



Research report

Making the First Pedal Stroke

Opting for an association of members

RESEARCH COMMISSIONED BY THE WOMEN ON FARMS PROJECT

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Preface

“... it is always good to remember how we learned to ride a bicycle. It was not by calculating vectors, critical mass, G-forces or the ideal speed. It was not by sitting down in front of a teacher and having him explain to us how that two-wheeled vehicle manages to keep moving. It was not because someone said our bicycle was better and safer than someone else’s bicycle, and so we could cycle forth with confidence. It was not because we listened to this or that opinion, or because we saw endless TV coverage of the Tour de France or the Olympic Games.

It was because we dared to make that first pedal stroke.”

[From Paulo Coelho’s article, The Tale of Two Roads]

In 2003, the Women on Farms Project (WFP) went through its annual evaluation exercise. As a result of this process, the NGO decided to commission research to help it decide on an option to build an ‘Association of members’. The two options were, either:

WFP helps to build a separate association for women in agriculture over the next three years; or

WFP, in its present form, transforms itself into a member’s organisation over the next three years.

Through the research, WFP wanted to learn from the experiences of organisations (NGOs) that have been building associations, social movements and networks of grassroots organisations in order to learn from their the pitfalls. Also, the organisation wanted to arrive at an appropriate model for building an association where the women in agriculture can truly make their own decisions.

The research focused on the following broad areas:

Sketching the context of agriculture.

The nature of agricultural formations organising employers and employees.

Examples of NGO’s giving birth to membership organisations with specific emphasis on the following questions:

Is it better to be separate or have one organisation?

What are the formal and informal relationships between the two organisations?

Can membership organisations become sustainable? If so, how would they do it?

The nature of the research questions dictated against a theoretical approach. It was important to sketch a picture of what exists in order to arrive at the conclusions that we, the researchers, reached. It is also important to remember that the organisations we looked at are changing as we write this report. This is the nature of most organisations: never static and always evolving. They often do not have the time or opportunity to reflect on these changes. Unlike the WFP, who spend a lot of time in reflection – a practice we hope they will continue, and others will learn from – in most instances our subjects did not want to be (or could not be) completely open about challenges and experiences they face. On the one hand, we had to discard untested, (sometimes irrelevant) information; on the other hand, sometimes that same information was all we had to present.

Finally, research ought not to be static process existing in isolation. When used in implementation it becomes a dynamic process that constantly grows and expands. Overall, we learnt a lot and hope you will too so that it may help you in making the first pedal stroke.

Introduction

A tree is an interesting metaphor that lends itself well to describe what this report is about. Any tree needs its roots to hold it in the soil and derive water and minerals from that soil. But then it also needs a trunk and branches reaching for the sky and giving shade to any passerby. On those branches are the leaves that convert the sun's rays into energy for the tree to grow and convert carbon dioxide into oxygen. Finally, in order to perpetuate itself the tree gives birth to flowers that change into fruit when the season is right.

For this report, the roots are the industry with all its actors and variables. It grounds the report and its findings. The trunk and branches are the employers and employees organisations that are constantly growing and give body to the report. The leaves are the case studies of social movements that are necessary to sustain the report and finally, the flowers are the recommendations and overall learnings that will hopefully turn into fruit when the client decides to use the report in implementation.

But, it is important to remember that not all trees grow the same. Some are well cared for, watered properly and have been pruned to enhance its growth. Not so, the agricultural sector. This is a vulnerable sector. A neglected tree. Vulnerable sectors are those in which the labour process, working conditions, production cycle and the industry strategy¹ combine to make it difficult to build stable organisation or maintain membership. This is especially true for farm workers who form a major component of the most vulnerable in the agricultural sector. The majority of farms employ small numbers of workers. Large distances separate one workplace from the next. Access to these farms is difficult. Much work is seasonal. Farm workers also face a number of very specific employment conditions: their housing is tied to their jobs; and they are bound into paternalistic and intimate relationships with individual owners, who are mostly extremely conservative and racist. [Cosatu's September Commission]

The Women on Farms Project (WFP) has been feeding people since its inception. The fruits of this are individuals, women, who are now empowered. But now, perhaps, it is time to create the opportunity for them to grow their own trees that will feed them for a lifetime.

¹ This is based on Michael Porter's Competitive Strategy

A picture of the Wine and Deciduous Fruit Industry

There is a clear perception that on-farm relations are political in nature. Government's economic policies are aimed at attracting foreign investment, which has to be balanced against its stated aims of the deepening of labour rights and the protection of workers. In a report on Women Workers in Wine and Deciduous Fruit Global Value Chains compiled by Stephen Greenberg, the researchers assert that the "dual process of neo-liberal economic restructuring and political democratisation" has led to an improvement in the rights of workers in 'standard' employment, while at same time atypical employment is on the increase. What, then, is the situation of workers on farms and in particular women workers?

1. Socio-economic factors and legislation

Many farmers have responded to changed conditions by restructuring their businesses and shedding labour. Farmers tend to blame these trends on the entrenchment of workers' tenure rights by the Extension of Tenure Security Act. As a result, workers are being moved off farms, and end up either in low-cost developments or in informal settlements around small Western Cape country towns.

Farmers are under pressure by international volatility in their industry. In order to maintain their profit margins, they shift costs downstream, with workers ending up in having their wages and prospects for permanent employment eroded. Because farm owners can do this, it means they don't have to consider the growth of the industry, of their markets, their products and upgrading the skills of their workers. This means that the conditions of vulnerable workers never change. In the long run this might well make these industries unsustainable.

There is a clear shift away from the use of permanent workers and towards the use of temporary, seasonal and subcontracted labour. At the same time there is a significant shift towards externalisation – the provision of labour by third party contractors. In addition, farmers no longer want to provide on-farm housing for workers. Previously, housing was seen as an important investment by Western Cape farmers. Now, this is increasingly being regarded as a liability.

2. New forms of management

On many farms the labour contractors perform management services as well, so that the employment relationship is not with the farmer, but with the contractor. In addition, collective bargaining does not happen with the farmer, but through designated agencies. The expectation that new, modern forms of management will emerge is unrealistic. On the macro level, labour relations is governed by a 'corporatist' model, where the parties are: big business, big unions and government. This in effect denies several layers of workers access to economic institutions.

3. Women bear social costs

Generally, in the farming sector, women hold most of the seasonal and casual jobs. At the same time, while work is becoming scarcer, men are now competing for these jobs leading to division within family units. There is also division among workers as a social class. This division is further exacerbated by the existing tenuous position of women in the political and social arena.

Table 1: Deciduous Fruit & Wine Grape statistics

Type of fruit	Deciduous fruit (apples & pears)	Wine grapes
Areas	Western and Northern Cape	Western Cape
Number of producers	3 000	4 390 growers 67 co-operative wine cellars 91 estates cellars 219 non-estate cellars 11 producing wholesalers
Number of workers	+75 000	±300000 on farms & 48350 in wine tourism (22.5% permanent)
Proportion of exports	100% (nationally)	9.7% (provincially)
Rand value of export	R1bn	R2, 5bn for wine (blending, bottling) R14.6bn (R3.5 billion through wine-tourism in the winelands)
Controlling/ Marketing body	Deciduous Fruit Board – Unifruco - Capespan	Distell, KWV, SABMiller, Rembrandt
Prospects for growth	Stagnation - contraction in production	Good – expansion in production

(Source: Women Workers in Wine and Deciduous Fruit Global Value Chains – compiled by Stephen Greenberg)

Nature of agricultural formations

In order to get a clearer picture of the state of the sector it is critical to look at how the employers and the workers organise themselves. Employers are organised on the macro level into AgriSA. They also belong to groupings of employers' organisations, primarily for collective bargaining.

1. Employers' organisations

AgriSA

South African farmers, for urgent economic reasons, joined hands and united their own interest in AgriSA. By means of collective action they negotiated for themselves the best possible economic, socio-economic and security position. AgriSA represents a strong united front where the farmer's general, commodity and co-operative interests are co-ordinated within one national organisation. Its mission is to negotiate continuously as a united front on a national level for the farmer's economic, socio-economic and security situation.

The negotiating environment includes many activities and AgriSA offers a wide spectrum of services to members. On a national level they facilitate an extensive range of products to assist producers. These include soil conservation and environmental affairs; land reform; aspects affecting small scale farmers; water resources; labour legislation; safety, law and order; rural local government; monetary policy; fiscal policy; financing; trade policy; industrial policy; agricultural extension; marketing; financial market information; input costs; liquid fuel; transport; disease and pest control; and food security.

AgriSA is made up of the following components:

Provincial Unions (AgriWC; AgriFS, etc.)

Co-operatives

Producer organisations (Deciduous Fruit Trust)

AgriSA's Constitution places no racial restrictions on membership. However, this does not necessarily translate into any tangible black membership. There are 40 000 commercial farmers and 45 000 small scale farmers countrywide incorporated in AgriSA via the affiliation of their provincial union, commodity organisation and co-operative. In this negotiating environment AgriSA has an extremely important liasing

function with the Government as well as other sectors and groupings in the national economy. As a representative body and national mouthpiece of the agricultural sector in South Africa, AgriSA has representation in numerous official bodies, international and private organisations. Interestingly, while AgriSA is playing these roles, it is not registered as an employers' organisation with the Department of Labour. In fact, there are estimated to be about 10 registered organisations representing farmers' interests.

This implies that organisations seeking to speak on behalf of the vulnerable sectors within agriculture – the landless, seasonal workers, women and subsistence farmers – need an equal range of scope. WFP, thus far, has started to empower women and seasonal workers on farms in a small, but economically active area. The landless and subsistence farmers are being organised by the Landless People's Movement, discussed as one of our case studies. There needs to be synergy among organisations in this sector that will aid in effective representation.

Our experience in organisation development suggests that the successful organisation and unity of vulnerable groups leads to the consolidation among the powerful. This will help the powerless to identify who and what they are up against, in order to consolidate their own vision and action. In other words a powerful and organised front for farm workers might well force employers to put forward an equally powerful and unified bargaining body but this in turn will help the organising of the sector as it is better to face a single adversary. At present, however, this is not the case.

2. Unions in the agricultural sector

There are about 24 registered unions with the scope to organise in the agricultural industry. The source of this information comes from the database of the Department of Labour. However, the unions are listed alphabetically, and the database does not categorise the sectors or scope of registration.

Table 2: Unions registered with the Department of Labour

Name of Union	Base & membership	Name of Union	Base & membership
Democratic farm workers union,	Nelspruit 1121	NEHAWU	Johannesburg 178 697
E. Cape Agricultural Professional Association	Bisho – 111	SA Farming & Commercial workers Union	Johannesburg 24,705
Farm hotel, catering and general workers union	Krugersdorp – 1124	National Union of Farm and Commercial Employers	Richard's Bay 104
FAWU,	CT120,000	SA Food Retail & Agricultural Workers Union	Port Elizabeth 2,400
Food and general workers union	Port Elizabeth - 6780	SA Plantation Managers, for- ester & Allied workers Union	Nelspruit 41
Forest Industrial Allied and Commercial Union	Isipingo – 250	RAPWU	Ceres – 9,450
Forestry, Farm and Allied Trade Union	George - 800	Regional General Farmers Commercial Workers Union	Tzaneen – 350
Hospitality Catering and Farm workers Union	Mpumalanga - 3100	National Union of Security, Food, Retail and Allied Workers Union	JHB – 1,143
Limpopo Agricultural & Allied Union	Louis Trichard – 650	Retail and General workers Union	Macassar - 276
Mine, Forest & Allied Union	Vryheid – 79 23539	Western Cape Agricultural and Alliedworkers Union	Bellville - 120
National Domestic, Security, agriculture and Allied Workers Union	Sabie - 1045	Farm workers Union of SA	Eshowe – 0
National Farms Allied Workers Union	Nelspruit – 2530	Agricultural Commercial Catering and Allied workers Association	Mtubatuba - 549
SAPAWU		Winelands Farm Workers Union	Stellenbosch – 50

(Source: Department of Labour, June 2003)

Table 3: Unions seeking registration with the Department of Labour

Name of Union	Base & membership	Name of Union	Base & membership
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Agricultural, Forest, allied and General Workers Union	Witbank – 122	Farm, Cleaning & Allied Workers Union of SA	Cape Town - 643
Commercial, Retail, Agricultural & Associated W.U. of SA	Cape Town - 200	Breede River Wine-lands Development Trade Union	Ashton - 102
National farm workers union	Kuilsriver 267	Agricultural Food and Allied Workers Union of SA	Cumberwood – 496
National Council of Food and Agriculture	East London – East London	Farm Entertainment Commercial and Catering W.U	Cape Town – 200
Domestic, Retail, Agri, Wood, Security & Construction W.U	Riebeeck-Wes - 125	Security Agricultural Commercial general Trade Union	? – 12 members

(Source: Department of Labour, June 2003)

The estimated number of workers organised is about 100 000. Currently, 12 new unions are seeking registration – with a combined membership of 4500 workers. Collective bargaining is almost non-existent, and only occurs in agri-processing.

For the sake of discussion, it is important to distinguish between the different types of farm workers:

Casual workers are employees who have separate fixed-term contracts normally for a day at a time. They are offered employment on an intermittent basis. They are sometimes referred to as "Stand-by workers".

Temporary employees are those who are employed for a specific period. The reason for their employment is usually a short-term need. The contracts of employment are fixed-term contracts.

Part-time employees are those employed on a continuous basis although not on a full-time basis. The contracts of employment are indefinite but for a shorter period than a full-time contract.

Permanent employees are those whose contracts stipulate employment on a continuous basis. The conditions of employment include working hours, benefits and entitlements.

(Draft Strategy to Organise the Informal Sector and Atypical Workers: Paper presented to Cosatu's 7th National Congress)

COSATU

Since the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) in the 1985, two of its organising principles have been: 'An injury to one is an injury to all' and 'One industry, one union'.

Cosatu has already identified the need to deal with the issue of organising informal, atypical and vulnerable workers. Unions in this sector are new, relatively weak and still very small. There are a number of unions organizing in the agricultural sector. Cosatu has a policy of one industry, one union. However, five of its affiliates – Sactwu, Fawu, Saapawu, Nehawu and Rapwu – are currently organising in this sector. We interviewed one official each from Saapawu and Rapwu, as they are directly linked to the geographical area in which WFP operates.

SAAPAWU

Sectors Organised: Farming, Plantation and Forestry Workers, Livestock, Poultry, Vine, Fruit, Vegetables, Fish, Forestry, Tea Plantations and Nursery Sectors

Membership: 22 500

This is a national union, with the membership as stated above. However, the numbers are highly controversial. In the Western Cape, organising takes place on and off farms in the West Coast, Grabouw, Villiersdorp and the Boland. There has been a membership decline due to externalisation and casualisation. Saapawu organises members who work for labour brokers. Very little contact is had with employers. Some are characterised as very good ('hulle steek hulle hande uit'); others as horrible. Employers negotiate via Seesa (Labour Co-determination), a Pretoria-based organisation. The union takes up problems with the Ethical Trade Initiative. Saapawu reports that they receive support from Centre for Rural Legal Studies (CRLS), WFP and the Department of Labour. Some conflict is experienced with Fawu, with regard to organising workers on some farms and in some processing operations.

Cosatu and Saapawu have a strategic alliance, with the federation providing the organising backbone to the union – office space, administrative and strategic support.

RAPWU

Sectors Organised: Retail, Agriculture, Food Processing
Membership: 3 489

The Retail and Agricultural Processing Workers' Union was formed in November 1999. Based in Ceres, Rapwu organises mainly on farms in that area, with plans for becoming a national union. The General Secretary of Rapwu, Sebastian Julies, describes organising in the area as an uphill battle. Although the union has recognition of shop stewards, subscriptions are deducted but not paid over. Workers are dismissed in casual fashion; police are called in on a regular basis. Membership decline is ascribed to farm liquidations – 150 according to Rapwu in the last year – not to externalisation and casualisation. Labour brokers are not reported to be operating, but small contractors occur. AgriWC is not very active in the area. Employers' Organisations negotiate via Seesa (Labour Co-determination). Other employer bodies are the Deciduous Trust, Nosmesa and the Landbou Werkgewers Organisasie.

Rapwu does not enjoy a strategic relationship with Cosatu. The union is no longer affiliated to the federation, due to non-payment of fees. At the time of the interview, it described the support it received from Cosatu as 'some material assistance', no training or strategic support, and affiliation as a 'waste of time'. Rapwu was formed by ex-members of Fawu, the Cosatu giant organising in food and agri-processing. This would surely not earn them any political credibility. They might appear attractive to similarly disgruntled members or to opposition political formations, but this does not address organisational deficiencies: union work is political work.

While independent, autonomous organisation is a constitutional given, the tripartite alliance (ANC, SACP, Cosatu) has a socio-political basis. It appears that the relationship between Rapwu and Cosatu has never been more than an illusion explained as follows: Cosatu granted Rapwu affiliation on the basis that they seek rapprochement with Saapawu or Fawu. When neither a merger nor a working relationship materialised, Cosatu was able to use the non-payment of fees to cancel Rapwu's affiliation.

Saapawu, on the other hand, is Cosatu's designated agricultural union. While it appears that Saapawu's membership claim is grossly exaggerated, there is a feeling that the Federation is helpless in implementing an effective organisation-building strategy. This must not just be seen in relation to internal weaknesses of these organisations, it relates to the difficult environment all worker organisations in vulnerable sectors face.

3. Criticism of agricultural unions

Already vulnerable workers are further exploited due to the recruitment practices of many of the unions operating in this sector. It appears that unions enter farms, sign up members, collect fees, and are never seen again. This, combined with low levels of service, offer workers very little protection against employers. No inroads into collective bargaining have been made. Sustainability is difficult to achieve, given the low rates of pay, low levels of unionisation and the difficulty in obtaining or implementing stop order deductions.

There is also low differentiation among unions, making it difficult to tell them apart. Finally, these unions and their industrial-based counterparts are overwhelmingly male-dominated, even in industries where women are in the majority, such as Sactwu and Saccawu. Their symbols, organising and negotiating styles further attest to this. Women are further discriminated against as seasonal workers – a category not organised by most unions – although they may sometimes be included when wage negotiations take place.

4. Conclusion

Employers are organised into large, powerful organisations with intricate networks. At the same time, the large organisation has contracted out of local level organising and bargaining. This has implications for organisations representing workers in this sector. Organised agricultural employers enjoy great political muscle and economic standing. Any organisation seeking to enter the industry would have to bring considerable political clout to be effective.

It appears that a lot of energy and research had gone into identifying the problems agricultural workers face. Of necessity, only registered unions can demand recognition and bargaining rights. However, the industrial model of large, modern trade unions does not accommodate sectors that need a back to basics approach to building organisation. The ideal combination would therefore be a union spearheaded by the workers themselves, and who have the support of a major trade union federation with strong national and international links.

Some key questions remain:

The overwhelming model of industrial unions offer few answers to the following questions: how do we define employment, consequently who is the employment relationship with; how do we build organisation of vulnerable, unemployed and under-employed, workers².

How does WFP as an advocate of labour rights and women's empowerment position itself or its constituency to attract or direct investment towards this sector. What are the implications of the latter issue for long-term sustainability and changing the historical equity or ownership patterns?

If the perception that on-farm relations are political is correct, one needs to formulate a clear understanding of its implications for the WFP and how it defines and engages its mandate.

For WFP, it may be useful to consider the model of 'political unionism' or 'social movement unionism' (Webster, 1994:266). This form of unionism emerged in countries where workers are excluded from political decision-making processes, e.g. apartheid South Africa, Brazil and the Philippines. Through the 1980's unions played an active role in South Africa. We may now have a democratic state, governed by a 'corporatist' model of labour relations, yet workers in the agricultural sector are suffering under harsh social, political and economic conditions. The workplace itself has not become more democratic, the economy is not organised on terms favourable to workers and agricultural workers are not seen as a major political grouping. There are large numbers of workers who fall outside of the economic institutions, organising net of unions and political activity. In the wine and deciduous industry there are an estimated 385000 potential union members (see Table 1). Alliances with community-based organisations, civic movements, women's organisations, local government, land activists and local branches of political parties, are required to build a strong social movement union.

² See Pat Horn's article:

Social movements & Non-governmental organisations

In this section, we first provide definitions of the two kinds of organisations.

1. Social Movements

A Social Movement is a collective activity which operates outside of established institutions. The individual member experiences a sense of membership in an alliance of people who share her dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs and her vision of a better order. A social movement is a collective with a shared common goal. Therefore, a social movement possesses shared values and norms.

“One of the defining characteristics of a social movement is that it is relatively long lasting, rather than flaring for a few hours or a few days and disappearing. A social movement is usually large,” (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

“Social Movements generally are led by a core of people who mobilise around specific issues or groups and often remain issue-specific unless the issue is related to a broader constituency or additional issues are included that represent the needs of the members.” (Social Mobilisation – Lessons from the Mass Democratic Movement – Vivienne Taylor)

2. Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are organisations that are not part of government. This covers a wide group of organisations, from large charitable NGOs like Child Welfare to small community organisations like sports clubs or civics. This could, technically, cover private companies but, in practice, when we refer to NGOs in South Africa, we mean only those non-governmental organisations that are non-profit as well. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

The World Bank (in Brown & Korten 1989:2) defines NGO's as.....private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment or undertake community development.

3. Summary

Both types of organisations are non-governmental in nature, both are community-orientated, and both are service-driven. The first major difference appears to be around a membership base. Social movements organise members who often pay a membership fee. NGO's provide service to beneficiaries who do not have to belong to the organisation.

In South Africa, development funding from international donors are often channelled via government to NGO's to service local communities. These organisations are therefore the development partner of government. Social movements, on the other hand, organise in opposition to government policies; or to create pressure where policies do not exist; or to act against policies that are detrimental to communities.

The WFP, in terms of how it currently exercises its advocacy role, clearly plays the role of a social movement despite being an NGO. In its aspiration to move to a membership base it is critical that the WFP aspires to retain those elements that are the lifeblood of any social movement to enable it to remain an effective voice of women in this sector. This includes elements of awareness, education, and challenging the status quo.

Selected case studies of social movements

While examples of social movements abound, the research was directed at samples of NGO's giving birth to social movements. To do this, we had to confine ourselves to SA organisations. The organisations are fairly new, less than 10 years old, making it difficult to establish clear achievements and weaknesses. The analysis relies to a large extent on information and opinions given by the subjects interviewed and published by the organisations – on paper and websites.

To contrast the SA examples, we first looked at Bangladesh, a country making great strides in improving the conditions of its citizens, before then looking at South Africa.

1. Two examples from Bangladesh

BRAC

BRAC, a national private development NGO, set up in 1972 by Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed was initially established as a relief organisation, to afford relief and assistance to resettle refugees returning to Bangladesh from India after Bangladesh's Liberation War. The immediate task of relief and rehabilitation over, BRAC turned its focus on the long-term issue of poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor, especially women, in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

From its modest beginning in 1972 BRAC, initially the acronym for Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee and subsequently known only by its acronym, is now a multi-faceted organisation with over 26,000 regular staff and 34,000 part time teachers, working in 60,627 villages in all the 64 districts of Bangladesh. BRAC has been characterized as a learning institution, learning from experience and through a responsive and inductive process. Adjusting its strategy to prevailing circumstances, it does not pursue any rigid development model.

BRAC diagnoses poverty in real human terms. Prospects of a 'quiet revolution' have been recognized in the economic role of women in the world of poverty. Women with social, cultural, technological and structural constraints have been able to organise as contributors not only to their families' well being but to national production and development as well as by increasing their access to economic and social resources with the assistance of BRAC. Today, BRAC promotes income generation for the

poor, mostly landless rural people of Bangladesh, through micro-credit, health, education and training programmes.

GRAMEEN

The Grameen Bank Project (Grameen means "rural" or "village" in Bangla language) came into operation with the following objectives:

To extend banking facilities to poor men and women;

To eliminate the exploitation of the poor by money lenders;

To create opportunities for self-employment for the vast multitude of unemployed people in rural Bangladesh;

To bring the disadvantaged, mostly the women from the poorest households, within the fold of an organisational format which they can understand and manage by themselves; and

To reverse the age-old vicious circle of "low income, low saving & low investment", into virtuous circle of "low income, injection of credit, investment, more income, more savings, more investment, more income".

Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty through microcredit

The Grameen Bank is based on the voluntary formation of small groups of five people to provide mutual, morally binding group guarantees in lieu of the collateral required by conventional banks. At first only two members of a group are allowed to apply for a loan. Depending on their performance in repayment the next two borrowers can then apply and, subsequently, the fifth member as well.

The assumption is that if individual borrowers are given access to credit, they will be able to identify and engage in viable income-generating activities - simple processing such as paddy husking, lime-making, manufacturing such as pottery, weaving, and garment sewing, storage and marketing and transport services. Women were initially given equal access to the schemes, and proved not only reliable borrowers but astute entrepreneurs. As a result, they have raised their status, lessened their dependency on their husbands and improved their homes and the nutritional standards of their children. Today over 90 percent of borrowers are women.

Intensive discipline, supervision, and servicing characterize the operations of the Grameen Bank, which are carried out by "Bicycle bankers" in branch units with considerable delegated authority. The rigorous selection of borrowers and their projects by these bank workers, the powerful peer pressure exerted on these individuals by

the groups, and the repayment scheme based on 50 weekly instalments, contribute to operational viability to the rural banking system designed for the poor. Savings have also been encouraged. Under the scheme, there is provision for 5 percent of loans to be credited to a group fund and Tk 5 is credited every week to the fund.

The success of this approach shows that a number of objections to lending to the poor can be overcome if careful supervision and management are provided. For example, it had earlier been thought that the poor would not be able to find remunerative occupations. In fact, Grameen borrowers have successfully done so. It was thought that the poor would not be able to repay; in fact, repayment rates reached 97 percent. It was thought that poor rural women in particular were not bankable; in fact, they accounted for 94 percent of borrowers in early 1992. It was also thought that the poor cannot save; in fact, group savings have proven as successful as group lending. It was thought that rural power structures would make sure that such a bank failed; but the Grameen Bank has been able to expand rapidly. Indeed, from fewer than 15,000 borrowers in 1980, the membership had grown to nearly 100,000 by mid-1984. By the end of 1998, the number of branches in operation was 1128, with 2.34 million members (2.24 million of them women) in 38,957 villages. There are 66,581 centres of groups, of which 33,126 are women. Group savings have reached 7,853 million taka (approximately USD 162 million), out of which 7300 million taka (approximately USD 152 million) are saved by women.

It is estimated that the average household income of Grameen Bank members is about 50 percent higher than the target group in the control village, and 25 percent higher than the target group non-members in Grameen Bank villages. The landless have benefited most, followed by marginal landowners. This has resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of Grameen Bank members living below the poverty line, 20 percent compared to 56 percent for comparable non-Grameen Bank members. There has also been a shift from agricultural wage labour (considered to be socially inferior) to self-employment in petty trading. Such a shift in occupational patterns has an indirect positive effect on the employment and wages of other agricultural waged labourers. What started as an innovative local initiative, "a small bubble of hope", has thus grown to the point where it has made an impact on poverty alleviation at the national level.

Grameen Bank (GB) has reversed conventional banking practice by removing the need for collateral and created a banking system based on mutual trust, accountabil-

ity, participation and creativity. GB provides credit to the poorest of the poor in rural Bangladesh, without any collateral. At GB, credit is a cost effective weapon to fight poverty and it serves as a catalyst in the over all development of socio-economic conditions of the poor who have been kept outside the banking orbit on the ground that they are poor and hence not bankable. Professor Muhammad Yunus, the founder of "Grameen Bank" and its Managing Director, reasoned that if financial resources can be made available to the poor people on terms and conditions that are appropriate and reasonable, "these millions of small people with their millions of small pursuits can add up to create the biggest development wonder."

In September 2002 it had 2.4 million borrowers, 95 percent of whom are women. With 1,175 branches, GB provides services in 41,000 villages, covering more than 60 percent of the total villages in Bangladesh. Grameen Bank's positive impact on its poor and formerly poor borrowers has been documented in many independent studies carried out by external agencies including the World Bank, the International Food Research Policy Institute (IFPRI) and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Lessons: Brac is organised as an NGO, while Grameen Bank is a social movement. Both are developmental in nature, and use micro-credit to alleviate poverty. Both organisations have driven the empowerment of women into the mainstream of their development agenda. This may not have come about as a result of a theory-based gender framework, but because they were interested in helping 'the poorest of the poor' – women. Finally, both organisations started out from a seminal idea and then invented their path from there making decisions as they went along. Today both organisations have become case studies that are studied internationally.

2. NGO - Assisted Social Movements in SA

PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE & SA HOMELESS PEOPLE'S FEDERATION

Formation of the movement: The NGO, People's Dialogue, concerned with the position of homeless poor, organised a network of homeless people in SA. Through exchange visits to India, homeless people were motivated to change their situation. The first was the launch of a Housing Savings Scheme in 1991, which led to the formation of Umfelandawonye Wabantu BaseMjondolo – the SA Homeless People's Federation – in 1994. Poor people, feeling the pain of their circumstances, taking up issues affecting their lives, formed a social movement.

Members: The organisation has about 1 million members nationally. 85% of members – and leadership – are women. Men are not excluded, getting them interested and physically involved in the activities are given as the reasons for their (men's) low numbers.

Structures: See organogram

Members' control: The Federation staff are all leaders of the organisation. Their payment is by way of a stipend – no salaries.

Link between the NGO and the movement: People's Dialogue provide managerial and administrative support to the Federation; raise donor funds and administer these for the Federation. They also sit on the Utshani Fund. Both structures report a healthy, supportive relationship, with no domination from the NGO. It appears as if there is an overlap between officials from the two organisations.

Donors and Finances: The Federation does not raise its own donor funds. All organisational funds –members' contributions via the savings schemes as well as donor finances – are channelled into the Utshani Fund (on which both organisations are represented).

Sustainability: The organisation claims not to be overly concerned about this issue. However, the crisis that occurred when people were unable to pay back their loans (because government was not channelling their subsidies), points to a serious mistake in the methodology of the organisation.

Challenges: The organisation was formed with the explicit aim of helping the poor access the housing subsidy of R10 000 promised by the government. However, by 2000, when government subsidies were not forthcoming, Utshani Fund was unable to advance bridging loans. People's Dialogue ordered a moratorium on bridging loans. The Federation leadership, however, did not want to lose membership and popularity. The moratorium was implemented, but at a great cost to the organisation.

In the last year, the organisation has embarked on two major change initiatives in response to pressure from its members. The first is about leadership: members have decided that leaders should not serve too long terms, and that they should get closer to the local areas. Secondly, the organisation is now incorporating savings for economic livelihoods in their programmes.

Learnings: One major lesson the organisation has learnt – the unorganised poor have little access to institutions and resources that will alleviate their poverty. The focus of the Alliance is therefore to mobilise poor people into a representative social movement to find resources to improve their lives. Whatever means are used in this quest, care should be taken that none becomes an end in itself. The question of 'revolving funds' is the issue in point. A second lesson is that times of crises are opportunities for growth. A major challenge for the organisation was the relationship between the NGO and the HPF. The latter being the membership base they did not want to lose credibility. It took enormous courage for the leadership to take a firm stand on the non-advancement of bridging funds. The 'revolving fund' crisis has forced the organisation to rethink their strategies. They are now plotting the next step in the efforts of the social movement to enable the poor to take charge of their destinies. In other words, housing is not enough to alleviate poverty and marginalisation; people need access to land, sustainable livelihoods and control over their impact on the built environment.

NATIONAL LAND COMMITTEE AND THE LANDLESS PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The National Land Committee is a section 21 non-governmental organisation comprising a national office and nine affiliated land rights organisation. The NLC's national office in Johannesburg is the lobbying and advocacy arm of the network. The national office staff works closely with affiliated organisations. The grassroots work of the NLC affiliates informs the policy approaches and interventions of the network. Affiliates provide information and education to rural communities on land reform, as well as facilitation and planning support to land reform communities. In our research

we focussed on the relationship between the NLC and the Landless People's Movement. However, a founder member of the NLC, the Transvaal Rural Action, gave rise to the Rural Women's Movement. We have looked at some aspects of the Trac-RWM relationship.

Formation of the movement: In July 2001 a national meeting was held of all existing landless people's structures engaged in different aspects of land reform, including those organized around restitution, redistribution and labour tenancy. The LPM was born out of this meeting. Their main aim was to transform South Africa's land and asset distribution pattern as rapidly as possible by returning the land and other stolen assets – including mineral rights – to its rightful owners according to the principles of the 1994 Community Land Charter and the 2001 Landless People's Charter, and in pursuit of social and economic justice.

Members: Membership of the LPM is open to all landless people in South Africa, including those landless people who have regained their land rights but continue to struggle for sustainable livelihoods, who accept the LPM's principles, policies and programme and are prepared to abide by its Constitution and rules. The movement and the NGO incorporate a wide range of political views, from the reformist to the radical. This is not unusual, given that the strength of social movements lies in building critical mass around a minimal platform.

Structures: The LPM is led nationally by a National Council comprising nine provincial representatives (one from each province) plus a six-member Central Committee elected by the Landless People's Assembly. The LPM is lead regionally by Regional Committees comprised as determined by the regions membership. The LPM is led locally by Local Committee elected by a Branch comprising at least 30 members.

Members' control: The LPM's policies are determined by its membership, and its leadership is accountable to the membership in terms of the procedures laid down in the Constitution and the principle of transparency. It is an autonomous people's movement and maintains a principled independence from all political parties.

Link between the NGO and the movement: The NLC provides support to the LPM. The LPM relies a lot on the NLC for support. However the LPM is completely independent in terms of their constitution and their decision-making. They are not affiliated to each other. They support each other's campaigns and programmes. The NLC

organize resources for the LPM. They also manage some of the funding of the LPM because the LPM is still young and does not have the necessary accounting structure to do this. At the moment the LPM shares an office with the NLC.

Donors and Finances: The LPM has their own donors and at times they do share the resources of the NLC. The LPM has a broad membership consisting of members from the rural and urban (informal settlements) areas. They pay an annual membership fee and processing this is very slow because of distances. Members also get a membership card and of course need to abide by the constitution of the LPM.

Sustainability: While the NLC is a very sustainable organisation presently, there is growing concern that the existing over dependence on foreign aid is neither desirable nor sustainable. At the same time there is also the realization that most NGO's have battled over the years to become self-sustainable and in almost all instances where NGO's have become self-sustainable they have taken the route of establishing consultancy wings. This has meant a shift in focus from the core business of the organisation and almost in all instances has worked to the detriment of such organisations.

Challenges: The Movement wants to break free from the NGO. It feels that it has developed the support base, skills set and focus to assert its independence more strongly. The LPM's dependence on the NLC has created a dominating aspect (on the part of the NLC) to the relationship. However, slowly that relationship is changing and it is causing friction because the movement is becoming more forceful in their articulation of ideas and also because the LPM is getting more media attention. There is also a lot of international interest in the LPM because they are mobilizing the people and therefore the NGO is becoming insignificant. However, this quest for independence must be seen in terms of the organisation maturing and needing to stand on their own, not as a separation of ways. The NGO and the movement share the same vision: i.e. the restoration and redistribution of land to the landless. The two organisations may have different tactics to achieve this vision, this is their challenge.

Learnings: Consideration needs to be given to the process of building a movement around its own priorities, programmes and plans and defining the appropriate level of institutional infrastructure, staff etc. This approach needs to be engaged seriously as opposed to building the movement out of the NGO. The attendant power dynamics, focus and resource issues that would have to be engaged may well detract from the effectiveness of the movement. The needs of a movement dictate the mobilization of

mainly activist orientated people who can engage, lobby and agitate as opposed to running programmes, building capacity and implementing projects often on behalf of government. There are different models for the formation of a Social Movement. The formation of the Landless People's Movement manifests an evolutionary path from NGO to Social Movements. The formation of the Rural Womens Movement almost makes a case for the parallel and co-terminous existence of the Social Movement and NGO.

In the case of TRAC and RWM the relationship initially was largely one in which TRAC played the primary role. Over time RWM developed the support base, skills set and focus to assert its independence more strongly. In its organisational structure the latter pursued a labour union type of approach in organizing itself with branch representatives and strong local structures. This was partly responsible for the acrimony between the two entities as RWM continued to assert its independence and ability to go alone based on its strong community support.

3. Conclusions

In appearance, social movements look very much like NGO's except that the former draws its support from a much broader based community network. NGO's in essence provides support to the movement at a grassroots level. The evolution of this relationship will determine the independence of the two bodies. In other words, the NLC-LPM relationship is one where the movement is a natural outcome of the work of the NLC. This could point the way for the NLC to be incorporated into the LPM, as its advocacy and support arm. This has happened with the People's Dialogue – Homeless People's Federation relationship, and both organisations benefit. Another factor is the joint agenda that the two organisations have. It is therefore clear that while autonomy and independence of the social movement are absolutely essential, as per the empowerment approach, there will be closeness in the NGO-social movement relationship.

However, the LPM is taking a more adversarial stance than the Federation with regard to government. This could be due to the difference in the issues, or an outcome of political approaches to achieving an organisation's aims and objectives. While the HPF is being hailed as a developmental approach that is working, LPM is being reviled as a radical threat to government. This latter factor has led to the NLC and LPM reaffirming their closeness.

One of the challenging dynamics of moving from an NGO to a broader based movement is how to deal with the core of staff that enjoys all the attendant benefits of an NGO and how one then redefines their role/benefits/modus operandi in the context of a movement. In both our case studies, the NGO and movements share officials, they wear two hats. However, the elected leadership receive stipends, not salaries. This, in the opinion of the HPF, is important to maintain, because the leadership may become removed from their very poor constituencies.

NGO's have less complexity in terms of mobilizing for funding and fundraising, the requirements of a movement are massive in comparison and requires a much broader support base. It is therefore important to keep structures of movements as simple, organic and close to members as possible. The long-term sustainability of both movements and NGO's can only be considered in an environment where the poor have access to opportunities that can be realised into resources. Sustainability must also be measured in terms of ideas, human resources and leadership development.

The human cost involved in building organisation is often immense. It would be useful to examine this further. It appears that there is no difference between men and women in making sacrifices to build organisations. This must, however, be qualified by saying that all the case studies are located within patriarchal systems. Women continue to bear the burdens of family caring, community participation, and making ends meet on limited means. This means that special consideration needs to be given to developing women leadership, among other things, that will lead to gender equity. At the same time, in almost all the case studies, conscious decisions were taken to target women as recipients – in the beginning – and as a natural outcome, to play leading roles in organisations. In the Bangladesh case studies, there was a direct reference to the emancipation of women as a result of their economic independence.

It is important to remember that NGO's do not always give birth to social movements, as in these two case studies. The opposite is often the norm. For example, the Black Sash has started as a movement of white women challenging the apartheid state. After the 1994 elections, there was a shift to consolidate the NGO status of the organisation, where the practical implementation of the organisation's goals happened in the Advice Offices. This was supported by the organisation's main functions of ad-

vocacy and lobbying. The United Democratic Front (UDF), on the other hand, was an example of a movement drawing together diverse organisations – such as student organisations, women’s groupings, trade unions, civics, religious bodies – into a programme promoting democracy, justice and equality. The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) led to the demise of the UDF. In preparation for the country’s first democratic elections in 1994, the ANC became a political party, and is now the ruling government party.

Social movements and empowerment: Implications for WFP

There is always the need to keep the issue of gender on the forefront. In SA, this has taken many different forms, such as Employment Equity legislation, women owned equity, women quotas in government, and gender mainstreaming. The latter concept argues that gender must be incorporated into all programmes, and not stand alone as a separate area of development. This stand-alone idea has led to the ‘ghettoisation’ of women’s issues. However, some feminist activists have argued that ‘mainstreaming’ has removed gender ‘from its pedestal’, which could lead to the marginalisation of the gender project.

Figure 1: Definitions of power and empowerment in practice

Understanding of power	Implications in practice
power over	conflict and direct confrontation between powerful and powerless interest groups
power to	capacity building, supporting individual decision-making, leadership etc.
power with	social mobilisation, building alliances and coalitions
power within	increasing self esteem, awareness or consciousness raising, confidence building

(Source: Oxaal & Baden, 1997, p.)

Oxaal and Baden assert that power struggles do not need to be a zero-sum game. From this figure, one can conclude that empowerment involves processes of engagement. These must be clarified by organisations based on their own assessment of their strengths, weaknesses and ultimate goals. WFP has started on the ‘power to’ road, by its capacity-building work; the decision to build organisation (supporting decision-making) and developing a core of leadership among women on farms. The social movement in the making must start with forming their own organisation and building strong networks with other organisations (the ‘power with’ road). In conclusion, the strategies adopted by the new movement must lead to ‘power within’. This will be the true challenge for empowerment.

Social movements and collective action

Tarrow (1998:19) identifies the conditions for collective action as political opportunities and constraints, the repertoire of contention, consensus mobilisation, mobilising structures, the dynamics of movement, and cycles of contention.

Changes in the structures of a society give rise to *political opportunities and constraints*. For the women on farms, the extension of labour legislation, the newly introduced Minimum Wage Act and the Domestic Violence Act have created political opportunities to organise women around their pressing concerns. At the same time, the casualisation and informalisation of agricultural labour acts as a constraint, making organisation of collective action difficult.

In Ghana, the trade union movement is busy organising agricultural workers in the General Agricultural Workers' Union (Gawu). In addition to the conventional union functions of representation, training and legal assistance, it supports members in economic livelihood activities. Some examples are: access to institutional credit, farming skills, and negotiations to acquire land.

The Timber and Woodworkers Union (TWU) also in Ghana, organises self-employed woodworkers in the informal sector via affiliated associations: the National Sawyers' Association, the Small-Scale Carpenter's Association, the Wood Working Machine Owners' Association and the Cane and Rattan Workers' Association. Some constraints experienced in organising these sectors are: (i) membership dues are low and union costs are high; (ii) unionisation is fairly new among the self-employed workers, who do not readily see the value of collective action; and (iii) in a context where social security is absent, the union does not have a ready package of benefits to attract members.

Social movements use the *repertoire of contention* to gain the support of those who would otherwise not participate in collective action. In South Africa, the trade union movement would call a national strike to either protest against or create pressure for a particular outcome. In addition, or separate from strike action, an organisation would march to the Union Buildings or Parliament to deliver petitions. Songs and slogans are also part of the repertoire of social movements. The Landless People's Movement have embarked on the occupation of land to bring their points home.

Similarly, *consensus mobilisation* uses shared ideology to “justify, dignify and animate collective action” (Tarrow, 2000: 21). Three purposes are served by consensus mobilisation. Firstly, the social movement translates individual grievances into a shared ideology for the whole movement. For example, the Homeless People’s Federation have used individuals’ frustration in accessing government housing subsidies to grow a movement that helps members strategise for their own poverty alleviation. On farms, this is illustrated by members who complain about having no employment contract, and her permanent job being reduced to a few days’ work every now and then. This would be translated by the movement into a campaign against casualisation on farms.

Secondly, the movement draws on the shared identities of the group to construct a new group identity and moves beyond the boundaries of the group to identify the opponents. In other words, the ‘us and them’ concept is clarified. For WFP this would mean that employers and their organisations, especially AgriSA is seen as the opposition, not other agricultural unions or the government’s trade policies. Thirdly, consensus mobilisation helps to contain the counterposing arguments and ideologies put forward by the opposition. Once again, the WFP uses consensus mobilisation to see casualisation as a strategy by employers (the opponents) to cut costs and fight its industry competitors.

The *mobilising structures* of social movements provide a home for a wide variety of smaller groups of differing social backgrounds and ideologies. In South Africa, the United Democratic Front (UDF), provided an umbrella for organisations opposing apartheid. The Homeless People’s Federation is made up of Housing Savings Schemes mobilising their members to access government housing subsidies. The Movement for Landless People (MST) in Brazil, is made up of sharecroppers, small landowners, rural workers, even city dwellers and others who support land redistribution. The LPM is made up of structures engaged in different aspects of land reform, including those organized around restitution, redistribution and labour tenancy. In this way, social networks are built with groups with similar interest.

The *dynamics of the movement* refers to the contradictory nature of the power social movements holds over collective action. In the case of the HPF, the provision of loans to members who were entitled to housing subsidies became an entitlement in itself. This almost led to the bankruptcy and undermining of the movement. Although the issue was resolved at the end of the day, the cost to the organisation was im-

mense. It is claimed that senior officials had to leave the organisation afterwards. In the case of the LPM, almost at the conception of the movement, there was a squaring up at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. This led to reports that the LPM and its supporting NGO, the National Land Committee (NLC), were on the verge of a breakdown. More worryingly, the LPM has been the subject of Intelligence scrutiny as a result of it being a threat to national security. This fear must also be seen in terms of land struggle happening right next door in Zimbabwe.

Cycles of contention refer to the opportunities others outside of the movement see for collective action to challenge prevailing systems. Alliances are reformed and the current ideologies are replaced – sometimes abandoned – in favour of new alliances. This has sometimes led to misalignment of previously stated goals, causing the demise of the movement. Here, the Rural Women’s Movement (RWM) comes to mind. The RWM was an outcome of the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (Trac), an affiliate of the NLC. Instead of remaining focused on the issues the movement wanted to promote, infighting and political agendas reshaped the work of the movement, causing its demise. It is hoped that NLC-LPM relationship will avoid similar problems.

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