# CHAPTER 11

## COMMUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining Community</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of community</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insiders and outsiders</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living community</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating community</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 11

COMMUNITY

"(In traditional society)...the individual was rich or poor only to the extent that the community was rich or poor, and vice versa."

(Nyerere, 1968:9)

Defining community

Kwa-Zulu Natal is the largest province in South Africa and has 21% of its population. As in the rest of South Africa, roughly half of the population is classified as rural. Three quarters of the population is poor (Gordon, 1997).

About 15,000 people live in the Ixopo area. There are 201 White-owned commercial farms – mostly dairy and, further south, sugar cane. There are also three large timber plantations owned by Mondi, Sappi and Timbo (ISS, 2003). The farms and timber companies employ casual workers from the communities who live on small traditional homesteads on Tribal Authority land. The town of Ixopo is about 10 km from the two rural schools of Lusiba Primary and Sinevuso Secondary, which are in the particular area of Chibini in the Midlands.

That is one way of looking at it.

In ‘Cry the beloved Country’ Alan Paton describes the valley:

“These hills are grass-covered and rolling, and they are lovely beyond any singing of it. … if there is no mist, you look down on one of the fairest valleys of Africa.”

(Paton, 1944)
That is another way.

Steinberg (2003) challenges Paton’s picture of a quaint, old fashioned and sublime pastoral fantasy. The irony, he says, of Paton choosing Midlands (the Ixopo area) is that it has historically been a scene of brutality, violence and marginalized people. Although political violence has declined in the last decade there has recently been an increase again of political assassinations and the old conflict between the ANC and IFP appears to be rekindling (Mail and Guardian, 29-5 May, 2005:1). Farm attacks have increased since 1994. Farmers have moved to employing casual labour. Because of lack of infrastructure Black workers are often dependent on White farmers for lifts into town – if there is a dispute they do not have the means to find help from authorities, and, anyway, they often do not know their rights. There is a great power imbalance in knowledge as well as resources between farmers and labourers (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

A Grade 7 child wrote this at our first class visit: “Long time ago people were not happy because there were bad things happening: people were abused by Whites. Blacks didn’t like Whites because of the hard life and stay in fear because it might come to violence in ancient time…” (SL14, 2002).

Rural communities are still marginalised and depressed after ten years of democracy (Odora Hoppers, 2001). Resources and infrastructure are lacking, poverty and unemployment are rife and HIV/AIDS is devastating families and communities (Gordon, 1997; Woza Moya, 2004; 2005). Communities remain fractured by wars and migrant labour practices of the apartheid era. Sexual abuse and substance abuse are increasing. Decades of oppression, fighting and land removals have meant loss of farming skills (Steinberg, 2003) and exacerbated poverty. Many schools are barely functioning, with teachers often under-qualified (HSRC, 2005).

Students and their families have little access to information, services or higher education. When we asked the Induna why there was so much poverty, he replied: “People lack information.” (C36, 2003). Creating and sharing information has been one of the goals of the research project. A Grade 11 student in his ‘discovering his family history’ assignment wrote this story. This gives yet another perspective:
A student’s family history:

“This history is so important to me and I find all this information from my mother who supported me to write this history.

I am Mduduzi Gema who is proud of this story and I hope everyone who reads it is going to be interested. I was born in the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal at Ixopo township. It was Sunday morning 15\textsuperscript{th} March 1985. My father gave me the name Mduduzi and my mother called me Sfiso which means it was her wish to give birth to a boy child. (Mduduzi was kidnapped and taken to Durban)….when all this was happening my father was not present, he was at work in Gauteng. In 1992 I was at school doing Grade 1. The first week I was so happy to be at school. Then things changed the following week. The teacher came to class with Stick in her hand by that time I was so afraid of Stick … When I was at Grade 3 I left school. It was winter and it was so cold. In the morning there was frost on the grass and on the roofs of the huts so it was not easy for me to go to school. I was wearing short trouser and short sleeve shirt and no shoes and no jersey so it was so cold so I went back to school the following year…..

In 2001 I was at Sinevuso doing Grade 8. I was feeling happy to be my first year at High School… but our learning degree was very low so I moved schools… Unfortunately the political conditions forced me to go back home and I went to Nonkwenkwane but I was walking 5 km to school so I had to go back to Sinevuso in Grade 11.

In 1996 I was so sad because my father was found dead and I felt so ashamed but the life was still going on after that bad situation. There was my father’s friend who supported me…. I don’t forget him…

In 1999 I joined a football club …. I am a supporter of Chiefs and my favourite international player in Manchester United is Quinton Fortune – a South African guy.”

(In 2004 Mduduzi matriculated. There were only four who passed in the whole class – a pass rate of 15%).
Two Primary School, Grade 7 children drew these pictures of their life and community:

(SL14, 2002)

Figure 11.1 My life
Figure 11.2 My Day – Grade 7 girl

Figure 11.3 My Day – Grade 7 boy
Sihle describes his community:

“People here are friendly, open, close-knit and helpful to each other. Everybody knows everybody. Problems are illiteracy, crime, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, lack of recreational activities.” (Sihle’s journal, R45c, 11/9/03)

A volunteer group of secondary school students gathered the following information from their community and fellow students. They created posters to display at the Science Festival.

Figure 11.4 Student census summary:

**Student Census:**

“We learned useful information about our community.”
“We learned how to communicate with community members.”

(SS11b, 2003)

This is the data they collated:

- Land ownership: most people do not own land.
- Students spend free time on: sport 41%; Radio or TV 31%; Reading or relaxing 14%; playing or talking with friends 14%.
- Most common food: phutu (maize porridge) 22%, cabbage and beans 17%, mealies, rice and potatoes 17%, bread 17%, chicken / meat 12%, tea (considered as food) 13%, sour milk 1%, eggs 1%.
- Shopping: 70% of income spent on food; clothes 10%; other goods 20%.
- Drugs and alcohol are a problem.
- More people dying than being born.
- No house has electricity or water.

(SS11a, 2003)

Here is a view from parents at our first meeting:

“We are afraid about our children and are worried – we have lost the hope for the future. They haven’t got anything. They have nothing to do. They are educated and have finished school but haven’t got work. It is so heavy with us as parents.” (C30a, 2002)

Which of these is important in describing the community? Will a scientific academy put more value on the ‘hard’ quantitative data which is in a framework familiar to scientific thinking, or are students’ portrayals of their lives more real? Through this research and also the
reporting, I have assumed that the voices of community participants are vitally important, as is the worldview of *ubuntu* that permeates community life and affects the ways things are seen. The potential disjunction in interpreting community from a Western research framework is described by Malcolm (2003) in his conversation with Justus, a Kenyan PhD student:

> “He gave an example: a Western researcher comes to a Kenyan home and asks: ‘How many people live here?’ The Kenyan answers the question, but sees it as strange, because the important thing is not the number of people in the household but their relationships with each other. When ‘people’ are abstracted as categorised, countable objects, their essence is lost. Meanwhile, the researcher moves on, her question answered, her data building up as planned, unaware that she has seen the household through her eyes only.” (Malcolm, 2003:2)

Zaslavsky (1973) describes a similar incident, this time in the taking of class registers in her research into ‘counting taboos’. So, community is not easily defined. Although throughout the report I have referred to ‘the community’ and ‘rural community’ this is a simplification. Who is ‘the community’? And for that matter, what is rural? What is poverty? I discuss here a selected aspect of the population in the area: that part of the community that has ties to students in the local rural schools of Lusiba and Sinevuso. There are others close by: the commercial farmers, town dwellers, teachers, and the Retreat Centre who are mostly outside ‘the community’.

Hughes points out that historically ‘community’ in 14th century denoted the common people as opposed to the privileged whereas now it means people from a common area or with like affiliations: generally ‘an amorphous collection of people’ (Hughes, 1995:9).

> “Communities are dialogically rather than ontologically constituted… (and) one can be part of multiple communities simultaneously.” (Masolo, 2002:569). This of course ties in with identity, which is dynamic and “changes with environments such as those of the home, school and society and when two or more cultures come in contact.” (Mwamwenda, 1999:10). Community membership is thus complex. Community is a porous, dynamic, contradictory organism or perhaps rather an ecology of sub-communities.
As I have tried to illustrate, community can be defined from perspectives of statistical demographics, place, politics, history, power, culture and personal experience. Masolo, (2002) suggests a socially constructed community, which is close to the way I conceive community in this writing. In some senses it is also larger than this and does indeed have an ontological and metaphysical existence. Community is cyclical in that the African ontogenesis of the self is cyclical. First there is the experiential or social self which corresponds to the Western life-span concept. Second the ancestral self-hood where the spirit enters the ancestral realm and the ancestors are an integral part of community life. The cycle extends to spiritual self-hood which begins after the ritual incorporation of the ancestral spirit into the spirit realms and ends (again) with birth – or rather the naming ritual. Death is a passage (Nsamenang,1999) - rather like the bardo in Buddhist philosophy. So community is more than numbers in a village or percentages of literacy. I have puzzled over the statement by a number of elders: “I was born here and I will die here.” That is just not the way I would describe my ‘place’ or ‘community’. By this I mean from my perspective where I die is not worth mentioning. In the light of the above cyclical nature of existence and community, this becomes a powerful statement of continued connection to the community. Without integration into each community within the cycle a person is not properly human (Nsamenang1999). Personhood is acquired (Louw, 1999).

At a very early meeting we explained that from our perspective, to develop relevant curricula, understanding aspects of community is important. We spoke about the talents, goals and experiences of the students. These are descriptors given by ‘the community’ of ‘who we are’ in Table 11.1, (C30a, 5/9/2002).

Table 11.1: Describing the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Practical needs</th>
<th>Talents, strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Farming (without tractors)</td>
<td>• Earning money</td>
<td>• Traditional dance, singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hunting</td>
<td>• Cultural village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Walk long distances to school</td>
<td>• Playing facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collect water and wood before school</td>
<td>• Computer access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looking after brothers and sisters</td>
<td>• Uniforms/clothes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

236
Data from our partner project in Nwedwe provided similar demographics. In summary people mentioned: “…hunger is the biggest issue; school education is not helping. In old days perhaps 20% of matriculants could become teachers or nurses – now not even that. The middle generation is missing partly because of poverty – parents go to cities for work – but partly they just ‘dump’ children with grandparents. People are lazy to farm – they prefer to shop.” (R48a, 8-10/8/04)

Through many community meetings, tasks and engagements, a multi-faceted description of life in the community emerged: poor resources and infrastructure, unemployment, subsistence farming, poor health, social disruptions, anxiety about the future and about immediate food security. Only a few percent of the population have completed secondary school. Parents believe in education, but at the same time resent that schooling has provided no apparent benefit. Young people who have matriculated are idle, either in the village or in towns to which they have moved. The community’s age-profile is distorted by the emigration of many parents (especially males) in search of work, so that the community is largely composed of grandmothers and children. This is in line with findings reported by the HSRC (2005). Cash income comes mainly from pensions – received by 15% of the community (Woza Moya, 2005). According to the Inkosi, 70% of the community is supported on pensions (C34, 2003) Unemployment is measured at 84% (Woza Moya, 2005). A community that has long felt marginalized is slipping further, its fabric torn by poverty, migrant parents, AIDS and personal conflicts that arise from relationships, gender issues and poverty. The village has increasingly become a target for crime from youths from the cities (C34, 2003). Some of the reports of conflict are contested: an example of multiple-perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life circumstances</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>Environmental wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No electricity</td>
<td>Moral values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not staying with parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Keeping bees
- Caring for animals, hunting
- Making muthi (medicine)
- Crafts

Inkosi
In spite of these constraints and difficulties there is still a sense of ‘community’: pride in culture, heritage, talents of students and the hope of *ubuntu*. Community responses to challenges range from hope: “we want to help the community have a better future” (SS 5, 2003), to lethargy: “the community has given up” (C35, 2003), to frank engagement: “we need more projects like this” (C33; C34, 2003). A clear message is that traditional and modern views and practices are both needed. Preserving cultural identity, finding relevance and local knowledge, as well as learning science, computers and English are all important (Keane, Malcolm & Rollnick, 2004).

**The complexity of ‘community’**

Piecing together a picture of community from different data sources results in a multi-dimensional, dynamic concept. Considering ‘community’, we had different responses which tell not only about different aspects of the community but about the respondent’s perceptions of what is important. I illustrate this process of different pieces fitting together as a ‘jigsaw’.

Figure 11.5  
Piecing together a picture of community.

---

**Emerging themes**

- ‘Community is a good place to be’ - Student
- ‘You are always welcome’ - Induna
- ‘It’s all about poverty’ - NGO worker
- ‘We don’t feel accepted’ - Teacher
Examples of ‘pieces of the data puzzle’ are:

“You are always welcome.” – Induna, (C30a, 2002).

“It’s all about poverty.”- NGO worker (C33, 2003).

“We don’t feel welcome.” - Teacher (T23, 2003).

“Community is a good place to live.” - Student (SS11b, 2003).

“Regaining confidence is the most important thing.” – Inkosi (Journal 2, 2003).

“Poverty is getting worse.”- Elder (C38b,c, 2003).

“We have no time or resources to address community issues.” – Principal (29c, 2003).

The various inputs contribute to our understanding of both community and sub-groups within the community. At times the pieces do not fit well together! For example (co-incidentally?) – the issue of community harmony and co-operation. Mrs Ngobane, (the sangoma’s assistant) in a discussion with us and the Sangoma, said: “There are no conflicts in the community” (C36, 2003); the Induna said: “This community works well together” (C36, 2003), and yet the Woza Moya NGO workers Jane, Benedict and Sioux say there is conflict ‘everywhere’ (C33, C35, 2003). The principal told us that students would not be able to go out into the community to work on assignments because of inter-family fights (C33a, 2003) and ‘personal conflicts’ were mentioned as being common by the community researchers (C33b, 2004). The Mbumba chairman claimed that relationships are generally good, but with some conflicts (C38a, 2003). Elders explained that youth love affairs (C38d,e,g, 2003) and stock eating plants (C38h,k, 2003) are the main causes of arguments. Mr Mkhize claimed that there is conflict, but not at his school (P29c, 2003). It is not possible to report in detail on all issues of conflict as some are serious e.g. child sexual abuse. Some years ago the Chief was assassinated, two years ago an Induna was ousted.

There are also many accounts of neighbours helping each other. Within the research project, co-operation was a strong feature. Students’ work highlights their positive experiences and aspirations to stay in or return to the community (after studying). All this points to degrees of both conflict and co-operation. This is not a triangulation of data technique to find the one truth, but rather the presentation of a multi-faceted situation.
I use this example to illustrate the disparities within data, and the complexities of interpretation and reporting – but also to avoid ‘romanticising’ pastoral life and ubuntu. Personal difficulties I experienced as a researcher need also to be seen in the light of my being part of the community. I was not exempt from the dynamics of care, suspicion, disapproval and appreciation that play through relationships! During one conversation with Mr Hadebe, he asked me: “What do you have in your mind? What do you think when you see poverty, unemployment?” (P29b, 2003). Mr Mkhize asked: “Have you ever stayed in a rural village?” (Journal 3, 2003). At another time he told Cliff (when I had been absent for a couple of months) that they were all really missing me! (C37a, 2003.) The Inkosi assured me I was always welcome, as did the Induna and many others (C34, 2003; C36, 2003; C30a, 2002).

Who is this community?

In one sense, the community in our project was defined by the membership of the local schools, in another sense by location. However, some locals were not directly involved in the schools; some children travelled from other localities; the teachers did not live in the village; the researchers and Agricultural NGO came from Durban and Johannesburg. It made more sense to consider the community as a community of interest – where the interest was education and community development in the village. However, this means that the ‘community’ is somewhat self-selective, even if efforts are made to draw in particular groups. In operational terms, the ‘community’ was represented by 40-50 adults who came to public meetings (more often grandparents than parents, because many parents work and live away from the village), a core group of 25 science festival students, as well as grades 7-11, the project committee and farmers, the principals of the two schools, a few teachers and the researchers, (including community researchers).

Referring to ‘the community’ in the singular is not quite accurate. The community consists of different sub-groups, with different needs and perspectives. For example, adults have lived under apartheid; Grade 8-9 students have not (in that they were only infants in 1994). Teachers and principals are more educated, and almost all live outside the village. Within and across these groupings are insiders and outsiders, depending on rank, gender, health, age, income and education. Groups and individuals have points of common concern, but also points of difference.
Identifying ‘community’ as either those living in the village (identity of place), or those association with the local primary and secondary schools (social identity) are both limited and an exaggeration. It is more accurate – in this context - to define ‘community’ as those involved in our project (a purpose definition).

Insiders and outsiders

“I wish the pockets of my shirt were big enough to fit you all in.” (Mandela, 1997)

South Africa, through centuries, has deliberately constructed insiders and outsiders, building fences and loyalties physically as well as socially and psychologically. This is the land of Apartheid, forced relocations, laws and institutions that entrenched difference, separation, and inequality. While the general separation of Blacks and Whites, Indians and Coloureds, was the major separation, it was not the only one – and separations continue. There were (and are) Afrikaners and English; Zulu, Xhosa, Venda etc; poor and rich; Jews, Christians, Hindus and Moslems; Communists and Capitalists; ANC¹, IFP²; rural and urban; males and females. In our new and young democracy this diversity (in principle) is welcomed. When we are feeling optimistic we call this our ‘Rainbow Nation’.

Historically we have come up with euphemisms for creating barriers: homelands, separate development and self-determination. Belonging to or being excluded from a group is a familiar experience for everyone in South Africa. Yet, so is the new sense of inclusion.

Living Community

The existence of community itself is so important that rituals mark important entries into community (rather than marking personal achievements) e.g. naming of a baby, initiation into adulthood, marriage and funerals. (Death is also an entry rather an ‘exit’, as it marks entry into the realm of ancestors.) All these rituals emphasize commitments to others (Nsamenang,

¹ African Nation Congress
² Inkatha Freedom Party (in opposition to the ruling African Nation Congress)
Humans need to grow into who they are and where they belong and this is fostered by self awareness (Nsamenang, 1999). Lewis defines the human as a social organism which needs for survival not only reproductive success but identity and culturation (Lewis, 1990, in Nsamenang, 1999). Identity has two main conceptions³ (which are relevant here): independent – which is a valued Western trait; and interdependent – which is how identity is conceived in this community (SL17a, 2003; R45e 2004; SS6b, 2003; SS6b, 2003). This is an important distinction for the notion of school (which places so much emphasis on individual achievement and assessment). I further discussed ideas of identity in Chapter 10.

In many practical ways the community is cohesive and close – especially compared to White middle-class urban communities. For a start, community members know each other. Leaders, elders, parents, students, farmers come together very easily and spontaneously to discuss problems and celebrate cultural events. Traditional leaders are strong; the two NGOs, Heifer and Woza Moya, are firmly part of the community; and students are willing and quick to learn – a possible indication of positive association with community.

**Creating communities**

“Sinonke Masihlangane – we are together, let’s meet.”

Community is created in research. When academics refer to the ‘research community’ they usually mean the community of academics. In participative research, participants become part of the research community and we, as researchers, become part of the rural community. More than this, participative research creates community. After an early meeting in 2002, the community came up with the name for the project: ‘Sinonke Masihlangane’ (30c, 2002). This has the connotation of coming together and communicating as a community. Through the research, a project management committee was set up; a group of chicken farmers came together at Heifer workshops.

³ There are, of course, many conceptions: experienced, presented; inner, outer; undesired etc. (Nsamenang, 1999.)
On the one hand community could be considered in terms of unity and solidarity. Participative research worked to broaden the community and even create a new community that included Ixopo residents (a vet and librarian), a visiting American student, university researchers, Heifer facilitators and other educators. This reminds me of Breen’s (2005:83) definition of teaching as “expanding the space of the possible”. Engaged research also expands possibilities for being, knowing and doing. School more typically establishes boundaries: closing down interaction rather than opening out to the wider community. Those who fail or are out of school do not belong in the ‘school community’. When the scope of research expands, those on the fringes of communities have an opportunity to be included.

Rural

“Urban South Africa has always found the countryside inscrutable.”

(Steinberg, 2002, viii)

Jacklin (1993) claims that ‘rural’ is defined by power and space, and that in comparison to definitions of ‘rural’ in the USA and UK, South African rural schools are more like UK inner-city schools. South African rural schools, in addition to being marginalized politically and economically, are isolated geographically. Rural South Africans have traditionally provided a pool of cheap labour (Wolpe 1972, in Ngonini, 2004). The South African Department of Land Affairs (1997:9) defines rural areas as sparsely populated and dependent on farming or natural resources. Halfacree (1993) in Ngonini (2004), maintains that descriptions of rural consider measures of employment, land use, population and distance from city – but these fail to define rural.

Biko (1973) pointed out an additional dilemma of rural poverty: “it is expensive to be poor.” Travel, fuel, going to town to make a phone call, are additional expenses of living in a rural area. Biko’s recommendation was to “establish co-operatives whose interest will be ploughed back into the community.” (Biko, 1973:84). This principle is close to the Heifer farming model of ‘passing on the gift’ that is used in the research project.

So not only were rural areas designed to be marginalized and exploited, but their plight has worsened further over time.
Poverty

“There is just incredible poverty. People are dehumanised – we need to re-energise people – they have given up.” (Woza Moya manager: C35, 2003)

Especially in rural South Africa, poverty has been handed down through political systems, exclusion from land, and more recently through the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Of the 201 White farmers in the greater Ixopo area, almost all belong to ‘Farm Watch’ to keep the poor out. Land invasions have increased in the area – and so have farm murders. One day as I stopped my car in Ixopo two small ragged boys approached. Before I had quite taken in the scene, a White man in combat uniform and carrying a sjambok (whip) threatened them and chased them away. Poverty is unsightly and untidy, and those who ‘have’ generally prefer for the ‘have-nots’ to be swept to the edges of society.

Poverty is numbing, demeaning, pervasive: it is more than the scarcity of basic necessities of food and clothes, or the hardship of enduring harsh conditions of absences of sanitation, running water and transport. It is also the feeling of insecurity in fearing one will not cope with inevitable misfortunes: sickness, retrenchment, drought, death. It is the helplessness of not being able to provide for children or aged parents. The world shrinks as options close down. Poverty produces feelings of inferiority reinforced by the way others treat you and the despair in seeing no chance of escape. In the first meeting with students in September 2002, one student said they thought no one cared about rural people: that they were inferior (C30a, 2002). Subsequently students have said they now feel acknowledged (T27, 2003). Feelings of despair can also lead to increased alcoholism, drug abuse and crime (which students reported (SS5, 2003), and which we witnessed when visiting farmers and walking through the village). Poverty also means children often miss school (for days or even years), and that necessary developmental stimuli are often absent. Poverty is the main factor that keeps children out of school (Porteus et al., 2000).

The material poverty is obvious and spoken about by all. This does not mean that it is understood. I found it surprising that some academics criticised our providing juice and biscuits at our meetings. This was considered ‘bribery’ and ‘patronising’. Yet the Induna said
frankly: “This is a poor community that needs help.” (C36, 2003). Engaging in action to address community problems (including poverty) does not necessarily mean that researchers view rural communities as a “worthy cause” (Zafar, 2004). Education research cannot be cut off from life, uncomfortable and complex as it is.

The worst poverty is in families with no income at all and poor land. Children, especially in the primary school, come to school in torn clothes and bare feet – even in winter. Principals acknowledge that many children cannot afford school fees (but these are usually insisted upon) so many children stay out of school until the family can afford to send them again. This is clear from the children seen walking along the road carrying wood or herding cattle, and from the Grade 11s stories (SS7b, 2003). Woza Moya helps students with uniforms and this is greatly needed and appreciated.

The Heifer farming project has helped about 20 farmers who have learnt not only to look after chickens (including dealing with sick chickens) but to budget, market and contribute to the cooperative in order to ‘pass on the gift, all while under the pressure of very little money. Those few (3/20) who have not managed the farming are perhaps so disempowered that the pressures of poverty have overwhelmed them. The farming project is not only providing food and income but giving farmers a sense of hope, community and achievement.

**AIDS**

“The HIV/AIDS infection rate, according to the Ixopo Department of Health’s antenatal survey, conducted from April 2003 to August 2003, shows that 47% of pregnant women presenting themselves at the antenatal clinic are HIV-positive. Of the general patients referred for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), 78% tested positive, during this five-month period.” (Woza Moya Annual Report: O43, 2004-2005)

No aspect of development, education or research in South Africa can ignore the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Not only do families suffer the physical, emotional and economic consequences but whole communities are threatened with disintegration. KwaZulu-Natal is the worst affected region in South Africa where the infection rate in some areas is over 50% (Badcock-
Walters, 2001). By 2015 10% of the population will be orphans (Coombe, 2001.) Campbell and Lubben (2004:1) argue that “researchers need to turn their attention to the provision of MSTE for learners that may be unwell, burdened by family responsibilities (or have no family) and/or are emotionally fragile.” Malcolm, while urging educators to reconsider the relevance of science curricula in the context of the pandemic also points out that “science education for economic development and productivity become more pressing.” (Malcolm, 2002a:2)

The other aspect of this, that principals did not mention, is the effect of the pandemic on educators - who are perceived as a high risk group (Bennell, 2003). Educator absenteeism in the Secondary School is already high, and the principal reports continual difficulty in acquiring new teachers.

**Conclusion**

Figure 11.6 Rural homesteads

---

4 Maths Science Technology Education
Education and development rest on community and ‘communities of practice’ that are shaped by demographics, history, economy and worldview. There can be no consideration of appropriate science education without considering: ‘education for whom?’ ‘who decides?’, or indeed ‘which are the relevant communities of practice?’ Much of the international science education research literature concerns itself with abstracted universals: the child, the African child, the teacher, the school, science, scientific literacy. The enormous impacts of HIV/AIDS, rural isolation and poverty are hardly considered in that literature, and neither are the particularities of ‘communities’. It is time that South Africa provides authentic and meaningful science education that takes into account the needs and visions of rural communities and reconceptualises the relationships between ‘school’, ‘science’ and ‘community’.