

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 The Calcom case study

Calcom is located 10 kilometres north west of Barberton, in the Umjindini Municipal area. The project site is adjacent to the main road linking Barberton with Nelspruit, which is the capital of Mpumalanga. Calcom also falls under the lowveld area of Mpumalanga, an area with mild to hot temperatures, and minimal chances of rain. It is because of this scarce rainfall pattern that scarcity of water is one of the major challenges confronting people engaged in farming in the lowveld area.

The project started its operation as far back as 1999, when it was called Eyethu Farming Association. At the time the group comprised 41 individuals with the objective of starting a successful agricultural farming project, producing agricultural goods such as sweet peppers, cherry tomatoes, cassava, cabbages, maize, and onions¹³. To further their goal, group members consulted Mrs Mbuyi, the then extension officer of the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, who advised them to apply for an LRAD grant. The grant was approved in 2000; this resulted in purchasing the Mosley farm in 2003.

Calcom beneficiaries qualified for the R20 000 grant because they offered to contribute their sweat equity, which was valued at R5 000. Combined, the 41 beneficiaries of sweat equity amounted to R205 000.00, with each contributing R5 000 which was added to that of the other 40 members. In return the beneficiaries qualified for a grant of R820 000.00, where each individual had a R20 000 grant which was combined with the other 40 members of the group. Portion 27 of the Mosley farm was R375 000, and portion 9 sold for R450 000¹⁴. The total price of the farm was R825 000, and since the beneficiaries could afford, they purchased the Mosley farm in 2003.

¹³ These objectives were later translated into the Calcom business plan which was designed with the help of the Department of Agriculture. The Calcom business plans also have a goal of creating at least 50 new jobs to help people in the surrounding of Umjindini Township. Mr Mbuyane, who is an extension officer at DALA, was quite instrumental in this process.

¹⁴ Portion 27 of the farm has 2 three bedroom houses, 5 incomplete wooden chalets and a pub and restaurant. Portion 9 of the farm has a four bedroom house, 1 servant's quarter and 1 two bedroom flat. There are 7 boreholes in total and a storage tank.

4.2 Group dynamics

Subsequent to the purchasing of the farm was the change of registration from Eyethu Farming Project to Calcom PTY LTD. The transition had far-reaching consequences as it resulted in the amalgamation of three farming projects. This required the negotiation and renegotiation of the beneficiary's relationships. The process was riddled with seeds of tension and group dynamics, as older members who belonged to the Eyethu Farming Association found it increasingly difficult to accommodate new entrants into the project. In some cases, members from the Eyethu Farming Association were described by other beneficiaries as people who enjoyed imposing their superiority on the rest of the group. As one beneficiary noted:

“There are two people who are giving us problems here on the farm, Thembi and Lubisi. They have noise hence I like setting myself apart from the rest of the group. Thembi wants us to think this farm is her, she wants us to think she owns the farm, since they are the ones who started here when they were still an association. They want to make the rules and expect us to work. I am telling you this causes serious conflict in the farm (Isuka manje), meaning conflict starts at any given time on the farm. I have a group of 4 people who sit with me. I try my best to avoid conflict. In a large group, since I am a sangoma, my spirit must not get sad because I won't be able to see my patients if my spirit is not willin, and the end result is me not getting money to feed my kids.”

The aforementioned shows that longevity and seniority play a crucial but disturbing role on the farm, where those who have been with the project longer than others dictate terms, thus fuelling conflicting group dynamics on the farm, which has the potential of compromising the harmonious relationship envisaged by many on the farm. As evidenced in Chapter 2 of the literature review, group dynamics can also result from a large group of members with divergent interests pooling their resources together. Hence Mark Anthony from DALA noted that:

“When the Calcom project commenced there were 40 beneficiaries: however as time progressed some pulled out of the project and now the project is left with 19 beneficiaries. Beneficiaries who decided to leave the Calcom Project are like deadwood: you cannot remove them completely from the project nor involve them effectively in the project. The best way to deal with the situation is to prioritise gains of the project for beneficiaries who have committed themselves to the project since its inception. Let me take for example the beneficiaries who left Calcom project for other thing: we cannot write them off completely from the project. The only thing we will do is to use the first greenhouse output to meet the needs of those who are currently working there, then the other greenhouses output will be shared with this deadwood” (Mark Anthony, Agricultural Scientist Ehlanzeni District DALA, 26 October, 2005).

Beside group dynamics there other factors that may have contributed to the departure of the other 22 beneficiaries in the Calcom farm. However chief amongst the reasons that were identified is a lack of interest in farming. According to Kariuki (2005), pooling resources together creates a sense of imagined communities. Implicit in these imagined communities is the notion that a community is a homogenous entity unified by a common identity and common characteristics or needs, whereas in practice this is not the case. Kepe (1998), cited in Kariuki (2004) defines a community in sociological terms with the focus on spatial units, i.e. people who share a common locality, and points out that there are often conflicting notions of belonging to this group. A community can also be an economic unit, where different groups share common interests, control particular resources and share similar economic activities to make a living. However, a study conducted by Lahiff (2003) suggests that this rent-a-crowd scenario compromises the sustainability of projects, since not all beneficiaries in LRAD projects are interested in farming. As one of the DALA extension officers observed:

“Lack of interest in farming cuts the lifespan of most LRAD projects. This is mainly because most beneficiaries got into these projects because they wanted a quick bug: without us (DALA Officials) being cognisant of this fact we proceeded

to give them farming projects. As a result they tend to lack a sense of ownership of these projects and to pull out of the project. But I think this situation is about to change, especially after the land summit conference. As a department we buy a piece of land, and advertise or invite those who are interested in applying for an LRAD grant. One prerequisite that we will use for approving their grant, is to give them a farm that they will be in charge of for six months. If they succeed to make the farm productive we will hand the farm over to these applicants, because they have shown that they are interested in farming. Another reason for putting beneficiaries to this test is to see whether they are passionate about farming or no, because if they are passionate this will help ensure that LRAD projects become sustainable” (Mmako, extension Officer from DALA, 1 November 2005) .

Notwithstanding the aforementioned points, the idea is good but the execution might not be as smooth sailing as it sounds in theory, particularly because political pressure to deliver hectares is mounting for the DLA. As a result it will be time-consuming to actually implement that six months course. Furthermore, there are serious prospects that only a few individuals might be able to succeed through the probation process. This will most likely be individuals who have been exposed to farming before, or those who were farm owners before. The end result will be the marginalisation of the new entrants into the agricultural sector: individuals who were previously and presently truly disadvantaged.

4.3 Sweat Equity

Although changes are underway concerning the criteria used to qualify LRAD applicants, as things stand sweat equity will remain intact for a long time. This is the case regardless of an oversight identified by Karuiki (2004) in the policy governing the sweat equity principle. Underlying the policy is an assumption that applicants once qualified will be ready to offer their labour freely until their contribution equals the R5 000 sliding scale that qualifies them to participate in LRAD projects (Kariuki, 2004).

However, a study conducted by Mather (2005) reveals that “own contribution” or “sweat equity”, which qualifies LRAD applicants for LRAD grants, is inadequate for encouraging participants to partake in the labour requirements of LRAD projects. This was particularly the case with the bulk of Calcom beneficiaries who left the project since it started in October 2003. One of the chairmen of the farm acknowledged that retired beneficiaries were even keen to participate in several meetings that were called in order to encourage them to recommit themselves to the project again. The only people who came for the meetings were three female beneficiaries who had recommitted themselves to the project, but the rest never returned to work.

They told us that we are wasting our time with this project, because government will not compensate us for our efforts on the farm. They swear that before they see tangible improvements on the farm they will never come back. Sometimes I understand their concerns since things are really slow to materialise on the farm, however there are some positive things that can be pointed. For instance, the government has constructed greenhouses for us, as you can see. I keep on telling them that things will be fine on the farm as long as we persevere, however only a few of them were willing to listen to me. One of them even showed me the graves of four of our beneficiaries who died during the years that we have been working on these farms. They tell me that if I am not careful I will also die without having benefited anything, like those beneficiaries who died. Sometimes it is really discouraging to hear them say those things, I have even decided to stop encouraging them because they tell you the truth, things are really slow on the farm (Bob Ngomane and Emmelinah Ngwenya, beneficiaries of the Calcom PTY farming project, 28 October, 2005).

For many beneficiaries like Mr Ndlanzi, the half a hectare greenhouse structure on the farm serves as a beacon of hope (see appendix1), even though turning the greenhouse structure into a commercially viable structure is still yet to materialise. Similarly, turning a building on the farm into a viable tourist destination is still a challenge, as many strides

were made to achieve this end, but with limited success¹⁵. Therefore tangible benefits are yet to materialise to the grant recipients, but the researcher suspects that if things do not really happen fast the farm will continue to experience challenge such as staff turnover and corruption incidents.

4.4 The Impact of Agro-nomic factors on the project

The nature of soil found in the Barberton area is largely unfertile, as opposed to the fertile fields found in the nearby town of Nelspruit, north west of Barberton. Calcom is as much part of the Barberton area as other farming communities around, and it experiences the same limitations of climatic, rainfall and soil patterns as the rest of the farming communities nearby; which means Calcom is no exception to the trend. That is why beneficiaries find working the land in the farm a challenge, since the soil form is not good for the kind of produce they want to grow in the farm. Hence project planners and beneficiaries resorted to a computerised greenhouse structure in their business plan, to modify the effects of bad climatic and weather conditions.

These greenhouse structures operate throughout the year, meaning that there is no season when production will cease because of climatic conditions, because everything is controlled inside the greenhouse with the help of a computerised system. It took the project 1, 2 million rands to build the half a hectare greenhouse structure found at the farm. Projections hold that a further R1, 203,042 is needed in order to complete the half a hectare structure (see Appendix 2)¹⁶. The rational behind building a half a hectare greenhouse structure, as opposed to a full structure, was to avoid building a structure that will run short of funds to put in place sophisticated electronic devices inside the farm. With hindsight it appears that the fear of DALA officials is coming true, even when they have opted for the safer option of building a half a hectare greenhouse structure. It has been 11 months since the half a hectare greenhouse structure was constructed. However

¹⁵ Beneficiaries intend to make one of the wooden chalet houses found on portion 27 of the farm a tourist destination. However because support is not forthcoming in this regard from relevant source like Department of Tourism they cannot pursue that goal.

¹⁶ The construction of the greenhouse structure commenced on the 25th February 2005 and ceased on the 28th February 2005. Also see page 12 of the business plan in the appendix section about the amount needed to complete the greenhouse structure.

production has not yet commenced due to shortage of funds to install the technologically advanced system that is supposed to be located inside the structure¹⁷. A source inside the DALA offices blames this on procurement challenges and a lack of commitment from those tasked with the mandate of leading the project; in this case the project officer in charge of the project.

4.5 Institutional and Bureaucratic delays

Through the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) managed by the DALA, this project qualified for 1, 2 million rands which will be used to purchase the half a hectare greenhouse structure on the farm. Coupled with these developments was the purchasing of water rights for the Eyethu farm. However one of the challenges of procurement is that intervention on one aspect requires intervention on other aspects too. For instance, greenhouse structures cannot survive without electricity and water, thus facilitating a need for institutional collaboration between these departments in order to ensure the sustainability of the project¹⁸.

What emerged from the field is the reflection of the disjuncture between institutional collaboration written with pen and paper, and that which exists at the project level. The fieldwork clearly reflects a lack of cooperation and coordination between departments and stakeholders that are supposed to oversee the Calcom project. For instance, while the Department of Water Affairs contributed significantly by approving the purchasing of water rights, other stakeholders are not forthcoming in their support in this regard. Procurement challenges at the DALA offices impeded progress in as far as installation of water pipes is concerned. As a result the Calcom farm has water rights in theory, but in practice those rights cannot be utilised because there are no pumps to pump water. When

¹⁷ At the time of visit nothing had been installed inside the greenhouse except for the electronically wired fan that had been installed to cool the structure in order to protect it from scorching temperatures. However the fan had stopped working due to the electricity cut-offs from ESKOM following six months of non-payment. Instead of waiting for the structure to start operating, beneficiaries decided to proceed with the vegetable garden that they started on the farm. So far they have harvested their first produce which saw them earning R800.

¹⁸ Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, Department of Water Affairs, and local government through ESKOM could do well to intervene in this regard.

asked to comment on this issue, this is what one of the officers from the infrastructural support unit had to say:

“I am scared for these people at Calcom, we recently bought them water rights, but it is sad that they cannot be utilised because there are no pumps, and according to the policy governing the issuing of water rights, immediately after the announcement that you won those water rights, you ought to start paying for the certificate. Ever since this project won the water rights, I have been working tirelessly to delay the signing of contracts that state that those water rights are under the Calcom farm, because immediately after I sign those water rights with the name of their company, they will have to pay, even though they are not yet using the water. But I am afraid I cannot slow down the process anymore, I will at some point have to sign those water rights in their company’s name before they lose those rights. We promised to install those water pipes a long time ago but still we haven’t done so. I am even scared to call those people on the farm; I don’t know what I will say to them or which excuse to give them this time around. They will start thinking that I am the one who is slowing their progress, but in actual fact I did my part, the only people who are slowing us are our authorities with their signatures” (Mark Anthony, Agricultural Scientist DALA, 26 October, 2005).

As a result of these delays, water shortage poses a serious threat to the sustainability of this project. Most beneficiaries unanimously identified water shortage as a serious impediment towards the commencement of production on the farm. These concerns were exacerbated by the threats of non-payments posed by tenants of the farm if the problem of water shortage persists¹⁹, since there is only one borehole that feeds six houses and the vegetable garden found at Calcom. This competition for scarce water resources heightens chances of conflicting dynamics on the farm as tenants take beneficiaries to task concerning the very same issue.

¹⁹ Calcom is using the 2 three bedroom houses to generate off-farm revenue through leasing the houses.

Coupled with institutional delay is a highly bureaucratic service from DALA offices, which slows down the progress of the project. Commentators close to the DALA bureaucrats states that the money for the completion of the structure is there, the only challenge is to get relevant signatures from the higher echelons of this bureaucratic chain. These signatures must follow order, from the highest chain of command down to the lower end of the DALA organisation. However on the 26th of October 2005, when this interview was conducted, most bureaucrats had already signed for the approval of the completion of the greenhouse structure, and were waiting for the signature of one top official from the DALA offices.

On arrival at the project site, Mr Frank Smith and Mr Paul Marius, officials from the company that helped construct the half a hectare greenhouse at the Calcom farm, visited the site and this is what they said after assessing developments on the farm:

“This is a complete waste of money; how can you build such an expensive structure without utilising it. It has been six months since we finished with construction but nothing has been installed inside the structure, I am disappointed. Had production commenced inside the structure, by now we would be talking thousands and thousands of rands; to be precise we would be talking half a million rands worth of output, which could immensely improve the livelihood of these poor beneficiaries. To us it is not enough to just build a structure and not do anything on it; they might as well not construct the greenhouse in the first place. Without the hydrophonic system cooling the structure inside the farm the structure will be damaged by the sun. What a complete waste of taxpayers’ limited resources, but it is typical of government project to end up this way” (Frank and Paul, from Illanga Africa company, 3 November 2005).

To prove their point, the two officials took the researcher to the other client nearby the project site, where they had installed the very same greenhouse structure for a large scale

white commercial farmer in June 2005²⁰. The farmer bought a full hectare structure which produced R1.1 million worth of output at the time we visited the farm. He was even arranging to buy another greenhouse structure with the money he obtained from his first produce.

The farm mentioned above has more or less similar goals with the Calcom farming project, which is to multiply the number of greenhouses found on the farm with the money acquired from the produce in the greenhouse. As one of Calcom project leaders envisaged:

“Ntate (Sir) we are hoping to use the money we will get from the first produce to complete the half a hectare structure we have. We are hoping that the first greenhouse will be used to buy other greenhouses until they total the number of 7. We are doing this so that we can avoid future conflicts that might arise between currently working beneficiaries and those who left the farm. We will use the first two greenhouses to compensate those who are already working on the farm and then the rest will be for uplifting those other beneficiaries we lost and the community of Barberton through the jobs that will be created as a result” (Johannes, Ndlazi, Chairperson of the Calcom PTY farming project, 24 October 2005).

Another factor that arrests progress on the farm is lack of electricity to meet the farm’s energy demands. A week before the fieldwork commenced Eskom disconnected electricity from the farm due to unserviced electricity debts. The implication of this electricity cut-off for the farm is that the greenhouse will not operate until the debt is paid, which means production on the farm will not start anytime soon. This is also detrimental to the structure itself, since it needs an electric fan to protect the structure from the scorching heat experienced in the lowveld area of Mpumalanga.

²⁰ It is important to note that the farm referred to here is owned by a private farmer. It is not part of Calcom nor is it an LRAD project. The farm is owned by a Mr Van der Walt and the name of the farm is Klukman farm.

The failure to secure energy on the farm reflects a lack of coordination and proactive approach to project planning on the side of officials, since it is expected that such mishaps would be communicated and anticipated much earlier, and settled before such drastic measures are taken. If such drastic measures are not averted they will compromise the progress of these emerging black commercial farmers.

The only area where institutional collaboration is perceived to have worked in this project was when the DLA conducted a successful land transfer to grant recipients. The DALA on the other hand contributed in a form of drafting a business plan for the Calcom project, unlike other LRAD projects which place heavy reliance on private consultants to draft business plans. This heavy reliance on private consultants breeds pessimism amongst some DLA officials interviewed in this project:

“I normally hear people saying the South African Land Reform Programme is here to empower the previously marginalised black people, however looking back at the time when it started until now I think people who are benefiting from our land reform are the very same people who benefited in the past. Lets us take for instance a very simple issue of consultants. Who are these consultants working on LRAD projects, aren't they white? They are. Who are the people who are getting tenders to be service providers of LRAD project? Guess what, it is still white people. I remember when I was still working at another unit in this department, but I wouldn't want to mention the name of the unit. I issued a R1, 2 million service provider tender to a company that I thought was 100% black-owned as per the requirements of the BEE policy²¹. There I was thinking I was empowering black South Africans, however after two weeks, I discovered that black people were just used as a front in that company, they were mere drivers and the real owners of the business were white. From that day onwards I became very skeptical of this BEE policy of yours” (Cynthia Mahlalela, the principal planner at the Department of Land Affairs).

²¹ BBBEE requirement states that a black-owned company must have 50,1 percentage of its membership being black.

4.6 Management of the project

Calcom is a PTY project, which implies that it has a democratically elected leadership of three people who run the project based on the mandate they get from other beneficiaries. However, the three executive members of the project can take decisions on behalf of the whole group after having consulted with other members. Contrary to this arrangement, a trust is normally made up of more than three executive members who cannot take any decision before all the members of the group reach a consensus. Tilley (2000) suggests that even though PTYs and trusts are democratic, they do not necessarily address every member's needs.

There are three directors on the farm, of which two are males (See Appendix 3). These demographics of the Calcom management reflect male dominance. It is puzzling to note that out of 14 females that are found in the farm, only one female made it into the directorate position, meanwhile out of five males that are on the farm, two are on the directorate of the farm. Simply put, the two to one ratio in the directorate of the farm is not representative of the overall number of women found on the farm vis-a-vis the number of males found on the farm. This reveals that even though equity policies are in place in the agricultural sector, they do not alter power relations between males and females (Hall 1998). This observation consolidates the fact that women form the backbone of the agricultural sector; however they occupy less influential positions as it is still believed that males make better leaders. In other words, the two to one ratio in the directorate on the farm is not representative of the overall number of women found on the farm vis-a-vis the number of males. Although the management of the farm appears to be set and determined, beneficiaries of Calcom intend changing the composition of the management once production commences:

“When production starts we intend hiring professional managers to run our enterprise, people with tertiary qualifications. If that plan fails we hope to send young people like yourself to school, so that they could handle the technical aspects of the farm, while we old people handle the manual aspects of the farm. However we need to be strict on anyone who will be handling the financial

aspects of the farm, so that our project might not collapse” (Olga Khoza, treasurer of the Calcom PTY farming project, 27 October, 2005).

Furthermore, during site visits DALA officials were negotiating with Peter Barker of the Renee farm to come and manage the farm for a year. It was agreed in principle that Mr Barker would handle the technical aspects of the farm such as managing the finances, and linking the enterprise to the market using his networking skills. While this deal appears to be good on paper, in reality it has the potential of disempowering grant recipients. The researcher anticipates that the partnership has the potential of creating dependency on Mr Barker while engendering a sense of powerlessness on beneficiaries, since beneficiaries are more likely to leave everything under the control of DALA officials and Mr Barker. This is already evidenced by the perceived sense of exclusion on the side of grant recipients when the negotiations between Mr Barker and DALA officials took place.

This sense of powerlessness over projects appears to be widespread in most LRAD projects across the country, for instance, one of the findings of the study conducted by Wegeriff (2004) in Limpopo, revealed that beneficiaries did not know the value of the land they had received, the size of the grants they are purported to have received, or the amount of their contribution to the project. He blames this ignorance on the manner in which LRAD projects are initiated and administered by DALA officials (*ibid.*). For him this lack of knowledge reflects a lack of ownership of the process by beneficiaries²².

This lack of knowledge of bureaucratic processes on the side of beneficiaries also encourages DALA officials to delay services, hence one of the DALA officials had this to say about the situation at Calcom:

²² This information was extrapolated from the Manamead case study in Limpopo. The case study is comprised of five beneficiaries, four men and one woman. All of the beneficiaries are full time farmers with an exception of one beneficiary who is both a councilor and a business-woman. Wegeriff (2004) used this case to demonstrate the lack of information that LRAD beneficiaries operate under. To quote him verbatim, “all five beneficiaries were not even sure of the exact size and value of land they own” (Wegeriff 2004, pp 32).

“I am concerned about the fact that nothing is materialising at Calcom, everything is standing still, we have not yet bought them water pipes and production has not yet started in order to convince beneficiaries otherwise. We promised to install those water pipes a long time ago but still haven’t done so. I am even scared to call those people on the farm; I don’t know what I will say to them or which excuse to give them this time around. They will start thinking that I am the one who is slowing their progress, but in an actual fact I did my part, the only people who are slowing us are our authorities with their signatures (Mark Anthony, Agricultural Scientist DALA, 26 October, 2005). I fear that if we do not release the funds for production and water pipes soon enough, they might start vandalising the greenhouse structures in an attempt to compensate themselves for their efforts” (Mark Anthony, Agricultural Scientist, Ehlanzeni district DALA, 26 October 2005).

This sense of inadequacy and powerlessness over the project amongst Calcom beneficiaries could only be curbed through training.

4.7 Training, Mentorship and Partnership

Jacobs (2003) argues that training is critical for the viability and sustainability of agricultural projects. According to land policy, the Departments of Agriculture are to develop strategic partnerships with the Agricultural Research Council and the farmers’ organisation called Agri-South Africa to assist with training (South Africa, Department of Land Affairs, 1997). The policy also invites other social partners such as the private sector, NGOs, and civil society movements to take part in training beneficiaries of land redistribution. Hence Jacobs (2003) states that training can also be done through joint venture partnership. These are partnerships that are entered into by a group of farm workers who use the LRAD grant to buy shares into an existing farming enterprise. A joint venture partnership can also occur when a private farmer decides to buy shares into an existing LRAD farming project or volunteers to offer mentorship and training to LRAD beneficiaries (*ibid.*).

This model has since been adopted by the DALA as one of the best ways of helping emerging farmers cope with the demands imposed on them by the agricultural sector. The preference for such a model was also reflected when DALA officials chose to pair Calcom beneficiaries with one of the successful large-scale white commercial farmer in Barberton. When asked about the rationale behind pairing Calcom beneficiaries with a large -cale commercial farmer in Barberton, this is what an official from DALA had to say:

“You see as much as we want to be independent from white farmers we owe it to ourselves to acknowledge that we cannot do without them. They practically own the Agri-economy; and they are by far the most skilled farmers we have in our country. We need to tap from this reservoir of skills in order to uplift our people; even the government encourages us to do so with the new Agri-BEE legislation. We had to trick Peter Barker to help Calcom beneficiaries with the management of the farm. We used the Agri-BEE clause which states that if you are exporting overseas, 10% of your company must contain the Black Economic Empowerment clause, which argues for the employment of members of the designated group. As a result he agreed to enter into partnership with Calcom beneficiaries, and once the greenhouse structures in the farm are complete, he will help train our farmers and sell their produce, which will mean that they already have a market for the tomatoes that they will produce in the farm” (Mr Mmako, extension officer Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs, 26 October 2005).

While these partnerships are good for ensuring that LRAD beneficiaries have a readily available market, the researcher questions the extent of participation of LRAD beneficiaries at Calcom in this partnership. Tilley (2000) suggests that participation in such partnerships tends to be clouded by power dynamics where redistribution of power is concentrated on the ones who are well-resourced, in this case white commercial farmers. Hence one of the DALA officials had to exercise extreme caution when negotiating the terms of reference for the partnership.

When we first approached Peter Barker about the matter he made an outrageous offer. He wanted to buy shares into this project; in that way he could employ Calcom beneficiaries as his ordinary workers. But I refused the offer since it would reduce beneficiaries into deadwood. He promised to pay each of them a fat check each and every month, but I suspect only few of them would have been employed in the project while others are paid without doing anything. I told him his proposition defeats the purpose of the Calcom business plan which is to groom emerging black farmers for agricultural production (Mark Anthony, Agricultural Scientist, Ehlanzeni district, 2005).

It is because of these power dynamics that Cousins (2000) notes that participation in such a scheme mostly serves to create competition and tension amongst beneficiaries, and thereby works in the interests of major shareholders of the project who can co-opt and exploit LRAD beneficiaries in the name of the so-called “mutual” interest and benefit. Hence, Miss Cynthia Mahlalela from the Department of Land Affairs noted that:

LRAD has a share equity scheme; this scheme is mostly exploited by farmers who realise that let me give my farm workers a share of property because they are still my chickens. Other farmers hear that there is a share equity and decide to tell their labour tenants about this programme. They tell these tenants that LRAD will give them money so that they may come and buy shares in their farm. The farmer then buys beneficiaries out after five years. Most white farmers take advantage of the fact that beneficiaries turn to be impatient, for example, with sweat equity, you will find them complaining that after five years, I am still a worker and I don't earn enough as a shareholder, I'd rather get my money back. The white farmer will then give them R20 000 and buy them out, and the department is not checking out on that (Miss Mokgadi, planner from DLA, 16 September, 2005).

Regardless of all these negative aspects of joint venture partnerships, the Calcom case study reflects that joint venture partnership still has a role to play in capacitating LRAD beneficiaries. Furthermore, the case study reflects that there is an urgent need for a

comprehensive training model that will involve all the stakeholders (i.e. government departments, NGOs and the private sector) in training LRAD beneficiaries. As mentioned earlier, the failure of beneficiaries to comprehend legalistic jargon contained in contracts is a reflection of a need for training intervention from the social partners. However, notes from the field suggests that alternative means of training such as mentorship by a private farmer called Peter Barker from the Renee farm appears to be a preferred option. While this option is in consonance with the Department of Agriculture methods of training of involving NGOs, the private sector and other stakeholders, it appeared in the Calcom case that the officials from the Department of Agriculture are abdicating their responsibility to train grant recipients.

This follows a series of failed attempts by DoA officials to train Calcom beneficiaries of the farm. As one of the farmers observed:

When we first started here on the farm, DALA officials used to come here and train us on how to handle each other as shareholders. We were also trained on livestock production. But as time went by, we never received more training and we think it will be necessary especially when we begin production (Manford Phiri, Secretary of the Calcom PTY farming project, 24 October 2005).

We can draw two conclusions from the interviewee's response; firstly, the response indicates that the pre-settlement training that beneficiaries received does not link with goals in their business plan and post-transfer activities on the farm. For instance, livestock production is not one of the main activities carried out currently on the farm, since vegetables farming dominates both the business plan objectives and farm activities.

Secondly, the interviewee's response indicates that only basic training was provided on the farm. This type of training is normally provided by extension officers, whereas advanced training is provided by the Economics Department in the Department of Agriculture offices (Interview with Mthomboti the head of LRAD at the Department of Agriculture offices in Mpumalanga). Advanced training includes financial management

skills training, which equips individuals with knowledge of accounting jargon and specialised training in agricultural management. These are skills that were not evident on the farm when this study was conducted on the Calcom farm. These are pivotal skills, which need to be acquired if Calcom is to be a commercial farm. As one of the beneficiaries noted:

“When we start with production we will send young people like you to school, so that they could handle the technical aspects of the farm, while we old people handle the manual aspects of the farm. However, we need to be strict on anyone who will be handling the financial aspects of the farm, so that our project might not collapse” (Olga Khoza, treasurer of the Calcom PTY farming project, 27 October, 2005).

The interviewee highlights some of the most important factors that are normally neglected by service providers in charge of training LRAD beneficiaries. For instance, not everyone involved in this project is interested in training or perceives himself to be a suitable candidate for some mode of training. As Kariuki (2004) observed not all LRAD beneficiaries are interested in farm management as community members tend to have different aspirations, some of which hinge on off-farm activities.

Therefore, if any training intervention is to be a success at Calcom, it must consider other factors such as a generation gap. The majority of grant recipients are old, with few if any, in possession of basic literacy skills. Only 30% of the beneficiaries at Calcom are from a youth-headed household or are youth. These are beneficiaries who might be more receptive to advanced training, while the older generation might be interested in acquiring basic literacy skills. This is where NGO groups like the Transvaal Rural Action Committee Mpumalanga (TRAC MP) could be invited to play a crucial role of skills transfer.

4.8 The viability of the project

The problem encountered by most LRAD beneficiaries is that they acquired land that is not conducive to agricultural production. This contradicts LRAD's primary objective of redistributing 30% of white commercial land to black people (Wegeriff 2004). The farm that Calcom beneficiaries bought was not formerly used for farming: the previous owners used part of the land for tourism. As a result the type of soil found on the farm is not suitable for engaging in commercial agriculture. This resulted into several failed attempts to produce good agricultural crops on the farm. For instance, beneficiaries noted that their first produce of mangoes did not materialise.

It is only after the third attempt that they were able to harvest spinach, beetroot, carrot, tomatoes, cabbage, maroons and onions. However, they have only been able to sell spinach while consuming the rest of the produce. From their first sales they have been able to get R800, which mainly serves to finance their transport allowances and to buy seeds for the next round of planting.

The income that beneficiaries generated through the vegetable gardens, coupled with income from leased houses on the farm is used to pay transport that beneficiaries use to go to the farm. Over the past years transport has been the main cause of concern on the side of beneficiaries, since they used to move from nearby communities barefoot and this placed their lives in danger. As one of the beneficiaries stated:

“Things are working for the better in the farm. Look, we now have our own transport that collects us from our township to the farm. I tell you, things were tough before these developments; we used to walk to the farm sometimes as early as 4am in the morning. Mind you, it was dangerous to walk at that time since there was a serial killer operating on the main road connecting Barberton with our farm. Every time dead bodies would be discovered next to the road. But I told myself that regardless of this threatening situation, I will come to the farm whether I die or not only God knows. Justice, I tell you I am willing to die for this

project even though we are not getting paid as yet; things will be alright” (Mumsy Khoza, one of the beneficiaries of Calcom PTY, 25 October, 2005).

The resilience and persistence of these beneficiaries enabled them to overcome difficult challenges so that they could offer their services on the farm. This includes working for close to one year six months without getting paid, all under the prism of sweat equity that assumes that people can continue to offer their services voluntarily. Perhaps it is slight improvements such as getting access to transport and the construction of what the researcher calls the “house of hope”, or greenhouse structures that inspires optimism amongst beneficiaries. However, if the situation does not change for the better soon, most beneficiaries vowed to stage chaos. As Gwede Mantashe in one of the media briefings he made on behalf of NUMSA workers said:

“The poorer of the poor in South Africa are normally patient people, but do not rely on their patience for long, once they get fed up with unfulfilled promises they become unstoppable like a tsunami.” (Sowetan 19 August, 2005)

The result of disenchantment with the slow pace of progress on the farm could be things like vandalism of property, as noted by one DALA official (Mark Anthony), or something worse than that. This potential reaction from Calcom beneficiaries would not be unique to this project, as it has been documented in other projects of this kind. For instance one extension officer interviewed in this project noted that most project beneficiaries in the Barberton area are becoming anarchic in the face of failed promises. Mr Mmako, an extension officer from DALA, mentioned one case of the collapsed projects that he handled recently:

“That project was not mine initially, it was started by one of the officials who used to work here before I joined the White River DALA offices in 2003. I discovered that the official involved was not doing his job properly. He did not pay regular visits to the project site, and those beneficiaries told me that he was full of empty promises. One day when he arrived on the farm, beneficiaries had

looted everything on the farm, some left with windows and farming equipment. They carted away every other farm property basically. This shows that giving people land without helping them with day-to-day needs of the farm is detrimental because when they decide to vandalise they leave you with the very same land that you gave them”.

In most cases DALA officials attribute vandalism of property to lack of interest in farming by beneficiaries, but case studies in the Barberton area reveal a completely different picture, as such acts are fuelled by impatience with sweat equity and the frustration that results from not seeing any tangible improvements in beneficiaries' livelihoods and lack of post-settlement support.

As Lahiff and Cousins (2001) would argue, the general neglect of post-transfer support and the failure to integrate land reform with a wider programme of rural development has severely limited its contribution to livelihoods and to the revival of the rural economy. Therefore, redistributing land and rights in land does not amount to agrarian reform and cannot by itself achieve wider objectives of alleviating poverty, promoting equality, contributing to economic growth and black economic empowerment.