

**Institute of Social and Economic Research**

## **Development Studies**

### **Working Papers**

**Gender, Households and  
Environmental Changes in  
Informal Settlements in the  
Eastern Cape Province, South Africa**

**Cecil Manona,  
Leslie Bank and Karen Higginbottom**

Working Paper No. 64

**Rhodes University**

# Development Studies

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### (a) Background

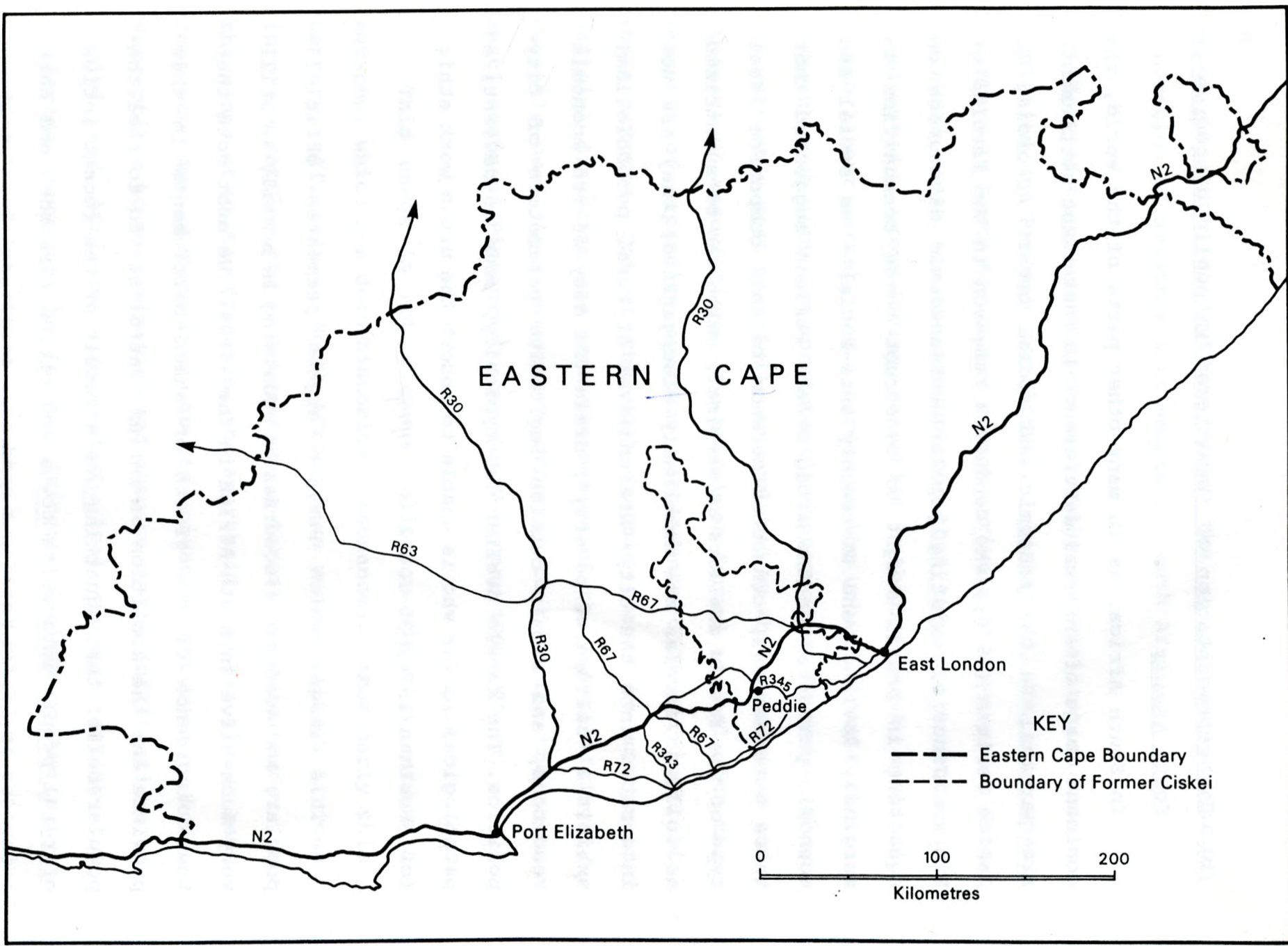
In recent years the number of people living in informal or 'squatter' settlements in South Africa has mushroomed and virtually every small town or city has one or more squatter settlements associated with it, often next door to the formal residential areas. Using field data collected from 1993 in two informal settlements in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa this study examines, firstly, the ways in which men and women in these communities organise their lives in their households and in the wider society. Secondly, it assesses the physical environment of informal settlements where there is a lack of service infrastructure, especially water, sewerage facilities, refuse removal and roads. Also, it was assumed that the presence of large numbers of people in an informal settlement has a deleterious effect on natural resources like the soil, wood, vegetation and water and that this may have a significant contribution to environmental pollution and degradation. This aspect was also examined.

Informal settlements are very different from the formal residential areas in the province largely on account of the fact that they have no legal status and their future is uncertain. The formal residential areas to which reference is made include historically black occupied townships which have some municipal services like sewerage, water and refuse removals. Almost

invariably, informal settlements have none of these services. Other formal residential areas are the old established villages in which people have devised various ways of adapting to their environment even though the services they have are not the same as those which are provided in the established townships. Usually, people resort to 'squatting' in search of residential land and, in some cases, in order to gain access to cheap accommodation. However, living informally in any area exposes people to many hardships; insecurity of tenure often forces them to erect only temporary dwellings which are not just uncomfortable but may be destroyed by bad weather; in particular, the scarcity of water in these areas seriously undermines the people's quality of life.

The study is comparative in nature. The larger informal settlement that is investigated is situated close to a large city, East London, and the smaller one is in Peddie Extension which is adjacent to the small town of Peddie (Map 1). The housing shortage in the urban areas in the province is chronic. According to a recent survey, one in every three black people in East London occupy informal housing. The housing crisis in smaller towns in the province is also very serious and it is incorrect to view squatting as an issue affecting larger cities only. The two communities which were investigated reveal certain similarities and differences which enable us to have a better understanding of the experience of living in an informal settlement.

MAP 1 - The Eastern Cape Province



(b) The representation of 'squatters' in public discourse in South Africa

In South Africa, as in many other parts of the world, the dominant image of informal settlements is that these settlements are marginal to the economic and social order. According to Janice Perlman (1976), who conducted research in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, existing popular and academic discourses on squatting in Brazil sought to construct these communities as marginal, deviant, and thoroughly anti-social - as social and economic parasites on the urban order. Perlman suggested that there were several, connected strands to this composite ideal type of the favela dwellers as marginal, which can be summarized as follows: favelas are internally disorganized; they are not integrated into the city; are enclaves of rural parochialism; exhibit a 'culture of poverty'; drain the city of its economic resources; and remain outside legitimate parameters of city politics. The favela dweller is, typically, seen as deviant; a pathological loafer who is unable to absorb the urban work ethic (cf. Perlman 1976, 30-100).

This image, which Perlman argues permeates official, popular, and academic discourses on squatting in Brazil, is still very much alive in South Africa in the 1990s. We must note that the coincidence of the growth of shack settlements in this province and the abolition of influx control served to fuel the popular belief that squatting was a result of the recent influx of rural people into white towns and cities (Cranshaw and Hart 1990, 66). Connected to this pervasive image of migration are a

number of other assumptions about the social and economic composition of squatter settlements in South Africa.

Many of these assumptions mirror the marginalization thesis identified by Perlman for Brazil. Linked to the idea that squatters in South Africa are recent arrivals in urban areas from the rural areas are the assumptions that they are essentially maladjusted to urban living, parochial in their outlook, marginal to the labour market, and a burden on the urban infrastructure. Although such views are consistently expressed in the media, they are currently most powerfully articulated by white officials and ratepayers' associations, who have been forced to deal with the prospect of expanding squatter settlements on the fringes of their suburbs. One of the most graphic images to emerge in official discourse has been the notion of the 'septic fringe', recently used by a government official to describe the shack settlements of Pinetown/Durban (de V Minaar 1992, 27).

This usage is not a casual slippage since it evokes a metaphor which has deep historical resonances. Since early this century, officials in South Africa have conceptualized African informal settlements as subversive, a threat to social order. In the minds of white officials, the Apartheid city has always been *imagined* and *naturalized* as an organic entity; a *body*, susceptible to contamination and disease by the infiltrations of uncivilized Africans, the metaphorical germs creating the festering sores of the 'septic fringe'. Sanitizing the city, cleansing it of impurities, has been a central ritual of renewal

for the urban Apartheid order (cf. Bonner 1991; Stadler 1979; Swanson 1977).

For Megan Vaughan (1991) this discourse of illness, of the 'septic fringe', would come as no surprise, especially in a colonial context. She maintains in her book, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, that in a colonial world ordered by and obsessed with difference - between black and white, between ethnic groups and between primitive and modern - the blurring of boundaries was seen as pathological. In the late colonial period, she argues: "there was a powerful strand of thinking which saw the erosion of difference as itself a factor which predisposed individuals and groups to the contraction of certain diseases" (1991, 12). Goldberg supports this argument when he states that in Africa it was claimed that 'uncivilized' Africans:

...suffered urbanization as a pathology of disorder and degeneration of their traditional life. To prevent their pollution from contaminating European city dwellers and services, the idea of sanitation and public health was invoked first as the legal path to remove blacks to separate locales at the city limits, and then as the principle for sustaining permanent segregation (1993, 48).

The reverse side of the 'septic fringe' was the idea of the 'healthy reserve'. Packard (1990) suggests that from the turn of the century workers on the South African mines were regularly sent home to the reserves to recuperate from bouts of tuberculosis. According to Packard, the pervasive myth of the

'healthy reserve' was not only a cheap way of treating tuberculosis, it was also a powerful justification for the maintenance of a migrant labour system (1990, 686-89).

In the 1990s, government officials did not use such radical images and language, but from our interviews it was clear they continued to regard squatter communities as depraved and abnormal. They were, naturally, finding it hard to accept the effortless slip in government policy away from the emphatic distinctions between 'orderly' and 'disorderly' urbanization in the mid-1980s to the new era of tolerance of squatting and site-and-service schemes in the early 1990s. In many towns in the Eastern Cape and Border, officials explained squatting in terms of the 'moral decay' of the reserves, the collapse of chieftaincy and disintegration of 'custom'. They saw youth politics - the comrades - as infecting the 'healthy reserve' and causing people to flee from the countryside to seek refuge in the towns and cities. These officials said that the new arrivals were not psychologically or culturally prepared for urban living, which they felt led to displacement and maladaptation.

White ratepayers' associations were far less cautious in their use of language and their choice of metaphors when it came to discussing the 'squatter problem'. Indeed, they often resorted to blatant racism. A good example is the case of Beacon Bay squatters in East London. At the Ratepayers' Association meeting of Abbotsford, Nahoon Valley Park, and Dorchester heights of August 1992, the Association called on the authorities to stop

'unacceptable, indiscriminate shack and hovel erection' in the area and to immediately eliminate 'slum development'. The Association based its case on the fact that the squatters were geographically and biologically displaced. They argued that the squatters were still locked within 'tribal systems of agricultural tenure', lacked the 'appropriate productivity' levels and 'commercial culture' needed to cope with urban living. The Ratepayers' Association concluded that this 'displacement' led to the development of anti-social pathologies - criminality, poverty, alcoholism, disease - which were polluting the white body politic.

What is probably most remarkable about the ratepayers representation of the squatters was how inaccurate it was. The image of local shack dwellers as maladapted, indolent, country-bumpkins without the skills or work ethic to cope with urban living was convincingly disproved by a municipal socio-economic survey conducted among the squatters in 1992. The survey revealed that: (1) the majority of squatters were not from the 'tribal homelands'; (2) that fully 68% of the squatters were gainfully employed in the formal sector; and (3) that one of the basic demands of the squatters was not for the restoration of tribal land rights but for freehold rights (East London Municipality Survey, 1992). Moreover, it was reported that the ratepayers' accusation that squatting had caused a sharp increase in 'crime and public drunkenness' in the white suburbs was also wrong.

The image of squatters as rural-orientated, indolent, and economically inept is connected to another set of ideas which links squatting to urban violence in South Africa. This refers to the notion of squatter settlements as strongholds of patriarchal power (and thus characterized by endemic violence) as with the bloodthirsty shacklords of Natal or axe-wielding fathers (or 'witdoeke') in the Crossroads conflicts (Cole 1987; Kentridge 1990; de V Minaar 1992; Morris 1992). These powerful images depict informal settlements as havens of violence, patriarchal power and ethnic chauvinism. As such they interlock with the pervasive notion of squatter camps as being full of maladapted, rural migrants and their extended families. In this discourse, the typical squatter household is viewed as an impoverished, male-headed, three-generational unit.

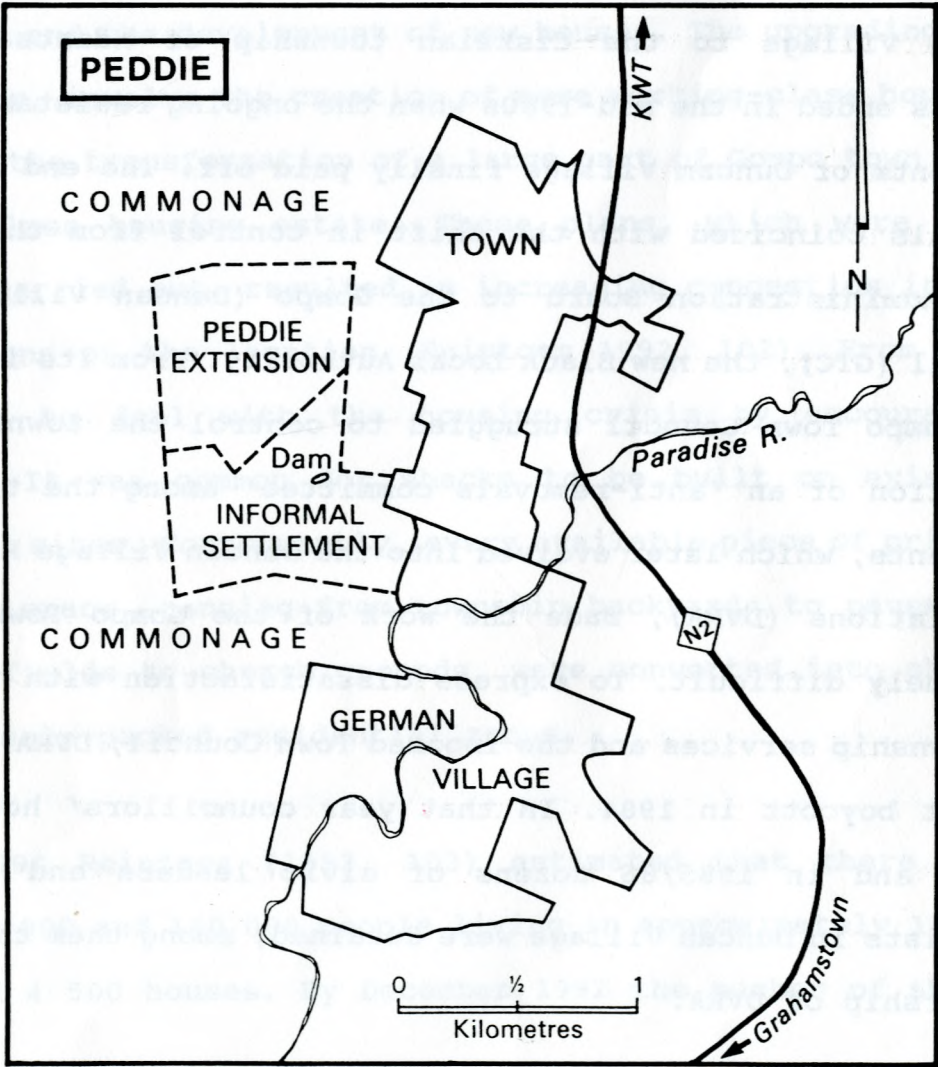
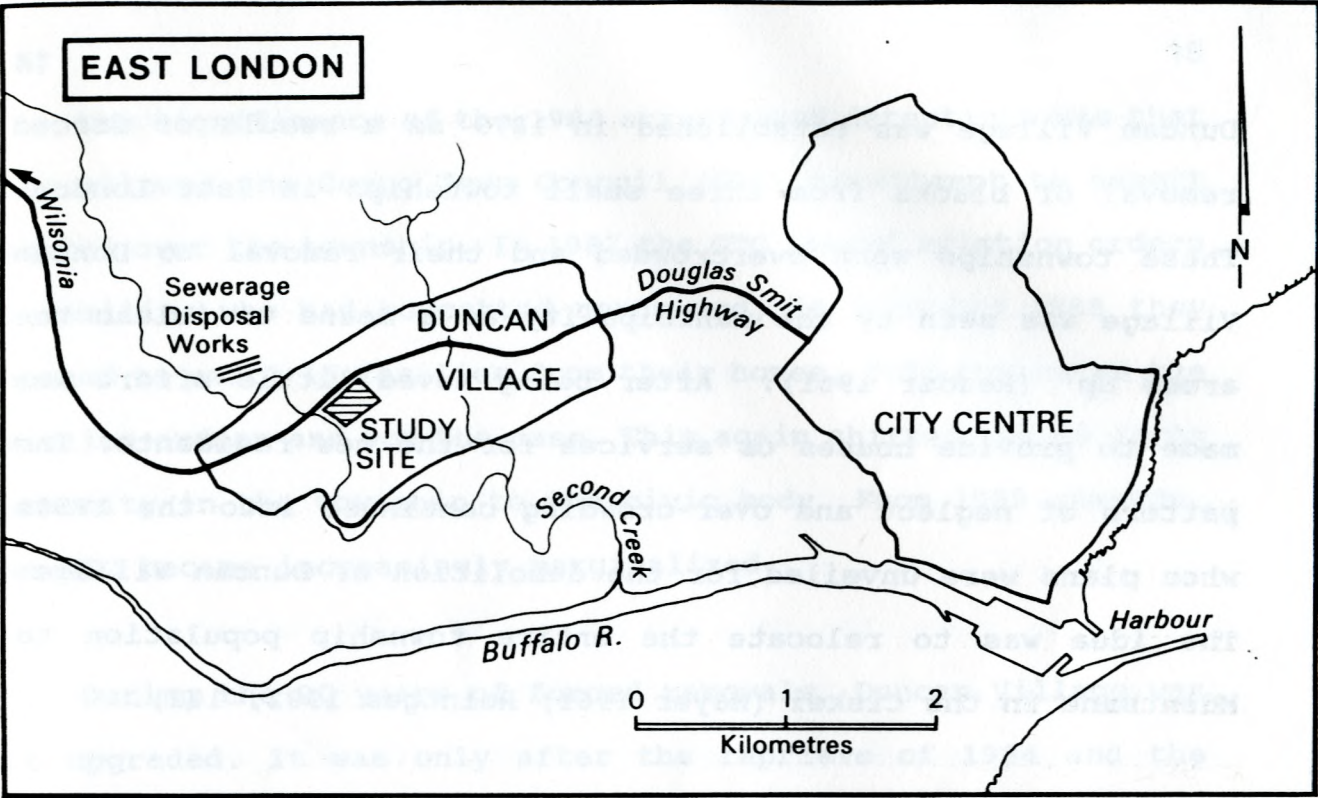
This conception of African domesticity underwrites the state's ongoing attempts to relocate squatters forcibly into site-and-service schemes. These schemes are laid out on an orderly, grid pattern and provide basic services on small rectangular plots intended for nuclear families. The schemes are deliberately designed to desegregate overcrowded squatter neighbourhoods and impose 'order and modernity' on these urban communities. Site-and-service schemes are seen by the state as part of the machinery of modernization. It is only by forcing squatters to swallow the bitter pill of site-and-service that the state has been prepared to accept squatting as a part of contemporary urbanization in South Africa.

(c) Settlement profile and historical background of study areas

(i) Duncan Village

Duncan Village is probably the most densely settled informal settlement in the region, perhaps in the country. Tiny, one-roomed, wood-and-iron shacks are packed up against one another in one of South Africa's oldest 'locations'. It is situated within walking distance of the East London CBD and the West Bank industrial area on the Buffalo river (Map 2). The closeness of this location to the city centre has meant that it has long been a prime target for workseekers intending to make their mark on the East London labour market. The attraction of living in the city has led to extreme congestion.

Shack density in the study area is very high, with no more than one metre between adjacent dwellings. The plots are not organised in any systematic fashion. During the earlier phase of the research the settlement was growing at an average rate of about 15 to 20 shacks per month, and it has now reached saturation point. Earlier the Residents' Committee specified that no building must occur on the floodplain area (see below). However, when fire destroyed some of the shacks on the hillside, people began to build on the floodplain. Some plots have fences constructed from wire and wood, which were erected when the shack was built to inhibit others from building too close. Fences are also seen as affording some small degree of privacy to the inhabitants.



**MAP 2 - The Study Areas**

Duncan Village was established in 1879 as a result of forced removal of blacks from three small townships in East London. These townships were overcrowded and their removal to Duncan Village was seen by the municipality as a means to 'clean the areas up' (Reader 1961). After being moved little effort was made to provide houses or services for the new residents. The pattern of neglect and over-crowding continued into the 1950s when plans were unveiled for the demolition of Duncan Village. The idea was to relocate the entire township population to Mdantsane in the Ciskei (Mayer 1961; Reintges 1992, 102).

Between 1964 and 1984, 112 000 people were removed from Duncan Village to the Ciskeian township of Mdantsane. This process ended in the mid-1980s when the ongoing resistance of the residents of Duncan Village finally paid off. The end of forced removals coincided with the shift in control from the Eastern Cape Administration Board to the Gomo (Duncan Village) Town Council (GTC), the new Black Local Authority. From its inception, the Gomo Town Council struggled to control the township. The formation of an 'anti-removals committee' among the township's residents, which later evolved into the Duncan Village Residents' Associations (DVRA), made the work of the Gomo Town Council extremely difficult. To express dissatisfaction with the state of township services and the imposed Town Council, DVRA initiated a rent boycott in 1984. In that year councillors' houses were burnt and in 1985/86 dozens of civic leaders and political activists in Duncan Village were detained, among them the current leadership of DVRA.

The significance of the 1986 arrests and detentions was that they allowed the Gombo Town Council (GTC) to attempt to assert control over the township. In 1987 the GTC issued eviction orders to families who had boycotted rents and, in February 1988 they managed to evict 15 families from their homes. DVRA contested the eviction orders and won the case. This again shifted the *de facto* authority in the township to the civic body. From 1989 onwards, the GTC became increasingly marginalized.

During the 20 years of forced removals, Duncan Village was not upgraded. It was only after the reprieve of 1984 and the arrival of the GTC that plans were announced for the improvement of services and the development of new houses. The upgrading did not, however, involve the creation of more working-class housing units, but the transformation of a large part of Gombo town into a middle-class housing estate. These plans, which were only partially carried out, resulted in increasing congestion in the poor sections of the location (Reintges 1992, 102). From 1987 DVRA tried to deal with the housing crisis by encouraging squatting. It was common for shacks to be built on existing residential sites. Consequently, every available piece of private and public space, ranging from township backyards to pavements to sports fields to church grounds, were converted into shacks in the densely-packed residential zones.

In 1990 Reintges (1992, 103) estimated that there were between 90 000 and 140 000 people living in approximately 15 000 shacks and 4 500 houses. By December 1992 the number of shacks

had increased to at least 20 000 or 25 000. In 1992, DVRA said that there were some 200 000 people squashed onto four square kilometres of land. Mr Metcalf, the Gompo town engineer, said there were 150 000 people there (Daily Dispatch 28/5/1993). Whatever the actual numbers, Duncan Village qualifies as one of the most densely settled areas in South Africa. Access to and control over the squatter settlements is undertaken by DVRA.

At the same time, the only services which are supplied by the discredited local authority, the Gompo Town Council, to this informal settlement are water, communal toilets and minimal refuse collection. There is one gravel road in the upper part of the settlement. Drainage spillways to divert the runoff from this road have not been constructed and since water tends to flow along the road it has become eroded. There are no other roads.

#### (ii) Peddie Extension

Peddie Extension is situated on the outskirts of the small country town of Peddie in the Eastern Cape Province (Map 2). Prior to the 1994 national elections in South Africa, it was under the jurisdiction of the Ciskei ('homeland') government. The vast majority of the people who live here have been landless for several generations and, over and above this, some of them have been victims of forced removals from white-owned farms in South Africa. It is necessary to make an assessment of this measure of deprivation since it has implications for the people's economic standing and present attitudes. The bulk of the people living in Peddie Extension previously lived at Thornhill Farm in

Alexandria and were evicted from there in June 1980 after the death of their landlord, Mr Reed. This farm was a home to no less than 72 families, including permanent and seasonal workers. The new owner of the farm asked the families to leave since he wanted to employ new workers. (Cf Surplus People Project, 1983, Vol. 2, 312, 313) The resettlement of the people was handled by the Department of Co-operation and Development which transported the people by buses and trucks. Most of the people had to sell their live-stock before their removal. Some of them alleged that the Ciskei Marketing Board bought the live-stock at give-away prices. The people were taken to a desolate area known as Kammaskraal about 40km from Peddie. Although they were promised agricultural land, this promise was not fulfilled. Instead, arrangements were made for them to be moved to another place near Peddie, i.e. the present Peddie Extension. They were moved to this new place in 1982.

The individual families were each provided with wooden, semi-detached houses by the South African government. The land on which these houses were built in Peddie Extension was previously part of the Peddie commonage which was used as grazing land by the land-owning families in Peddie. Six years after the arrival of the people in the area, i.e. in 1988, some of the older residents of Peddie, who were desperate for building sites, began to build their houses on the open spaces next to the original settlement. This 'land invasion' began somewhat inconspicuously. After the heavy rains of 1988, six families whose houses were destroyed by rain were given permission by the

Ciskei government to live temporarily at the Peddie Town Hall. Thereafter the government started to erect new houses on new plots for those whose houses had been destroyed by rain. However, these houses were never completed, leading some of the people who wanted land to move and settle informally on Peddie Extension. In the course of time this new informal settlement attracted large numbers of landless people from various places, with some still arriving at the beginning of the research.

Those resettled from Kammaskraal were provided with water. A reservoir was built and stand pipes were erected in some parts of the settlement. Other facilities which were provided included a primary school and a clinic. Yet even with these provisions the Ciskei Administration continued to view this settlement as a 'transit camp' and had intentions of moving the people again at some stage in the future, possibly to a newly-released farm to the east of Peddie. As such even this original section had no legal status as far as the administration was concerned. During the earlier phase of the research the people had no certainty about their immediate future even though some of them were building fairly solid houses to replace the wooden shacks. They feared that some of these houses would have to be demolished when the area is developed, a matter of great concern to them.

The informal settlement itself has no services at all. There is no water supply and water has to be fetched from the upper 'transit camp'. Sometimes (especially during droughts) the people have to ask for water from another source some five

kilometres away. There are no sanitation services. But this informal settlement continues to attract people into the area largely on account of the availability of land there as well as its good location. It is close to some of the important places of employment in the area (especially the town) and is only about four kilometres away from a relatively large hospital which also provides employment.

(d) Method

Fieldwork in Duncan Village began in mid-1992 in the form of a pilot study concerning the nature, causes and consequences of urban and rural informal settlements in the Eastern Cape Province. Duncan village was one of six communities which were included in the investigation. This pilot study resulted in a comprehensive report which provided the researchers with a better understanding of the nature of informal settlements. The specific research on gender, households and the environment started in Duncan Village in 1993 and utilised some of the material which was gathered during the pilot study of the previous year. In the latter study a detailed questionnaire had been applied to 100 households forming a random sample of 10% of various sections of the community. Aerial photographs were used to identify different pockets of shack settlements and to select appropriate research sites. We could not cover all the areas. But we did ensure that 10% samples were taken in the pockets of shacks which were selected. To make the study as representative as possible we applied between 30 to 35 questionnaires in three different pockets of shacks. Each pocket was settled at

different times. The questionnaire was designed to gather information from individual households under the following broad headings: residential and migration history, household composition, house construction, land use and resource utilization.

Fieldwork in Peddie Extension commenced in October 1993. After the community had given permission for the study to be done, preliminary work began in the informally-settled area of the community. It was established that there were about 205 households in this area. The questionnaire was applied to one out of every four adjacent households and altogether fifty questionnaires were completed. This was the same questionnaire as the one which was used in Duncan Village. As in Duncan Village, the gathering of more statistical material by means of the questionnaire was followed by more in-depth data collection including cases, life histories and general observations. The study also included an ecological survey to assess the impact of informal settlements on the surrounding natural environment.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PHYSICAL FEATURES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

#### (a) Duncan Village

##### (i) Physical features

The study area at Duncan Village is about four km west of the East London city centre at 33°01'S, 27°52'E, about 90m above sea level. (Plate 1)

#### Climate

East London experiences a subtropical climate (Kopke 1988). Temperatures are moderate in all months, with the warmest month (January) having a mean maximum temperature of about 25°C and the coldest month (July) having a mean monthly minimum of about 10°C (CCWR<sup>1</sup>; East London 1967-1986). The area is virtually frost free and the mean daily temperature range is only 8.5°C (*ibid*). The average annual rainfall is 810 mm, with the peak in March and a smaller peak in November (CCWR; East London 1918-1985). Pan evaporation exceeds rainfall in all months with the biggest deficits occurring in January (*ibid*). Thunderstorms occur frequently. Winds are strong and blow mostly from the north-east and south-west.

#### Topography, drainage and erosion

The study area is situated on a moderately sloping north-west facing spur adjacent to the floodplain of a small stream. The

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<sup>1</sup> Database of the Computing Centre for Water Research, Pietermaritzburg.

slopes are convex, with the upper areas having steep slopes of about  $12^{\circ}$  and gradually flattening out to about  $2^{\circ}$  at the edge of the freeway. The floodplain is flat, except for the steep banks of the stream itself. The whole area is bordered to the north-west by a freeway with sharply sloping banks. A perennial stream meanders through the floodplain below the settlement after passing through a small pipe under the freeway. After good rains in August 1994 the stream averaged about three metres in width and 10 cm. deep in the centre. A small tributary collects much of the water draining from the shack area from where it joins the stream about 150 m. away.

The sloping nature of much of this informal settlement is causing gross inconvenience to residents and makes it difficult to build shacks. In order to provide a flat surface for their dwellings, most of those living in the steeper areas have levelled terraces as a foundation for their shacks and sometimes for the plots. This reduces the erosion hazard immediately adjacent to the dwellings themselves. But the sloping terrain, combined with the large amounts of water which flow through the settlement, creates an erosion hazard and provides a direct threat of water damage to the shacks lower down on the slopes.

Most run-off water in the informal settlement eventually drains into the stream via a small tributary. Much of the run-off flows initially towards the freeway, where it is intercepted by a well-constructed open concrete drain (approximately one metre wide) which runs along the top of the bank adjacent to the freeway.

The drain is designed to empty into the tributary. This drain was constructed along with the freeway in order to prevent water running down the banks and therefore eroding its slopes. However, it has not been maintained and is now clogged with litter and vegetation for most of its length, slowing down the flow to a trickle and sometimes diverting the flow of water back towards the settlement.

Much of the water flowing through the shack area drains through a series of irregularly placed and meandering trenches which have been dug by the residents. These are 10-30 cm. in depth and width and are simply dug into the soil. Some of the trenches end abruptly without joining others so that water then flows in an uncontrolled fashion out of the end of the trench and sometimes settles in pools. Litter often accumulates in the trenches, diverting the flow of water in a random direction (often towards a shack). Some shacks have no trenches around them and water runs into the floor of these shacks at times. There is no organised system for the location of these trenches, with their construction depending mainly on individual shack owners linking up with a nearby trench to divert the water away from their own shack and down the hill. However, some neighbours have co-operated in the digging of trenches.

During the time of the research the overland flow of water had led to surprisingly little soil erosion, probably as a result of the relatively low erodibility of the soils and the short history of the settlement. However, in time this situation is expected

to worsen. The only way to overcome the gross inconvenience and erosion hazard caused by this water would be to install a network of impermeable (e.g. concrete) drains. These drains would need to be covered if the problem of clogging is to be avoided. It is also desirable, but probably impractical given the dense living conditions, to vegetate the ground in order to bind the soil.

### Vegetation

Virtually all vegetation, including grass, has been removed or destroyed in the residential area so that the ground consists mainly of bare soil. However, after heavy rains during the period of research, a lush growth of kikuyu grass (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) occurred in about 30% of the residential area, especially in those lower-lying areas where water accumulates. This helps to slow down water flow and control erosion in those areas.

The natural vegetation in this stream valley consists of the Southern Variation of Valley Bushveld (Acocks 1975). This is a dense succulent thicket dominated by large trees, some relics of which can be seen a few kilometres downstream. However, the valley floor and its slopes have been cleared of virtually all natural vegetation except on the steeply sloping banks of the stream itself, presumably for purposes of building and fuel. Within a few metres of the stream most of the original tree cover remains. This consists of trees typical of Valley Bushveld including tree euphorbias and coral trees (*Erythrina lysistemon*).

If these trees were to be removed, streambank collapse and consequent greater siltation of the stream would eventually occur.

The stream floodplain has nearly all been cultivated at some stage and its current vegetation consists of recent invasions of woody weeds and a variety of grasses and small forbs. There has also been some invasion by the thorn tree, *Acacia Karroo*, although only small specimens occur. This is a popular source of fuelwood elsewhere in the Eastern Cape.

(ii) Services and associated hazards

The only services supplied by the local authorities are water, communal toilets and minimal rubbish collection. No roads, pathways or drains have been constructed to service this area. There is no electricity in the informal settlement, although the adjacent formal township has electricity in the streets and people who can afford to do so can install electricity in their houses.

Water supply, drainage and water pollution

In Duncan Village the eastern part of the informal settlement is serviced by standpipes installed in 1994. These extend from the mains water system already supplying the formal township up the hill. The topography of the settlement is therefore such that this water can be gravity fed. There are no taps in the western part of the settlement, with residents having to walk up to 600 metres uphill to fetch water. The quantity and quality of the

water from these standpipes is adequate. People do not have individual systems for water collection such as water tanks.

No drains have been provided with the standpipes so that the water collects in puddles under the taps and then drains haphazardly down the slopes. That their siting was given little thought is evidenced by the fact that those taps which are closest to the freeway are only a few metres from the existing concrete drain. Although there is little sign of erosion under these taps, this is sure to develop with time.

The water draining through the settlement gathers household waste and human faeces as it flows. As it flows downhill it becomes progressively more polluted. The water entering the tributary from the drain is thus expected to contain the highest proportion of pollutants. The area around the taps also provides another place where stagnant water, with its associated micro-organisms, can collect.

Until standpipes were recently erected in the informal settlement, some people were using the drain water for washing. The greatest risk of infection occurs when people come into oral contact with the water, which is most likely to happen when they touch their mouths or food after putting their hands in the water. Certain skin complaints can also occur from contact with polluted water.

Water samples from the mouth of the drain entering the tributary

and the stream into which it flows were analysed for presence of enterobacteria. At least four of these species are human pathogens and one is potentially fatal (*Enterobacter sp.*), although none are associated with infectious epidemics (Zinsser 1988). However, it should be noted that a 'one off' test, especially if done after heavy rains, will pick up only some of the bacteria which occur over a longer period of time. Secondly, any pathogenic viruses which occur in the water would not be detected.

#### Toilet facilities, rubbish disposal and related pollution

In squatter settlements limitations on the provision of toilet and rubbish disposal facilities and the pollution of the environment often cause serious health problems. The most serious of these problems is probably disease transmission by the faecal-oral route (Rivett-Carnac 1984). In Duncan Village communal toilets in blocks of eight to ten are situated at the upper end of the informal settlement. These are conventional flush toilets connected to the mains water system. However, the toilets are insufficient for the number of people in the settlement and are often blocked. There are cold water taps outside where people can wash their hands. However, washing of hands with cold water and without soap is insufficient to eliminate faecal bacteria, which are the most common cause of gastric infections. No other toilet facilities are available, and the people at the bottom of the settlement are too far away to be able to use the communal toilets conveniently. Because of the lack of toilets people often use buckets within their own

shacks and later empty them. Some also defecate in the open area near the tributary, where piles of uncovered faeces can be seen, while others use the rubbish heaps.

The Gombo Town Council collects rubbish weekly from the settlement. This system is clearly inadequate since numerous informal rubbish dumps occur throughout the settlement (Plate 2) and litter is conspicuously scattered throughout the area (Plate 3). These piles of rubbish are usually on the surface of the ground rather than in pits, and are uncovered. They generally contain household waste, especially plastic and cans. Rubbish tips are also expected to harbour a range of bacteria and viruses, some of which can be pathogenic. This poses a health risk to people handling this rubbish, particularly children who are known to play on the rubbish tips.

Air pollution occurs in the form of particles of soil and litter which are blown into the air when it is windy. This means that foreign particles often get into people's eyes, causing irritation and possible infection. Given the crowded living conditions and the numerous sites harbouring micro-organisms, there is also some risk of air-borne diseases being transmitted.

The World Health Organisation estimates that up to 80% of diseases in underdeveloped countries are due to unclean or insufficient water sources and to inadequate sanitation (Rivett-Carnac 1984).

### "Natural" hazards

The greatest hazard in the informal settlement is fire. The use of paraffin lamps with naked flames provides a source of fire, while the highly flammable nature of the wooden dwellings means that shacks can easily be ignited. The high density of settlement then leads to a situation where it is difficult to prevent a fire from spreading. Fire is a recurrent problem in the settlement and it causes extreme hardship and suffering. During April 1995 no less than 65 shacks burnt down in one area of this community. Calamities of this magnitude occur frequently, especially during winter. The Residents' Association is now responding by building a cement-brick wall as a firebreak in any area which has been destroyed by fire.

#### (iii) Agriculture

Due to the small amount of land available in Duncan Village, the only opportunities for agricultural activities are small-scale vegetable gardens within the settlement, the cultivation of small fields on the floodplain, and limited rearing of chickens.

A brief reconnaissance survey of the soils in the study area yielded the following results. The soils on the slopes of the settlement appear to be fairly uniform. They are moderately deep (>800mm) and have a good texture for cultivation (sandy clay topsoil and clay loam subsoil), although the density of small metallic concretions in the subsoil increases with depth. The topsoil in the single analysed sample has a very organic content (8.5%), a low salinity (30.5mS/m), and is moderately acidic (pH

5.3). Although most vegetables can tolerate this pH level, some (e.g. onions, tomatoes and carrots) are not likely to grow well unless lime is added to the soil.

The soils on the floodplain are variable, becoming sandier as one moves closer to the stream. Soil depth varies from very deep (>1500mm) to very shallow where rocks lie just under the surface. A soil sample taken 30m from the stream consisted of a very shallow clay loam topsoil overlying a layer of unstructured sandy material (the soil is probably of the Dundee form, Soil Classification Working Group). The topsoil has a moderately high organic content (3%), is slightly acidic (pH 5.9) and has a low salinity (9.1mS/m). This pH level is such that a few crops such as onions and wheat are not likely to grow well unless lime is added.

The land capability of the floodplain was provisionally assessed according to Scotney et al.'s (1991) technique. The area is classified as ranging from high potential arable land (order A) where soils are at their deepest, to arable land with severe limitations (order B) where soils are shallow. The relative extents of land falling into each of these categories can only be assessed following a more detailed survey of the soil depths. There also appears to be potential for small-scale irrigation, although assessing the feasibility of this would require further investigation of the consistency of the stream's flow and more detailed investigation of the soils.

It is not surprising that there is very little cultivation of crops in Duncan Village, since the shacks are very close to each other. In the sample there were no household members who had cultivated anything during the previous summer season. But there are some people in this settlement who plant mealies on the edges of this place during summer.

Cultivation occurs in small fields on the floodplain of the stream (Plate 4) and in very small vegetable plots adjacent to shacks. Livestock farming is not a significant activity in Duncan Village.

Some people have fields on both sides of the stream, while others use areas on the opposite side of the freeway. However, there have been arguments with people in that area over use of that land. An area of land on the floodplain occupied by graves is generally avoided for cultivation and seen as "not fertile". Plots are generally between 50 and 200 m<sup>2</sup>, the size being limited by availability of labour.

There appears to be no strict regulation of the allocation of cultivation plots, and one does not have to ask formally for permission to cultivate in a certain area. One old man said that he gets himself a field "when he is hungry" and that it can be as big an area as he is able to "plough". However, two other men said that at times there was a shortage of space available for fields, and that some people were forced to use land on the other side of the freeway.

The main activities concerned with cultivation are field preparation (which includes clearing of woody vegetation by digging and/or burning and turning the soil), sowing, weeding and harvesting. All cultivation takes place with hand tools, such as spades, picks and hoes, and is thus highly labour intensive. It also involves minimal capital input (and therefore minimal risk), with people generally not using any additives such as artificial or natural fertilisers (e.g. compost, animal dung) herbicides or pesticides. Field cultivation, especially bush clearing, is seen as "a lot of work". There is little co-operation between households in cultivation activities - one old man said that the only way you could get others to help was to make beer for them. He said that he chooses the time when he will cultivate based partly on when he has sufficient time available.

Both men and women are involved in field preparation, with their roles varying between families. However men tend to be responsible for the physically strenuous task of digging the soil, which they still refer to as "ploughing". Generally, young people are not interested in cultivation: one old man said that those youngsters who were cultivating were not serious about it - their parents were forcing them to do it.

Cultivation activity is closely related to rainfall availability. During the study period a peak in field preparation activities occurred in August, following good rains and in preparation for the warmer weather. When rain is expected to be sufficient, some

people cultivate their fields twice a year - as was the case in 1994. Conversely during the drought years of 1992-3 there was very little field cultivation. In 1993 those fields which were cultivated were immediately adjacent to the stream, where soil moisture was higher than elsewhere.

A range of vegetables (e.g. spinach, cabbage, sweet potatoes and pumpkins) as well as the staple diet of maize is grown in the small fields. People with fields generally sell some of their crop within Duncan Village, which they find a useful source of income.

Theft of crops from fields does occasionally occur but is not considered a serious problem as it is in some other settlements. Thieves stand a good chance of being detected, and if so are reported to the Street Committee. A person stealing turnips, for example, would be punished via the Community Court by being forced to eat a large quantity of turnips until he becomes sick. This is said to be an effective deterrent!

Vegetable gardening is practised by a few households. Vegetable plots are generally small, which permits the growing of only a few types of vegetable for home consumption. Only a small proportion of vegetable plots are fenced, as there is no need to protect them from livestock. The plots are often levelled, which reduces erosion damage and aids in water retention. Vegetables grown include squash, butternut, spinach and onions, and most are of reasonable quality given sufficient water. Vegetables are

**PLATE 1 THE STUDY AREA**



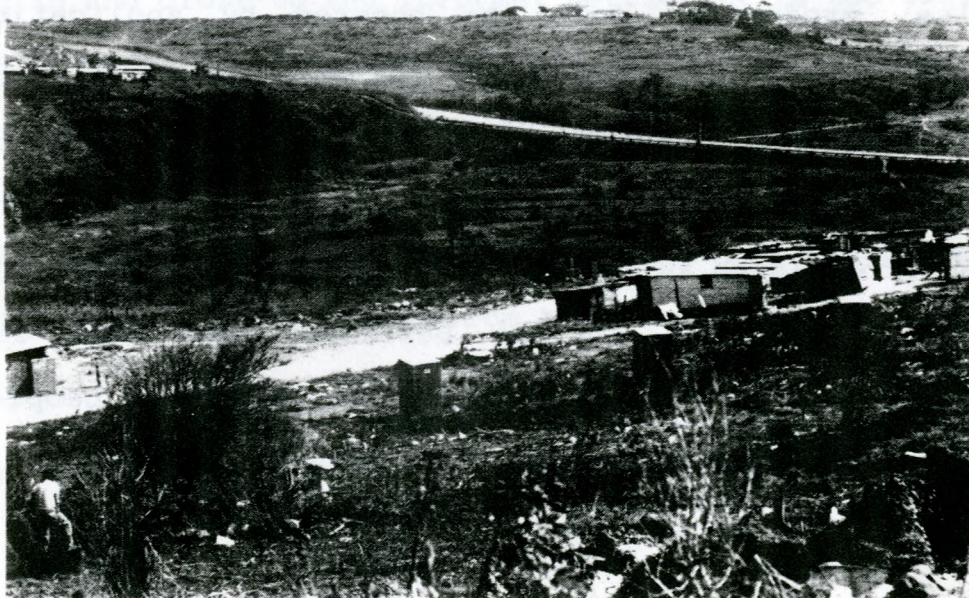
**PLATE 2 AN INFORMAL RUBBISH DUMP**



**PLATE 3     A DRAINAGE CHANNEL CLOGGED WITH LITTER**



**PLATE 4     FIELDS ON THE RIVER FLOODPLAIN BELOW THE INFORMAL SETTLEMENT**



normally grown from seed which can be obtained from local shops at little cost. The garden is prepared using a hand tool such as a pick or spade. Many people have to borrow these from a neighbour as they do not possess their own. Generally people do not use any natural or artificial fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides. However, household food scraps are often thrown directly onto the soil, which in the long run would help to maintain soil fertility and structure.

The major limitation on garden cultivation is the availability of water. This means that generally gardens are not cultivated in the drier winter months. In winter 1994, rainfall had been sufficient to allow the cultivation of winter gardens with virtually no need for hand watering. However, in drier seasons water has to be fetched from the nearest communal tap. One woman living alone said that, although this created a lot of extra work for her, it did not stop her from gardening because she depends on the garden for food.

Although many people have adequate knowledge to be able to grow vegetables, production could be boosted by application of permacultural or organic gardening principles. In particular, using techniques to conserve water and choosing crops suited to small spaces, would be beneficial. Many of the vegetables currently grown (such as pumpkin) are inefficient users of space. Organisations such as Abalimi Bezekhaya and Food Gardens Foundation have various programmes for teaching people and providing support in relation to township gardening. Such

programmes are having marked success even in some squatter areas such as Khayelitsha. Introduction of such a programme into Duncan Village could be similarly beneficial.

Theft is not seen as a problem in garden plots, since one of the few positive effects of the dense residential pattern is that there is an opportunity and an incentive for community protection. It is difficult to steal without being seen.

### Livestock

The municipality officially prohibits livestock in Duncan Village. However a few cattle (three were seen) are kept on the open land adjacent to the settlement. We were told that people buy calves and take them to rural areas when they mature. If livestock cause any damage to property the owners are expected to pay the costs. We were also told that these cattle always have someone tending them, but were unable to find anyone with those we saw.

### (iv) Use of other natural resources

The land in and close to the informal settlement is too small and too heavily modified by urban activity to provide a significant source of natural resources such as wood or traditional plants. However, despite the very limited supply, residents do obtain some fencing posts derived from green wood from the floodplain area, and some building poles from the same area.

**PLATE 5    SHACK DWELLINGS:    PEDDIE**



**PLATE 6    FETCHING WATER FROM PEDDIE EXTENSION RESERVOIR**



PLATE 7      FETCHING WATER FOR BRICKMAKING



PLATE 8      FIREWOOD PILE



(v) Environmental management and rehabilitation

There is little visible evidence of attempts to minimise environmental degradation or associated health hazards in a co-ordinated fashion (e.g. tree planting, litter clean-up campaigns, co-ordinated drainage control). However, the use of terracing and minimal provision of drainage channels are attempts to reduce the physical hazards caused by water flowing through the settlement. These are measures which are taken mainly by individuals, rather than requiring co-ordinated community action. There are apparently no NGOs concerned with environmental issues working in Duncan Village. However, we were told that health workers do encourage the cultivation of vegetable gardens for nutritional reasons.

General Comment

The physical environment in which people feel they are forced to live creates problems for people in terms of physical and mental health and practical difficulties. The demotivating effect of living in such an environment and the social context in which it occurs can tend to make people act in such a way as to exacerbate some of these environmental problems. At the same time, people can also influence their environment in a positive way, on two different levels. At a practical local level, they can act to ameliorate the environmental problems (e.g. organise a co-ordinated drainage system, carry waste to the disposal sites, plant trees). These can occur most effectively if they form part of a co-ordinated community strategy. However, people often feel that the impact that these sorts of actions can have is too

limited, and feel that the real problems are at a political level. Therefore the other way in which people can affect their environment is to organise themselves politically to seek positive changes to the broader environment - i.e. the fact that they have to live in such a settlement at all.

## **(b) Peddie Extension**

### **(i) Physical features**

Peddie is situated about 65km east of Grahamstown and 50km west of King William's Town by road. It is about 60kms inland from the sea, at 33°12'S, 27°05'E and is about 300m above sea level. The informal settlement is located immediately south of Peddie Extension and west of Peddie town (Plate 5).

### **Climate**

The climatic conditions in Peddie are described as subarid to mild subarid or Steppe (Loxton et al. 1979; Page 1982; Kopke 1988). Peddie experiences hotter summers and colder winters than Duncan Village, with the warmest month having a mean maximum temperature of about 30°C, and the coldest month having a mean monthly minimum of about 5°C (Els 1971). Colder winter temperatures are reflected in occasional frosts (31-50 days per year in the Peddie region; Page 1982). The average annual rainfall of 515mm (CCWR; records for 1878-1991) is well below that in East London, and also more variable between years (cf De Lange et al. 1994, long-term rainfall records from CCWR). Droughts are a major hazard in the area, particularly over the last decade. There is a clear summer peak in rainfall, while

winters are very dry. Water deficits occur in all months, as there is in Duncan Village, but they are of greater magnitude. Winds can be of high velocity throughout the Peddie District, although no detailed information is available for this area. Thus the climatic conditions at Peddie are much less amenable for crop cultivation than in East London, but rain damage to residential areas is less likely.

### Topography, Drainage and Erosion

Most of the houses in the informal settlement are located on a gently sloping spur. Slopes are generally gentle (about  $2^{\circ}$ ), with moderate slopes of up to  $6^{\circ}$  on the western edge of the settlement and on either side of a small tributary. These slopes are not sufficient to pose significant threats to any of the dwellings, except perhaps for a few located close to the tributary.

The only surface water source in the immediate vicinity of the informal settlement is a small livestock dam in the middle of the settlement. Heavy rain in the settlement would drain naturally towards the dam or one of the intermittently flowing tributaries in the area, particularly that in the small valley just north of the dam. There is not the dire need for man-made drains as in Duncan Village.

The most conspicuous erosion in the informal settlement is along dirt roads where deep rills and ruts have formed. There is also some streambank collapse on the banks of the small tributary.

### Vegetation

The vegetation within and immediately surrounding the informal settlement consists of grassland. Immediately to the south is an area of karroid veld dominated by the bluebush *Pteronia incana*, which is unpalatable to livestock. The presence of this vegetation type is an indication of past overgrazing (Acocks 1975). The commonage land to the east, south and north of Peddie Extension consists of a savannah of short trees interspersed by grass. The most abundant tree is the thorn tree *Acacia karroo*, and other common species are *Rhus sp.*, *Mytenus sp.* and *Scutia myrtina*.

### (ii) Services

#### Roads

There is a good gravel road in the upper part of the section of Peddie Extension, the 'transit' camp, , but not into the informal settlement. All other roads are unsurveyed dirt roads which are badly eroded and in some places impassable by conventional vehicles. There is a need for properly constructed roads with drainage spillways.

#### Water Supply

A grossly inadequate water supply is one of the most urgent problems facing residents of the informal settlement. The people living in or close to the town of Peddie receive their water from the Ngwekazi dam which is about 20 km outside town. However, very little of this water actually gets to Peddie Extension and the informal settlement itself has no taps at all. In theory,

the people in the informal settlement can fetch water from a reservoir at the 'transit' camp or upper section of Peddie Extension. Yet this is more than one kilometre away from the dwellings of the most distant residents. Moreover, this water is rarely available (Plate 6).

The ultimate cause of the water problem is an inadequate supply to the town of Peddie as a whole, resulting mainly from a catchment area which is too small to meet the needs of the present population (see Higginbottom 1995). There are plans in progress to pump water from the Keiskamma River to Peddie and nearby villages (Rowntree 1994). The Peddie Extension supply is particularly inadequate because it lies at the end of a system of pipes which first pass through other parts of Peddie. The water has often been depleted by other users before it reaches Peddie Extension. There are unconfirmed rumours from Peddie Extension residents that the town clerk arranges to switch off the valve between town and Peddie Extension in order to increase the pressure of the supply to town. Although we could not establish whether this actually happens, it was clear that the residents of Peddie Extension feel that they are being ignored by the local administration.

According to the person who operates the pumps at Ngwekazi Dam, water is pumped at night in order to supply water to Peddie Extension. The idea is that at night time, users further up the line will not be using the water, so that the water should reach Peddie Extension. However, this happens only when the reservoir

at the dam is full. Thus when the dam level is low, no water is pumped to Peddie Extension at all.

Sometimes Peddie Extension is without water for several weeks and people have to beg for water from people who live in town. They have to walk a distance of about three kilometres each way to do so. In other cases they are forced to buy water from people who fetch it from town with their vehicles. This shortage of water is considered by the people as the worst aspect of their living conditions. Very often water in Peddie Extension is available for only one or two hours daily, from midnight. Therefore, residents are subjected to the inconvenience of having to wake up at midnight in order to queue for water. The three taps which are close to the informal settlement (but outside it) are dry most of the time and are not of much benefit.

Although in the past there has been a number of functioning boreholes in Peddie, nearly all of these are no longer operational, mainly due to lack of maintenance by the municipality.

There is no evidence of illness being caused by the tap water that is supplied to the community. However, although there is tertiary water treatment at Ngekwazi Dam, there were no visits by health inspectors between 1990 and 1994.

According to those residents questioned, water in the small dam in the centre of the informal settlement (Plate 7) is not used

for human consumption. However, given the shortage of water, it seems possible that people might be tempted to use the dam at times, so it was analysed for presence of pathogenic bacteria. Two potentially pathogenic species were found. An unidentified species of Pseudomonas was present. Bacteria of this genus do not normally infect people, although they can cause severe infections or fever in people who are already ill. Another species found in the dam water was identified as either Escherichia coli or Salmonella arizonae. Certain strains of E. coli cause intestinal disease or urinary tract infection. S. arizonae can cause serious conditions such as Salmonella septicemia, enteric fevers including typhoid which can lead to death, and gastroenteritis (ibid). All these bacteria are likely to have been transmitted to the water by faecal material.

These results are sufficient to indicate that the dam poses a threat to human health if the water is consumed, and people should be warned of this danger. The water should also be retested for the presence of Salmonella.

#### Fuel and energy use

In the Peddie sample 92% of the households used paraffin and wood, 4% paraffin only and a further 4% paraffin and gas as their sources of fuel. This means that the usage of wood in Peddie Extension is much more intensive than in Duncan Village where only three per cent of the households in the sample use wood for fuel. One reason for this is the fact that wood is more readily available in Peddie Extension than in Duncan Village. In Peddie

PLATE 9 ONE OF FEW VEGETABLE GARDENS CULTIVATED IN WINTER 1994

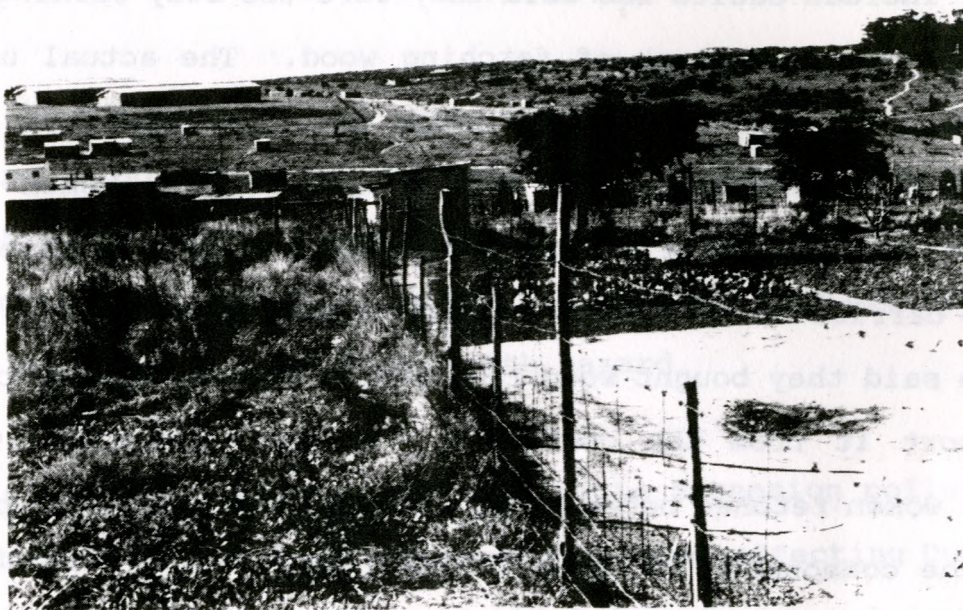


PLATE 10 BRICK-MAKING



Extension the four households in which wood is not used for fuel at all include adults who said they were too busy working or too old for the heavy task of fetching wood. The actual usage of wood varies, with some people being entirely dependent on wood and others using wood only from time to time. Women usually collect wood from the adjacent savannah, tied in bundles which can be carried on the head. In seven cases, (14%) in the sample, people said they bought wood from people who use donkey carts to transport it from the commonage. In the remaining 39 cases (78%), women fetched between one and six bundles of wood per week from the commonage, as shown in the table.

**Table 1      Headloads of wood collected per week**

|              | No. of headloads per week |   |   |   |   |   | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
|              | 1                         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |       |
| No. of cases | 10                        | 9 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 39    |

Those who collect surplus wood, that is, amounts which are not for immediate use, stack it up in piles next to their houses for later use. (Plate 8)

#### Toilet facilities, rubbish disposal and related pollution

Unlike Duncan Village, where residents use communal toilets, the residents of Peddie Extension use unimproved pit latrines and most have no toilets at all. There are 21 (42%) households which have pit latrines and in the remaining 29 (58%) cases people use the veld. Those who did not have latrines were those who had the least material means. People try to minimise the problem of

faecal smells by locating the pit latrines as far as possible from their houses, but the latrines often overflow during heavy rains.

Since there is no refuse collection facility households pile up their rubbish and burn it from time to time. Although there is some unsightly litter lying around in the veld, it is not likely that this will cause a serious health hazard.

What needs to be stressed is that in Peddie Extension pollution and health hazards are minor compared with those affecting Duncan Village, largely because the residential density is much lower.

#### (iii) Agriculture

Loxton et al. (1979) classify most of the Peddie area as being best suited to semi-intensive livestock production on natural veld. Any cultivation should be of low intensity with drought-resistant crops.

A brief reconnaissance survey of the soils in the informal settlement yielded the results below. The following description appears to be fairly general to the majority of the informal settlement area, but soils in the lower-lying areas are apparently different and were not examined.

Soils appear to be typical of those of the surrounding areas of commonage. They are generally relatively shallow. Much of the soil is of the Mispah form, with a shallow topsoil (typically

about 200mm) overlying rock. Areas with a distinct subsoil typically are no more than 500mm deep. The topsoil typically has a loamy texture, which is normally considered optimal for plant growth. The subsoil in the single inspected sample was sandy loam. Thus, the soil textures are well-suited to plant growth given enough rain, but may not hold water well in dry times. The two analysed samples of topsoil had very high organic contents (7.3, 10.3%), low salinities (19.0, 20.1 mS/m) and were acidic (pH 5.1, 4.5). Although not sufficient to prohibit crop growth, some problems could be experienced in growing maize, wheat and vegetables at this pH level, and better growth would be expected if lime were added to the soil.

A land capability analysis (Scotney et al. 1991) classifies most of the informal settlement as arable with moderate to severe limitations (Order B). These limitations result from the combination of low, unreliable rainfall and shallow soils. The lack of an adequate water supply and long distance from any perennial water course make the use of irrigation unfeasible.

The area around the informal settlement can support a relatively low density of cattle (of the order of 5 head/ha). Much of Peddie commonage has been overgrazed by cattle in the past, in the sense that there is now a relatively high proportion of unpalatable grass species (Higginbottom 1995). This overgrazing is most apparent close to Peddie Extension and the Informal Settlement, where the number of cattle the area can support is about 60% of its potential. The highest grazing potential is in

the northern part of the commonage, more than 1km from the informal settlement. The adoption of a suitable grazing management system and appropriate stocking rates are required to allow the veld to recover its full grazing potential (ibid for details).

The savannah near to the informal settlement can support a fairly high density of goats (about one goat per 0.7 ha) as most of the shrubs provide suitable browse for this species. In fact, an increase in the present number of goats would reduce the shrub density and thus open up the grazing for cattle.

There is no field cultivation at the Peddie informal settlement. The residents practise garden cultivation and also keep livestock since many of them have rural roots. There is a clear demand for both residential proximity to town and land for cultivation. In half of the households (25 cases) the people have gardens which they cultivate. Some of the crops cultivated are mealies, pumpkins, cabbages, potatoes, spinach, beans, tomatoes and onions. Many gardens are producing good crops in response to the good rains which fell prior to the study period. However, they are much less productive during droughts. (Plate 9)

One of the problems that the residents experience with vegetable gardens is that goats often enter and damage their crops. A communal gardening area is managed by a local development NGO called Masibambane on the eastern side of town. Originally the intention was to create the garden in Peddie Extension, but this

was prohibited by the Ciskei government which had intentions of moving the community and, in addition, water was perceived as a problem. All the people who have garden plots at Masibambane live in Peddie Extension (not the informal settlement), and there is a waiting list for plots.

Cattle and goats are kept, although goats are officially prohibited on the commonage. Of a total of 524 cattle on Peddie commonage, about 200 are owned by people from Peddie Extension and the informal settlement. About 300 of the 400 or so goats belong to residents of the informal settlement. In the past a few sheep were kept, but with very little success. In the informal settlement there are also a few donkeys which are used for fetching water and wood.

Ownership of livestock was investigated in the sampled households. In 17 (34%) households cattle and goats were kept. Many who were neither cultivating nor keeping stock said they would like to use the land since they were used to that lifestyle. However, some lacked material means and others were either very old or infirm. The recent drought had devastating effects on livestock numbers, particularly cattle, and records show that most of the cattle present at the start of 1992 died during the subsequent year, at the height of the drought.

There is no systematic livestock management system in place on Peddie commonage. This is related to the almost total collapse of the effectiveness of municipal authority and management, which

in turn relates to the lack of legitimacy of the former homeland administrations. People in the informal settlement say stock theft is not a serious problem in the community although it does occur.

#### (iv) Environmental management and rehabilitation

There is little visual evidence of attempts to minimise environmental degradation or associated health hazards in a co-ordinated fashion (e.g. tree planting, litter clean-up campaigns, building of drains). There are apparently no NGOs concerned with environmental issues working in Peddie. However, Masibambane offers training and advice regarding vegetable gardening techniques.

#### (v) Use of other natural resources

As is noted in a later section of this report many of the houses in the informal settlement are constructed in the traditional manner using locally obtained wood and soil. One of the common species of tree used in house building is *umthathi* (*Ptaeroxylon obliquum*). Usually bricks are made by mixing soil with water, and there is little obvious environmental damage as a result of soil collection (Plate 10).

Peddie people do not use grass for thatching their houses, as they did in the past, because they say suitable grass is not available. Dung is used extensively for smearing floors so that they remain firm.

Wood collection is supposed to be restricted only to *umnga* (*Acacia karroo*) and axes are not supposed to be used. But people collect any type of wood they can get and they use axes. *Umnga* is indeed the most popular tree for use as fuel because it provides steady heat and is more bulky than many other trees. Dung (which is scarce) is also used as fuel. The gathering of firewood is almost entirely a female task. Men fetch wood from the forest only when they cannot do otherwise. Family ceremonies are occasions when large amounts of wood are used. At this stage, there is a good supply of fuelwood within walking distance of the informal settlement, although people have to walk longer distances in order to get thick wood.

#### General comment

The type of environmental issues which are relevant at Peddie contrast sharply with those that are most relevant at Duncan Village. In Peddie, the priority is use of the environment for supplying natural resources, particularly in relation to agricultural activities. In Duncan Village, people do not have serious options relating to agriculture, although they have still managed to cultivate gardens under adverse conditions. The quality of the immediate living environment is of more central concern there. In Peddie, the environment impacts on people in terms of its ability to supply their basic needs. In Duncan Village, there is a vicious cycle where the high density of human settlement without adequate services has a severe negative impact on the quality of the environment which in turn impacts on the quality of people's lives, in terms of their health and welfare.

### Chapter Three

#### MIGRATION AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

##### (a) Informal settlements in the Eastern Cape Region

One of the most remarkable developments in the Eastern Cape over the past three or four years has been the phenomenal growth of informal settlements in small- and medium-size towns. In platteland towns, the development of informal settlements was restricted during the apartheid era by hard-line white and black local authorities which did everything in their power to prevent unlawful squatting. After the repeal of the Influx Control legislation in 1986, the first burst of urban migration was directed towards the metropolitan areas, such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, and East London. In these areas the lifting of influx control led to a proliferation of backyard shacking and 'squatting' on the fringes of township complexes, which had experienced a gradual increase in squatting since the mid-1970s. Some of the inhabitants of these settlements were certainly new arrivals from rural areas, but the vast majority of people were drawn from the overcrowded existing formal housing in the townships. By the time influx control regulations were repealed, the South African government had accepted the principle that African urbanization was a reality and that it would occur in a controlled and orderly fashion. It was stated that blacks should not be allowed to settle in urban areas without access to approved sites and/or accommodation. Access to these resources, it was pointed out, should be arranged through the existing Local Authority. One of the key objectives

of the White Paper was thus to extend greater powers and autonomy to local authorities in the control and administration of urban populations (Reintges 1992). Extensive parliamentary debates on the question of squatting eventually resulted in the passing of the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act in 1989.

During 1989 and 1990 the identification of shack settlements for demolition and the search for residential land became major pre-occupations of local authorities who now began unilaterally to replan urban settlement patterns. The difficulty for these bodies was not the identification of 'disorderly squatting', it was the actual implementation of removals. Without the support of popular organizations, such as civic, youth bodies and political movements, Black Local Authorities simply did not have the power to impose their wishes. In Duncan Village, the proposed removal of shack dwellers to Reeston never materialized because of sustained resistance from the Duncan Village Residents' Association to unilateral replanning. By 1990 the mayor of Duncan Village and his entire Council were forced to resign and their homes were razed to the ground. To completely humiliate the discredited councillors, DVRA allocated their vacant sites to squatters.

The sinister aspects of the new legislation as it was applied in the Eastern Cape were probably most clearly seen in the case of Grahamstown, where the Rini Town Council was placed under intense pressure by the provincial administration to demolish a new shack settlement that was beginning to emerge on

the fringes of the town. On the 12th September 1990 a squad of armed men (hired by the municipality) wearing balaclavas moved in to do the job. In response, Rini townspeople took to the streets and started stoning and burning vehicles. A few days later the Rini municipality offered to compensate the shack dwellers for any losses they might have incurred (see Manona 1993).

The point that emerges from these cases is that while the government was still using all the means at its disposal to prevent 'disorderly squatting', it had found it extremely difficult to implement the new legislation. This was particularly true, as demonstrated in the above two cases, where the squatters were connected to popular township structures, such as civics. In other cases, where squatters were removed from township structures, they were more vulnerable. In the latter half of 1990, the United Democratic Front (UDF) proposed a campaign to defy the local authorities' attempt to arrest those involved in 'disorderly squatting'. In terms of the campaign, landless communities were encouraged to take occupation of unused land. The campaign was welcomed by many communities and, in the period between 1990 and 1993, land seizures or invasions became a popular means by which poor communities acquired land. The land most frequently targeted for settlement was commonage or state-owned land. For instance, in East London, land invasions had occurred on land previously earmarked for incorporation into the Ciskei, as well as on land administered by the Department of Nature Conservation and Forestry. In the smaller towns of the

region, commonage land had invariably been seized.

The critical turning point in the urbanization process in the Transkei and Ciskei was, however, political, not economic. The military coups of Bantu Holomisa in 1989 and Oupa Gqozo in 1990 initiated far-reaching changes. In the Transkei, the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and several other organizations in 1989, unleashed an unprecedented wave of popular protest and industrial action (SAIRR 1989: 524-32). The Gqozo coup of 1990 had a similar effect in the Ciskei as workers and students took to the streets to celebrate the fall of the Sebe regime (van Holt 1990: 12-33). It was in this context that the policies of controlled urbanization in these bantustans finally collapsed. From 1990 onwards, the number of squatters in bantustan towns grew phenomenally and virtually every town in the region has at least one settlement. Overcrowding in existing townships, high rents and poverty in rural areas have all played a critical role in encouraging squatting. But it has been the political space created by the fall of the Sebe and Matanzima regimes that has ensured that these settlements have not been demolished or relocated.

#### (b) Patterns of migration

One way in which we assessed the residential mobility of the inhabitants of the two study areas was to gather information on where they spent their formative years or 'grew up'. The sample showed a low level of mobility, as illustrated by the fact that 43% 'grew' up in the same district as the one in which they now

resided, while 22% had grown up in an adjacent district. This indicates that people are migrating short distances and not moving beyond areas that are familiar to them. The pattern is illustrated below.

**Table 2**                      **Districts in which people grew up**

| Locality         | Same |    | Adjacent |    | Nearby |    | Distant |    | Total |     |
|------------------|------|----|----------|----|--------|----|---------|----|-------|-----|
|                  | No   | %  | No       | %  | No     | %  | No      | %  | No    | %   |
| Duncan Village   | 34   | 34 | 27       | 27 | 21     | 21 | 18      | 18 | 100   | 100 |
| Peddie Extension | 31   | 62 | 6        | 12 | 7      | 14 | 6       | 12 | 50    | 100 |
| Total            | 65   | 43 | 33       | 22 | 28     | 19 | 24      | 16 | 150   | 100 |

It can be seen that there has been much less mobility among those now residing in Peddie Extension than among those in Duncan Village. People were also asked to indicate the places in which they lived immediately before their arrival in these informal settlements. The findings are given below.

**Table 3**                      **District of residence before arrival**

| Locality         | Same |    | Adjacent |   | Nearby |   | Distant |    | Total |     |
|------------------|------|----|----------|---|--------|---|---------|----|-------|-----|
|                  | No   | %  | No       | % | No     | % | No      | %  | No    | %   |
| Duncan Village   | 92   | 92 | 3        | 3 | 1      | 1 | 4       | 4  | 100   | 100 |
| Peddie Extension | 39   | 78 | 3        | 6 | 1      | 2 | 7       | 14 | 50    | 100 |
| Total            | 131  | 87 | 6        | 4 | 2      | 1 | 11      | 8  | 150   | 100 |

As indicated 87% of the sample came from the same district and a further 4% from adjacent districts. This pattern of limited mobility, i.e. travelling short distances to reach the informal

settlements, is evident both in Duncan Village (92%) and Peddie Extension (78%). It was also necessary to consider the kinds of residential places from which people move, to give some idea of the context in which decisions about moving to new residences are made.

**Table 4**                      **Previous residential area**

| Locality         | Townships |    | Villages |    | Farms |    | Other |    | Total |     |
|------------------|-----------|----|----------|----|-------|----|-------|----|-------|-----|
|                  | No        | %  | No       | %  | No    | %  | No    | %  | No    | %   |
| Duncan Village   | 77        | 77 | 12       | 12 | 4     | 4  | 7     | 7  | 100   | 100 |
| Peddie Extension | 10        | 20 | 14       | 28 | 15    | 30 | 11    | 22 | 50    | 100 |
| Total            | 87        | 58 | 26       | 17 | 19    | 13 | 18    | 12 | 150   | 100 |

In the case of Duncan Village a majority were from other townships, most of them in the East London area. In Peddie, only 20% fell into this category. These are the people who previously lived in township houses, backyard shacks and (in the case of Peddie Extension) in the town itself. A further 17% of the households came from villages of former Ciskei or former Transkei. A total of 13% came directly from the farms, and a further 12% had previously lived in widely varying places like closer settlements, shack areas, government-owned farms and as tenants on privately-owned land. In the discussion that follows the factors which made township people leave their previous homes are related to the conditions in which they lived prior to their departure.

**Table 5     Reasons for moving from the townships**

| <u>No. of cases</u> | <u>Reasons for leaving</u>                                      |
|---------------------|---|
| 28                  | We wanted our own accommodation                                 |
| 21                  | We were overcrowded where we lived                              |
| 11                  | Unable to pay rent or the rent was too high                     |
| 8                   | Our accommodation was destroyed by fire                         |
| 8                   | We had a quarrel with the yard owner or with people in the yard |
| 4                   | There was no employment where we lived                          |
| 3                   | We wanted a place that is close to work                         |
| 3                   | The accommodation we were renting was sold                      |
| 1                   | We wanted a place where we would not pay rent                   |
| <u>87</u>           | TOTAL   |

It can be seen that the majority of those from the townships (32%) left because they wanted their own accommodation. Living in a shack implies many hardships, but there was one important compensation for these - controlling one's own space. As the following case study shows, access to his "own space" featured strongly in Thabo's account of his move to the shack settlements in Duncan Village:

Thabo left Alice for Duncan Village in 1989. He had gone as far as Standard 8 in school when he decided to take up lodging with his paternal uncle in East London. During 1989 and 1991 Thabo worked (intermittently) as a labourer at Kei Pipes. "It was shit work, man. But it kept me going. I earned enough to get by". Thabo's money caused tension in his relatives' house because they wanted him to pay for many things. Thabo also became tired of the demands and the constant arguments and domestic disputes over money. He felt he needed his own space, where he could make his own decisions and, ultimately start his own business. In October 1991, Thabo moved into a shack of his own in Section D of Duncan Village. Shortly after moving in he set up a shebeen and also started dealing in stolen goods. "The police", he explained, "can't get in here because the shacks are too close together. It is good to know

that they don't control this space - we do! That's what I like about it here, this space is my own".

Others moved to the informal settlements because they were not able to pay rent or they felt the rent they were paying was too high. The conditions for tenants in the townships have deteriorated rapidly throughout the country over the past decade. One of the main areas of complaint has been the escalating rental charges. This problem is more acute in Duncan Village than in Peddie Extension. Situated only a few blocks away from the East London CBD, Duncan Village has always been an extremely desirable residential area for the African working poor who have offered determined resistance to the state's attempts to have them relocated to Mdantsane in the former Ciskei (Reintges 1992; Swilling 1987). The success of the state's strategy to remove large numbers of Africans to the Ciskei during the 1970s and 1980s pushed up rents in Duncan Village to rates which are comparable to those in the Gauteng region. For Africans working in the CBD or the West Bank industrial parks, living in Duncan Village (as opposed to Mdantsane) meant a saving of R100 a month on bus or taxi fares. It is for this reason that site-holders can charge exorbitant rents, even though they have been on rent boycott themselves since 1984.

Besides rent, one of the reasons why some of the urban residents moved to informal settlements was overcrowding. With 200 000 people living on a few square kilometres of land, population densities in Duncan village are extremely high. Space is by far

the most valuable commodity in the township. Control over space means control over resources: inversely, access to resources means access to space. People with few material and social resources are forced into the smallest amounts of space in the location that is already overcrowded. This does not mean that they moved into uncrowded spaces, only less crowded ones. Many of those who mentioned overcrowding as a key reason for moving were sharing living space with others, usually family.

As Table 4 above shows, the other category of people (13%) who settle in these informal settlements are people from the farms. The typical pattern is for farm-workers in a district to move into the nearest town. It was noted earlier that the informal settlements in the region have sprung up both suddenly and simultaneously. There are localised conditions which have caused this development. The first is drought which has crippled farming in the region between 1989 and 1992. This has had the effect of generalizing farm retrenchments. It has been estimated that the drought had caused 80 000 jobs to be lost in agriculture by 1992 (Land Update, May 1992). The deepening of the drought dramatically affected the material circumstances of farm-workers. One report stated that:

"... workers' overall income has been adversely affected by the drought. The effect is not only in terms of the monthly salary, but also in terms of bonuses and the 'payment-in-kind' proportion of the workers' income... In many cases farm workers' annual bonuses were either not paid or severely restricted" (Land Update, Dec. 1992).

The other major impact of the drought on the material conditions of farm-workers, according to the report, was the deterioration of grazing which forced farm-workers to sell or slaughter their cattle. The drought worked in two ways: firstly, it led to thousands of evictions from the farms (under the Illegal Squatting and Trespass Acts) and, secondly, to the voluntary departure of thousands more.

The second reason for the departure of people from the farms is that all farmers have been faced with the arrival of new legislation to protect farm-workers. The bill in question, which was eventually passed in April 1993, was an extension of the Basic Conditions of Employment and Unemployment Insurance Acts to cover farm-workers. Since 1990 farm-workers have been organized under the banner of the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) which is a COSATU affiliate. The 25 000 unionized farm-workers have argued for the extension of the Labour Relations Act and Wages Act to farm-workers and have also demanded freedom of association and the right to bargain for a living wage and better living conditions (Land Update, May 1992). At the same time the white farming sector has dug in its heels, saying that this drought-ravaged sector of the country cannot afford the demands of the Union. However, the farmers have long been convinced that the bill will go through and, to protect themselves against the burden of supporting surplus labour, have resorted to mass evictions. By far the most widespread and serious problem of farm life is poverty: rising inflation throughout the 1980s has made it very difficult for people to survive on pay packets of

between R100 and R200 a month. The argument that farm-workers need not be paid higher wages because farmers provide sorg (maintenance) is a problem. Farm-workers explained that, unlike their wages which stayed much the same, their maintenance provisions had actually shrunk during the 1980s. Under these conditions, it was felt that life could not be worse in the nearby towns and cities. As was the case in a study done among farm-workers in the area (Manona 1989), many people from the farms said they migrated because they did not want their children to grow up as illiterates on the farms.

## Chapter Four

### THE HOUSEHOLD

#### (a) The urban household and matrifocality

The image of informal settlements as strongholds of patriarchal power and control stands in sharp contrast to the situation described in academic writing on urbanization in South Africa. Since the 1930s, sociological research has illustrated that informal or slum settlements have always been socially heterogeneous environments characterized by a wide variety of domestic groupings and social arrangements. Moreover, it has frequently been pointed out that, far from strengthening any patriarchal norms, these environments have posed a serious threat to male dominance. To understand this point, let us briefly reflect on the findings of some of the classic South African urban ethnographies.

Hellman (1934) in her classic ethnography, Rooiyard, Longmore (1956, cited in Bonner, 1988) in her social survey, The Dispossessed, and Pauw (1963) in his book, The Second Generation, were struck by the wide range of domestic arrangements evident in the urban slums of Johannesburg and East London, and by the pivotal role played by women in the social and economic life of these areas. In Rooiyard, Hellman was impressed by the ingenuity of women in making their own living from the sale of beer, prostitution, and a range of other commercial activities. But she was also sure that "the great prevalence of adultery and prostitution in Rooiyard, and the continuous references to quarrels and fights between husband and wife, pointed to the

disruption of family life" (1935, 55). From this evidence, she concluded that conjugal relations were extremely fragile in Rooiyard and predicted the "breakup of the family is one of the first results of slum residence" (1935, 44).

Hellman characterized Rooiyard as a social world dominated by women determined to establish their economic autonomy and to assert control over their own sexuality. In this city slumyard, women often took several lovers, brewed beer for profit, and supported themselves on the proceeds. Bonner's (1990) historical research into the position of Basotho women living in congested slum environments on the Witwatersrand of the 1940s and 50s supports these findings. He explains that:

The absence of state control over the movement and activities of Basotho women seriously weakened the hold that men could exercise over them and created new tensions between the sexes. Across the African communities of the Rand, Basotho women acquired a reputation for being promiscuous and fickle (1990, 246).

Longmore (1957), who conducted research in Johannesburg in the 1940s, summed up by saying that "urban woman have been schooled in self-reliance and self-sufficiency" (quoted in Bonner 1988, 397).

In the 1950s the Apartheid state cleared most of the slums and 'emergency' squatter camps on the Rand by creating massive dormitory townships like Soweto for urban Africans. To acquire access to the new housing estates, Bonner (1988, 395) argues that

marriage was required, but because no test was applied to establish a *bona fide* union, people posed as married in order to get a house. One graphic indication of the instability of marriage on the Reef at this time was the fact that approximately a third of births in Rand townships were illegitimate (1988, 395).

For the Eastern Cape, The Xhosa in Town trilogy provides an outline of the nature of urban domestic groups in the 1950s and 1960s. Reader (1961) and Mayer (1961) show that in East London the high levels of circular migration had a direct impact on household formation. Reader (1961, 136) notes that new arrivals in town would either move in with relatives or lodge with *iintanga* (agemates) from the same rural village or district. The definition of 'relative' in the locations, he also notes, was very broad and could be extended to anyone who shared the same clan name (*isiduko*).

In the rented backyard shack environments, some households were made up of male migrants living together with *iintanga*. These groups were, however, not seen as transitory:

Seven men is about the maximum in a space of 12 ft. x 10 ft. The arrangement is a loose transitory one for sleeping and eating only. Young men are usually seen adopting it, and the participants hive off and are replaced as soon as they find more stable and suitable accommodation (1961: 136)

Although the Mayers (1961) elaborate on the social dynamics

of *amakhaya* or *intanga* groupings in detail, they concur that these were essentially transitory domestic arrangements. Later on, rural migrants would move into their own room - sometimes living together (*ukushweshwa*) with townswomen (1961, 94-110; 256-257).

Pauw's (1963) research among the shack dwellers of the East Bank Location of East London during 1960 focused on the more settled urban population. Pauw worked both in the wood-and-iron shack settlements and in the municipal location. In the shacks, he found a wide variety of domestic groups, many of them female-headed. This led him to suggest that:

For their income, households depend mainly on labour, trading and rentals, and none of these are controlled exclusively by the husband-father. Mothers freely take up employment, venture into large- or small-scale trading and can own properties through inheritance or purchase. Even an unmarried mother can manage to rear her own family without a husband/father, and even without her own mother...(1963, 162).

In view of this observation, Pauw predicted a shift towards matrifocality in urban households. He suggested that the main reason for this was that the Xhosa husband/father had become 'dispensable' in the urban environment because of the earning opportunities and potential autonomy for women in the city, and noted the "insignificance of the father-role over the whole series of important external relations" (1963, 162). In the traditional Xhosa system, Pauw suggests, the father was an essential link between the matricentral cell and the wider

society. The father gave the mother's children both jural and ritual status, linked the household to productive land, and defined their political status in society. Jones' (1993) conclusion that men are being marginalised in his Bathurst case study seems to extend Pauw's prediction, as does the recent work of Cock (1980) and van der Vliet (1991) for Grahamstown. These authors insist that a kind of 'feminist consciousness' based on sisterhood has come to over-ride conjugal relations in Eastern Cape urban settings.

Is such a shift occurring in informal settlements as well? Are men really being marginalised to the extent that they are reduced to 'domestic nomads'? Can one really talk of a strident feminist consciousness in these communities? In the discussion below, we will attempt to identify the kinds of households discovered in the sample, and explore the material basis for their existence. It is, therefore, only in the end of this discussion that we turn to these fundamental questions. Here we argue that neither the nuclear nor extended patriarchal household stereotypes referred to above are supported by our data. Indeed, we are able to show that, in line with the historical writing and the older urban ethnographies, there are a very substantial number of female-headed households in informal settlements. But is there a natural progression from female-headedness to matrifocality to 'feminist consciousness', as some of the literature seems to suggest?

(b) Household size and structure

In Duncan Village the sampled households included 327 individuals (people who usually slept at these homes every night) consisting of 147 males and 180 females, and in Peddie Extension the total was 228 individuals, including 94 males and 134 females. This indicates that there are many more females in these communities than males. In both areas the average household size was relatively small compared to what it is in older and more permanently established settlements. In Duncan Village it was 3.27 persons per household and 4.56 persons in Peddie Extension. In an older village in the region the household size in 1989 was 5.9 (Manona 1992). This is one way in which a household in an informal settlement contrasts with households in old established places. The actual composition of the households is illustrated below.

**Table 6** Number of people per household

| Duncan Village    |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |       |
|-------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|-------|
| No. of people     | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9 | 10 | 11 | Total |
| No. of households | 8 | 30 | 29 | 12 | 10 | 7  | 3  | -  | - | -  | 1  | 100   |
| No. of people     | 8 | 60 | 87 | 48 | 50 | 42 | 21 | -  | - | -  | 11 | 327   |
| Peddie Extension  |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |   |    |    |       |
| No. of households | - | 6  | 13 | 11 | 5  | 7  | 3  | 3  | - | 1  | 1  | 50    |
| No. of people     | - | 12 | 39 | 44 | 25 | 42 | 21 | 24 | - | 10 | 11 | 228   |

The majority (52%) of households have between three and five members while only 32% have more than five members. What is remarkable about the findings is that 14% of the households have

fewer than three members and 67% fewer than four. The households in Peddie have a comparatively larger number of members than those in Duncan Village. For instance, 15 (30%) of the households in Peddie have six or more members and a comparative figure for Duncan Village is only 11%. There are a number of reasons for this situation. Firstly, the shacks in Duncan Village are uniformly tiny, 3m x 3m. There is a simple explanation for this; the shacks are constructed from crates supplied to the squatters by the Mercedes Benz company in East London. These crates are of a standard size and their frames, when nailed together, form 3 metre panels. In Duncan Village there are a number of 'backyard' firms which supply these panels to the public. This contributes to the uniformity of the shacks.

The second factor contributing to the generally small household size in Duncan Village is the youthful nature of the population in this settlement. Many of those moving into Duncan Village in the late 1980s and 1990s were either young workseekers or young couples seeking accommodation. Many of these people did not have children, at least not living with them in the shack settlement. As indicated in a section below, people in Peddie Extension have large residential plots and those who have the means can build larger dwellings than is the case in Duncan Village. The table below shows that most household members are aged 30 years and under.

**Table 7    Age distribution of household members**

| Duncan Village   |      |       |       |       |       |     |       |
|------------------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|
| Age in years     | 0-15 | 16-30 | 31-45 | 46-60 | 61-75 | 76+ | Total |
| No. of males     | 43   | 44    | 44    | 9     | 7     | -   | 147   |
| No. of females   | 44   | 78    | 40    | 14    | 4     | -   | 180   |
| No. of people    | 87   | 122   | 84    | 23    | 11    | -   | 327   |
| Peddie Extension |      |       |       |       |       |     |       |
| No. of males     | 43   | 19    | 14    | 6     | 10    | 2   | 94    |
| No. of females   | 56   | 31    | 22    | 7     | 18    | -   | 134   |
| No. of people    | 99   | 50    | 36    | 13    | 28    | 2   | 228   |

In both settlements the majority are 45 years of age and below and there is a larger proportion of children in Peddie Extension (43%) than in Duncan Village (26%). In Duncan Village this is largely due to the existence of a larger number of single men and women or couples without children. In Peddie Extension people move in as more complete household units and, as shown below, have intentions of establishing homes and not merely temporary accommodation.

From the information that was gathered the household turned out to be largely an association of close relatives and very few households included people who are not relatives. The members of this unit eat together although in a few cases some sleep next door or elsewhere. Traditionally the Xhosa-speaking people lived in homesteads consisting of extended families defined by patrilineal descent and virilocal residence (Hunter 1936, Hammond-Tooke 1962). In the informal settlements which were investigated the situation varies greatly from the 'traditional'

homestead and a wide variety of living arrangements are evident. In contrast to the patrilineal structure of the past, households which are headed by women are of increasing numerical significance. As shown in the next table only 59% of the households in the sample are headed by men.

**Table 8    Types of male-headed households**

| Categories of households                                       | Duncan Village |    | Peddie Extension |    |    |    |
|--|----------------|----|------------------|----|----|----|
|  | No             | %  | No               | %  |    |    |
| Husband, wife and children                                     | 19             | 19 | 15               | 30 | 34 | 22 |
| Husband, wife, children and other relatives                    | 7              | 7  | 9                | 18 | 16 | 11 |
| Husband and wife only  | 10             | 10 | 3                | 6  | 13 | 9  |
| Unmarried male, female partner, sometimes with other relatives | 12             | 12 | -                | -  | 12 | 7  |
| Male head and other relatives                                  | 7              | 7  | 3                | 6  | 10 | 7  |
| Male head alone  | 4              | 4  | -                | -  | 4  | 3  |
| TOTALS   | 59             | 59 | 30               | 60 | 89 | 59 |

As is consistent with many other studies concerning the area being investigated 41% of the households are headed by females (Table 9). These households include the following types:

**Table 9      Types of female-headed households**

| Categories of households                      | Duncan Village |    | Peddie Extension |    | TOTALS |    |
|---|----------------|----|------------------|----|--------|----|
|   | No             | %  | No               | %  | No     | %  |
| Female head and children                      | 13             | 13 | 6                | 12 | 19     | 13 |
| Female head, children and sometimes relatives | 12             | 12 | 4                | 8  | 16     | 11 |
| Female head, male partner and children        | 9              | 9  | -                | -  | 9      | 6  |
| Female head alone                             | 4              | 4  | -                | -  | 4      | 2  |
| Female head, children and grandchildren       | 2              | 2  | 7                | 14 | 9      | 6  |
| Female head & male partner                    | 1              | 1  | -                | -  | 1      | 1  |
| Female head & grandchildren                   | -              | -  | 3                | 6  | 3      | 2  |
| TOTALS  | 41             | 41 | 20               | 40 | 61     | 41 |

**Female-headed households**

Apart from two female heads whose husbands were at work, the others include women who have never married, who are widowed or who have separated from their husbands. As is shown in Table 9 above, these households commonly form around adult females who live with their children and, sometimes, also with grandchildren. In these households the family structure is mother-centred in that kinship ties within the household are traced largely through women. The most common pattern is that of an elderly female head who lives with her unmarried daughter or daughters who have their own children. In other cases the children belong to women who gave birth to them before marriage and left the children at their natal homes after marrying. But the particular constraints of living in an informal settlement, especially shortage of space, seems to affect the structure of these female-headed households. Under normal circumstances, for instance, in the townships and

in the rural areas (see Preston-Whyte 1978, Manona 1981) these female heads of households commonly live with adult women who are relatives and who have no husbands. This combination is usually that of a mother who lives permanently at home and her daughters who leave their children with their mothers while they go out to work. It may also be an association between adult sisters. In this sense the structure of the female-headed household in the informal settlements takes on a different form in that it centres mainly on the female head. There is not enough space for her to accommodate other women who have their own children.

Duncan Village is slightly different from Peddie Extension in that its female-headed households are smaller and more youthful. Our interviews showed that many young mothers continue to rely on their own mothers and on other female relatives for child-care and other forms of support. This is clearly seen in the case of Thembeke, an asthmatic woman who lives with her sister in a two-roomed shack in Duncan Village:

Thembeke arrived in Duncan Village in 1978. She came from the Lady Frere district of the former Transkei and was in town for two reasons: firstly, to find a job and, secondly, to have her asthma treated at an East London hospital. When Thembeke failed to find employment, she shacked up with a married man from her home district. For the next ten years, the two lived together (*ukuhlalisana*) in a backyard shack in Gwijana street. During this time, her lover supported her and fathered her two children.

In 1990, Thembeke's long-term companion deserted her, leaving her and the children in the shack in Gwijana Street. This placed Thembeke in a precarious position. There was no-one to support her children, so she sent them to her natal home in Lady Frere where her widowed mother - now on pension - took over the

responsibility. Her mother also supported her with part of her pension every month. Once the children had gone, Thembeke's younger sister joined her. In 1994, Thembeke and her sister ran a small spaza shop and shebeen in order to survive. They were regularly visited by their mother, who even had a separate room reserved for her in the small shack.

Thembeke, her sister and her mother were extremely close and constantly supported each other, even though they were not always (physically) in the same place. The spatial constraints of shack-living in Duncan Village kept house-holds small, but it did not prevent women from maintaining strong relationships with their female kin. The strength of these bonds was to a large extent a result of the fact that most children in the shack areas were born out of wedlock. This meant that the mother's family often bore some or all of the responsibility of child-care as young children were sent to live with their grandparents. In terms of custom, any child born out of wedlock is technically the offspring of the mother's parents and the child's biological mother is seen as her child's sibling. In such a situation where most children are born out of wedlock, it is not surprising that relationships between matrikin, especially mothers and their daughters were both durable and intense.

The point that emerges from our evidence is that we should be careful how we interpret the preponderance of female-headed households in informal settlements. Since Pauw's influential work on the African urban family in the 1960s, much has been said about the way men have become 'dispensable' in urban areas. Jones (1993) has argued that in some urban areas in the Eastern Cape men have been transformed into 'domestic nomads' as they are literally pushed from pillar to post by cohorts of dominant women. Hirshman (1994) supports this view, saying that women have lost all patience with men in the Eastern Cape and are now intent on making it on their own. In Duncan Village and Peddie Extension single women were far less antagonistic to men than we anticipated. They strongly criticised certain kinds of men, but

few denied that they were after the 'right' male partner. The women we spoke to generally did not feel that men were 'dispensable', but rather that some types of men were best avoided.

### Absent household members

In Peddie Extension there are many members of the households (not included in Table 6) who are away and who come home from time to time. In Duncan Village the situation is very different. There the home is almost invariably elsewhere and it is to those homes that the people go to occasionally. In Peddie Extension some of the absent household members make important contributions to the local household, while in Duncan Village many give support to relatives and other people living elsewhere, especially those in the rural areas. In Peddie Extension there are 27 (54%) households with one to five members who are away and in Duncan Village only 16% of the households have one to eight members who return to these homes in East London (Tables 10 and 11, below).

**Table 10** Absent household members (Peddie Extension)

| No. of absent household members | 1 | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5 | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|----|----|---|---|-------|
| No. of households               | 9 | 10 | 5  | 2 | 1 | 27    |
| Total no. of people             | 9 | 20 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 57    |

**Table 11** Absent household members (Duncan Village)

| No. of absent household members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| No. of households               | 7 | 4 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 16    |
| Total no. of people             | 7 | 8 | 9 | - | 5 | - | - | 8 | 37    |

In the case of Duncan Village 54% of those who are away are in the rural areas of the East London district, a further 40% elsewhere in the Eastern Cape Province and the remaining 6% in places which are further afield, e.g. Johannesburg. In Peddie Extension the vast majority (84%) of those who are away are in various parts of the Eastern Cape Province and the remaining 16% are further away in Johannesburg and Cape Town. It can be seen, therefore, that most people have not gone too far away, hence most of them are able to visit their homes. This maintenance of close links with homes is an important survival strategy.

Quite significantly, in Peddie Extension the sample includes three wives who are away from their homes. Two of them are working in town and the other one is living at her natal home in Port Alfred and visiting her husband occasionally. Her husband said she prefers to be away from her home most of the time as she is not on good terms with her step-children. Information was solicited on the reasons why some people leave their homes. In Duncan Village 65% of those who are away are at school, 22% were looking for work and 13% are working where they are. In Peddie Extension 56% of those who are away are working, 26% are at school, 11% are looking for work and 7% are visiting. It can be seen that most people leave their homes for other places in order to improve their circumstances. Yet there are many who are away who cannot find full-time employment and who do casual work or other informal work like hawking. Most of them visited their homes as often as they could, some at month-ends and others at the end of the year. These regular contacts sustain the unity

of households and families.

(c) Occupational structure

The occupational structure of the sampled households is illustrated below.

**Table 12 Occupational structure (Duncan Village)**

| Occupational categories                | No. of males | No. of females | Total |
|--|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Employed full-time                     | 48           | 35             | 83    |
| Unemployed and looking for work        | 41           | 71             | 112   |
| Unemployed but not looking for work    | -            | 4              | 4     |
| Old age pensioners                     | 2            | 5              | 7     |
| Disabled people who cannot work        | 2            | -              | 2     |
| Children at school                     | 31           | 42             | 73    |
| Young children not yet at school       | 22           | 22             | 44    |
| Disabled children not attending school | 1            | 1              | 2     |
| Total                                  | 147          | 180            | 327   |

**Table 13 Occupational structure (Peddie Extension)**

| Occupational categories                | No. of males | No. of females | Total |
|--|--------------|----------------|-------|
| Employed full-time                     | 13           | 10             | 23    |
| Unemployed and looking for work        | 15           | 29             | 44    |
| Unemployed but not looking for work    | -            | 7              | 7     |
| Old age pensioners                     | 10           | 18             | 28    |
| Children at school                     | 38           | 47             | 85    |
| Disabled children not attending school | 2            | 2              | 4     |
| Disabled children not yet at school    | 16           | 21             | 37    |
| Total                                  | 94           | 134            | 228   |

The concept of Economically Active Population (EAP) was used to analyse the employment situation. The EAP includes all

individuals between the ages of 16 and 65 years who are available for work. It excludes housewives who would prefer to remain at home, school children and disabled people. This is in line with the approach of the Central Statistical Services which categorises only those people who are able to work and are looking for work as unemployed. In the Duncan Village sample there are 195 people who are economically active and of these 83 (42,5%) are employed. This contrasts with the situation in Peddie Extension where there is an even smaller proportion of people in employment. There the sample includes 67 economically active people of which only 23 (34,3%) are employed. This is not surprising since Peddie Extension is simply a peri-urban community located adjacent to a small town with few job opportunities. In Duncan Village and Peddie Extension the vast majority of the people who are in full-time employment are in unskilled jobs which are least paid. This is illustrated below.

**Table 14 Occupational levels of those who were employed**

| Occupational level | Duncan Village |         | Peddie Extension |         | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------|
|                    | Males          | Females | Males            | Females |       |
| Skilled            | 1              | 2       | 2                | -       | 5     |
| Semi-skilled       | 1              | 2       | 4                | 4       | 11    |
| Unskilled          | 46             | 31      | 7                | 6       | 90    |
| Total              | 48             | 35      | 13               | 10      | 106   |

Of those who are formally employed, as many as 90 (85%) are in unskilled jobs working as labourers or domestic workers. Those who are designated above as semi-skilled have some training, e.g. as enrolled nurses, salesmen, truck drivers, etc. In Duncan

Village the three people who are skilled do clerical work. In Peddie Extension the two males who are skilled include a man with a Matriculation Certificate and a three-year diploma in dietetics and another one who is a qualified carpenter with a Junior Certificate and three years training in carpentry. This information shows that the economic situation of people as indicated by occupational status varies a great deal even though the majority have meagre means. The following table gives some idea about what the unemployed do.

**Table 15    Economic activities of the unemployed**

| Type of activity  | Duncan Village |         | Peddie Extension |         | Total |
|---|----------------|---------|------------------|---------|-------|
|   | Males          | Females | Males            | Females |       |
| Informal sector employment or casual work                 | 11             | 15      | 8                | 9       | 43    |
| Not involved in informal sector employment or casual work | 30             | 56      | 6                | 21      | 113   |
| Total   | 41             | 71      | 14               | 30      | 156   |

It can be seen that the role of informal economic activities is limited. In Duncan Village the 11 men who are involved in such activities include five who do casual work, together with six who sell either vegetables or liquor at home. In the same community the 15 women who participate in these activities include ten who sell a variety of goods like vegetables, groceries or liquor. A further three do casual jobs and two are earning some income by operating as hairdressers. In Peddie Extension eight unemployed men build houses or take casual jobs as gardeners. Nine women operate as hawkers selling food in town, doing washing on certain days in town or selling groceries at their homes on

a small scale.

(d) Housing and settlement pattern

In places like Duncan Village people erect temporary structures knowing that they will have to leave and build elsewhere later. At Peddie Extension the people have clear intentions of settling permanently where they are and say they like their settlement. For this reason they have, on the whole, erected better or much more permanent dwellings than is the case in many other informal settlements, and hardly anyone has resorted to the use of plastic sheeting or similarly fragile material for roofing. On arrival in the settlement the people submitted their applications for plots to the local committee and chose where they wanted to live. The plots vary in size according to the areas in which they are located and, on the whole, these plots are neatly arranged so that there can be streets where necessary. There are 28 (56%) households which are fenced and in some cases the homes have hedges. All these efforts indicate that people want to live there permanently.

In all the households in the Peddie Extension sample the roofing material that is used is corrugated iron. Some have had to use old, damaged iron sheets which means that the roof leaks. Apart from making the houses damp, these leaks cause structural damage. In a few cases (four in the sample) the walls of the houses are made of concrete blocks and in another four cases mud bricks are plastered with cement. In the remaining 42 (84%) cases the traditional (wattle and daub) style of building has been adopted.

In some cases the walls are made of sun-dried bricks (See Plate 11). The mud floors are smeared with cow dung about twice a week in order to keep them firm.

In Peddie Extension the number of rooms that are available to each household reflects varying economic circumstances. Nearly a third (32 or 64%) of the households in the sample have access to only one or two rooms and only three (6%) have five or six rooms.

The quality of the houses tends to improve over time. In many instances a person acquires a plot and first builds a small shack or 'tent'. He or she would then build a better house later. There are many homes where substantial improvements to the houses have been supported by the remittances of household members who work elsewhere. This was particularly the case where the middle generation was supporting the home, as is shown in the following case:

Mamthunzi, a 70 year-old widow, came to Peddie Extension from a village in Peddie in 1992. She came with her daughter and four grandchildren and they lived with the son of Mamthunzi's uncle for five months. In 1993 Mamthunzi got her own site in the informal settlement where she built a corrugated iron structure which she occupied. Later, her son who was employed in Mdantsane as a prison warder brought in building material and arranged for a local person to build a fairly substantial five-roomed house with cement block walls and corrugated iron roofing. A daughter of Mamthunzi's who was nursing at Whittlesea undertook to provide the home with day-to-day necessities so that her brother could concentrate on the building of the house. At the end of our research the house was nearing completion. The working children had co-operated and the members of this

household have moved stage by stage to the acquisition of their better accommodation.

In other cases the original house is extended by adding on a room or rooms as means become available. In Duncan Village and Peddie Extension a few sites belong to people who live elsewhere, usually in town where they do not have their own accommodation. In such cases those who keep accommodation for absent owners are normally in a desperate situation, seeking virtually any place in which they can live.

In Peddie Extension people intend to settle permanently where they are. Virtually all see their residences as their homes, hence their greater willingness to improve their houses. With the exception of one case they have no other homes elsewhere. In Duncan Village the situation is different in that the people generally see their homes as temporary structures and intend moving elsewhere in the future. This is one of the reasons why they do not make improvements to their shacks. Moreover, 29% of the household heads in Duncan Village retain a home elsewhere. These include people who visit their other homes regularly and intend going back to these homes at the end of their working careers.

In the Eastern Cape there is a regular flow of people and goods between town and country, a form of 'circular migration'. A recent survey which was not part of this study and which was conducted in Duncan Village revealed that, even in the 1990s, a third of the household heads there had retained another home

elsewhere. Of those homes, 91% were located in the former Ciskei or Transkei and 66% of them were visited once a month or more frequently. Forty-one percent of those interviewed intended retiring in a rural village, despite having spent most of their working lives in East London. This is one of the ways in which people try to adjust to the adverse circumstances of urban living, by maintaining a foothold in the country even though they may have to work in town until they retire. Investment in housing is affected by such choices.

## Chapter Five

### GENDER ROLES AND RELATIONS

#### (a) Background

This report is concerned with men and women who had moved to two contrasting peri-urban informal settlements from urban and rural areas and with varying life experiences. The increasing dependence of rural people on urban employment as well as the lengthy absence of men who had to go to work elsewhere effected important changes in the family structure and in the relations between men and women. Traditionally the Xhosa-speaking people lived in homesteads (*imizi*, singular *umzi*) with extended families defined by patrilineal descent and virilocal residence. The male head of this extended family lived with his wife, his married sons with their wives and children. In pre-colonial times this grouping could include up to twenty male kinsmen living with their wives and children (Hunter 1936, Hammond-Tooke 1962). Yet by the end of the first half of this century this traditional family had shrunk significantly and the tendency was the breaking up of the *umzi* very soon after sons got married (Wilson et al, 1952).

As rural society in the region became more differentiated - with some men and women acquiring education and others becoming more involved in migratory labour - various categories of people gradually came into existence. One of these categories was composed of married women who remained at home to care for their husbands' homesteads. The extended absence of husbands from

their homes was bound to affect the authority relations and decision-making in the home. In some of the fairly 'traditional' areas in the province homestead heads who were labour migrants had caretakers who acted on behalf of the men who were away at work. For instance, in the Willowvale district in the former Transkei the homestead's caretaker had total responsibility for the homestead left in his care (McAllister 1979). But in many other rural areas the wives who were left at home had to shoulder virtually the whole responsibility of running their homes. As the husbands were able to come home for only brief periods each year, consultation between husbands and wives was not always easy and this gave the women much scope for discretion. Also, the migrant husbands were not completely conversant with the day-to-day problems of running a home, e.g. making a living out of limited resources, budgeting and making decisions about children's education and following up children's problems as they grew up. It was the women who tended to be the most knowledgeable people on such matters which required experience and knowledge of what was involved in the local situation.

As in Bethnal Green (Townsend 1957) the true status of the husband in the home was revealed at his retirement from full-time employment. The men who did not emigrate permanently from their rural communities commonly returned home late in their lives, sometimes well beyond the age of sixty. Although such men wished they could then live happily at home in retirement, their marginal role in the family became even more apparent when they no longer worked. Since they did not have sufficient

opportunities of acquainting themselves with the routine of their homes during their working years, they were forced to leave much of the household management in their wife's hands just as they did when they were migrant workers (Manona 1981).

In the study area another category of men and women with a rural background includes those individuals who previously lived and worked on white-owned farms. Even in their case the family structure had undergone significant changes. A study (Hunter 1936) done more than half a century ago in the region shows that in the 1930s, many people who lived on these farms were part of patrilineal kinship groups living together in huts arranged in the form of a semi-circle. Where the farmer could provide work for grown-up sons the latter usually built their huts close to their father's homesteads. Very often, however, farmers could not employ their workers' sons who therefore had to seek work elsewhere. Moreover, the tendency for sons to desire their own independence was already strong and the ideal of family solidarity could not always be achieved. These changes occurred in a situation where people who previously supported themselves largely by stock-rearing and cultivation became almost entirely dependent on wages. In these circumstances parents who had retired from employment had to depend on their children for support and care. They exercised little influence in the home where major decisions were made by the working generations. From the time of the Second World War onwards many young men and women left permanently for the urban areas where they could strive for their own independence (Manona 1988).

Other men and women in these informal settlements have long associations with the towns. Earlier it was noted that no less than 77% of the people in the Duncan Village informal settlement came to their present residences from the East London townships. Even though as much as 86% of the people in Peddie Extension came to the informal settlement from rural areas, it must be noted that some of them have worked in the towns for longer or shorter periods. Another observation which was made earlier was that even from as early as the 1930s sociological literature had characterised informal settlements and slum areas as socially heterogeneous environments in which there was a wide variety of domestic groupings as well as the erosion of the notion of male dominance. The discussion that follows pays attention to gender roles and relations among those who live in these informal settlements.

(b) Socio-economic change and the implications for gender roles

A previous section of this report referred to the long-standing involvement of women in the urban environment where they had to establish their economic autonomy. In his study of the more settled urban population in East London, Pauw (1963) noted that the people depended mainly on wage labour, petty trading and rentals. None of these sources of income were controlled exclusively by men, and women were freely taking up employment, venturing into some forms of trading and were able to acquire their own properties through inheritance or purchase. Similar developments had taken place in the rural areas where during the course of this century an ever-increasing number of women left

their rural homes to work in the towns. In the urban areas and in the country this ability for women to gain access to wage employment or self-employment gave them personal independence and made it possible for them to be less dependent on the support of their male relatives. Regarding the rural areas in the early 1950s Wilson (1952 et al, 108) observed that the "women who work as domestic servants or in other employment in the towns, or who are fitted by education for some profession have a greater measure of economic independence than women had traditionally".

In the country increasing landlessness and, more particularly, the declining significance of land intensified social change. As people became more reliant on wage labour the younger generation attained greater independence. They could no longer be under the full control of their parents who were becoming increasingly poor. What needs to be stressed here is that the availability of employment for women gave them opportunities to make their own decisions about their lives. Moreover, the gradual change in the legal status of women enabling them to own land in their own right opened other avenues to women who wanted greater chances for self-improvement. Up to about the late 1950s women residing in the urban areas could not gain access to any form of accommodation in their own right. Accommodation for renting was available only to married men who qualified for urban residence. These restrictions on women were relaxed in the 1960s and women could rent their own accommodation. Likewise, up to about the early 1950s residential land in the rural areas could only be granted to married men. By that time the growing numbers

of unmarried women who had their own children made it necessary for women to be provided with residential land. In some areas they were given smaller plots than those which were made available to men. In later years this category of women received the same amount of land as men. What must be noted here is that both the availability of employment for women and their ability to gain access to their own land changed the social position of women in many significant ways.

Later developments had other implications. Recently Whisson (1993) has drawn attention to the change in the structure of the South African economy away from heavy industry and manufacturing towards lighter industry and service occupations. Historically, men have tended to be involved mainly in the heavy industries and manufacturing. But in recent years men in the industrial and manufacturing sectors have been vulnerable to cyclical unemployment. Yet this is not the case with women. Even though women in service occupations may not earn as much as men, they are less exposed to the problem of recurrent unemployment. On this account Whisson (1993) rightly observes that women tend to be relatively stable earners compared to men. In the study areas there were many men who were at home and unemployed after retrenchment from their industrial jobs.

These changes in the material basis of society have generated changes in the nature of marriage. For instance, even though the giving of bridewealth, *lobola*, is still regarded as a prerequisite for marriage, there are many cases where only token

*lobola* (e.g. two bottles of brandy) or nothing is given to the wife's family. Also, the humble material circumstances of people militate against the observance of the various marriage rituals which united the husband and the wife's families in the past. Marriages break up more easily than in the past if there is any strain in the marital relationship. Moreover, the increasing independence of married women is illustrated by the fact that young married women are now not subject to the same restrictions as was the case in the past. Granted, usually the newly-married wife wears clothing that identifies her status as a newly-wed woman, *umtshakazi*. But this is largely of symbolic significance. Moreover, virtually all young wives return to their natal homes after the death of their husbands. One important reason for this is the fact that a young widow can no longer be supported by the relatives of her deceased husband. Once again this is an indication of a major change in the functioning of the family showing that men now have less control over women.

#### (c) Education and its influence

Education is another factor which has enhanced the status of women. South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana are countries which contrast with the rest of the continent in that in these countries the education of girls began from the time mission schools were established in these states and it developed along with the education of boys. For instance James Backhouse who visited the first school to be set up in the Eastern Cape observed in 1836 that there were more girls than boys in that school (Wilson, 1974). From 1868 women were trained as school

teachers at Lovedale and the training of women as nurses started at Lovedale in 1903. When the University College of Fort Hare opened in 1916 it had two women among its first students. So in the country, and in the Eastern Cape in particular, women had a headstart in education (Wilson 1974). Research done in the late 1970s in a village in the Keiskammahoek district also showed that women generally were more educated than men (Manona 1981). This was because at least a generation ago more girls than boys were attending school in the district. At that time some of the boys could not attend school regularly since they had to herd cattle and plough. Girls, on the other hand, had greater liberty to go to school since the duties they had to perform (e.g. looking after young children) did not necessarily prevent them from attending school. The present research also shows that on the whole women are better educated than men.

In Duncan Village 52 (55,9%) of the men in the sample had passed Standards Three to Standard Ten whereas 83 (72,1%) of the women had passed those Standards. Similarly, in Peddie Extension 18 (47,3%) men had passed Standards Three to Ten as compared to 40 (62,5%) of the women who had managed to do so. All this has enhanced the status of women and is making women less dependent on male support.

(d) Other changes in the status of women

The changing status of women is also evident in the role they play in political affairs. As in virtually all communities in the region, local government is still in a chaotic state and is

likely to find direction only after the general elections for local government in 1995. The headman system which operated in the Ciskei ended after the military coup of Oupa Gqozo in 1990. Up to then Peddie Extension was under the authority of a headman who had to work closely with the magistrate and other relevant government officers. In the aftermath of the coup, Residents' Associations were established in Peddie Extension and in other communities in the Ciskei and they gradually took over some of the administrative functions of the deposed headmen.

In Peddie Extension the meetings of the Residents' Association, which is the mouthpiece of the community, are held on Tuesday mornings and, when there are important matters for discussion, they are well attended. Women are well represented in the Committee of this association and they take an active part in the discussions. Almost invariably, at community meetings women outnumber men by a large margin. Matters relating to social control, such as the resolution of petty disputes, are handled by Street Committees and women are active in these. This is occurring in the context of the ANC's major principle of non-sexism which has given women scope for participation in politics and public discussions, and is in sharp contrast with what was happening only a few decades ago. In her study of the villages in the Keiskammahoek district in the late 1950s Monica Wilson (1952, et al, 115) noted that women were debarred from holding political office and were not allowed to take part in political affairs of the villages. All participation in political activities was confined to men. She observed that "a woman is

not allowed to attend meetings of the village section council...unless she is concerned with the matter under discussion and even then she must sit some distance apart from the assembled men and be represented by a male spokesman". The situation today is completely different and it is likely that in the future the role of women in politics will be very prominent.

Women also play a much more important role in other community endeavours and associations than men do. They constitute the bulk of the membership of the various independent churches which have been established in these communities. Also, they are active members of the committees of the local schools and the pre-schooling centres. Many men, in fact, display little interest in community affairs and spend most of their time pursuing their personal interests.

## Chapter Six

### CONCLUSION

South Africa is the most industrialized country on the continent and as much as 65% of its population lives in the urban areas (including the informal settlements which are always within the confines of towns and cities) (DBSA 1994). The projection for African urbanization in South Africa in the year 2000 is 74% (Olivier 1992, 3). The housing problem in South Africa is exacerbated due to the fact that the country is urbanising at a rapid rate. This explains the ever-increasing proportion of people who live in shacks in the country. It has been shown that in the Eastern Cape the development of informal settlements was restricted during the apartheid years by hardline white and black local authorities who did everything in their power to prevent unlawful squatting. During 1989 and 1990 the identification of shack settlements for demolition and the search for residential land were issues which occupied local authorities who began to replan urban settlements unilaterally. But the actual implementation of removals failed largely on account of opposition from the civic organisations. This development has been prominent in the Duncan Village case. Alternatively, the Peddie Extension people simply took advantage of the chaotic political situation in the former Ciskei. Also, it was indicated above that it is the general deterioration of living conditions in the rural areas that accelerates urbanization. However, not all people in the informal settlements are new arrivals in town. Many have moved into these settlements from formally recognised

urban areas.

(a) Shelter for the homeless

The new government in South Africa is giving serious attention to the provision of housing for the less privileged people in the country. In the past year the successful general elections and the establishment of transitional local councils in the communities created the necessary environment in which individuals could eventually exercise choice in satisfying their housing needs. Valuable groundwork has been done to establish the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which, among other issues, is geared towards the improvement of the housing situation. Although informal settlements like those described above came into being unconventionally, their existence is now recognised by the new provincial government in the Eastern Province. However, no policy has been formulated on the future of these settlements. It is the people themselves who will be involved in the adoption of particular strategies for the improvement of housing. The RDP emphasizes the fact that there has to be extensive participation and involvement of local residents in matters that affect people who live in a particular area. This Programme focuses on local government with a view to the identification of people's needs on the ground. Such an approach is justified by the fact that communities have context-specific needs and problems which can only be addressed by representative local decision-making structures. In general, this requires people to take control of their own lives and to embark on collective action in order to solve their problems.

In terms of the RDP the fate of the informal settlement will be negotiated by the local communities together with the relevant local councils which, in turn, are supposed to work closely with the provincial administration.

The significant issue in this new political dispensation is the fact that an opportunity now exists for people to have a direct role in the provision of housing. The RDP envisages the formation of Housing Development Committees which must address the local needs of the people. Ideally, these development committees would provide people with information about housing and ensure that they have a range of options on how housing can be improved. It seems necessary to note the relevance of options since the people who live in informal settlements are not all in the same economic situation even though many of them have low incomes. In this sense opportunities should exist for people to gain access to the type of housing they can afford. Some may move from the informal settlements to newly-established residential areas, others may prefer self-help housing schemes which could be introduced and others may decide to remain where they are, hoping for a gradual up-grading of their area.

With regard to the urban areas in South Africa the new government has devised a comprehensive housing scheme which makes provision for a housing subsidy for a potential first time home-owner. The scheme provides a subsidy of between R5000 (for those earning between R2500 and R3500 a month) and R15,000 (for those earning less than R800 per month).

The existence of these subsidies as part of a national housing scheme demonstrates the new government's political will to improve the housing situation in the country. As Garau (1987) has observed with regard to Sri Lanka, a clearly defined national policy with specific goals and realistic targets is very necessary for the motivation of officials and the general public in the solution of housing problems of the less privileged. The material presented above has shown that shack settlements are inevitable features of South African urban areas. However, informal housing should be regarded as something of a temporary nature which should, over time, make way for permanent (and affordable) accommodation that can be rented or bought (Cf Kok et al, 1992). It is against this background that the availability of housing subsidies for the less privileged people in the country must be viewed.

Since Duncan Village is one of the most densely settled areas in South Africa, it has received special attention from the President and a massive upgrading project of the area is being planned. Overcrowding in Peddie Extension is less serious and this is clearly one reason why there are still no plans for the improvement of the area so far.

The two communities which were investigated have revealed certain similarities and differences which enable us to have a better understanding of the experience of living in an informal settlement. In both cases the people have resorted to 'squattting' in search of accommodation. These are people who

need shelter that is as close as possible to employment opportunities and some have been attracted to these settlements by the lower cost of accommodation there. But these informal settlements vary a great deal in their nature. Duncan Village is extremely overcrowded and residents experience many hardships. On the contrary, in Peddie Extension the people have access to more space and life there is much more pleasant. One common feature of these communities is that they are not disorganised and that they include people who are keen to improve their circumstances. Moreover, in these two informal settlements there were no internal conflicts to hinder efforts towards general renewal and upgrading. These positive features will certainly facilitate the development of these communities.

(b) Households and gender

The two informal settlements which were studied have, on the whole, contrasting types of households. In Duncan Village the households have a comparatively small number of members and tend to include younger people than in Peddie Extension. Also, the shacks in Duncan Village offer only temporary accommodation whereas in Peddie Extension people have larger dwellings and intend to establish permanent homes there. These households include a wide variety of domestic groups consisting of individuals who must co-operate in order to survive. Adult women, in particular, co-operate with their adult relatives with regard to child-care and other forms of support. The research has also shown that women do not regard men as 'dispensable' as is sometimes suggested in the literature. Instead, we found that

in both communities single women are far less antagonistic towards men than we anticipated. The investigation also shows the extent to which the status of women has changed. In these informal settlements women are, on the whole, better educated than men. This has enhanced the status of women and is making women less dependent on male support. Similarly, women are now more independent than they were in the past since they have access to land and can own their own property. It is therefore not surprising that women are now participating actively in political affairs. Also, their role in social matters is significant. The corollary of this is the erosion of male dominance to the extent that men now have less control over women.

(c) Environmental issues

The report has shown that there are many environmental problems that are associated with informal settlements. In Duncan village the pollution of the environment stems mainly from the limited provision of toilet facilities. The communal toilets that are available there are insufficient for the number of people in the settlement. The insufficient provision of rubbish disposal facilities adds to environmental pollution. These health risks are less serious in Peddie Extension where people have more living space. Both settlements encounter serious problems with regard to water. Although tapped water is available in Duncan Village, the people are exposed to polluted water in the streets. Water provision is grossly inadequate in Peddie Extension where there are no taps at all in the informal settlement. Sometimes

water is not available for several weeks and people have to fetch it from town a good distance away. Fire is a great hazard in Duncan village where the wooden shacks often catch alight and serious damage is caused. Once a fire has started it is difficult to prevent it from spreading. As in many other parts of the developing world, informal settlements in this province and elsewhere urgently need attention. Although the existence of these communities is now recognised by the administration in the province, the actual improvement of living conditions in informal settlements will depend on the creation of effective local structures which will be representative of the people.

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# **Development Studies Unit**

## **Institute of Social and Economic Research**

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

The DSU recognises that development is a multi-faceted, people-orientated process in which explicit cognisance must be taken of the economic, social and political needs and aspirations of all communities, especially those that are disadvantaged, discriminated against and excluded from access to opportunities for democratic participation in building a regional economy.

Through its research, the DSU probes and attempts to expose underlying causes of inequality and relative deprivation, in order to identify alternative ways of facilitating development, and establishing a socio-political framework within which development can be pursued.

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