

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF INDIVIDUALS AND HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

RASSP RESEARCH REPORTS NO. 1

NTOKOZO MTHEMBU

WORKERS COLLEGE RESEARCH UNIT

NTOKOZOMT@HOTMAIL.CO.ZA

The Centre for Civil Society publishes regular peer reviewed research reports in order to stimulate debate and reflection in civil society. Adding to the Centre's contribution is the Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme (RASSP) research reports. These reports are based on research designed, conducted and written by community activists from around the country who have been part of the RASSP training programme for the past three years. The research projects and these reports were made possible through the RASSP's grant programme. The reports are not written in an academic style and as far as possible the expression and style of the activists have been maintained.

We publish work from a range of ideological perspectives and the views presented in these research reports are not necessarily those of the Centre. All research reports are available online at www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs

Introduction

The monopolisation of Africa's means of subsistence negatively affected Blacks all over the world.... the emancipation of the Black world and the rest of the oppressed is inconceivable without breaking and melting down the chain of economic bondage and our reified historical consciousness. (Magubane, 2000: 414–416)

This research examined the day-to-day survival strategies of the households and workers that are affected by unemployment. This report also assesses how the adoption of neoliberal policies by the present government in post-apartheid South Africa led to continuous economic and political suppression of the unemployed African people.

The data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, as well as observations in study areas within the Durban Metropolitan. This included rural areas, informal settlements, semi-urban areas and a group of job seekers located at the Kwa Muhle Museum in the eThekweni Municipality.

The specific focus areas of the research related to the strategies adopted by unemployed people to meet their daily needs; the skills utilised in the securing of their daily needs; the resources of the unemployed; living conditions of the unemployed and the perspectives of unemployed people in relation to identity and other social groups/structures.

The research found that some of the survival strategies included relocating closer to the city to seek out job opportunities which in turn led to the establishment of informal settlements and scavenger - 'hunting and gathering' - patterns utilised in daily survival, e.g. collecting recyclables to sustain daily food. Food is also accessed with support from religious groups through bread distribution and soup kitchens.

The conclusion is that there appears to be no change from the old oppressive system of apartheid economics in terms of economic restructuring with regard to wealth redistribution to the poorest quarters of the population. Poverty is still continuing because African workers, in particular, remain compellingly oppressed: subjected to lower paid jobs, forced into migrant labour with resultant family displacements, disruptions and unemployment. The consequences of this are linked to a rise in crime, starvation and exposure to diseases such as malnutrition, TB and AIDS. Government needs to revisit its current economic policy as well as the redistribution of land, to enable those who are unemployed to make a living off the land, as well as to provide job security and social security to the poor, together with the provision of free basic services to those who cannot afford these services.

Background to the areas under study

This research was conducted in four areas: the rural area at Emaphephetheni – Inanda, informal settlement at Jadhu Place, Springfield, semi-urban township at Ntuzuma (G-Section), and a group of job seekers in Durban next to the Kwa Muhle Museum. The areas under study fall within the eThekweni Municipality.

The following is a brief overview of the areas:

Emaphephetheni: Inanda - rural area

The area is located 34 kilometres from the Central Business District (CBD). The total population is 4 923 and there are 669 households consisting of 98% African people. About 6.4% of the people are employed and about 10.4% are job seekers. About 23.5% of the households do not have an income and about 83.2% are not economically active. There is 100% informal housing. This data includes Imbozamo and Mqeku areas.

Table 1 – Demographics of Emaphephetheni compared to eThekweni Unicity

Employment Status			Household Income		
	Planning Unit	UNICITY	(per annum)	Planning Unit	UNICITY
Employed	6.4%	28.8%	None	23.5%	11.4%
Seeking Work	10.4%	13.8%	R1-R2400	3.3%	3.3%
Not Economically Active	83.2%	55.7%	R2401-R6000	24.4%	9.3%
			R6001-R12000	17.3%	10.1%
Dependency Ratio	16.1:1	3.9:1	R12001-R18000	9.3%	10.3%
Literacy Rate	25%	55%	Over R18000	7.8%	43.7%
Grade Ten and Higher	8%	36%	Unspecified	14.5%	11.9%

Source: Durban Unicity website: Community Profile 2001 citing Census 1996¹

Ntuzuma G - semi-urban

This area is located 17 kilometres from the CBD of Durban and the closest major commercial centre is Verulam (13km away). The total population is 6 556 and there are 1 352 households consisting of 98.9% African people. Approximately 21.7% of the people are employed with 13.8% being job seekers. Fourteen percent of the households do not have an income. There is 68% informal housing.

¹ The latest Census 2001 may reveal changes in statistics and trends.

Table 2 – Demographics of Ntuzuma G compared to eThekweni Unicity

Employment Status			Household Income		
	Planning Unit	UNICITY	(per annum)	Planning Unit	UNICITY
Employed	21.7%	28.8%	None	14.1%	11.4%
Seeking Work	13.8%	13.8%	R1-R2400	7.1%	3.3%
Not Economically Active	64.4%	55.7%	R2401-R6000	9.4%	9.3%
			R6001-R12000	11.0%	10.1%
Dependency Ratio	5.1:1	3.9:1	R12001-R18000	11.4%	10.3%
Literacy Rate	50%	55%	Over R18000	25.2%	43.7%
Grade Ten and Higher	30%	36%	Unspecified	21.8%	11.9%

Source: Durban Unicity website: Community Profile 2001 citing Census 1996

Kwa Muhle - Durban CBD - Job seekers

The employed people in the Durban Metro are about 28.8%. There are about 13.8% job-seekers and those that are not economically active comprise approximately 55.7%. About 11.4% of the people have no income. The area is located at Wyatt Road next to the Kwa Muhle Museum in Durban and was selected because it's one of the most historically rich places of African workers in KwaZulu-Natal. Durban has been a 'favoured destiny' by job seekers from as early as the 1900s as it has been the major city in the region that is perceived to offer employment. Even today one can observe about 50 to 100 job seekers who still congregate everyday close to or in the surroundings of these premises seeking work. Some employers too, still go there when they seek workers for temporary day work. This place used to be known as the Native Administration Department in 1957 and was important for the administration of the Influx Control Act. All job seekers had to be registered there to gain the notorious work permit dubbed 'Special' by workers in order to work in Durban. In the 1980s, this place became the Department of Manpower and after 1994 the administration office moved to Umgeni Road next to Game Centre. It was incorporated under the auspices of the Department of Labour.

Table 3 - Demographics of the eThekweni Unicity

Employment Status		Household Income	
	UNICITY	(per annum)	UNICITY
Employed	28.8%	None	11.4%
Seeking Work	13.8%	R1-R2400	3.3%
Not Economically Active	55.7%	R2401-R6000	9.3%
		R6001-R12000	10.1%
Dependency Ratio	3.9:1	R12001-R18000	10.3%
Literacy Rate	55%	Over R18000	43.7%
Grade Ten and Higher	36%	Unspecified	11.9%

Source: Durban Unicity website: Community Profile 2001 citing Census 1996

Jadhu Place - informal settlement

Jadhu informal settlement is located five kilometres from the CBD of Durban. The data about the area includes the following areas - Puntans Hill; Springfield Alpine/ Silvermaple Road; Burnwood Road; Hoffman Place; Howell Road and Silverwillow (Puntans Hill).

Table 4 - Demographics of Jadhu Place compared to eThekweni Unicity

Employment Status			Household Income		
	Planning Unit	UNICITY	(per annum)	Planning Unit	UNICITY
Employed	33.5%	28.8%	None	9.7%	11.4%
Seeking Work	9.3%	13.8%	R1-R2400	1.5%	3.3%
Not Economically Active	57.2%	55.7%	R2401-R6000	6.0%	9.3%
			R6001-R12000	5.9%	10.1%
Dependency Ratio	3.4:1	3.9:1	R12001-R18000	8.1%	10.3%
Literacy Rate	63%	55%	Over R18000	58.5%	43.7%
Grade Ten and Higher	43%	36%	Unspecified	10.2%	11.9%

Source: Durban Unicity website: Community Profile 2001 citing Census 1996

The total population in this area is 6 273 and the number of households is 1 428, The total population in this area is 6 273 and the number of households is 1 428, which consists of 11.8% African, 1.6% Coloured, 85.3% Indian and 0.1% White. The area has about 33.5% of the people employed and 9.3% of the people are job seekers with about 9.7% of other households having no income. This area was previously segregated as an Indian area under the Group Areas Act. Today it still houses a large proportion of the Indian population. It is also not a homogenous area and the wage gap between the middle class employed people and the poorer, unemployed people is more pronounced.

The research process

This research was based on a qualitative study, for which data was first collected from a pilot study where nine in-depth interviews (two from each area of study, one pensioner and one focus group in the rural area) and observations were conducted. Thereafter two focus group interviews were conducted from each area of the study. There were about ten respondents in each focus group.

All areas of study were selected through the use of the snowball method combined with observations. Wyatt Road was observed for about five years, as most job seekers flock to this area and most employers purchase their labour force here. The first interview and observation was conducted at Wyatt Road with job seekers. These job seekers were then traced back to the informal settlement in Jadhu Place and Ntuzuma G-section. In these communities, linkages were made to Emaphephetheni – the rural area. This method was used in order to seek linkages when it comes to residential or job seekers in these areas as well as assessing the mobility of job seekers from their various places.

An interview schedule was used to collect data from focus groups and questionnaires were also used in the in-depth interviews. The first pilot focus and in-depth interviews were conducted in October 2003 and ended in December 2003. Further interviews were held between the months of January 2004 to July 2004. Geographically, the sample is biased towards a few areas within the eThekweni metropolitan area and does not include information about activities in the whole of the KwaZulu-Natal Province and/or other provinces in South Africa.

Review of literature

The latest Household Subsistence Level Survey of 2002 revealed that the poorest in South Africa suffered the highest annual rise (17.1%) in their basic living costs, about 60% of which is food, in the past 30 years (Mngxitama et al, 2004). The Organisation of Civic Rights (OCR) revealed that South Africa has the largest, most extreme income disparities in the world, with 13% of the population enjoying a “firstworld” status and 53% living in conditions of the “third world” (2002:13).

Although in 1994, ‘change’ was ushered in, the majority of people are still subjected to living a life of poverty. The fact that most African people are still living in informal settlements is evidence of a good dream gone bad. This has defeated the high expectations of the African majority (Karumbidza, 2001a).

Ngceshu et al (2002:4) argue that employment opportunities are declining in South Africa due to globalisation and restructuring of the economy and technology. This type of development highlights the problems specifically related to class and race and the political survival of the regime. The ANC opted to respond positively to the demands of what is deemed economically viable, thus taking a route that seeks to ensure its political survival as a party at the expense of the political stability of the

country. Therefore, based on the choices the government makes, political survival would always be uneven against economic viability because of the inequalities created by apartheid as well as the mounting pressure from globalisation (Karumbidza, 2001a).

The adoption of GEAR has also led to thousands of jobs being lost in different sectors. This is despite the fact that the GEAR policy projected 1.35 million new jobs. According to Marais, GEAR has no redistributive target and no clear linkage between growth and income redistribution (Marais, 2001:170). The shedding of jobs led to changes in the labour market with an increase in the flexibility of the labour market and mechanisation of production that also resulted in the introduction of labour saving technologies, increased out-sourcing and as well as the reintroduction of casual and contract labour (Marais, 2001:175).

Presently, labour market changes have impacted on the migratory patterns of workers resulting in workers being subjected to a cyclical process of emigration to the urban area seeking employment. A consequence of this is that workers reside in informal situations with subsequent unhealthy living conditions such as nonexistent basic water and sewage services.

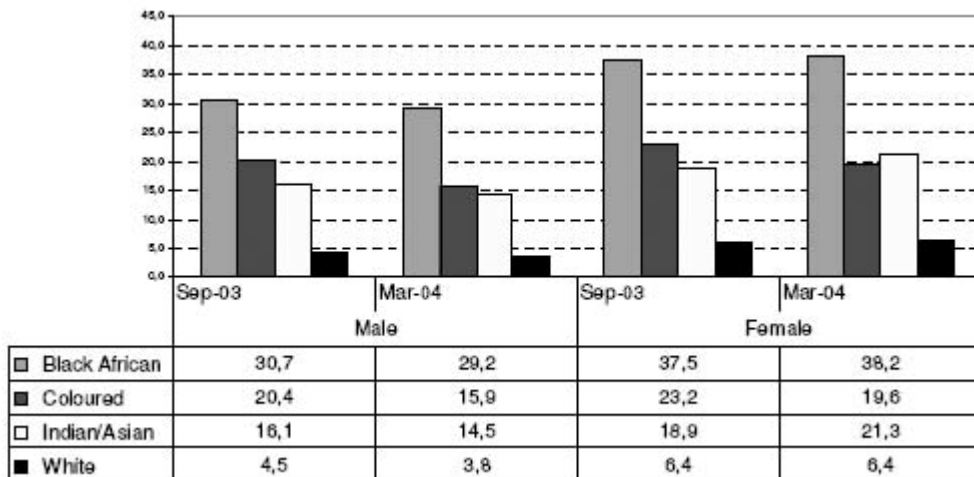
This set-up forces workers to come to the urban areas with no existing support systems such as relying on relatives to get shelter or a place to live. They therefore opt for informal settlements because it is 'affordable' (Ngceshu et al, 2002:3). On the flip-side of the rural-urban migration is the urban-rural move where unemployed urban workers have returned to rural areas seeking land to grow food (Mngxitama et al, 2004). The unemployed person also adopts various strategies to meet old and new challenges of being dispossessed and not being given the opportunity to participate in the current labour market and economic system as it continues to trim itself and develops information technology to run itself.

The unemployed are those people within the economically active population who: (a) did not work during the seven days prior to the interview, (b) want to work and are available to start work within two weeks of the interview, and (c) have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview. The expanded definition of unemployment excludes criterion (c) (Stats SA, 2004:xiii). According to Statistics South Africa, the recent estimate of the unemployment rate is at 41.2% using the expanded definition and 27.8% using the strict definition (2004).

The unemployed, in simple terms means the single mother, student, community defender, neighbour, popular criminal, rap artist and genuine 'ou' (good human being). These have come to be the collective identities of "the poor"; inclusive of the factory worker (Desai, 2002).

Table 5 below illustrates the increasing unemployment across racial lines. According to the table below, unemployment is significantly higher amongst women as opposed to men and this is predominant across all race groups.

Table 5 - Unemployment rate in South Africa (official definition) by population group and sex: September 2003 and March 2004



Source: Labour Force Survey October 2004 (Statistic South Africa)

Some unemployed workers work as ‘unintentional servants’ as they work not for income but accommodation (Magubane, 2000:409). Other unemployed people use their small fields or subsistence farming produce in the rural areas and sell it in the streets of the urban areas (Lund et al, 2000:10 & 23). Lund highlights that some survivalist traders transport goods to street traders on wheelbarrows and supermarket trolleys between trading sites and are paid about R3 per barrow load (2000:22-25). They are called “barrow-boys”. Others assist so-called informal traders as their helpers (“*ababambeli*”) assisting or minding the business whilst owners are away from the trading site; others are security guards who guard stalls at night (Lund et al, 2000:22-25). Although informal employment is celebrated as an alternative to formal employment, it cannot be seen as the solution to the unemployment crisis because the income that informal sector workers receive can barely sustain the livelihood of the households affected by unemployment:

... average monthly net return to the self-employed was R826 (\$130), while the median monthly income was much lower at R200 (\$32) ... A minimum of 45% of the self employed are earning an income lower than the Supplemental Living Level (SLL) poverty line, set at R220 (\$35) per month ... the sector contains a high proportion of the working poor who would readily take up employment in the formal sector. (Marais, 2001:178)

Other poverty-stricken people have no shelter above their heads and beg on the streets for food. Webster (2003) noted that Sitas suggested that there are three types of economic activity which have proliferated since 1994: firstly, 'new hunter-gatherer type societies' - who survive by selling waste products and are often homeless; secondly, the 'new forms of servitude' - individuals are forced to survive by being at the 'beck and call of individuals who demand chores, duties, sexual favours, etc'; and thirdly, 'the street traders and hawkers who sell basic commodities such as memorabilia to tourists, and food to urban workers'.

Often the unemployed are informally trained or unskilled people who cannot use their skills again as the very industries that employed semi and unskilled workers from which they came have been completely decimated by neoliberal trade policies. These industries include the clothing, textile, leather, car component manufacturing and other light intensive manufacturing industries.

The level of poverty and degradation is much worse than expected as it is interlinked and deeply rooted in colonial history (Desai, 2001; Terreblanche, 2002:27). Mark Napier (2004:6) confirms this when he argues that there is growing proof that poverty is no longer confined to rural areas. Terreblanche argues that the unemployed people are mostly Africans due to the inequality in the distribution of income, property and opportunities which were not favourable to them as they were criminalised in the years of oppression (2002:25).

Desai (2001) argues that unemployment in specific townships and areas that are dominated by the poor can reach heights of about 70%, leaving many families completely reliant on pensions and grants. According to figures released by the state's statistical institute (StatsSA), the average African household lost 19% of its real income between 1995 and 2000, while average white household income grew by 15%. The racial income gap stood at 400% in 1995 and the poorest 40% of households saw a 16% drop in their share of total income during the same period, with the richest 20% earning 65% of all household income (Mngxitama et al, 2004).

Table 5 confirms that the unemployment in South Africa is structural, not cyclical, as it affects mostly those who are part of previously disadvantaged groups, especially Africans. Even in a democratic post-apartheid state, Africans still remain the most disadvantaged through being the majority of unemployed people (Terreblanche, 2002:372 & 379; Streak et al, 2004).

Ngceshu argues that the growing frustration over a lack of employment opportunities amongst the youth leads them to become more violent, commit crimes and enter into occupations like prostitution (Ngceshu et al, 2002:5). The unemployed from the rural areas seeking employment establish themselves in vacant lands, usually next to formal housing and create some form of a service class, e.g. nurses, teachers and police (Ngceshu et al, 2002:9).

The twisted development in the South African economy for the past 30 years

has been focusing on huge investment in capital-intensive activities in the private and public sectors that resulted in the distortion of capital versus labour ratio and also undermining the job-creating ability of the economy (Terreblanche, 2002:379).

Unemployed workers living in poverty² are faced with a different situation each day as they are exposed in differing ways to unemployment, which impacts on the areas where they reside. Mohamed argues that 'shacks', i.e. informal houses, were built by Africans as a means of survival in the 1920s. This was done in response to squalid and deteriorating conditions in African reserves (2002:1). In addition, Napier notes the argument that Gilbert and Gugler (1992) make that informal settlements are defined in a variety of ways, but their core characteristics are that they are created through a process of unassisted self-help and tend to have two or more of the following characteristics: they are self-built by the families occupying them using initially temporary building materials; the settlements are 'illegal' in some way, unserviced; and, lastly, are mostly occupied by people living in poverty in poor locations (2004:8).

Emma Makhaza told commissioners at the *Speak Out on Poverty Hearings* in 1998:

I am having seven children and nothing to depend on. I am making bricks and sometimes it rains and then I can't do it. And I collect food and take it to people. I fetch wood and collect cans of cold drink and sell them. When I am without food then I go next door and if they don't have, then the children will have empty stomachs and I cry. Yesterday I left with my children fast asleep because they will ask me what we are going to eat. I am very thin, because when I bought a bucket of mielie meal, I won't eat at all if I am thinking of the children.... (Marais, 2001:198-199)

Cottle and Deedat in McDonald (2002), noted that in KwaZulu-Natal, when cost recovery was introduced on the provision of water in mid-2000, many people were forced to use unsafe water sources, contributing to the cholera outbreak in that province resulting in over 100,000 cases of illness and 250 deaths (McDonald, 2002). Several poor communities across Johannesburg, with the active assistance of the APF, have launched Operation *Vulamanzi* (meaning 'open water') in which the 'control' measures such as trickler systems, re-routed water piping and pre-paid meters have been by-passed by communities in order to retain access to water (McKinley, 2003). Illegal reconnection of electricity is widespread in Soweto as they began a campaign called Operation *Khanyisa* ("to light up").

² Where "poverty" can be defined as the lack of a means of survival, that is, basic for a human being to continue with life in a meaningful way. This type of a situation leads to a vicious cycle of poverty which is characterised by vulnerability, low productivity, diseases, dependency, ignorance and similar problems" (Ngeshu, 2002:3).

Desai (2002) argues that the poor joined forces on their common issues that affected them and their protests are not driven by ideology but by the need to survive and the desire to live decently. Ngceshu argues that poverty is a bonding factor that unites the poor who have a history of marginalisation; such is the case in semi-urban areas such as Inanda, as these areas housed people with different backgrounds who were united under a common aim of seeking work (2002:2). They also form clubs such as the homeboy clubs and *stokfels* - a way of saving or making money or loan schemes such as *Vukuzakhe* Housing Scheme and *Utshani* Loan Scheme (Ngceshu et al, 2002:3).

Molefe argues that some of the unemployed people collect garbage and compete with stray dogs for discarded scraps of leftover food and also find odd recyclable bits and pieces and newspapers for a few rands (2004:6). Other means of survival include grants that are meant for poverty alleviation. However, these grants end up not reaching the intended target due to the bureaucracy attached to accessing and receiving these grants (Ngceshu et al, 2002:6).

Presently, in South Africa, the unemployed impoverished communities still experience state repression. Sheriffs evict households that cannot afford to pay the rent. Police raid the streets, break down the doors of houses and arrest residents for 'trespassing' in their own homes in apartheid-style evictions (Mohamed, 2002:23). The municipality disconnects water and electricity because the poor, unemployed people cannot afford to pay for basic services that are being priced at cost recovery prices. The unemployed people live under threat of re-arrest, they face imposed bail conditions, they do not have lawyers for the arrested community members and they do not have payment of bail, if it has been set. The unemployed people who are arrested have nowhere to go. They face lengthy periods in jail awaiting trial and they get re-arrested whilst outside through actions such as marches to get services as they do not have income. Fadane in Lund (1998) argues that the poorest of the street traders may live on the street, use networks and payment to get a site in a shack settlement, live in hostels, or move between all of these (Lund, 1998). Whilst external environmental threats are more general threats, they are harder to cope with and have greater physical and socio-economic impacts on people living in poverty in informal settlements (Napier, 2004:18). Napier argues "that Africa is also the continent with the highest numbers of people living with HIV and AIDS, the impacts on the livelihoods of households living in such conditions are extreme, and likely to stretch established coping mechanisms beyond their limits" (2004:6). Ngceshu confirms this argument as he highlights that despite the HIV/AIDS campaign, sex activities remain as a survival means for the young people between the age of 20 and 30 years (2002:8).

Research findings

Life as an unemployed person

An investigation into some of the reasons why people were unemployed revealed that some were moved off their land, retrenched after working for sometime, injured on duty, their company closed causing retrenchment, resigned from work, could not get a job since completing Matric, disabled, low education, or would not like to be employed. The latter view is confirmed by Mandlovu (2003), as she highlighted in her interview that she would not like to be employed but prefers to sell chickens and she was planting and selling vegetables from an early age whilst she stayed at Mkhumbane. Other unemployed people blame Whites for colonising the majority of Black people (Khabazela, Interview: 19 January 2004).

The unemployed used various means to seek employment such as hearing from other working people or unemployed people about job opportunities in some companies, telling friends or neighbours to listen out for them, going to the gates of different companies, begging for work from the car owners, seeking work in the urban and residential areas like Phoenix and the city (like at Kwa Muhle) and also spotting where most employers come when they need workers (Shangase, 2004). Most job seekers spend most of their time seeking work and end up not getting work after travelling long distances and being exposed to harsh weather conditions such as hot sun, cold and even rain with no shelter. The unemployed are vulnerable and they even lose the respect of their family members such as spouses and children, friends and community members as they are regarded as nothing because they cannot meet their families' needs or responsibilities.

Eric Mkhize (12 January 2004) is a job seeker at Wyatt Road next to Kwa Muhle Museum. He is a single male aged 25 years with 3 dependants and lives at the MOTH Centre, as he does not have a place to stay. He passed Standard 8 and left school, as there was nobody to help him to further his studies after his grandmother passed away. Eric does not know what went wrong, as he knows nothing about his historical background.

He describes the conditions he lives under as bad as he stays in an old building which he guards at night and then he guards cars during the day and is able to make about R100 per week. He has been living in such conditions since 1992, after the restaurant he was working for closed down. He said, "I'm not happy with the conditions I live under as I cannot afford to meet my needs and have no place that I own". The biggest challenge he is facing is to have a house that belongs to him and to meet his family's needs. He sometimes survives by car-guarding and is able to partly meet some family needs. He also works as a house painter or security officer and he did not get any training in doing his work but was taught by other workers to perform such work as painting. He did not choose to do the work but it's the only job that is available.

He does not get jobs often, sometimes only after three months. He spends almost the whole day seeking work as most companies employ in the morning between 7:00am – 10:30am and very few or none after that time. If he does get work he gets paid cash depending on how much the employer wants to pay. However, employers pay between R10 and R20 within Durban and R50 if it's as far as Port Shepstone. When he works he gets no benefits, even if he gets injured at work. He highlighted that temporal jobs are the best activities that help the unemployed as they give the unemployed something to meet their daily needs.

Some of the problems he encountered when he sought work include the untrustworthiness of some of the employers as they changed the amount that was agreed upon when they reach the workplace or when it is time to pay. Sometimes a company whose workers are on strike employs him. He has been faced with hunger that has forced him to eat food that has been used for rituals by certain religious organisations. He said, "I'm not happy with the help from these organisations but I'm forced by hunger because other organisations give help in order to use you as the bin to dump rotten food or further their rituals". There is a lack of funds for transport to travel to and from town and the township, which forces him to sleep in town on the streets or in the 'wilderness'. He says that sometimes he fights or quarrels with other unemployed people vying for the same job that is offered at a particular time.

Mlungisi Makhathini (10 January 2004) survives by working as a taxi driver as he possesses a Code 10 driving licence and earns R350 per week out of which he gives R250 to his family. Sometimes his uncles provide him with food. Other times he may get a job once or twice a week but the taxi business is scarce in the rural area. He spends the whole day seeking work in the city, as there is a high chance of getting a job in the city. When he seeks work he encounters problems such as walking long distances to the city, sometimes reaching the factory or the company that is employing him late. There is a lack of transport funds to seek work. Unemployment has a great impact on how he sees himself as he cannot meet his needs and he said, "...this frustrates my soul as I cannot do what I want". He thinks there is no alternative from seeking work because he does not see how he can survive without work.

What was observed is that almost all young adult males have a dependency on the labour market for jobs, as they view 'to be employed or to get a job' as the only way of surviving and to be able to meet their family's needs. This was confirmed by the study as it revealed that the majority of those interviewed are job seekers and that the biggest challenge facing these job seekers is getting a job. Whilst some of the older people show the willingness to be self-reliant, their biggest challenge is to have land and a good house for living (Mphephetha, 2003).

Living conditions

Living conditions of unemployed people differ depending on what resources people have such as access to land, selling vegetables or related activities, friends and their parents who support them, and some members within their families who are working or have families that support them. The study revealed that the living conditions of all interviewees can be described as appalling and different age groups are exposed to and respond differently to these living conditions. The majority of the respondents in the sample described their living conditions as bad. This is confirmed by one interviewee when she described her living conditions:

My living conditions are bad, as I don't have clean water and no assistance and I survive through old age pension and also receive about R100 from the garden. (Mphephetha, Interview: 20 October 2003)

A single male, aged 43 years, described his living conditions as unhealthy, as the area he stays in, Jadhu Place informal settlement, is overpopulated. Houses are built with cardboard and mud and he forcefully stopped paying for water in 1995 as they were paying about 25c per 25l (Khabazela, Interview: 19 January 2004).

The study also indicates that there are various reasons why individuals are exposed to such bad conditions. For example, Mphephetha highlighted in the interview that as a rural resident she started living in such conditions about 20 years ago when her husband passed away and she was faced with the additional problem of her forced removal from her land when the Inanda dam was built. Living conditions are appalling, as most of the unemployed have difficulty in getting food, water, electricity and good shelter for living.

One interviewee, Mlungisi Makhathini (10 January 2004), a 20-year-old single male who was born here, supports six dependants. He passed Standard 7 and left school, as there was nobody to help him further his studies. He described his living conditions as "bad as I've no income and [it] is hard to send children to school because I don't have no job for now. I've been living in such conditions as from 2002 after I got retrenched as the driver when my employer left the route of taxi operator". He further highlighted that he is not happy as he wished to have many things but he cannot afford them. Since his father died he became the breadwinner but was retrenched in 2002 after working for three months.

Survival strategies

The majority of the unemployed do not have access to sources of food. This leads them to eat foods that have been subjected to rituals of some of the religious organisations that provide soup kitchens. Other unemployed people are forced to live on the streets, as they do not have shelter or accommodation. This exposes them

to harassment from criminals as well as the police as part of the 'crime prevention' programmes. This then forces them to sleep in the graveyard as a safety measure. As a consequence, many lose respect from other people and some experience family breakage. Others interviewed indicated that they survive by harvesting in the garden and by getting assistance from their older children to meet their daily needs (Mphephetha, Interview: 20 October 2003).

Mthembu, who came from Bergville, said that in order for him to be accepted into the informal settlement and in order for him to survive in that settlement he had to join the dominant political party in that settlement:

I heard about this informal settlement place (Jadhu Place next to Springfield) and I just came in and spoke to other people who advised me to belong to ANC before I can build my ghetto, then I organised planks and I started building my ghetto.

Since 2002, he has survived on a sick pension that equals R700 per month, as he is disabled. He has only worked temporary jobs as a trained petrol attendant and possesses a certificate for that. He says: "My skill is not helpful, as I don't get work, although it helps me to seek a specific job". He owns a one-room shack at Jadhu Place, which he erected in 1998, as he needed a place to stay when he came to Durban to seek work (Mthembu, Interview: 22 March 2004).

Sindi G from Ntuzuma says she does not have any skills and she applied her mind to start a 'business' so that she can have some money. She started selling ice cream for 50 cents and later cake crumbs for the same amount. She also plants vegetables in the garden although the land is not sufficient to plant various vegetables. She did not choose to do that work but the situation forced her to do something so that she can get food. Her mother's pension, child grants and the selling of sweets and cake crumbs meet her family needs. The problems she encounters when she seeks work are the affordability of bus fares and hunger due to the lack of money to buy food. Sindi believes that the best activities that help the unemployed are the food parcels which are distributed by the Government and assistance from the social workers who give advice on the grants that are provided by the government. She does not own anything except the sweets and cake crumbs she sells.

Mbutho Mthembu (22 March 2004) supports two dependants and passed Standard 8 in 2000. He could not further his studies, as there were no funds to do so. His living conditions are not right and he is unable to meet his needs. He has been living in these conditions since 1998 when he left school. He noted that he could not afford most things as he does not have money and blames his parents for his suffering as they failed to further his studies because he impregnated his girlfriend in 1998.

A number of the unemployed survive by being 'hunter-gatherers' through collecting old metals and card boxes or paper, engaging in informal trade such as selling fruits or vegetables and also engaging in criminal activities such as robbery, shoplifting and car hijacking.

Some unemployed survive through government grants such as a child grant, disability grant or old age pension from their grannies or grandfathers or parents. Some of the young and old women adopt various strategies; Sindi G (Interview: 15 February 2004) has two dependants as a survival strategy by getting a child grant from the government, as she gets nothing from the father of the child. She wanted to do a nursing course but she could not do it as there was no one to assist her with funds to further her studies and there are no job opportunities.

There are also the road cleaning projects, building projects and plumbing and cleaning of schools (Sindi G, 2004). These programmes are helpful as people get some money working on these projects or by begging for help from other people, doing gardening, road works, making of blocks, temporal work and advice on grants. Some also survive through the supply of cooked food or government food parcels, which provides temporary help. These strategies do help the unemployed in order to have some earnings from about R100 per week but they are of a short span and are not permanent.

Mlungisi Makhathini (Interview: 10 January 2004) confirms this in his interview when he notes that road works provide temporal jobs for a short while. Government programmes such as road works and construction are some of the activities that help the unemployed to earn some money to meet family needs. However, such programmes are full of nepotism and help only for the time being. They are limited and only provide temporal jobs for a while. He thinks skills training in sowing, drawing/painting and handiwork and craft can help the unemployed. He owns nothing except a driver's license and believes that he won't starve forever without a job.

The study has shown that the unemployed view themselves differently with some seeing themselves as not valuable at all, whilst others survive through the compassion of others. Mzonjani Shangase (Interview: 10 January 2004) a 47-year-old male, who supports seven dependants and is separated from his wife, said: "I consider myself alive because I can speak to other people who give me love and I give back that love".

The study shows that the unemployed received skills from different sources and some have skills they learned from their parents (Mandlovu, 2003), others taught themselves and were also taught by other workers when they got temporal work (Mkhize, 2004).

I used my mind and I initiated this 'business' so that I can have some money and started by selling ice cream for 50 cents and later I started selling cake crumbs for the same amount. (Sindi G, 2004)

In addition, some skills that were learnt whilst working or training are not helpful as they do not provide any alternative means for survival. For example, Mkhize (12 January 2004) trained as a cashier when he was working but, since he got retrenched, that skill has not helped in terms of a means of survival. Almost all unemployed, informally trained or skilled people do not use their skills, as they have become irrelevant since they are not employed anymore. For example, Mzonjani Shangase (10 January 2004) highlighted that the skill of being a cotton machine operator, which he learnt whilst he was working, is not helpful as there are no cotton machines to operate.

The unemployed share their experiences of knowing some skills as they teach each other, thus trying to make themselves employable. For example, Eric Mkhize said, "I was taught by other job seekers how to paint as I did not know but now that helps me get a temporal job when a painter is needed".

The unemployed also share information about where one gets shelter or job opportunities, and about employers who are exploitative as they all seek jobs together. Sometimes job seekers fight over a job or employer that they know treat workers well or pay well for temporal work.

The unemployed contribute to their households in varying degrees. Some contribute with old age pensions and garden vegetables. In some cases, one gets temporary work and earns between R40-R50 per week. Others work as taxi drivers earning R350 per week. Some can earn about R100 per week, depending on how much one receives on the day when he/she gets temporal work. Some sell cake crumbs, sweets and ice cream to school children to earn about R20 per week and enabling them to buy bread at least twice a week. Some earn a disability pension to the value of R700 per month (Sindi G, 2004). Some of the unemployed are unable to meet their needs and they end up separating from their children as they leave them or experience a family breakdown.

Some of the unemployed who live in the rural areas are at least able to own things such as a small garden, a few goats and ducks, a small plot of land which is not suitable for ploughing and a mud house (Mandlovu, 2003), whilst others own nothing except 'themselves' to be able to make ends meet (Mkhize, 2004).

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to present an overview of the survival strategies of the unemployed people with data collected within the eThekweni Municipality, providing base information about socio-economic conditions that affect poor people's lives. Given the prevailing material conditions affecting the unemployed and their households, it is worth stressing again that in the design of any intervention, a strongly situational approach is vital. However, we can say that survival conditions of the unemployed expose them to a typical range of hazards, including famine, flood, fire, the spread of certain types of disease (often food related), and the effects of poor indoor air quality. The documentation of existing examples where approaches have been used to address informal settlements and sustainable livelihoods in order to reduce vulnerability to poverty and unemployment would seem to be a challenging undertaking.

Almost all elderly unemployed people cited their historical background as the major cause of them being unemployed, as the apartheid government did not offer them opportunities to develop their skills and education. The younger job seekers highlighted that there are no job opportunities and also cited they are unemployed due to their lack of education, as well as their parents lacking finance to further their studies. Some of the young job seekers noted that since they left school they have never had employment, despite the fact that they finished their Matric. In addition, some young job seekers do not know what went wrong and why they are not getting employment, and when they are asked about their historical background they just say: "I don't know why we are suffering like that". Other unemployed people resigned from their employment as it exposed them to unsafe working conditions and they ended up not getting other jobs. In addition, some of the unemployed people were retrenched from their former employment, especially the older people because of their age, and they never got any permanent work again.

Unemployed people still flock to cities, as they were doing in the early years of apartheid, seeking employment and still paying taxes, but job opportunities are extremely minimal. They still opt for informal settlements like before and are exposed to inhumane and degrading living conditions like before. Pillars of colonial oppression are still intact as the economy is still based on values and cultures of the western world and some of the indigenous values and cultures such as '*ubuntu*' are co-opted into the westernised economic system as part of legitimising the system.

The questions that could be posed to government and other stakeholders would be:

- How should government and social agencies intervene in ways that can both reverse colonialist approaches and support the livelihoods of the unemployed Black majority?

- Have typical responses been effective enough to include physical, social and economic needs of the vulnerable unemployed people?
- What plan should the government develop in order to encourage all business institutions that occupy vast hectares of land to contribute to the surrounding communities with programmes aimed at uplifting/developing them in order to reach a point of self-reliance and independence?
- How should the communities and government introduce historical awareness programmes or campaigns to the younger generation, so that the youth can be in a better position to make appropriate decisions about their future?

There is a need for a favourable environment to enable the unemployed people to be in a better position to fight continuous and inhumane cycles of poverty, jointly with social agencies, to change these squalid conditions. Finally, the persistent turning of a blind eye by the government on the redistribution of land to cater for the majority of unemployed people will result in the perpetuation of poverty and dependency syndrome. Since the municipalities are integrating survival/informal economy in South Africa to the well-established capitalist economy, further investigation is needed to understand how it may be sustained according to the needs of the informal traders and not to capitalist needs.

References

- Bhengu, Jabu and Gcaba, Bongi (2003), KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport: *Poverty Alleviation in KZN*, SDR Vol 12, No 2 –
<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L31509118.htm>
- Desai, A. (2001) *The Poors of Chatsworth: Race, Class and Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Durban: Madiba Publishers.
- Desai, Ashwin (2002), *We are the Poors - Community Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Monthly Review Press
- FNV Mondiaal (June 1998) *Organising in the Informal Economy: The role of the trade unions*. Stichting FNV Pers: Amsterdam
- Illitha Park, Khayelitsha (25/11/03) "Centre for Civil Society Centre for Civil Society"
www.nu.ac.za/ccs
- Inkunzi Project Video cassette. (2002) *Umlambongwenya Community*, Workers College, Durban.
- The Informal Economy and Local Economic Development -
http://www.worldbank.org/urban/led/informal_economy.html
- Karumbidza J. B. (2001a) *Delivery and Political Survival: Contestations in South African Land Reform and the Effects of Zimbabwean Farm Invasions* - Paper prepared for the Third Multi-Disciplinary Conference of the School of Graduate Studies in the Faculty of Human Sciences, UND 27 October 2001.

- Karumbidza J. B. (2001b) *'Redistributionist' versus 'Productionist' Land Reform: 'Not yet Uhuru!' Debates and Choices for Post-Apartheid South African Land Reform (Comparisons with Zimbabwe)*. 2001
- Kester, G. (1996) *Workers' participation: African perspectives. Interim results of trend studies, case studies, and questionnaire surveys conducted* – APADEP (UCT, APADEP, ISS), The Hague
- Kester, G. and Sidibe, O. (eds.) (1997), *Trade Union and Sustainable Democracy in Africa*. England: Ashgate
- Lund, F. J. (September 1998), *Women Street Traders in Urban South Africa: A Synthesis of selected research findings* - CSDS Research Report No 15,
<http://www.nu.ac.za/csds/Publications/rr18.pdf>
- Lund, F. et al, (2000) *Street Trading*, Durban: University of Natal, School of Development Studies, pp. 9 – 40. - <http://www.nu.ac.za/csds/Publications/rr18.pdf>
- Mamaila, K. (30 September 2003). *Who will be penalised?* Sowetan, p10.
- Marais, Hein (2001) *South Africa Limits to change: The political economy of transition*. University of Cape Town Press: Cape Town
- May, J., and Norton, A. (1997) *"A difficult life": The perceptions and experience of poverty in South Africa* - Social Indicators Research. Volume 41
- McDonald, David A. (2002) *The Bell Tolls For Thee: Cost Recovery, Cutoffs, and the Affordability of Municipal Services in South Africa*, Municipal Services Project - Special Report: Cape Town.
- McKinley, D. (10 September 2003) *Water is Life: The Anti-Privatisation Forum & the struggle against water privatisation* - "Centre for Civil Society Centre for Civil Society"
www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs
- McNeill, P. (ed.) *Work, Unemployment, and Leisure*. Routledge. London
- Mngxitama Andile and Eveleth Ann (2004) *Country by country - South Africa 2003 Report: The widening gap between rich and poor*. National Land Committee (NLC) - <http://www.socwatch.org.uy/en/informesNacionales/355.html> (18 August 2004)
- Mohamed, I. (2002) *The Four Townships Survey (4ts)* – Chesterville, KwaMashu, Phoenix and Umlazi, Organisation of Civic Rights: Durban.
- Molefe, T. (2October 2003) *Slice of Life: We look at them but see nothing...* Sowetan, p. 6.
- Napier, Mark (2004) *Informal settlement integration, the environment and sustainable livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa - Programme for Sustainable Human Settlements*, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South Africa.
- Ngceshu, S. and Ncwane, T. (2002) *An 'Urban' Experience - Inanda*, Unpublished paper presented to the Workers College.
- Popenoe, D. et al (1998) *Sociology: First South African Edition*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall
- Shaw, Mark and Louw, Antoinette (2004) *Urban Poor Major victims of crime* - http://www.unhabitat.org/mdg/documents/africa/Vol4_No1_urban_poor_major_victims_of_crime.doc. (22 June 2004)
- Skinner, C. (May 1999) *Analysis of trends in urban policy and practice regarding street trading in five South African cities* - CSDS Research Report No 18, School of Development Studies
- Stadler, A. (1987) *'The Political Economy of Industrial South Africa.'* Cape Town: David Phillip
- Statistics South Africa Census 2001 - *Census in Brief* - <http://www.statssa.gov.za>
- Statistics South Africa (2004) *Unemployment: Labour Force Survey Key Findings -Force Survey Key Findings* <http://www.statssa.gov.za/keyindicators/lfs.asp>

- Streak, Judith and van der Westhuizen, Carlene (12 October 2004) *Fitting the pieces together: a composite view of government's strategy to assist the unemployed in South Africa 1994 – 2004*. IDASA - <http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000962/index.php>
- Terreblanche, Sampie (2002), *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652 -2002*. University of Natal – Pietermaritzburg and KMM Review Publishers
- Verhoef, G. *Savings and Survival in a Modern African Economy: informal savings organisations and poor people in South Africa*.
http://www.sls.wau.nl/law/livelihoodsavingsdebt/abstracts/1505_16-30_verhoef.html
- Water Pressure Group (Auckland) Press Release - "Centre for Civil Society Centre for Civil Society" <CCS@ukzn.ac.za> - (12 September 2003)
- Webster, E. (June 2003) *New Forms of Work and the Representational Gap: A Durban Case Study*. Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg.
- Yudelman, M. (1964) *African on the Land – Economic Problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern, Central, and East Africa, with Special Reference to Southern Rhodesia*. Harvard University Press - Massachusetts.
<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/media/1999/8/19990803.html>
<http://www.pambazuka.org/newsletter.php?issuedate=2002-12-05>
http://158.143.192.225/Research/africa_act.htm
<http://www.urbstrat.org.za> : Durban Unicity Community Profiles Website. Community Profile 2001; Community Profile 2001: Ntuzuma G (PU248); Community Profile 2001: Springfield (PU308); Community Profile 2001: Old Fort (PU257); Community Profile 2001: Imbozamo (PU125)

List of interviewees

Focus Group Interviews

- 1) Phakamani Garden Club Members at Maphephetheni Area: *Rural* (20 October 2003)
- 2) 2 X Groups of unemployed people at *informal settlement* at Jadhu Place - Springfield (20 October 2003)
- 3) Group of unemployed people at *semi urban* township at Ntuzuma (G- Section) - (20 October 2003)
- 4) 2 X Groups of job seekers in Durban next to Kwa Muhle Museum (20 October 2003)

In-depth Interviews

- 1) Paulos Gwala – Executive Member of Inanda Dam Reparation Forum at Ntuzuma Township: *Semi- urban* (20 October 2003)
- 2) Else Mphphetha a community member: *Unemployed/ Pensioner* - Maphephetheni Area - *Rural* (20 October 2003)
- 3) Eric Mkhize - *Job seeker* at Wyatt Road/ Kwa Muhle Museum: *Urban* - (12 January 2004)
- 4) Mbutho Mthembu – *Unemployed* at Jadhu Place: *Informal settlement* (22 March 2004)
- 5) Mlungisi Makhathini a community member: *Unemployed/ Job seeker* (10 January 2004)
- 6) Mzonjani Shangase a community member: *Unemployed/ Job seeker* (10 January 2004)
- 7) Bayi Khabazela – *Job seeker* at Wyatt Road/ Kwa Muhle Museum (19 January 2004)
- 8) Sindi G. - *Unemployed* at Ntuzuma G: *Semi urban* (15 February 2004)