

**African Women: An Examination of Collective Organizing Among Grassroots  
Women in Post Apartheid South Africa**

**Dissertation**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines how poor black South African women in rural areas organize themselves to address their poverty situations and meet their practical needs – those that pertain to their responsibilities as grandmothers, mothers, and community members – and assesses their organizations’ effectiveness for meeting women’s goals. My research is based on two groups that are members of the South African Rural Women’s Movement. They are the Sisonke Women’s Club Group (SSWCG) and the Siyabonga Women’s Club Group (SBWCG). A majority of these women are illiterate and were *de jure* or *de facto* heads of households. Based on interviews and participant observation, I describe and analyze the strategies that these women employ in an attempt to alleviate poverty, better their lives, and assist in the survival of their families, each other, and the most vulnerable members of their community. Their strategies involve organizing in groups to support each other’s income-generating activities and to help each other in times of emergency. Their activities include making floor mats, beading, sewing, baking, and providing caregiving for members who are sick and for orphans. I conclude that, although their organizing helps meet practical needs based on their traditional roles as women, it has not contributed to meeting strategic needs – to their empowerment as citizens or as heads of households.

### **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the memories of my dearest mother and grandmother, whose education and love sustain me to commit to hardwork, perservice, and hope, and to my son, Nkonzoenhle Zondi. Thanks for all the hard work, laughter, craziness (pulling out and eating keys from my keyboard), and for the wet kisses and hugs you gave to mama while she was writing her dissertation. Mama loves you very much.

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## **Fields of Study**

Major Field: Women's Studies

African American and African Studies

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem

This dissertation examines how South African grassroots<sup>1</sup> women in rural areas organize to deal with issues related to their poverty as well as to keep up with their regular duties and responsibilities as daughters, mothers, and wives. My research explored the strategies these women use to organize and tackle challenges they face in organizing and alleviating their poverty. The dissertation is based on the experiences and perspectives of rural women belonging to two groups: Sisonke Women's Club Group (SSWCG) and Siyabonga Women's Club Group (SBWCG). Both are part of a broader organization known as the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) that was founded in 1998 in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province. SSWCG and SBWCG are located in the rural communities of Umzinto district near Durban. A majority of the women of SSWCG and SBWCG are illiterate (83.5 %) and 84.7% were *de jure* or *de facto*<sup>2</sup> heads of households. They engage in various activities to generate income and survive. These include making floor mats, beading, sewing, baking, and caregiving for neighbors who are sick and for

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<sup>1</sup> Here the term grassroots refers to ordinary women who organize in rural areas, places that tend to be socially excluded. The Legal Dictionary online defines the term as referring to "ordinary people at a local level (as distinguished from the centers of political activity)," and, originally, a distinction was made "with reference to rural areas in contrast to the towns." The Legal Dictionary. Accessed September 20, 2012. [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com). See chapter 2 for discussion of grassroots development.

<sup>2</sup> As used and defined by Caroline Moser, a *de jure* female-headed household is a household in which "the male partner is permanently absent due to separation or death, and the woman is legally single, divorced, or widowed" while a *de facto* woman-headed household is one in which "the male partner is temporarily absent, and the woman is not the legal household head" (Moser 1993: 17).

orphans. This dissertation describes and analyzes the effectiveness of the strategies that these (and many other) women in South African rural areas utilize to alleviate their poverty and guarantee the survival of their children/families, and neighbors.

The creation and selling of products by the women of SSWCG and SBWCG prioritize their urgent “practical needs”<sup>3</sup> for feeding and educating their children and grandchildren they are raising. Decisionmaking regarding priority needs is based on daily emergencies as they arise. Organizing priorities of SSWCG and SBWCG, therefore, support one of Gwendolyn Mikell’s key themes in her discussion of African women: because a large proportion of African women are poor, they prioritize bread and butter issues in contrast to middle class women and feminists who prioritize more abstract issues of gender equality and women’s rights (Mikell 1997: 4).

Even though post-apartheid South Africa is democratic and emphasizes equality, economic development, and education for all, my research found that rural women continue to be left behind. They continue to face discrimination from economic, social, and political institutions and from patriarchal Zulu culture. This raises questions about how South Africa’s democracy should address the maldistribution of resources and income. It also led me to focus my dissertation research on what rural women are doing to survive under these conditions. Therefore my research question was: how effective are rural women’s survival and empowerment strategies?

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<sup>3</sup> Initially coined by Maxine Molyneux as “practical gender interests,” practical needs (Moser states that interests are needs) “are a response to an immediate perceived necessity that is identified by women within a specific context. They ... often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care, and employment” (Moser 1993: 40). I use practical needs to refer to what women of SSWCG and SBWCG perceive as immediate necessities such as food, water, sanitation, and education for children. Practical needs are what women require to fulfill their responsibilities as wives, mothers, and community members.

## **Background to the Problem**

The first democratic election in 1994 in South Africa marked a historical milestone in a long war against apartheid and dehumanization of most black South African citizens in society. There were some salient gains. For example, the newly achieved democracy in South Africa, in its new constitution, attempted to break the silence against gross injustice and abuse committed against women and children of South Africa and, most profoundly, recognized women's constitutional rights as citizens entitled to human rights. The African National Congress (ANC) government, from the outset, grounded the constitution in non-racist as well as non-sexist principles that put forth "human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedoms" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). In the making of a non-sexist society, the Bill of Rights of the constitution further emphasizes everyone's equality before the law and rejects discrimination on the bases of gender, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, and culture" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996).

South African women receive specific protection in section 9 of the constitution entitled "Equality." It says: "The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). The prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of gender, sex, pregnancy and marital status is clearly intended to protect women. South African



women's recognition in constitutional rights are based in the fact that before democracy in South Africa arrived in 1994, no women could vote and they were disproportionately economically disadvantaged with low paying jobs. However, as in the past, in contemporary South Africa black women still experience high rates of rape and domestic violence.

The new South African constitution and democracy created a false impression that the battle against sexism and racism had been fought and won. In fact, democracy in South Africa has been characterized by continued economic, political, and social inequalities across the country. For instance, no significant land redistribution was done, leaving an overwhelming proportion in the hands of whites, as under apartheid. Despite the democratic South African constitution recognizing women's right to participate in all aspects of politics, business, and the country's development (Todes, Sithole, and Williamson 2007), the democracy has embraced pre-existing forms of gendered power relations whereby men dominate women in most arenas socially, politically, and economically (Daymond 1996: xxv). Gendered power relations evident in the process of democratization of South Africa continue to be hierarchical. The principles of a non-sexist society expressed in the constitution have not yet been achieved. For this reason, Filomina Steady and Shireen Hassim have argued that women's collective action is crucial to fight entrenched patriarchal dominance and bring about gender equality and women's empowerment (Steady 2006; Hassim 2006). Women's organizations such as

RWM were established with this goal in mind. RWM focuses on both women's practical needs and their strategic interests.<sup>4</sup>

The ratification of the Rights of Women in Africa in the African Charter of Human Rights in 2005, signed by many African states of which South Africa was one, marked a milestone in the fight for women's legal rights (Equality Now 2010). Also adding to women's roles in the creation of a non-sexist society, the African National Congress Women's League's (ANCWL) Constitution encourages women to take the lead, even though it recognizes that the elimination of gender oppression requires both men's and women's responsible efforts (ANCWL 2009). ANCWL started as a "women's section" within the ANC as a form of gender consciousness addressing the ANC women's role in exile during the apartheid era (Hassim 2006: 13). It was on the return of the ANC from exile in 1990 that "the women's section" of ANC was "reconstituted as the ANC Women's League (ANCWL), a structure that had independent power." It was formed for women's collective action, even though it was still "under the ultimate political control of the ANC's National Executive Committee" (Hassim 2006: 13).

Despite all the efforts to achieve women's rights, women are still disproportionately affected by discrimination, lagging behind men on a variety of economic, political, and social indicators. According to South African statistics, black South Africans make up the majority, 79%, of the country's population, and women are a majority of the 49% who inhabit rural areas (Statistics South Africa 2010). Rural women

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<sup>4</sup> Molyneux differentiates strategic gender needs from practical needs as "the needs that are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination ... and they vary according to particular contexts" (Molyneux 1985a: 233).

face the worst oppression because they live in areas that are severely underdeveloped due to the heritage of apartheid (Small and Kompe 1992: 9). Although women lag behind men in South Africa, they contribute significantly to local and national economies as they participate in both formal and informal, work with a large contribution to informal work<sup>5</sup> through domestic work, vending, and agriculture, among others (Wills 2009: 23). Despite their major contributions and participation in transformational struggles in national and local arenas (Afonja and Olabisi 2000: 6), most black rural and many black urban women are still virtually excluded from decisionmaking in the government and private business sectors.

In South Africa, government development agencies and policies also have been put in place to advance some women's lives politically, socially, and economically. But implementation is problematic and many women's lives are still characterized by tremendous economic exploitation, sexual harassment, abuse, violence, and multiple oppressions based on gender. Thus, the marginalization of many South African rural and poor urban women from decisionmaking and strategizing for the development and transformation of their own country suggests the need to focus more effectively on their strategies for empowerment and coalition building.

Undeniably, some government agencies in South Africa have attempted to address gender inequalities to increase income and other economic opportunities for

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<sup>5</sup> Formal work refers employment in companies that are legally registered and covered by labor law. Informal work refers to subsistence agriculture and work that is not legally registered and escapes labor law. According to Cathy Rakowski, the informal sector (also referred to as the informal economy, informality, or informals) "encompasses any or all of the following: small-scale firms, workshops, and microenterprises with low capital inputs where production levels depend on intensive use of labor; the nonprofessional self-employed, subcontracted put-out workers, disguised wage workers; unprotected or only partially protected work" (Rakowski 1994: 3).

some women (Todes, Sithole, and Williamson 2007: 18). As a result, the social status and human dignity for some women have improved, especially the better educated and politically active women. The democratic government in South Africa, however, has not managed to decrease inequality as much as its legislative, institutional, and constitutional reforms would suggest (Romero 1998: 4; Hassim 2005: 8). The number of South African women who are victims of gendered violence, rape, HIV/AIDS, and poverty remain an area of deep concern in terms of South Africa's prospects for poverty eradication, with its effects felt more by women as caretakers and mothers than by men (Sender 2010: 9). This is to say, even though apartheid (and colonialism) was abolished in South Africa, its effects still remain and are felt in institutionally inscribed hierarchies and differences that still affect women's opportunities, problems, and choices of solutions.

### **The Objectives of the Study**

The study's main goal was to document the strategies and goals that grassroots women in rural areas apply through their collective organizing and to identify the challenges they face. Research focused on women in one area of rural South Africa in KwaZulu-Natal province. The members of the women's groups associated with the Rural Women's Movement who were interviewed, Sisonke Women's Club Group (SSWCG) and Siyabonga Women's Club Group (SBWCG), make crafts such as floor-mats, table-cloths, baskets, and beadwork, and also bake in order to generate income to fulfill basic needs for the survival of their children and families.

In this organization, we use our hands to work; we do crafts including floor-mats, beadwork, quilting, and baking. We

do this to be able to develop/empower/better/improve  
[ukuzithuthukisa] ourselves so that we are able to help our  
children and families.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of empowerment used by these women in Zulu can mean betterment, development, improvement of the self. This is the multiple sense in which it is discussed throughout the dissertation.<sup>7</sup> There are many challenges to the goal of “self empowerment” – in the sense of “improve capability.” For example, these women have no formal marketing mechanism for their products; they use their houses as places for gathering, and they depend on word of mouth and local events to sell their products.

We do not have a market place where we can sell our product; we work in our households, we rotate in volunteering our homes to use as a place of gathering for us. We sell our products to people in this place [village, region] and they now know us. They come and approach us if they also need to place an order for something. We also benefit from local events such as weddings and funerals because we get more orders.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike rotating savings groups and clients of micro-lending banks, members of SBWCG and SSWCG do not borrow money to make their products to sell. They instead

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<sup>6</sup> Research Subject # 1. August 27, 2009. SBWCGA Interview.

Kule nhlango, sisebenzisa izandla zethu ukusebenza; siyathunga obhasikidi kanye namacansi, senza ubuhlalu, siyathinga izingubo, futhi siyabhaka. Senza lokhu ukuze sikwazi ukuzithuthukisa sibe namandla ukuze sikwazi ukusiza izingane zethu kanye nemindeni yethu.

<sup>7</sup> *Ukuzithuthukisa* is a word/phrase that women interviewed frequently used referring to their own improvement/betterment/empowerment/development (in terms of affording practical needs). It is from a verb *-thuthuka* meaning “grow, increase, progress, develop, be empowered, become important, become influential” (Doke and Vilakazi 1989. *IsiZulu Dictionary*).

<sup>8</sup> Research Subject # 5. September 9, 2009. SBWCGB Interview.

Asinayo imakethe la singadayisa khona umsebenzi wethu; sisebenzela emakhaya ethu, siyashinethana ngokunikela ngamakhaya ethu ukuwasebenzisa njendawo yethu la sihlangukhona. Sithengisela umphakathi umsebenzi wethu futhi sebeyasazi, ngakho nabo bayeza kithi basitshele uma befuna ukwenza i-oda lokuthile, siyahlomula futhi emicimbini yasendaweni efana nemishado nemingcwabo ngoba sithola ama-oda athe xaxa.

use local raw materials from nature and small purchases of other materials with money borrowed from each other or from profits. SBWCG and SSWCG of RWM demonstrate the variety of methods that many South African grassroots women and groups utilize to remedy their situations in their settings. Their strategies are driven by practical needs, often urgent, that relate to their daily lives and fulfillment of their gendered responsibilities (Moser 1993: 37). They address inadequate living conditions, but their actions maintain existing gender relations and structural inequalities. For example, they still do not have decisionmaking power within their households; women still refer to men who are absent from home as heads of households. When men return, they defer to men's care and group activities often are cancelled; while men are away, women do not make the kind of decisions that are reserved for men. The power these women have seems to be limited to decision making that takes place within their groups. If women gained strategic power through participation in organizations, then they should be able to share decisionmaking on household affairs with husbands and should be able to participate in group activities even if the husbands are home. I conclude that the women I studied have not yet focused on strategic needs, but only on basic needs.

Craftwork as a form of addressing practical needs for rural women is not an income-generating strategy unique to SBWCG and SSWCG in South Africa. In West Africa women produce crafts and pottery and sell them in the market (Anquetil 1983: 1-4). Organizing craftwork to generate income helps many grassroots women around the world cater to the basic needs of their families. As such, women's organizing for income-generation can help to empower women in rural areas by improving their ability to

provide for their families, especially children. All of the women I interviewed said that, even though their small amounts of capital limit their production, they have been able to help themselves and help other group members. At times, groups' efforts help support members in meeting emergency needs (SBWCGA RS # 3). But it is important to point out that these groups are not intended to share profits among members, unlike groups studied by Paola Gianturco and Toby Tuttle (Gianturco and Tuttle 2004: 4-5). The group format is meant to facilitate each woman's individual efforts to meet her family's needs and to help the ill and orphans. This limits groups' possible function as a means to achieve greater individual and collective empowerment and the alleviation of poverty.

By studying these women's strategies for collective organizing for production and the challenges to their effectiveness, we can better understand possibilities for and barriers to women's empowerment and economic well-being. This will be important to improve theories about women's needs and strategies within this specific context. It also could lead to improved policy-making and programs to serve their needs. These are the goals of my dissertation. Therefore during fieldwork I focused my research on:

- the goals behind grassroots women's collective organizing;
- strategies grassroots women select, why, and the relation to women's empowerment;
- problems/challenges women face in using collective (group) activities to improve well-being; and
- how they strategize to solve these challenges/problems.

In this dissertation I therefore show that, for the women studied in the area of Umzinto in KwaZulu-Natal, the concept of “development” includes notions of “improvement, advancement, and betterment” of their individual and collective needs and that of their children and the broader community. The women understand that there are government programs for rural development but, according to them, such programs have not benefitted them. As a result, they organize in groups to foster solidarity and mutual help and commit time and great effort on income-generating projects that have not helped to move them out of poverty.

I also show that despite the South African government’s explicit commitment to rural development and its policy focus on poor rural women, the women I studied, so close to the municipal government in the city of Durban, have been marginalized or left out of community development and anti-poverty programs that both the national government and local governments (municipalities) have prioritized.

In this dissertation I further argue that the South African government’s current decentralization approach is not understood by the poor in rural communities. Decentralization is a neoliberal concept (Beall 2004) that involves citizens’ integration in development programs through cost sharing for services such as electricity and water. In fact, as revealed by the women I studied and studies of similar groups in KwaZulu-Natal (Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Sotshongaye Moller 2000), the rural poor think about development in terms of the earlier social welfare approach where the government took care of infrastructure and service needs without cost sharing.



Finally, I suggest in the conclusion that rural women's needs as identified in this dissertation can be linked to specific programs and policies that the South African government already has in place as part of its anti-apartheid strategies to overcome the injustices of the past.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter two includes the political background and history of South Africa that is relevant to understanding the historical context. It also includes the relevant theories surrounding women's empowerment and organizing as proposed in the field of "women / gender and development" and related literature. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology and introduces SSWCG and SBWCG women's club groups of the RWM – the umbrella organization. Chapter four analyzes women's experiences and perspectives as revealed in their interviews. Chapter five analyzes women's group activities and strategies through the lens of participant observation. Chapter six looks at challenges facing the women's groups studied and how the women handled them. Chapter seven summarizes and interprets the findings, discusses limitations of the research, and proposes directions for future research. In this chapter I also discuss alternative means for helping the women studied achieve their goals of empowerment/improvement/betterment and poverty alleviation – specifically the roles that can be played by the government programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus on women and empowerment in South Africa.

## **Chapter 2: Background and Conceptual Framework of the Study**

In this review of the literature that influenced my research, this chapter presents an overview of the background to the study – democracy and development in South Africa – as well as the conceptual framework for the study, including theories of development and of women/gender and development (WID/GAD approaches to development), development policy shifts, and some background on women's organizing and power in South Africa. The chapter also provides background details of the research site selected. These bodies of literature helped me to place my analysis of the groups I studied, SSWCG and SBWCG, and women's perspectives and their experiences within the broader context of South African history (cultural and political) and the current political and economic policies that are the context within which women understand or don't understand the causes of their oppression and/or the choices and limitations they face in their struggle to improve their livelihoods and their communities.

South African history and contemporary political and economic policies are included in this dissertation because they provide the context within which the women I studied live and struggle.<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, I also discuss theories of development, particularly the modernization approach, and the political impacts of neoliberal economic and political approaches to explain why the area and the women I studied continue to be

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<sup>9</sup> A discussion of Zulu culture is included in the next chapter.

marginalized in South Africa. Theories and approaches can be seen in the policies and government programs that are part of the context within which my study took place. They help to explain features of specific government policies (rural development, gender mainstreaming) that could or should provide social justice to the rural poor women studied.

Further, a feminist conceptual framework helped me to design my research for the groups and the place that I chose to study. Postcolonial theory inspired me to focus on women's perspectives and experiences as they expressed them through interviews. The reason is that the reality of South Africa's history of oppression of black women is critical to understanding their contemporary experiences. It was therefore important for me to listen to women's words and understand them within their historical, political, and cultural context. For example, the women showed in their conversations expectations of betterment and improvement as promised by the democratic government. Yet they find little difference between their current situation and when they were under apartheid. The feminist theory of intersectionality, which emphasizes the interaction of oppression based on race, class, gender, led me to identify the multiple sources of women's oppression, including those related to their structural positions, which they themselves may not be conscious of. For example, intersectionality helped me to realize that in addition to factors of race, class, and gender, some norms in Zulu culture were important sources of women's oppression. Through the lens of intersectionality I was also able to understand how women themselves enforce norms that limit their rights and their agency; they have confused defense of culture with defense of patriarchy.

My reading of WID/GAD approaches to development pulls together feminist theories of women's empowerment with critiques of mainstream development planning and neoliberal economies. This literature provided insight into my understanding of recent shifts in government policies and programs to "mainstream" women. One such policy is the establishment of a "national machinery" to address the needs of historically marginalized groups (for example, the Department for Women, Children, and People with Disability). WID/GAD approaches also influenced how I conceptualized the issue of women's empowerment in this study and how I contrasted feminist discussions of empowerment with women's "empowerment/improvement/betterment" as understood by the women I studied. The development literature also helped me understand the importance of women's NGOs and how they can substitute for the government on the one hand and how, on the other, they often focus on empowering women in many different ways. For example the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) emphasizes empowerment and women's rights among rural poor women in South Africa and it plays a role in policy advocacy.

A final section provides insight into women's leadership and forms of organizing in South Africa. Most studies of women's organizing focused on either women's political activism (i.e., against apartheid in South Africa) or on urban women's organizing or specific types of economic activities such as agriculture and markets. This realization is one reason why I chose to conduct my research on understudied groups of rural poor women who are not market women, traders, farmers, or political activists.

## **Background: Democracy and Development in South Africa**

From the nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, British and Dutch settler colonialism in South Africa divided and ruled African societies using apartheid as a primary method. Apartheid became the law in South Africa in 1948 with the election of the Nationalist Party by an exclusively white electorate. It was based on a “divide and conquer” principle, in this case racial and “tribal” segregation and oppression. The apartheid system was achieved and enforced by violence and deprived the indigenous African population of all rights, using as one model the treatment of Native Americans in the United States. Complete segregation was the goal, including confinement of all Africans to ethnically segregated reserves and ultimately to certain peripheral urban townships like Soweto at Johannesburg (Hamermesh 1968; Hlatshwayo 2000).

The resulting divisions between rural and urban, synonymous with poor and rich, still prevail. Rural areas were classified as reserves called “Bantustans” for the “Bantu,” a classification used for all black South Africans under apartheid. These areas contain a large majority of the rural population. With apartheid, white authorities removed many black South Africans from their traditional land, and forced them into small, segregated settlements in these reserves with no infrastructure and with little or no fertile land available for farming. In most white settler colonies like Zimbabwe and South Africa, white settler colonial governments dispossessed most Africans of their land and agricultural livelihoods in order to use them as exploited laborers on farms, plantations, and in mines, and in the case of women as servants (Mngxitama 2006: 43-45; Moyo and

Yeros 2005: 45-46). These inequalities made rural people more oppressed, poor, and less visible. In the process of land dispossession, rural black African women became more vulnerable. Deprived of land rights, they became laborers with little value or had to depend on men's labor – also another form of exploitation and oppression – for cash and survival, despite the fact that they had been the main agricultural producers traditionally (Frye and Magasela 2005: 4; Igoe 2006: 405). Publications on land conflicts and struggles suggest that, in the midst of postcolonial transition, development, democratization, and globalization, contemporary South Africa is still steeped in socioeconomic and political crises inherited from the era of colonialism and apartheid (Hlatshwayo 2000). This situation is directly relevant to the lives of the women studied.

#### *National Government Development Strategies*

The 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 marked the first democratic election in South Africa. Every citizen, for the first time, had the right to elect the government of his or her choice on the principle of one person, one vote. The reason why thousands of people stood in long lines to cast their vote was because they believed that democracy would bring good governance and justice for people who suffered the most under apartheid – the blacks, “the other.” The newly elected government with Nelson Mandela as president promised to work for all South Africans - black, white, colored, rich, poor, etc.

“The apartheid planning discourse [had been] organized along the lines of racial separation and operationalised through spatial partition” (Maharaj n.d.: 1). Non-white South Africans were stripped of their citizenship and the right to participate in all

political structures, to freely move around the country, or to own and use the land. They were only made available as a source of cheap labor for white capitalists by proscribing their access to arable land and taking away their means of economic self-reliance such as cattle. It should also be stated that the mining-based pattern of global capitalism that was adapted by apartheid South Africa after the discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1886) was articulated on the migrant labor system that moved the able-bodied male population to urban labor camps and not only marginalized women from meaningful economic participation, but also left them to bear the brunt of induced poverty in both the rural and urban areas. The World Bank reported the results of this system: 13% of the population of South Africa (comprised mainly of its white citizens) live like they are in the “first world” while 53% (mainly black citizens) live in the “third world” with no access to basic needs such as water, food, and sanitation.<sup>10</sup> Thus, for a post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) government, development had to encompass not only economic but also political (racial) and social goals. In short, development is not only an issue of economic expansion and human development but must also “give meaning to political freedom” in post apartheid South Africa (Wehner 2000: 183).

The post apartheid government linked development with democracy / citizens’ freedoms and social justice. Post apartheid development policy objectives are tied to the country’s constitutional values: “human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms, non-racialism [non-racism] and non-sexism”

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<sup>10</sup> The World Bank: Working for a World Free of Poverty. South Africa. Accessed October 7, 2012. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica>

(The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996).<sup>11</sup> For these reasons, the initial post apartheid government development policy objectives combined development with reconstruction, that is, mending political, social, and economic injustices. This was translated into the original Mandela development policy plan titled the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)<sup>12</sup> (ANC 1994). RDP's principal objective was to "meet South Africans' basic needs, develop human resources [through education and training], build the economy and democratize the state" (Government Gazette 1994: 8). The World Bank heavily resisted the RDP approach and the donor community argued that the program was too socialist and favored the poor instead of encouraging business and economic growth. The RDP as a development policy was therefore replaced by another development policy framework known as Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) in June 1996 (Wehner 2000: 184). "GEAR stresses the need for sustained and high levels of growth to be achieved through a 'competitive outward-oriented economy'" (Wehner 2000: 185). GEAR is a neo-liberal approach with a market driven strategy, shifting the focus to debt reduction by cutting social programs, reducing government expenditure that was blamed for encouraging dependency, and instituting fiscal discipline. GEAR was met with criticism in South Africa for departing from the RDP oriented primary development framework because of its emphasis on "economic development led by the private sector with privatization of state owned enterprises,

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<sup>11</sup> "Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996." Chapter 1: Founding Provisions. Accessed October 06, 2012. <http://www.info.gov.za/documents/constitution/1996/a108-96.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> This definition is a modification of the Wikipedia definition for the Reconstruction and Development Programme in South Africa. Accessed April 20, 2009. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction\\_and\\_Development\\_Programme](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction_and_Development_Programme)



reduction of government expenditure (social service / welfare), and a more flexible labor market” (Maharaj n.d.: 5). However, even with its rhetoric on improving the well being of South Africans, promoting economic and social development, and promoting justice, GEAR lacked an articulate strategy to bridge the gap between the rural areas of South Africa wallowing in abject poverty and the urban areas where most of the social services were concentrated. As pointed out earlier, this situation was created by the design of the apartheid regime, and the new democratic South Africa carried it over, creating great tensions and contradictions. Therefore, in attempting to promote justice and implement equality, the government proposed development strategies that would bring attention to rural areas, the most socially excluded regions of South Africa.

#### *Rural/Local Development Plans*

The South African government had to direct the focus of development paradigms that not only benefitted more urban areas but also catered to the most marginalized rural areas. The South African government has defined rural development as multidimensional, and as being much more than just poverty alleviation. “It placed emphasis on changing the socio-economic environments to enable poor people to earn more, invest in themselves and their communities and contribute toward maintenance of key infrastructure; a successful strategy will make people less poor, rather than more comfortable in their poverty” (IRSDS 2000: 6).

For this reason, in 2000 the South African government shifted to pro-poor and rural centered development initiatives through an integrated rural development strategy.

The Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) was designed to realize a vision that will “attain socially cohesive and stable rural communities with institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people, [...] equipped to contribute to growth and development” (ISRDS 2000: 4).<sup>13</sup>

In addition to ISRDS, the current Zuma administration embarked on a mission whose main objective was to focus on population on the periphery – rural communities – by introducing the Ministry of Rural Development and Land Reform in May of 2009 (RDLR 2010). In partnership with local governments, the Ministry resorted to the establishment of a development policy referred to as the “Comprehensive Rural Development Programme” (CRDP). In his foreword for the 2011-2014 Comprehensive Rural Development Programme’s strategic plan, the minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Gugile Nkwinti, stated:

The CRDP has set us on a new course for post-colonial reconstruction and development. It is about changing rural people’s lives, and enabling them to take control of their destiny and enjoy the freedoms and dignity promised by our constitution. People remain central to development, and as such, the programme will consciously place particular emphasis on empowering rural communities to take charge of their destiny (Nkwinti 2011: 7).

The government continued its attempts to focus on programmes that gave attention to the development of the poor in rural areas in accordance with their own research. “A considerable proportion of the population lives in poverty in the rural areas.

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<sup>13</sup> The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS). 2000. Accessed October 08, 2012. <http://www.sagov.co.za/isrds/html>.

Some 70% of poor live in these areas” (Hemson, Meyer, and Maphunye 2004:2).

Because the country has decentralized administrative powers,<sup>14</sup> the national government then passes responsibility to local governments to implement development programs in rural areas. Municipal governments, however, are required to come up with funds, identify local priorities (usually urban), and require cost sharing.

In facilitating development in the country, the post apartheid government stressed the importance of public participation in the public policy arena, putting the constitutional principle of “the democratic participation of the people in all policy processes” into practice (The Constitution of South Africa 1996). This required an integration plan, which resulted in the establishment of Integrated Development Planning (IDP) in 1996, under the authority of local governments at the municipal level, and theoretically in consultation with the people at the grassroots. Again, this is more likely to take place in urban areas than in rural areas where population is widely dispersed. Through the IDP development strategy, “the people [should be] given an opportunity to identify and prioritize their needs, identify available resources from their communities, and to participate during the development, implementation and review of IDP” (Mogaladi 2007: 8). Furthermore, the Municipality Structures Act (1998) and Municipality Act (2000) mandate that “all the municipalities should develop and have an Integrated Development Plan in consultation with the people, that is, there should be full and active participation of the people in each ward” (Magaladi 2007: 8).

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<sup>14</sup> This is a neoliberal policy designed to make elected officials accountable to those who elect them and to promote policies that respond to real problems at the local level. It leads local authorities to focus on areas where voters concentrate – urban areas.

### *The Research Site*

The Ugu District Municipality is one of the ten districts of the KwaZulu-Natal<sup>15</sup> provincial government. It is an area that “is bordered on the north by the eThekweni municipality and on the western side by the uMgungundlovu and Sisonke municipalities and the Eastern Cape Province. The eastern boundary is the Indian Ocean” (Situational Analysis 2012: 9).<sup>16</sup> The district consists of six local municipalities, including Umdoni municipality under which falls the Syphambili<sup>17</sup> area of Umzinto, the site of my research. Specifically, the local Umdoni municipality “covers an area of 236 square kilometers” and is located about “50 km from Durban and 65 km from Port Shepstone” (Umdoni Municipality 2012). This district consists of urban (small towns) and rural / traditional places. The population for this district is estimated at “687,735” with approximately “102,237 households” (Situational Analysis 1996). Population composition by gender shows that 54% of the population is female and 46% is male.

Prior to colonialism, Umzinto was made up of indigenous African all rural communities, but now is divided into small towns and rural areas located in the inner west region of the eThekweni<sup>18</sup> / Durban Municipal area of KwaZulu-Natal province.

Umzinto used to be known for its sugarcane plantations. Economic divisions exist

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<sup>15</sup> Most scholarly research and government reports about KwaZulu-Natal focus on HIV/AIDS, violence against women, sexual assaults, and sex trafficking because of high rates of each and they are considered life threatening. KZN consistently has the lowest rate of women in development and lowest female life expectancy compared to other provinces of SA (Booyesen et al. 2011).

<sup>16</sup> This is an online Situational Analysis of Ugu District Municipality for the KZN government’s development planning. Accessed October 09, 2012.

<http://devplan.kzntl.gov.za/Municipal/IDPs/Ugu/General%20Docs/5Situational%20Analysis.doc>

<sup>17</sup> This is a pseudo-name, given for the protection of the respondents who gave information for this study, as required by the IRB. However, names for municipalities are real.

<sup>18</sup> eThekweni is the new official name for Durban.

between its urban and rural areas, with rural people significantly poorer than their urban counterparts. Umzinto has a population of about 50,000, approximately 16% of whom are urban and 84% rural (Situation Analysis 1996). The research site is located some 30 kilometers from Durban and the Syphambili is about 30 kilometers from the area that the rural people refer to as their “town.” From my observation, this “town” site has only two buildings, one with a few government offices, a clinic, staff such as social workers, offices for elected councilors, and another building used as a community center. When I stopped by to check out the activities there, I found that the community center had young people inside. It had HIV/AIDS awareness visual aids (posters/pictures/writings) on the inside walls. The answer I got when asking individuals what was happening was that they use this place for community activities such as talking about HIV/AIDS and for sports (youth activities). There were youths (including teenagers) working on a HIV/AIDS stage play to promote awareness of the disease.

### **Conceptual Framework for the Study**

The research for my study is influenced by postcolonial feminist and intersectionality theories because of the interlocking issues prevalent in the South African economy, society, and politics that are rooted in the history of colonialism and apartheid as well as the diverse nature of the country and its inhabitants speak to possible intersecting life experiences for the women. Their intersecting life experiences of oppression overlap with the internal and structural factors that oppress the women I studied (discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation) not only in economic and social spheres but also in their political

life. The women studied are marginalized not only socially, economically, racially/ethnically, and culturally, but also by age, their grown children, and are self-oppressed because they are unaware of all factors that oppress them. They remain, as will become clear in a later section of this Chapter and in later Chapters, tokens and subalterns<sup>19</sup> in the implementation of government development programs designed for poor people in rural areas.

### *Postcolonial Feminist Theoretical Framework*

In their writings about Third World feminisms<sup>20</sup> in juxtaposition to Western feminisms, postcolonial feminists like Chandra Mohanty, Uma Narayan, Sandra Harding, Aihwa Ong, and Gayatri Spivak place emphasis on the significance of recognizing women's differences and the different forms of oppression(s) in women's lives (Mohanty 2003; Narayan and Harding 2000; Spivak 1996; Ong 1988). Postcolonial feminist discourse argues for understanding and acknowledgment of specific women's past and present history and culture to better understand the relationship among women around the world. Hegemonic feminists in First and Third worlds, or women in development and development planners in the case of this study, need to confront the brutal history of colonialism, apartheid, and slavery, and their roles in shaping the contemporary developing countries like South Africa. In alignment with the argument by

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<sup>19</sup> They are subalterns because they are not consulted – others speak for and about them and define their problems and solutions.

<sup>20</sup> I pluralize “feminism” to acknowledge feminisms as a concept with various transnational, transbordered, translocal, and transcultural approaches. A singular form, I believe, presents a danger of essentializing diversified approaches within feminism.

Mohanty, Narayan and Harding, Spivak, and Ong, it is evident in this dissertation that, based on the lives of the women I studied, one cannot talk about “women” – whether rural or urban – without acknowledging the differences among women and the intersection of variables such as culture, ethnicity, sex, class, race, and language in understanding diverse women’s lives. Human beings live on a planet of antagonisms where difference becomes a source of inequality leading to oppression, especially if your difference is distant from a socially embraced “norm” such as being well off and living in the suburbs with a car and a big house. For example, individuals like the women I studied live under a “deviating norm” because they are poor and living in underdeveloped rural areas with no running water, no electricity, no sanitation. They are usually associated with “otherness.”

Postcolonial feminists engage in rhetoric and textual discourses<sup>21</sup> that oppose inequitable power relations that have been oppressive to Third World women. Thus power relations between so-called Third World and First World women, including misrepresentations of Third World women, have become the primary focus of postcolonial feminist critics. According to Narayan and Harding, women are constructed through race, class, culture, language, and religion, including other power relations (Narayan and Harding 2000). Some feminists’ ignorance of distinct experiences among women means rejecting the reality of women’s lives, especially those in developing countries. According to Mohanty, feminists need to work towards a “noncolonizing” feminist discourse that acknowledges differences “within and among the various

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<sup>21</sup> I find this strategy highly revealing and useful for reading policies and government programs as political discursive tools.

communities of women” (Mohanty 2003: 224). She also states that feminists need to recognize the divisions that have been created through labels such as “Third World” and “First World” that lead to hierarchal stratification among women (226). As a South African feminist and studied at a U.S. university, I have taken these critiques to heart.

In “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” Alcoff critiques the inherent danger in most privileged feminists’ tendency of speaking for others, a danger that reinforces oppression and dichotomies: the speaker – the subject – and the silenced – the object, “the other” (Alcoff 1995). This connects to the women I studied in several ways. For example, the director of RWM occupies a privileged position as founder and political spokesperson for the organization. Not only does she speak on behalf of women and uses her class privilege and political skills to do so, the women I studied and others I spoke with who are members of RWM trust her to speak and advocate for them. There is nothing wrong with having an advocate, but there is a problem if the people the director is speaking on behalf of are unaware of the significance of the director’s position and how she benefits politically from being able to say that she represents hundreds of rural women. At the same time, I found that these women had no idea how the umbrella organization – RWM – operates and how they may or may not be represented on issues beyond the “land rights” issue that the director prioritizes. According to Alcoff, the position of the speaker and the speech are embedded in inequitable power relations. A privileged person, the director in this case, assumes that the less – or under-privileged woman cannot speak for herself; therefore, the privileged feminist claims legitimacy to speak for, to, and about other women.



Race is an additional issue that complicates representation and communication when women organize in multiracial groups. This is true in Western countries and in Africa. Michelle Rosenthal affirms the hegemony of whiteness and invisibility of blackness that complicate the organizational vision in some South African feminist movements like the Rape Crisis Center in Cape Town (Rosenthal 2001). White women's domination in this feminist organization reflects the values and concerns of dominant societal groups and black women are silenced. In this case, Rosenthal found that the Rape Crisis Center exemplified inequitable power relations that built upon a history of exclusions and hierarchies in South Africa.

Interestingly, Gayatri Spivak questions if a subaltern can speak for and about herself (Spivak 1996). Spivak critiques the ways in which the subaltern woman can be robbed of her agency and her ability to be an active speaker. I thought often about this when interviewing and observing the women I studied. I observed what appeared to me to be their overdependence on one person, the director, and I explored how this might interfere with their agency and even be a challenge to their attempts to get out of poverty. I wondered if this was a case, in this context, where the hegemonic position of a privileged feminist could rob the subaltern underprivileged women of chances for self-representation and possible self-empowerment – even when the privileged feminist was actively encouraging underprivileged women to organize and fight for their rights.

Some of the visions in postcolonial feminist critiques advocate for the extension of diversity and inclusivity in feminisms through recognizing diverse lived experiences and specific cultures of women wherever they may be. This call from postcolonial

feminists led me to incorporate intersectionality theory in my study of Siyabonga and Sisonke Women's Club Groups.

### *Intersectionality*

For the marginalized poor women I studied, I viewed intersectionality as one of the theoretical tools which would help me to improve inclusivity and diversity to better analyze and understand the situations of these women. Not only does intersectionality reveal multiple identities, but more importantly it also exposes different types of discrimination and the effects they produce in different contexts. For instance, the experience of a black woman in KwaZulu-Natal who is subjugated by Zulu cultural norms may not be same as the experience of a black woman in Western Cape subjugated by Xhosa cultural norms. Also, South Africa is quite different for a white woman in the same localities because of the differences in race, class, ethnicity, and identity in those contexts (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000; Miller 2003; Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Booysen et al. 2011). Intersectional theorists would state that African women are not only victims of patriarchy but also of race and class (Collins 2000; Crenshaw 2000). Rooted in the experiences of women of color in the U.S., the theory of intersectionality claims that women of color are faced with predominant racist and class oppressions on top of gendered oppressions including the history of slavery. These may not be the main sources of oppression and they may not intersect in the same way in various settings. Nonetheless, intersectional theory pushes the researcher to look for any and all sources of oppression and how they are intertwined.

Just like postcolonial feminists, intersectional theorists acknowledge that all women are victims of oppression and male domination but the experiences of oppression are not the same for all women. Audre Lorde, using the example of black women in the U.S., argues that some black women face a triple jeopardy because they are females, black, and lesbians (Lorde 1984: 116). She further states that some black women are also oppressed even in the academy; their experiences are overlooked or ignored as not scholarly. It is in this context that transnational postcolonial feminists like Joy Ezeilo critique universalism and cultural relativism and argue for a cross-cultural dialogue that acknowledges women's differences and their roles in diverse cultural practices (Ezeilo 2005). The theory of intersectionality then becomes crucial for all feminists to note that diverse women, whether in the so-called First or Third Worlds, are faced with multiple layers of oppression as are the women I studied. In addition, globally, women are faced with social, economic, sexual, and racial issues, which affect them in different ways. These ideas influenced my research to include how the women I studied are poor and marginalized not only because of race or class or patriarchy, but also because they are located in a particular place – KwaZulu-Natal – that is devastated by high rates of HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, prostitution and human trafficking in addition to poverty (Kim et al. 2007; Booysen et al. 2011). Their marginalization includes the socio-political reality of capitalism and neoliberalism at work and embedded in development policies such as the implementation of cost-sharing that places access to basic needs beyond their reach (IDP 2000). Understanding poor grassroots women's interlocking forces of

oppression may help to better understand and prioritize their practical and strategic needs and help identify the best and most relevant remedies.

In sum, both postcolonial and interesectional feminist theories helped to prepare me, as a researcher, so that I would be more aware of the diversity of my research participants' experiences and oppressions.

### **Theories of Development and of Women/Gender and Development**

West European enlightenment concepts of modernity and development emerged as popular terms after the Second World War to promote industrialization, urbanization, mechanization of agriculture, and, in the 1970s , a representative democratic political system (Rai 2002: 11). The goal was Westernization, extending “modern social engineering to the colonies as they were incorporated into the European orbit” (McMichael 2005: 26). Most critics of development show that development policies and practices were heavily influenced by the “modernization approach.” That is, development priorities were established in the West and the western style of industrialization and modernization was held up as a model for the former colonies to follow (McMichael 2005; Rai 2002; Scott 1995; Moser 1993; So 1990). Influential international Bretton Woods institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), have “played a central role in crafting development agendas” connected to capital flows through development loans, investment, and trade (Rai 2002: 48). In the 1970s the concept of development was expanded to include “human development” (meeting basic needs, people’s participation

in development), sustainable development, women and development; in the 1980s structural adjustment<sup>22</sup> reforms were added which rapidly expanded poverty (Kothari and Minogue 2002: 3-4). The concept of “good governance” emerged in the late 1980s as did a greatly increased focus on free markets and international investments in South Africa. To address poverty, microenterprise development and microcredit also became popular since both followed the entrepreneurial logic of capitalism and were a substitute for social welfare programs (Rakowski 1994). They also were popular as “women’s empowerment” programs.

Because modernization theory dominated development discourse from the 1950s to the 1980s (McMichael 2005), development has been driven by a top-down capitalist model based on existing power relations (colonial, racial, class, patriarchal, etc.), leaving the poor, especially women in the global South and other disadvantaged groups, on the periphery of their own “modernizing” countries. With the rise of neoliberalism and structural reforms, the state was forced to cut back on social welfare programs. As a result, other development actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) appeared to fill some gaps where governments are not able to fulfill their traditional roles. NGOs often lead and monitor grassroots development activities. They build capacity by developing simple tools and strengthening skills for people on the ground.

The pressure for involving the poor of developing countries in development activities led development actors such as NGOs and also some governments to adopt

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<sup>22</sup> This is represented by the GEAR and Integrated Development Planning policies in South Africa. For instance, cutting public spending, increasing state income, increasing exports, eliminating food subsidies, raising taxes, etc.

“participatory development” as one of their strategies to bridge the gap between the poor (people on the ground) and their governments (McGee 2002: 99). That meant that development actors could emerge “from ‘below’ in the form of spontaneous grassroots organizing; from the ‘outside’ through the actions of various public and private (NGOs) institutions; and from ‘above’ in the form of governmental policies” (Uwhejevwe-Togbolo 2005). NGOs are entrusted to lead grassroots development because of

“the [neoliberal] belief that NGOs efficiently and cost-effectively are able to implement projects in a sustainable manner, particularly those concerning the grassroots, [...] consequently, donors increasingly look to them for implementing projects, making still larger amounts [of funding] available. In this context, NGOs are also seen as the most adequate instruments to correct the failures of both markets and, in particular, governments” (Marcussen 1996: 407).

In the case of contemporary South Africa, NGOs take on the common roles of NGOs in other developing countries. Their aim is to “empower the poor and the oppressed, to build organs of people’s power and strengthen community-based organizations and to promote democratic process and practice” (Walters 1993: 2). However, the role of NGOs was different during the apartheid regime. They were more political and “anti-apartheid and contributed directly and indirectly to the transfer of state power from the white minority government to a popular democratically elected government” (Walters 1993: 2). According to John Clark, a healthy State-NGO relationship is when they both share the commitment to poverty reduction, even though NGOs may “find dialogue and collaboration [with the government] frustrating or even counter-productive” (Clark 2000: 6). In post apartheid South Africa, the relationship

between the NGOs and the government is healthier (more collaborative) than it was during apartheid. In fact, South Africa has more than 200 legally registered NGOs. South Africa's past still has effects in the present and contemporary NGOs "tend to focus on one or two main objectives: the first is [still] political in nature and the second aims at development and relies more upon education" (Nzimakwe 2008: 95).

The Rural Women's Movement, the umbrella organization of the community-based women's groups I studied, is a South African registered NGO committed to both political and social goals. It aims to bring about justice for the poor, especially women, on the issue of land, which was taken away from the poor during the era of colonialism and intensified in 1948 by the apartheid government. RWM is also committed to capacity building for women in rural areas to tackle poverty by providing training that equips women with relevant tools and skills. For example, at the workshop I attended in October 2009, RWM organized women from different community-based groups to discuss issues affecting them in their families and communities. These included poverty, caring for HIV/AIDS orphans, violence against women, and lack of materials for gardens (Fieldnotes).

#### *WID/GAD Approaches to Development*

Liberal feminists such as Ester Boserup (1970) also viewed development as modernization. Boserup's book (1970) was the first of many indictments of the negative impacts of the modernization approach on women, men, and families. She and other researchers argued that development was transformed into a masculine enterprise that left

women out (Scott 1995). Over two decades after Boserup's groundbreaking critique of development, Moser affirmed that "women and gender remain marginalized in [development] planning theory and practice" (Moser 1993: 6). In her study of gender in development theory, Scott also critiqued the way in which both modernization and dependency theories<sup>23</sup> incorporate gendered dichotomies of masculinity and femininity. These gender dichotomies are informed implicitly by a conceptualization of what is "modern" as "masculinized" and what is "traditional" as "feminized" (Scott 1995: 122). Gendered oppositions rooted in development paradigms, Scott found, point to other forms of power and domination. In their "fundamental nature, theories of development [especially the modernization approach] envision development as a terrain for masculine modernity" in which men are to become "modern" for industrialization and to occupy the public sphere, while women are traditional and "backward" and relegated to the private sphere of the home (Scott 1995: 122). This was the basis of the growing gap between men and women on a variety of indicators (poverty, health, etc.) as development programs were implemented over time.

Beginning in the 1970s, feminist scholars, activists, and professionals concerned over women's interests decided to take action on their behalf and designed women-centered approaches such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD). Women- and gender-centered approaches to development aimed to pressure international agencies and developing countries'

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<sup>23</sup> Dependency theory is a critique of modernization theory that argues that neocolonial relations between "developed" and "developing" nations (i.e. through trade) are exploitive and contribute to further "underdevelopment" of the less developed (traditional) countries (So 1990).



governments to incorporate women in development policy, planning, and practice (Bhavnani et al. 2003; Kabeer 1994; Moser 1993; Rai 2002; Visvanathan et al. 1997).

The following chart, inspired by Caroline Moser's analysis (1993), outlines major features of the "field," with attention to aspects that can be found in some South African policies and development programs post apartheid. The chart also incorporates ideas from sources other than Moser.

**Table 1**

*A Summary of Relevant Aspects of the WID/WAD/GAD Development Approaches*

**The 1950-70s**

**Welfare Policy Approach** (Moser 1993: 56 & 231)

-Influenced by Modernization Theory: Western capitalist market economy as a good model for development policy and outcomes (McMichael 2005). It's a pre-WID development policy approach introduced in the 1950s and 1960s for women of Third World countries. This approach brought women to development as mothers (important role) but only valued women's reproductive roles as their effective contribution to development (child-bearing and nurturing). Women are seen as passive beneficiaries of development – as vulnerable, not as agents. It tries to meet practical gender needs by providing handout services such as food aid and family planning to women. It's a top-down policy (designed by elites from the North for poor women of the South) and does not question traditional / naturalized roles of women and men.

Critique by Liberal Feminists: Women are excluded from the development process and need to be singled out. Policy Response: Advocate women's integration into development, planning, policies, and programs. This critique led to the WID (women in development) and WAD (women and development) approaches focused on equity, anti-poverty, and efficiency policy approaches.

**Equity Approach** (Moser 1993: 62 & 231)

The original WID policy approach, 1976 to 1985. Influenced by UN Decade for Women and Boserup, a liberal feminist. Recognizes women as active participants in the economic development process and economic growth through their productive and reproductive roles. It meets strategic needs and links development with equality. (Aims at redistribution of power and challenges women's subordinate positions), seeks women's political and economic autonomy. Socialist/Marxist feminists criticized it as a product of Western feminism. Socialist Feminists accused development policies and programs of underdeveloping women relative to men.

**Anti-poverty Policy Approach** (Moser 1993: 66-7 & 231)

A second WID approach that emerged in 1970s mainly from Socialist/Marxist feminists. They recognize that the modernization approach was not eliminating poverty and critiqued the equity approach for its link to economic growth. Anti-poverty targets poor women (low income families) to increase their productivity (on the basis of poverty alleviation). Views women's poverty, not subordination, as the problem of underdevelopment. Advocates meeting practical and basic needs for low income /poor households and income generating projects to empower women. Wants all women, including the grassroots who are most left out, to be included in the mainstream development policies of the South.

**1980s – 90s and onwards**

**Efficiency Approach** (Moser 1993: 69)

A WID approach predominant since the 1980s period of debt crisis and implementation of structural adjustment policies (SAP) by IMF and WB. Increasing efficiency and productivity are main objectives of SAP so feminists decided to argue that women should be targeted for poverty alleviation because it would be more "efficient" than pouring huge sums into mainstream development projects (gained popularity among international aid agencies and national governments [70]).

(Continued)

Table 1: Continued

Poverty was deepening and the IMF and WB wanted an effective and efficient way of spending money. Feminists proposed that anti-poverty projects are more efficient and effective through women's economic contribution and tripple roles (productive, reproductive, as community volunteers). Implementation of anti-poverty strategies included: giving credit, training, micro-finance, etc. But the focus on women also means longer hours for unpaid and paid labor for women.

General feminist critique of WID approaches: WID's integration of women into development models is grounded in modernization theory. It does not address women's inclusion in policy-making arenas, only as objects of policy. The policy process is still top-down and male centered. Women are therefore integrated in a marginal and exploitative manner into development structures. Socialist/Marxist Critique: Concerned about exploitation of women through the process of development. The division of labor between men and women, which made men producers and wage earners and women reproducers of human capital, is the point at which women became dependent on men. Women's economic dependence reinforces capitalism and patriarchy (Scott 1995; Visvanathan et al. 1997; Rai 2002; Bhavnani et al. 2003). Neoliberal critique by postcolonial feminists: Poor women have become poorer, dependency on women's unpaid labor has increased, and domestic violence (both on women and children) has also increased along with poor health. Neo-liberal policies are harmful to people, poor families, and women. There is widespread male bias in SAPs:

- 1) Reliance on women's long hours of unpaid labor (production and reproduction and human maintenance)
- 2) Exploitation in export orientated labor – increase agricultural work for women with less time for production and low income.
- 3) Family as a social institution, which is a main source of labor supply

#### Policy Response: Gender and Development (GAD)

Influenced by postcolonial and postmodern feminist theorists (and Socialist feminists) such as Molyneux (1986); Visvanathan et al. (1997); Sen and Grown (1987); Rai (2003); Bhavnani et al. (2003); Kabeer (1994, 2005); Kothari and Minogue (2002). Focuses on interlocking issues affecting women in development: gender, patriarchy, and capitalism. Places its emphasis on efficiency and poverty alleviation, primarily by giving money to women to alleviate poverty and improve living standards for children.

**GAD / Women's Empowerment Approach:** Advocates development strategies that include economic recognition of women's contribution, their empowerment, their productive and reproductive work, equal distribution of jobs and training, and elimination of the exploitation of women inherent in capitalism and patriarchy. Focus is on women's agency and on mainstreaming gender in government agencies, policies, and programs. Still considerable emphasis on women's access to productive resources such as land, education, and loans.

WID, WAD, and GAD seek to bring women of developing countries into socio-economic development processes in their communities and societies. GAD focuses more

on empowering women as leaders and in their relations with others. WID, WAD, and GAD are based on the assumption that women are important socio-economic contributors in many societies of the South and they seek a more sustainable and people-focused approach (Sen and Grown 1987; Rai 2002). Because of this, it is then imperative that women be integrated equally with men in the development process. One policy approach for doing this is gender mainstreaming (see below).

Moser and Rai both claim that gender inequalities prevalent in development policy and practices exist not only because most development practitioners marginalized women as “the second sex” (de Beauvoir 1989 [1952]: 3-4), but also because few women are involved in development power structures or in formulation of policy (Moser 1993: 3; Rai 2002: 82). All women-centered approaches acknowledge that inequalities between men and women have a huge impact on the implementation of development policy and practice and on the distribution of development resources. Gender hierarchies contribute enormously to women’s lack of access to resources such as credit, education and training, and project management tools. GAD proponents in particular target “political activism advocating strategies such as community organizing, transformative action, public education and coalition-building” to assure consideration of women’s needs (Visvanathan et al. 1997: 23). Naila Kabeer states that GAD, unlike WID/WAD, is an approach that provides more possibilities for lobbying for new feminist strategies (Kabeer 1994). The GAD approach encourages equal recognition of women’s and men’s participation in both reproductive and productive realms and focuses on improved gender relations through women’s empowerment. WID/GAD approaches were helpful in my research and analysis

to identify not only the gender bias in development policies, but also the shift from modernization to neoliberalism, the growing importance of NGOs to work with women, and the empowerment approach that is promoted by RWM in working with rural women.

### *Empowerment in Theory and Practice*

Empowerment is a popular theme in development rhetoric. Development is “supposed” to empower developing countries and help people to cope with economic, social, and political problems. It became popular among feminists and women’s organizations as a tool to deal with both strategic gender needs and practical needs. However, according to Townsend et al., empowerment “can be used to describe poor people finding the power to help themselves [...] or, at a more local level, it now seems to refer to promoting entrepreneurial confidence among poor women rather than any need for powerful change, as if the only problem is the lack of drive among poor women” (Townsend, Zapata, Rowlands, Alberti, and Mercado 1999: 21). According to Jane Parpart, empowerment “tends to mean different things to different players” (Parpart 2002: 41).

Randall Collins theorizes that the gender organization of production helps to locate different possibilities of power to women relative to men in control over productive resources and income. He argues that when women have greater control over reproductive resources and income, they “are empowered” and have “life options” such as control over their sexuality (Collins 1993: 188). Rae Blumberg proposes that economic power is the most important strategy, among many others, and vital to women’s overall

empowerment because economic power is “the major variable affecting [...] inequality” under capitalism (Blumberg 1984: 25). However, even though women’s control of economic resources can give women “autonomy in controlling one’s own life” (Blumberg 1984: 68), the degree to which a woman can exercise this power varies and changes “at the level of the household, the community, the class, and the state” (Blumberg 1984: 25). That is, rigid gendered customs, legislation, violence, and other factors can diminish the empowerment potential of economic power (both income and access to productive resources).

Blumberg’s theory and other feminist discussions of empowerment influenced my research. I explored whether the engagement in economic activities by the women’s groups I studied had the potential to equip women members with economic power at the household level<sup>24</sup> given that men are hardly home and that these women are *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households. If so, having control at the household level should open spaces for women’s control over their sexuality, reproductive choices, and decisions regarding children’s education. Women’s empowerment through control over income should help them end gendered violence such as domestic violence and all forms of sexual abuse. (However, I was unable to ask about sex, reproduction or domestic violence because of cultural norms prohibiting this.) If Blumberg’s theory is correct, I hoped that the women I studied would stand less chance of being victimized socially, economically, and politically. However, as I discuss in the analysis chapters, the situation was far more

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<sup>24</sup> Women’s empowerment through access to markets and incomes should enable women “to participate in economic decision-making” (Rowlands 1995: 102).

complex. The relationship between income and women's relative power is not so direct and context is critically important.

Jo Rowlands views empowerment on three levels: personal power, also known as "power to," is about "individual confidence and capacity;" relationship power is about the ability to make decisions and to be respected within a relationship; and collective power is about "individuals working together to achieve more extensive impact than each could have done alone" (Rowlands 1995: 103). These conceptualizations of types of power were very helpful to my study; I took care to consider how women's collective organizing contributed to capacity building, decision making, and confidence and whether and under what circumstances it may contribute to improved relationship power between women and men.

Rowlands also acknowledges that for poor and marginalized people, empowerment is a process "that involves some degree of personal development" (Rowlands 1995: 103). But, as Paulo Freire<sup>25</sup> (1970) has pointed out, persons who are oppressed often have incorporated into their sense of self the idea that they should be oppressed, that this is their place in the world. These people need to be exposed to new ideas that help them to understand the ways in which they are oppressed and to question and reject that oppression. In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire also asserts that oppression will not end until the oppressed refuse to participate in their own oppression (Freire 1970). Because the women I studied organized in groups where they could discuss

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<sup>25</sup> Freire's principles of liberation theology influenced Rowlands' concept of empowerment.

their problems, I used participant observation to examine whether or not consciousness raising might be taking place.

Despite the popularity of Blumberg's and of Rowlands' ideas, there are feminists who have been highly critical of WID/GAD policies that emphasize economic power as the most important source of women's empowerment. These critics tend to focus on the way in which certain policy strategies—such as promoting women's businesses through microcredit—have become one-size-fits-all strategies that ignore important contextual differences of women in different places. I agree that economic power is only one strategy for women's empowerment that may contribute to women's self-esteem and awareness of their rights, even their autonomy. They can help women in ways that may go beyond income: "Some authors have suggested that adding a gender focused training component to the financial dimension of microfinance programs may catalyze broader empowerment benefits while diminishing the risk of gender-related conflict" (Kim et al. 2007: 1795). In my research, I was very interested in learning whether or not women's organizing lead to "collective reflection and decision-making" and to their "building a positive self-image and self-confidence; developing the ability to think critically; building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action" as predicted by Young (1997: 372). Did the women themselves conceptualize and seek this type of empowerment?

The answer is not straight forward. In fact, my interviews with the women of SSWCG and SBWCG were complicated by the fact that the same term that is used for "empowerment" in Zulu also means improvement or betterment, to have money to buy



food, pay for their children and grandchildren's school fees, and to have access to electricity, running water, and sanitation.

RS: We are trying to improve our lives [empower ourselves] to get some cents to take our children to school and buy them what they need, also to always have food for our children.

R: Ok. Is that it?

RS: And so that we can also have a better life like having outside toilets and running water in our homes, we suffer to get water. We have no electricity; we cannot even watch TV like other people.<sup>26</sup>

This framing of empowerment, discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, is not unique to the women of the groups I interviewed; it is also reflected in other research of women organizing around the issues of poverty in South Africa (discussed in Chapter 5).

### *Gender and Development in South Africa*

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the post apartheid South African government has demonstrated some attempts to improve the lives of its marginalized people through its development strategies. The Comprehensive Rural Development and Land Reform Program of Zuma's current administration is aimed at increasing rural livelihoods and

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<sup>26</sup> Research Subject # 15. March 17, 2010. SSWCGA Interview.

RS: sizama ukuzithuthukisa ukuze sikwazi ukuthola amasenti okuhambisa abantwana esikoleni sibathengele abakudingayo, sikwazi ukuba nokudla njalo.

R: Yebo, kuphela?

RS: Nokuthi nathi sibe namathoyilethe ngaphandle kanye namanzi emizini yethu, siyawahluphekela amanzi. Asinagesi, asikwazi ukubuka umabonakude njengabanye abantu.

alleviating poverty and empowering the people. However, what has been missing in government efforts at development until very recently is the mainstreaming of gender.

The Zuma administration has been pushing to involve more poor black women as part of implementing development in rural areas. However, his major strategy was to establish a Department of Women, Children, and Persons with Disability in May 2009. For the first time South Africa had a government agency (a “national machinery”) aimed at mainstreaming historically marginalized groups in the country such as women, children, and persons with disabilities. Even so, this kind of national machinery seems to have more of a political goal involving women’s leadership (a woman-led ministry) than focusing on women and other minority groups. It follows the path of a “one state party in Africa [that establishes] women’s ministries [to] enhance the party’s policies [more] than women’s status” (Tinker 2006: 284). The Department of Women, Children, and Persons with Disability (DWCPD) was created with the following rationale: “to emphasize the need for equity and access to development opportunities for vulnerable groups within South African society (DWCPD 2009).<sup>27</sup> So, as the government attempts to involve women in development, it views them as vulnerable victims which essentializes them and ignores their potential agency and the key roles they play in the survival of their families and communities. The government also focuses more on women’s experiences of social problems such as domestic violence, rape, HIV/AIDS, and poverty. Women make up the majority of people who suffer these social problems, but their agency in fighting these problems is not prioritized.

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<sup>27</sup> Department of Women, Children, and Persons with Disability. 2009. Accessed May 11, 2010. <http://www.wcpd.gov.za/>

Some women are organizing to fight these problems often with the help of NGOs. Organizations such as RWM, Agenda, Bobbi Bear, Women's Net, Network on Violence against Women, Zenzele, and Indabezinhle Struggle against AIDS Center are examples of organizations in which women are actively involved. Even poor women who have survived violence and are affected or infected by HIV/AIDS are not just vulnerable; they are also survivors of their circumstances and actors for change. The inclusion of women as vulnerable in such government ministries points to ongoing gender inequalities prevalent in South African development.

Despite government and NGO intervention, according to Annelize Booysen, Frederick Fourie, and Lucius Botes, women in South Africa continue to lag behind men in the development process in all nine provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, and Western Cape (Booyesen, Fourie, and Botes 2011). Women in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are at the bottom of the “worst-performing provinces, while [women with the best development status] most frequently appear in the best-performance provinces,” which are Western Cape and Free State (Booyesen et al. 2011: 106). Women in KwaZulu-Natal are at the bottom of all nine provinces because of the high rates of poverty, HIV/AIDS, and violence against women in the province. KwaZulu-Natal therefore is not only the province with the least progress in incorporating women in development programs but also is the province with “the lowest female life expectancy rate in the whole country,” which Booyesen et al. blame on the fact that it has the highest rate of poverty and on the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS (Booyesen et al. 2011: 107). There is, therefore, a need

for research on women in KwaZulu-Natal to find out about their survival strategies underconditions of social crises. This was one reason that I selected this research setting.

Although some South African women have made enormous strides in terms of upward mobility, a lot of work remains to be done in terms of women's equality and equal access to positions of power and decisionmaking in their communities and organizations. The gap between the rich and the poor has not improved in post-apartheid South Africa. "Approximately 57% of individuals in South Africa were living below the poverty line in 2001, unchanged from 1996" (HRS 2004). The gulf between the white haves and the black have-nots has made the country one of the world's most unequal societies (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2004: 12). Unemployment in South Africa is extremely high and concentrated among young, less-skilled blacks, especially men (Hoogeveen and Ozler 2004: 4). Studies indicate that even though eradication of poverty is one of the democratic government's top priorities, poverty and inequality are still growing among the black population and among rural women. Research by the Department of Social Development of the South African government points out that in South Africa, "the years of active discriminatory policymaking and neglect have resulted in high levels of inequality, characterized by extreme wealth on the one hand and desperate poverty on the other" (Oosthuizen 2008: 1). And black African women in rural areas are the poorest of the poor and their communities remain underdeveloped. Studies on poverty and development still show that women, especially those in rural and urban informal settlements, are the most marginalized in democratic South Africa (Sotshongaye and

Moller 2000; Kehler 2001; Everatt 2003; Miller 2003; Hemson et al. 2004; Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Beall 2005; Oosthuizen 2008; Booysen et al. 2011).

South Africa emerged as a world leader in democracy and human rights following the demise of apartheid because of its stated commitment to combat oppressive inequalities embedded in gender, race, and class. To deal with gender injustices in working with women's, nongovernmental, and government organizations committed to gender issues, the government has agreed to support women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming in government policies and practices.

The Office on the Status of Women<sup>28</sup> proposed a national Gender Policy Framework on women's empowerment to be adopted and implemented by the cabinet (Kornegay 2000: i). The Gender Policy Framework envisions a society in which women and men participate in democracy as equal partners to ensure justice for all citizens through gender mainstreaming and equality. "This Gender Policy Framework attempts to ensure that the process of achieving Gender equality is at the very center of the transformation process in South Africa within all the structures, institutions, policies, procedures, practices and programmes of governments its agencies and parastatals, civil society and the private sector" (Kornegay 2000: ii). The Gender Policy Framework also links meeting basic needs with women's empowerment. It assumes that meeting basic needs will address multiple needs of women, especially the poor in marginalized areas. Women's empowerment, following a GAD approach, will address both practical and

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<sup>28</sup> Office on the Status of Women is located in the Office of the Presidency of South Africa and is responsible for designing, monitoring, and improving policies on the status of women in South Africa.

strategic needs,<sup>29</sup> “the goal of which is gender equality” (Kornegay 2000: iii). The Gender Policy Framework acknowledges that access to basic needs and resources, land, employment, economic empowerment and political power, as well as addressing violence against women, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and globalization pose problems to South African women, especially those who are extremely poor in marginalized rural areas. Even though South Africa has a policy of promoting equal gender representation in national and local governments, both national and local/municipal governments still lag behind in women’s representation and in policymaking on representation as well as on issues such as poverty, violence against women, HIV/AIDS, access to health care, water and sanitation, and infrastructure.

It seems that the Gender Policy Framework and the government’s goal of mainstreaming of gender in development policies remain theoretical; I could find no evidence of progress in implementation that reaches the grassroots level in KwaZulu-Natal. The lives of the women I studied and others in their area remain impoverished. They lacked government service delivery. There was no running water or electricity and there was only one school in the area. Worse, men controlled land and held all leadership positions. This poses a question: what is the Office on the Status of Women doing to ensure that national and local governments implement the Gender Policy Framework? I could find no studies or reports about this. Gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment will remain vague goals unless the government shows greater political will to implement them.

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<sup>29</sup> The document uses Molyneux’s definition (see Chapter 1).

## **Studies of Women Organizing and Power in South Africa**

South African women's organizing and leadership roles were evident in the precolonial period. For example, in the Zulu kingdom during the reign of Shaka Zulu, Mkabayi kaJama, Shaka's aunt – the sister to Sengakhona kaJama, the father of King Shaka Zulu – assumed the leadership position of the Zulu nation after her father because her brother was too young to claim the throne (Zulu Royal Monarchy 2010).<sup>30</sup> When Sengakhona kaJama took over as the king, Mkabayi kaJama still acted as the main advisor to King Shaka and King Dingane (Zulu Royal Monarchy 2010). The examples of Zulu women's leadership indicated some forms of power that African women possessed in the precolonial era, although still overshadowed by patriarchy.

Some researchers who study women and politics contend that most African women who participated in nationalist movements and struggles against colonialism are unsung heroines who are rarely mentioned, affirmed, or validated for their roles (Hassim 2006; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000; Urdang 1995). For example, women in Zimbabwe, Algeria, and South Africa are known to have fought alongside men and succeeded in helping their countries fight colonial oppression. However, their knowledge, contributions, and agency have been ignored in the dominant discourse and also by their

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<sup>30</sup> Zulu Royal Monarchy. 2010. Zulu Royal Family History. Accessed October 12, 2010. [http://zulumonarch.org/overview/family\\_history/](http://zulumonarch.org/overview/family_history/)

own people. Because of the centrality of patriarchy in colonialism and in most African cultures, these liberation struggles became known as a male domain despite the involvement of women. Films about liberation struggles such as “*Flame*,” “*The Battle of Algiers*,” and “*You Have Struck a Rock*” shatter the myth that African women were passive, and demonstrate that African women were active participants in the liberation struggle.

Organizations like the South African Rural Women’s Movement (RWM) and the Land Access Movement (LAMOSA) are similar to the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women’s Association (REWA) and Ethiopian Rural Women’s Agricultural Development (RWAD). All are women’s movements that address the basic needs of women, especially those engaged in agriculture and pottery making (Berhane-Selassie 1997; Pausewang, Kjetil, and Lovise 2002).

In addition to organizations in South Africa that promote land rights issues like RWM and LAMOSA, other organizations such as the Grassroots Sisterhood Foundation in Ghana, GROOTS Kenya, the Coalition of Women Living with AIDS in Malawi, the Ranchod Hospice in Zambia, and Seke Rural Home-Based Care in Zimbabwe address the same issues of gender, livelihood, and diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Bachram 2007; Ngubane 2004; Heyes and Huairou Commission 2010). Other organizations in South Africa and elsewhere deal with issues that affect women as a result of war such as rape, sexual assault, unwanted pregnancies, diseases, and poverty (Steady 2006).

On the more political side, the African National Congress Women’s League (ANCWL) in South Africa and Women in Nigeria (WIN) are examples of pro-democracy



women's organizations that promote women's rights and women's representation in the constitution and advocate the eradication of poverty (Tripp 2001: 11). While ANCWL members worked with men, WIN tries to work independently of men in order to promote women's power and empowerment. Other African women have organized in collective action around similar issues. Women's organizing in South Africa reflects women's lived experiences.

Women organize both in rural areas and in urban settings; in cities organizing is more geared towards strategic gender needs than practical needs. Even though women in urban areas are also concerned with poverty, many focus on strategic gender needs to bring about women's empowerment, to give them more independence and gender equality, and better serve their practical needs. Thus, many well known urban women's organizations promote women's leadership roles, access to employment and training, equal role responsibilities in households, and freedom of choice, including fighting violence against women, and helping to combat HIV/AIDS as form of violence. For example, the women's group of Crossroads Township called Philani Printing Project, engages in art as a vehicle for women's empowerment through which they "address and confront social and gender inequalities" (Miller 2003: 619). This women's project targets unemployed mothers and offers "various leadership and empowerment classes," including "training courses in design, textile printing, and painting" (Miller 2003: 620). Bobbi Bear is another urban women's organization that focuses on sexually abused children by helping victims and survivors with immediate health needs, comfort, and therapy (Schlottman 2011). Masimanyane Women's Support Center is an international

women's organization in South Africa that focuses on "gender-based violence and the gendered nature of HIV and AIDS [...] it claims to build the capacity of women as human rights advocates to claim and realize women's human rights" (African Feminist Forum 2009: 265). The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) is another example of a women's organization striving towards the goal of meeting strategic gender needs by providing a platform for African women and feminists to "share their experiences, information and strategies" to advance "women's development, equality and human rights" (African Feminist Forum 2009: 261). The South African Commission on Gender Equality (SACGE),<sup>31</sup> an independent organization initiated by the government, helps to facilitate and monitor issues of gender equality and human rights.

These urban women's organizations have diverse goals and use different strategies for women's empowerment, including raising awareness of human rights, gender inequalities that result in women's subordination, and the role of gender in domestic violence and HIV/AIDS. Urban women's organizing provides opportunities for women to "depict and discuss their life experiences with awareness that being female is a factor in their [needs] and oppression" (Miller 2003: 621). Rural women, however, and their organizations tend to focus more on basic needs and on meeting their gendered obligations (practical needs) as wives and mothers/grandmothers.

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<sup>31</sup> SACGE's role is to "advance gender equality in all spheres of society and make recommendations on any legislation affecting the status of women" (SACGE 2012: 1).

## **Selection of the Research Site**

Much research has been published about social movements in post-apartheid South Africa but there has been little focus on women's rural social movements and grassroots organizations. Studies of land conflicts and struggles in African societies in general describe contemporary Africa as being in the midst of a post-colonial transition and transformation towards development, democratization, and globalization. Yet South Africa is still impacted by socio-economic and political crises inherited from the era of colonialism and apartheid. Mafeje and Moyo and Yeros assert that postcolonial African rural social movements in general are less visible in public forums and are at a disadvantage socio-economically and politically because African rural areas are still very poor and underdeveloped due to factors that continue to affect rural areas negatively (Mafeje 2003; Moyo and Yeros 2007). These factors in South Africa include the colonial and apartheid policies that removed many South Africans from their land and forced them into rural reserves, leaving them with very few resources available for survival (Wiley and Isaacman 1981: 13; Romero 1998: 7). In particular, women in these areas remain understudied, especially, these who agriculturalists, traders, prostitutes/trafficked, or afflicted with HIV/AIDS or subject to rape and other violence.

In the process of land dispossession, African women were left more marginalized, were deprived of land rights, and became laborers with few resources who had to depend on men for cash and survival, although they were the main workers of the land (SARDF 1997:1; Igoe 2006:10; and Kehler 2001: 9). The South African Rural Development

Framework (SARDF) document describes rural areas, including villages and small towns dispersed through the reserves, created by apartheid removals, as sparsely populated and dependent on farming poor land and on the preservation of key natural resources such as water and firewood (SARDF 1997:9). SARDF defines rural development as:

Helping rural people set the priorities in their own communities through effective and democratic bodies, by providing the local capacity; investment in basic infrastructure and social services [;] justice, equity and security; [and] dealing with the injustices of the past and ensuring safety and security of the rural population, especially that of women (SARDF 1997:9).

Many studies of Africa have shown that women are at the heart of rural development (people-centered and sustainable) in their societies (Chambers 1993; Clark 1991; Cornwall 2005; Mikell 1997; Moser 1993; Olabisi 1998; Rai 2002; Robertson 2000; Tripp 2003; UNDP 2000; and World Bank 2000). Despite urban women's increasing visibility in South African and other African politics, both urban and especially rural South African women are still underrepresented, affecting advocacy for women's interests in decision-making arenas (Tripp 2003: 237). I chose to conduct research that would bring to light South African rural women's organizing.

The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in KwaZulu-Natal is one example of rural-based movements for grassroots women in South Africa. This movement is affiliated strategically with other grassroots organizations nationally and internationally. RWM works to help grassroots women mobilize in order to improve the economic and social conditions of their families and communities. By the year 2000, RWM's efforts had helped women organize and it had about two hundred grassroots women's group

members that focussed on poverty and sustainable development, economic empowerment, representation of local women in governance, and women's rights to land distribution. In 2012, the organization claimed a membership that passes 500.

There are South African rural women's movements and organizations that address women's needs in agriculture, gardening, and crafting. Little is known about them. Such is the case of the small groups of women I saw in 2006 while I was visiting rural communities. Also, when I was growing up, I remember seeing women in the rural areas, close to where I was residing, engaging in different activities such as keeping gardens, sewing clothes, and selling different staples for the purpose of generating income. Even my maternal grandmother, my uncle's wife, and my paternal aunt were involved in gardening. My cousins and I used to go with my grandmother at times to help fetch water for irrigation and to weed in her garden. The gardens were individually owned but women often worked as a group.<sup>32</sup> This personal experience of mine also contributed to my decision to study rural women's organizing in rural KwaZulu-Natal where I grew up.

Rural areas around Durban, South Africa, the location for my study, fall beyond the urban perimeter (Pillay 2011) and account for approximately 67% of the Durban metropolitan spatial footprint, translating into 1500 square kilometers with a population of around 750,000 (eThekweni Municipality 2009). The area of interest for this study, Umzinto, is part of KwaZulu-Natal provincial government and is in under the Ugu District Municipality of the Durban Metropolitan Area. The local municipality in the area studied is Umdoni. People live in dispersed settlements in homesteads (several single

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<sup>32</sup> My personal encounter with informal women's groups, consciousness-raising, and collective action. I was then living in a rural area of KwaMthethwa in SA,

family houses in one place) on communal lands along the periphery of the eThewkinini Municipal Area (EMA) (Pillay 2011). In spite of attempts at accelerated service delivery by the municipality, these rural areas are still characterized by few or no municipal services and fragmented services delivered by various government agencies. Communities there typically suffer from high levels of poverty and disease, low levels of income and few economic opportunities, as well as lack of access to key natural resources.

During my dissertation research, I had the opportunity to visit women's groups at Ixobho, Umzumbe, Umzinto, and Mgungundlovu (at Sweetwaters). I accompanied the director of RWM on her visits to rural women's small groups and learned about their diverse projects. The aim of most of these rural women's groups was to respond to the economic needs of rural areas, especially needs of the elderly, including women with grandchildren to care for. RWM also offers educational programs to educate rural women in agriculture and gardening, including pastoralism.

## **Summary**

This chapter has highlighted a brief review of post-apartheid policies on democratization, national and rural development, and neoliberalism. Also highlighted was a discussion of WID/GAD approaches to including women in development policies and plans, and key concepts, such as empowerment, that are relevant to the South African context and to my research. The chapter included a discussion of studies on women's organizing and empowerment in South Africa background for my study. The

following chapter presents the research design and methodology and provides more information on RWM and its member organizations SBWCG and SSWCG.

### **Chapter 3: Methods of Study and Introduction to the Rural Women's Movement (RWM)**

This chapter describes the methodology used and the organizations this research focused on in South Africa. It is therefore divided into two sections. The first section includes the methodology applied in the study as well as its challenges and advantages. The second part of this chapter includes the description of RWM member organizations (women's groups) and RWM – the umbrella organization – within its geographical and historical contexts, as well as its leadership.

#### **Research Design**

##### *The Sample*

The population sample of this study consists of female members of two community-based organizations of the Rural Women's Movement: Sisonke Women's Club (SSWC) and Siyabonga Women's Club (SBWC) in Umzinto. Umzinto is made up of predominantly African rural communities, now divided into small towns and rural areas because of colonialism. It is in the inner west region of eThekweni,<sup>33</sup> the Durban Municipal area of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa (SA). Umzinto, on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, is in the Umdoni Local Municipality, which is located in the Ugu District Municipality, some 30 kilometers from Durban. Umzinto used to be known

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<sup>33</sup> eThekweni is the new official name for Durban.



for its sugarcane plantations. Economic divisions exist between its urban and rural areas, with rural people significantly poorer than their urban counterparts. Umzinto has a population of about 50,000, approximately 16% of whom are urban and 84% rural (Situation Analysis 1996).

I chose to conduct my research in Umzinto because I am from KwaZulu-Natal, which gives me advantages with regard to local cultural understandings. Even though I chose my own country, I decided to work not in my home area, instead picking an unfamiliar site in a rural area to see what the women are doing to sustain their families and communities. This selection was influenced by the director of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), who helped me locate rural community-based women's projects/groups in Umzinto. As a point of reference for RWM, I had contacted the director in early 2009 and asked her to help me identify grassroots women's organizations to study. In conversation with the director, I came to understand that groups of women who wanted to organize were at different stages; some had not formed an identity as an organization or group, and some were organized but located in areas not easily accessible. Two groups, SBWCG and SSWCG, met the following research site criteria according to Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman: the possibility of entrée to the sites; a high probability of a rich mix of the process, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest in this case (Marshall and Rossman 1999); the chance to see women planning and working together to meet their common goals; and my beliefs that my respondents and I could trust each other since I speak their language and I was born and grew up in the same Zulu culture as they did. Therefore, the data quality and credibility of the study could be reasonably assured.

Sisonke Women's Club is comprised of an estimated 30 members while Siyabonga Women's Club has over 50 members. When I entered the field, I found out that each club has two or more sub-groups. Groups were organized to manage projects in small spaces. They could not have 30 or 50 women working in the same hut because huts are not big enough to accommodate all women and their projects. Sisonke Women's Club is divided into 2 sub-groups while Siyabonga Women's Club is divided into 3 sub-groups. One of the Sisonke Women's Club groups, Sisonke Women's Club Group A – SSWCGA,<sup>34</sup> has 15 members and I was able to interview all of them, whereas the other group, SSWCGB,<sup>35</sup> was said to have 15 members, but I was only able to contact 14. With Siyabonga Women's Club, I was able to interview 18 members of the first group, Siyabonga Women's Club Group A – SBWCGA,<sup>36</sup> which had a total of about 20 members, and 23 members of the second group, SBWCGB,<sup>37</sup> which had a total of 25 members. I also interviewed 15 members of the last group, SBWCGC,<sup>38</sup> which had over 15 members in total (no one was sure of the exact number). In all, I interviewed a total of 85 members of the clubs between the ages of 18 and 89. In addition to female respondents from these organizations, I had informal interviews with 5 community members, including South African government officials with relevant experience. The community members were selected randomly in order to include different voices from those of women who are the group project members. I consulted occasionally during fieldwork with government workers who had knowledge pertaining to the government's

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<sup>34</sup> Refers to the First Group of Sisonke Women's Club. In this study I do not use the real names of women's groups except the rural location where these groups are located and the umbrella organization's name – Rural Women's Movement.

<sup>35</sup> Refers to the second group of Sisonke Women's Club.

<sup>36</sup> Refers to the first group of Siyabonga Women's Club.

<sup>37</sup> Refers to the second group of Siyabonga Women's Club.

<sup>38</sup> Refers to the third/final group of Siyabonga Women's Club.

commitments to development. These workers included persons working for municipalities and teachers. I also held formal and informal conversations with the director of the umbrella organization.

### *Methods*

The methods of research used in this study were qualitative, aimed at answering study questions through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. The research questions focused on:

- a) What are the clearly identifiable sources of women's oppression in this context?
- b) Do women recognize and address all sources of oppression?
- c) What are the strategies that they employ to address which sources of oppression, i.e. poverty, marginality, and culture, etc?

Regardless of women's understanding of sources of oppression, I also focused some research questions on the activities of the groups:

- 1. What are the grassroots women's understandings of the role of collective organization in dealing with issues that pertain to their survival and empowerment?
- 2. What strategies do the grassroots women apply and are they conducive to women's empowerment and realization of legal human rights?
- 3. What problems/challenges do women face when initiating, implementing and evaluating the collective activities they are performing?
- 4. How do they tackle or solve the challenges/problems they are facing related to their individual and collective goals?

(The questionnaire used can be found in Appendix B)

In this study, I used a feminist methodology that gives voice to research subjects. For the most part, mainstream disciplines are often skeptical of feminist epistemologies because of their emphasis on “subjectivity” (giving voice to the research subjects) as opposed to “objectivity.” As a result there has been a flourishing of distinct feminist research methods, which intend to challenge “existing knowledge of women’s inferiority” in scientific methods (Holland and Ramazanoglu 2002: 13). In “Are ‘Old Wives’ Tales’ Justified?” Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff argue for a definition of epistemology that includes “gender specific experiential knowledge” (Dalmiya and Alcoff 1993: 228) as a form of “privileged access,” which I employed. Qualitative research methods through oral interviews are one example of how gender-specific experiences can be identified as knowledge, and this process develops a form of knowledge about women, by women, for women. Quantitative perspectives do more to contextualize those studied in terms of trends. Thus, oral interviews are one of the most powerful research methods that can be used effectively by scholars and researchers interested in influencing women’s production of knowledge. Some oral narratives based on life experiences do not reflect the chronological order at times, but are relevant and vital to research (Perks and Thomson 1998: 168). Oral narratives as a qualitative research method help us listen to women’s voices that have a history of being silenced and marginalized. Armitage et al. refer to such marginalized women as “lost heroines” whose experiences are not recorded and whose “struggles remain unrecognized” (Armitage et al. 2002: 3).

The qualitative research methods included preliminary meetings; in-depth oral interviews; and participant observation.

### *Preliminary Meetings*

Phase one consisted of preliminary meetings, which allowed me to recruit into the study poor grassroots women who belonged to member groups of the Rural Women's Movement – the umbrella organization. According to Gluck and Yow, a preliminary meeting between an interviewer and an interviewee is essential since it helps to break the ice and creates confidence (Gluck 2002: 9; Yow 1998: 80). I began with telephone and email communications with the Director of RWM, Sizani Ngubane, in which I explained my research project and she indicated it was agreeable to her. We strategized about getting access to RWM member groups so I could talk to the grassroots women.

On arrival in South Africa, I held preliminary meetings with the Director, who then arranged for me to hold preliminary meetings with women in rural locations. When I met with grassroots women from member groups of RWM, I introduced the research study, talked about the interviewing procedures involved, and asked for their consent to data collection that included interviews and participant observation. Everything had to be oral – explaining the study and getting interviewing and participant observation consent – since the majority of these grassroots women could neither read nor write. I recorded their oral consent. Yow emphasizes the importance of the narrator's comfort and good “interviewing environment” (Yow 1998: 80), so I normally interviewed women at their homes, one way of “managing the exercise of power” in the pursuit of knowledge

(Holland and Ramazanoglu 2002: 107). Once women were recruited into the study, they were then interviewed in-depth.

### *In-depth Oral Interviews*

Valerie Yow describes an in-depth oral interview as a qualitative research method (Yow 1998: 8) through which a human interaction takes place. I chose to do an in-depth, in-person interview because it allows obtaining gender specific information expressed by women themselves (in their own voices, face-to-face). I used a questionnaire as a guide with open-ended and probing questions. It was a useful format because it made the interviewing process more organized, comprehensive, and transparent. Moreover, as described below under “researcher’s role,” I used an interview technique that respected informants’ freedom of speech, recognizing unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched (Holland and Ramazanoglu 2002: 112).

Interviews were voice-recorded with a digital recorder.<sup>39</sup> I had a pen in my hand and a notebook next to me; however, I failed to take notes as the interviews went on because of the need to pay attention to the interviewee. The recording time varied depending on the interviewee; some talked a lot and some did not. At the end of the interviews, I requested informants’ verbal consent to keep the interview record, which enhanced the interviewees’ informed consent since by then they knew what they had said. In this dissertation, I identify the respondents according to a total number of the women

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<sup>39</sup> All members are given codes, as it was an agreement with IRB not to reveal their information and identities for their safety and security. Also, group names are a cover, not their real names. The only real name that is used is the one for the director, Sizani Ngubane.

interviewed in their sub-groups: 1-15 for SSWCGA, 1-14 for SSWCGB, 1-18 for SBWCGA, 1-23 for SBWCGB, and 1-15 for SBWCGC. In-depth oral interviews allowed me to build rapport with the participants and learn more about their lived experiences and their involvement in the organization. I found that, as Bernard says, in-depth interviews allow participants to convey fully their attitudes, beliefs, and life experiences (Bernard 2002: 22).

### *Participant Observation*

In the third phase, I observed grassroots women's activities in their respective groups through formal participant observation for a total of four days<sup>40</sup> (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010). Each grassroots women's group project was coded for a list of activities they were doing (e.g., planting, quilting, crafting, beading, and baking); I took some pictures of some of these activities. Participant observation not only immersed the researcher in the field site, it also led to insights that expanded on the interview materials. The qualitative data were obtained in the field through in-depth interviews and participant observation.

### *Interviewing skills*

Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack concur with Gluck and Yow in pointing out that good interviewing skills help to obtain rich and detailed data (Anderson and Jack 1998; Gluck 2002; Yow 1994). Thus, I tried to listen carefully to the informants while they

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<sup>40</sup> However, I spent much time with the groups and observed them informally (without recording the observation).

were speaking. I used steady eye contact to observe non-verbal performance and constructed follow-up questions where needed. I constantly tried to consider the relevance, validity, and completeness of the informants' narratives and responses. Even though I tried to follow some of the best interviewing procedures, I encountered some methodological challenges.

### *Challenges and Biases*

There were both strengths and limitations to data collection using in-depth oral interview techniques. On the positive side, I remain convinced that the interview brought out accurate information from the informants on the whole. I developed good listening skills and managed to refocus interviews on the questions after digressions or expanded answers. However, I noted the need for encouraging some interviewees to tell about their specific experiences as related to their organizing. In some cases I avoided asking direct questions about sensitive subjects, such as informants' sexual experiences with their husbands. For example, "Do you have fears about your husband being away from home, working in the city with a lot of other women, in particular?" During my transcription I found that there were places where specific added questions should have been asked, especially about family life; but because of the age factor and the awareness of cultural boundaries based on age I did not.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, most researchers utilizing interviews such as Trevor Lummis, emphasize the importance of handwritten notes taken during the interviewing process

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<sup>41</sup> See researcher's roles for more details on age-based cultural boundaries



(Lummis 1998). As someone new to the field research process, I found it very difficult and challenging to listen and take notes at the same time. As a result, I ended up not taking handwritten notes during the course of the interview but instead wrote field-related notes after each interview, which is an acceptable practice in many studies.

Another major challenge was my own biases through being a woman interviewing women from the same culture and country as the research informants. At times, I had to act ignorant because informants would assume my knowledge stating “*njengoba wazi-ke nawe* (as you also know).” For instance, when I asked my research informants about their domestic responsibilities – basic home chores – they do daily, most of responses include “as you also know”:

R: What do you do when you do home chores?

RS: Ee... It’s all domestic work that you also know as a woman: cooking, washing, cleaning the house and the yard, fetching water, and a lot more; you also know that.<sup>42</sup>

I wanted more detailed information even though my informants expected me as a woman to be aware of domestic chores. I did not always succeed in getting it since I often responded (as I did not want to use leading questions): *Yebo, ngiyezwa. Yikho nje lokho okwenzayo kuphela* (Yes, I hear you. That’s all that you do). It is not easy for one to act ignorant of her/his own culture just because she/he was in another location for a while. I had also to respect the women, the research informants, and disrupt our positions on the

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<sup>42</sup> Research Subject # 9. February 24, 2010. SSWCGA Interview.

Sisuke nenzani uma senza imisebenzi yasekhaya? Ee... Imisebenzi nje yonke yasekhaya njengentombazane nawe uyayazike, ukupheka, ukuwasha, uku-cleana endlini nasegcekeni, ukhe amanzi, kuningi – uyazi ke nawe

educational hierarchy in doing so to achieve the goal of this research, which was to find and listen to marginalized voices. It was their knowledge that had to be prioritized and centered in this work.

### *Researcher's Role*

In this research, I had to be on site for the study. I collected data in ways that allowed me to collaborate with the researched. My role was to listen to grassroots women's voices. In this particular situation, while I am a South African, I am not from the same location as the researched, which makes me occupy partly an outsider position. Each and every family and region / ethnic group has practices that may differ from others'. Here I look at my strengths and limitations connected to being both insider and outsider in this research as they informed political and ethical methodological issues.

I argue that my research role as an insider helped to produce rich information but also contributed to some limitations. My insider status gave me more advantages than if I had been a total outsider. Knowledge of IsiZulu was the first advantage, not only as a first-language speaker, but also as an instructor for several years at The Ohio State University. I also am fully informed about gender, class, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural issues of the researched. In the context of the culture of people of color in South Africa, especially those who reside in rural areas, there are limits that an outsider might not understand and that might result in the violation of cultural norms in the process of research. For example, age is crucial to the status of most people of color in South Africa, especially within Nguni groups such as the Zulus and Xhosas, and affects strongly how

people relate to each other and communicate. As a younger person I did not have the status to ask questions of my elders regarding sexuality and rites of passage. Thus, as an insider I did have some limitations.

Nonetheless, as an insider I had the advantage of acquiring more information based on my knowledge of the language and people, and better skills at conveying sensitivity and empathy. Paradoxically, this negatively affected my ability to obtain information in some areas. Perks and Thomson described how being an insider may limit a researcher's access to information to some extent, because of sensitivity (Perks and Thomson 2000:141). Had I probed further regarding sexuality it would have been a violation of cultural norms, which would have left the women offended and the culture disrespected. Also not probing left unanswered some important questions about women as *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households and about violence in their lives.

An outsider may obtain more access to "authentic knowledge" because of "the objectivity and scientific detachment" from the informant's culture (Perks and Thomson 2000: 140). An outsider might have an advantage in analyzing data more objectively, free of biases, compared to the limitations imposed by cultural restrictions and the knowledge of societal issues that made me approach the study more subjectively. However, I kept in mind such methodological issues and tried to avoid influences of subjectivity and bias when collecting and analyzing research data for this study. One way to do this was to make sure that I followed closely my research proposal as a road map during the 9 months when I collected data. Another way of controlling bias was to feign an outsider role (pretending not to be aware of what was going on in the country since I was out of

the country for more than 5 years by the time of the interview). While it is very important to keep the target audience in mind in data collection and analysis, it is also important to feign ignorance in some instances.

In effect, neither an insider nor an outsider role for the researcher is absolutely free of potential biases. An outsider-researcher may intentionally or unintentionally view the community or the researched based on her/his cultural perceptions. Ramazanoglu and Holland critique the outsider's "concepts of otherness," which contributes to heightened inequalities between a researcher and the researched and therefore lowers the quality of the data obtained (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:108). The concept of otherness not only affects access to information but also creates barriers based on "power relationships in divisions between them/us, knower/known, [and] inside/outside" (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002:108). Such power relations result in the marginalization of the researched and subjective data analysis. In this case, the researched's agency is not recognized and she/he becomes the object of research, with no further input that could inform the data's accuracy or quality. It is also possible for differentials in power between the insider researcher and those studied to create barriers. In my case, I tried to maximize commonalities in our background or feign ignorance due to my absence.

Another aspect of my insider status concerned being treated as a junior woman. All older respondents referred to me, as "*mtanami* (my child)," which is part of our African culture: that a woman is the mother of the nation and all younger women are her daughters. Also, when I shared my background with the study participants, including having been raised in rural and small town areas, informants assumed that I was

knowledgeable of rural issues in South Africa. This status forced me to find strategies to avoid agreeing or disagreeing with informants' statements. Here is an example of one interaction:

RS: You too my child know that we are poor; nobody cares about us in rural communities, even our government that we voted for.

R: Yes *mama*. I thought things were now different with the new democracy. Do you mean nothing has yet happened at all?<sup>43</sup>

In such cases I faced methodological challenges and had to find ways of getting more information without taking a position on issues raised by the participants. A distinct advantage was that informants normally trusted me, probably more than they would have an outsider. However, the insider still has the challenge of not allowing the privileges of being an insider to distort information gained, such as when informants either emphasize or avoid giving information about mutual acquaintances. Thus, being an insider in this research site challenged me to be conscious about my own and the informants' biases, interpretations, needs, and motives.

Whether insider or outsider, the researcher should be conscious, or analytical about, and therefore reflexive about, her/his role, which allows for a balance of power between the researched and the researcher (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 118). I was always aware of the differences between myself and my subjects based on my higher

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<sup>43</sup> Research Subject # 14. April 14, 2010. SSWCGB Interview.

Nawe X mtanami uyazi ukuthi asinalutho, akekho onendaba nathi endaweni zasemakhaya, ngisho uhulumeni wethu esimvotile. Umcwaningi: Yebo mama. Bengicabanga ukuthi izinto sezishinsthile manje ngenxa yenkululeko. Usho ukuthi kusenjalo?

level of education, my international experience, my urban present, my poor and lower-working class background, and my single and childless marital status (which also impeded discussion of sexuality). Nonetheless, there were enough commonalities, such as my rural upbringing and my cultural and linguistic knowledge, to build bridges with my informants.

### **Rural Grassroots Women's Issues and the Rural Women's Movement at the Research Site**

In the next section, I examine the history of the Rural Women's Movement (RWM), its organizational structure, and the priorities of its chief leaders and those of the component women's groups. The Rural Women's Movement in KwaZulu-Natal is one of several grassroots organizations that have managed to mobilize rural women to work on daily issues that include women's empowerment, community development, livelihood sustainability, pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, protection of children, and women's rights (freedom from violence, right to land and government programs).

#### *Historical Description of the Rural Women's Movement*

The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) that I studied<sup>44</sup> is a rural-based movement for grassroots South African women in KwaZulu Natal province. It began in 1998. This movement is affiliated with other such organizations nationally and internationally. RWM helps to rally grassroots women in collective action in order to

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<sup>44</sup> This is emphasized because there are several such movements with the same name – RWM – in other parts of South Africa.

improve the economic and social well-being of their families and communities. By the year 2000, RWM had given birth to more than 200 women's community-based organizations. According to the founder and director of RWM, Sizani Ngubane, "the movement now [2009] consists of over 500 rural women organized in their small local organizations."<sup>45</sup>

Ngubane told me that, in consultation with some of the rural women involved, RWM started as an organization focusing exclusively on obtaining land for rural women, which had been taken away from them by white settlers. When the South African government, under the Ministry of Land Affairs (now known as Rural Development and Land Reform), approved and introduced the Land Reform Gender Policy in 1996, it was aimed at enabling women, just like men, to have access to land for productive purposes (South African Government Information 2010). The Land Reform Gender Policy was introduced to promote the South African government's commitment to gender equity. South African policy on gender equity emphasizes equal participation of men and women in decision-making (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996). The 1996 South African Land Reform Gender Policy advocated men's and women's equal involvement in decisionmaking on land reform projects in national and local settings, that is, men and women should work together equally on issues of land.

However, according to Ngubane, in practice rural women who were part of land reform projects had no voice in land reform program meetings; land was treated as just a man's issue. In these land reform project gatherings – with a special focus on KwaZulu-

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<sup>45</sup> Ngubane, Sizani. June 25, 2009. Interview. Pietermaritzburg.  
Inhlangano manje inamalunga abantu besifazane basemakhaya angaphezu kuka 500.

Natal province – “women and men were seated separately: women on the one side and men on the other,” which was a clear mark of gender inequalities. “What amazed me,” elaborated Ngubane, was that “men were busy engaging in discussion while women sitting on the other side were silent until the meeting was over.”<sup>46</sup> It was obvious that women were just there as spectators, she affirmed. Even if the land reform gender policy put emphasis on gender equity in land reform projects, no strategies were put in place to insure equal participation in grassroots land projects. Thus, men continued following patriarchal norms and assumed absolute control of land reform projects, deliberately leaving women on the margins. Ngubane continued to say, “men claimed that the culture of the Zulus in this context did not allow women to stand and speak among men in public.”<sup>47</sup> The patriarchal norm characterized Zulu culture’s principle that women’s domain is in private sphere of the household, not the public arena (Hassim 1993:7).

For example, encouraging gender inequalities in land reform projects was the Zulu cultural practice known as *hlonipha*, which is more prevalent in rural areas. Ngubane explained that according to *hlonipha*, a married woman is not allowed to stand and speak in front of her husband and the in-laws; young women also cannot stand and speak out in front of their elders; and a woman of any kind is not allowed to speak among men both privately and publicly. Ngubane said,

Women were oppressed in land reform meetings, only men were allowed to talk. Women were like spectators. They

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Amadoda wona aye-busy ekhuluma emhlanganweni, abantu besifazane bona behlezi eceleni bodwa bethule kuze kuphele umhlangano.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Amadoda ayecabanga ukuthi usiko lwamaZulu lwalungabavumeli abantu besifazane ukuma bekhulume esidlangaleni samadoda emphakathini.



were not allowed to have a voice in meetings. They were not even allowed to sit in the same place with men; they sat on the side separately.<sup>48</sup>

In its literal meaning, *hlonipha* refers to “respect” in Zulu culture. Phyllis Zungu explains *hlonipha* as a cultural tool that is used to show appropriate respect for authority as a form of avoidance (Zungu 1985). Thus, *hlonipha* becomes a social custom that reinforces “proper” behavior in the family and community. Further, Raum views *hlonipha* culture as leading to forms of regulating and controlling, including the rules of conduct in language, dress code, and other behavioral patterns based on gender, age, and social status (Raum 1973: 273). “Further it [*hlonipha*] embraces the authority of men over women, and embodied in these relations is male domination in general” (Mdluli 1987: 67). Thus, married or unmarried, women are prohibited from speaking for themselves on all issues, even though women are at the center of the well-being of their homes and communities. Interestingly, most of the women in the land reform projects had internalized oppression in such a way that they tolerated going to meetings as spectators only.

The Zulu culture of *hlonipha* is intended to maintain “*ubuntu*” – humanity – (Mdluli 1987: 64) in the community but intentionally or unintentionally ends up promoting gender inequalities whereby men occupy superior status and women are consigned to subordinate status. Even though the government encouraged gender

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Abantu besifazane babecindezelikile emhlanganweni, amadoda ayevumeleke ukukhuluma.  
Abantu beseifazane babenjengezibukeli. Babengavumelekile ukuphawula emhlanganweni.  
Babengavumelekile nokuhlala ndawonye namadoda, babehlala eceleni bodwa.

inclusivity in its Land Reform Gender Policy, most men involved in local rural meetings and projects pertaining to land spoke “for” the community and regarding women as their property. It was due to the lack of women’s voices and to male dominance that Sizani Ngubane decided to organize rural women, who were already part of the land reform program but marginalized, to form a women’s movement to focus on land issues. She said, “I wanted to create a platform where women were able to speak for themselves about the issues affecting their lives.”<sup>49</sup>

#### *Relationship between RWM and Grassroots Member Organizations*

Formed in 1998, the Rural Women’s Movement was officially launched in 1999 but only registered as a legal non-governmental organization (NGO) in 2003. As an “umbrella movement” for rural women in KwaZulu-Natal, RWM helps rural women organize into community-based organizations. Volunteers – organizers and facilitators – observe and listen to their issues, participate in their projects, and contribute to their needs by looking for possible resources to help start up rural women’s income projects and fight for land rights for rural women. The role of the director of RWM is to visit community-based member groups, observe what they do and listen to their grievances. She then looks for volunteers to help the women with their projects. She also talks to professional farmers and invites them to come and talk to women to help them with their gardens and plots for those involved in gardening and farming. Additionally, she

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Ngangifuna ukwenza i-platform la abantu besifazane bezokwazi ukukhululeka bekhulume ngezinto ezithinta izimpilo zabo.

organizes workshops such as the one that was held in Pietermaritzburg on August 15, 2002 to enhance women's knowledge of land issues as part of South African history and politics. The director of RWM has been very involved in the land issue movement in South Africa and in the fight against continued apartheid-era models for communal land.

The director of RWM decided to expand its commitment to include other issues of urgency to rural women. As a result of the interlocking experiences of rural women – as mothers, workers of the land, at the center of family and community well-being, as home workers, and as marginalized citizens based on their gender, class, location, and race in South Africa – RWM further engaged in collective action by organizing rural women around other issues of practical gender needs such as getting access to land, clean water, sanitation, malnutrition, health services, HIV/AIDS, and non-farm livelihoods.

Sisonke Women's Club Group (SSWCG) and Siyabonga Women's Club Group (SBWCG) – two of the RWM's member organizations – focus on a variety of issues related to local needs such as poverty, sanitation, caring for orphans, and pandemic diseases like HIV/AIDS. Started in 2006 with only nine members, SSWCG today runs craft projects. As one of the members pointed out,

“It was an idea of six women who came together as stay-at-home women and decided to do something about our situations as we had nothing. We were poor and suffering. We wanted to do something that could help us generate some income and be able to help each other and others in need. We then thought of making and selling floor mats as something we did all the time [even when we] did not need money. We decided to do it for money so many could benefit.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Research Subject # 2. August 26, 2009. SSWCGA Interview.

Women of this group decided to use plants to make floor mats and baskets as they had no source of income to engage in activities using materials that needed to be purchased. Women of SSWCG gather sisal and grasslike plants from the riverbank.

Started in 2003 with only five members, SBWCG members do beadwork, sewing/quilting, and baking. Five friends who were neighbors decided to teach each other how to bake and sell cakes – using the stove that one of the friends owned – in order to generate income to help take care of their family needs, especially their children’s school expenses. Each woman brought material and shared baking ingredients. Many families use flour to prepare one of the customary cuisines such as steamed bread, *ujeqe* or *idombolo*. It was from the profits that they earned that they purchased more baking ingredients to fill demands for baked cakes. After 3 months of baking, one woman who knew how to sew started teaching others with her machine. This was supported by a member who said:

“I knew how to sew. I learned it from my mother and my husband bought me a machine when we got married in 1996. I never used it for anything special. Since we were meeting to bake, we started to think that we could do more and be able to attain some form of income. I started teaching my colleagues to sew and they learned quickly. That’s when the groups expanded because people heard that we were sewing and many wanted to learn. Within 6 months of starting our organization we had attracted about 11 members. From then, the numbers kept on increasing. However, some people dropped out of the project while

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Kwaba umqondo wabantu besifazane abangu-6 ukuthi sihlangane senze okuthile ukuzisiza; sasibulawa indlala sihlupheka. Sacabanga ukwenza okuthile ukukwazi ukuthola imali sikwazi ukusizana siphinde sisize nalabo abandingayo. Sacabanga ukwenza amacansi njengento esasihlala siyenza futhi engadingi mali. Sacabanga ukwenza lokhu ukuthola imali esizosizakala ngayo.

others went somewhere else to look for paying jobs once they knew how to sew. Some have just disappeared.”<sup>51</sup>

Both groups, SSWCG and SBWCG, are built on a non-hierarchical model. They have no single leader; they all equally contribute to the matters and activities of the groups with the major goal of cooperative economics, helping each other and their families. Like their grassroots sisters in other settings, rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG initiated and implemented a collective strategy aimed at generating income. They are still disproportionately affected by marginalization and poverty with little or no cash income because of their loss of land rights under apartheid, lack of education or job training, and lack of development programs in their communities. They also are oppressed by domestic violence, health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, cancer, and scarcity of health care services for the poor in rural areas (Reddy, Munthre, and Wiebesiek 2010: 28). RWM searches around KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) to find other rural women's groups who are organized and run projects on their own.

The existence of RWM helps to give a voice to the most marginalized rural women in South Africa. For example, RWM was one of the organizations that fought against the Communal Land Rights Act (CLRA) of 2004 and won the case. CLRA gave tenure security of communal land to the control of “traditional” so called “tribal”

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<sup>51</sup> Research Subject # 4. September 13, 2009. SBWCGA Interview.

Ngangikwazi ukuthunga. Ngakufunda kumama wami; umyeni wami wangithengela umshini wokuthunga uma siqeda ukushada ngo-1996. Angikazi ngiwusebenzisele lutho olutheni. Njengoba sasihlangana sibhaka, sabona ukuthi singenza okunye ukuthola imali ethe xaxa. Ngaqala ngafundisa ozakwethu ukuthunga, bafunda ngokushesha. Yilapho igruphu eyanda khona ngoba abanengi bezwa ukuthi siyathunga, bafuna ukufunda. Ezinyangeni ezingu-6 siyiqalile inhlangothi yethu, yakhula saba nezimemba ezingaba u-11; emva kwalokho izinamba zalokhu ziqhubekile zikhula. Noma-ke abanye babelokhu besala endleleni. Abanye bayahamba beyofuna imisebenzi ekhokhelayo uma sebekwazi ukuthunga, abanye bavelele benyamalale.

councils. This denied tenure security to at least 17 million very poor South Africans, including women because only men sit on councils. According to RWM and other opponents of CLRA, these councils were created by the Bantu Authorities Act [under] apartheid, which the democratic Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 transformed into “traditional councils” (RWM website accessed October 21, 2012). “Tribal / traditional” councils still follow the same type of leadership that was created by apartheid to divide and rule. Thus, according to RWM and other groups, “apartheid-created tribal authorities were given a new lease on life with additional powers over land, including control over the occupation, use, and administration of communal land and development in democratic society” (RWM website accessed October 21, 2012). The South African High Court finally declared this act unlawful in May 2010. Ngubane stated that “the Rural Women’s Movement (RWM), and many other rural organizations, welcomed the judgment as a fundamental victory for the rural communities who challenged the constitutionality of the Act. We have persevered with our objections since the CLRA was enacted in 2004 and despite the odds being stacked high against us” (Ngubane, RWM website accessed October 21, 2010). Even though the women studied look upon RWM as an umbrella organization that helps solve some of their organizational challenges such as advocating for rural women on such broader land issues as exemplified in CLRA’s case, SSWCG and SBWCG receive no monetary or other direct assistance from RWM.

In fact, based on anecdotal reports, the relationship of the RWM Director to community-based member groups that she counts among the 500 women she says are

part of her umbrella organization seems to be rooted in political influence. In order to say that she represents rural women, she had to have women in groups as RWM members. She searches for women's groups or helps them organize and then she incorporates them into the umbrella organization. She identifies political issues that she can influence, such as land. Rural women often call her their "savior" because she travels from the city to rural areas to work with them. I found that they are strongly influenced by her reputation as a popular person who fights for rural women's rights for land. They hear about her on local radios and from newspapers. Rural women in member groups therefore see her as representing their voices and their needs. They expressed gratitude for advocating for them with the government. Even though I appreciate the effort the Director makes to represent rural women of KwaZulu-Natal province, I, as a researcher, observed that the groups like SBWCG and SSWCG had no idea how RWM operated or how it was affiliated legally with them.

From my observations and research on RWM, I concluded that not only is the director's role to connect with poor rural women who need help but that the relationship of the umbrella organization with member groups is top down. The umbrella group also seems to be the "Director's NGO." Group members are not directly involved in running the organization. I could find no concrete evidence as to how she or RWM helped women other than as advocates on the land issues, organizing workshops for women to meet and talk about their issues, and conducting or facilitating some training on women's rights. I could find no direct material benefits such as "funding" for the groups I studied. "In terms of civil organizations, historically the Rural Women's Movement helped ensure

that distributive issues [...] have been kept at the forefront of rural women's political agenda, for example in relation to the constitution-making process" (Beall 2005: 271). Thus, the relationship between the umbrella organization and member groups is somewhat vague.

Sizani Ngubane is a politically minded-woman with good education, who was once an activist with the ANC and who left because of politics, including patriarchal domination. When some of the member groups call on Ngubane, whether or not she responds depends on her availability. The women studied liked her and praised her a lot and also had expectations of having their needs met. As mentioned above, she has a vested interest in signing up many members. She benefits from a large membership with political legitimacy and a stronger political voice for "her" NGO. As a result, for the women's groups to be affiliated with RWM has helped them get some attention from the government, donors, and women's and feminist organizations who now know there are women's groups organizing in KwaZulu-Natal. Being part of the umbrella group has helped some rural women in member groups to better understand matters concerning land rights in South Africa. Nonetheless, the women's groups that I studied seemed not to have gained attention and indicated that they struggle without additional needed resources.

Despite these complicated and challenging situations, women in rural areas still believe in collective organizing as a means to sustain their families and communities. Through SSWCG, SBWCG, and other community-based organizations, rural women try to better their situations by engaging in projects such as crafts, baking, gardening, care-



giving for the sick and orphans, and daily home activities. In adopting what Molyneux calls a practical gender needs organizing approach (Molyneux 1986), member organizations like SSWCG and SBWCG prioritize women's basic needs of livelihood and poverty, healthcare and care-giving, while RWM focuses on strategic needs such as women's rights and representation – lobbying and advocacy – in local and national governance.

The following figure outlines the structure and summarizes the activities of RWM and the two member organizations studied.

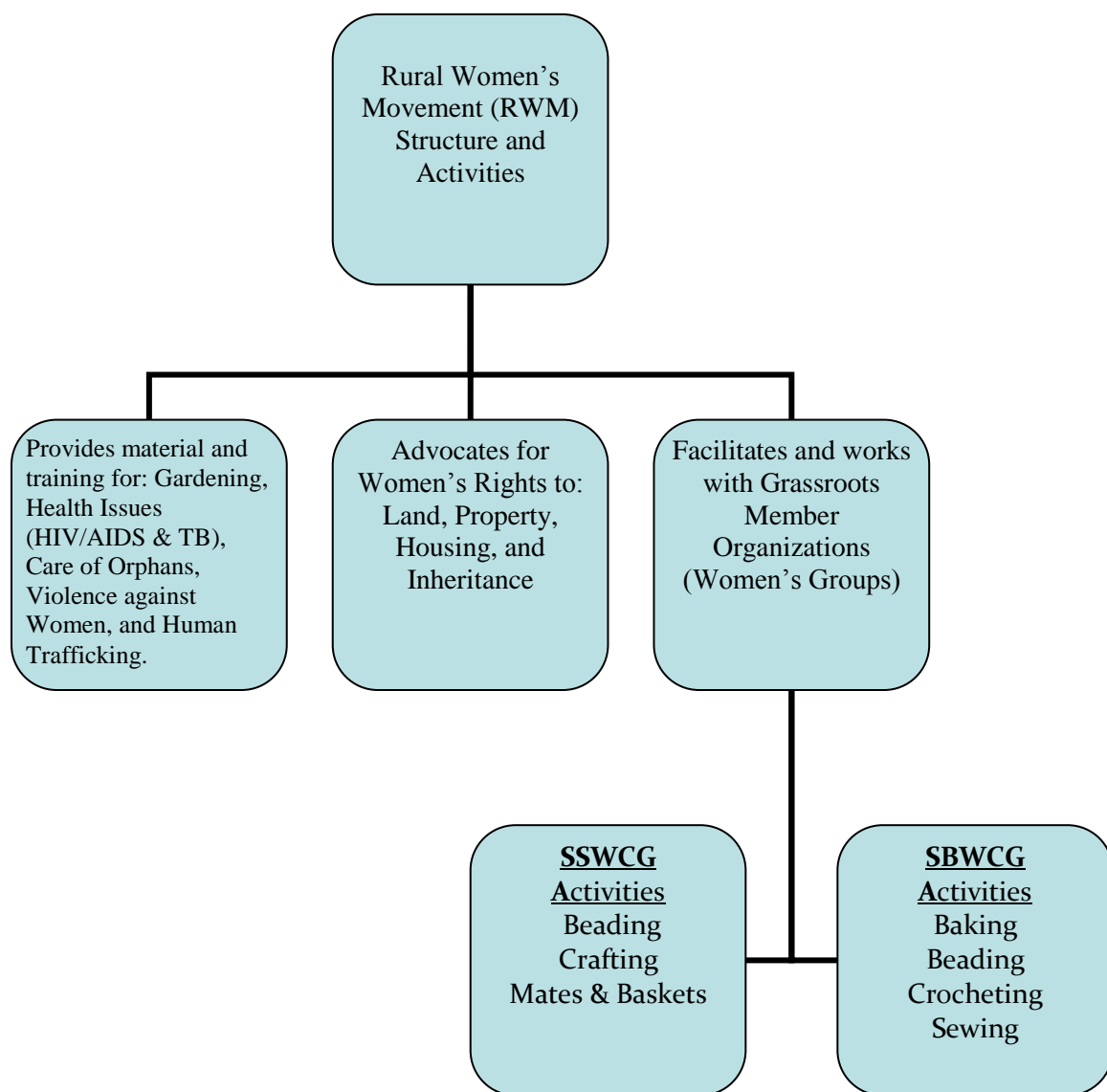


Figure 1: RWM and Women's Groups Activities

### *The Structure of the Organization*

Bystydzienski and Sekhon referring to selected women's and community organizations in several countries state that "most organizations try to balance flexibility, openness, and collective decision making to achieve their objectives in an efficient

manner, while appearing strong and united” (Bystydzienski and Sekhon 1999: 383). The authors theorize that most grassroots women’s organizations move away from power-centered structures towards more non-hierarchical and inclusive structures. In the case of RWM, it is designed for both a hierarchical and a participatory structure as evidenced in the figures below. Nonetheless, it was clear that the director is a critical actor since when she is absent, RWM activities come to a virtual halt. The following figure represent the structure and relations within the organization as explained in the text that follows.

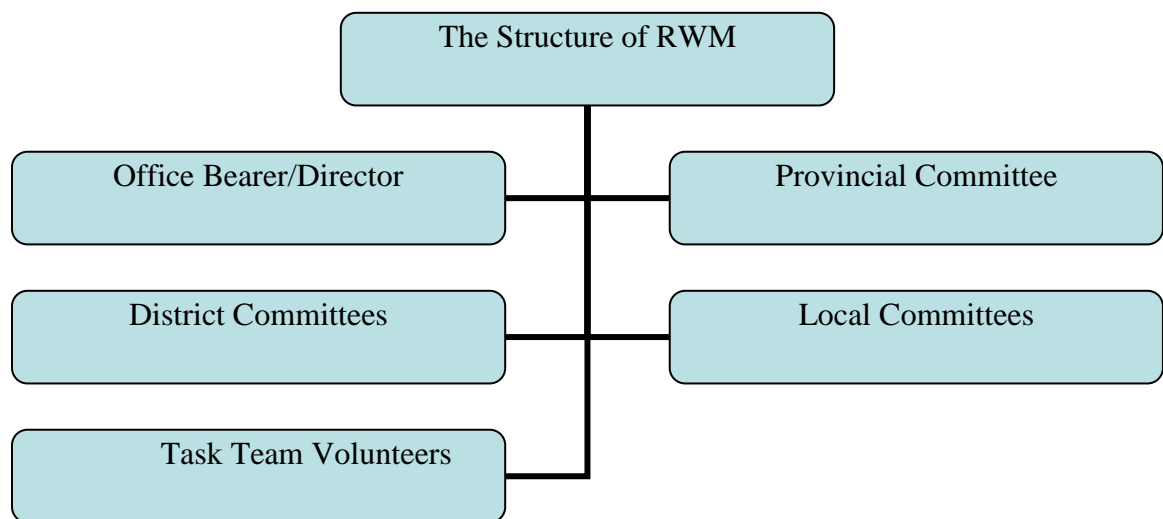


Figure 2: Hierarchical Structure of RWM

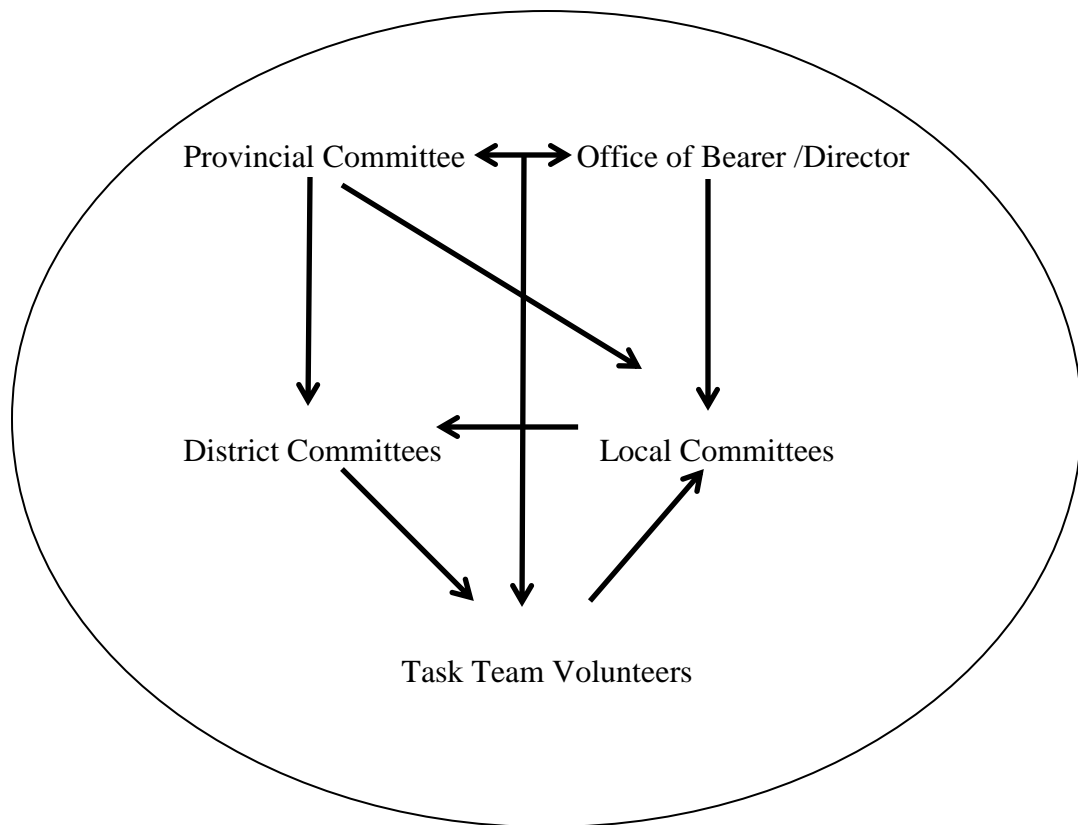


Figure 3: RWM Participation in Organizational Relations

According to RWM's constitution, the Provincial Committee in KwaZulu-Natal carries responsibility for the accountability of the movement to members. It should appoint the director and create policies. However, both the Provincial Committee and the Director function at the same level. The Office Bearer, the Director, ensures that the movement's resources are used effectively and efficiently, while also bearing responsibility for ensuring that the movement meets its mission and strategic objectives, facilitates development projects, and she is responsible for decision-making for all aspects of RWM's work. The District Committees coordinate projects and resources, and

the Local Committees are responsible for the implementation of projects/programs at the local level. Task Team Volunteers are mostly home-based health task teams.

Health volunteers are significant resources for rural families with members infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS. They connect affected families and individuals with health care services for them to get more information and have access to anti-retroviral treatment for infected individuals. They also get treatment for those who cannot travel to clinics and check on those who are able to travel and ensure that they keep up with their treatment schedule. They, in general, help facilitate information on health-related issues. Moreover, they help orphaned children by assisting RWM to relocate them to areas with better care for their needs such as education, food, and shelter.

Another set of volunteers are student interns in the organization. They usually help the director with office work and participate in different projects of the organization. Some student interns are sometimes placed at the local level. The use of different individuals for multiple tasks of the organization is meant to encourage participation (RWM Constitution 2003, Appendix A). However, decision-making depends heavily on the director.

The umbrella organization embodies a hierarchical structure with a written constitution that everyone must follow. This hierarchical structure includes all constituents in the movement and encourages participatory and inclusive practices. For instance, the director *says* that she does not make decisions for women's groups; she instead is supposed to work with them by listening to their concerns and they work on them together. I observed meetings where she met with women's groups; she allowed

women to identify problems or challenges and asked them to suggest possible solutions – clear participatory approach. Whether or not she actually followed through on help they asked for from her is in question since she uses her influence at policy levels with little immediate impact on women's lives.

Even though RWM uses a participatory approach aimed at non-hierarchical forms of organizing, it still maintains power differences in its leadership model and it treats members and staff according to differences in terms of education, class, and status.

Kathleen Iannello argues that bureaucracy, which is synonymous with hierarchy, is prevalent in most organizations that claim to practice non-hierarchical power sharing (Iannello 1992: 136). Even though RWM's relationship is symbiotic between the leaders and women at the grassroots levels, leaders' roles and duties as primary mediators indicate forms of power and authority that they hold in both the umbrella movement and over some community-based organizations. Unlike the majority of women in grassroots community-based organizations, some women in RWM's local, district, and provincial committees are able to read and write. Their duties require this as stipulated in the RWM constitution. They also get to travel across the nation and sleep in motels or bed-and-breakfast lodgings if they have to attend conferences outside their locations. Their duties give them privileges over other women at the local level.

The structure of the Rural Women's Movement is built on a principle of women's empowerment that promotes women's autonomy, alliances, and solidarity that should transcend differences and inequalities. It seeks to be a women's movement that prioritizes issues of concern to women and their families as well as their communities as a whole.

One goal is to strengthen South African rural women's participation in the democratization of their nation, as citizens. It does that by implementing a bottom-up strategy of grassroots organizing or consultation. Based on my field observations, the director of RWM appoints women from community-based organizations to serve committees. The women on the committees come directly from community-based organizations and are chosen by grassroots women to be their leaders and representatives. All grassroots groups recommend someone to the director who interviews all to select and appoint a few to each committee. RWM grassroots women who serve on committees then go back and disseminate information to other women. Also, from time to time, RWM works hand-in-hand with community-based member organizations through training and other forms of assistance.

#### *Priorities of RWM and Member Organizations*

According to a member, RWM

Is an umbrella organization that is comprised of the rural women's groups from different rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. This organization is a collective action of women in an attempt to overcome challenges that women, in particular, face in the community such as issues of poverty, lack of land, domestic violence, sexual assaults, orphanage, and pandemic diseases. These rural women, in collective action, apply different strategies in tackling these issues to bring about development, fight for women to get land, and give support to needy families, children, and individuals as a result of different causes mostly because of pandemic disease, sexual abuse, and poverty.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Research Subject #3. September 2, 2010. Interview SSWCGA.

The RWM is made up primarily of rural women aged between their early thirties and eighties although men are allowed to belong (I actually met one!). The movement prioritizes women in rural areas because they are the most neglected citizens; the socio-economic consequences of the apartheid government in South Africa are still perpetuated in the extreme poverty and lack of social services in rural areas (Moyo and Yeros 2007: 68). In the era of democracy, the South African government is faced with a huge burden of closing the gap between development in the city and in rural areas. Cities in South Africa have continued to develop economically as they did under apartheid, whereas rural areas are still suffering from the lack of development: no proper infrastructure, inadequate health services, insufficient transportation, lack of food supplies, and little or no land per family. In particular, “the African democratic governments’ strategies of development have [so far] failed to [efficiently] address the needs and realities of rural women” (Berhane-Selassie 1997: 187).

Thus, NGOs such as RWM here formed to prioritize the needs of marginalized women, especially low-income women in rural communities, to improve their ability to produce and be able to take care of their families and communities. However, the scarcity

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Inhlangano eyangamele izinhlangano ezabomama basemakhaya aka KwaZulu-Natal la e-South Africa. Le nhlangano yakhiwe ukuhlangana komama ngemizamo yokulwa nezinqinamba ezibhekene nomama emphakathini njenge: ndlala, ukushoda komhlalaba, ukuhlukumezeka kwabantu besifazane emakhaya abo, ukuhlukunyezwa okumayelana nobulili, kanye nezifo ezingalapheki. Labo mama basemakhaya, ngokuhlangana, basebenzisa i-strategy ezahlukeneyo ukulwa nalezi zinkinga nokuzama intuthuko, ukulwela amalungelo abantu besifazane, nokunakekela imindeni, nabantwana, kanye namanye amalunga omphakathi. Bakwenza lokhu ngenxa yezinkinga eziningi ezinye zazo izifo ezingalapheki, ukuhlukunyezwa okumayelana nobulili, kanye nendlala.



of resources and financial stability affect the movement. RWM and its community-based organizations both face hardships in efforts to help meet basic needs of rural women.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have outlined my methodology in terms of applying a feminist framework, with priority given to in-depth interviewing. I have also given the historical background and organizational framework for the South African Rural Women's Movement, which is fighting to remedy rural women's continuing oppression. RWM's organizing may be essential in this context as women fight the remnants of colonialism, apartheid, and continuing male dominance in order to survive. The aim of RWM and community-based member groups such as SSWCG and SBWCG is to empower women to change their oppressed and marginalized lives for a better life. Whether or not RWM or women's organizing have been effective will be discussed in the following chapters.

It is important to note that South Africa is still going through a transition in the direction of gender equity. Women would not have had small victories politically without some government support such as the inclusion of women in parliament and opening of programs such as the Department of Women, Children, and People with Disabilities that focus on marginalized groups (Waylen 2007: 522). However, even with colonialism and apartheid abolished, rural women still have to deal with capitalism, neo-colonial and corporate colonialism, the lack of development, and patriarchy.

## **Chapter 4: Home-based Women's Groups in the Area Studied: Part 1**

This chapter analyzes my research findings with regards to the goals of grassroots women's organizing in the KwaZulu-Natal area studied. We begin with the characteristics of the members of Sisonke Women's Club (SSWCG) and Siyabonga Women's Club (SBWCG).

My fieldwork took place over a nine month period between 2009 and 2010. I conducted in-depth interviews with a total of eighty-five members of the organizations aged eighteen to eighty-nine. Most respondents could not read or write, so I filled out forms on demographic characteristics such as age, education, work, marital status, and other basic data. Most respondents were forty and older; very few were in their twenties or thirties.

### **Characteristics of the Sample**

Women in South Africa tend to organize on the basis of class and race (even though there are racially mixed women's organizations such as Agenda and Bobbi Bear, mostly in urban areas). Most women in rural areas cannot read or write, are impoverished and are black or colored. More rural women experience poverty than women in urban areas and more black women than white women lack education and jobs. Most rural women do rural casual labor or work as servants in cities; their work is difficult and

exploitive. These women head most rural households because men are absent working as migrant laborers in South African cities or other regions.

Age is a factor in organizing by the grassroots women studied and there are differences based on their marital status and absence and presence of spouses. All were ethnically Zulu, with IsiZulu as their first language. The literature suggests that most grassroots women who resort to organizing are usually self-employed mothers, who take their reproductive responsibilities seriously (Mikell 1997: 8). However, many in this study are grandmothers, caring for grandchildren left behind by adult children who migrated. Few parents provide any support for children left behind.

**Table 2***Characteristics of Sample (N=85)*

Age	18 – 29	30 – 49	50 – 69	70 – 89	Total
	5	27	45	8	N=85
	5.88%	31.76%	52.94%	9.41%	99.99%
Marital Status	Never Married	Married living Together <sup>53</sup>	Married Not living Together <sup>54</sup>	Divorced/ Legally Separated	Total
	8	13	62	2	N=85
	9.41%	15.29%	72.94%	2.35%	99.99%
Education	Illiterate	Some Primary	Some Secondary <sup>55</sup>	Some High School	Total
	71	7	2	5	N=85
	83.52%	8.23%	2.35%	5.88%	99.98%
Informal work	Self Employed				Total
	85				N=85
	100%				100%
Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 of the 85 women (8.23%) were unpaid health volunteers and 11 (12.94%) helped the ill, elderly and orphans</li><li>• Healthcare volunteers pick up treatments for ill patients and ensure that they keep schedules for taking medication</li><li>• Care volunteers help patients, the elderly and orphans with cleaning, cooking, fetching water and other needs</li><li>• The self employed category refers to women in projects.</li></ul>				

<sup>53</sup> Husbands in this category are absent as migrant workers in town and are home occasionally.

<sup>54</sup> Women in this category are *de facto* heads of households as husbands are those who stopped returning home.

<sup>55</sup> As the old school system, secondary, was replaced by high school, I put secondary and high school together (older women had secondary as highest level of schooling).

### *Age*

Women aged fifty to sixty-nine make up the majority of members in the women's groups at 52.94%, followed by young adult women thirty to forty-nine with 31.76%; then seniors aged seventy to eighty-nine at 9.41%; and young women aged eighteen to twenty-nine at 5.88%. The average age was sixty-two. The low numbers of young women in the groups is a problem. Some young women were in school; some were working in part-time jobs; some were looking for jobs or had migrated to the city; and some remained home waiting for opportunities for pursuing higher education or jobs. When I asked group members about the lack of representation of younger members, one member said:

These young girls go to school, but even if they do not go to school, they want to work and join their age mates in the city, not stay home and work with seniors like us [laughing].<sup>56</sup>

The lack of representation of young women is not just an issue for SSWCG and SBWCG of the South African Rural Women's Movement, but for most grassroots women's organizations and movements in different places. For instance, Mariko Tamanoi highlights the same issue among grassroots women's groups in Japan where most members, who were older women, complained to her that "young women were not interested in [their] organization (Tamanoi 1998: 38). Some of the reasons keeping young women from joining local women's groups' projects included that most women of the young generation, married and unmarried, work outside the home as "part-time workers"

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<sup>56</sup> Research Subject # 3. October 25, 2009. SBWCGB Interview.  
Laba bantwana bamantombazana baya ezikoleni kuthi noma bengayi, bafuna ukusebenza bajoyini ozakwabo emadolobheni bangahlali ekhaya basebenze nabantu abadala abanjengathi [ehleka].

and some stay home and “[do] piecework, in addition to attending to the needs of the young and the old” (Tamanoi 1998: 38). In addition, Nawal Ammar and Leila Labidy in their research about women’s grassroots movements in Egypt, with a special focus on Alliance for Arab Women (AAW), emphasized diversity among the members in terms of “representation, age, and marital status” since its formation in 1987 (Bystydzienski and Sekhon 1999: 156). However, Ammar and Labidy indicated that the age of members ranged from early thirties to mid-sixties, which indicates there was little representation by young women. Instead of staying home doing nothing, therefore, even some young women prefer to join local women’s projects and do something while waiting for job or education opportunities. One young member of SBWCG, when asked why she decided to join the organization, said:

I thought it was better to join our mothers (women) and work instead of staying home doing nothing because my father does not have money for me to continue with school (higher education, as she had graduated from secondary school) and I have not got a job. So, being in the organization helps and teaches me a lot. I now know how to do design and make clothes, necklaces, earrings, and bracelets using the beads, something that I would not have known if I were to continue to stay home and do nothing.<sup>57</sup>

The inclusion of younger women would improve the sustainability of the movement and likelihood of women’s empowerment, raising hopes for stability and growth of the movement. However, in the context of this rural setting in South Africa,

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<sup>57</sup> Research Subject # 16. April 04, 2010. SBWCGA Interview.

Ngacabanga ukuthi kungcono ukujoyina omama bethu ngisebenze kunokuhlala ekhaya ngingenzi lutho ngoba ubaba akanayo imali yokungiqhuba neskole (imfundo ephakeme, ngengoba esegogodile e-high school) and anginamsebenzi. So, ukuba kwinhlangano kuyangisiza futhi ku

many young women's reluctance to join local women's organizations is associated and expressed in Zulu terminology; they are referred to as "*inhlango yomama*" - meaning "mamas' organization." Most people literally interpret *mama* as mother, meaning that women's organizations are taken to be organizations for mothers only. Also, mothers more often than not are thought of as old married women or women who are heads of households, not as young single mothers. The terminology thus unintentionally excludes and intimidates the young, giving them an excuse not to join or participate. The answers of young members eighteen to twenty-nine, when asked why they decided to join the organization, are indicative. Such membership was seen as a kind of last ditch, stopgap option better than "staying home and doing nothing" (RS #07: SSWCGB).<sup>58</sup> This is one reason why most women's organizations are moving away from the name, "*inhlango yomama*," in favor of "*inhlango yabesifazane*" – meaning "organization for females." Nevertheless, name *inhlango yomama* re-affirms gender norms (women should be mothers, homemakers, and married) associated with some women's organizations.

Another factor contributing to low representation by younger members is the *hlonipha* culture of the Zulu community. Older and younger women should respect age boundaries. Within the organizations younger women are expected to listen and follow what adults say due to the culture that teaches respect for senior women. In urban areas IsiZulu speakers more often "critically evaluate notions of *hlonipha*" [culture]. This culture still is practiced and preserved by many IsiZulu speakers in rural areas and "reinforces a complex value system which is based on the social variables age, status, and

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<sup>58</sup>Research Subject # 07. March 31, 2010. SSWCGB Interview. Ukuhlala ekhaya ungenzi lutho.

gender” (Rudwick 2008: 154-5). Despite good intentions post-apartheid of restoring respect for the elderly in the nation, *hlonipha* does further hierarchies on the basis of another binary oppositions such as “inferior status” and “superior status” (Raum 1973: 15). Thus, one reason why many young women are reluctant to join most women’s groups or organizations is that they are not treated as adults or they feel shy about raising their voices or concerns in the organizations, even when they are free to do so, fearing to argue with adult women, who are regarded as collective mothers within *hlonipha* culture. They may end up being silent members only who follow the instructions of senior women. Some then choose not to join or to withdraw and, in some cases, may organize separate projects for the youth or young women.

Most of young ones do not want to join us because they feel like we are going to control them and treat them as children as their mothers. Some do not feel they belong to our organizations because they think they are for older women. They prefer to stay home or look for jobs or join youth organizations.<sup>59</sup>

In the case of SSWCG and SBWCG, few young women, only 5% of them, expressed a feeling of equality in the groups. One member said, “We work very well with our mothers; they teach us work and let us be; we are free to say and do what we want” (SBWCGC RS#: 14).<sup>60</sup> However, even though some showed enthusiasm and freedom in

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<sup>59</sup> Research Subject # 21. April 18, SBWCGB. Interview.

Abaningi balegenge encane abafuni ukusijoyina ngoba bacabanga ukuthi sizobaphatha sibaphathise okwabantana njengomama babo. Abanye bacabanga ukuthi abahlangene nezinhlangano zethu ngoba ezabantu abadala. Bancamela ukuhlala ekhaya noma bafune imisebenzi noma bajoyini izinhlangano zeyuthi.

<sup>60</sup> Research Subject # 14. April 25, 2010. SBWCGC Interview.

Sisebenza kahle kakhulu nomama bethu, basifundisa umsebenzi ngendlela futhi basivumele sibe yithi; sikhulekile ukusho futhi senze esikufisayo.



their work, I did not witness them holding any conversation with the seniors unless they were asked something. They were all working together in one room with seniors talking loudly with laughter while young women were usually quiet and talked softly when they spoke, unless they laughed as a result of listening to seniors' conversation. They did talk among themselves. The need for cross-generational organizing is held back by the norm of *hlonipha*. For example, even during the struggle against apartheid when all age groups participated, they still tended to organize within age groups but not across age groups. The Soweto uprising of 1976, for example, consisted solely of school age children and teenagers.

Nevertheless, many senior members showed appreciation of young women in the groups and praised them for being helpful, which I witnessed during my participant observation, especially when it came to travelling to the city to get materials needed in local areas, and helping with writing in the case of keeping records for the organization. The young are more likely to be able to read and write. One member said,

We really appreciate seeing our children [referring to young women] joining us because they help a lot; we cannot write, and they also are accompanying us [senior members] to go buy material in the city because they know how to read and move fast; the city is so crowded.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Research Subject # 9. April 4, 2010. SBWCGA Interview.

Siyajabula ngempela ukubona abantwana bethu (esho abantu besifazane abancane kunabo) zisijoyina ngoba bayasiza kakhulu; thina asikwazi ukubhala, baphinda basize ukuhamba nezimemba zethu (abadala) ukuyothenga izinto zokusebenza edolobheni ngoba phela bona bayakwazi ukufunda kanti bayashesha futhi, kuyagcwala phela edolobheni.

What they call each other is also interesting; young women call older women *mama* and older women call young ones *mtanami* (my child). Within Zulu culture and Bantu philosophy, a mother is mother of the whole village. This also extends to many African cultures, guided by “indigenous communal thought” within African philosophy, as Gbadegesin described in Yoruba culture (Gbadegesin 1991: 8).

Also less represented among the membership are older women between seventy and eighty-nine. Senior women in their seventies and eighties composed 9.41% of the members. The lower representation of older women is due partly to disability caused by age, and relatively low life expectancy for women in South Africa, presently estimated at 55 years compared to 59 years in 2000 and 68 years in 1990 (WHO: World Health Statistics Report 2010). This falling life expectancy is due partly to the large impact of HIV/AIDS and cancer – mostly affecting black women – and other epidemics among the South African population as a whole, including high infant mortality. The future prospects for the groups’ progress and expansion rests on increasing age diversity.

### *Marital Status*

Many women are *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households,- 72.9% of the sample. Most husbands are migrant laborers in the cities. Most African rural women in the former homeland reserves maintain their families as they can while men, wage-earners, work elsewhere (Cutrufelli 1983: 41). This is in agreement with most of the literature showing that many homes are headed by women, especially in rural South Africa but also in other African countries that were settler colonies (Cutrufelli and Mazzotta 1983: 41; Hemson,

Meyer, and Maphunye 2004: 2; Mikell 1997: 7; Olabisi 1998: 70). It is also the case that many men who migrate to the cities never come back or do not support their rural families, leaving most women to be the sole support of their families, making them *de facto* heads of their families (Clark and Worger 2004: 40). Some men take city wives, in effect abandoning their rural families. Most men who migrated from this region went to Johannesburg.

I did not encounter a man in the homes of the women where we held interviews. There were a few at the preliminary meeting open to everyone where I introduced and explained my study. Moreover, even the women listed within the category of “married/living together,” who were 15.29% of the sample, often stated that their husbands were rarely home because they left for the city in search of jobs. Some came home at the end of the month and some did not. Even when men shared earnings, it was often not enough, as described by RS#3 below:

RS: Our husbands do not stay home because of work. Cash income jobs are in the cities; there are no jobs here in rural areas. Our husbands are able to go and work there; we cannot; we have to stay behind and look after the home and children.

R: When do they come back?

RS: My husband comes back at the end of the month after getting paid. However, he sometimes does not come if he cannot get off or if the money is not enough because of the expenses of that month.

R: Why then do you work if your husbands are earning income?

RS: Oh my child! The money they earn does not meet all our needs. Our husbands are not educated; they are just like us. Therefore, the jobs they have do not pay as much as those of professionals. We then have to try to do something to help there and there with home needs. The children will go hungry if you think you are going to stay home and wait

for the husband's month end's cash of support, which finishes fast without all needs being taken care of, as it is not much.

R: OK.<sup>62</sup>

The whole situation of men working outside of the home seeking wages and women remaining behind as *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households responsible for both reproductive and productive labor came as a result of colonial economic expansion. In the 1940s, the apartheid government placed black South Africans in socially excluded places referred to as reserves or homelands which are mainly rural areas today (Richardson 1978). The movement of black people was restricted outside these homelands, they had to carry passes,<sup>63</sup> and they were jailed or even killed by the apartheid government police. Most rural men migrated to urban areas to meet the demands of the capitalists related to cheap labor while earning some cash to take care of their families because they no longer had their own land for production. Wives (women) left home depended on men's remittances for family survival. With time, some men stopped going back or sending money to their homes, a situation that led some wives to enter domestic work. They became domestic servants doing housekeeping or custodial work, babysitting and other

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<sup>62</sup>Research Subject # 3. October 25, 2009. SBWCGB Interview.

RS: Obaba abahlali emakhaya ngoba bayasebenza. Imisebenzi enemali esemadolobheni ayikho la emakhaya. Obaba bona bayakwazi ukuhamba beyosebenza thina ke sisale sibheka ikhaya nabantwana.

R: Babuya nini?

RS: Mina owakwami ubaba ubuya ekupheleni kwenyanga, uma eholile. Kodwa kwesinye isikhathi akabuyi uma umsebenzi umxakile noma amasenti engekho kahle, izidingo ziziningi.

R: Nisebenzelena uma obaba besebenza?

RS: Hawu mtanami! Phelan je imali le abayisebenzayo ayenelisi zonke izidingo. Phela obaba abafundile, bafana nathi. Ngakho imisebenzi abayisebenzayo ayikhokhi kakhulu njengeyefundiswa. Ngakho kumele sizame nathi sibambe lapha nalaphaya ukuze sibambisane ezidingweni zasekhaya. Uma uzohlala uthi uyolinda ukuphela kwenyanga, kusho ukuthi abantwana bazolamba ngoba phela ifika isheshe iphele naleyo madlana, isike ingengakanani.

R: Yebo.

<sup>63</sup>A South African personal identification document is called a "pass" or "ID."

tasks of that nature. Like men, rural women were also obligated to carry passes and other personal identification documents. The hassle of carrying passes led to women's anti-pass campaign of the 1950s, which was later joined by men (Miller 2003: 623). Struggling and finding ways to survive during tough times have been central to the life of rural South African women. As they dealt with the apartheid pass law, rural women were always trying their best to find ways of alleviating multiple poverty situations that are affected not only their families but their communities as a whole. Further integration into the world capitalist economy has introduced a growing need for cash for basic subsistence and resources. Men depend on industries, factories, and market exchange for their household and family income, making women dependent on men for cash income (Ehlers 2000: xxxv, 3; Wiley and Isaacman 1981: 14). Given men's failure to meet their family economic obligations, this system has created a situation whereby women have to fend for themselves and they resort to alternative methods in order to sustain their families, including taking care of their grandchildren. This pattern established under apartheid endures in the present. Many women like those in my study engage in informal work by forming project groups.

### *Education*

The educational status of the members of SSWCG and SBWCG, as shown in Table 1, is highly reflective of their age. Most women in this rural area could not read or write (83.5%), especially the older generation. Only 16% of the women had some education, mostly primary (8.2%), while 2.3% had some secondary education and only

5.8% graduated from high school (all aged eighteen to twenty-nine). Those who had some primary education ranged in age from thirty to forty-nine. The legacy of apartheid in South Africa continues in this high rate of illiteracy, especially in rural areas. These areas were purposefully excluded from every kind of social, economic, and political development by the apartheid government, even before 1948 when it came to power.

Apartheid's legacy in establishing the high level of illiteracy in poor black communities in South Africa was expressed by Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, in a 1954 statement, which enshrined "separate and unequal" as official apartheid education policy. Verwoerd stated:

When I [Verwoerd] have control over native [black] education, I will reform it [education] so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them. There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of [labor] (Hlatshwayo 2000: 53).

Thus, the 13% of the population that was white monopolized educational resources, while Verwoerd implemented what was called Bantu education for black Africans who were taught, when they were taught at all, in Afrikaans ("a Germanic language which derives primarily from 17th century Dutch and a variety of other languages"), the language of Afrikaners ("an ethnic group in Southern Africa descended from the Dutch including Flemish, French and German settlers whose native tongue is Afrikaans") (Wikipedia 2012). His stance was that, whatever they learned, if they went to school, regardless of the level of education, it was not to change their socio-economic status, nor enter the labor market under better conditions. Verwoerd's declaration came

after the South African all-white legislature passed the Bantu Education Act of 1953, a law that instituted segregated schools for black communities, with poor equipment if any and poorly trained teachers guaranteed by low pay (Hlatshwayo 2000 53; Hartshorne 1992: 41). By 1975, white learners received better education financed by a 15 times higher per capita budget allocation than black learners received (Hlatshwayo 2000).

Subsequently, the grievances that arose from these policies led to the Soweto student uprising in 1976. They protested that seven thousand rands<sup>64</sup> were allocated for every white learner as opposed to three hundred and fifty rands for the black learner (Hlatshwayo 2000). As pressure continued to mount with political unrest, some amelioration took place: the margin between allocations narrowed by race. For instance, for every 4 rands spent on a white learner, 3 rands went to Indians, 2 rands to the colored (mixed race), and 1 rand to a black learner (Hlatshwayo 2000; Samuel 1997).

Indisputably, apartheid education ratified socioeconomic stratification wherein white minority groups received high quality education with strategic positions in job markets, while black majority groups received poor to no education, thus reducing most to jobs such as domestic servants and manual laborers. Despite significant changes that followed in the post-apartheid democratic era, the legacy of apartheid continues to impact the quality of education and educational achievement. The education levels of the members of SSWCG and SBWCG of RWM reveal the scars of apartheid and the difficulties faced by democratic leaders to put in place mechanisms to remedy the high level of illiteracy in the rural areas of South Africa, where only poor black people reside. In effect, the

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<sup>64</sup> Rand is the South African currency, now worth approximately R7 to \$1.

majority of the black population in South Africa still has a low quality of education, relegating them to low income jobs or no employment at all. Thus, most women in rural areas resort to self-employment through income-generating projects such as those of the SSWCG and SBWCG.

### *Work*

Most grassroots women are the “poorest of the poor, the least literate, the most exploited, and the most marginalized of all the social groups in the country” (Olabisi 1998: 70). Their employment consists of informal work (self employment). Both housework and work done by the selfemployed are stereotyped as “unproductive” work because they are unwaged and thus not included as part of the Gross Domestic Product (Waring 1999: 28). Economic statistics are designed to exclude those who do not earn wages. “A woman’s agricultural labor [and housework], for instance, is not paid [as long as] they are performed within the family; [a woman] cannot exchange her family production on the market” (Waring 1999: 34). Most feminists however argue that reproductive work is work (Waring 1999: 23) and rail against the fact that domestic work is devalued. They argue that the work performed within the family or home should be reclassified as “work” because of the labor time required and the value of these services if women if them in someone else’s home for pay

In this study it is clear that women’s organizations’ projects and home activities are “work.” The eighty-five subjects of the study who were interviewed were all homemakers, but were also involved in the women’s groups; both make them workers.



During interviews, one of the questions I asked women concerned their daily activities, which included household chores such as cleaning, cooking, taking care of kids, laundry, fetching water, collecting fire wood, maintaining gardens, craftwork for women's groups' projects, and even part-time informal work as community volunteers.

RS: I will say my day starts from 4am, I wake up and prepare the children to go to school; I cook food for them to eat before leaving, I prepare water for them to bathe, they bathe, eat, and leave for school at 6am; I then go to fetch water; I come back and clean the houses and the yard. I then go to the garden; I come back and cook so children will have something to eat when they come back from school. I then do some other housework, cook dinner. I then come back and do some handwork for the project (we sometimes take some work to do at home as we meet on weekends).

R: When do you sleep?

RS: I will say I sleep around 10 at night after finishing everything; I never go to sleep before 10 unless I am sick.<sup>65</sup>

This is full time work, unrelenting; women only take off or stop when they are handicapped or afflicted by illness. One member illustrated that:

It is sometimes hard for some members to come and work for the organization on some days because they have to attend to other family matters especially on weekends that children are home and not at school such as cooking, laundry, and attending community meetings. Most families

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<sup>65</sup>Research Subject # 10. April 4, 2010. SBWCGA Interview.

RS: Ngizothi nje usuku lwami luqala ngo-4 ekuseni, ngivuka ngilungiselele abantwana abaya esikoleni, ngipheke ukudla abazohamba bekudlile, ngibabekela amanzi okugeza, bageze, badle, bese beyaphuma ngo6, mina bese ngiya emfuleni ngiyokha amanzi, ngibuye ngihlanze indlu nebala, bese ngiye engadini, ngibuye ngipheke ukudla kwasemini okuzobuya kudliwe abantwana, ngenze eminye imisebenzi yasekahaya, ngipheke ukudlwa kwantambama, ngigeze, bese ngiyahlala ngenza umsebenzi weproject (sithatha umsebenzi sihambe nawo emakhaya siyoqhubeka ngoba phela sihlangu ngezimpelasonto kuphela).

R: Ulala nini?

RS: Ngizothi nje ngilala ngo-10 ebusuku sengiqede yonke into, angikaze ngilale ngaphambi kuka-10 ngaphandle uma ngigula.

do laundry on weekends. Also, community meetings are usually on weekends. Likewise, I do not work for the projects on weekends when my husband is home because I have to make breakfast for him, clean the house, and cook for him, wash and iron his clothes, and be available for any thing that he will need me for. Family matters and chores sometimes prevent members from attending all meetings and we are aware of that and fine as we all understand.<sup>66</sup>

Pat Mainardi claims that studies of household work responsibilities show that men with partners who work outside the home do not perform as much labor at home as their partners (Mainardi 1970: 171). The burden of work performed by women in this study shows that reproductive work is work. Most women need to “balance many tasks including childcare, farming, shopping, cooking, and water collection” (World Bank 1998: 146). Moreover, productive work cannot survive without reproductive work; the two are intertwined and one cannot fully be sustained without the other. Domestic work sustains households and subsidizes wage work. Men and women working in the cities benefit, too, because they can be assured that people left behind will take care of their children so they can focus on their urban jobs. Women’s work at home in rural areas, mostly stereotyped as remote places on the periphery, is as significant as, and should be valued as much as, wage or cash income work (Waring 1999: 28).

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<sup>66</sup> Research Subject # 16. April 11, 2010. SBWCGB Interview.

Kunzima kwamanye amalunga ukuthi aze azosebenzela inhlangano ngezinye izinsuku ngoba kumele babhekane nezidingo zemindeni yabo ikakhulukazi ngama-weekend ngoba abantwana basuke besekhaya; benza izinto njengoku pheka, ukuwasha, nokuya emihlanganweni yomphakathi. Imindeni eminingi iwasha ngama-weekend. Futhi imihlangano yemiphakathi ijwayele ukuba ngama-weekend. Kanjalo, nami angiyi enhlanganwenini ngama-weekend uma indoda yami isekhaya ngoba kumele ngimphekele ukudla kwasekuseni, ngihlanze izindlu, ngimphekele, ngiwashe ngiphinde ngi-ayine izingubo zakhe; futhi ngibe khona ukwenzela uma kwenzeka kuba khona akaudingayo kimi. Ngakho izidingo zomndeni kanye nemisebenzi yasekhaya kuyenza ukuthi amanye amalunga angakwazi ukuya kuyo yonke imihlangane yenhlangano; siyakwazi lokho futhi asinankinga njengoba sonke sikuqonda.

In addition to being homemakers, the table above shows that 12.9% of women are engaged as caregivers in other people's homes. They care for people who are sick and the elderly who stay alone in their homes. Women do this kind of work for no cash; it is a contribution that members of women's groups do to help the community. Women have no structured schedule for this work; they only do this work when available.

In addition, 8.2% of self-employed women are unpaid volunteers for the Health Department. They periodically check on patients, collect prescriptions for them at the hospital, and ensure that they take treatments. They get some compensation from the department for transportation. The involvement of women in informal and volunteer work simultaneously signifies the need for cash for basic needs. By engaging in multiple income-generating strategies, like the poor of many countries, these women attempt to meet their and their families' practical needs.

#### *The Groups' Economic Functions*

Sisonke, SSWCG, and Siyabonga, SBWCG, Women's Clubs are grassroots member organizations that are part of RWM. They prioritize issues of emergency to members such as putting food on the table, educating children, and helping those in need in the community. SSWCG runs a crafting project. They do beadwork and make mats and baskets and sell them at different markets for profit. The group does not collect any fees from the members for their activities. Since 2006, SSWCG uses grasslike plants, including sisal which they get from the riverbanks. The group started making only mats, using sisal and twine women had in their homes (most women in Zulu rural communities

make mats in their homes so they are very likely to have twine in their homes); it is a “bring and share” kind of business. After selling the first bulk of 11 mats for a total of R370 (about \$52), they started to buy additional twine using their earnings. The price of mats ranges from R30 to R60 (\$4-8), depending on the size. They also began making baskets in 2009 but encountered problems with marketing them.

The women said that good earnings for their group would be about R3000 (equivalent to about \$420) for the four months of the rainy season. This group never ran short of mats because they always make them during the rainy season when sisal is available. However, SSWCG depends on weddings more than on individual orders. It is customary in the Zulu culture that on a wedding day, a woman gives mats and blankets to the groom’s family members on a list provided by the groom’s family. If a groom’s list consists of 30 members, a bride has to give 30 mats and 30 blankets to all listed individuals; women who make mats benefit from local weddings.<sup>67</sup> The group suffers if there are no wedding orders because then they have to rely on individual customers. One challenge women of SSWCG had was that their product – mats – relies on collecting materials during the rainy season. Another is not having a guaranteed market for selling their products, which makes it difficult to earn regular profits regardless of the number of weddings. This encourages multiple income-generating strategies, a practice common among rural households in developing countries (Ellis 2000: 7; Lanjouw 2001: 534; World Bank 2000).

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<sup>67</sup> Younger women, the more schooled members, record information for orders.

SBWCG engages in projects similar to those of SSWCG, with the same goal. One group, SBWCGA, specializes in sewing and quilting; the other one, SBWCGB, does baking for different occasions. The third group, SBWCGC, does beadwork or beading. When interviewed and asked about the work that SBWCGA does, a member responded:

The work of this group, we do quilting. We design and sew clothes, tablecloths, quilts, and other specific things that people put in an order for. We also paint our material for decoration. We also do training since some members do not know how to do all this when they come to join. So we train women who come to our group. But some leave after getting training. We now ask if they are going to stay with us before training them.<sup>68</sup>

Another member from SBWCGB elaborated on what they do as a group of women committed to working together:

RS: In our group we do a lot of baking.  
R: What do you bake?  
RS: We bake cakes, just cakes but different sorts and flavors [laughing out loud].  
R: [laughing] Oh, nice. What do you do with them?  
RS: We sell them to the community and we also take orders from individuals and for events.  
R: What are those events?  
RS: The most popular ones are funerals and weddings.  
R: OK.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Research Subject # 17. April 4, 2010. SBWCGA Interview.

Umsebenzi wale gruphu, siyathuna senza i-quilting. Siyadizayna sithunge izingubo, izindwangu zetafula, ama-quilt kanye nezinye izinto abantu abazifunayo abafaka ama-oda azo. Siphinde sipende izindwangu ukuhlobisa ukuzihlobisa. Siphinde sense i-training njengoba abanye abafika ukuzojoyina igruphu bengakwazi ukuthunga. Siqeqesha abantu besifazane abafikayo egruphini. Kodwa abanye banele bengathola uqeqesho bahambe. Manje sesiyababuza ukuthi bazohlala egruphini noma cha ngaphambi kokubaqeqesha.

<sup>69</sup> Research Subject # 05. November 18, 2009. SBWCGB Interview.

RS: Kwigruphu yethu siyabhaka kakhulu.

R: Nibhaka ini?

RS: Sibhaka amakhekhe, amakhekhe nje kuphela kodwa phela izinhlobonhlobo zawo namafleva ahlukeni [ehleka kakhulu].

R: [ehleka] O, kuhle. R: Nenzani ngawo?

Baking benefits SBWCG a lot because they are likely to get orders for cakes in all seasons. Each 20 liter bucket of baked cakes costs R60 (equivalent to about \$8). SBWCG benefits more from wedding and funeral orders of cakes than individual orders because they usually make about four buckets for each event. However, part of the profit gained goes back into purchasing baking ingredients as well as other materials needed such as fabric for quilting and sewing, beads, and thread. Unlike SSWCG, whose profit depended on mats, SBWCG's profit relies more on baking than any other products they produce. Further, in describing the work that the group performs, another member from SBWCGC said:

We do beadwork such as cultural beading for men and women including bracelets, earrings, necklaces, belts, and handbags. There are a lot of things that you can do with beads. We sometimes do things based on orders we receive.<sup>70</sup>

This group does not make much profit from beadwork and sewing because products such as earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and clothes are available in all places in South Africa. Orders are very scarce. From all of their products, but especially baking, this group accumulates earnings of R200 – R500 (\$30 - \$70) a month, depending on orders. From earnings they have to use about R300 (about

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RS: Siyawadayisa emphakathini. Sithatha ama-oda kubantu siphinde senze nawemicimbi.

R: Yini leyo micimbi?

RS: Edume kakhulu imingcwabo kanye nemishado.

R: Kulungile.

<sup>70</sup> Research Subject # 8. February 7, 2010. SBWCGC Interview.

Senza ubuhlalu njengo bomdabu bamadoda nabantu besifazane njengamabhengela, amacici, imigexo, amabhande, nezikhwama lezi ezincane eziphathwa abantu besifazane. Ziningi izinto ongazenza ngobuhlalu. Kwesinye isikhathi senza izinto kuye nge-oda esilitholile.

\$40) every month for the baking ingredients. When I probed about the orders issue the research participant quoted above brought up, she responded:

People usually put in orders for special cultural events and the most popular one is weddings; but some make just personal requests because they like wearing beads.<sup>71</sup>

If the group does not make a large enough profit to afford materials to fill new orders, they have to collect money from the members. SBWCG members said that they rarely collect money, but if they need to, members usually contribute up to R10 each (about \$1.50) for an average total of about \$40.

I did participant observation in order to observe the baking activities of the group. I witnessed women baking in one member's kitchen. They had four 20 liter buckets to fill with cakes, which were for the orders put in by individuals. Two buckets were for a funeral that was taking place in the local area on the weekend. I observed the transfer of baking skills among these women. The women in these groups have special skills that many people in the cities pay to acquire. They have never been to any baking or cooking classes; however, they bake and train new unskilled members, as they did with me. One challenge with their baking session was that they had only one stove to use for filling the orders. It was not even a stove that belonged to the organization; it belonged to one of the members. They said they had not been able to use the profits to buy another stove as there were things like purchasing food and school fees for children in need that they prioritized. The members also used fabric and sewing machines for making tablecloths

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<sup>71</sup> Research Subject # 8. February 7, 2010. SBWCG Interview.  
Abantu bavame ukufaka ama-oda emicimbi yamasiko naleyo edumile njengemishado; kodwa abanye bafaka izicelo ngoba nje bezithandela ukuqgoka ubuhlalu.

and clothes. I observed women sewing clothes, women's long skirts, and tablecloths. They did no quilting when I was there.

The examples of matmaking, sewing/quilting, beadwork, and baking demonstrate how RWM women in various locations combat poverty, their own and that of other people. This involves incredible commitment and collective action to meet practical needs. They receive little direct assistance from RWM, the umbrella organization. But they do get organizational training. Some members of all groups studied are also involved in care-giving for orphans and people infected with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (TB) by helping them get their treatments from the clinic, and cooking and cleaning for those who are seriously ill with no family members to help. They also visit each family that they know to have orphans who stay with their grandmothers. Their visit intentions are to check if the family has food and that those children who are already in school are attending classes. At some instances when it happens that some of these orphans are missing, the grandmothers report this to the volunteers. The volunteers help the grandmothers to locate the missing children by looking around while spreading the word with neighbors to help with the search. They also report to the counselor and social workers who may provide support of some kind. Women usually are able to get the missing children back because they tend to stay in the community. However, unfortunately, there are some children who run away to a small town or the city and never return back home. This is one way these women's groups focus on community poverty and health issues.



In sum, just like REWA in Ethiopia and Groots in Kenya (Berhane-Selassie 1997: 188; WWB 2006:16), RWM carries out educational and consciousness-raising “development” programs to educate rural women to deal with their situations in their localities and their families. Rural women from poor families, as represented by RWM members and community based groups, SSWCG and SBWCG, engage simultaneously in multiple goals for organizing. They want to develop/improve/better and to be empowered, generate cash income in order to take care of themselves and their families, give care to the sick and orphans, teach one another through skill training, and promote women’s economic independence.

#### *Self-Empowerment and Self-Help*

According to Shirley Walters, the broader purpose of non-governmental and community-based organizations of the “South is articulated in different ways” but in South Africa it is “mainly concerned with empowerment of the poor and the oppressed” (Walters 1993: 5). The goals of self-empowerment, self-help or self-sufficiency, and self-support are central to groups in historically oppressed countries – ex-colonies or neo-colonies – like those found in Africa. Rural women’s clubs in Indwedwe in KwaZulu-Natal (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000) and in Limpompo (Oberhauser and Pratt 2004) are involved in income-generating projects including crafts, gardening, and sewing as efforts for self-empowerment and self-help so they are able to improve their living standards and enable their families to survive poverty. This is evident not only in South Africa but also in countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, where self-sufficiency, self-

empowerment, and self-support are central to the functioning of most non-governmental and community-based organizations.

The need for self-empowerment is an urgent issue in rural South Africa because of the past neglect and exploitation of rural South Africans. Because of the small size of the reserves/homelands, agriculture could not be profitable. The resultant impoverishment and starvation that continues is clear in the lives of women in these groups. One woman said, “the main purpose of this organization is to ‘empower’ ourselves as women and to be self-sufficient to support our families.”<sup>72</sup>

Self-help and women’s self-empowerment/improvement/betterment are at the center of many women’s organizing (Mohanty 2003: 228). The women studied pointed out that their aim for organizing is to employ women’s agency to achieve development/betterment/improvement and empowerment in order to be able to care for their families. Women organize separately from men because of the family burdens on their shoulders. Since they play a dominant role in taking care of families, they should be included in state development policies. However, development programs in rural areas are male-dominated, led by local government and locally elected councilors who are mostly men. This forces women to organize on their own to address their needs, especially in the home. A member of SBWCGA, RS#4, confirmed:

We do not see any development in this area; the government councilors do things their own way and there is nothing they really do as our communities still lack schools, easily reachable clean water, and toilets.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Research Subject # 1. August 23, 2009. SBWCGA Interview.

Inhloso enkulu yalenglangano ukuthi sihalnganise amandla ethu sizithuthukise njengabantu besifazane ukuze sikwazi ukusiza ukusiza imidneni yethu.

<sup>73</sup> Research Subject # 4. February 20, 2010. SSWCGA Interview.

Such statements about the lack of development in rural areas are interesting because it has been one of South Africa's main development goals to improve the lives of rural people and their places. During his term, President Nelson Mandela stated: "rural people, and rural women in particular, bear the largest burden of poverty in South Africa. If we can change the inequalities and inefficiencies of the past, rural areas can become productive and sustainable" (Government Gazette 1995: 5). The Municipal System Act, of 2000 required local government structures to employ Integrated Development Planning (IDP) as "a tool for transforming local governments towards facilitation and management [in connection with the people on the ground] of development within their areas" (eThekweni Municipality 2012/2013 IDP: 8). According to the mayor of Durban, IDP, in KwaZulu-Natal there is a

"continuation of the work started by the democratic government to ensure that [the] people are involved in the governance of their municipalities. As the sphere of government closest to the people, municipalities have a particular responsibility in achieving delivery of free basic services, building sustainable human settlements and viable communities, improving all public service, building infrastructure, creating job opportunities and fighting poverty" (eThekweni Municipality 2012/2013 IDP: 7).

However, according to the women that I interviewed, nothing much has been done in their areas, although they see some changes such as toilets and roads in nearby places. In their specific area, they have seen so far only one school – a primary school –

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Asiyiboni intuthuko kule ndawo, amakhansela kahulumeni enza izinto ngendlela yawo futhi akukhonto etheni awayenzayo njengoba umphakathi wethu ushoda ngezikole nangamanzi atholakala kalula futhi ahlanzekile, kanye namathoyilethe

and a mobile clinic that comes once every other week and does not come if it is raining. When I wanted to know more about this local government development dilemma, I got the same answer all over again. Women insisted on a lack of government development in their area. RS# 4 added,

We suffer when our children have to continue to high school. Councilors decide where the government toilets [part of South African government reconstruction and development program] would be built and they choose the places they like; there are some there but there are none here in our place.<sup>74</sup>

These are examples of social and infrastructure issues that touch women's lives directly and are part of local government accountability. When there are no nearby schools for children to continue their primary education, women as the main sources of home maintenance and care giving are affected more than men. Also, if there is no access to clean running water and no toilets, that translates to poor or non-existent sanitation. Insufficient sanitation for rural households makes women and children the primary targets for suffering the consequences in the form of malnutrition and diseases such as typhoid and cholera. A member confirmed this by saying,

RS: My children and I occasionally get diarrhea because of lack of sanitation. Another major problem, we do not even have a clinic center here.

R: So what do you do if a child gets sick?

RS: I usually give them hot water mixed with sugar and salt to suppress diarrhea while waiting for the mobile clinic day, which is Tuesday.

R: If the child gets sick even more?

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<sup>74</sup> Research Subject #4. September 09, 2009. SSWCGA Interview.

Siyahlupheka uma izingane zethu kumele ziqhubeka ziye e-high school. Amakhansela ayakhetha ukuthi amathoyilethe lawa omxhaso kahulumeni (okuyinxenye yohlelo lweRDP) azokwakhiwa kuphi; bavele bakhethe izindawo abazithandayo, akhona nje laphaya kodwa thina la asinawo.

RS: You then go to tell other women in the organization and ask for money assistance to take the child to the clinic in Umzinto or hospital in Durban.<sup>75</sup>

Men often escape these consequences. When they go to the city, they are more likely to have access to running water and hygienic toilets. Local men leaders have incomes so their children go to private schools, rated more prestigious compared to public schools in South Africa. One member of SSWCGB stated that “the government people, who are community leaders in the area, are rich and live a good life and we are here suffering.”<sup>76</sup> While the government community leaders and their families live well, ordinary families suffer and endure constant crises as a result of local government inability to deliver equitable services for all citizens. RS# 10 stated:

The councilors have nice homes with big cars that they drive and their children do not attend this local school; they go to mixed expensive schools in Durban.<sup>77</sup>

In the cases of SSWCG and SBWCG, women’s existence and experiences are deeply affected by the nature of patriarchy not only in their families but also at the societal and national levels. Moser and Rai claimed that gender inequalities prevalent in development policy and practices exist not only because most development practitioners

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<sup>75</sup> Research Subject #: 15. March 17, 2010. SSWCGA Interview.

RS: Izingane zami ngisho nami sinokuhlala siphathwa izisu ezisihambisayo, ngisole ukuthi yilenkinga yokungabi nandlu yangasese. Kuphinde kube yinkinga kakhulu-ke ngane yami ngoba akukho nama-clinic lapha. R: Pho nenze njani uma umtwana egula. RS: Ukuthi wenze umphuzise amanzi lawa afudunyeziwe anoshukela nosawoti ukudambisa ukuhuda, ulinde izinsuku zokufika kwe-clinic ngoLwesibili. R: Uma egula kakhulu? RS: Sekuyomele ke uzame imali emakhosikazini, uzokhala lapha enhlanganweni bekuzame ngamasenti umphuthumise e-clinic eMzinto noma esibhedlela eThekwini.

<sup>76</sup> Research Subject # 23. April 18, 2010. SBWCGB Interview.

Abantu bakahulumeni abaphethe emiphakathini banemali baphila kahle; thina siyahlupheka.

<sup>77</sup> Research Subject # 10. February 24, 2010. SSWCGA Interview.

Amakhansela anamakhaya amahle nezimoto ezinkulu lezi abazishayelayo; izingane zabo azifundi kulesi sikole sasendaweni, zifunda ezikoleni ezihlanganise izinhlanga ezibizayo emadolobheni koThekwini.

marginalize women but also because they do not involve women in policy formulation within development power structures (Moser 1993: 6-7; Rai 2002: 52). These gender inequalities between men and women have a huge impact on the implementation of development policy and practices and on the distribution of development resources. Gender hierarchies contribute enormously to women's lack of access to empowerment resources such as credit, education and training, and project management tools. This limits the impact and effectiveness of women's self-help efforts.

### *Generating Cash Income*

South Africa's first democratic government, elected in 1994, has always argued—against an array of critics and skeptics—that its social development programs such as Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP 1994) and Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR, the 1996 development programme), the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the current Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) of the Zuma Administration are appropriate. RDP, GEAR, IDP and CRDP, as major development programs, are results of good governance principles of consultation, accountability, responsiveness, and meritocracy in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the legacies left by apartheid are still evident in many ways, especially in rural areas. Established colonial and apartheid-period white-owned enterprises continue to flourish while excluding most black men and women from benefits. In a democratic era, emerging black-owned enterprises continue to show a wide gap with white enterprises, illustrated in binary oppositions between rural and urban, rich and poor, and haves and have-nots

(Rogerson 1997: 12). As a result of these inequities, most people in rural areas still have to migrate to urban areas in order to increase incomes. The “modern” industrial economy also intensified the gender division of labor by “enforcing reproductive roles for women and productive duties for men” (Olabisi 1998: 67).

In rural areas the precolonial gender division of labor where men farmed was destroyed by male migration so women must now generate incomes. Molar Ogundipe-Leslie calls for a reconceptualization of the gender division of labor and gender roles in Africa, especially in rural societies because of the “overlap between public and domestic domains” for women, as women do more work inside and outside of the home (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 12). Rural women’s organizing supports their doing productive work outside of the home, whether in fields, markets, community centers, or at members’ houses. This is perfectly exemplified by SSWCG and SBWCG. I asked about the goals for the organizations and was told,

We talked about many things, we want to be able to provide for ourselves with money we are going to gain in this project. We want to sell the things we make successfully to be able to get money for ourselves.<sup>78</sup>

Grassroots women often “integrate social and economic demands” in their organizing (Temma Kaplan 1997:8). Thus, earning cash is a practical need to meet basic needs among poor women, which makes organizations like SSWCG and SBWCG popular among most African rural women. In South Africa, for instance, poor black

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<sup>78</sup> Research Subject # 1. August 23, 2009. SBWCGA Interview. Sikhuluma ngezinto eziningi, sifuna ukukwazi ukuziphilisa ngemali esizoyithola kule project. Sifuna ukudayisa izinto esizenzayo ngempumelelo ukuze sikwazi ukuzitholelela imali.

women advocate for themselves to improve their poverty situations by engaging in income-generating projects. They form women's groups known as "clubs" – such as Zenzele Women's Club and Cibane Women's Club in KwaZulu-Natal. One woman of Cibane's Women's Club stated: "I don't have a husband, but I am trying. I weave grass mats and sell them and the vegetables. If I get money, I use it for my children's school fees. I also use the money to buy seeds for my garden plots" (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000: 124). These women's clubs signify a willingness and commitment to women's empowerment and self-reliance. Most black women's clubs use names that reflect how committed they are towards their empowerment, betterment, and improvement of their poverty levels. For example, Deborah Mindry provides examples of these names such as *Zamani* ("we try"), *Zibambeleni* ("hold/carry by ourselves), and *Zenzele* ("we do it ourselves")" (Mindry 2001: 1193). However, in her experience working with Kenyan women, Robertson points out that most grassroots African women are self-employed and, more often than not, with low incomes (Robertson 1984:140) and this is the same in South Africa. In the South African situation, many children have malnutrition because of lack of quality health care and the high poverty levels that affect families, mostly in rural areas. This situation is the same in the area of the Women's Clubs that I studied for this dissertation. One respondent said:

The thing is we are facing extreme poverty here in rural areas; we do not have even clean water, even healthcare in places. The government does not do much for us; the mobile healthcare service comes twice a month and sometimes does not come at all if it is raining on its due day.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Research Subject # 8. March 21, 2010. SSWCGB Interview



This situation is not unique to the women that I studied. It appears to be a common way for grassroots rural women to organize against poverty. Just like rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG in Umzinto in KwaZulu-Natal, the rural women of Ndwendwe in KwaZulu-Natal engage in women's clubs (projects) to empower themselves to be able to "make sure that [their] children go to school and their school fees are paid [...] and also to ensure to that they have food] to feed their families" (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000: 122). Furthermore, in their study in Limpopo, South Africa, Ann Oberhauser and Amy Pratt show black rural South African women engaging in collective organizing with a goal of income-generating to provide women with "economic opportunities" by "sharing resources, exchanging skills, and selling or bartering goods to other local people" (Oberhauser and Pratt 2004: 225). The income-generating projects the rural women of Limpopo engaged in include crafts, food processing, and sewing, and also reflected a limited conceptualization of empowerment as about improvement and betterment of these women's lives and that of their children and families. Despite feminist critiques of economic strategies for women, many poor South African rural women identify them as priorities. NGOs try to emphasize other strategies such as organizing for rights. But some women cannot consider these until basic needs are met.

How poor rural women understand "development" affects how they feel about their own capacity to improve their lives and how they understand a government's

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Into sibhekene nobubha kakhulu la ezindaweni zasemakhaya, asinawo ngisho namanzi ngisho nemitholampilo, Uhulumeni akasisizi ngalutho olutheni thina, umtholampilo ufika kabili enyangeni futhi uphinde ungafiki kwesinye isikhathi, uma izulu lina ngelanga lawo awuzi nhlobo.

responsibilities to its citizens. One reason why rural South African women feel that “development” has not reached them is because they do not have things that are basic and crucial to them to meet their practical needs (to fulfill their responsibilities as mothers and *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households). To poor rural women, practical and meaningful development starts with their ability to improve and better their lives, that of their children, families, and neighbors, as well as access to government services such as clean water.

South African women organizing in rural areas also associate development with social welfare programs made necessary after the colonial government stripped the black community of all the available resources under apartheid. The neoliberal democratic approach requires that people participate and work with local governments on community development projects. However, most people in rural areas do not understand this form of development or why they have to subsidize programs such as electricity and water through monthly services fees and installation fees. This means that people in poverty in isolated rural areas will always be deprived of basic services; they cannot afford cost sharing because they cannot afford adequate food.

Income-generating activities are not unique to grassroots women in South Africa; most grassroots women around the world also are involved in income-generating projects to cope with economic hardships (Agarwal 1994; Tinker 1990). Also many women are involved in an income-generating activity in which they pool some or all the money earned in a collective pot every month. This kind of pooling is called “*stokvel*.” It is a type of savings group known as Rotating Savings and Credit Associations – ROSCAs –

or Accumulative Savings Credit Associations - ASCRAs (Bouman 1995: 371). ROSCAs and ASCRAs are popular in many developing countries. For instance, there is “*Tontine* in Cameroon and Senegal, *Susu* in Ghana, *Esusu* in Nigeria, *Stokvel* in South Africa, and *Bishi* in India” (Bouman 1995: 371). In the case of South Africa, *stokvels* are so popular around the country that they are practiced in both urban and rural settings and also by both men’s and women’s groups (Pclinuxclassic 2010). In urban areas there are highly developed *stokvels* that generate significant revenues. In this type of organization members pay in one or more shares on a weekly or monthly basis and, in return, receive the whole pool on a rotating basis. If more than one share is contributed, a member gets more than one turn at receiving the pool.

Another popular *stokvel* strategy among rural women in South Africa is using the pooled money for a dedicated purpose, such as buying bulk foodstuffs at the end of the year in December and dividing them up among members instead of dividing cash. Many women, including some of my relatives, are involved in this kind of *stokvel*. The food usually lasts for about 6 months, depending on the size of the family. For bigger families it may last three months. Giving money to members is also a useful strategy if members know how to budget and do not use all the money for Christmas or holiday expenditures. They are able to save for children’s school fees and uniforms (the school year starts in January in South Africa) and other family needs.

A constant threat, however, persists when husbands or older children take the money to use for themselves, or try to control how a woman involved in *stokvel* spends it. In dealing with that the women came up with strategies such as hiding *stokvel* cash and

only showed foodstuffs to men family members. This strategy works because men think women only get food from their *stokvels*. *Stokvel* can be a space for empowerment and consciousness-raising for group members. Because they usually come together on the day of payment, even if it is to pay only one member, it becomes a group get-together. Members engage in conversation pertaining to their lives while sharing food and drinks that they bring to share. Therefore, it is not only about investing and accumulating funds to be able to survive or to help care for others but also about coming together. I observed several forms with both the women studied and a group in one of Durban's townships.

Not only does cash income from projects help women to meet some of their basic needs such as buying food and paying children's school fees, it also helps pay for transport for women and children who seek healthcare in town if they are sick. As the quotation above makes clear, healthcare services are still inadequate and episodic in this area. Even when the service comes two days a month, people do not get sick based on the schedule of the healthcare service. I asked the respondents about what they do when they get sick before the health care service comes back and what if that happens at night. They said they have to wait till the morning and try to go to places where they can catch a taxi or some other form of transport to the city to go to the clinic or hospital. This delay places them at great risk. If someone does not have money they have to borrow money in the morning before they can take themselves or someone else to a clinic or hospital. The example of a family member of RS# 9 illustrates this problem.

My mother in-law suffered many bad consequences of high blood pressure; she suffered the whole day the mobile clinic did not come and the night not having any means of transport to help take her to hospital. She stayed in the

hospital for a week because she was too weak when we managed to get money from our group and got a car to take her to King Edward hospital in Durban.<sup>80</sup>

The multiple challenges facing NGOs and women's groups compel action to eradicate poverty, pandemic disease, oppressive gender inequalities, and other social ills that affect mostly poor, female-headed households in rural communities of the developing world such as in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Thus, grassroots women's organizing focused on income-generation as a primary goal.

### *Community Resources*

RWM, together with its community-based member groups, is very concerned about the sustainability of members' households and communities. Community-based groups can serve as resources when they provide members with enhanced skills. For example, when SBWCG does quilting, beadwork, and baking, experienced members train other members to ensure that everyone knows how to do every project's tasks. When one member was asked about her tasks in the organization, her answer included:

OK, then second, we do training, because some members do not know how to knit or quilt; they learn, and we now ask them to join the organization because some leave after training. We should now ask a person first if she is going to join or not before training her. This means we know how to train others and teach them to quilt or sew.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Research Subject # 9. March 21, 2010. SSWCGB Interview .  
Umamezala wami wahlukunyezwa iBP ngenxa yokungatholi usizo lomtholampilo; wagula usuku lonke ingafikanga i-clinic le efikayo kanye nobusuku bakhona ngenxa yokungabi namoto yokumphuthumisa esibhedlela. Wahlala esibhedlela isonto lonke ngoba wayesephelelwe amandla emva kokuthola imali enhlanganweni ekuseni saqasha imoto yamyisa esibhedlela eKing Edward eThekwini.

<sup>81</sup> Research Subject # 7. November 22, 2009. SBWCGB Interview

Training that equips all group members to execute all functions of a project's tasks helps to avoid a skill monopoly in the organization. But Joti Sekhon states that some grassroots women's organizing faces challenges along the way, including hierarchical organization (Bystydzienski and Sekhon 1999: 35). Hierarchies result in power monopolies, where one or more members control the knowledge necessary to carrying out a project so other members depend on them. Thus, training all members in all skills for projects helps to diffuse power. In this case, women provide help and support for other women but with the hope of expanding and strengthening their organization. They then expect trained women to stay and provide service to the group/organization. However, that is not always the case; for whatever reasons, some women leave the group after getting training.

Even though training other women is rewarding for them and their communities, many women in the organizations expressed concern about the problem of short-term trained members leaving. However, they cannot force members to stay with the groups; members are free to join and quit at any point. Asking people if they will stay in the group before giving training does not assure continuity in membership. Some women take the training outside to use for individual or community benefits, which might pose competition for groups' projects if producing the same products for sale.

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Ok, bese okwesibil;I, siyaqeqesha, ngoba abanye abakwazi ukunitha noma ukuthunga, bayafunda, futhi manje sesiyabacela ukuba bajoyine inhlangothi kuqala ngoba abanye bayahamba uma sebefundile, sekumele manje simbuze umuntu kuqala ukuthi uzojoyina yini ngaphambi kokuba simfundise. Lokhu kusho ukuthi siyakwazi ukuqeqesha sifundise abanye ukuthunga.

### *Caregiving*

Another support for members that these women's groups provide is caregiving for orphans and people infected with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS.

The other thing we do in this organization, we take care of sick people who are infected with HIV/AIDS, by getting their medicine and taking it to them. We also bathe them and cook for those who are in need of that, but that is not always the case since many can take care of themselves. We also visit orphans in their homes and schools.<sup>82</sup>

Taking care of HIV/AIDS-infected individuals and orphans has been key for many who have benefited; they get their treatment and medication on time, as health volunteers are responsible for getting and administering treatment to these individuals. Also, orphans benefit from visits and the help they receive for coping with their situations and school fees.

RWM works with more than 2,000 orphaned children in KwaZulu Natal, trying to ensure that children do not drop out of school, while nurturing children's capacity to deal with the loss of their parents (RWM <http://rwmsa.org/>).

The most effective response to HIV/AIDS and victims in poor communities has been the strengthening of home-based care through grassroots organizations. Grassroots organizations help communities to recreate social networks that support and care for the sick and the growing number of children who are orphans. RWM, the umbrella

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<sup>82</sup> Research Subject # 04. October 28, 2009. SSWCGB Interview.

Okunye esikwenzaya la enhlanganweni, sinakekela abantu abagulayo abanesifo sengculaza, ngokubalandela i-treatment yabo sibahambisele, siphinde sibaqeze abadingayo, sibaphekele nabadinga ukuphekelwa, kodwa kuyathukela senza lokho ngoba abanengi bayakwazi ukuzenzela. Siphinde sivakashele izintandane emakhaya nasezikoleni.

organization, supports caregivers, who are mostly women, and provides psycho-social support through support groups. They also refer patients to health facilities so they can work with health providers. They conduct awareness training with regard to HIV/AIDS prevention, management and treatment in general. These tasks have significantly strengthened caregivers, the sick, and orphans' capacity to address challenges facing them in their communities.

### **Summary**

This chapter focused on grassroots women's goals and characteristics of the members in order to understand forms of participation and effectiveness of SSWCG and SBWCG in meeting women's needs. The goals of organizing are aimed at self-empowerment/improvement/betterment, self-help, and self-support to address the needs of their (grand)children, families, and community. One issue is the pre-dominance of older women that might threaten the group's future transitions and continuity.



## **Chapter 5: Home-based Women's Groups in the Area Studied: Part 2**

This chapter discusses women's groups' experiences through the lens of formal and informal participant observation<sup>83</sup> and casual, unrecorded conversations. Participant observation is one of the vital tools of qualitative research. It is a method used to capture themes that are not quantifiable (O'Neill and Morgan 2001). Thus, participant observation is a research method whereby the researcher studies the contextual meanings of a group through participating in and observing the group. I observed the home-based groups of Rural Women's Movement (RWM) – Siyabonga Women's Club Group (SBWCG) and Sisonke Women's Club Group (SSWCG) – by participating in some of the project work they were doing in smaller work groups, such as baking and making bracelets out of beads. In 2009, I had four formal meetings with the women as a participant observer. On an additional 55 days, I observed informally before, after, and while I conducted formal interviews because interviews were conducted near work sites.

### **Women's Groups as Seen through Participant Observation**

Because of the hectic schedules of the women, I was only able to interview the women when they met for group work one day a week. I did participant observation on

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<sup>83</sup> Even though I conducted four formal participant observations of four women's work sessions over different days, I also observed informally (without note-taking or recording) every time I was with women at their work places (a total of fifty-five days).

most work days that I also conducted interviews. I usually conducted two or three interviews a day. Interviews were conducted in the homes women used as their work places. The compound<sup>84</sup> where women of Siyabonga Women's Club Group met had three separate houses, whereas Sisonke Women's Club Group's compound had five houses. Each women's group was able to provide a place for me to do my interviewing while they worked in the rooms assigned for projects. For confidentiality purposes, a private space was assigned for the interviews adjacent to their workroom. I met them always on their workdays but conducted more interviews than participant observation. For this reason I chose special days to focus solely on observation with no interviews. This chapter includes insights both from informal observations and conversations, and also from specific days when formal observation was the focus.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 2009, I observed two work groups of the SBWCG group at the compound of one of the group members. I found the first group in the kitchen busy talking while preparing baking equipment. There were eight older women and one nineteen-year-old. It was quite an experience to be part of this project as a person who loves cooking. I asked if I could join in and help. I placed a voice recorder on the side to record our conversation. They gave me a spoon to measure the flour to put on the baking tray. I was careful not to spill or make a mistake adding ingredients to their flour as this was serious business for them. One spoiled cake meant a significant cost for these women who would have to replace it for what I knew was a large order; it also could cause

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<sup>84</sup> Each "home" is comprised of several structures with different uses assigned to each structure. This household form is called the "compound" and may include several nuclear family units of a same extended family (three generations).

wasted baking time, given their single stove. A spoiled cake would affect the whole configuration of the workload. I helped bake a few cakes but then I had to stop because the expectation of high quality made me nervous; I was not an expert on baking and I did not want to cause harm if I made a mistake.

This cooking talent of rural women derives not from schooling but from home-based education; they taught each other. The cakes tasted and smelled wonderful to me. When women got hungry, we had tea and cake while baking. Women were always multitasking – talking, laughing, and knitting table mats at the same time. After baking, which took about five hours in the kitchen building, we moved to another building, a *rondavel* (round, made of mud, and a thatched roof), where they stored their baking utensils. At that worksite, these women joined other women who already were working on other activities. Some were knitting, some making bracelets and earrings from beads, and some making tablecloths. When the nine women who had been baking joined the others, there was a total of 18 women present including 3 women between the ages of 18 to 29 and the rest were all older women.

The younger women in this group used beads and tiny wires which they loaded with different colors depending on the type of earring, necklace, or bracelet they were making. Others, older members, used wool and a crochet needle to crochet table and sofa covers. They also used fabric and a sewing machine to sew clothes that they designed. (They make clothes based on a buyer's design request.) Two members used a sewing machine to trim and pattern corners of tablecloths, which they then placed on a big table with a bowl of paint. For painting, they dipped a tiny pointed paint brush into the paint

bowl to decorate the tablecloths. They have a line inside the house where they hang finished tablecloths while the paint dries. I observed that there was no supervisor who told women what to do; they were all working in a coordinated fashion from experience. They know exactly how to manufacture their goods. There is no individual specialization; all perform the same tasks, completing the work on one item before moving to another. They sat on floor mats as they were working; only those who were using the sewing machine and decorating the tablecloths worked at the table. I moved around to take closer looks at what the members were doing. I later sat down and tried to use beads to make a bracelet, which I did not finish because it was harder than I thought. The women seemed to appreciate my working with them and not just observing them. They complimented me. One said, “You are doing well, you are a quick learner.”<sup>85</sup> I thanked her and mentioned that beading was not an easy task for me. RS#13 responded: “You are doing okay, just take your time, you will learn.”<sup>86</sup> That was to encourage me since I was really not doing such a good job. I assumed the women were just trying to make me feel welcome. It made me feel good as a feminist researcher to be part of the process, not a mere spectator; as part of the process I deconstructed the othering of the women as objects of the study. My participation contributed to the researcher and the researched both becoming subjects of the study (Alcoff and Potter 1993). This allowed me as a researcher to experience first-hand women’s commitment to their projects and to each other.

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<sup>85</sup> Research Subject 19. August 12, 2009. SBWCG Participant Observation. Wenza kahle, uyashesha ukufunda.

<sup>86</sup> Research Subject 13. August 12, 2009. SBWCG Participant Observation. Wenza kahle, bekezela, uzofunda.

I noted that relaxing and talking while baking or making crafts also gave women a space for consciousness-raising, as they discussed their life issues. For example, one of the women started sharing a story of a woman who came to her house asking for water to drink after a long walk and wait to get transport to take her to a clinic. The woman at the house asked what was wrong. The visitor told her that she had had diarrhea for a week with no signs of getting better. That got women in the group to talk about health issues and then to complain about not having enough water pumps so that some people resort to fetching water from a river which may be contaminated. I also heard the women bring up the problem of most families having no toilets during their conversations. These conversations not only raised women's consciousness about service and health problems, it also confirmed my growing awareness of women's challenges regarding lack of infrastructure and services – lack of toilets, clean water, and transportation. Such conversations always took place while women were working and may have sustained women's energy to carry on their work with no breaks for food or rest. They finally stopped at five pm to go home and prepare food for dinner for their families, having worked from 10am to 5pm with no breaks except for the bathroom. I did not even see them eating except when we all had tea in the kitchen around noon while baking. Before I left, the owner of the compound offered me food she had prepared in the morning when she saw that I had not brought anything with me except water.

While at this compound I observed a young grandchild of this woman, who was about three years of age. The woman baked with the child on her back and at times the child walked around carrying her juice cup. It was the woman's granddaughter by her son

and his girlfriend, who live in one of the black townships in Durban. She said that another two grandchildren she cared for were at school. This was a typical scenario for many of these women; they had raised their own children and now were raising their grandchildren. They are full time parents, full time home-makers, and self-employed workers.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2009 I did 2 more formal participant observations with work groups of SSWCG. I arrived at their workplace at 1 pm since they told me that they would not start in the morning because of other commitments such as home chores. Eight women were there working at 1pm and seven women arrived only after 3 pm. All were older women. The women in this group were making floor mats and baskets. Just like the women of SBWCG, they meet in a *rondavel* house and sit on floor mats to work.

Their work process is complicated. To begin, the women must go to the nearest river to cut sisal, which they tie in batches that they carry home on their heads; it looks green at the time. They unpack the batches of sisal and place them outside for two to three weeks to dry; the color then changes from green to look like dry winter grass. They take the sisal inside the house if it is raining and take it back outside once the rain has stopped; this is typically the job of the woman who is the home owner of the building where they keep the groups' work materials. To make floor mats, they sew dry sisal using "twine" (a strong, thin cord-like binding) on handmade wooden looms (by women). The women sit down at the looms and sew mats. I also participated in the sewing and the women said they were impressed that I knew how to sew (my grandmother taught me). Even so, I could not produce a quality mat because I did not have their experience, talent,

and creativity. I did not get a chance to see the women making baskets. They said they use sisal or other grasslike plants to make them. However, they already had many baskets that were ready to sell.

Again, their training comes from skill transfer among women, just as when my grandmother, a specialist in making mats, taught me. The women who taught skills to other women told me that they learned by observing family members and others when they were growing up. One of them said, “You have to practice in order to be perfect at it. There are people who have seen others doing it but still do not know how to do it because they do not practice.”<sup>87</sup> Another one added, “My children do not know how to do this. They have seen me doing it my whole life but they never bothered to sit down and learn.”<sup>88</sup> I observed that the kind of work that these women do requires skill, patience, practice, and perseverance. In addition, I also observed that craftwork, sewing, baking, performing duties with no manager to direct you, and helping others also require creativity, respect, diligence, and honesty. Moreover, organizing and collective action require extensive personal networking. SBWCG and SSWCG had no “secretary” to record things for them or send out messages to members. This seemed to promote greater solidarity among women since they had to work closely to pass on information. They relied on word-of-mouth<sup>89</sup> for notifying details about gatherings and for marketing their

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<sup>87</sup> Research Subject 7. August 16, 2009. SSWCG Participant Observation.

Kumele uhlale uluka ukuze uqeqesheke. Kukhona abahlale bebona abanye benza kodwa abakwazi ukuluka ucansi ngoba abaziqeqeshi.

<sup>88</sup> Research Subject 15. August 16, 2009. SSWCG Participant Observation.

Njengabantwana bami abakwazi ukuluka icansi; bangibona ngihlala ngiluka impilo yami yonke kodwa abakaze bazihluphe bahlale phansi bafunde.

<sup>89</sup> Only 3 of the women I met had prepaid cell phones which they seldom used.

products. The women I studied had no fixed space in a market. So they had to take advantage of news about gatherings and celebrations (events).

Word-of-mouth is a popular form of advertising used by women in rural areas. This method of disseminating information is evident in most women's organizing in rural African areas. For example, it was used successfully by Igbo women in Nigeria in preparation for the Igbo Women's War during colonialism (Van Allen 1974: 60). There also is the example of Luo women in Kenya who organized under worsening colonial economic conditions (Hay 1974: 90). The word-of-mouth strategy was also used by rural black women (in solidarity with other South African women) during the 1956 anti-pass campaign in South Africa. These women used this strategy to fight the "pass" (identity document) that restricted their movement around the country and controlled their labor during apartheid (Cassaburi 1986: 54). Word-of-mouth is a critical mechanism for organizing and income-generating. For the women I studied, even product orders and instructions are given verbally, as are recommendations for their work. I observed women taking orders for floor mats, baskets, and clothes, especially African attire for women, and for cakes for different events, such as weddings, funerals, and parties. They also completed orders and sold goods without written accounts; I never saw anyone record or write anything down. They used their memories.<sup>90</sup> Hence, their projects, as I observed, were as much about mental work as they were about physical work.

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<sup>90</sup> The production and sharing of knowledge through the social production of memory allows everyone to "participate [even if] unequally" (Popular Memory Group 1998: 76).



*Collective Decision-Making and Hierarchies in Women's Lives*

I observed that participation in the groups' activities and decisionmaking was non-hierarchical. Rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG are concerned about getting together with other women to work on their products and find better ways of generating income in order to provide for their families and neighbors. I saw no competition or claims to leadership or power. Members worked together and helped out each other. One member said when I asked about her position in the organization:

RS: I do not have any position, we are all the same.  
R: What do you mean if you say you are all the same?  
RS: That means there is no one who looks after the other or who gives us rules, we all get together and talk, and we know our organization's rules. We do ask each other if there is something we need to know but there is no headman [can be translated into supervisor].”<sup>91</sup>

The use of the word “headman” (*induna*) was a powerful reflection on gender inequalities and patriarchy. The fascinating gender implication here is that *induna* is always a man in the case of Zulu communities. So for this woman to use this word “*induna*” (headman) instead of “*umholi*” (a leader) suggests to me that these rural women may choose to not have a leader intentionally because having a leader in this setting is associated with patriarchal power. The Rural Women's Movement's (RWM) founder includes anti-patriarchal ideas in meetings with women's groups when she uses terms like

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<sup>91</sup> Research Subject 14. August 16, 2009. SSWCGB Participant Observation.

RS: Anginasikhundla, siyafana sonke.

R: Usho ukuthini uma uthi siyafana sonke?

RS: Phela lokho kusho ukuthi akekho ogada omunye noma osibekela umthetho sonke yiyahlangana sikhulume siyayazi imithetho. Uma kunento siyabuza kodwa asinayo induna.

*induna* and *amakhosi* (chiefs) or *amadoda* (men) to explain why women are marginalized from owning land. *Induna* brings orders to the people from the chief. Men's control over the issues of land in land reform projects, in which rural women had no voice, was one main reason RWM was founded in 1998 as an organization for rural women to focus on women's exclusion from land reform projects, including other issues affecting women such as poverty (refer to Chapter 3).

As a feminist researcher, I conceptualize such selection of words by women as premeditated, showing that while these rural women's organizing top priority is poverty, they also are changing hierarchal interpersonal relations located in patriarchal patterns of dominance. Townsend et al. state that empowerment from the powerless' (socially excluded) point of view, rural women in this case, means gaining power not just to fight poverty but also to change hierarchical gender relations and all other unequal forms of power in society, including class, ethnicity, and race (Townsend et al. 1999: 19). As I observed SSWCG and SBWCG, it was clear that women interacted as equal partners. I also heard about women's solidarity with others when I met with the women individually for interviews and as I observed groups performing project activities.

In the interviews women also said that there were no hierarchies in their organizations, which made for cohesive units for the betterment of the group. I observed firsthand the way the women interacted with each other and what occurred when the women were discussing replenishing products needed for making their goods. Collective decision-making and the participation methods modeled by the women of SBWCG and SSWCG demonstrate how women's groups operate through a more horizontal, fluid, and

democratic organizational structure (Roberts et al. 2005: 1853). Nonetheless, I did explore the possibility of conflicts and dispute resolution after leaving the field. I contacted research participant (RS#7) by phone from the U.S. on April 14, 2012. She was able to address the issue of dispute resolution in decision-making meetings. Her statements were in line with those of other respondents I had interviewed during data collection in South Africa. She gave examples of how business issues are discussed, such as putting money together, deciding on who to send to buy fabric and who to sell products at events. RS#7 pointed out that each member volunteers for tasks based on her availability. If no one volunteers, members may appoint some individuals and ask them to find a time that is convenient for them to do their given task such as buying material. The women acknowledged that they had a vested interest in the groups' success and therefore they tried very hard to work together collectively. They professed to adhere to an organizational model that is non-hierarchical with participatory decisionmaking and self-determination methods (Foster and Louie 2010: 4). Despite the fact that in their groups the women I studied have decision-making power and are also *de facto* heads of households, through my observations I concluded that the principles of shared decision making have not extended beyond the women's groups. In their homes women seem to have no power. They also have been excluded from local politics (only men hold leadership roles) and patriarchy reigns supreme.

There also is an implicit and unacknowledged hierarchical structure that I observed based on seniority and class. Younger women showed respect for older women and called them "mama" and older women always used "*mntanami*" (my child) before

everybody's name who was younger. That applied even to me as a young researcher. Age differences reflect the gerontocratic hierarchy that is embedded in Zulu culture and most other African rural cultures. Age-related cultural norms deter older women from taking advice from younger women who usually are literate and often have specific math skills and knowledge that may be helpful.

Although absences of hierarchies other than age marked the women's groups' interaction, hierarchy is a factor in their relations with their umbrella organization, RWM. Women in the groups I studied expressed great respect for the director of the umbrella organization. This is a class-based hierarchy that became evident to me when women submitted their concerns to her for help or resolution. For example, in the meeting RWM had with group members on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, several women brought up the issue of gardens and money. They wanted to start group gardens but did not have seeds or money to afford supplies. They also would have to get their gardens fenced, which they could not afford, to prevent unattended cows and goats from getting into the gardens. The director's response was that RWM had no funds to help but that she would look into finding donors to volunteer free seeds and help cover other expenses needed for starting gardens. She made it clear that RWM had no donors available yet. Even so, women expressed happiness to have her visit them since she lived in the cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban, drove a car, and had a laptop computer (the car and the computer belonged to the organization). All these things and her status as highly educated and politically influential person inspired expressions of respect. The women spoke of her as someone superior to them. They said they trusted her and felt that she would fight

for their cause because she had the knowledge and the skills needed to survive in the workplace and in politics. They also believed that I, as a researcher with an international education, was going to be able to help them with their problems. They were happy to see me conduct research in their area and expected some sort of assistance. One of them once said, as did most at one time or another, “Oh, thank you, my child, for coming to our place. We get happy if we see someone like you coming to our place because we have so many problems. Please help us my child.”<sup>92</sup> They sometimes talked to me as if I were a government representative. “Please tell the government to help us with schools, water, and toilets. We are suffering in this community.”<sup>93</sup> This made my fieldwork a challenge because I had to explain to them that I was not affiliated with the government and there was no material support I could offer; I could only record their life experiences in the hopes that someone from outside would take notice and help.

### **Women’s Experiences as Revealed through Casual Conversations**

In addition to formal and informal observation and formal interviews, on many occasions I overheard women talking about their dissatisfaction with the government representatives in their area, particularly the elected councilors and government employed social workers. They said social workers do not come to their area but they hear that they sometimes visit other communities nearby. The women can only meet with

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<sup>92</sup> Research Subject 17. March 28, 2010. SBWCGB. Interview.

Oh siyabonga X mntanami ukusivakashela nathi endaweni yethu. Siyjabula uma sibona umuntu ofana nawe eza emphakathini wethu ngoba sinezinkinga eziningi. Sicela impela usisize.

<sup>93</sup> Research Subject 11. February 24, 2010. SSWCGA. Interview.

Sicela usitshalele uhulumeni asisize ngezikole, amanzi, kanye nangezindlu zangasese. Siyahlopheka kule ndawo.

the social workers when they go to government offices “in town”<sup>94</sup> and always return empty handed. Social workers can only help if women report relevant problems such as patients’ situation.<sup>95</sup> Social workers also have not been able to help women with their grandchildren’s “social grants” – support which should be legally moved from the children’s mothers to grandmothers who raise them. (Some mothers collect the grants but do not give the money to grandmothers who take care of the children.) The women complained that when they went to see social workers, these always asked women for birth certificates and other documents related to the children, which the grandmothers did not have. According to the women, the government system and their own children both have failed them. In this case, these women saw themselves as oppressed not only by their poverty but also by their children and by government’s failure to implement laws such as the government grants program to support children’s needs (school expenses and household needs such as food) and failure to implement social welfare service programs.

Moreover, the lack of development support from the government in their community area, which they saw taking place nearby, made the women feel left out of the democratic system, which they see as another form of oppression. Women complained in their conversations with each other and in their interviews about favoritism and empty promises made by their councilor. The women based their criticism of the councilor on empty campaign promises. All the councilors had promised the community a new school, which had never been built. Their area has only one primary school.

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<sup>94</sup> By small town I refer to a place in Umzinto with a building that has offices of government employees; next to it, there is another building referred as a community center.

<sup>95</sup> “Patients” refers to the women’s neighbors who are sick because of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and whom some women volunteers help.

Women said that councilors always promised them things when they wanted their votes but did nothing after getting elected. They said councilors live in big houses with electricity and running water, and they have big cars and send their kids to schools in small towns or in the city. “They have money and everything; and we have nothing,” women emphasized (Fieldnotes). The failed promises of democracy, once a source of hope, are now contributing to resentment and dependence on the director of RWM.

In addition to corruption, the women of SSWCG and SBWCG accused their councilor of favoritism, contextualized through their concern that the councilor assigned development projects to some areas or community members while not to others. They mentioned to me over and over again their dissatisfaction with the counselor’s favoritism when it came to the building of outside toilets. They even pointed with their fingers to show me where the councilor had built those toilets but not even a single one in their area or section of the (spread out) community. As women of SSWCG pointed out in our conversations: “We have no government built in toilets here, but look there, my child, look. The councilor built toilets in that place. They have them and we don’t here” (Fieldnotes). This helped explain for me the confusion that led these women to conclude that they had no “development” in their area. The government toilet project implemented in other sections of the same area demonstrates that there are development plans in place for rural areas, but that there is no clear communication about who gets them, when or why. Their comments and my research into development policy planned for rural areas lead me to conclude that apart from possible favoritism, the logistics of development decision-making delivery and implementation is not understood by people on the ground.

As a result, they felt “left out.” This suggests a lack of clear language and consultation between the local government representatives and the people. It would be the government’s responsibility to find terms and means that can make the development process more understandable and transparent to all citizens. This is an important aspect for building democracy in South Africa. For instance, a government housing project in urban areas of KwaZulu-Natal “aimed to empower communities, particularly women,” has been effective in equipping many urban women with skills and employment opportunities (Ndinda 2009: 331). I question a development process that starts with those who are well-off in urban areas, leaving the rural marginalized even more marginalized.

In addition, the women’s comments on vote buying and development program delivery suggest that these women are not ignorant of politics. They do know that their vote should count for something practical and meaningful. They expect their democratic government to better and improve their communities as part of the transition from apartheid to democracy. But during the democratic era, they still see themselves stuck in long ignored rural areas with no substantial help. I noted that in telling their stories some women expressed a type of apartheid/democracy binary opposition in some statements made in connection to their suffering and needs. Some women asked questions like: “What is freedom if we are so poor like this; we have no food, no jobs, and no help. The freedom is not for us but for the government and its people (government workers, politicians). They always make promises and promises, yet there is nothing for us”<sup>96</sup> (Fieldnotes). Such statements indicate disappointment in the democratic government and

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<sup>96</sup> In their language, women used the word “*inkululeko*” referring to “freedom.” In their talks and complains to me, they kept on saying “*asiyiboni le nkululeko*” – meaning, “we do not see this freedom.”



in implementation of rural development programs. The women see that other places receive projects while the areas where they reside are left underdeveloped. They despair because of the disparities that are so prevalent. Disappointments about the democratic government are not only the case of the women I interviewed, but also the case of other poor and struggling people which results in opposition to the government in South Africa. For example, “opposition parties took up the refrain: ‘Life is no better now than in 1994’” (Everatt 2003: 76).

Misunderstandings over and disappointments in democratic government are not only related to the unequal prioritization of development implementation in urban and in rural areas, but also are evident in the fact that poor citizens like these women now have to pay for installation fees (and services) for some crucial resources such as electricity and water.<sup>97</sup> The women shared with me that they had to spend R250 to have the one water pump installed in their community. They also complained that it did not pump enough water; it is hard to pump and the water comes slowly. I tried it when I passed by; it was very hard indeed to turn the wheel around in order to get water to come out. As a result, women said they still got water for cleaning and cooking from the river, which was far away and contaminated. They only used water from the pump for drinking to avoid cholera and diarrhea. The cost-sharing fees for people like these women who are so destitute is a great burden. If they are not able to afford food, how can they afford installation fees for development programs, some of which also require maintenance fees, such as electricity? For example, households must pay for installation and for electricity

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<sup>97</sup> This has been introduced with political administrative decentralization and neoliberal ideas regarding cost-sharing (Beall 2004)

services using a card that must be pre-paid. Once the amount purchased expires, the power supply is cut off. Again, how can poor rural women afford to install and maintain and keep up with costs if there is no form of practical and consistent assistance for the destitute in rural areas who were deprived of basic services under apartheid? No wonder they express no hope for them to have electricity and running water installed in their compounds or homes.

Decentralized rural development programs is a problem to many poor women in rural areas in South Africa, not only to the women of the area I studied. A study conducted in Indwedwe communities in KwaZulu-Natal, which is north of Durban, highlights the same problems. Women do not have water or electricity installed because they do not have money for installation. The women said:

“As we are staying in this area, we do not have water. We used to go to the river and paid nothing. We see water as costing now. If we ask the developers to put water tap next to our homes, they charge us a lot of money. [...] They asked for R250 for water and put it far from the home, in the road. When you ask them to put a water tap in your house, they want another payment of R500 or R600 in order to do it for you. Money is a big problem for us and we want to have things. [...] This makes me unhappy, my child,<sup>98</sup> because we don't have water, we don't have anything because I cannot afford R250 for water. Where am I going to get it? I am still going to drink water with the cows down in the river until I die, because I will never have this money. [...] Where am I going to get this R250 and R800 to get a water tap in my home? Things are very difficult in rural areas; they don't develop us” (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000: 127).

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<sup>98</sup> The research respondent (a woman) called the researcher “my child” as happened in my study too.

Such similarities among poor women in rural communities of South Africa convey the process of cost-sharing development and decentralization as foreign to these women as they are accustomed to the government's earlier national social welfare approach to service delivery.

Another point of concern for the women I studied that always popped up in our general conversations was the effect of the lack of an adequate school on their children and them. They complained about the future of their children because of the lack of a high school in their area. They stated that the only optional high school that their children could go to was 2 hours walk from their local area. Children also have to cross a river on their way to school. A big fear was for female children being sexually abused or raped while walking such a long distance by themselves. Children have to undress in some instances if the river has increased water flow, also a worry the women expressed. Such thoughts reminded women of the story they said they heard about one female teenage student who was raped and murdered on her way back from school in years past. The case was still ongoing and the killer(s) had not been found. As I tried to learn more, I could see that the women were not comfortable talking about it and, as it was a very sad story in the community and terrifying for other kids, some stopped going to school. They said the grandparents and parents were terrified too; they did not encourage children to go back to school because the murderer(s) were still out there. Even though, they said, some children continued with school and nothing had happened ever since, they were still scared to think of what could happen to their children. The women also said that many girls who drop out of school get pregnant and leave for the city to look for jobs, leaving

their children behind with the girls' mothers and grandmothers. The lack of high school does not only deprive children of their education but also adds burdens to these women who already are struggling to earn a living.

Dropping out of school is not only a problem in the area of my study. In my informal talks with one teacher, she indicated that many teenage girls drop out of school because of pregnancy and poverty in other rural areas. She teaches in a rural area in the far north of KZN, and also mentioned that many teenage female students drop out to go sell bananas in the market to support their mothers and grandmothers. Then they end up pregnant by men they meet in the market. She said, "most girls miss school a lot and when you pass by market after school, they are there selling bananas and the next thing they drop out; next time you pass by the market they are pregnant" (Fieldnotes 2010).<sup>99</sup> She expressed how it saddens her and other teachers but there is nothing they can do because they know that people in that place suffer a lot of poverty. This government teacher's account of reasons for dropping out of school by many teenage girls ties in with the situation of the women I interviewed. Some of their children/grandchildren are forced to drop out because of poverty also when grandmothers are unable to afford school fees and uniforms or children need to work.

The issue of gendered poverty raises the issue of a discourse of women's rights as human rights, an issue RWM leader Sizani Ngubane, focuses on, too. My research revealed that even though the women I studied demonstrated knowledge of the

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<sup>99</sup> When I asked this respondent "why bananas" because she was specific to say the teenage girls sell bananas, she said that rural area is blessed with a lot of naturally growing bananas in the forest nearby. Another reason why children miss school is that bananas grow far away from home. They get tired after walking a long distance to go cut the bananas with their parents. Some just join their parents and choose that as a way of earning a living. The market also is the place for public transportation.

government's responsibility due to them as citizens, they lacked a clear understanding of women's rights as human rights. They all agreed that they had heard about women's rights on the radio, from people campaigning, and from RWM meetings. But when I asked what this meant that could not answer further. They could only say: "It meant being equal with men," and this always was followed by a shy kind of laughter (Fieldnotes). Based on my observation, I was convinced that the laughter represented the fact that these women did not believe in their statement of "women being equal with men." The patriarchal culture they were raised and lived in clearly locates men's power over women even in the absence of men. These women acknowledge men are heads of their households, even when they have been absent for many years. By doing so, they are following Zulu cultural obligations to be loyal to the cultural norm of men's authority over women. (In the next chapter I discuss how this is a challenge to women's organizing and empowerment.)

## **Summary**

In conclusion, formal and informal participant observation and informal conversations helped illuminate and helped me develop a deeper understanding of what women do, how groups function, and the broader context. It is through participant observation that I was witness to the women's considerable memory skills, some strategies of business networking such as the dissemination of information by word-of-mouth, and the influence of hierarchies located in patriarchy such as age and class-based hierarchical forms. These are important aspects of women's experiences that I would

have missed had I relied solely on interviews. I conceptualize being part of women's projects and observing their activities while listening to their voices as confirmation of Townsend et al.'s affirmation that "rural women have something special to say to academics and practitioners about empowerment" (Townsend et al. 1999: 3) or, in this case, lack of power and sources of disempowerment.

## **Chapter 6: Challenges and Barriers to Women's Empowerment**

This chapter looks at challenges facing the women's groups studied and how the women handled them. It starts by highlighting some of the challenges that hinder women's organizing and then presents obstacles to women's solidarity in a post-apartheid South Africa. It concludes by contextualizing South African women's inequalities with reference to feminist theory.

The challenges presented here are based on both the data obtained from interviews and participant observation of the women that I studied, group members of KwaZulu-Natal's Rural Women's Movement (RWM), and also from studies by others of South Africa. There are both internal and structural factors that contribute to the challenges that these rural women face in organizing to address poverty. The internal factors include time constraints, location problems, culture, and funding. Some structural factors overlap with internal factors. These include inadequate services and infrastructure due to lack of implementation of government rural development programs. Racial-ethnic, class, and language impediments also are due to structural factors that divide women, keeping rural women more on the margins than women in urban settings and dividing all women. There also is a challenge regarding the structure of RWM and its leader. These factors, internal or structural, pose multiple challenges to SSWCG's and SBWCG's organizing to tackle issues of poverty that include not only income but also lack of

schools, healthcare facilities, transportation, proper toilets, electricity, water scarcity, and health issues.

### **Internal and Structural Challenges**

#### *Lack of Time for Organizing*

The multiple roles performed by women of SSWCG and SBWCG complicate their organizing. Because of reproductive and productive roles that the women must perform every day, women of SSWCG and SBWCG find it difficult to meet and commit to their groups' work. This daily reproductive work includes cooking three meals, collecting firewood, fetching water, shopping (not every day), and hand washing laundry for the entire family, house cleaning, gardening, childcare, and being sure to be home when children leave for and come back from school. Women not only run their households, but they also participate in community events such as church meetings, funerals, weddings and occasional community meetings set by community leaders such as councilors. As a result of these extensive obligations, the women's groups meet once a week only, SSWCG on Wednesdays and SBWCG on Sundays. Even so, there are some weeks when they do not meet, especially during school commencement month and important holidays like the Christmas holidays.<sup>100</sup> The busiest months for them usually are December and January; I experienced firsthand that most women were not available to meet during those months.

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<sup>100</sup> I also noted women absent from the group when husbands were visiting at home, which women confirmed in interviews. This is frequent.



Feminist analysts describe women as participating in both productive and reproductive work, the latter being defined as all work that enables household members to survive. Mikell, for example, argues that women are at the center of production and reproduction in most of Africa, while men offer “supplementary service and income” only (Mikell 1997: 194). In agreement, Kehler states that poor black South African women perform multiple roles and are always at the center of reproduction and production in society (Kehler 2001: 4). Hay and Stichter also postulate that grassroots women “are the backbone of food supply” in Africa (Hay and Stichter 1992: 32). Moser and other feminists also identify a third role for poor women as community volunteers and organizers (Moser 1993: 15-16; Van Allen 1974). These commitments enable the society to survive, as well as posing a challenge to organizing around women’s needs.

Although time spent on their projects is limited, making work progress slower, the women I studied put such intensive effort into their projects that they were able to cover their orders and scheduled tasks. This situation is common in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Robertson, in *Second Face*, a film about the life of Berida Ndambuki, shows a gender division of labor based on patriarchy, and demonstrates graphically the intensive labor burdens of Kenyan grassroots women (Robertson 2000). Just like women in SSWCG and SBWCG, grassroots women in the film perform domestic chores alone. They cook, fetch water, collect firewood, and even look after domestic animals, which, supposedly, is a man’s task (Robertson 2000). Despite being overloaded with family burdens, many poor grassroots women in disadvantaged communities make efforts to organize to help each other with their daily struggles and survival and to free up some

women's labor for income-generating activities (for example from Senegal, see Gadio and Rakowski 1995, 1999). The multitasking of the rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG shows how these women have become the pillars who support families, children, and community survival with small but essential incomes with impacts multiplied by the social networks created through their collective work process.

### *Location Problems*

Another common challenge to SSWCG's and SBWCG's organizing was the location for their meetings to work on their projects. All respondents complained about not having a place for their projects or group meetings. Consequently, they meet at members' homes. Moreover, the problem of location also applies to selling their products. These women do not have a market where they can go and sell. They must rely completely on word-of-mouth orders for local events: weddings, funerals, community meetings, and pension pay days.<sup>101</sup>

The problems of location to do the craftwork and organize and of a market for women to trade their products limit social capital<sup>102</sup> aspects of the organization. These women are not able to expand their opportunities by networking with other grassroots

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<sup>101</sup> In South Africa, there is a day set up to pay out pensions to the elderly and sick recipients in poor urban and rural areas. Once a month, government people go to areas (points of payment can be a local store, or school etc., a place well known to all community members) to give pension recipients their pensions. These days are known as "pension pay days." As all communities and people around the country are aware of these days, they usually travel from different places to these areas to sell and market their products, especially women. So women I studied also take advantage of pension pay days in nearby places to sell and market their products (even though it costs them money to go there once a month and only if they have products to go sell).

<sup>102</sup> Whether applied to society or individual members, social capital comes from social networks that are united in resolving common problems that individuals/groups face. Social capital is viewed as a resource for collective action (Breen and Jonsson 2000)

women who could contribute to the growth of organizations and local development in general. Kamuti Kiteme emphasizes the importance of market places for grassroots women to extend their economic empowerment and networks (Kiteme 1992: 136). Working locally only limits their chances of maximizing their economic and social networks beyond the community. Networking would contribute to organizing that promotes sisterhood, autonomy, and women's empowerment that could expand to regional and national levels (Olabisi 1998: 60). This, in fact, is a goal for the RWM that has not succeeded for reasons to be discussed below. Rural women who are involved in organizing definitely need an accessible location where they can work freely, where they can network more, and gain exposure for their products. It is very important for any grassroots organization to develop local and national networks. RWM as an umbrella organization is known locally, nationally, and even globally, but home-based member organizations have to be known not only to RWM but to other women's networks and to public officials if they are to attract more support and clients. Rural communities are further marginalized geographically due to poor transport infrastructure.

When I asked respondents if they were aware of any other women's groups beside those of RWM, the answer was always "no." Their geographic location – established by apartheid – and their related poverty and lack of transportation make it difficult for most to go to meetings outside the area. In fact, RWM's founder travels to meet with women's groups in their rural communities because of this.

RWM does provide certain links among its constituent members in the form of strategic planning workshops, including those held in August 2008 in Pietermaritzburg

and in October 2009 and 2010 in Durban. These workshops provide opportunities for training rural women from diverse communities on issues of poverty and land, including the successful fight against the Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 (Government Gazette 2004: 2) which gave rural land ownership to communities where men are headmen (*induna*) and chiefs, and, therefore, just as in apartheid, failed to provide security for women's land rights. Even so, RWM has not yet achieved widespread women's solidarity for a variety of reasons. One factor that interferes with this goal is the lack of a history of solidarity among South African women's organizations due to divisions based on location, ethnicity, language, race, and class.

#### *Funding/Capital Requirement*

Another challenge lies in the business model used by the women which requires frequent capital inputs. Clearly the group projects were economically necessary for them or they would not have continued them over the four to six years of the groups' existence. As discussed above, the projects earned each woman about R200 – R500 (\$ 30-70) a month. They do not split the profits evenly; they set aside funds to help members with urgent needs such as food or school fees. Also, some activities require being able to purchase materials like flour, beads, cloth, etc. Materials must be purchased from the profits made. If not enough profit was earned, SBWCG members had to contribute at least R10 each. Those with no income had to borrow from friends and pay them when the group sold goods. So business capital is another major challenge to the groups since profits were frequently insufficient to continue the activities of baking, beadwork, and

sewing. In fact, every woman interviewed named the biggest challenge as shortage of capital.

Funding problems are pervasive for most home-based grassroots women's organizations, especially those in rural areas. In a post-apartheid South Africa, rural women's organizations are still less visible and are at a disadvantage socio-economically and politically because of poverty and underdevelopment (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000; Kehler 2001; Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Booysen et al. 2011). The failure of the South African democratic government to adequately address the needs of the poor and disadvantaged contributes to a problem of "financial sustainability" for small businesses and cooperatives (Davis and Rylance 2005: 43). According to the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme of South Africa, local micro-enterprise projects and subsistence activities are crucial to overcome poverty and unemployment (Nkwinti 2011). In particular, rural women's attempts to generate income are greatly hindered by lack of resources and funding that could be provided by government and NGO programs that are supposed to provide small loans to the poorest entrepreneurs and groups. But such programs have not reached the site of research and are not available to the women of SSWCG and SBWCG. Not only is lack of capital a problem for group projects, but also for women's subsistence gardening and their desire to start group gardening, for which they would need access to land, water, and seeds. RWM has worked to find donors for seeds and materials needed for gardens (i.e. fences).

Networks beyond local levels could be a source of support for women's grassroots organizations to carry out their projects and survive their daily hardships. Lack

of networks in this area also means lack of opportunities for funding. Donors and potential clients will not contribute to these women's projects if they are not known. According to the director of RWM, RWM sometimes receives assistance from donors. However, the women I worked with confirmed that their groups never received any type of funding assistance from RWM except to attend workshops and training for rural women to discuss income activities and South African laws, especially those pertaining to women's land rights.

#### *Challenges based on Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Related Factors*

Gender, racial, ethnic, class, and language issues are not only problems of SSWCG and SBWCG of RWM but are also prevalent in most South African women's organizing. These deepen divisions among women and complicate women's solidarity in the country. As indicated above, RWM came into being as a result of discrimination against women in access to land. Men headed and controlled land issues, leaving women behind as spectators (Ngubane: Interview June 25, 2009). According to Ngubane, many rural women expressed a desire to be included in land reform policymaking. One of the goals of RWM is to "promote the participation of indigenous women in decision-making so as to affect management of their land" (RWM website). The movement fights other patriarchal norms. Thus, from my interview with RWM's leader and the RWM website I concluded that RWM is concerned about both practical and strategic needs of women,

with land a critical strategic need.<sup>103</sup> On the one hand, the involvement of RWM women in land issues serves strategic needs as women break the gender stereotype that sees land as a man's issue. On the other hand, access to land allows rural women to overcome their poverty by putting food on the table and they can sell food staples to generate income, thus fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers (practical needs).

In addition to gender discrimination, rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG as citizens of South Africa also face racial, ethnic, language, and class challenges that divide South Africans. South Africa is a patriarchal society enmeshed in a long history of colonialism, apartheid, and oppression of indigenous cultures. In the midst of the post-apartheid transition and move to democracy, economic transformation, development, and globalization, South Africa is still beset by institutionalized social, racial, economic, and gender-based inequalities that were exacerbated strongly during apartheid. As a result, most South Africans are racially, economically, and ethnically divided; this directly affects rural people as it does the women of SSWCG and SBWCG of RWM. Aligning with this idea, Karen Proudford affirms that power relations and hierarchies among groups or individuals in organizations are influenced by institutionalized dominant ideologies (Proudford 1999: 16). Institutionalized social, economic, and racial inequities have intensified divisions within women's organizations and movements, complicating broad-based organizing for women's rights.

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<sup>103</sup> Blumberg affirms that access to productive resources like land and control over income are the most important variables to improve women's status and empower them. "The greater women's relative economic power, the greater their control over their own lives" (Blumberg 1984: 75)

For example, even though there are racially mixed women's organizations such as POWA<sup>104</sup> and Bobbi Bear<sup>105</sup> in urban areas, many women's organizations are still organized on racial and ethnic bases. For example, there are no white women living in rural areas; therefore, rural women's organizations only consist of black women. Urban inhabitants are highly diverse and segregated residentially. So, in an organization with a majority of one race – white or black or Indian or colored – the majority will dominate and often end up intentionally or unintentionally marginalizing the minority. Michelle Rosenthal recounts the hegemony of whiteness and the invisibility of blackness in some women's organizations dominated by mostly white women such as the feminist-run Rape Crisis Center in Cape Town. Racial hegemony complicated the organization's goals of ending violence against women because white women marginalized a black professional woman who wanted to adapt strategies to better fit the needs and forms of violence in black townships (Rosenthal 2001: 9). White women's domination of this type reflects "the values and concerns of dominant societal groups" (Nkomo 1992: 490). As a result, Nomsa (the only black township woman in an administrative position at the Rape Crisis Center) felt powerless and voiceless when white feminists, who occupy most governing roles in the organization, would speak "on her behalf" as if she could not articulate her own issues (Rosenthal 2001: 9). The Rape Crisis Center exemplifies a feminist

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<sup>104</sup> Located, in Johannesburg, POWA (People Opposing Women's Abuse in South Africa) conducts public awareness campaigns on gender-based violence from small community groups to legislative bodies (Gilbert 1996).

<sup>105</sup> Located in Durban, Bobbi Bear is a women's rescue center. They rescue and uphold the rights of sexually and physically abused children in South Africa (Schlottman 2010). They also work to get them into therapy.



organization that still follows predominant racist, institutionalized norms built upon power, exclusion, inequality, and on hierarchies.

In her book, *Black Sisters Speak Out*, Awa Thiam also argues that there is an assumption that most black women throughout Africa cannot speak for themselves; there is a failure to listen to African women in most feminist organizations (Thiam 1986: 15). In the fight against domestic violence and patriarchal oppression, feminist organizations like the Rape Crisis Center may invite black women to speak about their unfortunate experiences such as rape, domestic violence, poverty, and poor health. But being included only in discourses of victimhood negates the agency of these women, leading to further victimization, which problematizes the structures, goals, and values of the organization.

Ifekwunigwe states that institutionalized feminist paradigms are theorized around the politics of exclusion and difference. She further asserts that most feminist organizational structures reflect the social institutions of motherhood in which “white feminists and women are viewed as mothers and black feminists and women as daughters” (Ifekwunigwe 1999: 21). This affirms critical race theory that contends that women’s institutions and production of knowledge often remain white and continue to ignore women of color (Bell and Nkomo 2003: 101; Collins 1999: 86; Nkomo 1992: 490; Proudford 1999: 16). White women are also often underrepresented in some black dominated women’s organizations. In the South African context, black women such as the rural women members of RWM need to have organizations to interpret their own issues on their own terms, in their own words, without interference from white women,

more privileged sisters, and men. This reality may be why the feminist founder of RWM, a black African woman, focuses on organizing black African rural women only.

It is also well known that within South Africa ethnic divisions hinder national networking, especially for monolingual communities. Ethnic and class divides are not only along black and white lines in South African women's organizations; they are also manifested within black South African women's organizations themselves. For example, ethnic and class divisions are prevalent in the Philani Printing Project, "a group of urban Xhosa women" that focus on using art to fight issues affecting women, including domestic violence and HIV/AIDS and "confront social and gender inequalities" (Miller 2003: 619).

Gender inequalities are also embedded in the ethnic group cultures of South African women, the Zulu culture in particular for the women I studied. In Chapter 3, I show how *hlonipha* as part of Zulu culture plays a significant role in controlling women in terms of who owns or works the land. The South African men control the land even when women work it (Hemson, Meyer, and Maphunye 2004:16). Also, the *hlonipha* culture plays a huge role in keeping women in passive, submissive roles both in the home / private sphere even in the absence of men. Among the women I studied, norms of male leadership still prevail even with men absent. That is, women participate in continuing their own oppression. Also, cultural norms also prevent younger women from communicating on an equal level with older members of the group. Age or seniority is a big issue in the *hlonipha* culture. The young ones are supposed to follow adults' instructions without questioning (Mdluli 1987). This is a challenge to women's

empowerment as younger and older women may both have something valuable to add to organizing, especially since younger women are likely to have more formal education to contribute. As I discussed, in many of my observations younger members were sitting together and talking among themselves in the shared work space. According to the Zulu culture, as long as one occupies a child's position, she cannot interfere in adults' conversation. As an insider I understood this. But it was a factor that contributed to limitations of the research; I was not able to dig deeper for information, in some instances, during the interviews because of my youth. Thus, discussion of *hlonipha* culture in this study reveals that cultural norms perpetuate social divisions between men and women, adults and children, supporting oppression based on gender and age.<sup>106</sup> Despite the good intentions of *hlonipha* culture, such as restoring a culture of respect in families and society, it is a masculine culture placing femininity on the margins so as to restore black African masculinity damaged by colonialism. In an earlier section, I made references to African women who were influential in their communities such as the Igbo women in Nigeria and Mkabayi kaJama from the Zulu society in South Africa. However, even so, rural women's agency is at times invisible because rural women are more isolated from each other and from the outside world than women in urban areas (Townsend et al. 1999: 3). Men as heads of households and men in positions of power are reluctant to give rights or privileges to women. One effect is with female enrollment in schools (Hlatshwayo 2000), another is widespread violence against women in the area

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<sup>106</sup> *Hlonipha* also imposes behavioral and appearance rules on women – for example, how they should dress, talk, and live (Raum 1973: 273).

studied, and a third is the high rate of HIV/AIDS (Booyesen et al. 2011). Another is that Zulu rural women have little space in society to articulate their concerns and fears even in the absence of men, symbolizing how deeply entrenched culture is in their lives. Rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG are caught between the proverbial “rock and a hard place”—between their culture, their children, and structural problems such as poverty, lack of infrastructure, and pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, among others.

Another factor inhibiting the unity of women in both feminist organizations and women’s organizing in general are the language barriers that complicate communication among diverse South African women. South Africa has eleven official languages (including English and Afrikaans), reflecting its ethnic diversity. Mutual distrust can arise among feminists and women for setting agendas because of the lack of a unifying language in organizing and network-building. All members of SSWCG and SBWCG speak Zulu only and most are not literate in any language; only the 5.8% with high school education can understand and speak English, but poorly, not at the level needed for good communication. This lack of a unifying common language perpetuates divisions among feminists and in women’s organizing. Lack of communication about feminism is another obstacle. Most grassroots women perceive feminism, or rather feminisms, as alien to them. Most of my research respondents were not familiar with the word feminism and also did not understand the concept of women’s rights beyond the idea of being “equal to men.” In sum, multiethnic, multiracial, multilingual dimensions, and class stratification of South African women pose challenges to South African women’s and feminists’ empowerment.

### *Class Identity Impediments*

Some South African women's organizations not only incorporate and ratify institutionalized racial or ethnic divides, but also enforce institutionalized class hegemony. Obviously, the lived experiences of women in urban areas and those in rural areas are not the same. Both elite white women and elite women of color have been responsible for the exploitation of poor and low-income women of color, the majority from rural areas, as cheap domestic laborers. Because of this, in their challenge to exclusion from socio-economic and political arenas, all South African feminists and women in managerial positions should confront power relations that are deepened by racial, ethnic, and class identity divides. Identity impediment that is class related is exemplified by the Rural Women's Movement. The organization only consists of poor women, and all are residents of marginalized and predominantly Zulu rural areas.

Chandra Mohanty neatly translates class related hierarchies in women's movements into what she reframes as Western and Third World women's power relations. Mohanty employs the terms "One-Third World" – referring to privileged urban women – and "Two-Thirds World" – referring to underprivileged women on the periphery, including women in rural areas (Mohanty 2003: 228). She argues that class divisions in feminist organizations are mostly centered on urban and rural divides. Her analysis can be applied to South African society. Two-Thirds World women, underprivileged women mostly in urban squatter settlements and in rural areas, are marginalized and considered inferior in most feminist and other women's organizations

where One-Third World women (the urban privileged) are in power. In these women's or feminist movements and organizations, privileged women dominate the institutional managerial positions, while underprivileged women are underrepresented, marginalized, and homogenized (Proudfoot 1999: 9).

Olabisi also asserts that women politicians, professional and elite women in most African feminist and other women's institutions claim to represent *all* African women's interests and concerns (Olabisi 1998: 66; Hassim 2006: 9), thus marginalizing further rural women's concerns. For example, in women's organizations such as the ANCWL (African National Congress Women's League) and WNC (Women's National Coalition),<sup>107</sup> women who are professionals, politicians, and elites occupy the executive roles (Hassim 2006). In RWM, as stated above, the director of the organization is educated and well-placed politically while the majority of women in home-based groups such as SSWCG and SBWCG are illiterate, isolated and poor. To her credit, the director of RWM tried to disrupt these inequalities by using a bottom-up method for decision-making where everyone is asked to participate. But rural women who are poor and uneducated defer to her leadership and representation even though she tries to encourage more initiatives and leadership among them. The concerns of women's grassroots organizations such as the Rural Women's Movement and Zenzele Women's Association<sup>108</sup> (Mindry 2001) affirm that, although South African women could be

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<sup>107</sup> Even though its formation in 1990s was driven by women in politics, WNC, in fact, was "the association of hairdressers and beauticians, of *stokvels* and women farmers' groups – not the branch structures of the political organizations" (Hassim 2006: 27-28).

<sup>108</sup> Zenzele started as a black women's organization that focused on educating and uplifting black women living in rural and urban KwaZulu-Natal (Mindry 2001)

empowered by these organizations, most poor and disadvantaged women continue to be economically, politically, and socially disadvantaged.

Privileged and underprivileged divides are also manifested in the conflict of agendas among South African women's organizations. South African women, feminists or not, have a variety of priorities regarding women's issues, depending on their class standpoint. What privileged women and feminists may consider as oppressive and discriminating against women might not be an urgent issue for underprivileged women. Romero asserts that most privileged South African women are wealthy and well educated, with incomes that "are tied to the First World economies of Europe, Japan, and the United States" (Romero 1998: 10). Most privileged feminists are interested in attaining autonomy, equal rights, control over their sexuality, access to birth control, and higher wage levels. Conversely, grassroots women such as those in SSWCG and SBWCG are preoccupied with the basic economics of daily living rather than sexual and rights issues. The daily struggle to put food on the table and pay school fees comes first; gender equality and control over their sexuality and childbearing are not even on their agenda.

Because issues of survival are class-related, most poor women also do not exclude men from their struggles, further dividing them from feminists (Mandela 1985; Daymond 1996). Some black South African women's organizations do not want to exclude men because most women feel that men are part of their class struggles and because, importantly, they fought side by side with women in pursuing freedoms such as the end to apartheid and the right to vote for blacks in South Africa. After all, most black South

African men share a similar disadvantaged class position with most black South African women. Many women feel that if they follow the dominant Western (radical) feminist model of excluding men, women would be traitors and betrayers of their men since radical feminist theory argues for the removal of patriarchy and the spread of women's institutions (Bunch 1987; Firestone 1979). For the most part, according to radical feminists, women are victims under the control of men in the home and in the public arena. However, within the South African context, men and women cooperated in the liberation struggle (*You Have Struck A Rock* 1981), a fact that binds their interests.

Other factors that divide women by class are the fact that underprivileged women's lives, especially those in rural areas and urban squatter settlements, are mired in absolute poverty with little or no access to adequate services such as health and education. They are also faced with the possibility of acquiring HIV/AIDS or being forced into prostitution and sex trafficking, all major problems in KwaZulu-Natal (Kim et al. 2007; Booysen et. al. 2011). Thus, most grassroots urban and rural women's organizations prioritize basic needs such as access to clean tap water, land, health care, social welfare, electricity, and education. Considering Mohanty's argument of One-Third and Two-Thirds World women, most South African Two-Thirds World women are treated by their privileged sisters as the "other" and their priorities are seldom shared by the privileged. South African feminist and other women's movements that want to reach out to poor women should not only challenge women's oppression by patriarchy, but also should try to diminish the escalating economic inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa



by fighting for redistribution of resources and the priorities that are major problems for most South Africans – both women and men (Kehler 2001).

### *Challenges Related to RWM*

The effectiveness of RWM has been challenged by charges of fraud<sup>109</sup> against the founder and director who was accused reporting a false burglary and filing a false insurance claim after a break-in that happened in her house in Hilton, Pietermaritzburg in February of 2009 (article by Sandile Zamisa in *The Witness*, February 24, 2009). Charges were later dropped. Responses to her fraud accusation raised concern for some donors because of another person who was conducting research on behalf of a number of US donor organizations. This person had an interest in “any information that the South African public [was] willing to share with her pertaining to either the Rural Women’s Movement (RWM) or one Sizane Ngubane.”<sup>110</sup> This matter challenged Ngubane’s leadership and highlighted her privileged class status as compared to that of the rural women she works with. For example, she owns property in one of the upper class suburbs, Hilton, in the city of Pietermaritzburg (the city that is the headquarters of KwaZulu-Natal’s provincial government) and, as stated above, she owns a car. She told me that the car belongs to the organization, but it is still in her possession and she uses it for both personal and organizational purposes. This matter may cause mistrust among potential international donors. It also highlights the problem of group members’ over-

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<sup>109</sup> This fraud case against the leader of RWM had some forms of power-relations and gender inequalities embedded in it. The leader of RWM was falsely accused by a man of the white race who wanted to claim rights to her house. This shows patriarchy and racism at work.

<sup>110</sup> The comment was posted in the newspaper *The Witness*, on February 26, 2009 by Jane Lee Bright.

dependence on one leader. When she had to focus on the charges, RWM activities came to a virtual halt.<sup>111</sup> At the local level, women I interviewed claimed she was not getting the help they had asked for even though they continued to express respect.

### **Feminist Intersectional Analysis Applied to the South African Context**

Gender norms and class-based, ethnic and language inequalities limit women's access to public resources, education and training, and employment, making it harder for women to compete in a market based economy (Bryson 1992: 160; Whelehan 1995: 29). In their depiction of African women Andrea Cornwall, Gwendolyn Lewis, and Margaret Strobel argue that, despite the efforts that have been invested in women's collective action and organizing, most African women are still at the bottom (Cornwall 2005: 13; Lewis 1991: 43; Strobel 1982: 238). My research demonstrates how many poor, rural South African women are disadvantaged economically, politically, and socially. I have shown that for some women in RWM, their intersectional positions regarding class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and age have direct implications for their oppression.

As a result, critical black feminist theory has something to offer in terms of understanding South African women's oppression and their forms of organizing. Black feminist critical theorists in the U.S. state that you cannot separate out oppression by race or by gender or by class; all interact in women's lives (Collins 1999: 86). Using American women of color experiences, critical black feminist thought identifies women's

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<sup>111</sup> However, this also offered a new opportunity for solidarity. The case opened a space for member groups of RWM to unite in solidarity to help their leader. Rural women in women's groups showed respect and loyalty to her but also were concerned about the future of their umbrella organization. Some organized in groups to go support her during her court cases, which may have helped her end up winning the cases.

multiple oppressions, all of which can be contextualized and used to analyze South African women's lived experiences. That is, experiences of oppression for South African women and women of color in the U.S. are similar because colonialism, slavery, and apartheid share some commonalities in the way that people of color were enslaved, segregated, slaughtered, and oppressed in America as they were in South Africa. In fact, I would have found it impossible to fully understand the reality of the women of SSWCG and SBWCG if not for my knowledge of intersectionality and the wide range of sources of oppression. As a feminist, a South African woman, and a student at a U.S. university, I find myself understanding women's sources of oppression in a way that goes beyond their – women I studied – more narrow understanding of their oppression. When they see poverty and lack of government support, I see so many other sources of oppression discussed in this dissertation.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed internal and structural factors that are obstacles to women's organizing and empowerment and are sources of their oppression. Challenges to SSWCG and SBWCG members include lack of funds, location, and time constraints as well as racism, classism, patriarchy, and language/ethnicity, among others. Problems of rural women were discussed within the broader context of South African women as a whole, including structural factors rooted in inequalities and differences linked to urban and rural divides that originate in South African history of patriarchy, colonialism, and apartheid. Deficiencies within, and related to, the RWM and women's movements led by

privileged women and feminists also were discussed along with how different identities and sources of oppression serve to divide women, interfere with broader-based organizing and lead to competing agendas.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

In this chapter, I summarize and interpret the main findings of my research, limitations, significance, implications for future research, and recommendations.

### **Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

The overall objectives of this study were to investigate how poor South African women in rural areas organize themselves to address their poverty situations and meet their practical needs – those that pertain to their responsibilities as grandmothers, mothers, wives, and community members – and to assess their effectiveness for meeting women's goals. My research focused on two groups that are members of the South African Rural Women's Movement (RWM), founded in 1998. They are the Sisonke Women's Club Group (SSWCG) and the Siyabonga Women's Club Group (SBWCG). I described and analyzed the strategies that these rural black South African women utilize in an attempt to alleviate poverty and to aid in the survival of their families, each other, and the most vulnerable members of their community. Their strategies involve organizing in groups to support each other's income-generating activities and to help each other in times of emergency.

Most women studied are illiterate and are *de facto* heads of households with most also single mothers or grandmothers responsible for school-age and pre-school children. I

discussed their income activities, which include making floor mats, beading, sewing, baking, and their caregiving volunteer work for community members who are sick and for orphans. These strategies enable women of SSWCG and SBWCG to barely meet some of their urgent practical needs, such as feeding and educating children. But they also provide opportunities for sharing of problems through conversations while working. Both sustain women's decision to work in groups. However, their organizing has not contributed to meeting strategic needs – to their empowerment as citizens or as heads of household. There are many reasons for this: lack of information, time constraints, lack of capital and, in particular, both structural inequalities and cultural traditions that oppress them and limit their agency.

An important structural challenge is government failure to implement rural policies. Even though the democratic South African constitution recognizes women's legal rights and encourages women's participation in major institutions such as politics, business, and the country's economic development, "democracy" has preserved forms of gendered power relations whereby men dominate women in most arenas socially, politically, and economically (Todes, Sithole, and Williamson 2007: 8). This problem is not only limited to the women I studied. Because of continued gendered inequalities in the economic, social, and political spheres, South African women themselves and feminists, including the founder of the Rural Women's Movement, Sizani Ngubane, have argued that concepts of "rural development" and "gender equality" are discursively used to reflect democratic values that are not practiced in reality (Ngubane 2009 interview; Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Kehler 2001; Sotshongaye and Moller 2000).

My research asked: How viable are women's strategies for their empowerment and the betterment/improvement of their lives and those of their families? Despite women's hard work and dedication, their choice of projects do not pull them out of poverty because of challenges they face that include, in part, lack of support mechanisms (markets, capital, basic infrastructure). They are extremely vulnerable to any emergencies. Their health issues are worsened by the fact that women have no toilets in their homes and no running water. I never saw a single child wearing shoes, even those in school uniforms. These examples signify the extreme poverty and hardships women I studied and their families face. And yet they are so close to the municipal government in Durban that is responsible for rural development in this area.

Another theme that was vivid in my research is the absence of men. This meant that the women were *de facto* heads of households and the sole breadwinners; financial aid from the few husbands with work elsewhere was unreliable. Women are left with full time responsibilities for housekeeping, care-giving, and providing for the family. Even their own grown children fail to send money for care of the grandchildren left with these women.

Because of all these factors, internal and structural, despite women's attempts at self-reliance for poverty alleviation, there is still a need for government rural anti-poverty programs and aid from RWM or other South African non-governmental organizations that work with women (see recommendations).

## **Significance and Contributions of the Study**

### *Contribution to Theory*

One goal of this study was to apply diverse theoretical perspectives to analysis of rural South African women's collective organizing. Through the utilization of postcolonial theories together with the theory of intersectionality as applied to the South African context, this study potentially makes a contribution to women's studies, African studies, and development studies, among others, regarding sources of oppression and specific challenges for meeting African rural women's practical and strategic needs.

The application of intersectional analysis was used for this study to understand rural black South African women's lives in South Africa. It was necessary to expand the usual sources of oppression (patriarchy, race, class) to include the women's illiteracy, lack of access to capital (and other resources), their status as sole *de facto* heads of household and breadwinners, and lack of government support. I also focused on specific aspects of local culture and patriarchy (such as men's abandonment of their families as cash-income city migrants), women's age (mostly elderly women), and the fact that the women's adult children leave them with their children and do not send any money back even when the parents receive government grants for children's support.

Some sources of oppression I identified are forms of structural violence such as racism (rooted in apartheid) or based on class, gender, and geographical setting – rural areas – and these are more important issues in these women's lives than other problems. On the one hand, the women I studied acknowledged their oppression because



of poverty and being marginalized during apartheid, and they see little difference in a democratic era. On the other hand, I found that these women did not acknowledge or even notice other sources of oppressions, including cultural norms and abandonment by their men and adult children, as oppression. Intersectional theory was helpful in studying these women because it led me to overt and covert sources of oppression.

I analyzed my research findings within the contexts of the history of apartheid, the post-apartheid constitution and policies designed to promote equality, combined with recent neoliberal policy shifts (evident in cost sharing), Zulu culture and South African patriarchy. The use of an intersectional and postcolonial framework helped me, as a researcher, to uncover how these contextual factors worked for or against women whether or not they were aware of them all. As a result, I suggest that intersectional analysis in specific contexts, different from its theoretical origins, should be adapted to and consider the relative importance of different sources of oppression in each context. That is, analysis should go beyond the linkages among the most widely accepted variables of gender, race, and class developed in the U.S. setting. There can be more forces of oppression in women's lives than those acknowledged and their contexts intersect; one cannot work without the other. My intersectional analysis helped me to realize some forms of oppression specific to this context that do not always attract feminists' attention or influence policies.

The utilization of theories of development applied to the South African government's development plans and programs, together with the concepts of women's practical/strategic needs and of empowerment from the WID/GAD literature also were

important to understanding internal and structural challenges discussed in the previous chapter. I was able to situate my analysis of the lives of the women I studied within the broader discourses and implementation of democracy and development in post-apartheid South Africa. Such discourses and practices helped me to understand aspects of women's lives in ways I would not have if I relied solely on their interviews (their perspectives and experiences) or my knowledge of South African culture. The development literature also provided me with ideas for recommendations based on South African government policies and the type of feminist organizing (especially NGOs) that are found in South Africa.

Also, the broader discourse of women's development and empowerment helped me to discover that, even though the women I studied had some agency and were engaged in income-generating activities to alleviate their poverty, their activities were not very effective despite women's comments on how important they consider them to be. These women still struggled every day to survive but lacked critical resources that could have helped them. The women I studied had not reached the stage theorized by Blumberg who states that women's access to and control over productive resources and their own income are key factors that lead to women's empowerment and control over their own lives (Blumberg 1984). Their income-generating activities were not able to support any significant form of power in this case. Other studies conducted in rural areas of South Africa, including KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo, confirm my findings. They show that, despite rural women's collective action for empowerment, socially and geographically

isolated poor black rural women struggle just as those that I studied (Oberhauser and Pratt 2004; Sotshongaye and Moller 2000).

### *Contribution to Knowledge*

Another important contribution this dissertation makes is located in the production of knowledge. This study provides information on an understudied, socially marginalized group with several important characteristics that, combined, explain why they are understudied:

- They are South African rural women not engaged in political activism
- They are black, poor, and illiterate women
- They are primarily older women, many are grandmothers who are *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households
- Though they live in rural areas, they are not farmers, laborers or traders or market women, groups that dominate among studies of rural African women
- The women I studied are a part of new phenomenon in South Africa and perhaps in other areas of Africa – rural women’s networks that seek to represent women’s needs through policy advocacy (i.e., for land rights, women’s rights) and that encourage women to volunteer and organize to care for orphans and the ill, as well as to work in “clubs” on “projects” (The umbrella movement, RWM, is just one example).

In sum, my research contributes to the production of knowledge concerning African rural grassroots women's organizing beyond the most studied groups. I hope that my study will expand understanding of other, new forms of women's movements in their specific contexts that are confronting context-specific multiple forms of oppressions.

### **Recommendations for Future Research: Addressing Limitations of the Study**

Future research is recommended to more fully concentrate on participant observation of women's activities like community volunteering (assistance to the sick and orphans) and business-related meetings to focus on decision-making and conflict-resolution scenarios, both at the local level and in regional networks. A more detailed economic analysis of their survival strategies and dissemination of this information might help draw the attention of government programs and assist RWM or other women's organizations in identifying and offering appropriate services and training. Further research also could identify reasons why some women leave after receiving training and find possible solutions for the women studied. Additionally, further research should pay more attention to the relationship between the umbrella group, the Rural Women's Movement, and home-based groups. In this study, I focused much more (for reasons explained in Chapter 6) on the home-based member groups (SSWCG and SBWCG) of RWM, and I did not focus enough attention on the relationship between RWM and this or other home-based member groups or the RWM's policy advocacy and its ability to link women to other programs.

The limitations of my research only became evident to me after the fieldwork when doing the analysis and writing up my results. Some were related to time constraints because I had insufficient research funds to cover field expenses or to stay longer. This was a problem because women met only once a week and sometimes not every week. Also, there was no way to study the umbrella organization at work unless a meeting was held for members. In spite of the RWM structure of committees and volunteers, the director appeared to be the only one in charge and activities ceased when she had to turn her attention to personal problems. I should have learned more about the umbrella group, especially more about activities and diverse members' perspective that may have been very different from the director's or from those of the women I studied (whose groups seemed to have had little direct contact with RWM). Though I spoke to eighty-five women (out of about five hundred members the umbrella organization is said to have), they could provide little information on the RWM or its committees and its policy work.

Other limitations are related to my position as an "insider." I share a cultural background with the women and, out of respect, I, younger than they are, did not press for information on private affairs such as marriage, sexuality, or violence (domestic violence or sexual assault). I also did not ask women if they received pensions for the elderly or about any income received from absent husbands, in part because interviews took part in collective work space and women would not necessarily want to share this information with all the women in their group. Also limiting my research was the agreed upon and IRB approved focus on women's organizing and I did not immediately consider including interviews beyond the women's groups selected. Finally, I also did not get

enough information on how women decided to become volunteers, assuming a very stressful and time consuming task with no pay. For this I would have needed to hear both from women volunteers and from the RWM volunteers and the director who developed the volunteer program in this area.

Also contributing to limitations is the lack of direct information about how the municipal government or local councilors decide where to locate rural development projects. Future research is needed to focus on the forms of participation open to citizens in decision-making at municipal level. One aspect of neoliberal administrative decentralization is the expectation that government planners and officials “consult” with people regarding their needs and the allocation of services and projects. Right now, the women in the area say that they have not been consulted and do not understand why some nearby get services and they do not. This research also should consider how locally elected officials interact with municipal authorities and with the citizens who elect them. Finally, research could explore how rural women be able to participate in decisionmaking.

Future research also can learn more about local administration of government programs by observing what government workers do in the local municipal building. How are decisions made regarding allocations of development programs or services? What are citizens’ rights to assistance from these workers and how is information regarding the services provided communicated to local women in particular given local patriarchy, absence of men, and low literacy rates for the older women who predominate in this setting? These concerns come from the fact that women witnessed some government projects like running water and latrines in nearby communities but not in

their area and they expressed resentment and frustration. Also, the South African development plans reviewed in previous chapters show government awareness that many rural women are *de facto* heads of households, breadwinners, oppressed, and marginalized citizens and there is a national policy to mainstream women into programs and representation in order to meet their basic needs and empower them, thus contributing to their strategic needs (see Chapter 2). However, there are contradictions in government policy since the new Department of Women, Children and People with Disability conceptualizes women as “vulnerable” rather than “agents”. One area where future research could focus would be on identifying specific microcredit programs, workshops on citizen or women’s rights, and training (literacy, skills, consciousness raising) that could be made accessible to rural women (under the Durban/Ugu municipality or through other sources) and that might be of help to the women studied. Another concern raised in this study is the lack of urgent rural infrastructure – schools, clinics, sanitation, water, a market – that should be priorities of the democratic government. Further research could also focus on these fundamental government services and identify how best to link the women studied with those in charge of programs.

### **Recommendations for Policymakers and NGOs that Assist Women**

How viable are women’s strategies for their empowerment and the betterment/improvement of their lives and those of their families and the community? The women of SSWCG and SBWCG demonstrate that women’s organizing in this setting involves very hard work and dedication with some important outcomes for survival. But

their choice of projects, while building on their existing skills and available resources, does not pull them out of poverty. They do not achieve their goals of self-empowerment/betterment of the development/improvement of their community. Thus, I conclude that the current situation of the rural women I studied and the marginalization of rural communities in South Africa cannot be rectified only through women's organizing to meet practical needs without addressing their underlying strategic needs. Not only are these women poor, but also they suffer from a long history of political, social, and economic exclusion of rural communities. Both factors have negative impacts and are linked to multiple forms of oppression.

#### *Help to Meet Practical Needs*

- The women that I studied need access to some form of capital – loans or social grants – to improve their businesses

One constant theme in women's conversations was the need for money and markets to improve their businesses and incomes. Applying both microcredit and non-microcredit strategies may contribute to their economic empowerment as has been the case in other settings (see Rakowski 1994). There are many versions of support programs, including different approaches to microcredit, that are offered by private, nonprofit organizations and some that are offered by governments as part of social welfare packages. In fact, microcredit is a popular anti-poverty program promoted by international organizations like the World Bank as part of their neoliberal programs. Some studies on poor women and microcredit conclude that even though microcredit



benefits poor women, it also creates dependency as “many borrowers have no alternative to borrowing from microcredit programs, and consequently can not afford to default.” Neither can they afford to stop borrowing or drop-out of the programs” (Meade 2001). This makes women stay dependent as they have nowhere else for them to go, another form of women’s subordination. But women also need access to grants that they are entitled to as “vulnerable” South African citizens.

For example, the South African government’s welfare department, known as South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), provides grants to the most vulnerable and impoverished citizens, including senior citizens, orphans, and people living with chronic illness or disability. “A “social grant” refers to grants paid for by the South African Social Security Agency. There are disability grants, grants for older persons, war veteran's grants, foster child grants, dependent care grants, child support grants, and grants-in-aid” (SASSA 2012). The umbrella group, RWM, could consult with local offices of government agencies – the Department of Social Development of SASSA and the Department of Women, Children, and People with Disabilities. Other NGOs that do this kind of work also could assist women of SSWCG and SBWCG to identify social services for which they are eligible such as social grants and loans or microcredit (Kim et al. 2007). The women studied would need help in identifying NGOs that could help them and perhaps the social workers in “the town” could assist with this.

- The women I studied need to have their grandchildren’s grants legally transferred from parents to the grandmothers, who care for the children

Definitely, women need the help of government SASSA personnel and social workers, and possibly the assistance of RWM, to organize and facilitate meetings where SASSA representatives and social workers can help women find documents, fill them out, and file them. They need assistance because they cannot get hold of documents required to prove the identity of their grandchildren or document that they have legal control over their grandchildren and are their permanent caretakers. There needs to be a practical solution designed specifically for elderly women (grandmothers) who take care of children so as to guarantee the children's rights to these funds and other related support. As discussed in this dissertation, some grandmothers have tried several times to apply for their grandchildren's grants but are unsuccessful because they cannot find the documents. The fact that some children have parents who receive monthly children's grants they never send to the grandmothers suggests an issue of fraud that should be looked into.

#### *Help to Meet Strategic Needs*

- These women need literacy training

Literacy training can help the women I studied to better understand information they hear about on the news, help them understand their rights as citizens, and help them deal with government offices. Women also would benefit from business training such as how to keep accounts, records, and orders related to their projects. Literacy and related training can improve both business and personal skills. Undoubtedly, there are organizations, including schools, that provide literacy training but most are located in

urban areas. The task would be to identify volunteers to travel the short distance to this area to implement these programs.

- These women need consciousness-raising

Betty Friedan presents the issue of consciousness-raising as most important for mobilizing women for action (Friedan 1963). Through his pedagogy of the oppressed designed for poor, oppressed peasants, Paulo Freire developed consciousness-raising as a fundamental tool for people's awareness and understanding of how the world functions socially and politically and argues that consciousness raising is needed for the oppressed to take collective action against oppression (Freire 1970). Nancy Hawley claims that consciousness-raising groups for women prioritize friendship and a common political commitment that are rooted in discussions of shared experiences of sexuality, work, family, and participation in the male-dominated society (Hawley 2005: 8). In addition, Annette Brodsky postulates that consciousness-raising is a model for therapy with women (Brodsky 1973: 25).<sup>112</sup>

Consciousness-raising for the women studied is needed to strengthen their agency and increase their power at the personal, interpersonal and collective level and in social, economic, and political arenas. It can help these women to understand those aspects of their oppression that they do not yet understand. This may become a task of RWM or could be provided by other feminist organizations (and some government organizations

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<sup>112</sup> Brodsky's claim speaks to the form of consciousness-raising strategy that the women I studied need for self-empowerment and emotional healing to help them cope with their daily challenges. Many of the women stated that working together as groups of women helps them deal with other problems such as stress, sickness, high blood pressure, and other family issues. During my participant observation, I observed women of SSWCG and SBWCG talking and laughing as they were working on their projects' activities; that could be a form of therapy.

for women). Through consciousness raising these women can develop awareness of how to realize and exercise their rights, understand how cultural norms work against them and why they should change when living situations change, how they also participate in their own oppression. Through consciousness-raising they can find ways of empowering themselves not only to alleviate poverty but also to prevent gendered violence, and to get the attention of their local councilors and municipal government. Consciousness-raising can also help these women to communicate their concerns about government project delivery to councilors and local government agencies. The involvement of feminist organizations or groups has a potential role to play in extending rural women's existing awareness and raising consciousness for them on multiple levels.

Examples of feminist organizations that can be of use to realize and fight gender inequalities among rural women of SSWCG and SBWCG are Women's Net,<sup>113</sup> AGENDA,<sup>114</sup> and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) South Africa.<sup>115</sup> In addition, the South African Commission on Gender Equality (SACGE)<sup>116</sup> acts as an independent organization that was set up by the democratic government to stimulate, monitor, and facilitate efforts of bringing about gender equality in the country. Experienced feminist organizations that promote women's rights and gender equality should be in a position to help facilitate rural women's meetings on such

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<sup>113</sup> Women's networks are designed to advance gender equality and justice in South Africa (Women's Net 2012).

<sup>114</sup> AGENDA gives women a forum, voice, and skills to articulate their needs and interests towards transforming unequal gender relations" (AGENDA 2012).

<sup>115</sup> AWID South Africa is an international feminist organization "committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and women's rights" (AWID 2012); it can be a referral of some help to RWM to help its member organizations such as SSWCG and SBWCG.

<sup>116</sup> SACGE's role is to "advance gender equality in all spheres of society and make recommendations on any legislation affecting the status of women" (SACGE 2012: 1).

political, social, economic, and cultural issues in their rural communities where most of the poor marginalized and oppressed women like the ones I studied reside.

By using a consciousness-raising strategy, rural women like those of SSWCG and SBWGG will better realize and articulate the problems that are affecting them and come up with possible remedies that they identify. Not only could this reduce women's marginalization, one of the factors that affect women in their attempts at poverty alleviation, but also women's rights could benefit from the important role that rural women will continue to play in their local communities.

- Connecting with other women's organizations, urban or rural, that offer other assistance can be of help to the women I studied

There are urban women's organizations that are multicultural and multiracial and that provide services that RWM does not. For example, Bobbie Bear helps the victims of violence (with therapy, medical assistance, and police assistance) and could have assisted with the trauma the children and parents of the area I studied faced when a female student was raped and murdered on her way home from school. Another organization, AGENDA, may help to give a platform for these women to tell their stories and have them and their projects known to a broader audience. This may help them to connect with other rural women's groups beyond those in RWM. Some examples are, for instance, Cibane and Mavela Women's Clubs (Groups) located in Indwedwe (Sotshongaye and Moller 2000). Connecting with diverse organizations might help the women I studied reach other markets with different products and help them learn more strategies to successfully market and sell products.

- The women could benefit from assistance to strengthen their marketing strategies such as “word of mouth.”

Strengthening the “word of mouth” strategy could help attract more customers to purchase their products. Strengthening “word of mouth” also can help attract additional members. One of their strengths is their creativity and skill in finding ways to overcome barriers such as lack of a market. Support can include extending their access to radio news programs where they could advertise or to transport such buses where they can advertise their products.

- The women I studied need to get access to government infrastructure and services projects without cost sharing

Government infrastructure and services not only meet practical, daily needs, they also provide the basis on which women have more opportunities for empowerment. The long-term political, social, and economic exclusion of rural communities has both direct and indirect impacts on poverty, education, and health, including exposure to pandemic diseases (Oosthuizen 2008:1). Basic services are needed if women are to free up the necessary time for other activities, such as demanding their rights as citizens, engaging in consciousness raising sessions and activism, applying to programs such as children’s grants and microcredit programs. Without basic services, women’s struggle to meet daily needs and cope with service-related problems will continue to take away the energy needed to focus on other, more strategic needs.

For these and other poor rural women, the neoliberal approach to cost-sharing for the installation and monthly delivery of services such as water and electricity (and often

health care and education) means that certain populations—the most marginalized and impoverished—will never be able to access these services. Cost sharing applied to the poorest rural residents increases the gaps between white and black, urban and rural, men and women (where men are breadwinners and women are homemakers). Neoliberal forms of capitalism that require cost-sharing make it more difficult for these impoverished women to meet their basic and practical needs; they make even their most simple and pragmatic strategies to alleviate poverty more difficult by the hardships associated with lack of access to clean, nearby water and electricity. The women I studied understand that something is happening in politics that is beyond their control but their words and actions reveal that they believe that there is nothing they can do about it. Also, government officials who work with poor communities need to use a simplified and understandable language to explain programs to citizens; the words used to describe programs in neoliberal terms are not understood nor is the meaning behind them understood.. Helping people to understand and identifying people whose conditions of life should exempt them from certain policies such as cost sharing are important aspects of a democracy's respect for its citizens, their differences, and the legacy of apartheid.

The South African government claims to be committed to social equity and to reverse the damages of apartheid through rural development. The government also has accepted the concepts of gender mainstreaming (considering gender differences in all programs and plans) and women's empowerment as priorities. Among the democratic principles that Christine Keating points out in her article on global democracy include "the notion that [democratic policies] must be justifiable and responsive to those subject

to it” (Keating 2011: 147); in the South African context, this means ensuring equality and justice among citizens in ending the extreme inequalities created by colonialism and intensified by apartheid and ending patriarchal oppression of women.



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## Appendix A: Rural Women's Movement Constitution<sup>117</sup>

### PREAMBLE

The RWM is an initiative of a group of rural women (widows, single mothers, married women, women living positively with HIV, orphans and the youth) whose communities were forcibly evicted from their ancestral land by the apartheid regime. We are based in seven (7) Districts of KwaZulu Natal – South Africa. With our majority live on privately owned farms, freehold and some on traditionally administered communal land. More than 500 community-based organizations (CBOs) are affiliated to the RWM.

- **Rural women have to struggle hard to feed themselves, their children and their members of communities who are bedridden as a result of chronic diseases including HIV related illnesses.**
- **RWM promotes and encourage support for entrepreneurial development through training of women and the youth and providing necessary infrastructure and facilities for implementation of projects aimed at generating income as a primary response to economic development and reduction of unemployment.**
- **Women's participation in land reform processes has not been on an equal basis with men – it is not easy for the women to have access to processes of political decision-making.**
- **Many of the legal entities and committees that have been established in the land restitution and redistribution processes are still male dominated.**
- **Although women are included as members of the community structures, often they are not even aware of their role especially in Traditional Councils.**

In its efforts to promote women's rights and access to resources, as an ongoing process, the RWM has assisted the rural women to organize themselves in these specific focal areas and assisted them to establish community, district and provincial structures.

The RWM aims to facilitate, in conjunction with other rural women's organizations, the establishment of a vibrant Rural Women's Movement in KwaZulu Natal to represent and promote women's specific issues and concerns and to lobby for policy changes.

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<sup>117</sup> Provided by the director.

## **1. DEFINITION**

*Name : RURAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENT (RWM)*

*The reason why this called Rural women's movement is: -*

RWM had this dream of this vibrant rural women's movement made up of different women's organizations throughout the province. When we did a research in 1998 on the status quo of women's organizations we asked the 153 women's organizations we interviewed to make a suggestion on what this new movement would be called. The majority of organizations chose the name "Umbutho wabesifazane basemakhaya" which means Rural Women's Movement.

## **2. OUR MISSION**

*The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) of South Africa based in KwaZulu Natal is an independent non-profit rural women's land and property rights organization that seeks to eliminate poverty through programs designed to provide training on women's land and property rights, enhance women's participation in local governance. RWM advocates for women's independent housing, inheritance and property rights and lobby for public policy changes. RWM also provides training on how to respond strategically to the AIDS pandemic. While nurturing orphaned children's capacity to deal with the loss of their parent/s RWM also strive to deepen children's commitment to pro-social values such as personal responsibility, helpfulness, respect for others and kindness – qualities RWM believes are essential to leading humane and productive lives in a democratic society.*

## **3. SLOGAN**

**Our slogan is "Wathint' abufazi wantint' Imbokodo" meaning that " You strike the rock, you strike the women"**

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

- 1. To ensure that women are adequately represented in the decision-making structures both at provincial and at national levels.*
- 2. To establish self-sustainability through income generating activities that serve the needs of rural women while sustaining the RWM mission and reducing reliance on social subsidies.*
- 3. To increased rural women and girls capacity to address the unmet needs of underlying issues (e.g. economic justice, climate change)*

4. *To provide training to respond strategically to the HIV/AIDS pandemic*
5. *Establishment of suitable mechanisms to ensure women's acquisition of natural resources in their own rights.*
6. *Intensive training on women's independent rights in land for all the members.*
7. *To influence the policymaking processes at provincial, national and at international levels.*
8. *To ensure that the RWM is financially secure*
9. *The RWM intended to promote rural women's development and rural women's organization across socio-political. We are committed to capacity building and empowering rural women to participate effectively in community development processes at local, provincial and at national levels.*
10. *To raise awareness about the importance of integrating women's needs and aspirations into all the developmental processes at community, provincial and at national levels.*

#### 5. Powers of the organization

- Dismissal and Recruitment of members
- Networking with other organization
- Facilitation / Coordination & Conducting of training
- Have its own financial record
- Getting into agreements
- Can sue and / or be sued on its identity in the court of law
- Be able to own property and other possessions.

#### RWM's Aim

The RWM aims to facilitate, in conjunction with other rural women's organizations, the establishment of a vibrant rural women's movement in the province of KZN (KwaZulu Natal) to represent and promote women's specific issues and concerns around women's economic empowerment, customary inheritance and the impact of HIV/AIDS.

## **6. The Organizational Structure**



### **a). Provincial Committee (PC)**

The principle role and decision-making powers of the Committee are to:

- Appoint and supervise the Director;
- Act as an advisory body around elements of RWM's work;
- Carry the final accountability of the organization;
- Ensure that organization stays on track in terms of its mission and use of resources;
- Provide a broad policy review mechanism for staff policies (salaries and staff conditions)

### **b). The Office Bearer (OB)**

The roles and functions of the Office Bearer are to:

- Make decisions about policy strategies and staffing of Director/Assistant Director;
- Ensures that RWM's resources are (human and material) are used effectively and efficiently;
- Allocate resources to projects / programs;
- Approve projects

### **c). Director**

The role and functions of the Founding Director is to:

- Ensure that RWM meets its mission and strategic objectives;
- Manage day to day running of RWM;

- Monitor implementation, budgets and expenditure of the projects / programs;
- Facilitate strategic development;
- Be answerable to the Provincial Committee;
- Hold final responsibility and decision-making for all aspects of RWM's work.

#### **d). District Committees**

The role and functions of the District Committees are to:

- Identify the projects that fall within the planned goals and objectives;
- Ensure that all projects are evaluated and their completion date of at the end of the year if they continue into the next year;
- Ensure that project proposals and budgets are prepared for approval by the OB;
- Coordinate project work and resources.

#### **e). Community/Local Committees (CC)**

The role and functions of the Community/Local Committees are to:

- CC will be responsible for the implementation of the projects/programs are implemented at local level;
- Organize community/local meetings/workshops and campaigns whenever is necessary;
- Develop its sets of rules, which regulate functions and procedures but conforming with the general procedures of the RWM;
- The CC shall report to the District Committee. This report must be submitted by its Chairperson in five working days before the commencement of the District Committee 3 monthly meetings;
- The CC will account to the District Committee for the expenditure of funds;
- Thus the District Committee will be accountable to the Director;
- Director will be accountable to the OB; and the
- OB will in return report to the Provincial Committee; which
- Will be answerable to the women's organizations affiliated with RWM and the donors/funders.

#### **6. Commission of inquiry over financial management**

- a. A five Member Secretariat shall be appointed to look after financial management.
- b. This Secretariat shall consist of members from the community who shall be appointed by the Office Bearer (OB) of the movement.
- c. Every 12 months a full statement of expenditures shall be presented before the Annual General Meeting – this should promote greater accountability and transparency and a new Provincial Committee will be elected;
- d. The movement financial year will be the end of February **each year**.

#### **7. The Secretariat's actions on error**



- a. If the Secretariat identifies an error or problem regarding mismanagement of funds, it shall immediately report these findings to the OB, which shall then call a meeting immediately and take further action.
- b. The Secretariat will work with all receipts and statements and see that all spending has been accounted for.
- c. If the Secretariat does find a problem with statements, the person responsible shall be held liable.
- d. The Secretariat will regularly inspect the statements and receipts, which shall at all times be accessible to all committees and the community.

## **8. The disciplinary committee**

- a. Within the membership of **RWM** there shall be a disciplinary committee, which shall work with the South African Police Services (SAPS). The disciplinary committee shall be responsible for disciplining the wrongdoers and handing them over to the police if the case requires hand over.
- b. The disciplinary committee shall be chaired by community members with the necessary skills

## **6.1 Disciplinary hearing**

- There shall be a disciplinary hearing, which shall be convened before the person found guilty can actually be sent to the SAPS. If a person found guilty shall be given a verbal warning or first written warning pending on the nature of the case. The dismissal shall be considered the first option if the case is too serious or it involves financial corruption, disgracing the image and the reputation of the of the movement.
- However, if the accused is not satisfied with the punishment or the sentence, she is allowed to appeal to the chairperson of the Provincial Committee, who shall then review the case and the Constitution of the movement and of the country and give a fair decision.
- The decision taken by the Provincial Committee shall be final and if necessary there shall be further appeal to be made with the assistance of a representative.

## **7. Minutes**

- The Secretary of the Provincial Committee shall write the minutes and keep all necessary documentary records. The minutes of an Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be recorded in a separate document for reference purposes. All the minutes will be written in Zulu and briefly translated into English.

- Decision reached at an AGM or special meeting of the executive organization shall be a binding decision to the members.
- The District and Local/Community Committees will be bound by the decision taken by the OB irrespective of their absence.

## **8. The Director (ex-officio)**

- **RWM** shall have its ex-officio who will be appointed for her skills by the Office Bearer.
- This person shall be fully responsible and accountable to the movement.
- The Chairperson of the Provincial Committee shall clarify the responsibilities of the committee members, the purpose and the procedures of the movement.
- The information given shall be concerning the functioning of the movement and issues pertaining to social, economics and policies of the movement.
- The Chairperson of the Provincial Committee shall possess the skills and experience to sustain development and in the delivery of development to the rural areas RWM is working with.

### **8.1 The duties of the Chairperson of the Provincial Committee:**

- Shall at all times keep the committee informed with regards to organizational affairs.
- Shall look after the well being of the members and staff.
- Shall guide the movement to the right direction
- Shall develop proposals and budgets with the assistance of the Director
- Director shall make financial and activity reports to the Office Bearer.
- The Chairperson shall at times be accountable, responsible and liable for movement actions.

- Shall represent the organization in areas of co- competency.

## **9. MEETINGS**

**The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held at least once a year.**

- The AGM- shall involve all the committees, the representatives of member organizations affiliated to RWM, donors/funders and other stakeholders like other women's organizations. Government Departments Officials, will be invited. The main objectives of the general meeting are for the Provincial Committee Treasurer, and the Chairperson of the Provincial Committee to make transparent annual report.
- The Treasurer and the Chairperson shall give a report based on all the activities conducted during the year and also present the projected budget with the actual current financial status (the constructive debate shall be encouraged over this report, this should promote effective member organizations' participation.

### **Provincial Committee Meetings**

1. Meetings of the Provincial Committee shall be held 2-monthly at a regular time to be mutually decided upon by the Provincial Committee
2. The Provincial Committee Secretary shall circulate the 14 days notice with the previous minutes and suggested agenda.
3. The binding decision shall only be taken if 2/3 majority of the members or Office Bearers is present in the meeting

## **10. DECISION MAKING**

- Provincial Committee will determine the procedures for admission or expulsion of individuals as members of the organization.
- Review and ratify decisions and recommendations of the members of the committee and the general membership

- The Committee shall meet at least six (12) times a year on a date and at a place to be determined by the Provincial Chairperson and the Secretary in consultation with the members of the Committee
- Members shall be given at least 1-week notice of an ordinary 2 monthly meeting and 4 weeks notice of an annual general meeting listing the business to be considered thereat. Any proposed changes to the Constitution must be detailed therein.
- The quorum of general meetings and AGM or a special meeting shall be representatives of at least 70 farms and 50 communal areas and at least 1 freehold area present in person. If no quorum is available at such meeting the Chairperson with the assistance of the Secretary may reconvene the meeting upon another date and the reconvened meeting, if it so decides, may proceed to transact business even if requisite quorum is not present
- Voting shall take place by show of hands unless any members request a secret ballot in which case the Provincial Committee Chairperson shall order a poll by secret. Only members present at a meeting shall be entitled to vote.
- RWM will enter into any contract.

## **11. Membership**

**a.** There is no membership fee but those members who wish to make a contribution in cash or kind are encouraged to do so.

- Members of the RWM are women who live on the farms, freehold areas and on communal land (traditional authority areas). Individual rural women who are within the boundaries of the province of KwaZulu Natal and who live on farms; freehold areas and in communal areas may apply for admission both as individuals or women's organizations.
- Members of the organization must attend its AGM. At the AGM members exercise their right to determine the policies of the movement.

**b.** Income and Property of the movement shall never be distributable to its members or Committee Members, except as reasonable compensation for services rendered with prior consent from the director and the Office Bearer.

**c.** This movement shall be a body that has its own identity and existence distinct from its membership or Provincial Committee.

- d.** This movement shall have continued existence notwithstanding changes in the composition of its membership or Provincial Committee.
- e.** Members of the movement have no rights in the property or other assets of the movement solely by virtue of theirs being members of Committees or member organizations.
- f.** All the financial transactions shall be conducted by means of a project's banking account.
- g.** If the movement has funds that can be invested, the funds may only be invested with registered financial institutions.
- h.** The movement may not give any of its money or property to its members or Committees. The only time it can do this is when it pays for work that a member or Member of the Committee has done for the movement. The payment must be a reasonable amount for the work that has been done.

## **12. AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Any clause of the constitution or part thereof, maybe altered by a resolution passed by a two-thirds majority of members present and entitled to vote at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting, providing due notice of four weeks specifying the proposed constitutional changes is given to all the members

### **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

- Death
- Misbehavior
- Relocation

## **13. DISSOLUTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

### **Dissolution Causes**

- The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) may be dissolved by a resolution of two-thirds majority of members at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting provided that notice of the proposed resolution is given to the members not less than four weeks before the date of the meeting.
- As an Non-Profit organizations registered under the NPO Act, the Rural Women's Movement stipulates in this document that any of its assets remaining upon dissolution or winding up will be

transferred to another non-profit organization with similar objectives as provided by the South African NPO Act/1997 12(2)(o)

- If a resolution is duly passed, or if for any reason the movement ceases to exist, its assets after payment of its debts, shall develop upon an organization of a non-party political nature, or a charitable institution or community based organization.
- The beneficiary thus qualified shall be decided upon at the meeting at which the dissolution resolution is taken and members shall be notified of the proposed beneficiary may be decided by a postal ballot not more than a month after the dissolution resolution has been taken.

***ALL MEMBERS UNDERSTOOD & AGREED***

**This constitution is binding to all its members as all members understood and agreed upon all its contents.**

**Signatories:**

Chairperson : xxxxxx

Director ; Sizani Ngubane

**Date 25/03/2003**

Chairperson : xxxxx

**Signature.....**

**Director : Sizani Ngubane**

**Signature.....**

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

### *Qualitative Study Interview (Questionnaire)*

***Study topic: African Women: An Examination of Collective Organizing Among  
Grassroots Women in Post-Apartheid South Africa.***

*My name is Gabi Mkhize, a Ph.D. candidate at Ohio State University, majoring in Women's Studies. I am interested in learning about grassroots women's organizing: women's organizational strategies, skills, and challenges. Thanks for willing to help.*

Igama lami uGabi Mkhize, umfundi wezifundo zobuDokotela enyuvesi yase-Ohio State, osemnyangweni wakwa-Women's Studies. Ngifuna ukufunda ngabesifazene bezinhlangothi zasemakhaya: indlela abasebenza ngayo, isikili, kanye nezinqinamba. Ngiyabonga ukuvuma ukusiza.

Name (*Igama*):

Social status (*izinga lakho emphakathini*):

Telephone (*ucingo*):

Place: (*Indawo*):

Date (*Usuku*):

Level of education do you have:

*Izinga le mfundo:*

1. ***The grassroots women's understandings of the role of collective organization/actions in dealing issues that pertain to their agendas. Ukuqonda kwabantu besimame indlela yokusebenzisana ekubhekaneni nezinkinga / izinto eziphathelana nabo.***

a. *When did the organization begin?*

- *Who founded it?*



- *Why?*

Iqale nini le nhlangothi?

- Ubani oyiqalile?
- Kungani?

*b. What are the goals?*

- *Do you have any written document?*
- *If yes, who wrote it?*

Yini izinjongo zayo?

- Ikhona incwadi echaza ngayo?
- Uma ikhona, ibhalwe ubani?

*c. What is your occupation / position/status here in this organization?*

Yini isikhundla sakho la enhlanganweni?

*d. What are your tasks?*

- *How do you do them?*
- *For how long (hours of working)?*

Yini imisebenzi yakho?

- Uyenza kanjani?
- Uyenza / usebenza isikhathi esingakanani?

*e. For how long you have been doing this / task(s) and how do you cope with those tasks?*

Usunesikhathi esingakanani wenza lo msebenzi futhi wenze njani ukuhlala ungenankinga?

*f. Are you satisfied or not about the way you organize / work?*

- *How and why*

Wanelekisile ngokusebenza kwalenhlangothi?

- Kanjani futhi yini?

- g. *Considering your experiences with this organization, would you encourage more women to join, why?*

Uma ubheka isipiliyoni sakho kule nhlangano, ungabagququzela abanye abesimame ukuthi bajoyine?

**2. *Methods or strategies that are used by the grassroots women in enhancing their solidarity and cohesions. (Women liberation, empowerment and human rights).***

**Izindlela ezisentshenziwa abasimame basemakhaya ukuthuthukisa ukuba munye nobumbano. (Ukukhululeka kwabesimame, ukuzithuthukisa, kanye namalungelo abantu)**

- a. *What method/strategies are your organization or an individual member using to meet the goals?*

Iziphi izindlela inhlangano yakho noma amalunga ahlukene azisebenzisayo ukufenza izinjongo?

- b. *Which method/strategies you have found reliable in achieving empowering you?*

Iziphi izindlela eziwusizo ukuzithuthukisa?

- c. *What is human rights? How do you know about them?*

Yini amalungelo abantu? Uwazi kanjani?

**3. *Problems/challenges that women face when initiating, implementing and evaluating the collective (organization) activities they are performing. What are the solutions?***

**Izinkinga / Izinqinamba abantu besimame abahlangabezana nazo ekwenzeni imigomo yokusebenza, ukuyisebenzisa, kanye nokucwaninga imisebenzi abayenzayo. Yini izixazululo?**

- a. *What problems or challenges your organization is facing?*

*Yini izinkinga noma izinqinamba inhlangano ebhekene nazo?*

*b. How do these problems affect you as a member of this organization?*

Zikuthintaphi lezinkinga njengelunga lale nhlangano?

*c. What Problems/challenges both your organization and individual members are facing in doing evaluations?*

Yiziphi izinqinamba inhlangano kanye namalanga ababhekene nazo ekuhlaziyeni / ekucwaningeni imisebenzi yenhlangano?

*d. How does the organization and members solve / tackle those problems or challenges?*

Ingabe inhlangano kanye namalunga bazixazulula kanjani lezi zinkinga / izinqinamba?

*e. What do you think will happen if your organization cannot be able to solve this problems or challenges?*

Ucabanga ukuthi kungenzakalani uma inhlangano ingahle ingakwazi ukuxazulula lezi nkinga noma izinqinamba?

**4. *The challenges posed for such women to participating fully in collective (organization) activities by their domestic responsibilities with their basic chores as daughters, mothers, and wives. Izinkinga ezibangelwa imisebenzi yasekhaya yokuba indodakazi, umama, nenkosikazi ezanza ukuthi laba bantu besimame bengakwazi ukwernza kahle imisebenzi yabo yenhlangano.***

*a. When do you normally start and finish daily work/duties?*

Ngokujwayelekile, uqala futhi uqeda nini imisebenzi yosuku?

*b. What is your everyday homework (house/domestic work)?*

Yini umsebenzi wakho wansuku zonke (wasekhaya)?

*c. When do you do it and for how long?*

Uwenza nini futhi isikhathi esingakanani?

*d. How do you cope with organization work and homework?*

Wenza njani ukumelana nomsebenzi wenhlangano nalo wasekhaya?

*e. What challenges you are facing in doing the tasks of your organization and your home tasks?*

Iziphi izinqinamba ohlangabezana nazo ukwenza umsebenzi wakho wenhlangano nowasekhaya?

*f. Does your husband, or are your kids, grandparents, friends and other relatives supportive to you being a member in this organization?*

- Do they help you to do some home activities while you are doing the task of your organization?*
- If yes, like what?*

Ingabe umyeni wakho, noma abantwana, abadala, abangani, kanye nezihlobo zakho bayakweseka njengelunga lale nhlangano?

- Ingabe bayakusiza ekwenzeni eminye imisebenzi yasekhaya uma wena usenhlanganweni?
- Uma kunjalo, njengani?

## **5. Social Life / Impilo jikelele**

*g. Do you have friends?*

- What do you do for fun?*

Unabo abangani?

- Nenzani / Wenzani ukuzijabulisa.

*h. Do you belong to any other organizations?*

- What is it?*
- How much time do you spend on those?*

Ingabe ikhona enye inhlangano okuyo?

- Iyiphi?
- Uba nayo isikhathi esingakanani?

i. *Are there any other women's organizations or associations in your area?*

- *If yes, what do they do?*

Ingabe zikhona ezinye izinhlangano zabesimame emphakathi wakho?

- Uma kunjalo, zenzani?

## **6. Closure. Ukuvala.**

a. *How do you feel about your position in this organization?*

- *What about in your family?*
- *And, also in your society?*

Uzizwa kanjani ngesikhundla sakho enhlanganweni?

- Emndenini wakho?
- Nasemphakathi wakho?

b. *Do you have any questions for me?*

Ingabe unawo umbuzo ongathanda ukungibuza wona?

*I would like to thank you again for your cooperation and contribution to this study. I value your information and it is going to be of great help not only for my study but also for learning and understanding grassroots women's organizations and organizing. Again, the information you have given is going to be used solely for this study. If further clarification is needed, I will contact you. You will be contacted when the study is done and you will be given a copy only if you ask for it. Once again, thank you very much.* Ngithanda ukubonga ngokuzibandakanya nangegalelo olithathile kulesi sifundo. Ngihlonipha yonke imininingwane oyinikezile, izoba usizo olukhulu hhayi nje kulesi sifundo kuphela kodwa nasekufundeni nokuqonda ngezinhlangano zabantu besimame basemakhaya nangokusebenza kwazo. Futhi, imininingwane oyinikele, izosetshenziswa kulesi sifundo kuphela. Uma kudingeka incazelo ethile, uyothintwa. Uyothintwa futhi ekupheleni kwalesi sifundo, uyobe uzucela ikhophi yakho uma uyobe uyidinga. Ngiyapinda futhi, ngithi ngiyabonga kakhulu ngakho konke.

## **Appendix C: Observation Guide (Enye yezinjongo zokuba khona emsebenzini wenhlangano)**

During Observation sessions, I will be observing the following:

*Ngesikhathi nginawe emsebenzini, ngizobe ngibheka:*

1. The process/division of labor of the Collective Organizing activities.  
*Ukuhlukana kwemisenzi yenu emnhlanganweni.*
2. Individual/group of women doing/performing their tasks/duties.  
*Ukusebenza kwabesimame ndawonye noma ngokhlukana, imisebenzi yabo.*
3. Interactions between members and their leaders in and out of an organization area.  
*Ukusebenzisana / ukuxhumana kwabaphathi kanye namalunga enhlanganwenini.*
4. Specific approaches, methods or strategies that members and leaders are applying in meeting theory organization tasks.  
*Izindlela zokusebenza (imigomo kanye izikili) ezisetshenziswa amalunga nabaphathi ukufeza imibandela yokusebenza kwenhlangano.*
5. Specific activities based on the nature of their daily schedule/routines.  
*Imisebenzi yangalolu suku, njengokuhlelwa kwayo kulandela isikhathi esibekiwe.*
6. Specific strategies/approaches related to problem solving/conflict resolutions that are applied by the members and their leaders.  
*Izindlela zokulwa nezinkinga / izinxushunxushu ekusebenzeni kwenhlangano, ezisetshenziswa amalunga nabaphathi.*

## Appendix D: Consent Form

### A statement of consent (*Isitatimende sokuzibandakanya kulolu cwaningo*)

I ....., agree to participate in this research interview, which is conducted by Mkhize Gabi on this day ..... of ..... in the year .....

*Mina ....., ngiyavuma ukuzibandakanya kulolu cwaningo, oluholwa uMkhize Gabi ngosuku lomhlaka ..... ku ..... ngonyaka ka .....*

I understand that the recorded tape(s) and the transcript from this interview belong to Mkhize Gabi, her advisor Dr. Claire Robertson, the Ohio State University and I; and will only be used for the purpose this research study. Furthermore, I know that that:

*Nginyaqonda ukuthi amathephu aqoshiwe kanye nezimpendulo zemibuzo ebhaliwe yalolu cwaningo iya kuMkhize Gabi, umphathi wakhe u Dokotela uClaire Robertson, inyuvesi yaseOhio State akanye nami; futhi izosetshenziselwa izinhloso zalolu cwaningo. Okunye, ngiyazi ukuthi:*

1. I am free to participate or to withdraw your consent. *Ngivumelekile ukuzibandakanya noma ngingazibandakanyi kulesi sisivumelwano.*
2. I am free to respond or not to respond to any questions. *Ngivumelekile ukuphgendula noma ngingaphenduli noma ngabe imuphi umubuzo.*
3. All personal information that I provided will be kept confidential from others except those who are dealing with this study. *Yoke imibuzo ephathelene nami ngqo izovikelela futhi ibe isifuba sakho nabaphathelene nalolu cwaningo kuphela.*
4. In case of any question or concerns, I will contact Gabi Mkhize at 614 446 1332, or by email at [gabimkhize@yahoo.com](mailto:gabimkhize@yahoo.com). Also, I can contact her Supervisor of this study Dr. Claire Robertson at [robertson.8@osu.edu](mailto:robertson.8@osu.edu). She is also the chair of my dissertation committee.  
*Uma kuba nemibuzo noma izintshisakalo, ngizothinta uGabi Mkhize ku 614 446 1332, noma kwi-imeli u-<[gabimkhize@yahoo.com](mailto:gabimkhize@yahoo.com)>. Futhi, ngingathinta umphathi wakhe uDokotela uClaire Robertson kwi-imeli u-<[robertson.8@osu.edu](mailto:robertson.8@osu.edu)>. Ngoba uyena ongusihlalo wekomidi lokubhalwa kalolu cwaningo.*
5. Please, keep a copy of this consent for your reference. *Uyacelwa ukuba ugcine ikhophi yalesi sivumelwano, uwufakazi wakho.*

Furthermore, by signing this form, I am agreeing to participate in this study and you are knowledgeable about this study and your participation. There will be no compensation that will

be given and that all risks have been explained to you. No compensation available from The Ohio State University or myself for injuries results from your participation in this study.

*Okunye, ngokusayina leli fomu, ngiyavuma ukuzibandakanya nalolucwaningo futhi ngiyazi ngalo nangokuba omunye walo. Akunasinxephezelo senkokhelo esizonikezwa ngenxa yokuba kulolu cwaningo futhi zibekiwe nezimo zalo ezingahle zibe bucayi. Akukhko sinxephezelo noma hlobo luni esizokwenziwa inyuvesi yase-Ohio State kanye nomnwaningi uma kwenzeka kuba nobungozi ngexa yalolu cwaningo.*

Name of Interviewee (*Igama lobuzwayo*) ..... Date (*Usuku*) .....

Witness (*Ufakazi*)..... Date (*Usuku*) .....

Interviewer (*Obuzayo*) ..... Date (*Usuku*) .....



## Appendix E: Participant Data

**Table 3**

*Interviews, Participant Observation, and Preliminary Meeting*

### **List of Formal Interviews: Women Interviewed Individually by Group**

<b>Group/Organization Name</b>	<b>Member Identity</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>SSWCGA</b>	Research Subject #:1	08-19-09
	Research Subject #:2	08-26-09
	Research Subject #:3	09-02-09
	Research Subject #:4	09-09-09
	Research Subject #:5	09-16-09
	Research Subject #:6	09-23-09
	Research Subject #:7	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:8	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:9	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:10	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:11	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:12	03-17-10
	Research Subject #:13	03-17-10
	Research Subject #:14	03-17-10

	Research Subject #:15	03-17-10
<b>SSWCGB</b>	Research Subject #:1	10-02-09
	Research Subject #:2	10-14-09
	Research Subject #:3	10-21-09
	Research Subject #:4	10-28-09
	Research Subject #:5	11-04-09
	Research Subject #:6	11-11-09
	Research Subject #:7	03-07-10
	Research Subject #:8	03-21-10
	Research Subject #:9	03-21-10
	Research Subject #:10	04-04-10
	Research Subject #:11	04-04-10
	Research Subject #:12	04-04-10
	Research Subject #:13	04-25-10
	Research Subject #:14	05-02-10
<b>SBWCGA</b>	Research Subject #:1	08-23-09
	Research Subject #:2	08-30-09
	Research Subject #:3	09-06-09
	Research Subject #:4	09-13-09

	Research Subject #:5	09-20-09
	Research Subject #:6	09-27-09
	Research Subject #:7	10-04-09
	Research Subject #:8	02-21-10
	Research Subject #:9	02-28-10
	Research Subject #:10	03-07-10
	Research Subject #:11	03-21-10
	Research Subject #:12	03-28-10
	Research Subject #:13	03-28-10
<b>SBWCG B</b>	Research Subject #:1	10-11-09
	Research Subject #:2	10-18-09
	Research Subject #:3	10-25-09
	Research Subject #:4	11-01-09
	Research Subject #:5	11-08-09
	Research Subject #:6	11-15-09
	Research Subject #:7	11-22-09
	Research Subject #:8	02-07-10
	Research Subject #:9	02-14-10
	Research Subject #:10	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:11	03-14-10

	Research Subject #:12	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:13	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:14	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:15	03-07-10
	Research Subject #:16	03-07-10
	Research Subject #:17	03-28-10
	Research Subject #:18	04-11-10
	Research Subject #:19	04-11-10
	Research Subject #:20	04-11-10
	Research Subject #:21	04-25-10
	Research Subject #:22	04-25-10
	Research Subject #:23	05-02-10
<b>SBWCGC</b>	Research Subject #:1	11-01-09
	Research Subject #:2	11-08-09
	Research Subject #:3	02-07-10
	Research Subject #:4	02-14-10
	Research Subject #:5	02-21-10
	Research Subject #:6	02-28-10
	Research Subject #:7	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:8	03-14-10

	Research Subject #:9	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:10	04-18-10
	Research Subject #:11	04-18-10
	Research Subject #:12	04-18-10
	Research Subject #:13	04-25-10
	Research Subject #:14	05-09-10
	Research Subject #:15	05-09-10

#### **Women Interviewed Formally in Groups**

<b>Group/Organization Name</b>	<b>Member Identity</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>SSWCGA</b>	Research Subject #:7	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:8	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:9	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:10	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:11	02-24-10
	Research Subject #:12	03-17-10
	Research Subject #:13	03-17-10
	Research Subject #:14	03-17-10
	Research Subject #:15	03-17-10

<b>SBWCGB</b>	Research Subject #:10	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:11	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:12	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:13	03-14-10
	Research Subject #:14	03-14-10
<b>Formal Interviews and Casual Conversations with the RWM Director</b>		
RWM	Director <sup>118</sup>	06-25-09 08-09-09 04-25-10 05-02-09

#### **Informal / Casual Interviews with Other Informants**

<b>Group/Organization Name</b>	<b>Respondent Identity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Government	Municipal Worker 1	12-16- 2009
Government	Municipal Worker 2	01-05-2010
Government	Teacher1	12-26- 2009
Government	Teacher2	01-04- 2010
Community	Member	09-02- 2009

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<sup>118</sup> I had several casual meetings with the director. I saw her almost every month. She drove me to my project area several times. She also used to invite me to some of her meetings related to RWM.

RWM	Sweetwater Meeting	26-06-2009
RWM	Mzumbe Meeting	08-06 2009
RWM	Durban Meeting	02-10-2010

### **Preliminary Meeting**

Preliminary Meetings with all groups <sup>119</sup>	09-09-09
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### **Participant Observation**

<b>Group/Organization Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
SBWCG 1 <sup>st</sup> Group	09-12-09
SBWCG 2 <sup>nd</sup> Group	09-12-09
SSWCG 1 <sup>st</sup> Group	09-16-09
SSWCG 2 <sup>nd</sup> Group	09-16-09

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<sup>119</sup> There were over 100 people present at the preliminary meeting (I was unable to take the exact count); also present were community members who did not belong to organizations/women's groups, including a number of children (daycare to primary age) and a few teenagers.