



An exploration into the challenges faced by rural communities in the  
effective use of land for subsistence agriculture for poverty alleviation: a  
case study of the Mpongo and Twecwana communities in the  
Eastern Cape.

A mini dissertation submitted in the fulfillment of the requirement for the  
degree of  
Master of Social Science with  
Specialisation in  
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at the

University of Fort Hare: East London Campus

by

### **Declaration**

I hereby wish to declare that unless stated otherwise, this dissertation is result of my own work that has not been submitted for any degree in any university and that all sources that I have used or cited have been acknowledged.

Xolani Mlonyeni

November 2010

Signed .....

Date .....



### Abstract

The escalation of poverty simultaneously with the decline of small-scale agriculture in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape in particular, raises serious concerns within the government circles in South Africa and among researchers. Of the nine provinces of South Africa, the rate of poverty in the Eastern Cape is a pathetic one and is the largest contributor to poverty statistics in the whole of South Africa. Machete (2004) stresses that high levels of poverty are visible in the rural areas and the large proportions of the people who are poor in South Africa are found in the rural areas. It is widely accepted that small-scale agriculture plays a vital role in and contributes substantially to socio-economic life of people living in the rural areas and is one of the strategies most suited to combat poverty for the majority of the people in the rural areas.

This study explored the challenges that limit the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture as a strategy for poverty alleviation at Mpongo and Twecwana villages in Tsholomnqa. The study adopted a qualitative approach in order to get in-depth understanding of the challenges as experienced by the participants. The sample comprised of fifteen (15) subsistence farmers and three (3) extension officers from the department of agriculture. The data was collected from the participants through the focus group technique with an interview schedule containing open ended questions.

The findings of the study indicated that the communities lack capital such as money, machinery, labour and other resources needed to pursue agricultural livelihoods. The findings also showed that agricultural infrastructure such as dams, rivers, fencing have deteriorated. Machete (2004, p.8) concurring with Pote (2008) says “inadequate physical infrastructure in the rural areas, particular in the former homeland areas remains a major obstacle to smallholder agricultural growth in South Africa”. In the two villages the situation is worsened by a total lack of irrigation scheme development.

less interested to participate and pursue agricultural based activities in the rural areas. Williams et al (2008) claim that young people are unwilling to pursue agricultural studies as career of choice because of negative image attached to it. Many youths regard agriculture as an activity which belongs to adult and ordinary people.

Drought was also cited as the worst natural disaster that has threatened the already disadvantaged small scale agriculture in these rural areas. These deficiencies have rendered subsistence agricultural centred activities to a total collapse.

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## ACRONYMS

AIDS- ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME

ASGISA- ACCELERATED SHARED GROWTH INITIATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA

ANC- AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

CD- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CV- CURRICULUM VITAE

EDP- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

EPWP- EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES

FSP- FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

GET- GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

HIV- HUMAN INFECTIOUS VIRUS

IFAD- INTERNATIONAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

IRD-INTERGRATED RURL DEVELOPMENT

IPA- INTERPRETIVE PHEMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

FSP- FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME

NGO- NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

RDP- RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

PLAS- PRO-ACTIVE LAND AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY

SMMEs- SMALL, MEDIUM MICRO ENTERPRISES

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Poverty is one of the social ills which continues to threaten many lives in the rural communities of South Africa generally and in the Eastern Cape in particular. Official figures also indicate that poverty in this province is extensive and multi-dimensional and a multi-dimensional approach is thus necessary if it is to be significantly alleviated. For example, The Strategic Framework for Growth and Development 2004-2014 of the Eastern Cape (2003) has highlighted several causes of poverty ranging from lack of income, lack access to opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, skills, knowledge, self-confidence to lack of access to decision making. Dzivaski and Jacobs (2010) also note that poverty in the Eastern Cape is also linked to historical economic neglect on the part of the past and present governments.

Since 1994, the new government of South Africa has formulated and developed policies in an attempt to reduce the continued escalation of poverty rates that are encircling communities. However, these policies such as the White Paper on Agriculture (1995), the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) and the White Paper on Land Policy (1997), are not implemented effectively. It is widely accepted that a gap exists between policy making and implementation in South Africa. Fukweni (2009) observes that there is a lack of understanding among policy makers about the nature of poverty they are aiming to address. Fukweni continues to say the gap that is identified includes lack of joint planning and policy integration in implementing Community Development (CD) initiatives. Manqina (2009) asserts that an integrated approach in CD is critical to address poverty and underdevelopment more effectively.

Historically rural communities have made their living from subsistence agriculture. Machete (2004) is of the opinion that agriculture plays a vital role in the economy of

designated for the development and improvement of the economy, and providing employment opportunities for its citizens (De Wet, 1985; Dixon, 1990).

Furthermore, commercial agriculture is closely associated with the rich white minority group and it seems to focus on the promotion of privileges for a few capitalists. For example, De Wet and Bekker (1985, p.27) assert that "The South African state supported the development of commercial and capitalist farming among whites at the expense of blacks". The black majority was left behind through a number of discriminatory policies and legislation that prevented them from actively participating in the commercial agricultural sector.

Subsistence agriculture, on the other hand has been one of the dominant features and part of the livelihood activity of the African people especially in the former homelands of Transkei and Ciskei, including the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana. Crop cultivation and livestock keeping were the foundation for food security and entrepreneurship activity. People produced their own food mainly for private consumption and also to supplement other sources of income to ensure long term food security and to fight poverty. The Agricultural Development Strategy (2005, p.9) states that "the traditional pattern in the rural villages is rooted in crop production in small household gardens and larger arable plots, and includes livestock ranging on communal commonage." This implies that the usage of small gardens and communal fields for crop production was indeed an important factor in providing for subsistence of the rural communities and in preventing poverty.

Studies conducted by scholars and academics, such as De Wet and Bekker 1985; Bank and Qambata 1999; Baiphethi and Jacob (2009) reveal a substantial decline in subsistence agriculture among black South Africans, in the Eastern Cape in particular.

nearby towns and cities, and, more recently the huge dependency on social grants. Labour migration to the cities and towns has had a negative impact on agricultural development in the rural areas because it has deprived rural communities of their human resource.

One of the positive steps taken by the government of National Unity in 1994 was to address issues of poverty, unemployment and inequality, focusing specifically to the rural areas (Reconstruction and Development Programme, 1994). The South African government developed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) policy framework as part of addressing a number of social and economic issues in rural development. Also, as part of rural development initiatives, RDP encouraged the use of land for agricultural purposes and other productive purposes (RDP, 1994).

This study sought to find out why there is a decline in the practice of subsistence agriculture among rural communities and explores the challenges and obstacles that the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana are facing in land use for subsistence agriculture for the alleviation of poverty.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The issue of poverty in South Africa is a matter of serious concern, especially in the Eastern Cape. Many research studies have found that the poverty rate in the Eastern Cape is widespread, with an estimated forty-three percent (43%) of provinces' population living below the poverty line (Eastern Cape Department of Social Development, 2009). The Amathole District Municipality, where the study is based, is one of the poorest districts in the province, and it contributes to twenty-six (26%) percent of the poverty gap in the Eastern Cape (Eastern Cape Department of Social

This study charges that there is a link between poverty and decline in subsistence agriculture as experienced in the Eastern Cape generally including the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana. The decline of subsistence agriculture at Mpongo and Twecwana, and in some other areas, has contributed to other social challenges such as low income levels, ill-health, low standard of education, malnutrition, theft, crime and unemployment.

As an educator working in these communities for more than fifteen years I have observed that the fields that were used for crop production have been lying fallow for many years and this has resulted in the escalation of poverty which is reflected in the poor health, malnutrition and under-development of learners as well as the escalation of HIV/AIDS infection. This is a cause of concern as Nell, Wessels and Machedi (2000, P.812) note “Poor nutrition and health in the early childhood affect cognitive development with consequent losses during adulthood”.

The Food Security Programmes (FSP), such as Siyazondla and Siyakhula, that have been introduced by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development are also not functional in these two communities as there are no visible signs of flourishing plants growth in the gardens. Siyazondla and Siyakhula programmes are meant for emerging subsistence farmers producing mainly for household consumption and using allotments at the back and side of the home sites. The implementation of the FSPs among these communities has failed to the extent that most of the gardens, plots and communal fields in the area remain uncultivated for several years and some are without proper fencing, and this has resulted in communities becoming food insecure with a general decline in their socio-economic conditions.

role to play in poverty alleviation, job creation, use of local resources, improvement of nutrition and health, development of skills, and provision of long term livelihoods for many individuals, households and communities” (Amathole District Municipality 2005).

Statistics South Africa’ in its Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2009), also reports that major economic sectors have been affected by massive job losses in South Africa. The decline in the economy may have a negative impact on agricultural development, more specifically for the people who are living in the rural areas and who are primarily dependent on agriculture to make a living. If this trend is going to persist it implies that rural development goals of eradicating poverty are not going to be sustained. With conditions still not positive for the poor in the global and domestic economies, which are still unstable and vulnerable, the situation is still uncertain for the rural and the under-privileged people in ensuring household food security, and the situation is going to be worse for those who do not qualify for social grants.

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by the rural communities in the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture for poverty alleviation at Mpongo and Twecwana villages in Tsholomnqa.

### **1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

This study posits that there is a positive relationship between poverty and the decline in the use of land for subsistence agriculture and sustainable living in the Eastern Cape Province. The aim of the study is therefore to explore the challenges that limit effective land use for subsistence agriculture as a strategy for poverty alleviation.

#### **1.3.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question is: What are the challenges which confront the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana in effectively using land for subsistence agriculture as a means of earning a living.

The study also asks the following questions:

- What are the current means of livelihood adopted by the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana?
- What are the communities' perceptions of subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy?
- What can be done to enhance the use of subsistence agriculture as a means of livelihood?

#### **1.5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

In this study the researcher chose the exploratory design as the main research design. The exploratory design, according to Kuma (2005) is appropriate to explore an area where little is known about a particular study area. The exploratory design helped the researcher to gain more insight into the problem situation, and how the participants interpret and perceive phenomena and events in their day to day situation.

The study also used a qualitative methodology in order to get an in-depth understanding of the problems experienced by the participants. One of the advantages of using the qualitative method in this study was that it explored the feelings, attitudes and opinions of participants, and how they interpret the situation as they experience it. This is confirmed by Hakim (1987) who says that the qualitative approach provides rich information about individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and viewpoints, and how they interpret events and circumstances. The qualitative approach has helped the

#### 1.6. LOCATION AND POPULATION OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the two villages, Mpongo and Twecwana, at Tsholomnqa in the Eastern Cape. Kamer (2005) described population as a class, or family, living in a city or town from which the researcher selected a few participants to question in order to find answers to the research questions. The population of the study was mainly **subsistence farmers from the two villages, and the extension officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.** Fifteen (15) subsistence farmers and three (3) extension officers took part in this study.

The study made use of purposive sampling to recruit the participants. Bless and Higson –Smith (1995) state that a purposive sample relies on the opinion of the researcher in determining sample representatives. The purposive sample was operationalized by employing homogeneous and typical case study strategies. This implies that the researcher selected the participants who are subsistence farmers, and also made the selection with the assistance of the local community members.

#### 1.7. DATA COLLECTION

Focus group interviews were the main data gathering technique used in this study. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (1999) focus group interviews are conducted in the form of a group that discusses a specific topic in the study area. A semi structured interview schedule with open ended questions was used to facilitate discussions. The schedule with open-ended questions gave the researcher an opportunity to raise follow-up questions, even during the process of interviewing, and the participants were not bound by the original questions that were on the schedule. The focus group discussion helped the researcher to hear diverse forms of input, views, thoughts and ideas, and what could be done to rectify the situation in this study area.

researcher began the process of reading the text, identifying and labelling themes that characterised each section of the text, and also looking at similarities and differences. One of the strengths of IPA is that it always requires the researcher to analyse what has transpired from the participants' experiences.

### **1.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Dealing with ethical issues was also an important part of this study. De Vos; Wessels; Machedi (2002) warn that persons of lower status and less power than the researcher may feel compelled to participate, or consider participation as a way of handling boredom, or of receiving certain privileges. In response to this the researcher took full responsibility for disclosing all information and the aim of the study was also explained to the participants. In addition, the researcher designed consent forms and requested permission from the participants to take part in this study, with the full assurance that their identities and information would be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

### **1.10. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

One of the limitations which the researcher encountered was that it was difficult to secure a date for the interviews with the extension officers in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Eastern Cape. One of the participants from Sample A (Mpongo) also decided to withdraw from the interviews complaining that she was tired and hungry and the interviews were too long. The researcher was left with no option but to release the participant in line with the code of ethics as prescribed in the guidelines of the Department of Social Work and Social Development at the University of Fort Hare. The researcher had also informed the participants that participation was voluntary and participants could leave at any time during the interviews. These



#### 1.11. THE VALUE OF THE STUDY

The study has assisted in identifying some challenges that still face rural communities in the use of subsistence agriculture and some gaps in the implementation of existing government policies designed to promote rural development and alleviate poverty. The recommendations have also been made on how these challenges can be addressed. The findings have also laid a foundation for future comprehensive studies. The results will also be shared with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and will provide an opportunity for the Department to identify in the study, some of the findings that may help to improve the implementation of agricultural policies and programmes. Finally, the researcher intends to share the findings with the broader communities of Mpongo and Twecwana in an attempt to empower them with information that may assist them in community development efforts.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The choice of literature for review in this study will mainly be South African, including literature pertaining to the Eastern Cape, as well as literature from abroad. One of the main purposes of a literature review is to explore intensively and extensively the work that has been done by other scholars and academics in relation to the topic under investigation, and to identify gaps and challenges that still exist.

This chapter is structured as follows: the first section provides a definition of key concepts such as community development, subsistence agriculture, poverty and poverty alleviation. The second part presents a conceptual framework on community development and subsistence agriculture as approaches to poverty alleviation. The principles of community development such as participation, empowerment and sustainability which are the core of community development are also discussed. The third section of this chapter discusses poverty and poverty alleviation with reference to the statistics of poverty in the Eastern Cape.

### **2.2. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

#### **2.2.1. Community development (CD)**

Different approaches have been adopted in the usage and meaning of the term 'community development'. One approach to defining community development is to look at the improvement in the social, economic, political, cultural, physical and personal spheres of the community, by the community. For example, Lombard (1991) defines community development as a process, method and programme that aims to improve social, economic and cultural aspects of community life with the actual involvement of

On the other hand, authors such as Gray (1998) and Travies; Mcfarlain; Van Rooyen (1999), link community development to poverty alleviation which seeks to improve underdevelopment in partnership with progressive civil structures within government, business and non-governmental organizations. Speaking from the Canadian perspective, Frank and Smith (2005) also state that CD is one of the important tools used for capacity building among the communities to enable them to solve their own problems. The Department of Social Development (2009) also highlights the enhancement and advancement of community capacity in order for the people to grow, and thereafter initiate their own development as the core aim of CD.

According to France and Henderson (1992) community development refers to active participation by the local people and also the enabling and equipping of people with knowledge, skills and values to make own their choices and make decisions to handle their own problems. Another way of viewing community development is to look at the materialist approach that links CD with the improvement of physical assets and infrastructural development (Midgley 1995). Construction of schools, clinics, roads and sanitation signal the characteristics of the materialist approach to CD. Travies *et al* (1999, p.182) in their characterization of CD say that “Upgrading the infrastructure of many under developed areas was deemed just as important as capacity building and giving people life skills and confidence”.

Lund (1987) sought to align community development with progressive movements such as community education, community work and mass education. Community development does not happen in a vacuum; instead it is focused on the people and

Midgley (1995) also emphasizes the significance of the two principles, of self-help and self-determination in community development. Self-determination is understood to be a process by which the local community initiates, leads and decides what they want to be, and how they want to achieve self-actualization. It is a well-known fact that human beings are the drivers of development, therefore the involvement of people at the local level is important, and the use of material and non-material resources is also significant. Drawing from all the definitions that have been discussed, the study adopts Lombard's definition as the working definition for the study. Lombard's definition embraces social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and personal spheres that are the core for human development. Ife (1995) also emphasizes the importance of these six spheres of development which need to be taken into account in any community development discourse.

### **2.2.2. Subsistence agriculture**

Subsistence agriculture has been described by many scholars as producing mainly for own consumption rather than producing for selling. For example, in the context of South Africa, in Nel, Wessel, Moloka, Machedi (2000) and in Williams, Masson, De Sagte, Epstein, Semwayo (2008), it is described as a process by which individual families are engaged productively in agriculture which is commonly practiced in home gardens and communal fields primarily for own consumption. Wharton (1970) also provides the most useful definition which states that subsistence agriculture is a process which refers to producing specifically for self-reliance and self-sufficiency, characterized by the total absence of commercialization and monetization. This means that subsistence agriculture is not intended to make a profit but is a process initiated by family members to enhance their livelihoods and ensure households food security on a medium to long

farming, small scale, and low income, less technology or peasant farming. According to Bank and Qambata (1999) subsistence agriculture involves activities such as fields and food garden cultivation and livestock, poultry, and pig-rearing that rural communities organize mainly for domestic consumption and also to diversify livelihoods.

Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009, p.461) attach words such as 'own production', 'households food security' and 'income diversification', in their definition of subsistence agriculture. For example, rural people construct their living by combining different sources of income generation, and other activities such as crop cultivation, livestock keeping, remittances, and self-employment, including small enterprises that form part of rural livelihoods. The production is never sold or exchanged for cash or trading. If there is a surplus, it would be distributed to the relatives, neighbours and to needy individuals in the communities. Pote (2009) also concurs that this sector refers to as 'traditional agriculture', is mainly located in the former homelands and self-governing states of the Republic of South Africa. The reserves, in particular in the former Ciskei and Transkei rural areas, are associated with the so-called unproductive, less economic viable agricultural activities.

This study chooses Nell *et al* (2000) and Williams *et al* (2008) definition as a working definition which emphasizes self-reliance and self-sufficiency in pursuing subsistence agriculture as a strategy and a developmental approach most suited to alleviating poverty in the rural areas. This study is not focused on broader subsistence living but only on crop farming as a form of subsistence agriculture in gardens and communal fields.

### **2.2.3. Poverty**

about their lives. For example, May (2000, p.5) refers to poverty as the lack of multiple resources, generally characterized by food insecurity and the inability of individuals to meet acceptable minimum standards of living. She points out that poverty is not the result of a single factor, but a combined lack of material well-being. On the other hand, Burkey (1993) emphasizes the lack of basic needs such as food, shelter and clothes as forming the essential aspects in defining poverty. This study aligns itself with the Department of Social Developments' recent definition, which defines poverty as "an inability of individuals, households or communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living." (Department of Social Development 2009). From what has been said here, it is clear that poverty means different things to different people and has been looked at as a multi-dimensional phenomenon.

## **2.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND SUPPORTING LITERATURE.**

### **2.3.1. Community development**

It is important to note that CD is reviewed in this study because it is an overall framework strategy for the development of community and embraces other interventions such as subsistence agriculture, as approaches to poverty alleviation. The study also examines the relevance of small scale agriculture in the context of CD, and how it can be used to implement the goals of community development at the local level. Ife (1998) also notes that there is a positive relationship between CD and the use of natural resources, such as land and water, in ways that are economically and environmentally sustainable and also seek to find solutions to poverty.

Nell et al (2000) also state that there is a link between food from gardens and the four

The government of South Africa believes that CD is one of the appropriate strategies that can be used to combat poverty and to improve the standard of living of the poor people (Gray, 2006; Travies et al, 1999). While community development strives to improve the socio-economic areas of human life, it is also concerned with the development of intellectual aspects of human beings through education. Education is one of the tools that can be used to effectively combat poverty (White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997). Knowledge and skills development, and the value systems also become central areas of emphasis for quality and substantial community development. Besides that, project development at the local level makes a significant contribution to raising the level of living of the ordinary people.

Campfens (1997, p.28) eloquently writes about Community Development: " In its more pragmatic sense it may be viewed as a means of mobilizing communities to join state or institutional initiatives that are aimed at alleviating poverty, solving social problems, strengthening families, fostering democracy and achieving modernization and socio-economic development " Midgley (1995) also states that CD, as envisaged by the colonial administrators, was primarily to advance and implement the goals of social development, and to contribute positively to economic growth. Social development in South Africa is a national policy which also uses CD as an intervention strategy to implement the policies of social development.

Midgley (1995) also associates the evolvement of community development with local government and agricultural extension, with particular emphasis on the utilization of the local community, their resources and labour. Midgley (1995) notes too that, one of the reasons for the establishment of community development was to improve the standard

However, Weyers (1997) says that, in order for development to be more meaningful, various role-players are important factors in community life. In this regard Midgley (1995) notes that the government, non-governmental organizations and political parties, including business, have a critical role to play in developing human potential. In addition, Community Development, as a process, includes other approaches, such as the people-centred approach, the learning process and the human development and social development approaches as social partners in development. In a people centred approach, people are the means and end for development. Lombard (1991) says "People are both the target and instruments of community development." One of the advantages of a people centred approach is that it seeks to enjoy the support of the population and to integrate various stakeholders, which include the state, NGOs, businesses, churches and Community Based Organizations (CBO). The learning process and people centred approaches place greater emphasis on independent decisions and self-determination by the poor people, for further development of the poor. The ultimate goals of community development are to improve the quality of life of the people considering the assets the communities have and by engaging various role-players and adopting different strategies

Also within the context of CD, social and co-operative movements were founded as the agents of change in communities (Campfens, 1997). The establishment of co-operatives in terms of The Co-operative Act (2005) is also beneficial to communities as this will contribute to the values of democracy, caring for others and promoting community solidarity at the local level. This means that there is a positive relationship between CD and other anti-poverty strategies mentioned above. Campfens (1997) also



increasing currency, and there is a mutual relationship between CD and agricultural economic development.

Campfens (1998) further noted that the CD approach was also adopted by government agents, especially the Department of Agriculture had asked the CD staff for help with regard to agricultural inputs and dissemination of information. This means that CD is one of the ways in which change can be brought to the communities for the attainment of development. Lombard (1991) also adds that CD is one of the appropriate turn-around strategies and ways in which communities can improve their quality of life by themselves. This implies that communities are in a better position to articulate their problems and understand their own needs, than those from outside.

De Beer and Swanepoel (1998) state that agricultural extension is emphasized and the issue of equipping people with knowledge and skills with regard to agricultural practice and techniques is the primary focus of CD used to promote self-help projects in the rural areas. Furthermore, the use of local resources in an integrated way towards development was emphasized. Community Development as a process also includes the Basic Needs Approach developed by the International Labour Organization and the World Bank. According to Bhaket (1981) the Basic Needs Approach refers to the minimum requirements needed by individuals and households to live a normal life, and it includes private consumption and socially provided services. One of the principles of the basic needs of a community is advocating poverty eradication through the provision of goods and services to the poor - and not inadequate service delivery.

Commenting from a development point of view, in a journal article, Nel and Davies

Community Development includes Integrated Rural Development. De Beer and Swanepoel (1998) state, "CD and IRD became agents of change, with special emphasis on the massive use of local resources and the delivery of services to the rural areas." Lombard (1991) says CD is one of the ways in which change can be achieved in the community for the attainment of development.

Unlike in the international arena, some scholars hold the view that in South Africa CD was not popular during the apartheid regime. Community Development began to emerge in South Africa under the auspices of church organizations and the Black Consciousness' Movement, in 1977. According to De Beer and Swanepoel (1998) and Lombard (1991) CD was carried out in an isolated and fragmented manner and on a small-scale, most often by the NGOs.

The researcher believes that CD is a learning process only if people participate for their own development. The key central principles of CD which this study intends to explore include participation, empowerment and the use of natural resources in a sustainable manner. Community development is multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary, and also works well through partnerships, to build strong relations and to involve other key sectors and disciplines in efforts to significantly eradicate poverty.

### **2.3.2. The principles of community development**

#### **2.3.2.1. Participation.**

Ife (1995 p.177) notes that the principles of community development are the basic tenets that should underlie a developmental approach to all community development. Participation has become one of the essential principles in the development efforts and in community development in particular. Having said that, the Reconstruction and

Whitlock (1978, p.9) notes that “We no longer believe that the problems of the poor people can simply be solved by the generosity of the rich.” In addition to that, Gothiram (2005, p.124) says that, in order to overcome poverty, a knowledgeable, active and empowered civil society is the most critical aspect. On that score, Shepard (1998, p.90) is of the opinion that active participation by the poor people is one of the suitable strategies that can be employed to alleviate poverty. This means that the reduction of poverty is in the hands of those affected by poverty, and the government can only give assistance in the form of funds and resources.

Burkey (1998) states that participation makes people grow and unlock salient potentialities, such as pride and selfconfidence to become innovative and creative and to stimulate responsibility and co-operation. Many scholars have found that numerous projects aimed at developing communities failed because there was a lack of participation by the communities. Participation is a getaway for knowledge construction and production. “Without such a development within the people themselves all efforts to alleviate poverty will be immensely more difficult, if not impossible” (Burkey, 1998). Development becomes problematic if it is imposed or comes from the upper structure. De Beer and Swanepoel (1998) refer to this as an example of a top-down approach with the co-opted involvement of people which leaves no room for creativity. People’s input and contribution at the local level is of utmost importance in any development today.

The first step to participation is decision making, accountability and the consequences of the community’s actions. Swanepoel (1992) is of the opinion that only if people are involved to improve their own actions, gains in self-sufficiency and self-reliance can

Swanepoel (1992) "Community development fulfills both concrete and abstract human needs." The most distinguished quality of CD is that it is tightly knotted in the principle of the learning process, participating collectively as a team, in addressing both concrete and abstract human needs, and direct involvement by the people themselves in achieving developmental goals (Swanepoel 1992).

#### **2.3.2.2 Empowerment**

Ife (1995, p.182) broadly defines empowerment to mean providing people with the resources, opportunity, knowledge and skills to increase their capabilities, to determine their own future and participate in projects and programmes that affect the life of their community. Ife (1995) also advises that "empowerment should be an aim of all community development." This means empowerment for development should be holistic to include and address the social, economic, cultural and environmental needs of the local communities. On the other hand, the dictionary for social work, cited in Grey 1998, refers to empowerment as a process whereby individuals and groups attain personal or collective power which enables them to actively improve their living conditions. De Beer and Swanepoel (1997) define empowerment as a collective action achieved through community groups in a local area.

Empowerment does not mean addressing cosmetic changes such as providing food parcels and food handouts among societies. It means tackling the fundamental matters, such as education, health provision and full participation in policy making and formulation. It refers to, without limitation, a process of passing authority and responsibility to individuals at the lower level of the organization. Furthermore, the notion of power is also critical in the empowerment process. There are four levels of

existing structures of domination. This means that empowerment is a revolutionary process that aims to address social, economic and political freedom.

### **2.3.2.3. Sustainability**

Ife (1995) is of the opinion that sustainability to community development implies the minimization of dependence on non-renewable resources, limiting pollution and the construction and recycling of material, if possible. Ife has also alluded to the minimization of growth as a vital approach to the process of community development, as this is also a way of ensuring sustainability. Sustainability is one of the important principles in development and community development, in particular in ensuring long term usage of resources. Ife (1995, p.181) states that " If community development is to be part of the establishment of the new social, economic, and political order, its structure and processes must be sustainable."

In conclusion, CD is about empowerment and equipping the communities with training, skills development and knowledge and building capacity through the provision of resources and about community participation in their own development for poverty alleviation.

### **2.3.3. SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

A study carried out by Hebinck and Lent (2007) reveals numerous ways in which subsistence agriculture was used to alleviate poverty in the Eastern Cape. Hebinck and Lent (2007, p.38) also point out that "The farming system among the Nguni people primarily involves the cultivation of land to produce grain and vegetables in small fields and gardens, and cattle rearing for milk and other products derived from animals." By implication, small scale agriculture has a crucial role to play within the context of the

cattle farming patterns, including crop cultivation, are much valued and have significant social, economic and political status. In African cultures the bigger the size of arable land a man possesses and cattle ownership, earn individual families status and respect in the community (Anslie, 1998).

The White Paper on Agriculture (1995) further notes that development and growth in the rural areas can be achieved through co-ordination between government departments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and the allocation of resources for the implementation of agricultural policies. In this regard, in order for agricultural policy goals to be achieved, it appears that various role players should come together and provide support in the form of resources and agricultural inputs.

It is also worth noting that one of the aims of the Strategic Plan (2009- 2012) of the Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs is to strive to find complementarities between two agricultural components, i.e. commercial agriculture which is large-scale, capital intensive and the subsistence farming which is unproductive and the small scale farming, working together for a unitary agricultural sector that contributes to a vibrant rural economy. Land delivered through land reform must contribute to food security.

From the development point of view, the role played by subsistence agriculture in poverty alleviation is universally undisputed. There is also a world-wide belief that a substantial number of people living in the rural, as well as the urban, areas cannot survive without subsistence agricultural production. More than half of the world population depends on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods (Wharton, 1969).

This is confirmed by Baipheti and Jacobs (2009, p.459) who claim that:

Subsistence/smallholder agriculture can play an important role in reducing the

that it is difficult to believe that any significant progress can be made towards growth and poverty alleviation in the absence of agricultural based activities in the rural areas in particular.

Pote (2009) also pointed out that “The significance of the smallholder agriculture sector is recognized in the light of its contribution to the welfare of the smallholder farmers through poverty alleviation, food security, employment at a local, regional and international level.” In addition, Dixon (1990) points out that the traditional system of production in third world agriculture was used mainly for household consumption. This implies that most people in the poor countries subsistence farmers in particular, cultivate and grow only for families and for the survival of the local community. Yawitch (1981, p.11) says “Cattle are a form of wealth, and means of accumulating capital.” Crop and cattle can be exchanged for cash for the education of children, for paying lobola, and for practising ritual traditions.

In the former “homelands” of Ciskei and Transkei, the governments there were very concerned about the significance of food production and as a result agriculture received special priority. In the former Ciskei for example, small scale agriculture was used to combat poverty and unemployment through the establishment of semi-commercial and semi-subsistence irrigation schemes at Peddie and Keiskeimahoek. These produced maize, and green vegetables such as cabbages, spinach and turnips. According to De Lange; Van Averbek; Sonanda; Lesoatsa; Witbooi; Mei (1994) a number of plots of about 0.25 ha in size for subsistence production were allocated to people who held dry and arable allocations when the Tyhefu Irrigation Scheme was piloted. According to Hebinck and Lent (2007) these schemes were abandoned after the collapse of the homeland regimes before 1994, a period which was also marked by withdrawal of

agricultural policies clearly recognize the potential and role of small scale agriculture for food production and food security, both at household and national levels.

Van Rooyen; Fenyes; Van Zyl (1987, p.183) state “ Traditional agriculture in Southern Africa is predominantly subsistence, and is carried out by individual families on small farms of 1 to 5 hectares, using virtually no hired labour, and relatively low levels of material output.” Steven (1977, p.4) noted that traditional agriculture is characterized by low productivity and slow growth. The lack of modern technology, new knowledge and skills and the lack of information and techniques, among other things, are the cause of the poor production

Several studies have highlighted a massive decline in subsistence agriculture in the rural areas after 1994 and this is caused by skewed agricultural development among black South Africans, in the former Ciskei and Transkei in particular. The work that has been done in research studies attempts to highlight several factors that also have a profound effect on the decline of reserve agriculture or subsistence agriculture. These include state intervention in the form of grants, population dynamics, market formation, migration and de-agrarianisation.

In terms of state intervention, Henbinck and Lent (2007, p.63) elaborate that “In 1993 the government increased the value of the welfare grants paid to black people, by removing the disparities that existed along racial lines. As a result of transfers in the form of grants and old age pensions, these became a major source of income, which in some households support three generations.” One could clearly state that the introduction and the extension of social assistance in the form of old age pension grants, child support and foster grants as sources of income, provide a way for most



recipients of pensions on agriculture and thus lowered the incentive for them to commit themselves to collective resource management activities. On the issue of natural resources used by local communities, Anslie also alluded to the issue of integration between the former Ciskei and Transkei, and the portion of the old Cape Province that currently forms the Eastern Cape. According to Anslie (1998), the process of bringing **three different administrations together resulted in skewed development**, as far as agriculture and the management of natural resources was concerned. He also noted that the plans of the new administration contributed to the collapse of the institutions responsible for the management of these natural resources. This also implies that the amalgamation of Ciskei, Transkei and some parts of the ex-Cape Province caused distorted development as far as agriculture was concerned.

Other dimensions, as stated by Hebinck and Lent (2007), relate to the pursuit of, and exposure to an urban lifestyle arising from practices such as labour migration, market purchasing and education which has amounted to a shift away from placing great value on agriculture. Labour migration is characterized by a gradual process in which people left their villages and began to settle permanently in cities and towns. The process of migration had a long term impact on the people living in the rural areas, as villagers became less and less interested in agrarian livelihoods. According to Anslie (1998), the present generation and the new emerging labour migrants have no interest far as village life, and an interest in it, are concerned. Anslie (1998, p. 146) states “ For them the village became essentially a rural base, where they spent their holidays and periods of unemployment, or a place to which they retired, other than a place in which they could generate reliable and sufficient incomes from agricultural production.”

migrant labour is used to buy fertilizers and seeds. However, Anslie (1998) and Hebinck (2007) indicate that the present migration patterns have had a detrimental effect on agricultural development.

Hebinck argues that a majority of women are leaving the rural areas for the city centres in order to be close to their husbands who have not returned to their homes and families for a long time. Anslie also notes that the majority of people in rural areas are very urbanized, and a class of educated elite has developed to the extent that some have significantly done away with agricultural centred activities. Hebinck and Lent (2007) state that the migration of entire families to major cities and townships, after 1994, also had an impact on population composition, age and sex distribution.

Hebinck and Lent (2007) also attribute the gradual depreciation of the traditional subsistence system among the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape to drought that reduced livestock numbers, - mainly cattle - and the loss of valuable resources such as arable land and agricultural inputs. Other factors are retrenchments which contributed to the high rates of unemployment due to the collapse of the homeland governments, which marked the withdrawal of agricultural support from the government in the 1990s. This phenomenon forced rural communities to modify their way of life in order to survive. Henbinck and Lent (2007) allude to the restructuring of the social policies which caused social and economic changes among the African people.

A study survey conducted by Pote (2009) at Nkonkobe Municipality, indicates that large portions of land are still owned by the government, and the rural communities do not have full access to land tenure rights. He recorded only thirty-nine percent (39%) of

adverse conditions. Anslie (1998) also indicates that the people came from various parts of the province to settle in the study area has led to overpopulation in some of the villages - a situation that has resulted in an over-concentration of people. Most of the villagers were unable to secure land rights and access to arable land.

De-agrarianisation has had profound effects on the entrenched dependency on market purchase, and has forced the poorer black Africans to stay away from resources such as livestock and arable land. De-agrarianisation refers to a process by which rural people gradual shift away from making a living from activities derived from agriculture and begin to adopt new social and economic ways of surviving (Bank and Qambata, 1999).

Academic work also reports on numerous factors that brought about other complexities of under-development and under-utilization of small scale farming in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape. These include, *inter alia*, the decline in participation by age, because adults who are regarded as more experienced in farming are no longer able to cope with the huge demand of labour in agriculture. HIV/AIDS related diseases have impacted negatively on many societies in SA (see Hebinck and Lent 2007). Phiri (2009) also stated that the HIV /AIDS challenge impacted on a range of future developments whereby members of households were affected. Anslie (1998) also highlighted resource degradation, such as land being eroded, and in some districts there was a reduction in livestock due to diseases and the impact of natural hazards.

It is worthwhile to conclude this section by highlighting some gaps in the subsistence sector which continue to exist and which have an impact on rural development. De Wet (1985) indicates that the small-scale sector was not given proper attention or adequate

De Lange *et al* (1994) reveal problems related to the lack of access to information by small scale farmers. De Lange *et al* note “Small-scale farmers are exposed to extremely rudimentary information services and networks only”, while the commercial sector enjoys extensive information networks. This means that the lack of information has affected subsistence agricultural development in many ways. A study done by Aliber and Hart (2009) indicates that agro-ecological complexities and socio-economic conditions have also resulted in an agricultural turndown. These authors contend that the present form of support which aims for agricultural economic development in the former homelands, is far less effective, and has failed to take local conditions into consideration, and to address the actual constraints. Other things which are mentioned as additional constraints are the lack of a sustainable market within the subsistence sector and the lack of agricultural education, resources and machines to work the land profitably.

## **2.4. POVERTY AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

South Africa, which is made up of nine provinces, is recognized as an upper middle income country in economic terms. This means that South Africa is among the wealthiest countries in the world and has resources enough to feed its population, but despite such relative wealth, poverty is a national emergency, widespread and deep in South Africa, and the Eastern Cape in particular (May, 2000; and the White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997). Of the nine provinces, the rate of poverty in the Eastern Cape is a pathetic one and is the largest contributor to poverty statistics in the whole of South Africa. According to Punt *et al* (2005), and the *Mail and Guardian* cited in Thorton (2009), the Eastern Cape recorded sixty-eight percent (68%) and sixty percent (60%) of poverty rates. Furthermore, May *et al* (2008) note that forty-three (43) percent of the

concerned, the reality is that they show how complex and deep poverty is in the Eastern Cape.

On coming to power in April 1994, one of the positive steps taken by the ANC-led government was the drafting of the policy framework called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP, an attempt to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality (ANC, 1994). In addition, Gothiram (2005, p.124) writes “In 1994 the government of National Unity adopted the over-arching socio-economic policy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme to confront and challenge poverty, inequality and injustices in South Africa. All subsequent policies have been based on the developmental approach of the RDP.”

The White Papers on Agriculture (1995), Land Policy (1995) and Social Welfare (1997) were developed in order to tackle, among other things, poverty and unemployment. One of the goals in the White Paper on Agriculture (1995) states that “Agricultural programmes are designed in such a manner as to improve the quality of life, skills and productivity of farmers and farm workers.” These programmes include small scale agriculture in garden plots and communal fields, mainly for family consumption in the rural areas.

Linked to these programmes are various interventions such as social grants, the school nutrition scheme, housing, access to land, Siyazondla (meaning we feed ourselves), co-operatives, Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP), Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), and small-scale farming, in order to ensure that poverty is effectively alleviated. Although it is a well-known fact that South Africa has developed good policies, the reality is that these policies have not been effectively

the major obstacles to poverty alleviation in South Africa is poor governance, a situation which is made worse by the poor performance of government officials, corruption, and the lack of political will to act against underperforming officials. Corruption causes poor service delivery and bad provision of essential services to the people, such as education, housing and health services.

## **2.5. CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed CD as an overall framework for development and it embraces other local strategies, such as subsistence agriculture, as an intervention suitable to combat poverty in the rural areas. The chapter also examined the relevance of small scale farming within the context of CD and how it can be used to focus on, and to implement the goals of CD, raising the standard of living of the ordinary people at a local level. The chapter also discussed the principles of CD which are the core elements of CD with special emphasis on participation, empowerment and sustainability in order for the community to be pro-active in the improvement of the quality of their own lives. The chapter proceeded to discuss poverty and poverty alleviation with particular focus on the Eastern Cape. This section also highlighted the positive link between subsistence agriculture and other strategies within the communities that aim to ensure that poverty is effectively alleviated.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces to the reader how the study was conducted. It covers the following: research design and methodology, sampling procedures, data collection methods and analysis methods. It also deals with ethical considerations, limitations and the value of the study.

The main research question asked was:

What are the challenges facing the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana in the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture for poverty alleviation? The study also asked the following questions:

- What are the current means of livelihood adopted by the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana?
- What are the communities' perceptions of subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy?
- What can be done to enhance the use of subsistence agriculture as a means of livelihood?

### **3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Most people describe research design as a detailed plan that gives an overall framework of how the researcher intends to conduct a study. For example, it is described by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p.29) as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. There are several research designs that are identified by researchers, such as experimental, descriptive, developmental and participatory research design.

the participants interpret and perceive phenomena and events that the researcher was previously unaware of. The study explored the participants' perceptions, behaviour and viewpoints of the challenges that the community is facing in effective land use for subsistence agriculture, and how these challenges can be addressed. In exploratory design, the respondents are not limited in their responses, and the exploration is best used with open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to explore more primary data as the respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate as they were giving their answers.

Methodology refers to rules and procedures to be followed for collecting data in the whole study. It includes elements such as sampling procedures, data collection instruments and data analysis. Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) state "Methodology is the study or 'meta-theory' of study, as distinct from the particular method you adopt in your study." The study used mainly the qualitative methodology in order to get more in-depth information about the challenges experienced by the participants. Qualitative methodology collects data in the form of spoken or written observations that are recorded, and analyses the data by identifying and categorizing themes (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999, p.42). One of the advantages of using the qualitative method in this study was that it explored the feelings, attitudes and opinions of participants, and how they interpreted the situation relating to subsistence farming in their communities.

This is confirmed by Hakim (1987) who says that the qualitative approach provides rich information about individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and viewpoints, and how they interpret events and circumstances. Creswell (2003, p.181) also states that several aspects emerge during qualitative study. The use of the qualitative method in this study



### 3.3. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

#### 3.3.1. Location and population of the study

The study was located at the two villages of Mpongo and Twecwana at Tsholomnqa in the Eastern Cape. These two villages were selected because, in the past, agricultural human livelihood was primarily through subsistence agriculture and was one of the strategies used to alleviate poverty, create employment and livelihood diversification. It has subsequently declined over the past few years resulting in vicious cycle of poverty which plays itself out in numerous ways including a high infant mortality rate, poor nutrition of children at school, the occurrence of HIV/AIDS and higher TB levels. In addition, Mpongo location is where the researcher is working as a teacher and faces these problems on a day to day basis.

The population of the study was mainly subsistence farmers from Mpongo and Twecwana villages. Population is defined by Kumar (2005, p.165) as a class or family living in a city or town from which the researcher selects a few participants to question in order to find answers to the research questions. De Vos *et al* (2002) define population as a totality of persons, events, organization units, or case records with which the research problem is concerned. Population in the context of a research undertaking should be selected in such a way that the findings should be generalizable, validated and reliable. De Vos *et al* (2002) also indicate that the larger the population, the smaller the percentage of that population, the sample needs to be.

#### 3.3.2. Sample

Sampling is described by Yates (2004, p. 25) as a strategy of selecting a portion of people from the population who are going to take part in the research study. The

The sample also included three (3) extension officers from the department of agriculture who are working in Tsholomnqa area as Agricultural Development Technicians. The reason for including officials from the Department of Agriculture was to examine from a development perspective, the planning and the implementation of agricultural policies by the government at the community level. The inclusion of the extension officers provided much valuable and in-depth information for this study. The criteria for selection were based on a number of factors, which included willingness to participate and individuals who are smallholder subsistence farmers. The number of the participants was eighteen (18) in total.

### **3.3.3. Sampling technique**

This study made use of purposive sampling as a technique to recruit the participants. Purposive sampling gives the researcher an opportunity to select the participants who have the characteristics that the researcher wants. Bless and Higson-Smith (1995, p.95) state that purposive sampling relies on the opinion of the researcher in determining sample representatives. In this regard, only subsistence farmers were selected to participate, including the extension officers who are deployed in Tsholomnqa to oversee agricultural development. Purposive sampling was relevant for this study because it provided an opportunity for the researcher to target, with the help of the local people, those participants who are subsistence farmers or garden owners.

Purposive sampling is also suitable for researchers who are concerned with exploring phenomena which are unknown by the researchers and to learn from the participants. Purposive sampling was operationalized by using homogeneous and typical case strategies. Homogeneous sampling strategy uses small samples with similar

### **3.4. DATA COLLECTION**

Data collection is a process of gathering information about the topic under investigation, by using a wide range of data gathering instruments. The main form of data gathering used in this study was focus group interviews. A focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group (Terre Blanche and Durrheim 1999, p.388). This includes a group of people who share the same life experiences of a particular issue. The aim of focus group is to get closer to participants' understanding and perspectives of certain issues. The researcher decided to use focus group discussion in order to come closer to, and to access individuals' attitudes, perceptions and values. The interviews also paved the way for the researcher to meet the participants in a face to face situation in order to study their body language, and to have direct observation of the general situation. The focus group discussion yielded diverse opinions and viewpoints pertaining to the aim of the study, and the overall importance of subsistence agriculture for people living in the rural areas was also highlighted. Yates (2004, p.57) states that, in focus groups, there is a free flowing conversation with the participants.

Terre Blanche and Durreim, (1999) state that the advantage of using focus groups is that it helps the researcher to gain access to intersubjective experiences and also to understand differences between people who previously were thought of as homogeneous. On that note, the participants told the researcher about their own life experiences and provided in-depth information pertaining to the topic under investigation. Seale (2004) says that the focus group method enables the researcher to examine peoples' different perspectives as they operate within a social network. This means that knowledge is subjective and is independent of the external truth, and people construct their knowledge through personal life experiences. The interview schedule

information (Brewerton and Millward, 2001, p.70). The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and recorded, using a tape recorder. May (2001, p.120) says interviews yield rich insight into people's biographies, experiences and feelings.

### **3.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

Analysis involves the process of breaking data down into small units to reveal their characteristic elements and structure (Dey as cited in Gray, 2004). The researcher resumed the process of analysis soon after the data was collected, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a technique. IPA is described by Breakwell (2004, p.229) as an approach used to explore ways in which the participants perceive and interpret phenomena and events, as experienced by them. As suggested by Willig (2001), the researcher began the process of reading the data. The purpose of reading the data was aimed at having a coherent and cohesive understanding of the data as a whole. Kvale (1996) points out that IPA studies the manner in which the participants view and experience the world in which they live. The researcher looked for relationships and links and similarities and contrasting responses from the participants, and integrated them and combined units of data.

The advantage of using the IPA is that it provides the participants with opportunities to share their personal life experiences of phenomena under investigation, with the researcher (Willig 2001, p.54). Interpretative analysis is derived from the fact that the researcher is also required to interpret the data presented to him by the participants, and to turn the data into information. One of the strengths of IPA is that it always requires the researcher to analyse what has transpired, out of the participants' experiences. Qualitative data analysis is described by Gray (2004, p.319) as a rigorous

### 3.6. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Dealing with ethical issues is an important aspect of every research study. Ethics refer to the general principles and rules that a researcher is expected to follow when conducting a research study (Robson, 1993). This research was conducted according to the guidelines of the Department of Social Work and Social Development of the University of Fort Hare. One of the guidelines requires the researcher to make sure that the results are not misleading. In this regard, the researcher ensured that the participants were told about the goals, values, procedures, advantages and disadvantages of the study. De Vos *et al* (2002) state that sometimes persons of lower status and less power than the researcher may feel compelled to participate, or consider participation, as a way of handling boredom, or of receiving certain privileges. On that note the researcher took full responsibility for informing the participants that the study was for academic purposes only and that the results would be shared between the supervisor, the researcher and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

De Vos *et al* (2002) stress the significance of the informed consent, which ensures the full knowledge and co-operation of subjects while also resolving, or at least relieving, any possible tension, resistance or insecurity of the subjects. By implication, informed consent is a 'must', regardless of whether the participants are interested or not in knowing, or do not listen to, the explanation. In response to that, the researcher made use of consent forms, and asked for permission from the participants to take part in this study with the full assurance that their identities and information would be treated with the highest confidentiality. The researcher made sure that all information regarding the study was disclosed in advance, and the participants were informed about the aims and

### **3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

One of the main challenges encountered by the researcher was the difficulty to secure interviews with the extension officers from the Department of Agriculture. It took the researcher about four weeks to get the extension officers to participate in the study, after numerous calls and visits to their offices in Mdantsane. The extension officers cited several commitments, such as a work related schedule which was too tight, while others complained that they were too busy with their studies, as the reasons for not being available. During the focus group discussion, one of the participants decided to withdraw from the interviews, citing exhaustion and hunger, and the participants complained that the interviews were too long. The researcher was left with no choice but to release the participant in keeping with the code of ethics that the researchers are required to follow.

This delay compelled the researcher to streamline some of the questions that were in the interviewing schedule and sometimes prompted him to avoid probing and follow-up questions. This, however, has not distracted from achieving the purpose of the study. Eventually, the extension officers agreed to meet the researcher, after numerous visits to their offices, and the situation was rectified. The withdrawal of one of the participants meant that some of the data was lost. It is also important to note that the recorded interviews, using a tape recorder, provided serious challenges because of technical problems. The recorded interviews were thus less helpful due to poor and unclear quality of the sound. Having said that the transcribed interviews were very helpful, in that they cover every question that was asked.

### 3.8. THE VALUE OF THE STUDY

The study has assisted in identifying some of gaps and challenges that still face communities in the use of subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy, and it also provides insight into how these challenges can be addressed. The findings can also form a foundation for further prospective comprehensive research. The results will be shared with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Eastern Cape. They offer an opportunity for the Department to identify, in the study, some of the findings that may help to improve the implementation of agricultural policies and the adoption of new strategies for agricultural development programmes. Finally, the researcher intends to share the findings with the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana and to empower them to take initiatives to address poverty. Findings from the study will also be publicized in local newspapers and as journal articles for public consumption.

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed in detail the research design and methodology that was used in this study. Sampling procedures, such as location and population and sample and sampling methods were also discussed extensively, in order to provide in-depth information. The data collection method was also elaborated, using mainly the focus group as a data collecting strategy. The discussion of data analysis was also given in detail utilizing the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The chapter proceeded to discuss ethical considerations, limitations and the values of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the data emanating from the three focus group discussions. The aim of the study was to explore the challenges that limit the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture, as a poverty alleviation strategy. As stated in the methodology chapter, the sample of the study was made up of three sets of focus groups consisting of fifteen (15) subsistence farmers, selected from the two villages of Mpongo (Sample A) and Twecwana (Sample B) and three (3) extension officers (Sample C) from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Eastern Cape. The samples are referred to in this study as samples A (Mpongo), B (Twecwana) and C (extension officers) respectively. Focus group interviews were used to collect data in all three samples. The total sample that took part in this study was eighteen (18).

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents data from the subsistence farmers. The second section deals with the presentation of data from the extension officers in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. It is important to note that, due to the qualitative nature of the study and the method that was used to collect data, there is limited graphical and tabular presentation of data.

### **SECTION ONE**

#### **4.2. EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND MEANS OF LIVING OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher wanted to understand whether the subsistence farmers from both samples A and B were employed. All of the subsistence farmers indicated that they were unemployed, and reported that they had not been working for the last three decades. Some of them stated that they had never worked before. However, three of the members in sample B said that they lost their jobs in 1987, 1998 and 2002



One of the members in sample A also stated that he often prepares his Curriculum Vitae (CV) because they are often told to submit their CVs to various workplaces in East London, which they do, with the hope of getting jobs, but when they do that, there are no jobs to be found. Mr Somtsora, from sample A said “I also struggle to get my CV to the nearest workplaces because I have no money to board a taxi to East London”.

The researcher further asked about the means of making a living, and most of them responded that they were surviving by means of social assistance from the state, or self-employment tasks like chopping and selling wood in the community, fencing the sites of other households, and various part-time jobs. Most of the participants also commented that self-employment had not provided a reliable and sustainable means of living.

#### **4. 3. LAND OWNERSHIP BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

The participants in both samples claimed that they own fields and home gardens. Sample A (Mpongo) reported that they last cultivated their fields in 2009 with the help of Tractor World Company funded by the state to assist in land cultivation and the planting of maize crops. However, most of the respondents stated that yields were very poor due to a number of factors, such as drought, lack of monitoring by the community and lack of professional support from the government. Mr Mpofu added “Professional support was granted but was not monitored, hence poor yields”.

Sample B in Twecwana village also claimed ownership of fields and home gardens. Most of them also reported that they last cultivated their fields in 2003 because of drought that killed their cattle. They also claimed that the cattle were affected by diseases such as foot and gall bladder diseases - a situation that had exacerbated the

All the participants from sample A (Mpongo) reported that they own gardens and they rely entirely on family labour to plough their gardens. The respondents said that they grow vegetables such as spinach, cabbages, beetroots and maize meal. Sometimes in their gardens they are able to produce enough food due to the availability of water from nearby taps.

The sample B (Twecwana) said they owned gardens and these varied in size. Mr Faneme said “We own gardens but these differ in sizes most are about 400 square metres. We are short of fertilizers, and insects destroy our vegetables and crops”. One of the respondents stated that crops in the gardens do not produce sufficient food because of the continuous heat from the sun, lack of availability of organic fertilizers, and the prevalence of the green locusts that destroyed the plants. Similar to the sample in Mpongo, Twecwana villagers also grow vegetables like spinach, potatoes, beans, green peppers and mealies. One of the participants claimed that “The vegetables provided temporary food security as the situation depended on whether the year was good or not”.

#### **4. 4. TITLE DEEDS FOR THE FIELDS**

All the participants in sample A (Mpongo) reported that they have no title deeds for the fields. Mrs Dyabha said “We were not give title deeds when we were forcibly removed from MacLentown to Mpongo and did not hear anything about the titles deeds for the fields”. However, the sample B from Twecwana claimed that they did originally have title deeds for their fields, but were not sure whether they still had them, as they had not seen them for a long time. This group also said that only the old people might know the whereabouts of the title deeds.

the market food prices would become more reasonable if everybody could get involved in agriculture. For example, Mr Mlumbi said “We can save money, and people will not get hungry and the food prices at the retailers will not go up if everybody can be serious about agricultural farming.”

Some of the members of sample A said that one of the roles of agriculture is that of promoting health. They stated that fresh harvest from the fields and gardens is good for health especially if it is consumed while still fresh. The sample also highlighted the importance of maize production, saying that maize can be used in various consumption patterns. They explicate that maize can be used as samp, mealie-meal and other traditional African foods.

Sample B in Twecwana stated that agriculture is important in reducing poverty and unemployment, in preventing starvation and in contributing to economic development. The sample members added that agriculture creates job opportunities and food production in order to reduce poverty. Mr Faneme concluded “It creates jobs and offers employment opportunities” and “People can have an opportunity to be hired to do hoeing jobs and taking out weeds between the crops, and assisting during harvest time when the crops are ripe. It drives away poverty and can reduce income inequality, can be used for home consumption, for income generation and for promoting health care.” In sample B, one of the members added that agriculture was very important because “it feeds the nation” and “combats diseases because we get fresh foods from the garden”.

#### **4.6. RELIANCE ON SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE FOR A LIVING**

The researcher wanted to know from the participants if they can rely on subsistence agricultural for a living. All the participants in Sample A believed that they can depend on subsistence agriculture, if they can keep up with ploughing their fields and gardens.

resources and implements and taught how to raise the standard of production and improve soil fertility, utilizing fertilizers.”

Both samples indicated earlier in this discussion that they also rely on off-farm activities, such as social grants, self-employment, remittances and part-time work. The focus group in Twecwana indicated that they need external support, especially from the government, and that they do not have enough resources or means to work the land.

#### **4.7. THE PARTICIPANTS’ EXPERIENCES WITH FOOD PRODUCTION**

The samples were asked about their experiences with food production in the past five years. Both samples indicated that food production in the past five years had been unstable. One of the members in sample A (Mpongo) indicated that all the maize crops had died when the chemicals were applied in 2009. However, the yields improved when a commercial farmer, Mr Graig intervened and cultivated all the fields for the community, using his tractors. Sample B stated that there had been some substantial improvement in their production, specifically in their home gardens in 2010 whereby they managed to get a better harvest, but they were concerned about the problem of barren soil.

#### **4.8. THE IMPORTANCE OF PLOUGHING FIELDS**

The samples were asked about the importance of ploughing the fields. One of the participants in sample A said “We make a living from them because we must have something to eat and if there is a surplus we sell”. Ploughing is a way of survival and through ploughing we save money.” Ploughing the fields, for sample A, also meant to make their lives better and raise their level of living. One of the participants added “We make a living through ploughing, and sell some of the yields.”

#### **4.9. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN SOIL CULTIVATION**

The researcher wanted to know about skills and the knowledge the participants have pertaining to land cultivation. For sample A, all the participants said that they lack skills and knowledge on how to prepare the soil for planting crops, and indicated that they rely on traditional cultivating methods. This implies that there is no special training that equips the communities with the new techniques and modern technology applicable to land use. Instead they rely on old methods of ploughing, and common knowledge.

All the participants in sample B also stated that they lack skills and knowledge about land cultivation. However, one member stated that he had received basic training in botany. This knowledge has helped him to prepare the garden soil for growing vegetables and to apply the different types of fertilizers, such as nitrogen and phosphorus. It also taught him how to identify early and late blight, a disease that kills plants. The respondent also noted that this knowledge has also taught him to use formulae 2:3:2 in applying organic and inorganic material to the soil. Some of the participants indicated that they have knowledge for making compost. One of the members said that kraal manure causes the plants to die if, for example, too much manure was used when planting crops like maize.

#### **4.10. OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION**

Sample A was asked about opportunities they have had for increasing the food production and their response was “We can do so if we have resources and get professional support from the extension officers, and are educated on how to use and apply organic and inorganic material.” The participants also noted that they need assistance for the soil to be tested, and how to apply fertilizers, and guidance about

skills in using fertilizers to increase food production. However, most of them indicated that they do not have money to buy the fertilizers.

#### **4.11. SUPPORT NEEDED TO PRODUCE MORE FOOD**

In sample A most of the participants noted that they need to be supported with farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, implements and tractors. Mrs Ma-awu said, “We want to cultivate mealies, and the timeous arrival of tractors while the soil is still wet is important. The tractors must arrive and must not wait till the soil gets dry”. Sample B also stated that they need the support in the form of agricultural implements, garden tools, seeds and fencing for their fields. The samples stated that they need support from the government, and reported that they had applied for fencing, not only for their fields, but also for the grazing camps for their livestock as they had heard that the government had done this for other communities. Unfortunately the government has not responded to their request.

#### **4.12. SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE AS A POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGY**

Both samples were asked if they thought subsistence agriculture could be used to alleviate poverty. The respondents stated “If we cultivate and grow plants in our gardens and fields we would no longer get hungry.” Most of the participants in Sample A acknowledged that cultivation of fields is the answer to poverty alleviation, employment creation and food security. Sample B shared the same sentiments as sample A because of their experience that a long time ago when the cultivation of fields was an important activity for every household and the community, there was no poverty

#### **4.13. REASONS WHY PEOPLE NO LONGER USE THEIR FIELDS FOR FOOD**

agricultural studies as one of the priority subjects, and there is a total lack of guidance as far as agricultural education is concerned". Sample B (Twecwana) stated that theft of agricultural implements, lack of fences, and bad roads leading to the fields render them unable to use their fields for food production.

#### **4.14. THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH AND ADULTS IN AGRICULTURE**

The researcher wanted to know from the participants if it was the youth or adults who were involved in agriculture in the communities. A hundred percent (100%) of the participants from sample A said that adults were more participative in agriculture than the youth. In addition, one of the participants commented that "Despite their lack of interest young people are the ones that harvest when the crops are ready."

Sample B (Twecwana) also added that adults were keener to participate in Twecwana village, and were more committed and dedicated, both in agriculture and in livestock keeping. One of the participants said "Adults plough their gardens and are very interested in agriculture and also livestock keeping". Using purposive sampling in both samples A and B, only adults were sampled for this study.

Both samples A and B indicated that youths' lack of interest in agriculture was growing worse, and was a matter of serious concern. Young people today regard agricultural studies as a backward and degraded learning area.

#### **4.15. AVAILABILITY OF ARABLE LAND.**

The researcher also wanted to know if the subsistence farmers have sufficient arable land. The participants had contrasting views on this question. Some of the respondents in sample A believed that there was not enough agricultural land to sustain food security. They also stated that some people in the village did not have fields in the communal fields. One of the members of the sample explained: “We can say that the land we have is enough, but it is not enough” and “If we had enough land we would have ploughed more than we do.”

On the other hand, group members in sample B were of the opinion that their fields were big enough because the fields can produce sufficiently, and people can produce enough food and can sell the surplus to the market if the land is cultivated properly. One of the members reported that in 2008 one of the agricultural extension officers provided the community with different types of seedlings to every household in the village for their gardens. This initiative opened the opportunity for every home to start its own garden. However, the project did not last because the extension officers moved to other villages in the area and they did not provide follow up support to render the programme sustainable.

#### **4.16. THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

The researcher wanted to know from the participants what challenges they were facing in using land for crop production. All the participants in sample A agreed that one of the biggest challenges faced by the communities was the lack of capital, such as money, machinery, tractors and resources. Mrs Mpangele said “The first thing is water; we do not irrigate because of the absence of dams, and if there can be irrigation for all the fields, we can have a good harvest.” Mr Mpofu added “We have no fences, or



small-scale agriculture unsustainable in the community, and has totally discouraged subsistence farmers from pursuing subsistence agricultural- centred activities.

Sample B also noted the shortage of water with a lack of dams and rivers to store water for irrigation purposes. They claimed that they rely on seasonal rainfall to grow their crops. Linked with the scarcity of water is the persistent drought, associated with the ever changing weather patterns and the deteriorating agricultural infrastructure. Other challenges are theft of old agricultural implements which are then sold to scrap merchants. Mr Faneme claimed “There are no fences, tractors, or cattle, and we want tractors and implements to work the soil. Children have stolen things such as ploughs, harrows, planters that are used to work the soil and sold them to Chicks.” Some of the participants also claimed that their livestock, like oxen that are mostly used to plough, had died because of drought and diseases which are common during the dry season. Drought and floods are the most common climatic hazards that destroy farmers’ crops, and are the major threats to the future of small-scale agriculture. These are increasingly becoming a common feature in their area.

Sample B stated that the fields are not fenced, and are too far from the homesteads to the extent that they are exposed to wild and domestic animals that destroy crops. The fields are also vulnerable to theft. The distance has other disadvantages too, because some of the participants stated that they are too old to travel the long roads leading to their fields. Some of them stated that they are less energetic than the demands of labour needed for agricultural production.

Sample A (Mpongo) identified other problems that are related to land constraints which

resources to work the soil for food production. The lack of modern machinery, such as tractors, also poses potential challenges. Some participants claimed that tractors often arrive very late whenever they are needed.

Sample B, had similar challenges as sample A, but the sample highlighted the problem of bad roads leading to their fields, and the reduced numbers of their livestock that was used to plough the fields. The sample also cited that the fields were too far from their homesteads. Too much reliance on social grants has also created serious problems in these communities. All the participants indicated that they are dependent on social assistance and market purchases and this has posed serious challenges for agricultural development in these communities.

Sample C was asked about the challenges they face in promoting subsistence agriculture in their area of deployment. They claimed that there is a lack of co-operation from the community, as some of the community members in the rural areas do not regard agriculture as a serious business. The extension officers said that the farmers sometimes got grants and funds as a group and alleged that once they got the money conflicts arose. The sample also indicated that the youth do not want to involve themselves in agriculture and only adults show interest. However, one of the respondents stated that old people are not strong enough to withstand the day to day activities of agriculture. The participants also noted that arable land is insufficient and a small handful of fields are available for only a few households who are living in the urban areas, and are less interested in agriculture. When food programmes are implemented by the government, they agree for their fields to be used for share-cropping, but once the harvest was ripe, they reaped all the yields and did not re-

unwillingness to take the initiative, and the lack of a sense of ownership as further challenges. In addition, the participants also mentioned lack of machinery, having no fences and lack of interest and will by the communities to work together. The other challenges cited by the extension officers include inconsistent and changing weather patterns, drought and scarcity of water.

#### **4.17. THE CURRENT MEANS OF SURVIVAL FOR THE COMMUNITIES**

Sample A (Mpongo) stated that they make a living through social assistance, such as old age pensions, child support, disability and foster grants. Others survive by doing part time and small jobs, which include the building of shack houses. Some are self-employed in small businesses such as fruit and vegetables stalls, shebeens, and taxi services and ploughing in their gardens. Young people earn a living by participating in sport activities such as rugby in local teams funded by the Border Rugby Development programme.

Mr Somtsora said “Others make a living by getting money from informal jobs such as taking part in sport like rugby; some are living through selling fruit, vegetables and meat.”

Sample B expressed similar views to sample A that many people depend on the old age pension grant of their parents, while others are self-employed by chopping and selling wood.

#### **4.18. THE EFFORTS MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE LIVELIHOODS**

Both samples were asked if the government was doing enough for the community to improve livelihoods in the rural areas, and they indicated that there is little support from the government as far as the betterment of livelihoods is concerned. One of the

commented that “Things are right there on top, but are not happening correctly for the poor people at a lower level.” With regard to sample B, their responses were that the government is not doing enough to assist the community and maintain that it has been a long time since they applied for a fence or for road maintenance in their village, and the last time their application was unsuccessful.

#### **4.19. PLANS AND SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE IN THE RURAL AREAS**

The researcher wanted to know if there were plans and suggestions to improve small-scale agriculture in the rural areas. Most of the participants suggested that they needed to meet the agricultural extension officers to get training, education and advice on the new technologies applicable in the subsistence production system generally, and on the crops that were suitable in certain seasons. One member even commented that “We just cultivate maize only, and yet we do not know whether the type of soil we are utilizing is suitable for maize cultivation.” Furthermore, the sample stated that they plan to consult the extension officers from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to organize work-shops and empowerment on new strategies of food production, and improvement in livestock production. They also suggested that they need to be trained, skilled and re-skilled in courses related to soil preparation and farming generally, and on how to use the resources effectively.

One of the members, for example, reported that he had recently attended a course on land conservation in one of the villages in the area, at which people were taught the techniques of how to prevent soil erosion. The sample also suggested that there is a need for the government to provide skills and to encourage people to establish co-

Mr Mpofu also suggested that “Political intervention is necessary and the support of civil bodies to help the community.” Sample B reported that they had tried to fix the roads by filling the holes and dongas with stones and soil, and also attempted to erect a fence-- but they had given up. The sample also claimed that between 2007 and 2008 they had made an application for fencing, but it had been unsuccessful. Sample B had similar views to sample A, and also added that they would like the government to assist them with the construction of dams, windmills and fencing.

## **SECTION TWO**

This section presents the data and responses from the extension officers who are deployed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in the Tsholomnqa area. The section begins with the extension officers’ understanding and description of the key concepts.

### **4.20. UNDERSTANDING OF KEY TERMS**

#### **4.20.1. Subsistence agriculture**

The extension officers understand subsistence agriculture in two ways, and said “It is when the farmers produce food for their own consumption.” One of the participants further stated that “People produce only to feed their families.” This implies that subsistence agriculture is characterised by families who are producing primarily for self-sufficiency and self maintenance.

#### **4.20.2. Community development**

The sample conceptualized Community Development (CD) as a process which refers to the improvement of the standards and conditions of living of the people, and which includes human, physical and natural capital. The sample also described CD as

that Siyazondla programmes have been implemented by the government solely to give communities a chance to produce food for themselves.

#### **4.21. EXTENSION OFFICERS' EXPERIENCES WITH SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE IN THE AREA**

The participants indicated that subsistence agricultural based activities in their area were of a very low standard and under-developed, and stated that some of the subsistence farmers were struggling to sustain themselves and their families because they produced mainly from their home gardens. The participants also stated that the product was often bought on credit, because buyers depended on pension grants to pay for subsistence production. According to the extension officers, the cultivation of the communal fields has declined, and production from the home gardens is mainly for own consumption. If there was any surplus it was sold to the neighbouring communities, or sometimes shared among the extended families since they did not have the means to take it to the market.

#### **4.22. THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL SCALE FARMING FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES, AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION**

The extension officers were asked about the significance of small-scale agriculture for rural communities, and their responses were of a positive nature. Ms Tatase maintained that "Subsistence agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation in several ways, in that people produce to satisfy their own needs, and if there is surplus they sell to make profits, generate income and help to improve the health conditions of the people, and further it opens opportunities for subsistence users to become commercial farmers in the near future." The respondents noted too that it also serves as a supplement to the

The participants noted as well that subsistence farmers were also engaged in subsistence based projects whereby farmers shared problems and found solutions. The sample further pointed that most people in the rural areas depended on agriculture as the primary source of food security and income, and in that way it protected rural communities from having to buy everything from the market. It also increased the health status of the people and minimized the expenditure of money on food. The focus group pointed out that subsistence agriculture contributes to the local economy because people buy local products at reasonable prices, and in that way the local economy was boosted.

#### **4.23. HOW DO THE EXTENSION OFFICERS ASSIST RURAL COMMUNITIES TO DEVELOP SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE?**

The sample was asked about ways of helping rural people to develop subsistence agriculture and they responded that they give technical advice and training to improve ways of production and have demonstrations and information sharing about agriculture generally. There are also programmes, such as Food Security, that provide financial assistance to buy inputs (chickens and seedlings), so that the communities can produce for self-consumption and sell the surplus for profits so that they would be able to buy on their own in the future. The extension officers also stated that they provide access to the communities to information regarding financial institutions that give grants for the needs of the farmers. The sample also indicated that they involve sister departments, NGOs and local governments which work collectively to enhance households livelihoods.

#### **4.24. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICIES WITHIN THE SUBSISTENCE SECTOR**

They also stated that policies in agriculture are in full support of the subsistence sector, which was evident from the establishment of food security programmes such as Siyazondla, Siyakhula and Massive Food Production. Siyazondla, for instance is a programme which aims to reach out to rural communities and to ensure that every household has a garden in the backyard, for self-reliance. The extension officers also said that “Siyazondla programmes give support in the form of inputs (seedlings, seeds, fertilizers, garden tools and implements) and infrastructural development and drought relief programmes.”

The participants also stated that subsistence farmers who were following Siyazondla programmes were allowed to move from Siyazondla to Siyakhula and Massive Food Programmes. These two programmes, Siyakhula and Massive Food, were producing for market sale and were utilizing big sizes of land of about 50 hectares. The programmes were being funded by the UVimba financial institution. In addition to that, farmers who own small scale farms are capable of moving (once graduated) from the subsistence sector to become commercial farmers through the Pro-active Land Acquisition Programme (PLAP) and Land Reform and Agricultural Development (LRAD). The Accelerated Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) is also running programmes that involve subsistence farmers in maize production and massive food production, and the Department of Agriculture has signed five-year contracts with farmers involved in Siyakhula. The extension officers stated that all these were an indication that small-scale agriculture was being given more priority in the rural areas.

#### **4.25. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE RURAL AREAS TO MAKE A LIVING FROM AGRICULTURE?**



in the form of bursaries, scholarships and funds should be made available to attract youth and the community to become more involved in agriculture, and remuneration to community development workers and rangers should be improved to be like that of the old regime. Efforts to combat weeds and prevent soil erosion must be initiated. One of the participants even suggested “organising workshops and agricultural shows to give them information and encourage them.”

#### **4.26. PLANS TO IMPROVE SMALL- SCALE FARMING IN THE RURAL AREAS**

The researcher also wanted to know from the extension officers what plans were in place to improve small-scale agriculture in the rural areas. The sample mentioned that the government was planning to expand and allocate more arable land for food security and also for the elimination of wind and soil erosion. The sample stated that they also plan to encourage people to use organic material, such as kraal manure as fertilizers thus reducing the production costs and input costs. One of the participants envisaged the promotion of sustainable agriculture and the conservation of natural resources for the benefit of future generations. The group also proposed the training of farmers in skills development, such as basic financial skills and record keeping, farm visiting to check progress and problems, and the organization of agricultural shows for competition among the farmers to stimulate interest in agriculture. The sample also envisaged that there was a need for the people to form co-operatives so that they could buy inputs in bulk and benefit from collective sharing of knowledge and skills.

#### **4.27. THE VIEWS OF THE EXTENSION OFFICERS ON SUBSISTENCE FARMING IN GENERAL**

The researcher wanted to find out from extension officers what their views were on

#### 4.28. THE ROLE OF SMALL SCALE FARMING AS A STRATEGY FOR CD

The respondents stated that, through producing food, poverty could be alleviated, and by selling and culling animals, income was generated which resulted in improved quality of life. Money that came from agriculture was also used to educate children of families thus contributing to social development. One of the participants added “It plays a huge role in poverty alleviation and in improving the health condition of communities who are affected and infected by HIV/ AIDS by consuming green vegetables.”

The sample also felt that there was a positive relationship between subsistence farming and community development, in particular for people living in the rural areas. Small-scale agriculture contributed significantly to the local economy at community level and the money generated from on-farm activities played a pivotal role in developmental needs and human welfare, including health care, education and human capital. The participants indicated that CD can be used to encourage the people to take part in agricultural activities as a collective.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and analyse the research findings as they relate to participants' responses and understanding of the issues related to the main research question. The study's main focus was to understand the challenges that face rural communities which create barriers to the effective use of land through subsistence agriculture for poverty alleviation. This would be achieved by asking three (3) main research questions, namely:

- What are the current means of livelihood adopted by the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana?
- What are the communities' perceptions of subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy?
- What can be done to enhance the use of subsistence agriculture as a means of livelihood?

As was stated in the methodology chapter, the IPA was employed in this section to analyse the findings in order to turn the data into information. One of the main principles of the IPA is to explore and attach meaning to the data that is directly drawn from the participants' personal experience and social world.

### 5.2. UNDERSTANDING OF KEY CONCEPTS

#### 5.2.1. Subsistence agriculture

The extension officers understand subsistence agriculture as a process which refers to producing primarily to support the family, neighbours and the community, utilizing small plots and gardens within the homesteads. The extensions officers place more emphasis on producing for own consumption in their definition of subsistence agriculture.

of production, is less commercialized and is not sustainable. However, Van Rooyen *et al* (1987) provide a broad definition by referring to subsistence agriculture as “A traditional agriculture predominantly subsistence based, which is carried out by individual families on small farms of 1 to 5 hectares, using virtually no hired labour and relatively low levels of material output.”

### **5.2.2. Community development**

Community development is understood differently by different people. For example the extension officers sought to link CD with the improvement of the peoples' lives through poverty alleviation, the creation of jobs, and being free from financial constraints. The definition shows that the extension officers understand community development within the context of poverty reduction, employment creation and financial freedom. The extension officers also associate CD with the establishment of food security programmes in the former homelands of Ciskei and Transkei. On the other hand, authors, such as Gray (1998) and Travis *et al* (1999) point out that community development is one of the ways in which poverty can be alleviated and seeks to uplift the standard of living of the poor people and that can be achieved by working together with the progressive civil structures, government, business and non-governmental organizations. One would clearly state that CD is integrative and a multi-sectoral approach which embraces various sectors and other intervention strategies in the development discourse.

### **5.3. CHALLENGES FACED BY COMMUNITIES IN SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE**

Investigating the challenges was the main research focus of this study, and its analysis represents the views of subsistence farmers and extension officers from the two

subsistence sector. Assets in this study include social, capital, and natural assets, and human capacities. For example, a study carried out by Pote (2008) at Nkonkobe Municipality found that smallholder farmers were being handicapped by serious impediments to expanding productive activities due to the lack of the application of fertilizers, insufficient access to infrastructure and information, and inadequate availability of assets. Machete (2004, p.8) concurs with Pote and says "Inadequate physical infrastructure in the rural areas, particularly in the former homeland areas, remains a major obstacle to smallholder agricultural growth in South Africa." In the two villages the situation is made worse by a total lack of any potential irrigation scheme development.

For example, one of the social problems, highlighted by all the samples that were interviewed, is linked to the lack of social cohesion and responsibility among these communities because of the fact that fencing and agricultural equipment were stolen and were subsequently sold to Chicks. In addition to that, the extension officers' responses highlighted the lack of co-operation among subsistence farmers, because of their allegation that farmers are only interested in cash, grants, or funding, and prefer to work as individuals rather than as co-operatives. It is widely accepted that, in order for subsistence agriculture to be developed in the rural areas, co-operatives should be established. Chambo (2009) says that agricultural co-operatives have managed to mitigate food insecurity in some of the countries in the African continent. Furthermore, the extension officers are of the view that one of the problematic areas they are experiencing in small-scale agriculture is that farmers attach more importance to money that comes from external sources, than to initiating projects and to utilizing resources close to them, for self-reliance.

resources, to the extent that it deters them from pursuing agricultural based activities. The researcher understands that these challenges include the lack of capital resources such as modern machinery and agricultural implements, and human resources which include family labour, and a decrease in the number of animal resources like livestock. These resources were mostly used in small-scale agriculture. Bank and Qambata (1999), in their study at Ngxingxolo, Mooiplaas, state that: "Small-scale agriculture is purely natural, entirely dependent on intensive manual labour provided by the families and relies on favourable climatic conditions for their crops to grow, and the utilization of less equipment such as ploughs, hoes and garden tools."

With regard to environmental factors, the nature of these challenges is a result of and emanates from natural hazards and is beyond the scope of human control. Drought, diseases and pests are the most common natural disasters that often constrain the emerging farmers in the rural areas from raising their agricultural productivity and occasionally these hazards destroy and kill farmers' crops and livestock. Van Rooyen et al (1987) state that drought has crippled an already existing subsistence economy in less developed rural areas, resulting in crisis conditions which seriously threaten the survival of many communities.

A study carried out by Nel and Davies (1999) reveals some of these challenges are linked to the environmental sphere. The study shows that in some of the rural areas the poor quality of the environment and recurrent drought are serious impediments to utilizing the land profitably. The White Paper on Agriculture (1995) acknowledges that "South Africa is a country lacking sufficient water supplies." According to some of the sample members, drought carries with it a shortage of water supply from dams and

resources.” The situation is being complicated by the lack of arable land and unsophisticated methods and practices of land cultivation. Subsistence farmers in these two villages do not adhere to the practices of crop rotation, and plant the same crops on the same land year after year.

Apart from insufficient arable land, the researcher has also found that land ownership is a matter of serious concern to those subsistence farmers who have a keen interest in farming enterprises, but do not have fields to use. Speaking from a farming and rural livelihoods point of view in South Africa, Francis (2000, p.33) notes “The appropriate starting point of rural development must be the understanding of the constraints households face as they construct their livelihoods. Most households lack access to land or means to work it.” The other developing new culture is the minimization of agriculture in the rural areas, whereby arable land has been substituted for residential purposes - a move that has resulted in the depreciation of agricultural land.

The other dimension, as stated by one of the extension officers, relates to the huge dependence of the rural communities on the state in the form of grants and hard cash, which is one of the major challenges. The officer alleges that people are interested in cash, and they will listen only if you bring them money. One would also say that people show less initiative and refuse to take control of their own development. One of the principles of Community Development (Ife, 2000) states that too much dependence on the state is regarded as disadvantageous for the community, because it can cause the community to take less initiative and, in the long run, can deprive them of making independent decisions for their future. Extrapolating from the views of the participants

#### 5.4. THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMMUNITIES ABOUT SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE AS A MEANS OF LIVING

Based on the viewpoints of the subsistence farmers and the extension officers who were interviewed the researcher found that small scale agriculture is one of the important ways through which poverty can be addressed and reduce food insecurity in particular for people living in the rural areas. Rigg (2008, p.181) says “Livelihood in the rural south and in many places, and for many households continues to depend on smallholder agriculture production.” One could also state that subsistence agriculture is the economic hub for the rural areas. Baiphethi & Jacobs also add “In South Africa, an estimated four million people engage in smallholder agriculture for various reasons, and the majority of these people are in the former homeland areas.”

Subsistence agriculture has also been looked at from other dimensions, as it plays a significant role in job creation, improving the health of human beings, discouraging people from buying from the markets, and reducing the stress and shock of high market prices. Furthermore, the participants expressed no doubt that small scale farming is one of the essential aspects and one of the vital tools used to stimulate local economic growth and to benefit societies at local, provincial and national levels. In addition to this the extension officers attach the significance of small scale agriculture to poverty alleviation, income diversification, and helping to improve the health conditions of the people.

However, the significance of small scale agriculture is also underestimated, as some of the participants stated that they cannot make a living from crop farming only, and stated that they can also pursue other on-farm activities such as livestock keeping, poultry, and pig farming for business purposes. In addition to this, they can also make a living from



The study also found that crop production has positive socio-economic implications because it is a way for the community to feed their families, offer business opportunities, prevent starvation, and access employment opportunities. It also means a better life for them, raising their standard of living and making substantial changes in their socio-economic life, while reducing the shock and stress of dependence on market purchases. Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009) say: "Subsistence production is important to improve household food security." With regard to food production in the past five years, the researcher found that there have been fluctuations as far as production is concerned due to negative changes in the weather patterns, and the absence of support from the government and too much reliance on external support.

With regard to field cultivation, all the respondents believed that their fields are important assets and are an answer to poverty reduction. They validated their views by stating that when the fields are cultivated they are able to manage and contain social ills such as hunger, poverty and malnutrition. However, the cultivation of fields in these communities is characterised by fluctuations and stoppages from year to year. For example, the farmers in the two villages indicated that they last cultivated their fields in 2003 and 2009 respectively. In addition to that, food production in those two years was characterised by unstable and low levels of output, due to other constraints, linked to too much reliance on external support, unwillingness to participate and the lack of a sense of ownership.

## **5.5. PLANS NEEDED TO IMPROVE SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE IN RURAL AREAS**

The question that was asked sought to find out from the participants' point of view what

departments, non-governmental organizations and the local government in implementing development. Integrative and multi-sectoral approaches are the core strategy for sustainable development. The extension officers also indicated that support in the form of training, skilling and up-skilling of the subsistence farmers is already in place. However, according to the participants the training and support for more agricultural skills of subsistence farmers was inadequate and did not get the results it intended to achieve. Mr Faneme, supported by Mrs Mlahlwa from sample B (Twecwana) stated that “more agricultural skills and extensive capacity was needed.” By implication subsistence farmers who were interviewed did not indicate that they had received such training.

The extension officers also proposed medium to long-term solutions, because of their belief that bursaries and learnership grants should be made available for youths to study basic agricultural education. This implies that agricultural studies become more important in the formative years for the school- going children and there is a need for the government to prioritise agricultural education. Basic and further agricultural education was also raised as a pre-requisite for the implementation of new knowledge and techniques which are applicable in agribusiness. The extension officers also believe that the establishment of co-operatives is more important than a small farm owned by an individual.

The study also found that local leaders, such as chiefs and councillors, can play a pivotal role in securing communal land for the benefit of the community. This is important because there is insufficient arable land for crop production, especially in the rural areas and this becomes one of the challenges that need to be addressed.

According to some of the subsistence farmers, the government is not doing enough to assist the rural communities to improve agricultural livelihoods. Mr Somtsora claims that rural communities do not get enough support from the government and says "Service deliveries are poor and lacking especially in the rural areas." Others had the view that nothing is happening, as one of the members reported that in 2007 the community applied for fencing and road maintenance, without success. Others had the opinion that support comes from the state but the problem is lack of monitoring. They alleged that development and services do not reach those people who are supposed to get them.

The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform strategic plan (2009-2012) intends to assist 38 000 land tenure beneficiaries to have access to land through land acquisition programmes. On the other hand, the extension officers pointed out those positive steps are taken by the government to promote smallholder farming and rural livelihoods through the implementation of the Food Security Programmes (FSP). Though the Department of Agriculture is providing financial support, one of the important aims of FSP is to give people living in the rural areas an opportunity to be able to help and rely on them through the establishment of programmes such as Siyazondla, (meaning 'we feed ourselves'), Siyakhula, (meaning 'we are growing'), and Massive Food Programmes. One of the principles of CD states that community independence from the government is one of the significant factors if development is to be sustainable (Ife, 2000).

Siyazondla programmes accommodate emerging subsistence farmers, cultivating only in their home gardens and plots, and producing mainly for their own consumption. It seems that farmers following Siyazondla programmes are cultivating on a narrow piece of arable land and are making a living on a subsistence level. On the other hand,

With regard to food production, all the respondents are optimistic and are of the opinion that there are good prospects to increase food production provided they can be assisted with grants and agricultural inputs. Agricultural inputs encompass things such as seeds, seedlings, implements, ploughs, tractors, organic and inorganic fertilizers and irrigation methods. Besides that the participants feel that small-scale agriculture is not receiving enough attention, either from the government or the community, given the fact that it has been characterized from time to time by fluctuations and lack of consistency of output. The researcher has also taken note of the very serious negative effect the lack of human capital (knowledge and skills) and the insufficient factors of production (such as capital, labour and machinery) have had on productivity. A well-integrated retraining and reorientation programme needs to be formulated, and will require investment, if the capacity of small-scale farming is to be enhanced through appropriate support services (White Paper on Agriculture, 1995). However, the extension officers claimed to have provided support through the establishment of anti-poverty strategies and food security programmes. It seems, though, the support with regard to these programmes is insufficient and less effective and does not help the subsistence farmers to change things around. Secondly, the technical training and advice also appears to be inadequate and inconsistent, because the farmers are unable to use these for their own benefit. Thirdly, the Food Security Programmes that are said to be in place are not active in the two villages where the study was carried out because none of the members of the communities are in Siyazondla, Siyakhula and Massive Food Production. Other research findings pertaining to the other questions asked are discussed below.

#### **5.6. FIELDS, GARDENS AND TITLE DEEDS OWNERSHIP**

A hundred percent (100%) of the subsistence farmers have gardens on their home sites

agriculture is based on a very small scale farming system with an estimated average size of farmland below 0.5 hectares, and is producing above the subsistence level. Prandi-Zika sought to refute the common belief that farmers who grow and produce on small sizes of land cannot produce adequately especially to meet the needs of their own families.

The participants are experiencing several problems in using their gardens, *inter alia*, drought, unavailability of organic and inorganic material, and the prevalence of green pests that often destroy and kill young plants, plus the absence of proper fencing surrounding the gardens. The small size of the gardens, drought, destructive pests and failure to apply organic and inorganic matter into the soil, renders their gardens useless and prevents the users from producing substantially. In this regard, Nell *et al* (2000, 812-813) advise "The management of food gardens is the key to its success in a community development programme. Anyone who wishes to start a garden in his or her own backyard must understand how the system of food garden management works and what management means." This implies that if the communities want to start a garden project, they must be prepared to take the initiative and a leading role and must be supported in terms of project management skills so as to ensure the success of their initiatives.

With regard to field ownership, 100% of the participants have fields which they cultivate and produce for subsistence purposes. However, both samples A and B have pointed out that they last used their fields in 2003 and 2009 respectively, owing to drought and diseases that killed their cattle, lack of proper fencing around the fields, and lack of money and resources to work their fields. The lack of resources and machinery and the

For example, Henbinck and Lent (2007, p.63) say “As a result of transfers in the form of grants and old age pension, became a major source of income which in some households support three generations.” This implies that with the introduction of social welfare grants rural people began to shift away from livelihoods that are agriculture centred.

Regarding titles, none of the participants in sample A have title deeds for their fields, and in sample B, all who took part in the study claimed that they have legitimate titles, even though they have not seen them for a long time. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the issue of titles has no negative bearing on the subsistence farmers, as ownership of fields in some localities is protected by the application of common laws in those particular communities.

## **5.7. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THE FARMERS HAVE IN LAND CULTIVATION**

It was of the utmost importance for the researcher to understand the extent of knowledge and skills subsistence farmers have with regard to the expertise needed for soil preparation and the application of these skills. It is a well-known fact that, in the white commercial sector, farmers are using modern technology with technical skills and that this has kept their businesses sustainable. In a discussion paper of Adato and Meinzen-Dick (2007) they assess the impact of agricultural research on poverty and they say “Human capital in the form of knowledge and skills is often required to properly make use of new technologies.” It transpired, during the interview process, that all subsistence farmers have no specialized training appropriate knowledge or skills in land preparation because of the fact that they still rely on general and indigenous knowledge. Nell *et al* (2000) allege “Lack of knowledge results in very low yields as well as poor quality products.”

The White Paper on Agriculture (1995) states “Researchers need to be more sensitive to local knowledge of farmers to check whether the knowledge has applicability and value in the wider system and to incorporate this knowledge into the research design programmes.”

The researcher is of the opinion that new knowledge and skills in the entire agricultural system are an important factor in driving the local agrarian economy at a level high and that lack of consistent support from the extension officers deprives communities like Mpongo and Twecwana of reliable information to make subsistence agriculture a means of livelihood.

#### **5.8. YOUTH AND ADULT INVOLVEMENT IN SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE**

The subsistence farmers in samples A and B expressed different views with regard to the involvement of youth in agriculture. Sample A stated that the young people are less interested, or show very little interest, in anything that has to do with agriculture. However, youths show much interest when the harvest is ready. In addition to that, the extension officers echoed the same sentiments and highlighted that the youths’ lack of interest is a challenge, as the adult people cannot stand up to the demanding work in agricultural activities.

The researcher found that the youths’ lack of interest emanated from various attributes, linked to the stigma attached to agriculture, by the present generation. Today’s youth regard agricultural science as a backward learning area, and if a person pursues agricultural studies, he/she is regarded as a backward person. The researcher also understands that, since the introduction of the new curriculum in the education system, agricultural science has been phased out as a subject of teaching in many primary schools in the Eastern Cape. However, during the follow-up of informal discussions with

### **5.9. LAND AVAILABILITY FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES**

The researcher wanted to out find from the subsistence farmers if there is sufficient land to serve the needs and interests of every household family, for agricultural purposes in particular. Land constraints, in proportion to the large number of the population in the community, seem to be a serious challenge, because some of the members within the community do not own fields, and others have very small garden plots at the back of their homesteads. The relatively small sizes of agricultural land constrain subsistence farmers from expanding their output. The other dimension connected to land limitation is the inability of the subsistence farmers to demonstrate the usage of new technological skills in agriculture. Subsistence farmers plant the same crops, on the same land, year after year. According to the extension officers who were interviewed, some of the land earmarked for grazing purposes has been converted for human settlement in some of the rural areas. In addition to that, the researcher also observed that some of the arable land that was used to produce pineapples in some of the Ncerha villages in the neighbourhood of Tsholomnqa is also now used for residential purposes.

### **5.10. LINK BETWEEN SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Sample C felt that there is a positive relationship between subsistence farming and community development, in particular for people living in the rural areas. Small-scale agriculture contributes significantly to the local economy at a community level, and the money generated from on-farm activities plays a pivotal role in developmental needs and human welfare, which includes health care, education and human capital. Nell *et al* (2000) state “The food garden links directly with four major cornerstones of community development, such as health, education and training, economic development and job



#### **5.11. THE GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS ABOUT SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE**

The participants were asked how they felt about the subsistence sector as a whole. Most of the participants stated that for people living in the rural areas, agriculture had a special significance because of the fact that it could reduce the dependency of many rural households on buying from the markets, and is capable of reducing the shock and stress of high food prices. It was also one of the ways in which poverty could be alleviated. The participants also believed that agriculture plays a pivot role in the socio-economic and health life of human beings, because of its ability to create jobs and economic growth, and to improve the food security of households.

#### **5.12 CONCLUSION**

The chapter presented findings as expressed by both subsistence farmers and the extension officers. As was stated in the methodology chapter, the results were analysed, using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

The chapter was introduced by starting with the way in which the study was sampled, and then followed by the views of all the participants pertaining to agriculture in the rural areas. The chapter also examined the challenges faced by the subsistence farmers and extension officers in the use of communal fields for poverty alleviation, and how these could be addressed. The findings also highlighted the lack of capital, machinery, agricultural implements and resources, and agricultural infrastructure deterioration as the biggest obstacles that deter most of the subsistence farmers from participating in active agrarian economy. The chapter also dealt with the understanding and conceptualization of subsistence agriculture and community development by the

## CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1. Summary

The study began by introducing poverty in the rural communities and linking it with the decline of subsistence agriculture for communities living in the rural areas, with particular emphasis on the Eastern Cape. The escalation of poverty in the Eastern Cape was also highlighted, in particular in the rural areas despite the government's efforts to reduce poverty through various pro-poor policies, such as the White Paper on Agriculture (1995) and the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997). The study proceeded to highlight the objectives that sought:

- to explore the understanding of the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana about the importance of subsistence agriculture as a livelihood strategy.
- to examine the challenges that face communities of Mpongo and Twecwana in the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture, and
- to explore the views of the communities on how these challenges can be addressed.

Furthermore, the significance of agriculture for people living in the rural areas was also highlighted, and the crucial role this sector plays in the socio-economic life of the people living in the rural areas was stressed. The study also asserted that small-scale agriculture had lost its overall importance and that there was a link between poverty and the decline of small-scale agriculture in the Eastern Cape, including the Mpongo and Twecwana communities.

The study continued to review the relevant literature that provides a framework for the study, with particular focus on community development, subsistence agriculture, poverty and poverty alleviation. In order to have an in-depth understanding of the challenges,

## 6.2. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the challenges faced by the communities of Mpongo and Twecwana in the effective use of land for subsistence agriculture, as a poverty alleviation strategy. The study identified many challenges including lack of resources, assets deprivation, the deterioration of agricultural infrastructure and drought as the main challenges. Assets deprivation include the lack of capital assets such as money, equipment, machinery and resources needed to work the land, also insufficient natural resources that include water and arable land, and inadequate human capabilities, such as knowledge and skills. De Lange *et al* (1994) stressed that South Africa is a drought-prone country and therefore shortage of water in South Africa is one of the serious concerns which many regions are experiencing, including the Eastern Cape.

Inadequate resources and distribution of land are serious challenges; for example, some of the participants in the study indicated that very little plots of land in their home gardens, and the small sizes of their fields, severely constrain subsistence farmers from improving production. It is also well-known fact that capital, natural, social and human capacities, such as new knowledge and skills in agriculture, are the key defining features in agricultural production. In terms of infrastructural deterioration, the study has discovered that the fencing of agricultural fields and grazing camps has been destroyed or stolen, and the roads that link the homesteads and the fields are very bad. Dams, rivers and other irrigation options are lacking, and the situation becomes worse due to continuous droughts and the changing weather patterns. The current global warming and the climate change have profoundly affected the ability of the rural communities to sustain their traditional cultivation systems.

derived from the members of the family. Pote (2009) has also revealed in his study on the Nkonkobe Municipality that the majority of smallholding farmers are constrained by insufficient access to infrastructure and information, while many of them lack the assets to expand productive activities. Other challenges identified in this study include the lack of agricultural inputs from the farmers, lack of co-operation among the farmers, and lack of interest by youth to participate in agricultural based activities. Furthermore, the study revealed that state intervention in the form of social grants and other sources of income, has had a negative impact, causing most of the people in the rural areas to devalue agricultural centred activities.

### **6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings presented which point to the multifaceted nature of the challenges identified, the study proposes the following recommendations, namely: Food Security Programmes (FSP) such as Siyazondla, Siyakhula and Massive Food Programmes should be revived; co-operatives be established, up-skilling and re-skilling of emerging farmers should take place, government support in the form of finance, resources, information and an integrated approach to community development are also proposed

#### **6.3.1. Revival of the Food Security Programmes (FSP)**

The current food security programmes, like Siyazondla, Siyakhula and Massive Food Programmes that were launched for the community in the area of study, should be revived and ways and means must be found so that they reach every household in the community. Food Security Programmes that are focused on home food gardens are designed for the communities to uplift themselves and to reduce the stress and shock of

limiting dependence on the government's unsustainable hand-outs and food parcel programmes. Consistent with the above findings, Nell *et al*(2000) say "The main goal in training in food gardens development is to get as many people as possible interested in food gardens by showing how they can improve their quality of life."

On the other hand, the extension officers are the key components in agriculture as a whole, and they need to play a leading role in agricultural development, and to forge links with other stakeholders, and business and developmental agents in ensuring that the food security programmes are the vehicles for the improvement of small-scale agriculture. One of the functions of the extension officers as set out in the norms and standards of government is to promote and facilitate access to agricultural information for improved planning and decision making (Annual Report on the Compliance for Norms and Standards for Extension, 2008/9).

The study also suggests that these programmes should be accompanied by the re-introduction of the agricultural support services in the form of tractors, as participants indicated in the findings that they do not have enough resources to work their land.

### **6.3.2. Up-skilling and re-skilling of emerging farmers**

It has transpired during the analysis of the findings that the lack of skills and knowledge pertaining to agriculture for food production is a serious concern that has affected output. The subsistence farmers in these communities cannot produce enough without having the basic skills and knowledge of farming, and the resources and facilities to unlock human potential. The study proposes that skills training centres be established and managed by the communities, and be supervised by the extension officers from the Department of Agriculture. *Equitable access to appropriate and effective extension and training must be ensured, with the emphasis on farming communities who lacked*

Agricultural development can never be achieved without agricultural education and training, and therefore the study suggests that agricultural science must be re-introduced into school curricula, in particular in the General Education and Training (GET) band in the rural areas, in order to stimulate interest and to empower the youth and adults and other interested individuals, with farming skills. According to (Bhakit, 1981, p. 9) "The role of education is related to the need, and to equip individuals with skills, ability and attitudes necessary for full and effective participation in the economic and social life of the settlement."

### **6.3.3. Establishment of co-operatives**

It emerged during the discussion of the findings and the analysis that the challenges faced by the communities are multi-dimensional and need a multi-dimensional approach. The perceptions from most of the participants were that government support was necessary, together with that of other stakeholders. Therefore, this study suggests that the possibility of establishing co-operatives should be examined. Establishment of co-operatives is indispensable if small-scale agriculture for food production is to be improved in the rural areas. A co-operative is defined by Philip (2005) as an association of persons united to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned democratically controlled enterprise.

One of the advantages of co-operatives is that they are owned by a group of people whereby resources are combined, and information is shared for the benefit of the members, thus reducing the stress of too much dependence on external sources. Co-operatives also increase knowledge and skill capacity, because group members exchange ideas, information and knowledge, and can enjoy making independent

Chambo (2009) states that agricultural co-operatives have many privileges for the people living in the rural areas, because of the fact that agriculture is a source of food, income and employment. Co-operatives can also enjoy financial support from the government, since they have been established on the democratic principles of caring for others, community solidarity, equity, equality and democracy. Chambo (2009) also states that through agricultural co-operatives, farmers enjoy the supply of agricultural inputs to enhance productivity, and the marketing of commodities of farmers living in remote areas. In addition, agricultural co-operatives have the advantage of bulk purchase of inputs and services through collective action, and to place even the poor farmers in the market arena.

#### **6.3.4. Access to information**

De Lange *et al* (1994) have found that small scale agriculture in the rural areas is exposed to rudimentary information services and networks, and this situation has created serious problems as far as small scale agricultural development is concerned. At the same time, the agricultural system is too hierarchical and the information pertaining to the welfare of small scale agriculture does not reach those who are supposed to timeously implement agricultural policies. Findings from this study propose that the establishment of the information service centres, simultaneously with working committees and the extension officers, should be encouraged. The role of the extension officers is crucial in facilitating an enabling environment to assist subsistence farmers and the communities with information pertaining to finances, loans, credits, training, and technical advice that is not too costly for the new farmers. The extension officers should also ensure that prospective farmers are informed of possible natural disasters, market services and the availability of agricultural inputs such implements, seeds, seedlings

the purpose of sharing information, ideas and technical advice which is made available to attract various population demographics.

#### **6.3.5. Integrated development**

It is universally accepted that rural development remains a myth without agricultural development. It is also a well-known fact that the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development cannot succeed if it aims to tackle and address its problems alone. Findings from the study suggests that an integrated approach with other Departments, such as Public Works, Education and Social Development is crucial, and should be the hallmark of community development. Within the context of rural development the involvement of various stakeholders, such as NGOs, the business sector, established commercial farmers and other structures is important.

Turok (2008) advises that help in the promotion of local economic development in which the three spheres of government work together to co-ordinate the planning process of national sector departments is critical.

One of the strengths of an integrated and multi-sectoral approach is co-operation, integrative planning and the sharing of resources, skills, knowledge, ideas and thoughts. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development can request other government departments to assist these communities with fencing of the fields, grading of roads leading to the fields, and the construction of dams for water storage which have been stated as some of the challenges by the participants.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it is hoped that the research findings will appeal to government and other stakeholders in the Eastern Cape to strategise ways and means and to make it possible



The revival of home gardens may pave the way forward for the communities to become productive subsistence farmers and gear them towards sustainable agricultural development. The development of basic skills training and agricultural education for emerging farmers and youth can open good economic opportunities and attract them to be involved in the general economic development of their communities.

The establishment of co-operatives may also contribute to increase the capacity of the resources and the sharing of knowledge and skills, and further enhance social responsibility and solidarity with the result that the communities may then give all that they have to support one another. The centres of information can provide local communities with easy access to information and facilitate communication among various role players.

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## 7. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

AN INTERVIEWING SCHEDULE FOR THE SUBSISTENCE FARMERS IN THE COMMUNITIES OF MPONGO AND TWECHWANA VILLAGES.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE: SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. How long have you lived in this community?

5	10	
11	20	
21	above	

2. Can you tell me about your ages?

35	45	
45	55	
65	above	

3. Are you formally employed?

If yes, what do you do?

.....

If no, how do you earn a living?

.....

4. Do you own gardens for food production?

If so, what do you plant?

.....

5. Do you own fields for food production?

.....

a) If yes, please explain

.....

b) If no, please explain

.....

## QUESTIONNAIRE: SECTION B

7. How important is agriculture for the people living in the rural areas?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. Do you think that the rural communities like yourselves can depend on agriculture to sustain living?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. What have been your experiences with food production in the past 5 years?

.....  
.....

10. How important is it for this community to plough these fields?

.....  
.....  
.....

11. What knowledge and skills do you have in land cultivation?

.....  
.....  
.....

12. What opportunities do you have to increase food production in field cultivation?

.....  
.....  
.....

13. What support, if any do you need in order to produce enough food?

.....

15.What are some of the reasons for the people no longer to use the fields for food production?

.....  
.....  
.....

16.In this community, who are involved in ploughing the fields?

.....  
.....  
.....

17.Do you think that you have enough land to produce enough food?

a) If yes, please elaborate

.....

b) If no, please elaborate

.....

18.Explain how the cultivation of these fields, especially within the community is so significant?

.....  
.....  
.....

19.These fields have been lying fallow for quite some years. What are the problems and challenges that you are facing from using the fields for subsistence farming?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

20.What plans do you have to solve these problems?

.....  
.....  
.....

21.How do most people in the village make a living?

.....  
.....

23.What would you like the government to do to assist you to improve farming in your area?

.....  
.....  
.....

24.What are your overall perceptions about subsistence agriculture?

.....  
.....  
.....

**APPENDIX 2**

**AN INTERVIEWING SCHEDULE FOR FIELDWORKERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**QUESTIONNAIRE: SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. For how long have you been working for this department?

.....

2. What qualifications have you obtained?

.....

3. What is your job specification?

.....

4. For how long have you been working in these communities?

5	10	
10	15	
15	above	

**QUESTIONNAIRE: SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING OF KEY CONCEPTS**

5. What is your understanding of the concept ‘subsistence agriculture’?

.....

7. How did subsistence agriculture contribute to the local economy?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. What is the significance of subsistence agriculture for the people living in rural areas generally?

.....  
.....  
.....

9. How do you assist rural communities in developing subsistence agriculture?

.....  
.....  
.....

10. How is subsistence agriculture helpful in alleviating poverty for the people living in the rural areas?

.....  
.....

11. How does the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development support rural communities with subsistence farming?

.....  
.....  
.....

12. Do you think that the policy on agriculture promotes subsistence agriculture for the benefit of the rural communities?

a) If yes, please elaborate

.....  
.....  
.....

b) If no, please elaborate

.....  
.....

13. What are the achievements so far in the implementation of agricultural policies as

.....  
.....  
.....

15.What can be done to overcome these challenges?

.....  
.....  
.....

16.What plans do you have to improve subsistence agriculture for these communities?

.....  
.....  
.....

17.What can be done to encourage people living in the rural areas to pursue subsistence agriculture to make a living?

.....  
.....  
.....

18.What is your overall impression about subsistence agriculture.

.....  
.....  
.....

19.What is your understanding of the concept of community development?

.....  
.....  
.....

20.How can subsistence agriculture help community development?

.....  
.....  
.....

### APPENDIX 3

#### Consent Form

I, Xolani Mlonyeni, an MSc student at the University of Fort Hare, School for Post Graduate Studies, am conducting a research project that *Explores the Challenges that Face Rural Communities in the Use of Subsistence Agriculture as a Livelihood Strategy for Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study of Mpongo and Twecwana Communities in Tsholomnqa*. As part of this process, I am inviting you to participate in a focus group interview.

Should you consent, I wish to guarantee you that any information that you may provide will be confidential. Your identity will not be divulged or made available to anybody other than the researcher.

Thank you.

Signature ..... Date .....

I, ....., hereby give/do not give consent to participate in the study on *An Exploration of the Challenges that Face the Communities in the Use of Subsistence Agriculture as a Livelihood Strategy for Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study of Mpongo and Twecwana Communities in Tsholomnqa*.

I understand that I am participating in this study freely without being forced in any way. I also understand that I can stop participating in this study at any time and my decision to do so will not affect me negatively.

Signature ..... Date .....

