment if a rural fieldworker needs to deal with a child abuse case, or if there is someone who is indigent and needs food parcels, professionals are not there.

I also think that there will have to be a rethink of the whole education of the social workers. Social workers are not there doing people a big favour. Welfare is peoples' legal right which they have paid for through taxes. All social workers should be servants of the community, as opposed to being there just because it's a job — and they have a big responsibility.

So I would see the meshing of foreign funding and community based organisations, with the organisations linking in with more responsible state social workers who are happy to be where they are, and happy to be doing what they are doing.

Another one of the great debates of the moment in development is this: in a future South Africa, how are we going to go to scale? Building up model programmes has taught us a number of very important lessons, but often we are not reaching enough people. The problem (and this is not a very popular thing to say) is that many of the models depend on particularly unique individuals who are charismatic, who have got vision, who can win trust, who are quite out of the ordinary. And there are not enough of them around. Can you comment about this, about what would be needed to go to scale, to have more impact over a wider area?

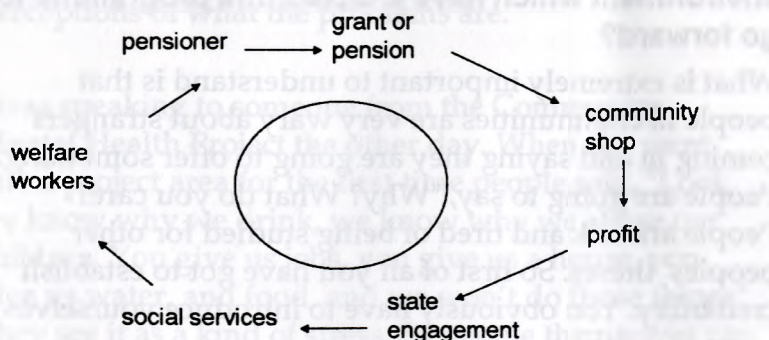
Let me start the answer from a different place. I know that there are many cases where advice centres have closed down, and this has made me wonder about the dynamism of this programme. Where does it come from? I think it is because it's not just about welfare per

se, and it's not just about advice per se. There is a development aspect to it as well, and I think that it's this involvement with people as a whole that has given this programme its dynamism.

Let me explain it differently: A person qualifies for a state grant — in order for them not to become totally dependent on that money, you must be able to access them to a means of involving themselves say in chicken production, or in a co-op, so you are involving people in development as well. You involve them in how to use that money so that they become independent, and they can have some control over their own lives.

In this programme we are using welfare to access people to money, and to information. We then put that in a kind of a broad development perspective. People then use their money to for a sewing group or a chicken cooperative or whatever they would choose to do, or even to put their children through school — that itself has social ramifications for the future. This programme sees welfare as a dynamic force that actually can start other factors moving, which will improve the social fabric generally. For example through a programme such as the Mabheleni Community Shop instead of pensions being viewed as a purely welfarist intervention by the state they become the means of generating further income. The pension or grant is used to buy goods from the shop — the net that feeds the money back into community structures. In other words the input from the community shop is then used to engage the state as well as to provide basic social services — which include the salary of the welfare fieldworkers. So as long as the amount of money from pensions generated in the Gross Geographic Income is greater than the fieldworkers salaries, the net has increased its profit and the circle is repeated.

The dynamism of this programme comes from the fact that it is not just about welfare per se but also about development



Model from Mabheleni

A feature of poverty is that people have no choices

Can I just be quite clear on this? The fieldworkers help people to get an old age pension, or a disability grant, or a maintenance grant. Those clients then are perfectly free to do with their money what they like. But the fieldworker encourages those clients to come and become part of some group, and use part of their money for membership or for materials. Is this an explicit policy?

In Groutville, people started saying that they would like to set up a chicken cooperative. So the CORD person who helped set up the aquaculture project at Mboza, moved down to Groutville. She helped organise and train those people who had expressed an interest in broiler production. CORD prefunded each person R400 to buy the day-old chicks and to set up the structures (chicken coops). But people were able to buy in because they were getting money through pensions. So that is the way it happened. It's just a facility that is available. And because the different people in CORD move around from area to area, and because people from the community also come through to CORD's central office, people are aware of what the possibilities are.

I believe that a feature of poverty is that people have no choices. One of the problems is that they have no information about what choices there are. Once people become aware that there is a choice, that if they want to invest their pension in a cooperative effort, they can, the possibility is there, and it can be done.

Earlier I asked you about problems of going to scale: a closely related challenge is that of replicability — can programmes such as this be copied by others? you have commented before on how this programme grew organically. It can never be organic in the same way to anyone else. Can you try and identify the factors, aside from your commitment, your enthusiasm, your working environment which have enabled this programme to go forward?

What is extremely important to understand is that people in communities are very wary about strangers coming in and saying they are going to offer something. People are going to say, "Why? What do you care?" People are sick and tired of being studied for other peoples' theses. So first of all you have got to establish credibility. You obviously have to introduce yourselves

to and meet with the community structures to begin with. And to establish credibility, for people to see that you are not going to make promises which you can't keep, you have got to go in there with an instant delivery. From there people will be able to say, "Hey, these people are actually quite clear about what they are doing and the end product is community empowerment. It is not just empowerment for this outsider who is doing it!" One possible thing to go in on is water, because that is a given problem in most rural areas, but welfare is also a useful point of entry. If you can go and get some success stories with some old people who have been sitting there dying because there is no one out there to support them, it has an impact. Suddenly these people have a social worth again. It's amazing what an injection of capital to a household can actually do to the worth of the person who is bringing it in.

Once you have started in an area in such a way, then you will get all the classic problems, like health and child care, coming to the fore. People start prioritising those needs, and then you can go forward.

On the other hand, I also think what's happening in Matatiele is particularly exciting, because it's not just ad hoc. The water team has gone in with water delivery to show they are actually serious about what they are doing and at the same time, CORD is employing three town and regional planning interns who are going into the area talking to people to prioritise needs.

Whichever way you go in, you need to go in with the idea of making that community viable. You have to be sure that you have worked with all the other organisations first so that they are prepared to give you backup once people start to throw up their own perceptions of what the problems are.

I was speaking to someone from the Community Mental Health Project the other day. When she went into a project area for the first time people said, "Look we know why we drink, we know why we abuse our children. You give us jobs, you give us a house, you give us water, and food, and we won't do those things". They see it as a kind of stress. So people themselves can

Water and welfare are two useful points of entry into rural communities for service organisations because it is possible to implement quick delivery

It's amazing what an injection of capital to a household can actually do to the worth of the person who is bringing it in

What is important is how you approach the problem, and whether the people are involved

articulate the holistic nature of their problems. And if you are going to be serious about going into an area, you have got to be serious about how you are going to address the problems. And of course you can predict with some surety what the problems will be, the kind of typical characteristics of poverty.

Absolutely. It's not that unique from area to area. Of course there are regional variations, but you can make broad generalisations.

Yes, and you know you are going to come across them. But what is important is how you approach the problem, and whether the people are involved. I think one of the most dreadful development failures that I ever saw was on a programme on the Sudan where people had come in — typical top down stuff — and put in all these windmills, all this machinery for water. Then they left for political reasons, and they hadn't trained one local person to operate the machines. What they left behind are people who are worse off than they were before, because for a little while they had a taste of clean water. And they left behind these obscene structures, lying there with no one able to use them. To me this says: rather don't get involved if you can't do it properly. You will make matters worse.

Welfare grants are not just about getting money — they have social repercussions as well

There is rightfully a lot of concern in the country right now about the breakdown of family life, with particular concern about what is happening to African family life. Can you say something about the effect of your programme, if any, on family life, on the survival of families?

You have to look at the fact that getting welfare grants is not just about getting money. It has a whole lot of social repercussions as well. First of all it gives value to somebody who before had been marginalised because they were just another mouth to feed — they were another albatross around the neck of the household. Where an elderly person or a sick person can get the household access to a grant, the grant will give that person some status which they didn't have before.

Welfare is a kind of investment for the future

That money is then used either for rent or more often than not for education. And with the education crisis and the unemployment crisis today, I see welfare as a kind of investment for the future. It goes further than the household. Some of it is used to pay school fees for

the children who are then educated, and who are then likely to be more employable than somebody who didn't have any primary or secondary education because there was no money to pay for school fees or to buy school uniforms. So a grant can have this kind of social as well as economic multiplier effect.

Getting people the grants can be very frustrating. I am thinking of a woman who travelled miles on foot to get to the fieldworker's home in Groutville. She had been refused a grant before. We had to get all sorts of information like schooling reports and how important the maintenance grant is for schooling.

Why has there been such a difficulty with maintenance grants?

The authorities are just not giving them. People who have had them are being cut off. New applications are not getting through. We have had only one or two success stories with maintenance grants, which are vital to family life. I said to the grant official, "Given the fact that you know of the unemployment problems, given the fact that there are no child care facilities, and that these women are performing a vital function by looking after the children, thereby lessening the propensity for violence in the future, since unnurtured children can grow into angry adults — surely you should be more than willing to provide these women with a grant for the time that their children are at home?" To me it is perfectly logical.

Okay, I want to continue with replication and impact of programmes. CORD pays you, and CORD pays fieldworkers who help people get access to state grants. But in the case of Mabheleni, the fieldworkers are paid by the profits from the community shop. Would you see that as an ideal? As the opposite of a top-down programme? Is it a possible model for replication?

The strength of the Mabheleni welfare programme is that it is truly community based. I do not see why it cannot be replicated in other areas. It is not necessary to have a community controlled shop as the catalyst. It could be organised through any community based income generating programme. You need a broader vision to be able to see the social investment value of the welfare fieldworkers.

Maintenance grants are being cut off by the authorities – we have had only one or two successes in obtaining them

When removing a child from an abuser, you like to know that it is going to a better place – when state social workers don't care, your whole hope for this child is shaken

Can we get on to what you think are problems that the programme has had and is likely to have. You have mentioned the fieldworkers saying they need better communication skills, and you have said how they feel that welfare work has a low status. What other things have been constraints on the programme as a whole?

What we have found absolutely pivotal is transport. In order for people to reach those that are in most need, who are by definition the people furthest away, the fieldworkers need some form of transport to get to and fro. They don't have an office. We are hoping to build an office so that people they are not reaching or are very far away will know that they can come on a certain day and find a fieldworker there. But still, it is vital that the fieldworkers continue visiting homesteads on an outreach basis.

Another problem that is just very basic — the weather. Obviously if it is raining in the rural areas you can't get out, you can't use the roads. That's been a constraint.

Another problem has been the attitude of some rural-based state social workers, who have seen the work of the fieldworkers as a threat. This has two results. First, it leads to a kind of a depression on the part of the fieldworkers: if you are going to take a child away from an abuser, you would like to know that it is actually going to a better place. And if you have got a state social worker telling you that you may as well throw that child back on the street (because that is where he picked it up from), your whole faith for what you are doing for this child is shaken, because your gateway to your place of safety is the social worker.

You can take a case so far, but once you get to the door of the state machinery, you start to get a little bit nervous about what you are doing. You are hoping to improve the chances of this child being properly nurtured, and the gateway to assistance is a person who doesn't care. And then if you consider some of the 'places of safety', you start to think, what am I doing, placing a child in those conditions? So we can do so much, but the state has to start getting its own house in order too.

We can only do so much, but the state has to start getting its own house in order

The second thing that is problematic is that in some instances the government social workers and other government employees feel so threatened by the 'dirtying-of-hands' work that the fieldworkers do. They then put a political complexion onto the work with the intention of getting other people up in arms and destroying the initiative which will then mean they are safe again.

This has been a problem in each of the areas and there have been meetings between various CORD area managers and tribal authorities where we have tried to explain the fact that the fieldworkers take anybody — their client is the poor, the rural poor. They are certainly not biased towards any political grouping.

The programme started in 1988. I am aware that your perspective will be different from the perspective of the fieldworkers. But speaking for yourself, in your role in the programme, can you tell me about the moments when you have thought, "Aha! Now we are getting there! Now we are on the right path!"

One moment would be a time when one of the fieldworkers came down from Maputaland. She told me she had managed to get an old man backpay which ran into thousands of rands. He was so thrilled, and he bought her a two litre cool drink. She was so happy for this man.

Again, the removal of an abused child from Groutville was important for me. We didn't put her in a place of safety. One of the community members took her in, into a better place. Another time I was in Groutville visiting homesteads with the fieldworkers. There was this baby lying on the floor. He was tiny. The mother had no form of income, and the child was just a scrap of humanity. The fieldworker gave this a priority — the mother had to be helped because she was an alcoholic. Both were hospitalised and they managed to get the child onto a drip and to start salvaging him. He has stayed in hospital for about three months. When you can put a face to what you are doing it makes a huge difference.

The fieldworkers' clients are the rural poor – they are not biased towards any political grouping

The problem of the current bureaucracy is that it does not facilitate – one is always up against something

And give an example of an occasion when you felt really frustrated or angry.

There was an old man who is a deaf mute in the squatter area of Groutville. The fieldworker tried three times for a disability grant, so I finally got personally involved. I phoned the official in charge of grants. I told him I couldn't understand why a person who is 100 percent permanently disabled was being refused a disability grant. What he said — that this deaf mute could possibly find work in the cane fields — really horrified me, and put into perspective just what we are up against. This is the problem of the bureaucracy; it is not a thing that facilitates — you feel like you are up against something, a mindset.

I said to him, "Why don't you go out and meet the people who you are disenabling, and then see if you feel good about what you are doing? You are not just sitting neutrally at your computer. Your computer is not the end result of what you are doing. You are pushing buttons there, wiping off sheets of names. Why don't you go and see those people and see what it actually means to them"?

The man's grant came through after the fourth application. It was important to me not just letting it rest, continually going backwards and forwards against the magnitude of this bureaucratic mindset and finally finding this man's pension for him — getting it to him, and it making a difference to his life.

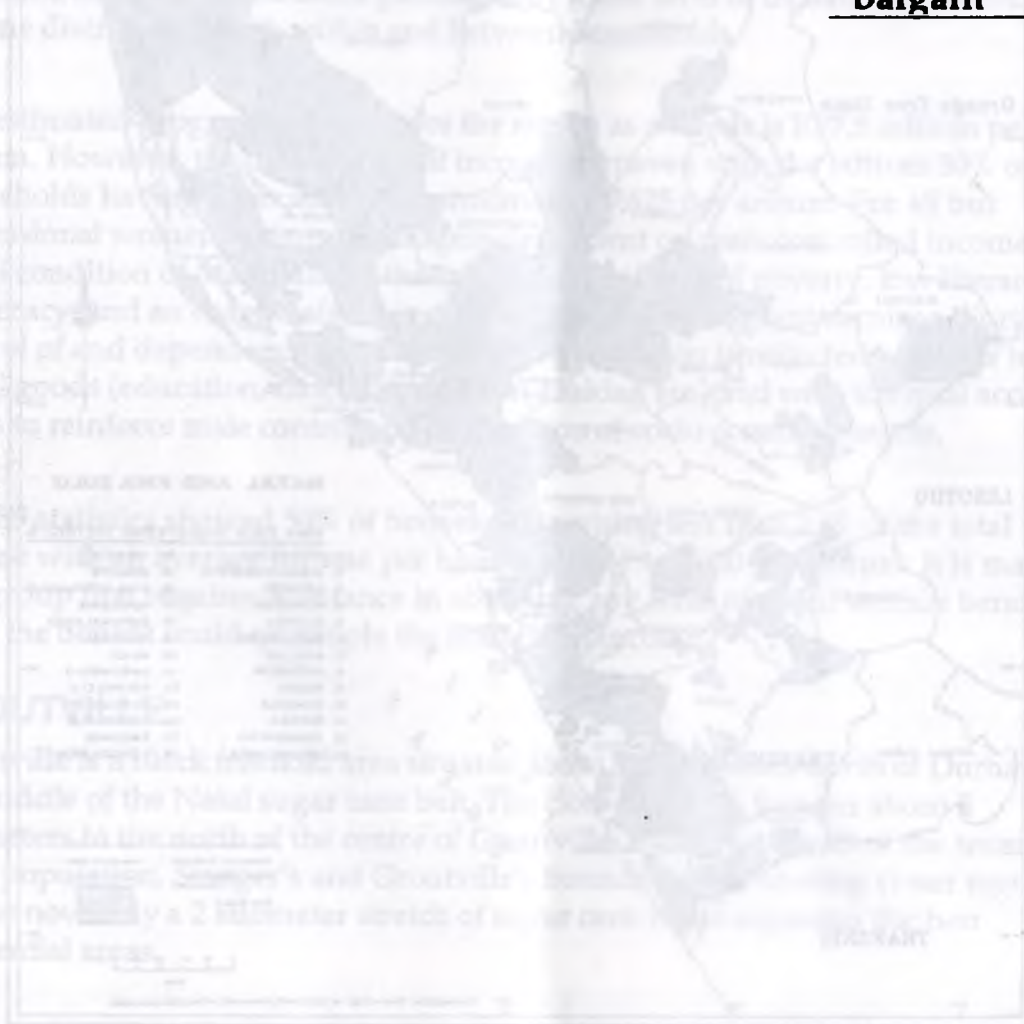
If you had to leave the programme tomorrow, would it go on?

I think you would have to have a link person. I think you would have to have somebody in an urban area who could refer problems to other professionals which the fieldworkers cannot solve. Also, it is a very lonely arduous job out there for the fieldworkers, slogging it out, going from household to household. I believe they have got to have a sense that somebody cares. So whether it's me, or whether it's someone else to come and visit them once a month and talk about their work and to say, "Yes, oh that's great, you've got it" — that kind of positive reinforcement is very important.

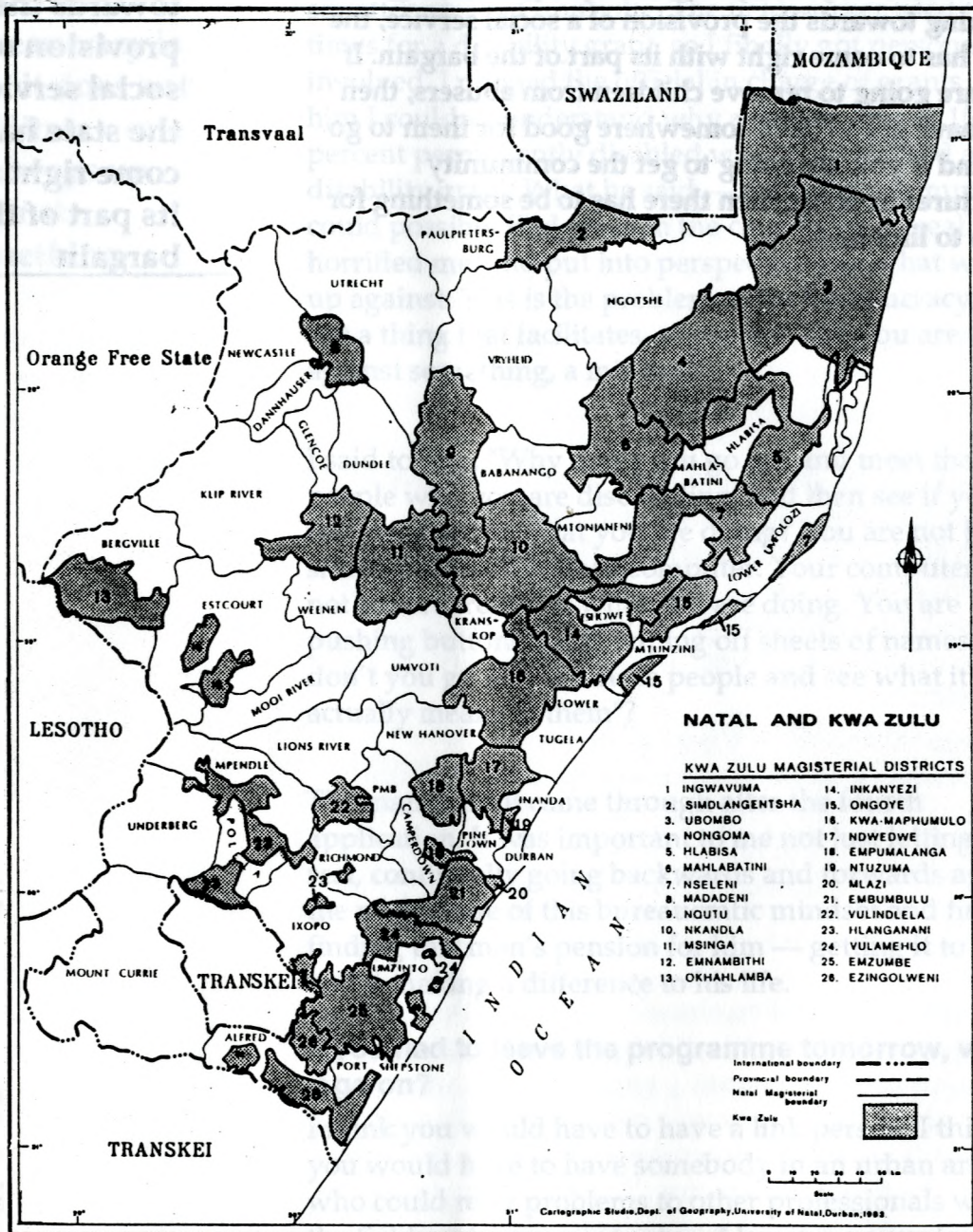
Any last comment you would like to make?

I really do think it is absolutely vital that we don't start organising at the grassroots level and then leading people to an abyss. If you get the people on the ground working towards the provision of a social service, the state has to come right with its part of the bargain. If you are going to remove children from abusers, then you have got to have somewhere good for them to go to. And if you are going to get the community structures in place, then there has to be something for them to link into.

If you get the people on the ground working towards the provision of a social service, the state has to come right with its part of the bargain



The population was initially estimated to be 30 000 by 1960 and 40 000 (Regional Water Board) in 1970. But official statistics in South Africa are notorious for their inaccuracies and must be treated with caution. More than 80% of the population is under 20 years of age with only some 2% of the population being in the age bracket of 65 years or older. As with other black communities in South Africa, Grahamville is characterised by high levels of unemployment, particularly in the 15-25 year age bracket. High levels of unemployment in this age bracket are of special concern inasmuch as those who will ensure the physical reproduction of society have little or no direct access to social assets.



Brief area profiles

MAPUTALAND

Maputaland is the collective name for the Ubombo and Ingwavuma districts of Northern Natal. The population (212 000) is one of the most economically depressed and least serviced sectors of South African society. This is well illustrated by social welfare indicators such as levels of illiteracy, income status and distribution, and access to State health facilities. Illiteracy levels are exceptionally high, with some 88% of males and 94% of females over the age of 30 having no formal education. A restricted access to education is paralleled by a low level of income and uneven income distribution both within and between households.

The estimated geographic income for the region as a whole is R57.5 million per annum. However, the distribution of income is uneven with the bottom 50% of households having an income of approximately R625 per annum. For all but professional women, women are largely dependent on male controlled income. The social condition of Maputaland, then, is one of generalised poverty, low literacy and numeracy, and an exaggerated dependency upon male migrant earnings. Further, control of and dependency upon male migrant earnings is reflected in access to social goods (education, nutrition, decision-making etc.) and such unequal access tends to reinforce male control and domination of socio-economic assets.

In 1989 statistics showed 50% of households earning less than 20% of the total income with an average income per households of +- R600 per annum. It is mainly this group that requires assistance in obtaining any form of social welfare benefit as often the benefit could quintuple the household income.

GROUTVILLE

Groutville is a black freehold area situated about 75 kilometers north of Durban in the middle of the Natal sugar cane belt. The closest town is Stanger about 8 kilometers to the north of the centre of Groutville. With the growth of the tenant slum population, Stanger's and Groutville's boundaries are moving closer together so that now only a 2 kilometer stretch of sugar cane fields separates the two residential areas.

The population was officially estimated to be 30 000 in 1985, and 90 000 (Umgeni Water Board) in 1990. But official statistics in South Africa are notorious for their inaccuracies and must be treated with caution. More than 50% of the population is under 20 years of age with only some 5% of the population being in the age bracket of 65 years or older. As with other black communities in South Africa, Groutville is characterised by high levels of unemployment, particularly so for those under the age of 30. High levels of unemployment in this age bracket are of special concern inasmuch as those who will ensure the physical reproduction of society have little or no direct access to social assets.

The seriousness of unemployment in Groutville is compounded by the limited employment opportunities within the area and the fact that the vast majority of workers necessarily commute to Durban on a daily basis. Transportation costs are high relative to incomes and research has shown that for poor they can reach as high as one third of household budgets. Disposable income is thus extremely low, and necessarily goes to support those in need. The process of in-migration into Groutville has transformed an agricultural community into an impoverished urbanising area on the edge of a growing small industrial town (Stanger).

The growth of Groutville relative to that of Stanger reflects State bias in Apartheid development. Groutville is hopelessly under-resourced in terms of its access to basic needs. In many ways this is reflected in its lack of access to clean water. While the Umvoti and Ntshaweni Rivers transverse Groutville, they are polluted by human, agricultural and industrial wastes and have been declared unfit for human consumption unless properly treated. Groutville's only access to clean water is through water tankers that deliver from Stanger. Groutville is divided into different 'Wards'. Each ward having its own socio-economic identity. The ward that consists of slum clusters — Ward 5 — is populated by people who are amongst the most disadvantaged in Groutville and who through relocation have had their bureaucratic access dislocated.

MABHELENI

Mabheleni is a rural area situated in KwaZulu approximately 150 km from Durban on the South coast of Natal. The nearest town, Hibberdene, is approximately 40 km from Mabheleni.

The road leading to the area is a winding gravel surface which becomes impassable during the wet weather. The extent of the area that the local people regard as Mabheleni is approximately 16 km in radius. The topography of Mabheleni is steep and mountainous. Thus, for example, the land owned by the Catholic Mission in the area ranges in height from 1 977 meters to 2 386 meters above sea level. There is very little level land in the area. The tributaries of the Mzimhlanga and Quha rivers run through the area.

The only study available is one reflecting the quality of life of tenants living on the farm owned by the Kwa St. Joseph Mission. This study was undertaken by Jean Davidson in 1986 and commissioned by the Bishops of the Zulu Pastoral Region. Although this study is limited in providing a representative view of all the people of Mabheleni in that it was restricted to the 27 families living on the mission property, it nevertheless gives some idea of the social profile of the population of the area. The lack of reliable research information for Mabheleni is equally true of the South Coast of Natal in general, and CORD anticipates addressing this problem in the near future.

There are approximately 20 000 people living in Mabheleni. One distinctive feature indicated by the Davidson study is that the broad base of the population pyramid

are the youth-nearly 70% of those surveyed fell into the 0-30 age bracket, and of those living on the church farm, 50% were children of 15 years or younger.

At least 50% of the population are migrants who work in the Durban and Scottburgh areas. This situation is a result of the limited job opportunities in the area and the rugged topography agricultural endeavour. As with other rural areas, a higher proportion of males as opposed to females are migrant workers.

Of those people who consider Mabheleni to be their home area, the following seems to prevail; most of the children under the age of 15 live in the area; more than half of those between the ages 16 to 30 have left in pursuit of jobs; nearly all males between the ages of 31 and 60 are migrants; most of those above the age of 60 are residents in Mabheleni.

It is difficult to assess the educational achievement of the people of Mabheleni as this would require an intensive study. The Davidson study, although not necessarily representative, gives a good idea of the educational achievements of all the adults on mission farm who are of working age. According to this study 50% of the population had some form of primary school education, 30% had attended secondary school and no one had achieved their matriculation (South Africa's school leaving certificate). What little is known about the rest of the area clearly indicates that the situation outside the mission farm is worse.

In all there ten primary schools and three junior secondary schools and no pre-schools or creche facilities. Recently a clinic staffed by three nurses has been built by the KwaZulu Government. However, the topography of the area makes access to the clinic difficult. The nursing staff acknowledge this and express a keen interest to be involved in any primary health care initiative that will make health care generally accessible.

Level land for building homes is limited and people are forced to cut flat ridges into the steep slopes to build their homes. The poor quality of homes has made people easy victims of floods. Most homes are built of mud with thatch for roofing.

Mabheleni is without an adequate water supply, but is flooded during the rainy season. Water is normally obtained from the streams or from the natural unprotected springs. Many people have to spend an hour or more on a single trip to collect water. The lack of an adequate and protected water supply has forced people to share their domestic water with livestock.

Apart from the clinic and schools the only other service facilities are general dealers who provide a postal service and a restricted access to telephones. Furthermore, the Catholic Church through the St.Patrick's Farmers Association performs a limited outreach activity. It is involved in improving the living conditions of tenants on

church land. However, their outreach activities are not extended to the community at large.

The 3 areas — Maputaland, Groutville and Mabheleni are all very different in terms of topography, demography and concentration of households: e.g. — whereas in Maputaland the households are widely spread; in Groutville there are slum areas and in Mabheleni the mountainous nature of the region makes access difficult.

These differences however do not alter the basic similarities regarding the nature of poverty in rural areas only the priorities change.

The following CORD publications can be ordered from the address below:

Workshop proceedings

Tourism workshop, Workshop Proceedings, Forum for Research in Maputaland, May 1990.

Research and the Environment, Workshop Proceedings, Forum for research in Maputaland, May 1989.

Working papers

Natural Resource Management, Rural Development and Regional Planning in the Natal/KwaZulu Region. Working paper 1. CORD, 1989.

Integrated aquaculture within the Mboza Village Project: A case study of applied participatory research. Working paper 2. CORD, 1990.

Overcoming Apartheid's land legacy in Maputaland (Northern Natal). Working paper 3. CORD, 1990.

The limits of traditional ethnic paradigms in the explanation of rural social organisation and survival strategies. Working paper 4. CORD, 1990.

Technically skilled but unemployed: A neglected aspect of Apartheid education. Working paper 5. CORD, 1989.

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