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LOVING THE LAND THAT FEEDS YOU: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INVESTIGATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN A COMMUNITY FOOD GARDEN

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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Faculty of Humanities

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Department of Anthropology

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Supervisor: Dr. Julia Hornberger

Department: Anthropology

Degree for which this thesis is submitted: Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any university.

Nolizwe Esther Madinga

Date

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Dedicated to Lesley and Lesnar Madinga. Gone too soon, but always remembered and missed.

Chapter 1

Introduction

I was sitting at home one relaxed Saturday afternoon and I was uninterestedly watching a movie. I started paging through a community newspaper and on about the third page my random paging stopped because something had caught my eye. A community-based organisation in Soweto, called Ministry of Helps, has started a vegetable garden and they had celebrated the launch of this garden a week ago. The name of the gardening project was *Vuna.* The name given to the project seemed apt because *vuna* means to reap or harvest in *isiZulu*. Each garden that would be started from henceforth would be called *Vuna*, followed by a number that symbolises the order that the garden was launched. Thus, the garden being launched on that day was called *Vuna* 1. Present at the launch had been a company called Friends of the Soil and they had adopted the gardening project and were going to sponsor it with all that it would need to run successfully. Some of the sponsorship would be in the form of seeds for the produce that is to be planted and gardening equipment like hoes, spades and rakes. Also present was the Ministry of Helps staff, including the workers that are going to work in the garden and some community members. The guests of honour were the children that would benefit from the community garden project. The journalist narrated how the food garden being launched on that day would be the first of many gardens launched by the centre in collaboration with Friends of the Soil. The produce from the garden will be cooked in the kitchen and thrice a week, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, a nutritious meal will be prepared for the children that form part of the Ministry of Helps Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Office. Another portion of the vegetables will be shared with local schools for their feeding scheme. Whatever produce that would remain after this would be shared with

people in the community whose food security is threatened because they cannot get food for one reason or another. Terminally ill people in the community will be some of the beneficiaries in this category. Thus, the community garden project was, according to the article, started as a tool to increase food security in the local community for those community members that for one reason or another could not secure their own food. Next to the article was a photo of the manager of the food garden project and *Vuna* 1 and he posed behind a few bunches of luscious spinach. If these spinach bunches were anything to go by, the vegetables planted on the *Vuna* project will be of a high calibre. The manager had a broad smile on his face – a sign that the manager was proud of the harvest as well as being involved in the project.

I was intrigued by the project because even though there are many food gardens that have been established in Soweto, this was the first time that I had read about a project where the produce from the garden was for somebody else other than the people that have planted it. Soweto also has many cooperatives where the members grow vegetables in a garden and then sell it so that they can make money to sustain themselves and their families. However, this group of workers seemed to be neither selling the produce nor growing it for their consumption. They were working on the gardens for a different reason – to feed other people. This is why I became interested in studying this group of workers. I dialled the number provided at the end of the article and a lady by the name of Muriel was on the receiving end. I introduced myself and explained that I had been looking for a Masters topic and had until then struggled to find one, but that I thought that I had now found an interesting topic. I explained to her that I had not come across a vegetable garden project where the workers planted the produce for others to eat and I wanted to understand why the workers would do

this. I asked Muriel if we could meet and she was willing! I then learned that although Muriel's cell phone number was given as a contact at the end of the article, she does not work at Ministry of Helps. She works for Friends of the Soil and she is the contact that helped Ministry of Helps receive the sponsorship for the gardening project. Muriel is a member of the community and she works closely with the workers from time to time. Therefore, my request for Muriel to introduce me to somebody else from Ministry of Helps that could assist me in my research was a move in the right direction because she is not involved in the day-to-day work in the garden.

The meeting

"*I am running late but I will be there soon. Can you just send me your location on WhatsApp and I will come and pick you up and then we will make our way to the centre. Okay*?" These were the words that came from Muriel on the day that we were finally able to meet. After my discovery of Ministry of Helps and the *Vuna* project, Muriel and I had been in contact for several months, but struggled to coordinate our schedules and as a result, we could not meet. Nevertheless, this day marked the day when my site entry could begin. When she arrived, I noticed that she was heavily pregnant and I empathised with her. She was carrying precious life in the middle of a South African summer. I also started to feel guilty for being a little angry that she was running late. She was wearing a sleeveless blue denim dress that hung freely from her shoulders and she had paired it with a pair of comfortable black sandals and donned a wide-brimmed sunhat that rested casually on her head. Her outfit made her look content and relaxed even though the sun was blaring down violently. It took approximately 10 minutes for us to drive from my house to the centre and on the way Muriel attempted to get

to know me better. "*So what did you say you were studying?"* she probed. I thought that simply saying 'anthropology' would answer her question, but my response only made Muriel more curious. For the rest of the trip I tried to explain what anthropology is.

We drove past familiar places like the well-known *Sechaba* Stores where my great-grandmother would send my cousins and me to buy bread and other household essentials when we spent our school holidays with her. There were still children hanging around the store but I am not sure that they had been sent by their grandparents to buy anything. There was less hurry in their step! The shops we used to buy from have since closed down and new owners had taken over, yet they still had the same familiar items on offer; bread, eggs, cool drinks, cigarettes, meat, mielie meal and my personal favourites, *magwinya*[1] and *kota*[2]. Groups of young people were either leisurely walking around the streets or were *blomming*[3] on a street corner. Taxi drivers headed to town, Chris-Hani Baragwanath Hospital and nearby townships honked desperately for pedestrians walking along or across the main road to get on a taxi and pay for their lift. I was confused as to whether the loud music blaring from the minibus taxis is meant to encourage or deter potential passengers. When we crossed over one of the longest and busiest main roads in Soweto, we were now in an area adjacent to where the centre and *Vuna* 1 is. This area is infamous for violence and theft and is a part of Soweto where poverty is overt. My mother often told me about this area because she attended a high school here. She warned me against coming here. On this Saturday morning, though, there were no traces of crime, but those of us in the know are aware that the many cars parked along the pavement of the main road belonged to men that are playing the illegal

[1] Fat cakes
[2] A quarter loaf of bread stuffed with a variation of fillings, like chips, polony, white liver, russian, egg, sauces and atchaar
[3] Used in local language and taken from the Afrikaans word *blom,* which means to chill.

game of *amadice*[4]*.* Urban myth says that many men have gambled away their homes and even wives trying to make quick cash. Whether this is true or not, nobody can really say.

An automatic gate protected the driveway into the centre, however the gate appeared to not be working as it should and the security guard on duty was responsible for opening and closing the gate. "*Sawubona, sisi",* he greeted Muriel in *isiZulu*. The security guard informed us of an important meeting that was taking place on the premises. He mentioned that a collection of delegates from a certain governmental department were having their meeting in the hall adjacent to the church and we were admonished to stay away from the hall. When the pleasantries and warnings were done we drove further into the yard via a path that is part grass and part soil. The wheels of many cars navigating the centre's drive-way have told the grass where to grow and where not to. The car moved slowly and jaggedly ahead. On the right was the hall which is primarily used by the centre's staff, but was on that day being used for the surreptitious meeting. After driving past an area of open space, Muriel started to slow down by the kitchen that I assumed was used to cook the meals that were served to the children and also some other rooms, that I later found out were used to accommodate some of the staff that stay on the premises. On the left were the toilets and a triple-door garage. The toilets had the words *bo mme* and *bo ntate* painted on the walls of the female and male toilets, respectively. I noted quietly to myself that the toilets could do with a coat of paint and perhaps some anti-bacterial pine gel or Jeyes Fluid because of the smell of urine that wafted in the light afternoon breeze. One of the triple garage doors stood open and there were tables and chairs stored inside. The chairs had the letters MoH, an acronym for Ministry of Helps, inscribed on them with white paint and they stood all around the garage as though there was

[4] A form of illegal gambling where two die are rolled at the same time after the gambler has chosen a number between 2 and 12.

a meeting held there earlier but the attendees did not pack the chairs away. The foldaway tables were placed neatly against one of the walls. The space between the garage and the kitchen, where the car had stopped, is used for parking. The premises were eerily quiet. There were no other cars in the driveway or the makeshift parking lot and besides the security guard at the gate and Muriel and I, there were no people in sight. Muriel spoke into the silence and offered to show me the garden. As we started walking around the garden, I realised that I should have told Muriel that I would have liked to meet the workers when I come for my visit. I took it for granted that the workers would be there when I met Muriel, but the workers do not work on the weekends so they were not there. Although I was not able to meet the workers on that day, I was consoled that I would at least see *Vuna* 1, the first garden that was started for the gardening project.

Three children appeared from around the corner and hurriedly walked towards the car and greeted Muriel and me. Their smiles showed me that they are fond of Muriel and they were bursting with excitement. Their eyes gleamed innocently. Muriel told me that these young ones were some of the children that come to the centre for the meals provided as well as for the after school classes that are run at the centre. They looked at Muriel as if she was the only person in this world that brings happiness into their lives. They were going to watch a play at a nearby hall and for them, seeing Muriel confirmed that the outing would indeed take place. Muriel explained to me that outings like these form part of the curriculum for the children at MoH and serve to encourage and motivate the children, and that this particular group of children that were going to watch a play were members of the drama group. Muriel told me that she had purposefully chosen the play because it is being showcased in Soweto and would show the children that they too can be successful artists one day.

I then got a tour of the garden: I did not expect the garden to be as simplistic as it was. I had made the assumption that a garden from which a few hundred children can be fed surely ought to be more specialised with the latest machinery. Yet, the truth is that *Vuna* 1 was an uncomplicated garden. The vegetables that were being grown were potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, spinach, lettuce, beetroot, cabbage and a variety of herbs. The vegetables that were being grown are the kind that one can find being cooked in kitchens all over Soweto every day. There was also some clever use of old and reusable materials, like tyres. Muriel explained how the workers use everyday materials to make the garden organic and affordable to run. Tyres that can no longer be used for cars were used as seedling beds. A few tyres were stacked so that the hole is in the middle and that hole was filled with soil. These makeshift gardens were used to grow the seedlings before they are transplanted into the soil. The workers had also used the sacks from which some fruit and vegetables come as a cover for birds, rats and other pests. There was a big drum at the base of the garden and it was covered with a wooden slate. This drum is where the “tea” for the plants is made, Muriel explained. She told me that the tea was a mixture of water, cow and chicken dung, old leaves and other organic material. This mixture was used as a fertiliser for the vegetables that are grown. Muriel told me of the success that they workers have had with the “tea” and she was especially pleased that the mixture is organic.

After Muriel had shown me around the garden we paused in a shady patch of the garden and we talked. Muriel explained that there were no workers on site today because they do not work on Saturdays. The working hours are Monday to Friday 8:00 to 17:00. The community gardening project had approximately 15 workers. Some of these were permanent staff and others were volunteers. The permanent staff got a salary every month, while the volunteers

got a stipend when they were called into work. Muriel described both the salary and the stipend as a small token of appreciation to the workers since they work so hard for the beneficiaries of the community food garden. The produce from the garden was used to cook the meals for the children and it was also given as parcels to the children's families and community members. The workers did not take the produce home, neither did they sell it. When Muriel told me this I realised that the situation at the Ministry of Helps community food garden was a conundrum. If the workers on the community food garden did not take the food that they grow in the garden home but also did not sell it, then one would assume that they were working on the project for the money that they got as payment. Yet Muriel had made it clear to me that the salary and stipend that they offer is little. Why then did the workers work in the Ministry of Helps community food gardening project?

Problem statement

The workers do not consume the food that they grow and they also do not sell the produce. Muriel has also told me that the workers get money that is below the average minimum wage in South Africa. Then, why are they involved in a urban agriculture project? The literature that I have read suggests that people will get involved in urban agriculture for their personal food security or monetary gain, however, this was not the case here at the Ministry of Helps community food garden project. It is from this puzzle that I set out to start my research.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the experience of working and volunteering in a community food garden project in Soweto. Specifically, I ask what motivates the workers to work in the garden even though there are no obvious benefits to being part of the project. By obvious benefit, I mean that the workers do not get paid an amount that is perceived to be worth their efforts or do not get paid at all. Furthermore, the workers do not get the produce from the garden to take home or to sell. This research will contribute to broader research which discusses the value of work, especially the kind of value which goes beyond the idea of monetary value in relationship to the very optimistic literature about urban gardening (and people because it addresses the question of why people do work that has little to no perceived benefit to them or to those in their lives). Here I am particularly interested in theoretical discussions of urban agriculture, food security and volunteering.

Literature Review

In the literature review I will be looking closely at literature that discusses urban agriculture and the different types and uses that there are for this practice. I will also study the closely aligned motivators to being involved in urban agriculture, such as food security. I will end off the review by discussing volunteerism. The purpose of this literature review is to highlight that although urban agriculture is a broadly researched topic the focus for that literature is on food security being ascertained as a result of partaking in the activity or the monetary gain from selling the produce. Also, the literature consulted portrays volunteerism as having certain benefits, which the review will cover, whereas the research I have conducted has

revealed other benefits to volunteering. Thus the purpose of this literature review is to draw attention to the way that the *Vuna* project is differently run and highlights the space in the literature to explore this.

Urban agriculture

Urban agriculture has been lauded in many publications for having several benefits (see for example Armar-Klemesu, 2000). In fact, the only sectors that find urban agriculture problematic or are in opposition to it are urban planning, public health and environmental agencies. These sectors have tried to discredit urban agriculture by suggesting that this trade will introduce agrochemicals into the land and water system. However, many city dwellers across the world have ignored this warning and have rather focussed on urban agriculture's ability to assist with, resolve or help cope with an array of development problems (Mougeot, 2000). At the forefront of these development problems are urban poverty and food insecurity. In addition, urban agriculture may potentially improve food supply, the health conditions of those that consume the produce, the local economy, social integration and environmental sustainability. The practice of urban agriculture practice is especially beneficial to poorer households because they can spend up to 85% of their already meagre income on food. With urban agriculture these households can start and run their own gardens and may use the money that they would have used for food on other household expenditures. Thus, urban agriculture favours social improvement (Osrini *et al*., 2013).

Urban agriculture includes farming activites that are carried out in built up areas that have some space available. These activities may include keeping livestock, such as cattle, sheep,

goats, pigs and fowl (Mwalukasa, 2000). The most common type of urban agriculture is growing crops in the backyard and around buildings, but can also include cultivation on community and public lands as well as parks (Bryld, 2003). Some farmers will make use of unused privately owned land. Urban farmers in southern Africa will most likely squat, borrow or make use of user rights to access cultivatable land for urban farming. 'Off-plot' food production is the most common form of land cultivation because in overcrowded cities many households do not have the space to plant where they live. This is especially the case for low income houses (Crush *et al*., 2011). Urbanisation in Africa is happening at much slower paces when compared to other parts of the world and because of this in these parts there are still large tracts of vacant land in the cities. In these instances residents of the city are most likely to use the vacant land for raising livestock for home consumption. Conversely, urban residents in North American and European cities mostly practice urban agriculture by planting fruit and vegetables in backyards and community gardens (Nugent, 2000).

Cities are designed to offer economic and social development opportunities, however these opportunities are only actualised if the cities are managed well. Cities are crucial points for economic growth, innovation and employment because cities are where a considerable majority of modern productive activities converge in the developing world and where most of employment opportunities ought to be found (Cohen, 2006). Yet these ideals of the city do not always materialise and as a result many city dwellers are left in poverty and are food insecure. Thus, in the face of a failing economic system in the city, urban agriculture has gained popularity as a viable intervention strategy for poor urban residents to gain extra income when they sell the produce and then be able to purchase the food that they need to survive. Also, urban agriculture makes it possible for the urban poor to reduce their reliance

on money as an income and instead grow their own food and increase their access to food by consuming what they produce (Armar-Klemesu, 2000). Therefore, to many urban dwellers urban agriculture is a survival strategy that provides them with money to buy other necessary household supplies or provides them with food that they cannot buy as they have limited access to money. On the occasion that the produce that was meant to be consumed is too numerous to be eaten it may be sold. Due to the link between urban agriculture and subsiding household income most African urban agriculturists are women. Women are traditionally responsible for household food provision and it is estimated that 65% of urban farmers worldwide are women (Osrini *et al*., 2013). The most frequently grown crops are maize, beans, cassava, rice, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, sorghum and yams (Foeken, nd).

Food insecurity is a state when people do not have or have enough of nutritional and safe food. Food insecurity is also a condition where people cannot acquire acceptable food in a socially acceptable way. The food insecure tend to be people of a lower socio-economic status and have and spend less money on food (Allen & Wilson, 2005). This explanation describes some people that live in the city. As a result, urban agricultural gardens may be seen as a means to make households in the city less food insecure. These gardens are known to increase a family's vegetable intake for both adults and children. The availability of vegetables makes it less necessary for people to worry that the food in their house will run out before money becomes available to buy more. Moreover, people involved in urban garden initiatives believe that these gardens help the health of their family in one way or another. Physical health benefits and economic benefits were reported more often (Carnet *et al*., 2012). However, urban gardens are not always a viable option for some city dwellers. Sometimes communities and organisations will galvanise and start a community urban garden. These urban gardens

are in some cities under threat from vandalism and it is unlikely that new ones will be established. For many low-income communities, these gardens are far, as this is the only available tract of land, and thus require transportation to travel to them. Sometimes food insecure communities will not participate in urban community gardens for various other reasons. The two main reasons for non-participation, despite being food insecure, are the inaccessibility of the gardens and a lack of a fit between community members and the garden. Community members will sometimes not participate in community gardens because they don't know how or where to participate, the garden is not in their area, they didn't know what the programme was, the programme reached capacity before they could enrol, they were not eligible and the cost of the programme. Other reasons are time constraints due to other commitments, interest, needs and health (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013). As a result some people choose to start gardens in their own backyard, no matter how small the space (Gray *et al*., 2014). This highlights that there are other outlying factors that may hinder the food security of urban communities. As a result, ensuring the food security of the urban poor requires more than merely establishing community or home gardens.

Urban poverty can be especially debilitating because unlike the rural poor, urban dwellers are unable to obtain and produce their own basic needs such as water, shelter and food. These needs are commercialised and highly reliant on a citizen's ability to make money and use it to pay for these services. The urban poor are as a result more vulnerable when compared to their rural counterparts because they rely more heavily on money to help them fulfil their daily needs (Gallaher *et al*., 2013). De Bon and colleagues (2010) differentiate urban farmers into four groups. These categories are home subsistence farmers, multi-cropping peri-urban farmers, family-type commercial farmers and entrepreneurs. Home subsistence farmers, as

the name suggests, grow crops for the purpose of consumption in their homes. In other words, these farmers grow the produce in order to feed their families. Multi-cropping peri-urban farmers also grow crops to be consumed at home, but some of the produce is sold for an income for other household needs. The third category, family-type commercial farmers, solely grow crops so that they can be sold and the money used for subsistence within the household. The final group of farmers are entrepreneurs and their objective in urban agriculture is to obtain an additional income and for leisure. This type of farmer does not need the money to feed their family, but rather uses the money for wants that may come up and also indulge in farming because they enjoy it. In this fashion, urban farmers practice urban agriculture to feed their families, to sell the produce in order to have money and be able to purchase other needs or because the farmers enjoy farming.

The types of urban agriculture that are practiced can be divided into three broad groups; micro, meso and macro. Micro urban agriculture can be done on building roofs, backyards and pavements. These types of gardens may be public, private or corporate owned. The second category, meso, are gardens that are a bit bigger than micro gardens. They are community gardens, individual or collective gardens and urban parks. These are run as private gardens on private land or are wholly public owned. The third and final type are macro urban gardens and these are big scale gardens aimed at commercial sale of produce. Dairy farms, orchards, nurseries and greenhouses are examples of this kind of garden. All these gardens are privately or commercially owned (Pearson *et al*., 2010).

When urban residents become involved in agriculture in the city it is not always because they are looking to feed their families or make money to support their families. Similarly to those that partake in urban agriculture as a favourite past time, there are those that see urban

agriculture as an opportunity to be social activists. Some partake from an environmentalist approach related to watching plants grow and escaping some of the unpleasant features of the city, like the smell of traffic (Flachs, 2013). Thus, according to Flachs (2013) this group of urban farmers do not fall into any of the categories outlined. There is also a movement in urban farming where individuals are taking it upon themselves to take on responsibilities that were previously thought to be of the government's, like cleaning up the city's spaces that are notoriously known for being dirty and unkempt. In this way, a committed and voluntary group of citizens form part of the urban community and run community gardens where the target groups are local residents, migrants and children (Rosol, 2012). These are alternative reasons that are mentioned in the literature, however, these still do not answer the research question that I seek to answer.

Urban gardens that are run by community members are also perceived to have several health and community benefits. Community gardens are reported to increase access to food and improve nutrition. These gardens increase physical activity and improve the mental health of gardeners. The gardens also benefit the communities that they are run from by promoting social health and cohesion. These advantages are reported even against a backdrop of insecure land tenure and access, official resistance, concerns about water and soil contamination and a lack of awareness and understanding by community members and decision-makers (Wakefield *et al*., 2007). Unfortunately, there are sometimes internal problems that cause a rift between workers. For instance, there are those among the workers that do not work as they should and do not pull their own weight. This puts strain on the team and may cause conflict (Firth *et al*., 2011).

Community gardens foster social cohesion because the workers conduct their work in communal spaces where other community members can approach them about their work or their lives, and the workers see community members partake in their daily activities. Therefore, farm work, which can sometimes be isolated is done amongst people (Kingsley & Townsend, 2006). Community gardens bring together people with a common purpose and the activities around these gardens, such as growing the produce, cooking and eating of the produce allow people of different backgrounds to interact. In order for community gardens to work there has to be individuals that are willing to volunteer (Firth *et al*., 2011).

Volunteering

Akintola (2010:2) defines volunteering as involving committing time and energy to provide a service that benefits someone, society or the community without expecting financial or material rewards. The role that volunteers play in organisations is vast. Volunteers are believed to solve social and community problems, build social solidarity, change public policy, help to redress social wrongs through organised citizen groups and generally improve the quality of life of communities and nations (Hodgkinson, 2000). In fact, volunteers are considered to be so influential that they are replacing paid staff members in some organisations. However, the opposite is also happening where paid staff members are replacing volunteers. There are several reasons for this interchange in roles: budgetary changes, professionalization of an organisation, incorporating the volunteers and increased sophistication of volunteer roles (Handy *et al*., 2008). There are certain demographic characteristics that make people more likely to volunteer. According to Shye (2009), people are most likely to volunteer if they are of a higher education, have a higher income and are

more religious. Volunteers, being more likely to be educated, earn an income and/or be religious may engage in volunteer activites to make friends since their material needs are taken care of. Then again, undertaking in volunteering activites makes it easier to meet people and thus increases the probability of making new friends (Prouteau & Wolff, 2008).

Similar to the latter authors, Stebbins (2009) argues that volunteers are engaging in a leisurely activity which they have had the option to reject or accept on their own terms. He maintains that people volunteer in three ways: casual, serious and project-based. Casual leisure type of volunteering is a relatively short-lived pleasurable activity that requires little to no special training to enjoy it. Serious leisurely volunteering is the pursuit of a volunteer activity that is interesting and fulfilling for the participant in order for them to find a career. This type of volunteering is sometimes referred to as career volunteering. Project-based leisure activities are short term, occasional and infrequent activities that are done in the volunteer's spare time. This activity includes a temporary effort to complete a project or fulfil a responsibility.

Volunteering affords volunteers the opportunity to contribute to their community and establish connections with a social cause that they wish to be involved in. There is also a connection between the reasons why people volunteer and their stage of life. Older volunteers are motivated to give their time because of service concerns, while younger people volunteer out of relationship concerns (Omoto *et al*., 2000). However, this is not to say that people volunteer for non-monetary reasons only. Some people volunteer because of the monetary reward that this activity affords them. Bassous (2015) found that there is a correlation between age and motivation for volunteering. Simply put, the younger the volunteer, the more important monetary incentives were in their motivation level. This was in comparison to older people where monetary incentives were not deemed as important in

order for them to volunteer. Similarly, male volunteers were more motivated by financial rewards than their female counterparts. By the same token, volunteers that are offered a stipend for the work that they do report higher levels of benefit, however, this positive relationship between stipend and perceived benefit is reportedly lower for people that are older. This cohort tend to be involved in volunteering activities for more non-material reasons (Morrow-Howell *et al*., 2009).

Volunteers that get monetary compensation for the work that they are doing are stipend-paid volunteers. Stipend volunteers receive some financial compensation below fair market value and engage in formal work service activities to help people to whom they have no personal connection (Tschirhart *et al*., 2001:422). Volunteers that work in organisations where they are offered a stipend do not always start working in these institutions because of the monetary value linked to the work. Albeit that getting some form of payment, especially in a country rife with poverty like South Africa, is a contributing factor to people seeking out employment. A study conducted by Hunter and Ross (2013) found that there were several contributing factors that lead to volunteers seeking out stipend-paying volunteering posts. The first of these is a love for children and/or community orientation. These volunteers loved being around the people that they were helping through their volunteering. In volunteering posts where training and career-related experience was given it was found that volunteers were motivated. Volunteers were more motivated if they found that the type of training they got was linked to the career that they wish to pursue in the future. Unemployment had also propelled volunteers to seek out opportunities in another avenue. When volunteers could not find work they decided that it would be better to do something instead of being unproductive at home. Needless to say there are volunteers that actively try to find volunteering posts that

pay a stipend because they need the money. Although this motivation was not readily divulged by many participants in the abovementioned study. There are however, stipend-paid volunteers who insist that they did not get involved in an organisation for the money because the money that they get is not enough to pay for all their basic necessities. (Hunter & Ross, 2013).

There is a dispelling view that stipend-paid workers are not the solution to the staffing needs for non-profit organisations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This region has a high rate of unemployment and a stipend from an informal agreement between the volunteer and organisation does not mitigate the effects of this scourge. Thus, uncertainty is at the heart of the economic insecurity that many volunteers voice (Maes, 2010: 867). Even though volunteers are given a stipend there are other significant opportunity costs that a volunteer, particularly in poor communities, can incur and at this point the volunteer's ability or willingness to place their community's needs before their own may be weakened by the state of poverty that they find themselves in (Glenton *et al*., 2010).

The literature reviewed highlights urban agriculture as a means to secure food security for the individuals that take part in this activity. Furthermore, the activity can, according to the literature, be defined clearly into different systems depending on how the farming is done. Also, volunteering is seen as an activity that people do and get no monetary remuneration. However, the case at MoH is such that the gardening project is run by people that have no benefit to the produce. The workers do not consume the produce, nor do they make money from it. in fact, there is no money generated from the planting of these vegetables. In terms of volunteering, some of those that work on the garden are employed full time while others volunteer for a stipend as and when they are called to come and help. Others volunteer to

help the project to progress because there are community members that benefit from it. Another group volunteer because their studies require them to do so. Thus, one can see that the *Vuna* project is organised in a way that is different from the norm, and this is the reason why this site should be studied in detail.

Method

> "Through ethnography, researchers can find that gardens are far more complicated intersections of socioeconomic diversity. Because, it both demonstrates the anthropologist's commitment to the community and provides more time for qualitative research, volunteering as a gardener can be an extremely useful tool to investigate the ways that community gardens are used" (Flachs, 2013: 99).

In order for me to study the way that the workers work at *Vuna*, I have chosen ethnography as my research method. An ethnographic approach will allow me to view and be a part of the lives of the workers. I can do this through observations and interviews (Lewis & Russell, 2011). An ethnographic approach helped me interpret and describe the symbolic and contextual meanings of the everyday practices in the natural setting of the research participants. In order to understand how the workers work in the community gardens I observed how they create the reality of their lives at work.

The first phase of my field work was negotiating and gaining entry into the site. Reeves (2010) argues that the central element to gaining access to a research site is the gatekeeper. These can be both formal or informal. In my case, it was a formal gatekeeper, Muriel being a part of the company that sponsors the community food garden project. Thus, Muriel was highly

influential in helping me gain rapport with the workers because she was the one that introduced me to the workers.

The second phase of my field work included observations. I started by broadly observing the way that the workers interacted amongst themselves when they were at work. Initially I observed everything that happened on the site while I was there. Gradually, as it became clearer to me what I wanted my research to hone in on I started observing specific happenings. The reason I chose this initial style of observations is because I was still trying to find my way around the place, register the faces, voices and learn the names and discover how a work day on the *Vuna* gardens progresses (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). While I observed I made field notes, however, as the field work process progressed and I became more of a participant than an observer it became difficult to make detailed field notes during my observation. In these instances I would make rough notes and at the end of every day in the field I would get home and collate my rough notes and write descriptive entries and also make voice recordings of the events of the day. Participant observation thus required me as the researcher to be alert to the activities that were happening around me so that I could later record them in depth (De Clerk *et al*., 2011).

The next and final phase were a set of interviews. I conducted interviews with seven of the members of the garden project. Four are male, while three of them are female. The ages of both the males and females range from 25 to 45 years. In the interviews I asked the workers questions related to the work on the garden and especially focussed on questions about their reasons for working on the project. I also asked the workers about previous jobs that they have had and how they differed. The questions were geared at finding out what their perceptions were about their current role on the *Vuna* project. For purposes of this research

all participant names, the project name, the names of the areas that the gardens are in and school names where the gardens are based have been changed to protect the identity of all those involved. All identifying information has been changed as agreed upon on the informed consent form.

Even though I did not interview all the workers on the project, I approached all workers for consent because I would be observing them while they worked. All the workers agreed to be observed. This was in line with the ethical obligation to make participants aware of the type of information that I would like to gather from them, why I wanted to gather the information, what purpose the information will serve, how the participants are to participate in the research and how it will directly or indirectly affect them (Kumar, 2011). The consent obtained from all the participants was entirely voluntary.

I conducted the interviews with the seven participants on a day when they agreed that they would be able to each take a break from their work duties for the duration of their interview. The interviews were conducted on site one of the gardens that the workers were tending to. According to Gill and colleagues (2008), interviews with participants should be conducted in a place where the participants feel comfortable. The workers are used to the gardens that they work in and were therefore comfortable in that place. Before starting with each interview I reminded each participant that their participation is voluntary and that they could at any time stop and refrain from further participation in the research. I also requested their permission to record the conversation that we were about to have. In other words, I reminded the participants of what I had promised to do when I asked for their consent to participate in the study. I recorded the interviews using a video recorder so that I could capture the intricacies of unspoken gestures and facial expressions. I later transcribed the recordings and

watched them for the same non-verbal cues that I had hoped to capture by video recording them. These recordings were then saved securely in a place where only I had access to.

The method that I chose for the interviews is a semi structured or in depth interviewing. Semi structured interviews should be a scheduled activity and this is why I asked the participants beforehand for a day that I would be able to conduct the interviews with them. The questions are open ended but follow a general script that covers a list of topics. The interview guide made it easy for me to keep track of what we were going to cover but also allowed for some flexibility for us to pursue new avenues of interest (Goldman, 2012). The interview guide is an instrument that the researcher may also use to make sure that none of the important issues are left out of the discussion. The researcher pays close attention to what the participants are saying and responds with follow-up questions and probes that help them to collect more information. Although I followed a script guide I remained alert to any questions that were not answered and required me to probe further. Probes are useful in stimulating the participants to share more information or to clarify something that they had shared but was unclear (Bernard, 2006). These kinds of interviews may take between 45 minutes and two hours to complete, however, this is dependent on the responsiveness of the participant (De Clerk *et al.,* 2011). Case in point; my interview with Musa was much shorter than the other interviews. Musa is generally quieter when compared to the other workers and this meant that I had to probe deeper and ask more clarifying questions.

I chose this method of interviewing because these interviews were going to be the only opportunity that I was going to get to ask in depth questions to the participants. Other than the semi structured interview I also asked informal questions while I was observing and participating with the workers. I especially used this method at the beginning of my

participant observation when I was getting to know the workers and also learning about the way that they work. When the workers responded to my questions I would find a way to excuse myself from the work I was helping with and write down what they had shared with me. In some instances it was difficult to stop working and excuse myself to go write down what I had just discovered so I would rely on my memory and record this interaction at the end of the day with my field notes.

As an African and resident of Soweto I had to constantly be aware of how my similarities to the participants and closeness to the site could potentially skew my research findings. One way that I attempted to minimise familiarity is by reminding myself that although I share some traits in common with the team members and are familiar with the field site I need to assume the role of a researcher that does not share those traits. In this way I was able to observe situations that are mundane to me but were fruitful for my research. On the other hand, I used the commonalities that I have with the participants to get insider perspective into their lives. One of the ways that I managed to do this is by communicating in isiZulu and seSotho with them. This was sometimes challenging to me because I speak English more frequently and more fluently, however, it was important for me to communicate with the participants in a way that they will understand and shows that I respect them.

Study limitations

Although I am an African and a resident of Soweto, just like the participants, I am also a graduate, budding academic and from a different part of Soweto. These factors thus contribute to how I am viewed by the participants and to me being an outsider. The belief

that I am different or not part of the group is evident in the way that the workers did not think that I would be able to handle the difficult work that they do in the garden. Laughter at my attempts to do the work that they do during the work day and questions that basically ask "*Are you sure you will cope?*" were common when I first negotiated entry into the site. Similarly, my presence within the group may have altered the way that the workers interact with each other and how they do their work. The workers were aware that I was doing research and could have put on a certain kind of behaviour, which they thought I wanted to observe and document for my research. Another limitation to the study is that I may have swayed the decision to let me onto the site by offering to help in the gardens. There is plenty work that needs to be done in the gardens to make sure that the beneficiaries are provided for, thus an extra pair of hands that asks for no remuneration whatsoever will definitely be appreciated, as was the case in my research.

Background

Ministry of Helps is a non-profit organisation that was established in 2002 and officially registered as a non-profit organisation in 2003. A board of seven members that are also beneficiaries direct the centre. There are 45 people that work in varying positions at Ministry of Helps and a retired Lutheran priest, Rev. Pooe, manages them. There are 400 children that benefit from the activities at Ministry of Helps, which include homework supervision, poetry and drama classes. The centre management chose the children because they are orphaned and vulnerable, their parents are terminally ill or have died from AIDS-related diseases. Some of the children were referred to the centre by the schools they attend and Ministry of Helps

has opened their doors to them. These are the children that receive a meal on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

When the project was initially launched, it was estimated that the produce from the first garden would need to feed 300 children, but the number has since increased to 400 due to the growing demand for support for orphaned and vulnerable children. However, when the garden project was launched it did not have the sponsorship of Friends of the Soil and as a result it was not as successful as it is to date. To keep up with the need from the community the centre has had to acquire more land and start more gardens. To date there are 11 gardens; and 10 of these are in the same neighbourhood, while one is about 7kms from Ministry of Helps. The first garden is on the Ministry of Helps grounds, three of the gardens are on the premises of high schools and four are on primary school grounds. The remaining three are at a home-based care centre, an old age home and a community hall. The gardens are named *Vuna* 1 to *Vuna* 11.

Ministry of Helps has its roots in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church has three ministries that they base their service on. These are the Evangelism, Spiritualism and Diakonate Ministries. Ministry of Helps is part of the Diakonate Ministry, which is primarily involved in the ministry of serving the community, poor people and young people across the world. The organisation is Christian and is run based on the values of Christianity, like fellowship, service and care for the less fortunate. The majority of the Ministry o Helps staff are Lutherans and fellowship together. There are daily morning devotions that form part of the work day.

Other than Friends of the Soil, the garden project has managed to secure other sponsors. These include the South African Council of Churches, AIDS Consortium, HIVSA and The

Department of Agriculture. The South African Council of Churches is an inter-denominational forum with 36 member churches and organisations. They are involved in the advocacy, care and empowerment of their members (The South African Council of Churches, 2015). AIDS Consortium is the largest non-governmental organisation in South Africa. Their aim is to strengthen communities and all sectors to stop the HIV/AIDS epidemic by having an impact on the lives of vulnerable communities whose vulnerability puts them at a higher risk of contracting HIV (The AIDS Consortium, 2017). HIVSA is a non-profit organisation that empowers individuals, community workers and organisations by developing their capacity and resilience to effectively addressing socioeconomic and health issues in the context of their HIV and AIDS burden. Their vision is to create an HIV free generation (HIVSA, 2017). Without these sponsors, it would be impossible for Ministry of Helps to manage to support the beneficiaries.

There are different groups that provide labour on the gardening project. When discussing the collective group they will be called workers and this category is determined based on the premise that regardless of which group a person falls into their responsibility is to work in the gardens. The first group comprises of those that receive a stable income at the end of the month as a result of working on the *Vuna* project, and they work in the gardens from Monday to Friday. All of these workers started by receiving a stipend but have gradually progressed to receiving a salary. Some of the workers were hesitant to disclose to me how much they earn, however, one worker openly told me that the workers on the *Vuna* project earn R1000.00 per month. Friends of the Soil pay these workers and they each hold a contract with Ministry of Helps and Friends of the Soil. Each worker in this category gets a garden that they have to assume the role of caretaker for. The majority of these workers are those that started working

on the garden project when it was primarily a HIV/AIDS support group. These workers are locals of Soweto and based on being part of the founding members of the community gardening project we know that some are HIV positive. For purposes of this study, this group of workers will be referred to as employees.

Then, there are those workers that are volunteers and work sporadically in the gardens. These workers are called in as the need arises, to cite an instance, when new land has to be prepared for planting. These workers receive a stipend, which is much less than the salary offered to the gardening project employees. Although most of the volunteers were hesitant to tell me how much the stipend is I was informed by one of them that it is R300.00 for every four weeks of work that they do. In this study this group of workers will be referred to as volunteers because they do not have a contract with Ministry of Helps, therefore are not bound to come to work when they are requested to. Furthermore, this group of workers identify as and call themselves volunteers. The volunteers are provided with lunch and transport to and from work on those days that they are working on the *Vuna* project. The transport, food and stipend are paid for by Friends of the Soil. Similar to the employees the volunteers are also given a garden that they are responsible for during the time when it is being established. In other words, during the time when the land is being cleared, rocks and other debris removed and the soil prepared into beds where the seedlings will be planted. Once a garden is set up, an employee then takes over the upkeep of the garden because the volunteers are not always there to do so. As a result, one employee may end up managing more than one garden. Maintenance of the gardens includes weeding, reaping, planting and watering. In this study, this group of workers will be called volunteers and this classification is based on this group of

workers offering their services, i.e. working in the gardens, without stable remuneration and also reporting for duty only during times of high demand.

There is yet another group of people that work on the *Vuna* gardening project. The global Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission and universities in Germany and the United States of America provide the bulk of these workers. They are normally young people that are taking a gap year after school or university students that are coming to Ministry of Helps as part of the practical learning for their course. These foreign workers are funded by the organisations that have sent them. The organisations pay them a stipend, and pay for their living and travelling costs. These workers normally stay in South Africa, specifically in Soweto, for a year and then return to their countries. In this study, these workers will be referred to as external unpaid workers. This description is based on the workers not being from Soweto or South Africa and not being paid by Ministry of Helps or Friends of the Soil. This group of workers also work on other offices within Ministry of Helps, so they are not always working in the gardens with the employees and volunteers.

The other people that assist on the gardens are walk-ins from the community. This group of workers want to make a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries of the project, or are looking for an activity that can keep them occupied, or are seeking employment within Ministry of Helps and are hopeful that volunteering will lead to that. They usually are from the area and know the ways that *Vuna* and Ministry of Helps has been an aid to people in the community. These are people that are aware of the work that is done at the centre. Just like the young external unpaid workers the community members help in the garden project, in the kitchen and on other projects where their help may be needed. However, unlike the

external unpaid workers, the locals do not stay on the centre premises because they live nearby. These walk-in workers will be known as local unpaid workers.

Chapter outline

After spending a few months in the field I found out that there were three overarching reasons that the workers, whether employed, volunteering, external or local unpaid workers, worked on the *Vuna* project. These three reasons are the nature of the work that is done on the project and money, food and social cohesion.

I will cover the first reason, the nature of the work and money, in the first chapter under a few subheadings. The subheadings under the nature of the work are working in the community, the work done on the project being therapeutic, teamwork, following the Christian ethos, learning on the job and the relative safety of the job when compared to other jobs. Under the money subsection I will discuss the money that sponsors pay for the external unpaid workers to come and work in South Africa, the paradox of the volunteers not getting paid enough money but that amount being better than nothing, the employees' ability to provide for their families with the regular salary that they get and finally, the hope for a better pay or job that even the meagre stipend provides for the volunteers and internal paid workers.

In the next chapter I will focus solely on food. The main objective of the project is providing food for beneficiaries in the community. This is the first sub point in this section. The workers are motivated to remain on the project because they are providing food for other people. Other than the food that the workers grow the workers eat together and this helps them to

create a strong bond amongst themselves as a team. There are some days when the workers get food while they are working and this is a motivating factor for them working on the project. While eating may seem to only benefit the body in the form of nutrition, this activity also benefits the workers because as they eat they share their life experiences and any problems that they may have. Thus, this activity of eating also is like a counselling session.

The final chapter speaks to social cohesion as being another reason why the workers are motivated to work on the project. In this chapter I highlight the different measures that the team takes to make sure that they work cohesively together. I also focus on the role that going to same church plays in making them support each other outside of working hours. The role that the community plays in supporting the project is also brought into the spotlight and I will discuss this further.

Chapter 2

Money and work

The first time I went to the centre I was with Muriel. The second time I went there I walked through the centre gates on my own. Muriel does not work at the centre so she was not there, as a result I did not know anybody at the centre. However, I quickly forgot that the people at the centre on that day were strangers because of the way that they greeted me and treated me. A simple walk from the gate to Rev. Pooe's office meant that I was greeted by about ten people. All of them greeted me, smiled and asked if I had been assisted. The centre management and staff treat all people kindly because they know that most people that come to the centre are either looking for help with a difficult situation in their lives or are going to be providing help to the people that need help. Regardless of the reason that you go to the centre you are welcomed and made to feel at home.

I spent a few months in the field with the workers from *Vuna* and I discovered that money and the nature of the work that is done at MoH are some of the reasons why the workers are motivated to work on the garden project even though there are no obvious benefits to being part of the project. In this chapter, I will delve into detail about how money and work shape the workers will to work on the project, despite the challenges that they face at work.

This is how things work around here

The most basic motivating factor for the workers to be part of the project is the nature of the work that they do on the *Vuna* project. For starters, they work in the local community, which means that they work in a space that they are familiar with and are therefore comfortable in.

The close proximity of their homes to their place of work makes going to work every day less stressful on the workers. This is because, unlike a lot of employed people in Soweto, these workers do not have to commute to their place of work which is in a far off suburb and requires them to take bus, train or taxi rides to get there. The length of the commutes requires employees to leave their homes before dawn but they only arrive just in time for the workday to begin and they only get back home after dark. Furthermore, it is expensive to commute to these places and an employee may spend a large portion of their salary on the travelling costs. With the *Vuna* workers getting to the work site for the day does not require a long commute or money, as my fieldwork journal entry shows:

> *29 July 2016*
>
> *Today was my first official day in the field, in that I was fully involved with the workers in the garden. Before today, I simply observed how they do things in the gardens. We met at MoH and we changed into our work clothes and started with our walk to Thandabantu Home, our site for now. Initially, everybody treated me like a stranger and a visitor. This is slowly changing because I am making a conscious effort to be involved in the project. During the walk to Thandabantu Home I was privy into a little bit of the workers' lives. For example, I know that Mam' Thandi knows many people in the area because they meet at the local tavern. She made sure that she told her friends that she would see them later because it was Friday and the weekend was beginning. The walk lasted for ten minutes and before long we were already at the site.*

The workers are relaxed and are familiar with the area that they work in and the people, and this helps them not feel alienated from their work. As a result they are able to perform their work with a sense of ownership. The workers also do not need to spend money for them to

get to their place of work. If the workers have to work on a garden that is too far for them to walk, such as Legae Hall, then they are picked up from the centre, dropped at the garden, and then fetched once their shift is over. If a worker is lucky enough to live enroute from the garden to the centre then they are dropped off at home or very close to their home.

Secondly, many of the workers have reported working in the gardens as therapeutic for them. Working on the project allows the workers to take time out from their sometimes stressful lives and helps them to temporarily forget about their problems, but also helps them to have the strength to face their problems. One worker, when asked why they were working on the *Vuna* project said:

> *"It was not my dream to be a farmer, but I fell in love when I got into farming. I fell in love with farming because it helped me and gave me a chance to have one on one with myself and with God. Especially when I am at my place… I am alone. I plan, I think a lot about my life. Personally, I think the profession of being a farmer is the route I want to take. In the next five years I see myself as a professional farmer with my own land. Big companies like Pick 'n Pay and Shoprite coming to me and I am supplying them"* – Gift

Gift is an employee and he receives a regular salary for his work at Ministry of Helps. He lives alone but is also responsible for looking after his family that lives in another part of Soweto. He is able to do this with the salary that he gets, even though he has expressed that the salary is not enough. Of all the workers, Gift is one worker that has expressed wanting a profitable future within the farming sector.

When the gardeners are not working in groups to help establish a new garden they are responsible for their own gardens. This means that they spend a lot of their time at work on

their own, in pairs or at most in threes. This work can be lonely because of the isolation, but it can also be a time for reflection and introspection. The workers view their work as therapeutic instead of lonely and this motivates them to work on the project. Some of the workers have reported that they sing (mostly gospel) while they work, pray or think about different issues that are prevalent in their lives. These activites help pass the time. Their work allows them to resolve issues that they may be struggling with because they do not have the regular interaction and interruptions that people who work with others have. One worker, who had previously been very stressed with the circumstances in her life, shared the calming effects that working with the soil has on her.

> *"If it was up to me, I would not go and be cursed at a casino [where she previously worked] or anything else. I would sit with the plants. I would prefer working here"* – Zandile.

Although Zandile was still a volunteer she expressed that she preferred working on the gardening project. She compared her previous job in a busy casino with her current volunteer role, and has found the latter to afford her peace of mind.

People who work would not most easily describe one of the benefits of their job as being therapeutic. In the absence of a preferred job workers would rather have a job that pays them a little money but also affords them some peace. A peaceful and tranquil working environment is not easy to come by!

Even though the workers are mostly working on their own in their allocated gardens there are periods that require the team to work together. The ability to work as a team is another motivating factor for the workers. On a basal level, the workers enjoy each other's company.

They make jokes and share their stories and lives. They have become like a close-knit family. Most importantly, the team comes together when there is work that they have to do and works hard to meet their target. I have borne witness to two gardens being established and at every one of the garden initiations there was a task that required all the workers to come up with ideas as to how the issue would be resolved and then to play an active role in solving that problem.

10 August 2016

I got the chance to experience some exceptional teamwork from the workers today when they removed a huge boulder from a patch of ground that was being prepared for new seedlings. Three of the workers took turns at chipping away at the stone in an attempt to make it weigh less. They soon realised that if they asked a fourth person to help they would not have to chip the rock away but rather lift it out of the hole and away from the ground being prepared. Everyone involved gave a great effort and removed the rock. Mashudu tore his pants in the process and gave some comedic relief to all of us present.

The teamwork element is also very instrumental during times when the plans that the workers have for their gardens do not materialise or when things do not go well. The workers put in a lot of effort into their work and give of themselves wholeheartedly, thus one can only imagine how devastating it is when somebody ruins the gardens that they have worked so hard on.

17 August 2017

Jabu comes rushing into the garden where Bontle, John and I are working. It is 15:30 and we are finishing our tasks for the day before we knock off at 16:00. He has a sullen look

on his face as he greets and before he tells us why he has come to a garden where he is not scheduled to work, he lights a cigarette. The tree stump at the foot of one of the beds provides a comfortable seat for him. John and Bontle light-heartedly talk to him about the progress in the garden. The spinach is not growing so well and Bontle is worried that this is because it is not getting enough water and sunshine because it is planted in a shady spot. Earlier I was wondering why she was giving so much attention to the spinach. Now I understand. It is only when Jabu does not respond to Bontle's progress report that both she and John notice that he is not at this garden on a friendly visit. He starts to explain that he got a call from one of the security guards at Adele Mokoena School and the garden they had worked on over the last two weeks is now ruined.

Bontle, John and Jabu agree that they will go and clean up the garden the next day. I am invited to go with them and Jabu explains that they will need the extra pair of hands. The next day, when Jabu sees the damage caused to the plants, he looks like he has had the wind punched out of him. His face is sunken, he puts his hands on his head and he whistles. "Banna![5] What have these people done?" he asks rhetorically. Almost all of the plants have been uprooted. The walls that the workers have built around the plant beds have been demolished and only the bricks that were used to build the wall show that there had been a structure erected. Jabu says that destruction like this is a setback for the project but it especially inconveniences the children who rely on the produce for their meals. I ask where I can help and Bontle says we should replant the spinach and lettuce.

[5] A SeSotho word meaning men, but often used colloquially to convey disbelief at what one is hearing or seeing.

We work determinedly for the entire day. By the time we knock off the plants that could be saved have been replanted and the garden is looking much neater.

Although this was an unpleasant experience the workers still supported each other and helped to get the garden back to functionality. This garden has been allocated to Bontle yet Jabu and John both helped to restore it. The laborious work that the workers have to do is more doable because they work together as a team. Also, from this experience we see how the workers show ownership for the products of their labour. The people who vandalised the garden try and alienate the workers from their work but this only serves to intensify the connection that the workers have in striving for a unified goal.

The ethos of Ministry of Helps is doing work that helps people in their different needs. Rev. Pooe explained the centre's ministry to be in serving. It could be serving the community, serving poor people or serving young people. The different offices within the centre have a people-centred focus, which is built on the principles that The Bible outlines. The centre management believes in equipping people to be able to survive and this is why they have several programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and uplifting people. The workers, mostly being Christian, subscribe to this ministry and they are motivated to keep working because their work helps other people. By using their Christian values to do their work on the gardening project the workers are showing their ownership of their work and are at the same time attaching meaning to their work. The workers on the gardening project associate their working on the project for minimal or no pay as being Christ-like and therefore in line with their personal ethos. Musa says that she was compelled to work on this project even though she had worked elsewhere and made more money. She believes that this job is her calling and she is not after the money but is rather doing what God wants her to do. One of the

common characteristics of the four groups that work on the *Vuna* project is that they are all working on the project for the benefit of others. They do not get the produce for themselves but they find joy in knowing that children, the elderly and the sick at least get a healthy meal. Through the interviews I have conducted and participant observation activites, I have seen that the meals are instrumental in helping the children concentrate at school and have a better chance of passing well and having a bright future, and also helps assist those that are sick back to health so that they may continue with their lives and looking after their families. Once again, we see an alignment between the workers and the work that they do on the *Vuna* project thereby eliminating or at least reducing alienation from a worker's production. One of the workers that I interviewed details their motivation for working on the project being the children, more than the other beneficiaries. He believes that no child should be absent from school because they do not have food or struggle to concentrate when they are at school because they are hungry. His biggest motivation for working on the project is when he sees the children get a meal at Ministry of Helps and also take home the produce to give to their families. This is the most fulfilling part of his job.

> *"Here [referring to Ministry of Helps] it is an organisation which deals with people directly, and addresses issues directly with people. So in the corporate world they deal with profit. They deal with issues that affect the economy and all those things. In this organisation, we deal with people directly. We know what people need and how I as a person can help and make an impact in somebody's life"* – Themba.

Themba is a volunteer that earns a stipend. He is driven by helping other people, even though he is experiencing some difficulties in his personal life. He mentions the children as his motivation for working but does not speak much to the other beneficiaries that are adult. This

puts into context that even though the workers are selfless in their work, they often can only live up to the expectations placed on them inadequately.

All throughout my fieldwork at Ministry of Helps there were opportunities for the workers to learn on the job. At least once a month a representative from a company that sponsors the project with seeds that would visit the workers while they worked on the gardens. This representative gave the workers the latest information in the world of agriculture and any new methods of farming that could help the workers to do their job better. The workers were always eager to ask questions to make sure that they understood their work and do their job to the best of their ability. Other than the representative imparting information to the workers, the centre organises workshops for the workers to attend. The content of the workshops are broad and they do not only focus on skills that the workers can use at Ministry of Helps but also beyond. One workshop that I was invited to focussed on equipping the workers with the skill required to improve the quantity and quality of vegetables cultivated and therefore, to be better enabled to provide food for the beneficiaries. The workshop also covered eco-friendly farming methods. The attendees get a certificate at the end of the workshop to show that they attended the course. The workers could also use this certificate to build their CV and apply for other jobs. On one particular day in September, the workers had a visitor from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). This visit from SANBI was in line with Arbor Month that is celebrated annually in September. This session taught all those present about the importance of conserving water and planting only indigenous plants. This is the kind of information that could help the workers do their job better. After the informative talk we planted a yellowwood tree, the national South African tree, in each of the *Vuna* gardens. The planting of the trees was open to community members

and in this way appeared to be a teaching moment not just for the workers but for community members. It was a ritual of sorts that gave hope for the future in the form of the trees.

15 September 2016

The tree planting starts soon after Bontle and I have had a brief walk in the garden. We meet Thami Mokoena who is the education centre manager at the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens. He tells us about Arbor Month, alien trees, planting indigenous trees and conserving water. He is very knowledgeable on the topic. He hands us some pamphlets to read at home. After the talk we plant three trees at Ministry of Helps. One of them is South Africa's national tree, the yellowwood.

One worker highlighted that he prefers working on this project because when he compared it to other jobs that he has had this job was much safer. While we worked on the garden at Lesedi High School he shared an anecdote.

John was employed to work on the construction of the Gautrain railway between Rosebank and Park Station. One day he was placed in charge of making sure that the crane was picking up some concrete pipes correctly. His job was to secure the hook onto the pipes and give the signal to the crane operator for him to lift the pipes. John was not paying attention to what he was doing and gave the 'okay' signal to the crane operator before it was actually safe to do so. He did not realise that some of the cord was coiled around his foot and when the crane operator lifted the load he also lifted John. As a result John was flung up in the air and carried head down over some Rosebank buildings. Although John jokes about this incident and says that now he knows what it feels like to be a bird, he could have been seriously injured or killed. Luckily, he did not sustain any injuries. He is happy that this job at Ministry of Helps

keeps his feet firmly on the ground! He sees this as reason enough to keep working on the project.

The nature of the work that is done on the gardening project as well as the way that the project is run motivates the workers to continue working on the project. The workers compare the jobs they have had before and see their current work, even if it is on a voluntary basis, as safer, therapeutic and cost effective. Thus there is an element of benefit for the workers – case of this work being the lesser devil.

Money makes the world go around

Money is another attributing factor to the workers working on the project. Whether the workers are employed or are volunteering money is an integral part of their presence on the *Vuna* project. The foreign unpaid workers, although they are not paid for their time in South Africa, rely on their sponsor to pay for their stay and their necessities. If the sponsors were to not pay then the external workers would be forced to go back to their countries. This would unfortunately cripple the work supply because the project (and the centre) relies on the extra hands and unpaid labour to fulfil their duties. Also, the external workers need the experience in South Africa to fulfil their study obligations. Therefore, the sponsor pays for them to be able to provide help and to also pass their studies.

Volunteers from the surrounding areas on this project are paid a minimal stipend of R300 per month. Even though this amount is below the amount that the volunteers would need to survive there is an attitude of gratitude for the money that they receive. Most of the people

that are currently volunteering started when they were not being economically active in any way. Therefore, the stipend offers some relief from not having any income.

> *"To be honest, I pay my [children's] nanny R500 a month and here we get R300 a month, so I don't have enough to pay her. But it does make a difference"* – Zandile

The employed workers express more satisfaction with their salary. They report a better life not just for them but their families also since they have started earning a salary. It is important to note that the workers that report that the salary that they get from their job is substantial were the same workers that did not want to tell me how much they were earning on the project. Therefore, it is possible that the workers reported that their salary was making a difference in their lives because they were operating under the assumption that I did not know how much they earned.

The workers recount that they are able to sustain their families with the money that they get from working on the project. And they have some money left over for them to do activities that they enjoy. If this is a true state of affairs it shows that they make do with small amounts in the hope that it their role would become more steady and well paid and translate into a permanent post. In the time being, the small amounts are aspirational.

> *"Now I have planned a lot of things. I can pay for nursery school transport and I still have money left over for my entertainment"* - Bontle

One worker reported that he is the breadwinner and is able to look after his wife and children with the salary that he gets. Furthermore, he says that he earns more at this job than he has earned at his previous jobs. Coupled with the fact that this worker says that he loves working in the gardens and is not picky about the kinds of work that he does, he is comfortable to

continue working on the project. The salary is guaranteed because the workers are in contract with the MoH and Friends of the Soil so they are able to make long term plans with their salary.

Some of the volunteers are working on this project while they wait for a job with a salary. One worker reported that she had been unemployed since she matriculated some years back. She wanted to study further after she matriculated but because of financial constraints in her family she was unable to pursue that career. Working on the *Vuna* project gives her an opportunity to earn a little bit of money and keep busy until she finds an ideal job with enough salary.

> *"At least here I am doing something that makes me preoccupied mentally. I meet different people and in different gardens. Maybe we will grow in this. It is not that I am not looking for a job but I am occupying myself and do something than to sit at home and do nothing. So I rather come here and help with whatever I can help with"* – Zandile

Zandile is the same worker that had said that even though the stipend that she gets is not enough to pay her children's nanny it is making some difference. This highlights that she does need more money, however, she is making the best of her current situation.

The team members that are now employed by MoH started by volunteering on the project and then were gradually employed and offered a salary. It is this gradual progression of the workers that motivates the current volunteers to believe that they too will one day be employed, either at MoH or at another place. Thus, working on the *Vuna* project brings light into the sometimes glum future of the workers.

Working on the *Vuna* project does afford the workers an opportunity to make money. Even though both volunteers and employees express that they need more of it, they express their gratitude for the money more. Therefore, there is most likely more of a link between motivation and perceived benefits from being a part of this project. Working on this project affords the workers an opportunity to be trained and enhance their skills and also to take part in community-building activities like planting trees and thus the limited money is perhaps not seen as so much of a hindrance but rather as something that the workers are able to make due with. The workers, I argue, find dignity in being part of this project and are not alienated from their work.

Chapter 3

Food

For this project, food is not only the main objective of the work that is done but it is also a central activity on which the workers create and maintain relationships. In this chapter, the focus is on food and how it is a motivating factor for the workers to continue working on the project. While food may seem to only be physical nourishment for the body there are other ways in which food helps the workers with problems that they may be facing in their lives. However, it is important to note that although eating is a central activity on the project there is no evidence that working on the project ascertains the workers' food security in any way. Thus, unlike conventional food gardens that are started to make sure that the workers are food secure, these gardens on the *Vuna* gardens do not make the workers any more food secure than they already are.

Another motivating factor to working on the *Vuna* project is food. The first motivator linked to food is that the workers work on the project because they want to help in making sure that the beneficiaries have food. There are other projects at MoH that workers could be a part of; however, these projects are not focussed on food. Secondly, the workers have created a culture for themselves where they eat as a collective. Sometimes, the workers do not have to buy food because the centre provides food for the volunteers. This is the third motivating factor. Although the overt activity is eating there is a deeper and less overt activity that is taking place as the workers are eating. This activity is counselling and this happens as the workers share their problems with each other as they eat. This is the fourth food-linked motivator to working on the *Vuna* project. In this chapter, I will discuss in detail the role that food plays.

We grow food

All projects at the centre rely on volunteers for it to be able to function, especially during periods where the workload is increased. Thus, volunteers could work on any project at MoH, however, most of the volunteers that come through the MoH gates ask to be part of the *Vuna* project and be involved in providing food for the beneficiaries. External unpaid workers also come to South Africa, unpaid, and work on the gardening project. At the centre of their motivation is making sure that the beneficiaries have one of the most basic human rights in South Africa, food. When I asked the volunteers whether they thought their working on the project is making any difference in the lives of the beneficiaries, Musa responded in this way:

> *"Yes, I think so. Mostly for the orphans. They get food from the veggies. For some it is their only meal for the day. I see a big difference."*

Themba had a similar answer but he did not focus on the children only but also on adults in the community who are beneficiaries:

> *"Of course it does make a big difference in the community because a lot of the people struggle to buy vegetables. Some of them have to go as far as Shoprite, if they can afford it… In addition, the school kids who do not have lunch at school get lunch. They get a meal from the vegetables that we grow here in the garden."*

These two workers perceive the fact that the beneficiaries, especially the children, get food as a sign that the project is working. This belief highlights the integral role that food plays in helping them see their role as being fulfilled in their work on the gardening project.

We eat together

Early in the fieldwork period I realised that food is central to the workday on the *Vuna* project. The workers work diligently throughout the workday but they make it a point to take their tea and lunch breaks. During these breaks, especially at lunchtime, they huddle together and come to a decision about what they are going to eat, they collect money and then one or two of them go and buy the food. The gardens are within the community therefore the workers choice in food is limited to what the local shops sell. Often times they will eat fast food, like fat cakes, chips and bread or kota. By doing this the workers show that they are aware that the produce that they grow is not theirs but they earn some money to be able to buy the food that they desire. However, the workers do not buy food that is typically considered healthy. Thus, one asks themselves why they would opt to eat food of little to no nutritional value if they have organic food literally at their fingertips. Ledger (2015) speaks of a similar phenomenon happening in Pretoria, South Africa where the workers could consume their produce but would rather sell it and then make money from it. This case, however, is different from this one with the *Vuna* workers because the workers from Pretoria have access to the produce.

12 August 2016

One of the challenges that I foresee with being in the field is the junk food that the workers eat during their lunch breaks. Black South Africans, whether you are umZulu[6], moSotho[7] or any other ethnicity, take offence if they offer you food and you decline. Therefore, out of being polite and respectful I eat with the workers during our lunch

[6] A person who is of *isiZulu* ethnicity.
[7] A person who is of *seSotho ethnicity.*

break, regardless of what is on the menu. In addition, I have a weakness for chips so I would not be able to resist even if I tried!

The workers buy the food with their own money and even though the workers that are chosen to go and buy on that day asks the other workers to contribute they never ask me to contribute. In fact, they do not accept my money when I contribute. This signals to me that the workers still consider me a visitor and therefore an outsider. I wonder if this will change. I want to gain the trust of the workers but if I bring my own food I might be prolonging my state of being an outsider. Perhaps I ought to patiently wait out the process and I might be considered a part of the group any day now.

When the workers put money together to buy the food, there is never a set amount that is stipulated. Whatever amount that one can contribute is accepted. Workers that do not have money to contribute are also included in the number of people to be catered for. In this way the contributing for food is not about money, but rather about sharing a meal and making sure that everybody has eaten something before they resume their duties. The workers are thus motivated to go to work, even if they do not have money on that day to buy food. This act of sharing reinforces the alliance that the workers have amongst themselves.

<u>Sometimes, food is provided</u>

The centre tries and minimise the cost implications associated to working on the project. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, they provide transport for the workers if the garden they are working in is far from their home. They also sometimes provide food. They provide the food for the volunteers, specifically, but they share the food with the employees. Therefore, regardless of who is providing the food there is an element of sharing amongst the

Vuna workers. The centre provides food when the workers are starting a new garden and are working in one place. Starting a new garden is especially difficult because the workers have to clear the land first and this involves rigorous labour. Sometimes the land is very hard because it has never been used for anything that required the soil to be loosened. Although the food is welcome by the workers, it means that until lunch time one of the workers is not on site helping because they are cooking the meal at the centre. One of the workers, normally a female, is responsible for cooking the food and also dishing up for everyone. The meal that they get is often basic and comprised of pap[8] and meat. Pap is relatively cheap and is known to sustain people that have physically demanding jobs, like farming. On one particular day *mam'* Thandi asked me to dish up for the workers. This request made me feel like I was finally being accepted into the group because she asked me to contribute to the meal. For the first time I was going to do more than eat with the workers.

18 August 2016

Today was a very busy day in the field. We were working on the new garden at Aganang Primary School. This was no easy feat! The ground was very hard and we used hoes to soften the ground. At lunch time mam' Thandi arrived with the food and asked me to dish up for the team. I was very happy about this instruction because it signalled to me that the workers were starting to see me as one of them.

Thus, food in this group is a mechanism for uniting the team and also, as in my case, used to distinguish who are outsiders and insiders. Food serves as a means of creating a community.

[8] Thickened porridge made from maize meal. It is often served with a savoury component, but can also be enjoyed with milk or sour milk.

Sharing more than a meal

The workers are a close-knit group and this is partially because they share their lives with each other by talking about what is going on in their lives. Gardening in its nature allows for the workers to talk while they work, but the workers also talk as they eat. Therefore, sharing a meal has benefits for the workers that are beyond nutrition. Certain workers sit together at lunch time and this forms a bond that is visible even as they work. Meal times are a type of counselling session for some of the workers because they talk to each other about whatever it is that is bothering them. When the workers are talking to me it's an opportunity to find out more about my project or to try and find out whether I knew anybody that could help them with a specific problem that they were facing.

17 August 2016

With there being only three of us working in the garden today it felt easier to be more watchful of the intimacies of the day. I got to spend some time with Bontle while we ate magwinya and snoek fish and sipped on some ginger beer. She told me how her daughter, two years old at the time, died. The post-mortem did not reveal anything and until today she wonders about the cause of her daughter's death. Her daughter's father's family accused her killing the child, because at the time of death she was living with her partner (not her daughter's father). A few days after burying her daughter she found out that she was three months pregnant. This baby was a blessing, but she still misses her other daughter.

As Bontle shared this story with me she had tears in her eyes. It was clear that this incident still hurt her deeply. Sharing a meal with me during the tea break somehow made her feel comfortable enough to tell me about this sad story.

Food is a constant feature on the *Vuna* gardens. The workers are growing food for the beneficiaries, but they also share food and in so doing their life experiences. In this way, food is an objective, a reward and a unifier for the workers. Also, food serves as a means for the workers to believe that the work that they are doing is benefiting people. By virtue of the children getting a meal, it means to the workers that they are successful in their work. Acquiring food also happens in a different way for the workers on the project. They use the money that they obtain from their activity at *Vuna* to buy the kind of food that they prefer. The relationship that the workers have with food highlights that food is a motivator for being involved in the gardening project, but not in the way that people who work on food gardens normally do. These workers use food to carve their own identity and form relationships.

Chapter 4

Social Cohesion

The *Vuna* project is unlike other community garden projects in that it does not serve to increase the food security of the workers. However, it does create an environment where the workers can foster social cohesion amongst themselves as the gardening project workers, MoH staff and community members. Thus, even though they are not direct beneficiaries of the work that they do, they do benefit from the sense of family that they get as a result of working on the project. This is not something that has started recently, but it has always been by design from the beginning of the project.

In the beginning

> *"When it [Ministry of Helps] started we were worried about the spread of HIV and AIDS. Now, we said as a church we cannot just sit down while people are dying. And then we said, how can we intervene? Then we started Ministry of Helps. Then, when we started we were dealing with the support group. These are the people who are HIV positive who came to us and said we need some help. And then we said, we might not help you so much because even ourselves we are not yet familiar with this phenomenon [HIV/AIDS epidemic]. Then we said, we can afford you the platform to help each other. Hence the terminology support group. You start supporting each other"* – Rev. Pooe.

Ministry of Helps started as a support group for HIV positive community members. The community members approached the centre management for daily support on dealing with their HIV positive status. Ministry of Helps provided them with a place to meet and gave the support group members the guidance that the centre could to help them. However, at the

time the centre management and staff knew very little about HIV/AIDS and living with the virus so they sought the assistance of HIVSA. HIVSA sent a social worker that was knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS and could assist the support group members as well as other community members that were experiencing social and economic issues related to HIV/AIDS. The support group members were mostly unemployed but they received food parcels from Ministry of Helps and this sustained them in that sense. Nevertheless, the support group members needed money to pay for other living expenses, like for example school fees for their children, and this is where the Ministry of Helps support group, although very instrumental in their survival, fell short. While the support group, through the help of MoH, facilitated an environment of support, sharing and caring, it failed to support the members economically and financially.

The support group members approached MoH and requested that they start a project that they could work on and earn some money from. Thus, the gardening project was born. Unfortunately, some of the founding members of the support group and gardening project have died, but some of them have climbed through the ranks and now work in the MoH offices, while others continue to work on the gardening project to date. Please note that although the gardening project was started as a support group for HIV positive community members the recruitment of those that work in the gardens to date is not based on their HIV/AIDS status. Therefore, not everyone that works on the *Vuna* project is HIV positive. The success of the *Vuna* gardening project is an example of how community members can galvanise themselves for a purpose and in the process establish an organisation that can help unite the community.

Team building

The MoH management organises an annual team building weekend where the entire staff goes away for the weekend to learn some skills on how they can better relate as colleagues. During this weekend the staff has an opportunity to resolve any problems that are eminent and covert amongst the workers and they are also given the skills they require to make sure that these issues do not resurface again. I was invited to their 2016 edition of their team building weekend and I learnt about conflict resolution and working together. The facilitator that ran the session took us through a series of trust-building exercises, as well as exercises that lead to introspection.

23 July 2016

Today Tefo, a motivational speaker and life coach, came to help us with some issues that the team was having. He took us through some exercises that were meant to help us trust each other as team players. Although I have not yet started working with the Vuna team I now know that there are some issues that the team is having with regards to working together, but after today's session I think that they have been sorted.

The exercises that we did were fun but also scary because they required us to trust each other. This is especially scary for me because I do not know the workers well enough to trust them, but if I am going to work with them I have to have their trust and trust them. All in all it was a good weekend and I learnt a lot about myself and the other staff.

The team-building weekend was an opportunity for the workers to improve on their togetherness as a team. The centre management is aware that in order for all projects, including the *Vuna* project, to be successful the workers have to be able to work in harmony. The skills that the workers get are not only useful at work but also in their personal lives. This is another reason that the workers are motivated to work on the project.

Creating communal ties

When the centre needs volunteers to help with starting a new garden the centre management asks the workers to recommend people that they know could benefit from the stipend and would be willing to do the work. The workers recommend their children, partners and other family members. Although the volunteers only work for a few weeks at a time and for R300 per month, there is some temporary relief on the family that working on the project has. For instance, when the volunteers are working in the gardens they have something that can keep them busy while they wait for ideal opportunities to present themselves. Ideal opportunities such as another job or a permanent job at the centre. In addition, the workers get some form of income, which they can use for certain needs around the house. In this way, by another family member being involved in the gardening project they are helping to create a more stable family environment. In other words, when one family member is involved in the *Vuna* project there is a better chance for a family member to be accepted as a volunteer and then possibly later a worker on the project.

The gardening project was started on the premise that community members can take care of each other. This premise is still the same and community members work to make sure that other community members, that are less fortunate than them, have food. Of these beneficiaries, children are the most numerous and the most special to the management and the workers on the *Vuna* project.

> *"We started by adopting the children whose parents have passed on and were part of the support group. When partnered with the schools around here. The problem with the schools is that they try and teach the children, but after school, what do they do? They start lingering in the street, they start doing naughty things. Then we said, bring these children here. We will help them with their homework and feed them"* – Rev. Pooe.

The gardening project and centre, in general, have taken on the role of looking after the children in the community. They are in essence operating on the principle that it takes a village to raise a child,

only in this instance the village is the community members in their capacity as workers at MoH. However, the workers do not operate on their own. The schools in the area also play a role in making sure that these disadvantaged children have as stable a life as possible, regardless of their circumstances at home. The principals of a few local schools allow the gardens to be run from the school premises. The workers have a good relationship with the principals and staff, who have realised that they work done by the *Vuna* project is of value. In collaboration, they help the gardening project workers to make sure that the children and other beneficiaries have fresh vegetables that they can eat. The workers have created relationships with the school principals and staff in order to fulfil their task of feeding the MoH beneficiaries. In the process they have created social links with these organisations and individuals.

On a smaller scale the *Vuna* workers have a relationship with the parents of the children that are beneficiaries of the gardening project. Granted, it is not all parents that play an active role in their child's life, however there are some parents that are interested in their child's activites at MoH. These parents attend meetings when they are called and also look after the *Vuna* workers and the gardens. One of the workers Emmanuel explained the nature of the workers' relationship with the beneficiaries parents in the following way:

> *"I do see a difference, because when I follow the history it was small children who used to go to MoH. The parents did not know what was going on. Now that we are planting all over at different schools and the parents see us and ask us what we do with the produce and we tell them that we feed the kids. We have no benefit, it is for the kids. Then the parents check on us when we are doing our work and they look after the gardens when we are not working and make sure that people do not vandalise the gardens."*

Through their work on the project the workers have created a relationship with some community members, that are also the parents of the young beneficiaries. These relationships make it easier for

the workers to do their work in their community and also creates another social link that the workers can rely on.

We are family

Some of the workers attend the Lutheran church from which the centre is run. This means that the workers are not only colleagues but also form a spiritual community. Due to the workers also being spiritually linked it means that they support each other beyond working hours. For instance, when a worker is experiencing difficulty in their life like the death of a loved one or when a family member is sick, they provide support. Bontle and Mampho's mother was sick and had to be hospitalised. The workers visited their home and held a service to pray for their colleagues' mother's wellbeing. As an act of goodwill some of the older ladies that work at MoH helped their colleagues with some house chores. They continued to hold services at this colleagues' house until the mother, unfortunately, passed away. The workers were involved in the funeral preparations with the family's permission, of course and in this way helped to support their colleagues through a difficult time.

4 August 2016

Mam' Thandi informs me that the team will be going to pay their respects at the home of two colleagues because their mother has passed away. This case is especially sensitive because it affects two of the workers, who are sisters. We leave Sizanani Primary School where we are working that day and head to the house where the mourning period is being observed. The atmosphere is solemn, as can be expected. When we arrive there are a few women that have come to assist the bereaved young women. Since they have lost a mother, they need guidance from other women who will take on a motherly role during this time. The staff from the gardening project has come to show that they are in

support of their colleagues and therefore do not contribute to the sombreness. Instead, they greet the mourners present in a lively manner and sing Christian songs that have lyrics aimed at consoling grieving hearts. The colleagues that we have come to show support to are pleased to see familiar faces, and they thank us many times for coming at such a difficult time. The workers support each other when others experience similar circumstances. This is another way that they become close as individuals and a team and foster relationships that translate into advantageous working relationships.

Some of the workers attended the funeral that following Saturday and spent the rest of the afternoon with their colleagues as a sign of their support. The two bereaved workers were allowed to take compassionate leave and came back to work a week after their mother had been buried.

The centre, and gardening project specifically, afford the workers an environment where they can create a cohesive community for themselves. The workers have formed a family for themselves where they help each other through the challenges that they face. As follows the workers have a refuge in the gardening project. The workers feel so safe being a part of the *Vuna* project that they recommend their family to join them as workers on the project. The cohesiveness also spreads to community members. The project serves as a mechanism to make the workers and community members unite for one purpose. The connections between workers, workers and their families, and workers and the community is yet another reason why the workers are motivated to work on the *Vuna* gardening project. The project affords the workers a type of safety net where they can rely on other people during difficult times in their lives.

However, the closeness of the workers and the sense of security that the project affords to the workers does not mean that the workers do not fight. In fact, there are often fights among the workers and when this happens the management is called to intervene. The intervention is done in such a way that the workers are able to work together thereafter and this further increases the team's cohesiveness.

Another point of contention is that not everybody that is called to volunteer ultimately becomes a worker on the project, and because of this there could be tension amongst volunteers. However, such an occurrence is beyond the scope of this paper as I was not in the field long enough to see the volunteers become workers. In as much as the community looks after the workers while they work they are also people that are against either the workers or the project. I covered this in a previous chapter where one of the gardens was vandalised. Once again, we have an exception to the rule, being that not everybody in the community is in favour of the project and these people will use whatever access they can get to the gardens to make sure that their displeasure is known.

Despite these challenges that the workers face amongst themselves and the community, there are still some benefits to being involved in the project. Social cohesion is one of these benefits for working on the project. The workers are motivated to work on the project because their work provides them with some sense of social security.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The workers of the *Vuna* project do not get the produce that they are responsible for growing. They also do not sell the produce that they grow for an income. These two conditions are normally the two that are met by urban agriculture teams. Yet, this is not the case for this particular team. If the workers do not consume the produce or sell it, the question which remains is why do the workers work on the gardening project. Furthermore, the workers do not receive remuneration which they perceive to be sufficient for their daily needs. Therefore, this paper seeks to find out the reasons why these workers work on the project even though there are no perceived benefits to working on the project?

Through interviews and participant observations there are several reasons that have been highlighted as being the motivators for working on the project. For the purposes of this research these reasons have been summarised into three. These three are work and money, food and social cohesion.

In terms of work and money, workers are part of the research project because of the nature of the project. There are factors that make the workers want to work on the project despite the challenges faced are working in the local community, the therapeutic nature of working in the gardens, the team work aspect, following the Christian ethos and learning on the job. These attributes are personally appealing and are for the benefit of the workers and also by extension their families. Money is also an attribute that motivates the workers. The workers report that although they do need more money or a more regular income getting the money that they get is better than not getting any money at all. Thus there is an attitude of gratitude

where money is concerned. Money highlights the need for people to have dignity while they wait for something better and more favourable to present itself. The workers therefore use their activity at MoH as a way to wait and hope. Also, the fact that some workers started as volunteers also provides hope for the current volunteers that they too will be considered should there be an opening.

Even though the workers do not consume the produce there are some motivators that are linked to food. The workers are motivated by knowing that their work helps children and other beneficiaries to obtain some sense of food security. Some of the workers have joined the project solely driven on the fact that through their efforts will benefit community members that are disadvantaged and they will have food to eat despite that they live in poverty. The workers have made eating a central activity to their work at the centre. They make decisions about food together and will then eat together. Even those workers that do not have money are included on the number of people that are going to eat. However, the workers eat food that is not of high nutritional value. This highlights the workers will to make a decision regarding the kind of food that they want to eat. Sometimes the workers get food from the centre and this helps alleviate the workers with the burden of having to spend money even when they are not earning enough. Eating is a social event because the workers have conversations about their lives as they eat. They share the burden of their lives with each other and in this way eating provides a manner for them to solve their problems.

The project provides an opportunity for the workers to be a cohesive unit amongst themselves and in the community. The community members know the workers and so provide for them some security in the community. However, there are some people in the community that are not in favour of the work that the workers are doing and ruin the gardens

that the workers work on. Those workers that are now employed at the centre provide a sense of security for their families because when there is a need for people to join the team the management asks the workers to recommend someone. In the process of working together the workers become a family and support each other through difficulties that they face.

The workers do not receive the produce but they also do not sell it. Therefore the project does not add to the food security of the workers. The workers do not sell the produce and so their efforts do not directly translate into profits. The workers do their work for other motivations, some of which are selfless and some of which are for their own benefit.

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