

# **DE-AGRARIANISATION AND RURAL EMPLOYMENT NETWORK**

Afrika-Studiecentrum, Leiden

Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University

## **Agriculture and Co-operative Labour in Shixini, Transkei, South Africa**

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## **Preface**

This working paper provides research findings emanating from the De-Agrarianisation and Rural Employment (DARE) Research Programme funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated by the Afrika-Studiecentrum in conjunction with African research teams from institutions in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa. We wish to acknowledge the encouragement of Hans Slot of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the editorial skills of Ann Reeves for providing vital back-up for the work of the programme's research teams.

Despite Sub-Saharan Africa's agrarian image, the rural peasant population is diminishing in relative size and significance. From a multi-disciplinary perspective, the DARE has sought to dissect the process of change, drawing attention to the new labour patterns and unfolding rural-urban relations now taking place. The programme research theme consists of four sub-themes: economic dynamics, spatial mobility and settlement patterns, social identity adaptations and gender transformations.

The objectives of the DARE programme have been to:

- 1) compare and contrast the process of de-agrarianisation in various rural areas of Africa in terms of a economic activity reorientation, occupational adjustment, social identification, and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly peasant modes of livelihood.
- 2) examine how risks on rural household production and exchange influence the extent and nature of non-agricultural activities in rural economies.
- 3) explore the inter-relationship between agriculture and the service sector in African economies; and
- 4) publish and disseminate the research findings to policy makers and scholars in Africa and elsewhere.

The Afrika-Studiecentrum's role has been to facilitate the formulation of country case study research in various rural African localities by African researchers, provide a discussion forum for work-in-progress, and assist in the publication and dissemination of completed analyses of research findings.

The following study by Professor Pat McAllister of the University of the Western Cape is the product of collaboration between the Institute of Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University and the Afrika-Studiecentrum. The specific objective of the research was to document the changing nature of rural livelihoods, links to urban areas and relationships between agricultural and non-agricultural work.

The overall findings from the DARE programme are intended to provide insight into the processes of change which are moulding the livelihood prospects of African rural and urban dwellers of the next century. It is hoped that the knowledge gained may be useful for formulating more effective developmental policies to assist in short-circuiting Sub-Saharan Africa's current economic and political vulnerabilities.

Dr. Deborah Fahy Bryceson  
DARE Programme Coordinator



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# **Agriculture and Co-operative Labour in Shixini, Transkei, South Africa**

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## **Introduction: Shixini and Its People**

Shixini is a ward or Administrative Area, part of the Jinqi Tribal Authority, located in the rugged coastal part of Willowvale district, Transkei in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. Jinqi consists of Shixini and one other Administrative Area, Ntlahlane, both under the authority of Chief Mandlenkosi Dumalisile, who is the genealogically senior living representative of the right-hand house of Hintsá, paramount chief or king (*ukumkani*) of the Xhosa and head of the Gcaleka chiefdom in the early 19th century. Chief Dumalisile is effectively also the headman of Shixini ward. Ntlahlane has its own headman.

Shixini people are relatively conservative and older men and women readily identify themselves as *amaqaba*. Literally this means 'those who use red ochre' (on their clothes and bodies), but more broadly it refers to a traditionalist orientation, and among more westernised, educated people it is regarded as a derogatory term meaning 'uncouth', 'uneducated' or 'backward'. Education, the churches, a money economy and other forms of westernisation have made heavy inroads all over the Transkei, and *ubuqaba* (traditionalist values and way of life) has consequently been undergoing a process of rapid change since at least the mid-nineteenth century. There remains, nevertheless, a Xhosa conservatism which makes Shixini rather different in some ways from the other two areas studied in this project.

## ***Aims of the Study***

This report forms part of a larger project conducted in three rural areas in the Eastern Cape Province, the aim of which was to examine the nature of rural livelihoods and the urban-rural interface in so far as this was relevant to making a living. In particular, the study sought to look at the extent to which agrarian activities were still important within rural areas, or to which agrarian activities were being replaced or supplemented by other economic activities (income diversification). This report should therefore be read in conjunction with those documenting the findings in the other two villages which formed part of the study - Melani near Alice in the former Ciskei, and Mooiplaas near East London. The findings from Shixini differ considerably from the other two areas.

The Eastern Cape project is itself part of a wider initiative aimed at understanding the extent and nature of changing rural livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa and the extent to which rural African communities are undergoing a process of 'de-agrarianisation' - i.e. a move away from agrarian activities and towards non-agrarian means of securing a livelihood. It is well established that such a process has been under way for some time in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, and this study sought to examine the nature of this process in the Eastern Cape Province, and to consider the policy and development implications thereof.

## ***Methodology***

Much of the general information recorded in this report is influenced by my long-term association with the people of Shixini, and by information gleaned over many field visits since 1976. However, most of what is documented in this report is new, not previously collected on a systematic basis, and not published or recorded elsewhere. As in the other two areas included in this study (Mooiplaas and Melani), a basic census was done of all the 194 homesteads in the three adjacent sub-wards of Shixini selected for the study (Nompha - 76 homesteads, Ndlelibanzi - 41 homesteads and Folokhwe - 77 homesteads). These figures are approximate because the number of homesteads changes constantly and it is not always clear whether a homestead without occupants has died out or is still viable. These three sub-wards are occupied by approximately 1,220 people (an average of 6.3 per homestead). A sample of 46 homesteads (20 in Nompha, 10 in Ndlelibanzi and 16 in Folokhwe), occupied by a total of 305 people, was drawn on the basis of every fifth homestead, but this had to be modified in practice because of unoccupied homesteads or occupants who were unavailable. A detailed questionnaire was applied to the sample, primarily by two field assistants, with a small number being done by the writer with the assistance of an interpreter.

The questionnaire elicited some useful information but it also reinforced my awareness of the limitations of a survey approach. My long association with the area made it possible for me to determine with reasonable certainty which of the questions were being misinterpreted, inadequately answered, contradicted by practice, or produced misleading answers in some other way. Basically, the experience of using the questionnaire confirmed my opinion that various kinds of data cannot be reliably gathered in this way. This includes information of a potentially sensitive nature, but also information based on daily practice of a 'taken for granted' kind, which is non-discursive and largely unconscious and difficult for people to be reflexive about (e.g. the mutual assistance between neighbours which is so common in rural areas like Shixini). But this is not the place to engage in a detailed critique of the questionnaire approach. It simply needs to be pointed out that this report is based primarily on qualitative material gleaned through the conventional anthropological methods of participant-observation and in-depth interviews. I have made only limited use of the questionnaire data to reinforce or add to findings where appropriate. Other quantitative methods were also used (e.g. to determine maize yields) and will be detailed in the appropriate sections below.

## ***Physical Characteristics and Location***

Shixini is typical of the Transkei and Eastern Cape coastal belt. It is situated in broken terrain with many small hills and streams running down to the Shixini river in the north-east and the Jujurha river in the south-west, rising from sea level to around 300 m further inland. Annual rainfall is around 1,000 mm per annum, with 70 per cent of this falling between October and March. In terms of Acocks' classification, the vegetation is primarily coastal forest and

thornveld, but nowadays it is only in the river valleys that forest is still found, and much of the thornveld is now grassland (mostly sourveld). Soils, poorly developed due to leaching by rain, are mainly Glenrosa, Mispah and Swartland over shale and sandstone (Andrew 1992, Whisken 1995).

Shixini is 37 kilometres (at its furthest point) from Willowvale town, the district's small administrative, judicial and commercial centre. The town, in turn, is located 32 kilometres by dirt road from Idutywa, which is on the main highway running through Transkei, and from where connections to Butterworth, Umtata, East London and other urban centres may be made. The distances between Willowvale town and these and other centres is indicated in the table below:

|                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| Willowvale to: Idutywa | 32 km   |
| Butterworth            | 59 km   |
| Umtata                 | 119 km  |
| East London            | 180 km  |
| Port Elizabeth         | 490 km  |
| Cape Town              | 1259 km |
| Bloemfontein           | 573 km  |
| Johannesburg           | 971 km  |
| Durban                 | 558 km  |

These distances, together with the poor condition of the road between Shixini and Willowvale town, and the unreliability and cost of local transport, make Shixini (like the Transkei coastal belt in general) relatively remote from the main urban centres. In summer the rains often make the road between Shixini and Willowvale town impassable to all but four-wheel drive vehicles.

### ***Infrastructure***

Like other parts of the Transkei, Shixini shows evidence of decades of neglect by previous administrations. Apart from poor roads and lack of public transport, facilities of all kinds are either absent or inadequate. There are three junior schools (Sub A to Standard 4) and one junior-secondary school (Standard 4 to Standard 7) in the ward, but no high school, to serve a population of some 5,000 people. Medical facilities in Shixini are limited to two clinics (one established quite recently) staffed by nurses with occasional visits by doctors from town. There are two or three private practitioners in Willowvale town in addition to the clinics there, and a community health centre has recently been built on the outskirts of the town, but it is not yet staffed or operational. The nearest hospitals are in adjoining districts - Kentani, Elliotdale (Xorha) and Butterworth (Gcuwa).

Willowvale town boasts the district's only post office, police station, government offices, and petrol station, as well as various specialist shops (hotel and liquor store,

furniture marts, hardware, wholesalers, undertaker, etc.). The seven general stores in Shixini stock only basic necessities such as maize and maize products (samp, mealie meal), flour, sugar, tinned foods, patent medicines, household utensils, paraffin oil, some building materials (e.g. windows and doors) and clothing. The local stores also have telephones.

There are no public telephones, electricity, water reticulation or public water storage system and no sewage system. Housing is primarily of the mud-brick and thatch variety, but in recent years square houses with corrugated-iron roofing have sprung up, and a few wealthier people have large, western-style houses. Most of the latter are in the area occupied by the chief in the central part of Shixini.

### ***Settlement Pattern***

There are ten sub-wards in Shixini, each under a sub-headman (*isibonda*) who sits on the Tribal Authority and acts as intermediary between the chief and the people. Land rights are granted by the *isibonda* in collaboration with the senior men of the sub-ward, and ratified by the chief. An indication of the chief's power in this regard was given some years ago when one *isibonda*, an active farmer, decided to take over a large, long-abandoned garden belonging to a homestead which had died out. He fenced the garden and commenced turning over the soil in preparation for cultivation, but before long the acting chief at the time (Mandlenkosi's younger brother) got to hear of this unauthorised use of communal land and paid a visit to the area to see for himself what was going on. The result was that the *isibonda* was removed from his position as sub-headman and ordered to remove the fencing and cease his cultivation of the garden. Most of the time, however, the chief is not directly involved in sub-ward affairs, though he remains the ultimate arbiter of local disputes and manager of the land under his authority.

In most of the ten sub-wards, homesteads are widely scattered in areas demarcated for residential use. Other areas within each sub-ward are set aside for fields and for grazing. This division and use of local resources is decided by consensus at the level of the sub-ward moot, consisting of all senior males, presided over by the *isibonda*, and ratified by the chief. Before new areas can be opened up as fields or as residential sites, for example, local consensus and the permission of the chief are required. It is given on the understanding that local consensus has been reached. The seashore and areas proclaimed as forests by the administration are the responsibility of the regional government and neither the local people nor the chief have any authority over them.

It should be pointed out that in many parts of the Eastern Province (especially the former Ciskei, where the other two areas included in this project - Mooiplaas and Melani - are situated), chiefs and headmen are no longer relevant. They were replaced in the 1980s by ANC-affiliated residents' associations belonging to SANCO (The South African National Civics' Organisation). Residents' associations tend to see chiefs and headmen as conservative and as representing the old political dispensation. Despite widespread support

for the ANC in rural Transkei, civic associations have not made much headway in places like Shixini, and the old Tribal Authority system still remains in place. Where civics replaced headmen in the Ciskei, considerable administrative uncertainty and inefficiency resulted (see Manona's report on Melani as part of this DARE project - African Studies Centre Working Paper no. 32, 1999). This has not been the case in places like Shixini where matters such as land administration continue more or less as they have for decades. The recently-formed Rural Council for the district seems to have made little impact so far on daily life.

In many parts of Transkei (as in the rest of South Africa) during the period 1950-1980, rural areas were subjected to agricultural 'betterment' schemes. These have been well documented (de Wet 1989, McAllister 1989) and need not be discussed in detail here. The basic idea was to relocate rural people into ordered villages and to divide the land that remained into arable allotments and fenced grazing camps. A scheme of this kind for Shixini was approved by the Transkei government in the early 1980s but was only partly implemented before being abandoned. Shortly before this time, members of one sub-ward were forced to relocate to another area to make way for a wattle and eucalyptus plantation, and were allocated small, betterment-style sites and gardens in the new area. In most of the rest of Shixini, however, there was relatively little movement to new residential areas before the scheme was discontinued. Many of those who moved later returned to their old sites.

In most of Shixini, people live in scattered homesteads. Gardens adjoin homesteads and may be as big as the homestead head desires, as long as the rights of neighbours and of other members of the sub-ward are not infringed upon. Gardens are fenced but homestead sites and fields are not. Fields are in separately demarcated areas, usually on the flood-plains adjoining rivers and streams, and at some distance from homesteads. Many fields, as we shall see, have been abandoned altogether.

Sub-wards are divided into sections or neighbourhood groups (*iilali*, *iziphaluka*). These are informal groupings but are nevertheless recognised by the residents and the *izibonda* and the sections play an important role in social and economic life. Some demographic features of the sampled homesteads are illustrated in the following tables.

**Table 1: Homestead Head**

|        | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Male   | 8        | 12     | 5           | 25    |
| Female | 8        | 8      | 5           | 21    |
| Total  | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 2: Marital Status of Homestead Head**

|          | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|----------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Married  | 8        | 10     | 5           | 23    |
| Widowed* | 7        | 9      | 5           | 21    |
| Divorced | 1        | 1      | 0           | 2     |
| Total    | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

\* Includes 19 women and two men

It is evident that female-headed households form a large proportion of the total and that this is mainly due to the high percentage of widows in the area. In addition, in households with a male head who is away from home as a migrant worker, women are in charge of the daily running of the homestead (Heron and Cloete 1991).

**Table 3: Number of People per Homestead**

|          | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|----------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| 1 to 3   | 2        | 3      | 2           | 7     |
| 4 to 6   | 4        | 11     | 5           | 20    |
| 7 to 9   | 4        | 3      | 3           | 10    |
| 10 to 12 | 6        | 3      | 0           | 9     |
| Total    | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

Note: Total number of people in the 46 homesteads = 305; average homestead size = 6.63 people)

A characteristic of these sub-wards, and probably of the whole of Shixini, is the relative stability of the population and the absence of immigrants. This is due partly to the remoteness of the place. Most of the people who live there have lived there for a long time - 32 of the 46 homesteads sampled were established more than 20 years ago (Table 4). Current residents are the descendants of those who lived on the same site or nearby with 37 of the 46 homestead heads' parents having lived on the same site or in the same sub-ward as the current occupants (Table 5). Even today, women who leave to marry go to homesteads in the same or nearby wards and seldom marry into another district (Table 6). And all nine new homesteads in the sample were established by people in the same sub-ward as their parents' homesteads.

The number of homesteads and people in Folokhwe sub-ward, for example, has remained virtually static over the last 20 years. In 1976 there were 79 homesteads there - today there are 76. This level of continuity and stability is important in understanding the

social and economic characteristics of Shixini.

**Table 4: Date of Establishment of Homestead**

|                             | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Within the last 2 years     | 1        | 0      | 1           | 2     |
| Between 3 and 10 years ago  | 4        | 2      | 1           | 7     |
| Between 11 and 20 years ago | 2        | 2      | 1           | 5     |
| More than 20 years ago      | 9        | 16     | 7           | 32    |
| Total                       | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 5: Location of Heads' Parents' Homestead**

|                        | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| On same site           | 3        | 13     | 6           | 22    |
| Same sub-ward          | 9        | 3      | 3           | 15    |
| Same ward (Shixini)    | 1        | 3      | 0           | 4     |
| Same district (W'vale) | 2        | 1      | 1           | 4     |
| Adjoining district     | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| Total                  | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 6: Location of Newly Married Women in Relation to their Natal Homes**

|                    | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| n/a                | 10       | 12     | 7           | 29    |
| Same sub-ward      | 2        | 1      | 1           | 4     |
| Same ward          | 1        | 2      | 1           | 4     |
| Same district      | 1        | 6      | 1           | 8     |
| Adjoining district | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| Further afield     | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| Total              | 16       | 21     | 10          | 47    |

### ***Economic Practice***

The Shixini landscape, together with observable everyday activities, immediately suggests to the observer that the local lifestyle is primarily agricultural. Crops growing in gardens, chickens and pigs around homesteads, groups of people ploughing or hoeing, and livestock

wandering about under the care of herdsmen all lend substance to the impression that Shixini people practice mixed farming. This is backed up by conversations with local residents, whose attachment to the land is soon apparent, and who see themselves as rural farmers.

These observations, however, disguise a number of important factors which include the role of migrant labour and its importance in sustaining rural lives, a heavy reliance on cash through remittances or social pensions, the strong links with cities which some people have, and the permanent emigration of a substantial number of people to the more urbanised parts of the country. In the 46 homesteads sampled, there were 37 migrant workers away at work at the time of the study, and others who were in town seeking work. Of the 194 homesteads in the study area, 155 claimed to receive a regular cash income, usually from migrant remittances or pensions, while 39 did not, though they may have had occasional access to cash. In addition, there are a number of ways of gaining access to money and other items needed for subsistence which are not, strictly speaking, 'agricultural'.

Agricultural activities will now be dealt with first, before turning to other kinds of economic activities and the issue of de-agrarianisation. This procedure is chosen not because subsistence is derived from agriculture - although a good proportion of it is - but because, as will be demonstrated below, the ethos and tempo of life in Shixini is an agrarian one, and because the people see themselves primarily as agriculturalists. The cash contributions from migrant workers and from pensioners are crucial to sustaining livelihoods, but this does not change the self-image of the residents as rural farmers; on the contrary, it sustains it. Many rural researchers in southern Africa have illustrated the interdependence between cash income (usually wage earnings) and agricultural production (e.g. Murray 1978, Spiegel 1980). As I have demonstrated in the past, migrant labour is viewed largely as a necessary evil, a means of 'building' the rural homestead, where the term 'building' includes activities such as raising livestock and cultivating the soil (McAllister 1980). This is still a common view among those who live in Shixini today. In addition, it should be pointed out that in Shixini many migrants time their visits home to coincide with the period of ploughing, planting and initial cultivation (November-January), and people who make visits to town time these to coincide with the period after the harvest when there is little agricultural activity. The perception of migrant labour as the antithesis of an agrarian lifestyle is also blunted by the fact that many Shixini male migrants work as labourers in agricultural enterprises in the southern and western Cape, for example on fruit and dairy farms. They are therefore at the bottom end of the migrant wage-scale, with few prospects for improvement or occupational mobility, and it is not surprising that they look to their rural homes and communities for a sense of belonging and meaning.

### **Local Agriculture**

Most of the homesteads in the three sub-wards of Shixini in which this study was conducted derived at least part of their livelihood from agricultural activities. Questionnaire data obtained

during the course of this project back up and qualify this impression. One measure of this is that of the productive equipment found in the sampled homesteads, most is linked to agricultural work (Table 7). The table also indicates the relative poverty of Shixini homesteads. For example, although all but two of the 46 homesteads in the sample engage in cultivation, only 16 own ploughs. Such shortages are partly overcome through co-operative labour.

**Table 7: Productive Equipment in Households**

|                      | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Plough               | 5        | 6      | 5           | 16    |
| Planter              | 0        | 4      | 2           | 6     |
| Cultivator           | 0        | 2      | 2           | 4     |
| Generator            | 0        | 0      | 1           | 1     |
| Grain storage tank/s | 7        | 4      | 1           | 12    |
| Sled                 | 2        | 0      | 0           | 2     |
| Sewing machine       | 3        | 0      | 1           | 4     |
| None of the above    | 8        | 12     | 5           | 25    |
| Total                | 25       | 28     | 17          | 70    |

### ***Access to Land***

#### ***Gardens and Fields***

Homestead sites are allocated at the sub-ward level with the approval of the members of the sub-ward section. The *sibonda* reports this to the headman/chief and the allocation is ratified by him. Members of a sub-ward section may ask for part of the area associated with the section to be demarcated as arable and turned into fields. This request has to be conveyed by the *sibonda* to the chief and approved by him before any fields are allocated and ploughing commences.

All homesteads have the right to at least a garden. Gardens adjoining homesteads can be quite large (up to 2 hectares), their size being limited primarily by the amount of labour and other inputs which the homestead has, as well as by the location of adjoining homesteads and their gardens. In practice, although many homesteads also have fields, it is the gardens adjoining homesteads which are significant agriculturally. This is a relatively new development in the sense that as old, established fields (mainly in river valleys) declined in fertility and became unproductive, people adapted by developing large homestead gardens to take their place. The area available for fields was (and is) very limited, whereas residential areas are still relatively large.

Of the 194 homesteads in the three sub-wards, only 15 had no arable land, and only three of the 46 households surveyed in more detail had no arable land (Table 8). Most

households could claim access to a field, but in practice most fields were last used many years ago and have to all intents and purposes been abandoned. The questionnaire-derived figures relating to fields are therefore significant only in the cases of the four households in the sample whose fields were still being used regularly, and in the case of another two who use their fields infrequently.

**Table 8: Arable Land Holdings**

|                         | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|-------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| No arable land          | 2        | 1      | 0           | 3     |
| Small veg. garden only  | 1        | 3      | 0           | 4     |
| Small and large gardens | 7        | 4      | 3           | 14    |
| Large garden only       | 4        | 8      | 6           | 18    |
| Field and large garden  | 0        | 4      | 0           | 4     |
| Other                   | 2        | 0      | 1           | 3     |
| Total                   | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

Although every homestead is entitled to a garden not all homesteads have one. Those without gardens are often new homesteads which have not yet accumulated enough resources (e.g. for fencing) to establish one but intend doing so in the future. There are also a few homesteads which have undergone decline and where the garden has been abandoned following the death of the male head and the emigration of younger members, leaving perhaps only an elderly woman behind. And in a few other cases elderly women who have returned to their natal homes in Shixini, leaving their married homes in other locations, have not established gardens along with their new homesteads. They lack the labour and other resources to do so and subsist primarily on their old-age pensions.

It is clear, however, that most homesteads do have gardens (in the larger sample of 194 homesteads, 157 had gardens and 45 had smaller gardens). Gardens are used regularly, primarily to grow the staple, maize. Small gardens are used for maize as well as a for a variety of other crops, including tobacco (Tables 9 and 10).

**Table 9: Large Gardens - Frequency of Use**

|        | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Yearly | 13       | 15     | 9           | 37    |
| Other  | 0        | 1      | 1           | 2     |
| n/a    | 3        | 4      | 0           | 7     |
| Total  | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 10: Crops Grown in Large Gardens**

|                      | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Maize only           | 0        | 8      | 6           | 14    |
| Maize and vegetables | 13       | 7      | 3           | 23    |
| Other                | 0        | 1      | 1           | 2     |
| Total                | 13       | 16     | 10          | 39    |

Despite the entitlement of garden land and the role which gardens have played in replacing fields, there is little doubt that there is less land under cultivation in Shixini, and in the district as a whole, today than in previous decades. All over the district large expanses of abandoned, terraced fields can be seen. This is partly because of a tendency in the past to move the location of fields from time to time (see Hunter 1936: 72), and partly (in the inland part of the district) because of betterment schemes, where new fields were allocated and old cultivated areas were forced to revert to grazing areas. But discussions with Shixini residents indicate that thirty or forty years ago there was considerably more cultivation than is the case today, and an analysis of aerial photographs (Andrew 1992) bears this out. The number of hectares being used as fields in Shixini in 1942 was 1,327 and this declined to 650 in 1982. Over the corresponding period, the area being used for garden cultivation rose from 30 to 327 hectares, and the total number of homesteads increased from 501 to 836, the sharpest increase being between 1962 and 1982, probably as a result of apartheid policies restricting African urbanisation and the forced relocation of people from 'black spots' and urban centres into the Transkei (Andrew 1992: 77).

The decline in field use and in the overall number of hectares under cultivation was at least partly compensated for by the higher fertility of gardens, and the greater intensity of garden cultivation in comparison with fields (McAllister 1989). The limitations on field cultivation include low soil fertility, the distance from homesteads, and the fact that they were/are unfenced which makes fields difficult to fertilise with manure from the byres, difficult to protect, and difficult to collect crops from on a day-to-day basis. Fields were used primarily for maize monoculture while gardens are much more suited to intercropping.

#### *Small Second Gardens*

In addition to the large garden, many households have a smaller garden attached to the large one. This small garden is used regularly for a variety of purposes. Some use it exclusively for tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*), others use it for a wide variety of vegetable crops, and yet others use it to provide basic crops during the period when the main crops in the large garden are not yet ready for cultivation (Tables 11 and 12).

**Table 11: Small Vegetable Gardens - Frequency of Use**

|              | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Yearly       | 9        | 6      | 3           | 18    |
| Infrequently | 0        | 1      | 0           | 1     |
| Other        | 0        | 0      | 1           | 1     |
| n/a          | 7        | 13     | 6           | 26    |
| Total        | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 12: Crops Grown in Small Vegetable Gardens**

|                      | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|----------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Maize only           | 1        | 2      | 1           | 4     |
| Maize and vegetables | 8        | 5      | 3           | 16    |
| n/a                  | 7        | 13     | 6           | 26    |
| Total                | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

This small garden is called *iqal'itye* (lit: 'first eating') or *mvelidinga*, which is hard to translate but means something like 'ever present' or 'always trying'. Sometimes it is not fenced with wire but with woven branches (*amahlahla*), like a byre. In such cases it may be distinguished from the main garden by the term *igadi yamahlahla* ('the *amahlahla* garden').

Like the main garden, the location and boundaries of the *mvelidinga* are constantly moving to take advantage of micro-environmental changes. For example, livestock byres often adjoin the *mvelidinga* and if the byres are moved, small but highly fertile areas become available for cultivation on their former sites. A *mvelidinga* is also sometimes established on a former homestead or hut site, also areas known to be fertile (cf. Hunter 1936: 87). As old huts, chicken coops, pig-pens and livestock byres collapse and new ones are built to take their place, so a homestead slowly changes its location, and the garden and *mvelidinga* are modified to take advantage of this. Indeed, the motivation for moving the location of the homestead slightly is often to allow for an expansion of the garden or *mvelidinga*.

### *Grazing*

Rights of residence are automatically also rights to use the grazing areas and other resources of the sub-ward in which one lives. Sub-ward sections become relevant here too because in each sub-ward people usually graze their livestock in areas associated with the sub-ward section in which they reside. The households within the section may decide among themselves whether to close off or open up areas of grazing, depending on the condition of

the veld in various parts of the area associated with the section. They may also ask permission to graze in adjoining sections within the sub-ward.

Most homesteads own livestock of some kind, with those not having any citing disease and the use of livestock in rituals and bridewealth payments as the main reasons for the absence of cattle, sheep and goats from their byres. Livestock holdings are illustrated in Tables 13 to 15. In total, the forty-six homesteads owned 73 cattle, 73 sheep and 142 goats. A significant number of households do not have any livestock (68 out of the total of 194 in the three sub-wards). The average number of cattle per homestead was 3.5 head, or 6.3 for those homesteads having cattle. This is slightly higher than for the coastal half of the adjoining district of Elliotdale (Xorha) (ARDRI 1989).

Almost all ploughing is done by ox-draught, and cattle are the most commonly owned type of livestock. There is one tractor owner in the area, in Nompha, and his services are in considerable demand. However, it is costly to hire a tractor to plough. Many of the gardens are on gradients too steep for tractor ploughing, and the tractor in question is old and unreliable, frequently breaking down and being inoperative for long periods. The only regular means of local transport between the various parts of the sub-wards, between forest and homesteads, and between gardens and huts, is ox-drawn sled. Sleds are either a basic v-shaped tree-trunk for hauling poles, ploughs, etc., or a similar v-shape with woven base, sides and back for the transport of maize cobs, manure and other commodities.

**Table 13: Livestock Holdings - Cattle**

|            | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nil        | 6        | 7      | 6           | 19    |
| 1 to 3     | 3        | 3      | 1           | 7     |
| 4 to 6     | 3        | 4      | 1           | 8     |
| 7 to 9     | 1        | 4      | 2           | 7     |
| 10 or more | 3        | 2      | 0           | 5     |
| Total      | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 14: Livestock Holdings - Sheep**

|              | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nil          | 13       | 19     | 9           | 41    |
| Less than 10 | 2        | 0      | 1           | 3     |
| 10 or more   | 1        | 1      | 0           | 2     |
| Total        | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 15: Livestock Holdings - Goats**

|            | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Other |
|------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nil        | 6        | 13     | 6           | 25    |
| 1 to 3     | 3        | 4      | 2           | 9     |
| 4 to 6     | 3        | 2      | 0           | 5     |
| 7 to 10    | 2        | 0      | 1           | 3     |
| 10 or more | 2        | 1      | 1           | 4     |
| Total      | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

In addition to cattle, goats and sheep, a few homesteads (two in the sample) own horses, and most have pigs (usually between one and three) and small numbers of poultry (the average being around five to seven fowl; some have ducks, geese and even turkeys). Only ten of the forty-six homesteads did not have pigs, and 11 did not have poultry. Both pig and poultry holdings vary considerably over time due to the fact that they are frequently sold for cash or slaughtered to provide meat for sale or domestic consumption.

Other natural resources which are of some importance to Shixini people include thatching grass, the use of which is controlled by the sub-ward and the sub-ward sections. Forests provide fuel and building materials, and are used to a lesser extent for hunting and for gathering medicinal plants. Certain wild plant foods (*imifino*) are collected, and specific grasses and reeds are used for crafts. The seashore is also an important resource (for collecting shellfish, seaweed and driftwood), and a number of men and boys are skilled anglers. The forests and the seashore fall under the authority of the regional department of forestry, though in practice little control is exercised.

### ***The Agricultural Cycle***

One crop of maize, the staple food, is produced annually during summer. Ploughing starts shortly after the first summer rains, in about mid-November, although dry conditions may delay it until December and even, in exceptional cases, until January or even early February. There is considerable variation across homesteads in this regard, and some may plough as early as late September or early October. If one visits Shixini in December it soon becomes evident that people plough and plant at different times because some gardens have maize plants a metre or more high, while other gardens have not yet been planted. Such variations may occur even within a single homestead, with different parts of the garden being planted at different times as a strategy to ensure a supply of green maize over a longer period than one single planting would give, or to take advantage of variations in weather conditions.

Ploughs are of the single-furrow type and are drawn by teams of oxen. Most people plough twice before planting. The seed is planted shortly after ploughing, sometimes with a

mechanical ox-drawn planter which dispenses fertiliser or manure along with the seed. Many still simply broad-cast the seed and hoe it into the soil. The soil is usually not harrowed prior to planting. Some homesteads own small 'cultivators' but these are used primarily for breaking the soil and removing weeds once the crop is growing.

Once the maize plants have developed to a height of about 10 cm, roughly 3-4 weeks after planting, it is necessary to remove the weeds by hoe or, if planted in rows with a planter, by mechanical cultivator. It is vital to remove weeds at this stage if the maize plants are to develop properly. A second hoeing is required about eight to ten weeks later, depending on rainfall. In Shixini, the weeds include a hardy form of coastal grass which is very difficult to eradicate and which flourishes in gardens year after year. Conscientious farmers may hoe a third time, at least in those patches where weeds and grass have developed most quickly. If there are two or three members of the household available to hoe, each period of hoeing may last for a number of weeks. Alternatively, the homestead may organise a work group to hoe the garden in a single day. Various other hoeing arrangements are possible and are discussed more fully below.

Other crops are planted shortly after the maize has started to grow. Additional maize is planted in spaces where the first seed failed to germinate, and subsidiary crops such as pumpkins, melons, calabashes, cowpeas, beans, sweet potatoes and others are planted in the spaces between the maize plants or in other parts of the garden reserved for non-maize products. Some may even be planted before the maize planting takes place.

Maize and other crops are consumed directly from the fields as soon as they are ready but the bulk of the maize crop is allowed to dry on the stalks before it is harvested in early winter (May-June). If there are no other crops in the garden, livestock are allowed to graze on the old maize stalks and consume any sub-standard maize cobs left on the ground. The land then lies fallow until about August-September when the soil is turned over (*ukugelesha*) in preparation for the next ploughing and planting. Many also fertilise the land with manure from their byres, which are conveniently situated next to the gardens. About half of Shixini farmers manage to cultivate a winter crop, usually of peas, beans, sweet potatoes or cabbages (McMillan 1988).

## ***Commitment to Agriculture***

### ***An Agricultural Ethos***

Dependent on cash or not, the tempo and ethos of life in Shixini is primarily agricultural. In the ploughing season attention is focused on the weather and the prospects of a good crop, and on the amount of rain which has fallen or is expected to fall. Much discussion revolves around this and other matters agricultural: Will the rain stop before the land is too sodden to plough? Will there be enough rain for ploughing to begin? Will the ploughing be done before the hot weather sets in? Associated activities include the repair of fences, the preparation of equipment such as yokes and ploughs, making arrangements for co-operative ploughing and

the labour it will require, etc. Social activities at this time also revolve around cultivation. No beer drink or ritual may commence till midday when those who labour on the land cease work, and many of the beer-drinks which take place are held to reward agricultural 'companies' for their assistance with ploughing and planting.

During the hoeing season most people are preoccupied with their gardens. Even when not physically hoeing, they are busy planting subsidiary crops, thinning out maize plants growing too close together, and so on. Throughout December and into February and March a lot of hoeing activity can be seen, sometimes only a single woman (or man) working, sometimes groups of from two or three to twenty or more. At the same time, people have to ensure that their livestock are well tended and do not destroy the crops, and as a result many men and boys spend most of the day out on the grazing lands herding their animals, taking advantage of their proximity to forest and bush to cut poles or branches for building purposes, or to collect medicinal plants. At around 3 pm the herdsmen return with the animals and people keep a watchful eye on both gardens and livestock, making sure that the two remain apart.

Harvest time, too, brings an associated set of activities, as sleds are readied, granaries repaired, branches cut and collected for new granaries, the fertility of gardens remarked on and compared, and so on. In May 1996, for example, people were excited about the bumper harvests, and many were busy constructing new granaries to hold the crop. Talk inevitably turned to those with very good harvests, the number of people required to help in the fields, the size of the granaries, the number of sleds of maize brought in from the garden, the amount of beer that was going to be brewed later, etc. Shortly after the harvest there is a flurry of beer-drinking activity as people brew 'beer for the harvest', to give thanks to their ancestors for what they have received, and to publicly recognise the assistance of those who did the ploughing and harvesting.

During the fallowing period gardens are extended, fences repaired, and manure may be transported from the cattle byre to the garden and left there to be ploughed into the soil during *gelesha*. In the past this was also the time for building new huts, repairing or replacing livestock byres, and for rituals including male circumcision. This is still the case up to a point, but now many rituals are conducted in December-January, when men who work in town return for their annual holiday.

Although the overall ethos in Shixini is an agrarian one and most people are involved in agricultural activities to some degree or another, it is obvious that there are some homesteads which have not used their gardens for many years, which do not have any livestock (and have not had any for some time), and which cannot claim to live from agrarian activities to any significant extent. These homesteads depend almost entirely on pensions or on the remittances of migrant workers who visit their homes annually or less frequently. Some of these homesteads are kept going by an aged widow or by a migrant's mother or other relative, but to all intents and purposes they do not engage directly in agrarian activities.

Among these are a few which find non-agrarian means of securing some cash income (see below). Of course, members may participate indirectly in agriculture, helping other people with hoeing, for example, and in the case of those with absentee migrant males, they may engage in agriculture at some point in the future, given that many men intend to return home once they retire from migrant work. Other cases include homesteads apparently on the point of dying out altogether, although revival is often possible, as some of the case studies below show.

It may also seem apparent that it is these homesteads which are the most de-agrarianised, but again this would be to ignore a number of factors. One of these is the cyclical or historical dimension which shows that involvement in agrarian activities may be linked to the point a homestead has reached in the developmental cycle. Related to this is the well-documented relationship between agrarian activities and the urban-industrial sector (e.g. through the wages earned by migrants being used for rural capital investment in agriculture).

In some cases a homestead has no occupants and stands empty most of the year until the absent migrants return for their annual visit. In others, the head and his wife are away at work and the homestead has a tenant who looks after it while the owners are absent. In some such cases the homestead members are minimally involved in agrarian activities, but the homestead still has cattle and goats, and its garden is used annually.

Comparison of the results of the present study with the results of a survey conducted in 1990 reveals that in most cases homesteads which had livestock and were using their land in the earlier survey are still doing so, sometimes despite radical changes in the composition of the household.

However, six homesteads which were using their gardens regularly in 1990 had stopped doing so by 1996/7, either because of a lack of labour or because of other factors. In other cases, however, homesteads which in 1990 did not practise agriculture and which seemed to be on the point of dying out have undergone a revival of sorts, e.g. through a long-absent son returning and becoming active in agriculture.

It is apparent that de-agrarianisation is not necessarily related to age since there are still many young people who want to farm. In May 1996 Jiwawa Monelo and his wife and four young children lived in the Folokhwe homestead belonging to Nontinti Jabavu. They had borrowed the homestead from her (she has another in Ndlelibanzi). Jiwawa works in Umtata and comes home for holidays in December/January. He had been allocated a site nearby down in the valley and had turned the soil there. He intended to build his homestead there in the near future. I asked Jiwawa's wife if they did not want to live in Umtata. 'No', she said, 'we want to live here'. I asked why that was. '*Oh, sifun' ukulima, sifun' ukwakha*' ('We want to cultivate, we want to build [the homestead]', she replied. This response is revealing in the sense that 'building the homestead' (*ukwakha umzi*) which Shixini people regarded as a moral and religious duty, is linked to 'farming' (*ukulima*). Eight months later we met Jiwawa's wife and a neighbour collecting sweet-potato runners in a garden some distance

away from their homes (see below) and we asked her how their plans to farm were proceeding. They had managed to establish a small garden (*mvelidinga*) and had cultivated it for the first time. They had also borrowed a field from a kinsman in Ndlelibanzi, an adjoining sub-ward, and had ploughed it with the help of this kinsman's cattle when her husband was able to take some time off from his job in Umtata during November and December. This was the second field they had borrowed, she added, saying that the first one was not a success because the soil was infertile.

#### *Effect of the 'Betterment Scheme'*

In some cases the move out of agriculture on the part of certain homesteads is linked to the betterment scheme mentioned above. Where people moved as a result of the scheme, they established new gardens as part of their new homesteads - but the demarcated areas were much smaller than the old. Many continued to use their old gardens as well as the new ones, at least for a few years. This made sense given that it takes a new garden some time to become productive. But disputes arose, old fences were not maintained and livestock entered the gardens and ate the crops. In one case a man complained to the livestock owner and was told that since the old garden was now in an area demarcated for grazing, he should expect his crops to be grazed.

In some areas the homestead sites coincided with existing sites, but the existing sites were reduced in size and other homesteads moved in, taking up space that used to be part of other, older homesteads' gardens. So homestead areas became more crowded.

By and large, however, once it became apparent that the betterment scheme was being abandoned by the authorities, many affected homesteads started to take steps to recover from its effects. Some moved back to their old sites, others simply developed their gardens to the desired size on their new sites. In one or two cases, the move to a new site enabled the homestead to become more productive than before because it provided new opportunities for agricultural development (see below the case of Mntuwakhe).

#### *Household Development*

One can look at the question of de-agrarianisation at the level of an area as a whole, as well as at the level of individual households. Often de-agrarianisation is associated with growing pressure on land, growth in the population, increased availability of alternative subsistence strategies and an overall change in the character of the area. In the case of Mooiplaas, for example, it may be possible to view the area as one in which betterment, increasing population, improved transport to East London, growth of employment opportunities in East London and the Border corridor, and other factors, combined to transform the area from an agrarian one into a peri-urban one, or at least to diminish the importance of agrarian activities in relation to wage earnings, petty trading, etc.

In the three sub-wards in Shixini in which this study was conducted there have certainly

been changes over the 22 years during which I have been visiting it. However, these do not appear to have changed the basic nature of the area as an agrarian one (bearing in mind the qualifications previously mentioned). There has not been a significant growth in the resident population and therefore no real changes in the availability of land. There are various reasons for this. Undoubtedly, there has been emigration to cities by many younger people, and this may be the main reason leading to the disappearance of their parents' homesteads as the parents die. But the establishment of new homesteads has taken place at a similar rate to the disappearance of old ones. In some cases new homesteads are established as people who have been in town for many years return home, either permanently or temporarily.

For example, Lindemene is a young man of about 25 years of age. He has been working on a dairy farm near Plettenberg Bay for the last 7-8 years, and married in 1994. In 1997 he asked his mother to secure a site for him so that he could start to build his own homestead. She arranged a meeting with the Folokhwe sub-headman, ensuring that the discussion would proceed smoothly by presenting the sub-headman with a bottle of brandy at the time. 'It was not a payment for the site', she said, 'it was just because there was a discussion taking place'. The site applied for was identified as that belonging to Lindemene's paternal grandfather, Cangci, and in this sense it was not a new site that he was requesting but permission to re-occupy and build on it.

In other cases, young people establish and maintain a rural homestead in anticipation of retirement there at a later stage. Some young people, like Jiwawa and his wife (mentioned above) try to establish themselves as cultivators while maintaining a job in the city, and thus a wage income. For many in Shixini, young and old, the idea of permanent town life is not appealing because of high rates of crime, unemployment and other forms of social pathology in urban areas. To others, including many young people, town life is attractive and exciting, and provides a secure livelihood at least while a wage-paying job is maintained.

Turning to the question of de-agrarianisation as it affects individual households, one has to look at it in processual/historical terms. The question is complicated by the fact that at times it is difficult to forecast the course of development that a household is likely to take. Just as it seems that a homestead has declined to the point where it no longer partakes in agricultural work, some factor or other reverses the change. In other cases, such homesteads fade and die out altogether, providing others with opportunities for expansion and development. The following case studies illustrate some of the above-mentioned points regarding homestead development in relation to participation in agriculture.

#### *Ndabanduna*

Ndabanduna was first interviewed at his homestead in Ndlelibanzi in 1977. He was about 50 years old, with a 22-year-old daughter, a 12-year-old son and three other younger daughters. He was still an active migrant but at the end of his migratory career. On his previous return from work (in January 1977) he had

purchased wire netting, a metal grain tank, six bags of maize, and clothing for members of the family. He owned 14 cattle, about 15 sheep, and two horses. People regarded him as relatively wealthy. His garden was used annually though his field had been abandoned. In 1976 he said he had harvested 4 bags of maize (though the real figure was probably twice this - see section on yields). He was a member of a prominent and powerful lineage segment of the Ntshilibe clan, and belonged to a ploughing group headed by Gamalakhe, the son of a paternal uncle, and one of the most respected and wealthy men in Folokhwe.

By 1990, Ndabanduna's son had started to work as a migrant, and his household had expanded to include two daughters and a brother's daughter's daughter. His eldest daughter had married and was living with her husband in Mandluntsha, a nearby ward. He still had cattle and sheep, and now also goats, but the horses had died. The garden was still used regularly.

In 1992 Ndabanduna died. In 1997 the homestead still had the garden, and used it regularly, but no livestock at all. The son was still a migrant, and his wife and child were with him in Cape Town. He returned home regularly and sent money to his mother, No-amen, who now also received a pension. The daughter in Mandluntsha had returned home with her four children because her husband had died. The daughter of Ndabanduna's paternal uncle, Xukuse, was now also a resident. She was about 50 years old, and had come to live at Ndabanduna's homestead with her 15-year-old daughter. They had left the homestead of her father, Phepkepheke, about 100 metres away, after the death of her elder brother, Sinotwana, and the homestead had disappeared.

It is possible that Ndabanduna's son owned livestock but that they were kept elsewhere and not at his home, as is common with migrants. It is also highly likely that, with a number of girls in the home and some of them teenagers, livestock would be coming in as bridewealth in the near future. So although the current position seems to be heavily dependent on migrant remittances and pensions, the household contains a potential for expanded agricultural activity, particularly as it has ample labour. On the other hand, should Ndabanduna's son decide to settle permanently in town with his family and his mother die, the homestead would be likely to go into decline and possibly disappear altogether.

### *Mbuntshunthu*

A younger member of the same Ntshilibe clan segment, Mbuntshunthu, was a young man who had just gone out to work for the first time in 1977. His father, Bokhwe, had died, and he had two younger brothers, one of whom had disappeared to town some years previously. No one knew his whereabouts and he had neither written home nor sent any money. The other was still too young to

go out to work. His mother appeared fairly destitute. She depended for maize on her natal home at Fumbatha, a nearby sub-ward, and on the generosity of her neighbour, Gunyuvu (Ganu clan). Her last yield from her small garden was only half a sledful, and the year before that it had been even less. She had no oxen with which to plough, and the ploughing was done by Gamalakhe. The homestead had no livestock at all. At this point the homestead looked like one that might be on the verge of disappearing unless Mbuntshuntshu and his brothers made some sort of commitment to a rural lifestyle. It seems that they did so with the help of their father's brother, Gamalakhe.

By 1990 Mbuntshuntshu had married and was now regarded as the head of the homestead. He had four children (2 months to seven years), and he returned home regularly from his job in Welkom. The garden had been extended and it was used regularly, with Gamalakhe's help. They still had no livestock except for pigs and chickens.

By 1997 the homestead had expanded and was relatively well off. They had added a smaller vegetable garden to the large garden, built an additional hut, and installed a new grain tank as well as a new granary (*idladla*). He now had six children, and owned cattle as well as goats (a large and well-stocked byre was evident). He had lost his job in Welkom and had been unable to find a new one. One of his brothers, Lungisile, had established himself in a homestead nearby which had belonged to Thyobeka, of the same lineage segment. But Lungisile had died suddenly and his wife had returned to her natal home. Mbuntshuntshu now maintained Lungisile's homestead and had access to the garden, which he used annually. In addition, Mbuntshuntshu and his wife run a liquor outlet which brings in cash on a regular basis.

### *Masilingane*

In 1977 Masilingane, a recently-married young man, was working in Cape Town. His wife, MaDlamini, and their two small daughters were with him in the city due to illness, it was said, and they did not come home during the December-January period 1976/77. It was said that they were 'school' people with at least some education. This turned out to be true to a certain extent - MaDlamini was one of the few Folokhwe women at the time who had taken to wearing 'school' type clothes, and Masilingane once dressed in a very urban style (suit, hat and shoes) when he accompanied me to watch a *tshila* dance a few years later. In addition, over the years it became apparent that they valued education very highly and took pains to ensure that their two girls attended high school. Here, surely, were candidates for conversion from a rural to an urban lifestyle.

Masilingane's father's sister, Nomfuxuse, a widow, occupied an adjoining

homestead with her two daughters. She had a garden, situated next to Masilingane's, but no livestock. Both her and Masilingane's homesteads consisted of only a single hut. Masilingane had some livestock which were being kept by Keneti, his older brother, but he owned no agricultural implements and their garden did not yield much (they said that they reaped only 6 baskets of maize on the cob during the 1976 harvest).

Masilingane continued to migrate until 1983 but has not been to work since then. They made some money for four or five years through liquor sales, but this was a temporary small-scale exercise and they often ran out of supplies. MaDlamini sometimes collected oysters to sell to the local hotel, and Masilingane is one of the skilled anglers in the area so was sometimes able to sell fish to the hotel, and frequently provided it for the supper pot at home.

By 1987 their homestead had developed somewhat. They had two huts, 15 cattle, and some small stock. The garden was being used regularly and sometimes also a borrowed field. The previous year's maize yield was 5 bags, mainly from his garden. There was 'virtually nothing' from the field because of beetle infestation. In 1990 he had added goats, and an *isibhaya* (small stock byre) as well as *ubuhlanthi* (cattle byre). Innovatively, the garden was joined up with his father's sister's, and used as a single piece of land. Three years before the two gardens were surrounded by a single fence but kept separate by a strip of unploughed land between them. In 1990 the strip had gone and the two were being cultivated as a single garden. This makes sense given that Masilingane was the *usipatheleni* ('caretaker') for Nomfuxuse and usually did the ploughing for her anyway. He had acquired enough cattle to be a prominent member of a ploughing company, along with Nqakaba, a clansman and leading member of the sub-ward.

Today Masilingane is highly regarded as a successful farmer. He has effectively incorporated Nomfuxuse's homestead into his. Her single hut is now abandoned and she has her own hut as part of his homestead, which now comprises five huts. He has approximately 30 cattle, 40 sheep and 30 goats, as well as pigs and poultry. There are two small vegetable gardens in addition to the large one. He has a variety of agricultural implements, and his maize yields were sufficient for household requirements between 1996 and 1998. He no longer ploughs with Nqakaba but is the head of his own ploughing company, and he is *usipatheleni* at five other homesteads. His elder daughter is studying to become a teacher (her small child lives with Masilingane and MaDlamini), while the younger one is married and lives in Elliotdale. Four of Nomfuxuse's daughters are also domiciled in the homestead (in 1997-98 they were all away working or looking for work in Umtata or Cape Town), as are two daughters of theirs.

Bridewealth that comes in for these women when (and if) they marry will be Nomfuxuse's but they will be managed with the homestead's herd. Nomfuxuse now receives a pension, and this brings in necessary cash, but Masilingane is able to raise money also through livestock sales and the occasional sale of other agricultural products such as maize and wool.

### *Keneti*

Keneti, Masilingane's older brother, provides a contrasting picture. Shortly after Masilingane 'retired' from migrant work in 1983, Keneti went to Umtata to look for a job. Prior to this he used his land regularly and also lived on his earnings as a part-time builder. He was successful in securing employment in Umtata but it was very poorly paid. He seldom sent any money home to his wife, Nokabodi, who struggled to feed herself and their children. Their livestock died and the homestead deteriorated. It was only with help from her mother, in an adjoining homestead, and from Masilingane, the official 'caretaker' of her homestead, that she managed to keep starvation at bay. After some years Nokabodi, together with their four children, decided to join Keneti in Umtata. This never ensured a more secure existence for them, and she returned to Folokhwe from time to time. From about 1987 the homestead was inhabited sporadically, and the garden was not used at all. To all intents and purposes it looked as if this was a family now fully dependent on urban wages and detached from agrarian life. In 1994, however, Keneti died, and Nokabodi lost her foothold in Umtata and was forced to return home permanently. She eked out a living for a few years, sometimes returning to Umtata for short periods. In 1995 she hired a tractor to plough her garden for the first time in years but it was unable to finish the job and she considered the R100 fee badly spent. In 1996 it was not cultivated. Finally, in 1997, Masilingane ploughed and planted the garden for her, even providing the seed. She was also able to establish a smaller garden below the main one for the cultivation of vegetables. When we visited her in February 1998 she was growing a sizeable crop of maize in the garden along with pumpkins, and in the smaller garden she had three types of sweet potatoes, beans, spinach, cabbage, gourds and pumpkins as well as maize.

Part of the key to Nokabodi's success in re-establishing herself lies in her kinship links with her mother, her mother's sister, and her father's brother's daughter, all of whom live nearby, as well as with her late husband's kin. But part of it is due to the fact that she had been actively engaged in hoeing for others in return for payment in cash or in kind. She also hoed for Masilingane in return for the seed he gave her. This had enabled her to bring in some food and money during the growing period. Re-establishing the homestead also meant that she

was able to become part of the neighbourhood network again. When we encountered her in her garden in mid-1998 she and her FBD were replanting maize because cattle belonging to Thekwane, a neighbour, had managed to break into her garden and cause some damage. We asked if she would ask for compensation from Thekwane and his wife. She said she would not, 'because they are neighbours; they came to apologise, and they do help me from time to time'. She had obtained her sweet potatoes, for example, from another neighbour, mkaGqwetha. Walking past this neighbour after speaking to Nokabodi we observed two women in the garden filling hessian bags with sweet-potato runners. They were from Chibi section, about two kilometres away. We asked them if they were purchasing these, and if they were related to the homestead. They replied in the negative on both counts, saying that they had merely heard that mkaGqwetha had an abundance of runners, so they had come to ask for some and had been given them. Each went off with a large bag full of runners, and we saw them repeating this the next day.

#### *Mntuwakhe*

Mntuwakhe was one of the people who was able to use the betterment scheme to his advantage. In 1977 he was a young man living with his mother in his late father's homestead in the Ngingqi area of Folokhwe. It was probably the most remote homestead in the sub-ward, situated in the extreme south-west corner. They were relatively wealthy, having inherited a sizeable herd of cattle, sheep and goats from his father. A few years later he married and established a homestead next to his late father's. For a short period he was actively engaged in cultivating both his own and his mother's garden, as well as a field which his mother had inherited. By this time the threat of relocation was hanging over Folokhwe because of the betterment scheme. Mntuwakhe probably saw this at least partly as an opportunity to acquire access to more arable land. He applied for a site for himself and an adjoining one for his mother in the new residential area near Ngadla shop and the local school. He moved to his new site and left his mother at her old homestead where she could keep an eye on both of their original gardens. By 1996 the threat of relocation had disappeared but Mntuwakhe had developed two large gardens on the new residential sites, one on either side of his homestead (technically one is his mother's, but she still lives in her old home). He therefore now has access to four gardens and, in addition, one of his sons has recently married and established his own homestead nearby. The garden associated with it is also farmed by Mntuwakhe. He is an energetic man with access to great material wealth - his herds of goats and sheep now number in the thousands, and his cattle in the region of 400-500. He regularly purchases

vaccines and medicines to prevent and cure livestock diseases. He uses good-quality maize seed and prepares his soil carefully. The results can be seen in the healthy, tightly-packed maize plants and his good yields. In the winter of 1998 he was growing cabbages in one of the gardens, and although they looked healthy he complained that they needed rain. He had been relying on barrels of water conveyed from the nearby stream by ox-sled, a time-consuming and laborious task but potentially rewarding since there were some 1,000 cabbages growing in the garden, and the local price for a medium-sized cabbage was R2.50.

### ***Agricultural Yields***

When asked how much maize they had harvested from their gardens in the previous season, respondents gave answers as reflected in the following table.

**Table 16: Maize Yields from Large Gardens, 1997**

|                        | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nothing or very little | 3        | 1      | 3           | 7     |
| 1 to 2 bags            | 1        | 4      | 2           | 7     |
| 2 to 4 bags            | 0        | 3      | 2           | 5     |
| 5 to 6 bags            | 3        | 2      | 2           | 7     |
| 7 to 8 bags            | 2        | 2      | 0           | 4     |
| 8 to 10 bags           | 3        | 1      | 0           | 4     |
| More than 10 bags      | 0        | 2      | 0           | 2     |
| Other                  | 1        | 1      | 1           | 3     |
| n/a                    | 3        | 4      | 0           | 7     |
| Total                  | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

Figures such as these are, however, utterly misleading, and it is extremely difficult to obtain an accurate estimate of agricultural yields or of yields per hectare in a place like Shixini. For one thing, people tend to understate their yields when asked. Hunter (1936: 93) mentioned that Pondo 'never boast of the crops they have reaped. They usually complain, when asked, of having a poor crop...'. But there are also other reasons - some more technical, some cultural:

1. Arable land is irregular in shape and unevenly used, making it difficult to measure the amount of land (in hectares) under cultivation at any one time. It may also have rocky patches which are not used. A garden may be extended to incorporate an old homestead site including burial sites, but care is taken never to plough over graves. People do not choose to bury their

dead in the centre of a garden but it can happen that a burial site is to be found there because of the dynamic relationship between a garden and the rest of the homestead. Sometimes large margins are left between the cultivated area and the fence and sometimes only half the garden is used in a particular year.

2. Intercropping: Maize is the basic crop and most important foodstuff, and is grown on all three types of arable land. However, it is seldom grown alone and a variety of other crops can be found occupying the spaces between maize plants. Intercropping makes measurements in terms of amounts of maize per hectare difficult and meaningless.

Looking at a field or garden when the maize plants have started to grow may create an impression that the land is badly farmed, especially when the broad-cast planting method has been used rather than a planter, which produces neat rows of maize. There appears to be no order; some maize plants are right up next to each other, others widely spaced, and with certain areas of the garden almost devoid of maize altogether. The advantages of this are that it leaves plenty of space for secondary crops such as cowpeas, beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins and melons. Even *imifino* ('wild' greens), of which there are different varieties, may be found growing between maize plants, creating for the untrained eye an impression of careless weeding. This kind of cultivation makes a fair amount of sense, however. It provides variety, it makes crop rotation unnecessary since a kind of random rotation occurs anyway, and it puts certain nutrients back into the soil (e.g. in the case of legumes). This means that soil fertility is prolonged and regular fallowing not needed which in turn saves on things like fencing costs and helps to conserve other resources like grazing, since the total amount of land put under the plough is kept low.

3. An accurate figure for agricultural yields should include yields of all crops grown and not just maize, the staple. Since most of the secondary crops, with the partial exception of beans and cowpeas, are not harvested in bulk but consumed directly from the land, measuring the amount produced is difficult. Maize, too, is consumed directly from the land for a period of one to three months before the 'harvest'. Many people plant the section of the garden nearest the huts before they plant the rest of it, ensuring a supply of green maize over a longer period than would otherwise be the case. The same applies to other crops. Sometimes three different plantings take place - two in the garden, one in the smaller garden - to guard against the risk of crop failure and to ensure a longer supply of green maize. An accurate assessment of yields would require a daily measurement of the amount of food crops used directly from the land. And even this would be difficult as it is not uncommon to come across a woman or child cooking green maize on the cob, immature pumpkin stung by pests and unlikely to ripen without rotting, the softer inside maize leaves, mature melon or pumpkin, and a quantity of *imifino* all together in a single pot!

The gathering of maize and other crops from the land before the harvest is called *ukufula*. Even after the maize has dried out and is ready for harvest, people continue to use it directly from the land, choosing the smaller and driest cobs (called *amaqhashu*) until the

harvest itself.

4. The term 'harvest' is culturally specific, making it difficult to assess responses to a question like 'How much maize did you harvest in 1998?' There are a variety of reasons for this apart from that already mentioned in the previous paragraph. By 'harvest', Shixini people usually mean the amount of maize taken in from the fields at harvest time around about May-June, threshed and stored for later use. Sometimes people simply do not know how much they have harvested, but usually they can give a figure of some kind. Some express the yield in terms of 'bags', but others only in terms of sleds or, if the harvest was very small, in terms of baskets. By 'bags' they usually mean an old-fashioned hessian bag filled to the brim which they refer to as a 'Xhosa' bag. It weighs around 100 kg in comparison with the new, shop-bought bags of maize which weigh 80 kg. Sleds are home-made and vary considerably in size, some twice as big as others, so a figure in terms of sleds is meaningful only if one knows whose sled was used and what the equivalent in terms of 'Xhosa' bags is (which those who regularly use the sled *and* who store their harvest in bags know).

Some homesteads have metal grain-storage tanks and a few use pits dug in the cattle-byre floor. Metal tanks are popular but they have to be painted regularly to prevent rusting, and they are liable to leak when old, like underground pits, which are now rare. Most homesteads have a granary (*idladla*, pl. *amadladla*) made from woven sticks (*amahlahla*). *Amadladla* are normally used for temporary storage only, the idea being to allow the maize cobs to dry out completely before removing the grain (*ukuxhontsa*) and storing it in bags or in the metal tank. During the two to three months of temporary storage continuous use is made of the maize as and when required. Tanks facilitate protection against damp and against weevil infestation through the use of carbon disulphide, known and marketed as *ieyeza letanki* - 'tank medicine'. If the harvest is small, however, it may never reach the tank, being consumed directly out of the woven granary for a few months until it is finished.

5. Local perceptions of what constitutes 'maize' (*umbona*) are more complex than one might assume. Harvesting is usually done by a group of women who strip the cobs from the stalks and the sheaths from the cobs, and empty their baskets full of maize out at a number of points in the garden in readiness for the oxen with sled who transport it to the homestead. Before removal to the granary, the harvest is divided into two - maize (*umbona*) or 'good' maize (*umbona mhle*), and 'spoilt' maize (*umdlungu*) which is sub-standard in the sense of consisting of poorly-developed cobs, or being partly infested with weevil or other forms of rot (*abolile*). Sorting on this basis may in fact commence in the garden. A third category, *isiswenye*, consists of a quantity of the best quality cobs from which the next season's seed is taken. So if you ask someone how much *maize* was harvested, the other two categories (*umdlungu* and *isiswenye*) are excluded from his/her answer. In fact, they may well also be excluded from the granary and later the tank, with only proper maize being stored and the *umdlungu* being kept in an untidy pile in a hut for immediate consumption, beer brewing, or

feeding livestock (or all three). The *isiswenye* is usually hung from the rafters of one of the huts till it is required in the following season. This does not mean that all the cobs designated as *isiswenye* (often estimated to be as much as 80 kg of threshed maize, or two bags of maize on the cob) will form the basis of the next crop, but only that the seed (*imbewu*) used will be taken from this category, with what remains being eaten. Sometimes, however, all three - *umbona*, *umdlungu*, and *isiswenye* - are initially placed in the granary, separated by palm leaves or sacking. People with two granaries may use one for good maize, and the other for the sub-standard *umdlungu*.

The nature of the maize called *umdlungu* varies in relation to the size of the harvest and the overall quality of the maize. If the harvest is large, the cobs which are badly infested with weevil and rotten may be left in the garden for livestock to eat. The maize regarded as *umdlungu* under such circumstances might be of a quality not that far removed from the good maize. If the harvest is small, however, very poor quality cobs may nevertheless be taken out of the fields and used, and the difference between 'good' and 'bad' maize will be more evident. This became clear to me when I commented that the *umdlungu* we were shown at one homestead was not all that different from the good maize. The homestead head then informed us that the 'real' *umdlungu* had been left in the garden for the pigs and cattle. In another case we were told that no *umdlungu* at all had been harvested, which reflected the fact that the harvest was of a good size and quality, with sub-standard cobs being left in the earth for foraging livestock. In a third case, however, we commented that the entire harvest looked like rather poor quality *umdlungu*, but were told by the homestead head that this was not *umdlungu* because the cobs were not rotten or weevil infested.

6. Yields vary from year to year and a good measure of yields would have to take place over a period of around five to ten years to take into account both good and lean seasons. All three seasons covered in the course of this study were regarded as relatively good, and even here it was possible to record dramatic differences in the same garden from year to year. Some homesteads which harvested well in 1996 did very poorly in 1997, for reasons which were difficult to determine. The time of planting appears crucial. In 1997 those who planted in November were able to take advantage of early rains and appeared to do well, but those who planted in December complained that there had not been enough rain, which accounted for their poor crops. A number of households which regularly produced good harvests complained, in February 1998, that their maize plants had not developed well at all. Some had replanted in January, but this measure had not been very successful.

### *Measuring the Contents of Granaries*

Since granaries are either roughly cylindrical or rectangular in shape it is possible to measure their volume. If one has an idea of the volume occupied by the harvest of maize on the cob, and a specific portion of the same maize is removed from the cob and weighed, it is then possible to calculate the amount of maize in a granary in terms of kilograms of maize off the

cob. If one then also has a measurement of the amount of land used to produce this maize, a figure in maize per hectares can be given. This does not, of course, solve the problem of intercropping, nor tell one how much maize was consumed prior to the harvest, but it does give an idea of how much maize per hectare was harvested and stored.

The procedure followed in this study was as follows. A wooden box with a volume of exactly one eighth of a cubic metre was constructed - internal dimensions of 500 mm x 500 mm x 500 mm. It was fitted with sturdy wooden handles. Four homesteads, representing people regarded as poor, average, above average and 'good' farmers, were visited and, with the permission of the head, careful measurements were made of the space occupied by stored maize in the granaries. The box was then filled with maize from the granary, and the maize was tipped out and weighed. Finally, the kernels were removed from the cobs, and both cobs and kernels were weighed separately. This procedure was followed for both 'good' maize and *umdlungu*. An average weight of the amount of grain represented by a cubic metre of maize on the cob, for both 'good' maize and *umdlungu*, was thus obtained. Some homesteads with more than one granary kept the good maize in one and the *umdlungu* in another, but at others both types were in the same granary but separated by a division of some kind, so it was possible to calculate the volume of each. An additional twelve homesteads were visited, again representing a range of types of farmers - from homesteads headed by widows with little labour to those with a lot of labour and other resources. The contents of their granaries were measured to provide the amount of maize harvested and stored. The average weight per cubic metre as arrived at in the initial four homesteads was then applied, so that we obtained the size of maize yields in kilograms for all sixteen homesteads.

Measurements were also made of the sixteen gardens, using a metering device (a 'Truometer'). Since this took place shortly after the harvest and the maize stalks were still in evidence, it was possible to see which areas of the gardens had been used and which had not been cultivated. Uncultivated parts were measured and deducted from the overall garden size so as to get a more realistic picture of the number of square metres under cultivation.

The main difficulty here was that many gardens are not strictly rectangular but merely quadrilateral, making it important to know the internal angles at which the sides joined each other. Some idea of the irregularity of field shapes can be obtained from the sketches in Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* (1936: 72-73), particularly the 'Sketch Map of Fields in a River Valley'. Since we did not have any means of measuring the angles, recourse was made to aerial photographs of the gardens in question, and the size of the gardens plotted onto squared paper in accordance with the shape of the same garden on the photograph. A measurement in terms of square metres could thus be arrived at - admittedly a rough and ready one - but one that could at least provide an idea of the nature of maize yields per hectare.

For example, Hloniphile Goso's granary is 2.6 m in diameter and was filled with maize

cobs to a height of 1.55 metres. The volume of maize in the granary is thus 8,232 cubic metres. Using the box mentioned above, one eighth of a cubic metre of Hloniphile's granary maize yielded 53.2 kg of grain. The granary thus represented 3,503.5 kg of maize off the cob. He also had *umdlungu*, which comprised 310.4 kg of grain, so his total harvest was 3,813.9 kg. His garden is 13,982 square metres, or 1.3982 hectares, giving a yield of 2,727 kg of maize per hectare.

This figure can be adjusted to take into account maize consumed prior to the harvest, based on the estimates of household members of how frequently they used such maize and in what quantities.

It was found that the sixteen homesteads sampled produced and stored a total of 22,614.3 kg of maize in the 1996/97 season. The average was 1,413.39 kg per homestead. By ARDRI's estimates the basic subsistence requirement for maize is 175 kg per person per year or 1,050 kg per homestead of six people per year (ARDRI 1989: 30). On this basis, eleven of the sixteen homesteads listed in Table 17 produced sufficient to meet their maize requirements in this particular season.

The yields ranged in size from a low of 330.6 kg to a high of 3,730.8 kg. Gardens ranged in size from 1,347 square metres to 20,225 square metres, and the yield per hectare ranged from 747 kg (9.3 bags) to 4,683 kg (58.5 bags). The average yield per hectare was 2,307.25 kg (28.8 bags). The full results are detailed in the table below.

**Table 17: Maize Yields per Hectare, 1997**

| Homestead    | Garden size (sq. m) | Yield in kgs | Kgs per hectare |
|--------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Hloniphile   | 13,982              | 3,813.9      | 2,727           |
| Gadalala     | 20,225              | 2,560.9      | 1,266           |
| Nothusile    | 6,091               | 1,374.9      | 2,257           |
| Nqakaba      | 5,300               | 2,402.2      | 4,532           |
| Masilingane  | 7,964               | 3,730.8      | 4,683           |
| Ntanyongo    | 5,458               | 1,735.9      | 3,180           |
| Nofikile     | 8,891               | 1,194.2      | 1,343           |
| Mamnune      | 2,852               | 393.5        | 1,379           |
| Mnyuntsu     | 1,346               | 632.4        | 4,698           |
| Nontwaba     | 4,212               | 744.2        | 1,767           |
| Nowinile     | 5,614               | 1,053.4      | 1,875           |
| Nokabodi     | 3,544               | 437          | 1,248           |
| Sonkebese    | 3,912               | 818.6        | 2,092           |
| Gulakulinywa | 6,743               | 510.7        | 757             |
| Mpambane     | 4,358               | 330.6        | 758             |
| Mpinga       | 3,742               | 881.1        | 2,354           |

It is worth pointing out that the two households with the lowest yields, when first asked about how much they had harvested, said 'nothing'.

— If one adds green maize to the average yield of 1,413.39 kg of maize per homestead on the basis of 45 days consumption at 1 kg per day, the figure rises to 1,458.39 kg (3,215 lbs, 1.435 tons, 1.458 tonnes, or 18.2 bags of 80 kg). The equivalent yield per hectare is similarly raised to 2,352.25 kg (approx. 29 bags). The figure for green maize consumption is a very conservative one. Hunter (1936: 84) states that the consumption of green food from the fields lasted for 'nearly four months' before the harvest of dried maize. According to Lipton (1977), if one quarter of the maize yield is consumed in this way (Lipton uses a figure of one third), then the harvest of homesteads which produce enough maize for the year represents three-quarters of the total crop. For homesteads which do not produce enough maize for the year, the green maize eaten directly from the land represents *more* than one quarter of the total crop.

Even the conservative average figure of 2,352.25 kg of maize per hectare is far higher than any previous estimates of maize yields in the Transkei. For example, a survey by ARDRI (Fort Hare's Agricultural and Rural Development Research Institute) of the area served by the Lima Community Development Association (basically the coastal half of Xorha (Elliotdale) district) immediately adjacent to Willowvale, found that in 1987-88, only 4 per cent of households harvested more than 8 bags of maize. This was considered a bad year since heavy rains had adversely affected the crop. Fifty-two per cent harvested 'nothing', 25 per cent got from 1 to 3 bags, and 18 per cent from 4 to 8 bags. The average yield per hectare was 112 kg, and the long-term average was 315 kg per hectare. The survey concluded that 'in an average year the Lima area as a whole produces 30 per cent of its subsistence grain requirements'. These low yields were obtained, they reported, despite a relatively high use of fertiliser, manure, cultivators and planters. The ARDRI figures are close to those used by the Tomlinson Commission for rural black agriculture as a whole, namely 2.5 bags (500 lbs) per morgen (about 280 kg per hectare), which they compared unfavourably with the yield from commercial (white) agriculture of nearly 7 bags per morgen in 1959-60 (Lipton 1977). Lipton points out that yields among black subsistence farmers in the 1950s in Lesotho were between 7 and 8 bags per morgen, and between 5 and 9.5 bags per morgen in Swaziland.

Another survey in 10 areas drawn from three districts in Transkei (Umtata, Tsolo and Kentani) produced very similar figures to the ARDRI survey. It found that the average yield was 100 kg per acre (247 kg per hectare) and that in good years 30 per cent of households grew enough food to feed themselves (Leeuwenberg 1977). Similar yields are provided by other commentators (e.g. Westcott 1977, Moll 1984, Phillips-Howard 1995).

Other figures are slightly higher. Hunter (1936: 94) records that yields of 5.5 bags per acre (13.75 bags per hectare) were obtained from demonstration fields in Pondoland in 1929-30, with ordinary people harvesting only about 2 bags per acre (5 bags per hectare) from fields which were, on average, 7,903 square yards (approx. 67 hectares) in extent. She also

observed one well-ploughed and well-weeded (but unfertilised) field belonging to a local minister of religion which yielded 10 bags to the acre (1936: 87). Assuming that these were 200 lb bags, this equates to approximately 2,240 kg per hectare for the minister, 1,250 kg per hectare for the demonstration fields, and 455 kg per hectare for ordinary people. A somewhat higher figure is provided by Mpambani (1994: 13) where Transkei maize yields are estimated at 624 kg per hectare (i.e. 7 to 8 bags of 80 kg each).

In stark contrast to these sorts of findings are figures obtained by economist Norman Bromberger in a study of a peri-urban area of KwaZulu-Natal. Here, with careful measurement and sampling of maize plants prior to harvest, Bromberger found mean maize yields from small gardens to be 4,200 kg per hectare (University of Natal 1984; Bromberger 1998 personal communication). This was, admittedly, an area fairly well endowed with rainfall of 1,000 mm per annum (similar to Shixini's rainfall figure) and where people were relatively well off and able to afford regular inputs such as commercial seed and fertiliser. No doubt the small size of the cultivated areas (gardens were from 0.1 ha. to 0.3 ha. in size) also contributed to the high yields. The method used was to count cobs on the stalk in sample strips, then to collect cobs which had survived through to harvest stage and weigh the grain. The average mass of grain from the cobs was applied to the number of cobs counted earlier and then extrapolated. A difficulty with this method in Shixini would be that people select the smaller, diseased cobs during the green maize stage and leave the better ones to reach full maturity, so one could not assume that all cobs counted early on would be similar in size at maturity.

More recent findings based on PRA methods in KwaZulu-Natal have estimated that food grown at home accounts for between 25 per cent and 45 per cent of rural household food consumption. In addition to this, however, between 25 per cent and 60 per cent of household food was obtained from other households in exchange for labour (Chopra and Ross 1995, Murphy 1995, cited in May 1996). This differs markedly from the finding from the large SALDRU survey conducted in 1993 which estimated agricultural production in rural households in Natal at only 6.8 per cent of total household income (including maize, milk, eggs and livestock products). Finally, a study by Leibbrandt (1989) in former Ciskei found that the contribution of agriculture to total household income, in kind and in cash, was nearly 32 per cent.

Clearly, survey methods consistently underestimate the role of agriculture in former homeland areas. Yields such as 300 kg per hectare in an average year are, as Lipton (1977) pointed out, simply too low to believe given comparative statistics from other parts of Africa and Southern Africa. Equally clearly, studies based on careful though rough measurements of yields (rather than on a questionnaire) show that there is a lot more maize being produced in places like coastal Transkei and rural KwaZulu-Natal than is conventionally accepted. Those who have pondered the results of questionnaire surveys in this respect have sometimes asked why rural people bother to cultivate at all, speculating that perhaps it is to maintain

claims to land (which of course begs another, similar question). The answer is evidently that they continue to cultivate because they find it worthwhile - a rational choice made on economic grounds.

It is possible to come to the conclusion then, that agriculture in the Transkei is not, as almost all commentators assume, 'hopelessly unproductive', and that many Transkei farmers in places like Shixini are skilled enough to produce maize yields comparable with dryland commercial farmers in South Africa's 'maize triangle'. What is remarkable is that they are able to achieve this without chemical fertilisers, insecticides and commercial seed, and despite a complete absence of state support and the severe constraints imposed by shortages of labour and implements. In poorer land in the Western Transvaal farmers get around 2,000 kg per hectare (Westcott 1977). In the highly-mechanised maize production schemes established in former Transkei by TRACOR in the 1980s, yields were around 20 bags (1,600 kg) per hectare, with up to 40 bags (3,200 kg) per hectare in 'exceptional' years (Cloete 1985).

In asking how generalised these findings are, it is necessary to point out that Shixini is probably typical of the coastal part of Willowvale district, and of the Transkei coastal belt as a whole. Most of this area has not been subject to agricultural betterment, enjoys good rainfall and retains a degree of social and political stability. Some of the figures from KwaZulu-Natal show that a reasonable standard of agricultural production is probably typical of many parts of that region also.

The large variations in yields per hectare in Shixini are understandable. Inputs (especially labour) vary considerably across households, and when all other things are equal, maize yields depend heavily on the amount of labour devoted to weeding. All other things are not equal, of course. Heron has shown how important it is to plough and plant at the right time in Shixini, and how few days there are available to do so given the vagaries of weather conditions and shortages of oxen, ploughs and labour (Heron 1990, Heron and Cloete 1991). Then there are differences in the type and amount of fertiliser and seed used, the depth at which ploughing occurs, the fertility of different types of garden soil, etc. And in the final analysis, although farmers try to control as many of these variables as possible, there is an element of unexplained luck, good or bad. Farmers simply cannot explain why a normally productive garden suddenly produces very little maize, or why maize seeds hardly germinate one year and another planting is necessary, or why a garden planted in early February (which I once witnessed), instead of at the optimum time in November, produces a bumper harvest.

The differences in yields between the 16 households shown in Table 17 are also linked to differences such as household size and differences in livestock holdings. Heron (1990) has demonstrated that livestock ownership correlates with maize yields, and it should be obvious that smaller households with little labour are likely to farm smaller areas less efficiently than others. They do not correlate with the gender of the household head - seven of the sixteen households listed have female heads, and these are by no means the seven with the lowest yields or the smallest gardens.

### *Agricultural Labour*

We have noted the relative stability of the population in Shixini, the lack of significant population growth (due primarily to permanent emigration to urban areas), the availability of land, the non-implementation of betterment, and continuity in administrative and political structures. We have also noted the important role of cash incomes through migrant remittances and social pensions. All of these factors combine to make agriculture possible in Shixini. One of the major ways in which this combination is manifested is through co-operative labour.

One of the most striking features of life in Shixini is the dense network of relationships based on both neighbourhood and kinship and which involves collaboration and interaction in a variety of agricultural activities. It is largely due to this that production is possible. Kin and neighbours put their animals together to facilitate herding arrangements; they form ploughing companies to overcome shortages of labour, implements and oxen; they organise work parties for a wide variety of purposes; and they assist each other in a variety of small but significant ways on a day-to-day basis. Although the questionnaire used in this study failed to elicit the range and frequency of ways in which neighbours assist each other on a daily basis, it is significant that only two respondents in the sample could not think of some form of assistance they had received from neighbours in the recent past.

The more formal forms of labour co-operation - ploughing companies, work parties, etc. have been described elsewhere (Heron 1990, Heron and Cloete 1991, McAllister 1979). Here I concentrate on one previously undocumented aspect, namely the everyday co-operative and other arrangements people make in order to ensure that their gardens are hoed to clear the weeds.

Most Shixini households would be unable to cultivate their gardens without relying to some degree on the labour inputs of members of other households. The corollary of this is that, to many households, providing labour for others is an important (though always partial) means of securing subsistence. Prior to undertaking the fieldwork for this project I was aware that communal work groups for hoeing and other purposes were to be found in Shixini, and that these were sponsored primarily by larger, wealthier households, through which the labour of others was secured in return for sociability, food and drink. Here the emphasis is on much less spectacular, and sometimes less visible but nevertheless vitally important forms of labour collaboration.

The most widespread of these lies in hoeing. In the growing season, individual and small groups of people can frequently be observed hoeing in gardens to remove the weeds. Passing by the homestead of Kezana one day in February 1998, we observed three women hoeing in the smaller garden (the *mvelidinga*). We stopped and asked to speak to *umama wekhaya* (the 'mother of the home'). One of the women came over - it was Noncedile - and after the preliminary greetings and enquiries we asked her who the women helping her were. She replied that one was the wife of Kose, a neighbour and junior agnate of Kezana, her late

husband, and she was described as *umolokazan' am* ('my [classificatory] daughter-in-law'). The other was also described from the male viewpoint, as the daughter-in-law of Dhyubeni, not a close relative, from another part of the sub-ward. But although Noncedile explained who the women were in terms of a kinship idiom, she then also added, almost as an afterthought, that they were 'working for meat'. Asked to explain further, she told us that she had killed two pigs, referring to them as *iihagu zokuhlakula* ('pigs for hoeing'). Those who accepted meat from these pigs had done so on the understanding that they would 'pay' for it with their labour at hoeing time. It emerged that there were well-established conventions relating to the amount of meat taken to the number of days of labour payment (a 'day' here refers to the period between about 6 am and midday). A joint (back- or fore-leg) required three days' work; a side, two days' labour. However, this also varied according to the size of the pig. In this case, six people had accepted meat and had promised to hoe in return, and the two in the field with Noncedile at the time were the last to fulfil their obligations.

After asking a few more questions, we moved on. In the next garden we saw there was only one woman hoeing - not Nowayinesi, the female head of the homestead, but Nolibele, who lived some distance away - and she too was there because she had accepted pig-meat from Nowayinesi. Four others had already paid their dues in this garden, and one man who took a side of the pig had chosen to pay for it in cash, a sum of R25. So we were able to start making calculations about the cash value of a day's hoeing.

Over the rest of the research period it was found that there are a variety of ways in which people are induced, or offer, to hoe for others outside of the context of the larger and well-known work parties. Some of these, as already indicated, involve working for a payment in kind. Apart from pig-meat (worth R12.50 for one day's work), other commodities are commonly used, including maize (2 *amanxithi* - a seven-litre beaker used for beer drinking - or 4 kgs, for a day's work; cash value of R12.80), sugar (4 small tinfuls or 5 kgs per day; cash value R17.35), paraffin (5 bottles per day; cash value R9), tobacco (four *amanxithi* lidfuls per day - approx. 700 grams; cash value R10) and dried beans (1 small tinful - approx. 1 kg; cash value R12).

It is difficult to determine the logic of this reward system. The cash wage for a day's hoeing is R5, which is well below the cash value of the commodities. From the purely economic point of view one would expect those who want labour to offer cash, with those offering labour to demand sugar. However, women claim that out of these various rewards, it is cash and paraffin which work best in securing workers. What this suggests is a premium on hard cash, since of the various commodities used, it is only paraffin and sugar which can not be produced within homesteads, and of these two items, one can possibly do without sugar but not without paraffin if this is the primary source of household energy. People say that it is 'too expensive' to hire workers for R5 per day, and that they provide maize, beans, or other commodities instead. On the other hand, many households have to purchase maize and beans since the quantities they grow in their gardens are usually insufficient.

Payment in cash or kind for hoeing is by no means a new thing in Shixini. All the people we asked about this were able to cite earlier cash rates for a day's labour (various informants mentioned rates of nine pence per day, one shilling a day, two shillings and sixpence a day, etc.). Nqakaba, who is about 65 years old, said that killing a pig for hoeing had been common when he was a boy, and that the use of commodities such as paraffin and sugar was a long-established custom. What was new, he said, was giving maize for hoeing because in the old days everybody had maize. This was confirmed by a younger woman of about 35 years of age. But two elderly women said that hoeing for maize had been practised when they were girls, and that they used the maize to brew beer for sale, using the proceeds to buy things such as scarves for themselves. At the time they had maize in their homes, they said, but did not feel free to use it in this manner, preferring to work for their own.

#### *Work Party or Payment?*

Fourteen of the forty-six homesteads in the sample reported hosting a work party in the recent past for a variety of different tasks, and twenty-one of the respondents said that homestead members had attended the work parties of others during this period. In discussions with people, however, opinions varied on whether paying people to hoe was a more efficient way of getting the work done than organising a work party (*ikongresi* or *idwandwa*). For a work party, the host has to brew beer and provide food for those who come to work, and this is costly, especially in terms of labour. Eight *amanxithi* of beer have to be made for *ikongresi*, and a caskful for an *idwandwa*. In addition, there is no certainty over who will come along and who will not, since the invitation is a general one to the people of the local area. Astute householders, however, when holding a work party, utilise their kinship and other connections to try and ensure a good turnout of the 'right' people. Some people complain that those who attend work parties do so primarily for the beer and do not work hard enough, but this is not a common complaint. Nowayinesi had organised *ikongresi* for the hoeing of her garden some time before she killed a 'pig for hoeing' for her smaller garden. She felt that the *ikongresi* had not worked quite as well because the task had not been completed by the workers.

Another older woman considered herself to be too old to brew and therefore, she said, if she did not have money to hire labour she had to get people to help 'by means of some plan' (*ngamacebo*) such as killing a pig. But she added that 'I used to brew when I was strong enough' and that she thought *ikongresi* was a better way to get the work done because of the large number of people who would attend. Making 'plans' enabled her to get only a few people at a time, and the work thus took longer to be completed. Nobongile agreed that *ikongresi* was a better way of getting the work done, saying that those who participated worked longer hours than hired labour, and no individual could demand a particular amount of the reward. She herself often participated in *ikongresi* even though as a Zionist church member she did not drink beer: 'You do it because of *ukuncedisana* [mutual help], even if

you do not drink'. She did receive tea and something to eat at these events, but said that she 'did not go for the food, only to help'. Santikana held an *ikongresi* which was attended by 12 people and for which he provided a full cask of beer as well as a bottle of brandy. The event was successful in that the entire garden was hoed and Santikana was pleased with the way the work was done. It was because of this that the unusual step of providing brandy had been taken, as an extra reward given voluntarily.

### *Reciprocity*

Workers who come to hoe for payment are said to be 'hired' (*qeshiwe*), and even beer for *ikongresi* is spoken of as 'payment' (*intlawulo*). Yet there is an expectation of reciprocity as well. Taking meat or another commodity in return for labour means that the worker has given up the opportunity of working for herself in order to help someone else. A reward is given but there is also an obligation to reciprocate with labour, which will be rewarded in turn with some form of payment. Some people articulate this quite clearly, although others are either unable to or do not see things in the same way. The person who requires labour kills a pig and sends word to people whom she feels are likely to help her with hoeing in return for meat. Many of these are close neighbours, including kin, and there is an expectation that their help, once requested, will be given. The basis of the relationship is clearly more than simply economic, but the economic element is necessary for the transaction. Thus long-term reciprocity on the basis of neighbourhood, kinship or friendship *coexists* with short-term reciprocity - the exchange of labour for goods or money.

Nowinile recognised this quite clearly. She had decided to provide 'paraffin for hoeing' and she sent word asking people to come and hoe. The status of the work as response to a request for help is encapsulated in the term Nowinile used to describe the event, *isicelo* (from *ukucela*, 'to ask for'). Those who responded were all close neighbours, and some were also close kin. We asked if any of those requested had said they would not come, and how she might feel about this. She replied that all those she had asked to come had done so, and that she would have been very disappointed if anyone had refused. On further inquiry, it emerged that Nowinile had in the recent past hoed for some of those who had responded to her *isicelo*. Nowinile pointed out then that this was *ukuncedana* (mutual help) - 'the person I hoed for will be expected to hoe for me, but this does not mean that she should be asked to hoe without reward!'

Under certain circumstances, however, the emphasis seems to be on the short-term exchange. Nonzame, one of the women who helped with hoeing in Gulakulinywa's garden, did so largely because she had met Nomaweale in a taxi en route from Willowvale town. Nomaweale had been to purchase maize, and the next day Nonzame, who lives a good distance away in another sub-ward, came to ask if she could have some maize in exchange for hoeing. Nomaweale said that the others who came to work for maize, who included neighbours and some local kin, had also come to ask for maize and offered to work in return.

Kinship and good neighbourliness had nothing to do with the exchange, she felt, they came to work because they had been given maize.

In another case, three young women from a neighbouring sub-ward, Jotelo, came to Folokhwe sub-ward and went from homestead to homestead asking for hoeing work in exchange for paraffin. One of the women who took up their offer spoke of their work as *isintu* (a concept similar to *ubuntu*, 'human kindness') but did not feel that she would be obliged to help them in future due to the fact that it was they who had come and offered their labour in exchange for a payment. Clearly, not all cases of hoeing assistance follow the same pattern or involve the same kinds of rights and obligations.

But even in the above case the perception that there was an element of *isintu* in this labour was not incorrect. This was brought home to us very forcibly when we noticed the mother of the richest man in Folokhwe hoeing in the garden of someone who was neither a relative nor a close neighbour. We asked the female homestead head why this person was hoeing in her garden. 'For tobacco' was the response. She had come to ask if she could hoe in exchange for tobacco. In economic terms it made little sense - not only was her son immensely wealthy by local standards, but she herself was a diviner and income earner in her own right with ample ability to pay cash for the tobacco she wanted. On further enquiry it emerged that the homestead had, at an earlier point, also enjoyed the labour of four other women who had hoed, this time for paraffin. All four of these women were close neighbours and kin, and all four came from homesteads which were not by any means poor - one was from the second wealthiest homestead in the area. None of these people were in a position of having to work because they needed to do so in order to obtain paraffin. They worked because they were asked to do so and, in the case of the one wanting tobacco, because labouring for others and the associated notion of reciprocity are socially approved and valued.

In some cases close kin and neighbours assist each other with hoeing without any payment changing hands. A mother may ask her daughter from a nearby sub-ward to come and provide assistance in the garden; the women of neighbouring homesteads headed by close male agnates may assist each other on a reciprocal basis without giving or expecting any material reward. Relationships between homesteads of a patron-client type (which may coincide with agnatic links) may similarly involve labour service on the part of the poorer 'client' in recognition of the diverse and frequent material and political assistance received from the 'patron'. In some cases close neighbours may be asked to help with a hoeing task and be told that *mangumba* ('beer' brewed overnight from shop-bought ingredients) or *marewu* (a nutritious, fermented but non-alcoholic drink made from maize meal) will be available afterwards. It is not payment but is provided 'so that they do not get hungry, since they have come to help'. For example, when Ntanyongo needed help in removing some very large weeds from his garden, he called on three neighbouring women to assist and brewed *mangumba*. In the event, rain made it impossible to do the work but the *mangumba* was

nevertheless consumed. The women returned a few days later, after it had stopped raining, to complete the job. This time Ntanyongo had prepared *isichenene*, a small quantity of home-brewed maize beer. This meant that neighbouring men could be (and morally, had to be) invited to partake of it - one beaker being set aside for them. There were two beakers for the women who were also fed with *marewu* and with samp and beans.

A more formal way of organising reciprocal labour exists, and it helps to throw some of the more general principles into relief. In Folokhwe in February 1998 there was at least one formal hoeing group, referred to as an *umbutho*. It came into being in 1996 when a group of eight adult women decided to hoe and perform other work for each other on a reciprocal basis. Hoeing and other tasks (such as making bricks, cutting thatching grass, collecting firewood) are performed on the basis of reciprocity rather than in return for some commodity, although the person requesting the others to work must provide tea and bread during the course of the morning, and food (samp, *marhewu*) for the workers once the job has been completed. Reciprocity is generalised within the group; that is, hoeing may be reciprocated with another form of work if a member is unable to come and hoe on the appointed day. The existence of the group does not preclude a household from making other arrangements to do any particular task, including hoeing, nor does it prevent individual members of the group from entering into other kinds of labour arrangements with other households or with each other.

An individual may use a variety of strategies to ensure that his/her garden is adequately hoed. For example, in the 1996/1997 season, the hoeing in Masilingane's large garden was done partly by the two adult women of the homestead - his wife and his paternal aunt, Nomfuxuse, partly by women who had asked for seed and who had agreed to hoe in return, partly through hiring labour at a cash wage of R5 per day, and partly through killing a 'pig for hoeing'. Masilingane's wife is a member of the *umbutho* mentioned above, and this group was also responsible for some of the hoeing done. In addition, Masilingane requested help from an *umtshana*, a distant cognatic kinswoman who lives nearby. She provided her labour free of charge because, as Masilingane said, 'she always gets maize from me when she needs it, so she is not paid for hoeing'. He acknowledged that the basis of this was *ukuncedisana*, 'helping each other', but when questioned about those to whom he had paid cash he said that it was the payment that was important not *ukuncedisana*. 'They may need money', he said, 'and their own maize may be very immature and not yet in need of hoeing.' On reflection, however, he added that even with a cash payment for hoeing there was an expectation of reciprocity: 'There is *isintu* involved; if people notice that you do not help others they will not help you, they will leave you alone with your paraffin or your maize [i.e. being offered for hoeing]'. As an example he cited the case of an elderly woman who lived nearby, who never attended other people's ritual events and never ate meat at any homestead other than her own. When she had recently held a small ritual for her grandson at which a goat was killed, the women who attended refused to eat any of the meat placed before them

as an indication of their disapproval of the old woman's behaviour.

Masilingane's garden is, however, exceptionally large, and he takes a great deal of care to ensure that he has good yields by removing the weeds at least twice during the growing season. Many homesteads with smaller gardens and enough labour do not have to engage any assistance with hoeing, especially if they are happy to remove weeds only once and accept the lower yield that this brings.

### **Local Income-Generating Opportunities**

Although the emphasis in this report has been on agricultural activities, no Shixini homestead can survive without some form of cash income, and very few are able to secure access to cash by selling agricultural produce. Of the total of 194 homesteads in the three sub-wards, 155 reported access to some cash income, usually in the form of migrant labour earnings or social and disability pensions. The remaining 39 said that they had no access to cash whatsoever, but presumably at least some of these were able to acquire small amounts of money from time to time in various ways. The importance of cash income relative to income in kind is not always easy to gauge. Pensioners told us that they were able to meet many of their needs through the cash they received but that they would have difficulty in managing without their garden produce. A would-be migrant worker said that he needed a job badly as he was presently surviving 'on maize alone'. Access to cash is vital: agricultural produce is important but the land can provide, at best, all of a household's vegetable and grain requirements and, at worst, something of a fallback in hard times. Shixini people buy a range of manufactured food products (sugar, tea, coffee, flour, tinned foods, etc.) as well as many other manufactured goods such as clothes, footwear, cooking utensils, agricultural implements, etc. They need money to pay for transport, medical and school expenses; they pay taxes and local levies and so on.

Opportunities for local employment in any formal sense are extremely limited. Outside of the general stores, the schools and the hotel at the mouth of the Qorha River where a few jobs exist, there are occasional jobs at the plantation or with the road gang. Campers and fishermen from other areas provide a few temporary jobs in the holiday season. Apart from local teachers, who are almost exclusively from outside the area, we encountered one man who was employed as a night-watchman at the hotel, and one who was a policeman in Willowvale town. Both visited their homes at weekends. Self-employment is usually part-time and included one owner of a panel-van which he used as a taxi, and one man who owned a tractor and who hired out his services at ploughing time. A handful of others worked as builders of huts or livestock byres, and there were three or four herbalists and diviners (none of whom made a regular living out of their calling).

There are many ways of obtaining cash in Shixini, but very few of obtaining a cash income which is sufficient for a household's subsistence needs. In other words, apart from migrant remittances, most cash incomes are irregular and small. One of the most common

methods is the purchase and resale of alcoholic beverages, or the brewing and sale of *mangumba*, but this is largely used only as a way of making a few rands in an emergency. The costs are high because one has to travel to town to buy the liquor from the hotel's liquor outlet, and most people dislike the idea of their home being seen as a shebeen. Only two homesteads (one in Folokhwe and one in Nompha) sell liquor on a regular basis. Maize beer may also be made for sale, again on an irregular basis. But the only socially acceptable way in which it may be sold is through the convention of a beer drink known as *imbarha*, at which a good portion of the beer must be given out free of charge. *Imbarha* is regarded as a means of obtaining cash in an emergency, and not as something that should be done on a regular basis. Nevertheless, there are one or two female-headed households which seem to brew *imbarha* more frequently than others, but this frequency is too low (about twice a year) and the amounts made too small (around R100-R150 each time) to be regarded as a regular means of obtaining a cash income.

Seven homesteads in our sample claimed to run small informal shops (*iziroxo*), an additional two said that they received an income in this way fairly regularly, with another two saying that they 'occasionally' sold manufactured goods. But the range of commodities involved was very limited. For example, Nobongile sold only potatoes and cabbages (purchased in Willowvale town) as well as paraffin. Only two of these households sold more than three or four commodities, and even here the range was limited to items such as paraffin, long-life milk, soap, sugar, beans, candles, etc. Two women make occasional trips to cities such as Durban where they purchase second-hand clothing for resale back in Shixini. Neither makes a full-time living out of this occupation, however.

Other common ways of earning an occasional cash income included making bricks, cutting thatching grass, selling pig-meat or poultry, and hoeing. Three women in the sample made clothes for sale, one made and sold baskets (*iingobozi*) and sleeping mats (*amakukho*), one collected and sold the grass (*imizi*) required by those who made mats and baskets, and one collected and sold firewood.

The coastline provides some people with occasional cash as well as providing valuable protein from shellfish at spring tides. Some women collect and sell oysters to the hotel at the mouth of the Qorha River. This involves a walk to the oyster beds approximately 2 km up the beach in a north-easterly direction from the Shixini River, a few hours spent collecting oysters, then a walk to the hotel, some 8 km from the Shixini in a south-westerly direction, where the oysters are sold to the hotel keeper for R2.50 per dozen before walking home. This round trip takes at least 5 hours, and each woman commonly sells three or four dozen oysters for a total income of R7.50 or R10. Since this can only take place at the time of low spring tides and not many women have the skills to find the oysters, it is not a very common means of obtaining cash. Another source of income from the sea is a certain species of seaweed which gets washed up in large quantities and which is collected by women for sale to a merchant from East London who makes irregular trips to the area for this purpose.

Fishing with rod and line is the preserve of many boys and a handful of adult men. The skill, time and equipment required to fish successfully make it difficult to make money out of this occupation, though the local hotel will purchase freshly caught fish at approximately R5 per kg. On rare occasions an angler may strike it lucky and land a large fish of some 5 to 8 kg, making the long walk to the hotel worthwhile. More often than not, however, anglers return home empty-handed or with only a small fish or two for the pot.

It seems clear that most of these activities are strategies to obtain small amounts of urgently needed money rather than a means of earning a regular livelihood.

Hut building provides for a range of more substantial income-earning opportunities. For the common mud-brick and thatch huts, a recognised builder is hired to construct the foundation and the walls for payment of around R200. A specialist thatcher is hired for the roof for slightly more than this, around R300. The conical roof frame is costed separately, and R60 is needed to pay someone (often a third person) to construct and fit it. This includes both the main supporting poles and the thinner branches (*iilayinki*) which support the thatch. Young girls from the neighbourhood are usually hired to make the mud bricks, and they are paid R12 for every 100 bricks. The grass needed for thatching may be purchased from one or more women or acquired through organising a work party of women to cut it. An elderly woman said that she sometimes made R60 a week by cutting and selling thatching grass (three bundles per day at R4 each). When Nothusile organised the thatching of her son's hut in July 1997, she held two work parties for cutting grass. For the first she provided *mangumba* (4 beakers) as well as five bottles of Castle Stout for the four women who came to help her. On the second occasion a similar amount of *mangumba* and stout was provided for the three who came to assist. Then there was the fitting of the door and window, plastering the walls with mud, and the construction of the floor and the drainage ditches. Of course, members of the homestead may do many of these tasks themselves, hiring specialists only for the building and thatching.

### ***Sale of Agricultural Produce***

Few people have enough livestock to sell animals on a regular basis but this is a source of money in emergencies even if one has only a few head. Prices are high (e.g. R200 for a ewe; R2,000 for a young cow or bull) and buyers outnumber sellers. In good years, people with surplus maize sell some of their harvest to others. Sometimes a person who has reaped well makes it known publicly that he has maize for sale, and the idea of 'a person who sells maize' is linked to this, as a public and known event. More often than not sales are relatively private and unpublicised. As with livestock sales, this is linked to the problem of witchcraft and the fear that envious people may, wittingly or unwittingly, harm those who are wealthy. Masilingane, who sometimes has surplus maize, told us that he occasionally sold a bag or two to someone who came to ask to buy maize. His price was considerably lower than the price of maize bought at the shop, and he never sold less than a bag at a time. If smaller

amounts were required he provided the maize as a gift, sometimes (as we have seen) in exchange for labour at a later date. It would appear that transactions involving maize are therefore not frequently ones which involve cash, with maize given and reciprocated in the form of labour or in other ways.

Some also sell other garden produce such as cabbages, sweet potatoes, green maize on the cob, spinach, and the like. One Saturday morning we observed Nowinile, a neighbour and pensioner who spent many of her younger years in East London, set up a small table outside her homestead on which were placed green maize and sweet potatoes for sale in the manner of a city hawker. An active and skilful farmer, Nowinile boasts a productive *mvelidinga* from which she regularly sells quantities of vegetables on request. Sheep owners are able to sell wool to a merchant who visits the area from time to time. A large bag of wool fetches around R100. Masilingane, who owns some 40 sheep, had three bags of wool in his hut in mid-1998.

Certain income-generating tasks are indirectly related to agriculture. Three or four younger men in the three sub-wards studied are known to be skilled at the task of constructing livestock byres and garden fences. Circular byres are made by planting a number of stout poles and then interweaving thinner, longer branches (*amahlahla*) horizontally. When Nothusile hired one of these men to construct a cattle byre for her in mid-1998, she supplied the poles (which she bought from the plantation in the centre of Shixini) as well as the *amahlahla*. The labour costs for the construction of the byre were thus kept down to R100. The person she hired told us that if he had been required to supply the poles he would have charged a total of R200, and another R100 for the *amahlahla*. Another man who sold poles for byres said that he sold them in R75 lots.

### **Migrant Labour and Links with Urban Areas**

Migrant remittances are by far the most common way of obtaining sizeable sums of money, with sixteen of the 46 homesteads surveyed saying that they received regular remittances. However, twenty-nine of the homesteads surveyed said that the migrant workers from the homestead did not send remittances regularly. It is possible that they preferred to bring a lump sum when they returned for visits or holidays.

As indicated in the tables below, most households surveyed had members who were absent at the time (Table 18), and the most common form of absentee and thus also of contact with urban areas is through migrant labour (Table 19).

**Table 18: Number of Homestead Members Away**

|              | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nil          | 3        | 7      | 5           | 15    |
| One          | 5        | 7      | 3           | 15    |
| Two          | 1        | 4      | 1           | 6     |
| Three        | 5        | 1      | 1           | 7     |
| Four or more | 2        | 1      | 0           | 3     |
| Total        | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 19: Location of Absent Homestead Members**

|                          | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| At work (mine or city)   | 16       | 14     | 7           | 37    |
| With spouse at work      | 3        | 3      | 0           | 6     |
| With parents at work     | 5        | 0      | 0           | 5     |
| Seeking work in the city | 4        | 2      | 0           | 6     |
| In city for medical care | 2        | 0      | 0           | 2     |
| At school elsewhere      | 3        | 1      | 1           | 5     |
| In jail                  | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| Total                    | 34       | 20     | 8           | 62    |

One has to qualify the use of the word 'city' here because local people use the names of South African cities quite loosely. Someone who is said to be 'in Cape Town' (*Ekapa*) might, in fact, be working in a small town like Robertson in the Cape, in the fishing industry in Saldana bay, or on a farm near Stellenbosch.

Ten of the thirty-seven migrant workers were new migrants, having recently gone out to work for the first or perhaps the second time. Of these, five were in 'Cape Town' and five in a variety of other centres, including Umtata and Port Elizabeth, but none in East London. In fact, the lack of association with East London, as the nearest large employment centre, was striking. Out of the total of 194 homesteads, only three reported some sort of link with East London in the sense of having a migrant worker located there or of members visiting it frequently.

Twenty of the interviewees said that there were members of the homestead who were still looking for employment as migrants. Some of these had lost their jobs in the recent past (17 homesteads reported members who had lost jobs due to retrenchment, dismissal, ill health or old age) but some were new entrants to the labour market. As indicated in Table 20,

most migrant workers maintained regular contact with their homes.

**Table 20: Frequency of Home Visits by Absentees**

|                           | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|---------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Once a year               | 20       | 12     | 7           | 39    |
| Twice a year              | 2        | 2      | 0           | 4     |
| More than twice a year    | 1        | 1      | 1           | 3     |
| 'Seldom'                  | 3        | 2      | 0           | 5     |
| 'Never'                   | 1        | 4      | 0           | 5     |
| Absent for the first time | 6        | 0      | 0           | 6     |
| Total                     | 33       | 21     | 8           | 62    |

Apart from those absent at the time of interview, other members of the homestead also visited urban areas from time to time for a variety of reasons, staying for periods varying from a few days to five years, as indicated in the tables below. Almost every household had one or more members who paid one-day visits to local towns such as Willowvale and Idutywa from time to time, usually to buy groceries and other necessities, to seek medical attention, or to visit government offices.

**Table 21: Number of Other Homestead Members Visiting Urban Areas Occasionally**

|              | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|--------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Nobody       | 6        | 8      | 4           | 18    |
| One person   | 5        | 9      | 5           | 19    |
| Two people   | 4        | 3      | 1           | 8     |
| Three people | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| Total        | 16       | 20     | 10          | 46    |

**Table 22: Reasons for Visits to Town by Other Members of the Homestead**

|                   | Folokhwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|-------------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| Visiting kin      | 3        | 1      | 0           | 4     |
| Visiting children | 2        | 0      | 1           | 3     |
| Visiting spouse   | 6        | 2      | 3           | 11    |
| Medical reasons   | 2        | 1      | 1           | 4     |
| Seeking work      | 2        | 2      | 1           | 5     |
| Other             | 1        | 0      | 0           | 1     |
| n/a               | 5        | 8      | 5           | 18    |
| Total             | 21       | 14     | 11          | 46    |

**Table 23: Length of Stay in Town by Other Members of Household**

|                 | Folokjwe | Nompha | Ndlelibanzi | Total |
|-----------------|----------|--------|-------------|-------|
| A few days      | 1        | 1      | 0           | 2     |
| Approx. 2 weeks | 2        | 1      | 1           | 4     |
| 1 or 2 months   | 5        | 1      | 2           | 8     |
| 5 to 7 months   | 3        | 2      | 2           | 7     |
| 1 to 5 years    | 5        | 1      | 1           | 7     |
| Total           | 21       | 14     | 11          | 46    |

There are some households with strong links with East London, the nearest large city, but not many. Nokavala, who lives in Folokhwe, has four daughters living and working in East London. One works as a shop assistant, another runs an informal business (*isiroxo*) from home, while the other two do not have regular jobs. They all live in a shack near Gompo in an area called *Endlovu*. They send money to their mother every month, and write to her regularly, visiting home twice a year. Nokavala visits them in East London regularly - maybe twice a year - especially if she needs to consult medical practitioners. She takes foodstuffs to them (e.g. maize) and in turn purchases things in East London which she takes home. In the past, she has made brooms for sale in East London and wants to continue doing so. She also would like to make small sleeping mats for sale there, the kind which 'white people like to put on the floor next to their beds'.

## **Conclusion: Agrarian Life and Xhosa Identity**

There are important policy implications in the findings of this study and of the project as a whole. In the current context of transformation and development in South Africa these results, together with those from Mooiplaas and Melani, are another reminder that rural areas are not homogenous. In particular, the Shixini case, together with some of the comparative material outlined in this report, points to a need to question the conventional perception of rural Transkei agriculture as being inefficient and in decline. As Merle Lipton (1977) pointed out many years ago, the notion that yields in the bantustans were very low derives primarily from the Tomlinson Commission, which also overestimated maize consumption. The large gap between yields and needs could conveniently be used to argue that it was necessary for black rural dwellers to engage in wage labour in the mining and industrial sector.

As far as occupational change and de-agrarianisation are concerned, the findings from Shixini show that there are rural areas in South Africa where agrarian change and income diversification are proceeding at only a slow pace. Migrant labour and most of the other means of earning cash have existed in Shixini for generations but there is little evidence of a rapid move to diverse means of earning a living, as witnessed in other parts of the continent (Bryceson 1996). What is new is the sizeable social pension (R445 per month) being paid to people, although pension payments as such are not particularly new. For a few, this has made it possible to eke out a rural living without spending money on or having to invest labour in agriculture; to a small number of others, it provides the capital for small-scale trading in liquor or groceries; but for many, it has provided a valuable supplement to homestead food production rather than a substitute for it, and a means of investing in agricultural activities. There is little scope for individual wage employment in the area or nearby. The main form of occupation in Shixini, and the main form of labour, is agrarian. Some of the agricultural work is monetised, but this is not new, and it is tied to an agrarian morality. Certainly, reliance on remittances and pensions means that we cannot characterise Shixini, or any other part of rural South Africa, as purely agrarian, but this has been true for well over a century. No doubt the wages paid to Shixini migrants have risen since South Africa's transformation process got under way around 1990, but since many migrants work in enterprises such as commercial agriculture and fishing, these wage increases have probably not been very high in real terms.

Agricultural development and land reform strategies should take rural heterogeneity into account, though exactly *how* they should do so needs careful thought and discussion. The findings of the project need to be placed within the wider context of agrarian reform in South Africa. Some of the debates here concern the viability of smallholder agriculture (Bernstein 1996, Lipton *et al.* 1996), its role in rural livelihoods, and the role of household food self-sufficiency in a money economy (Bernstein 1996). What is interesting and important here is the historical lack of support for agriculture in places like Shixini (Lipton 1977) and the dogged persistence of farmers in the face of this. Familiarity with many Shixini farmers and

my own involvement in a short-lived attempt to provide agricultural inputs in Shixini in the late 1980s (McAllister 1994) suggest that there is a large and widespread demand for inputs such as seed, fertiliser, fencing materials, and so on, in the area. The implications of this are that, given the right kind of support, household-based agriculture in Shixini and similar areas would grow and flourish. This could foster income diversification around increased agricultural activity provided that such activity became more commercialised.

Alternatively, development efforts which focus on non-farm activities could stimulate agriculture by making income available for investment in livestock and cultivation (Meagher 1998). These kinds of policy questions need, however, to be placed within the context of developments in other parts of Africa and the theoretical issues which have arisen around the relationship between farming and non-farm activities. It has been pointed out that there is not yet much clarity on this relationship (ibid. 6), merely a debate. Much of this debate revolves around the impact of structural adjustment policies on African agriculture, and the most appropriate development responses to this. In this respect the South African context is somewhat atypical. For example, South African rural areas have been severely neglected for a long time and rural agriculture has not had the kind of support that it has in other parts of Africa (Lipton 1977). In the current context of transformation and development, therefore, the South African state and parastatals are increasing, not cutting back on, the development of rural services. We do not yet know what sort of economic impact this will have, and how it will affect the relationship between farm and non-farm activities.

Rural heterogeneity also suggests that debates around development and transformation need to take careful account of contemporary lifestyles, preoccupations and identities, and it is with this issue that I want to conclude this report.

Perhaps the most important question arising from this study is how the people of Shixini manage to maintain a largely agrarian lifestyle in the face of the momentous changes which have affected South Africa over the past twenty to thirty years. The short answer is that is because they have managed to maintain a sense of community and a sense of identity as rural Xhosa. Integral to the first is the ethic of mutual assistance which makes agricultural production possible; integral to the second is an identification with the land and its products and the great value placed on both cultivation and livestock husbandry. A sense of community is maintained *despite and because of* the long-term and sometimes permanent emigration of many people.

On the one hand such emigration threatens the social fabric because it removes kin and neighbours from the area, and it decreases the amount of labour power and the variety of skills available. On the other hand, it relieves the pressure on land that would otherwise inevitably result and, in the case of migrant workers who remit, provides for much needed cash income locally. Since land is available, agriculture is possible and, for many, profitable - not in the sense of generating money, but in terms of providing a partial food supply. Those who remain at home depend on each other in this respect, and the sense of community and

social integrity is maintained through a dense network of relations which are based on neighbourhood and often reinforced by kinship, but which are manifested in economic practice. Not only does agriculture depend on community, therefore, but community also depends on agriculture. The two are in a mutually dependent and dialectical relationship with each other. It is because of the morality of neighbourhood that emigration does not threaten social solidarity. Kin may leave, but there will always be neighbours. But it seldom happens that people are isolated in kinship terms. It is individual members of kinship groups, rather than the groups themselves, who leave. Even if local kin are few, kinship as a principle of relationship stretches well beyond the local neighbourhood, although its manifestation in this case is usually through communal ritual rather than through communal work (McAllister 1997).

For Shixini people, their identity as Xhosa is closely bound up with their particular lifestyle, in which ties with the land and the various agrarian activities discussed in this report are predominant. Cultivating the land is not simply a technical means of producing crops, it is also a cultural activity, closely connected with neighbourhood, kinship and ancestors. Labouring in the fields or herding cattle are an opportunity for the expression of Xhosa values as well as economically important activities. It is through these activities, as a particular *habitus*, that identity is acted out. Identity is also asserted through contrasting rural agrarian activities with the urban 'other', i.e. life in town and the activities associated with wage-earning. Even for those in town, the rural link and the importance of agrarian activity is manifested clearly in ritual. Firstly, rituals are ideally performed at one's rural home (of birth) and not in the city. Secondly, ritual involves the products of agricultural labour - maize (for beer) and livestock (for sacrifice). And brewing beer and offering animals to the ancestors at one's homestead or father's homestead are simultaneously a claim on and a legitimization of certain rural rights and/or resources. It demonstrates that one 'belongs', not only to a specific kinship group but also to a specific territory of origin, and as such that one can legitimately claim the right to a homestead and arable land, as well as a right to the other natural resources of the area.

To those who have left Shixini for a permanent life in town, this may not apply, but for those who remain and who view their future as being linked to their Shixini homes, engagement in the urban world and earning money may well be absolute necessities, but they are not ultimate values in the sense that agriculture, animal husbandry and a homestead in Shixini are.



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