

APPENDIX 1 - Mpumlanga, Provincial DLA's Report on the Sheba Trust¹, Baberton District, October 1999

The Sheba Siding Tenure and Development Project began after the DLA was contacted concerning a land invasion on state land outside Baberton. Under the guidance of Chief T S Dlamini, the Lomshiyo Tribal Authority began allocating stands on this land in 1991. As the settlement area spread, mine workers from Avgold's Sheba mine began to settle on the land. A farmer in the area, Mr. Jan Nel, also had people invade his property. In 1998, a company was appointed through the Land Reform Support Programme to identify the issues and to try and facilitate a resolution to this matter. A well constituted planning forum with representatives of many of the community structures and other stake holders was created and investigations were conducted as to what could be done with this situation. Towards the end of 1998, a report was compiled, motivating that a tenure project be registered to provide residents at Sheba Siding with security of tenure, whilst at the same time developing infrastructure and economic opportunities for those people who were already on the land. At the same time, the community's elected committee undertook to prevent any further invasions on the land. This report was submitted to the Provincial Prioritisation and Approvals Committee, who approved a budget for the 700 beneficiary households then resident on the land. Following the registration of the project, the DLA's project officer worked with the community's committee to draft terms of reference for the appointment of a planning agent to assist with the planning of the project. A selection day was held, on the 29th of July 1999, to appoint a planning agent. In August 1999, the Provincial Tender Committee appointed Unidev to conduct the planning of the project. A meeting was held, on Saturday the 28th of August 1999, to discuss the contents of the agreement and the principles by which this project would be managed and conducted. A follow up meeting was held on the 2nd of September 1999 to iron out some of the finer points of the agreement. On Sunday the 5th of September 1999, at a mass meeting, the elected committee representing the Sheba Siding community mandated their chairperson, Mr Monday Madolo, to sign an agreement with the DLA.²

¹ Official report to the DLA, Mpumlanga, by project officer, David Manzini, October 1999

² During the first round of interviews I conducted at Sheba, it became apparent that the report cited above bore very little resemblance to the actual situation in which the community found themselves. The discrepancies between the report and the community's experiences (as they related them to me) became increasingly evident as time went on. None of the interviewees (neither in the individual interviews nor in the group discussions) mentioned or recalled any "land invasion". As far as the respondents were concerned, they (or their ancestors) have lived in the area for centuries. Interviewees recalled several meetings with the DLA and appear to have a trusting and amicable relationship with the DLA's project officer. Yet, no one had any idea what the status of their "project" was, nor whether they were likely to obtain access to land/ secure tenure rights. A number of interviewees spoke about the possibility of purchasing land through the Redistribution programme but this is not reflected in the DLA's records. The majority (about 90%) of the interviewees claimed that they had never heard of Unidev. When I visited the community in June 2001, the National Parks Board was threatening a section of the community with eviction. The community did not have access to water, electricity or social services. They lived in informal structures and lacked the financial resources to pay for transport to the nearest town and secondary schools. The vast majority was unemployed and, those who were employed tended to be farm workers receiving wages of less than R200 per month. The most prevalent feelings among interviewees, with regard to land reform, appeared to be frustration and confusion. All interviewees saw land invasions as a legitimate method of land acquisition and supported the highly publicised land invasion that took place near Kuruman at the time.