

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Life among the poor
in Philipstown
by
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ABSTRACT

This study is essentially a descriptive, rather than a prescriptive or explanatory study. It centres on the life among the poor in Philipstown with special attention on the way poverty affects their housing, health and education. There is also an investigation of the attitudes of the people towards their situation because this illustrates how the poor themselves feel about their situation.

A questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 respondents. The main method of enquiry was an ethnographic method, using open ended interviews. Main findings were that the poor are provided with inadequate housing which is expensive. The rent the people pay depends on the area in which the house is situated. If the house is in the Administration Board area, the people pay more rent for housing similar to that found in the municipal area.

The health of the poor in Philipstown is very poor. This may be because medical services are insufficient. It is also because of their living conditions and their diet. The most common diseases are poverty related diseases. We cannot, however, attribute ill-health solely to poverty because ill-health has a number of multiple causes.

Education in Philipstown is free but it was found that even though there is free education for the first eight years of school (Sub A to Standard 6), there are no improvements in the situation and living conditions of the people.

The people have learned to make the best of their bad situation. They have resigned themselves to a life of poverty and have learned to live with it. This study brought them to understand their situation better and to see that it is possible to change it.

They do not have the means and the initiative of doing so; their lives and their children's lives have been prescribed for them and they are fearful of seeking other directions. One of our respondents even stressed that there was absolutely nothing they could do about their situation.

INTRODUCTION

Some people are rich, others are poor. Some are strong, others are weak. This has always been the situation of mankind, and as such it has not previously attracted a great deal of attention. Now, however, improvements of the condition of people who are poor and weak, has become the most pressing problem of the age. The situation must have changed to account for the sharp attention focussing on the problem.

There are in fact two important developments in recent times. One is that poverty has become intolerable for poor people because they no longer regard it as inevitable. They realise that their problem could be solved, and they therefore see no reason why it should not be solved. Previously the mass of mankind was ready to accept poverty because there was no obvious alternative. But it has been demonstrated to them that mass poverty can be eliminated.

The other new feature of the situation is that for the first time the poor have realised that by acquiring political rights and national status, they can help themselves out of their situation. At the moment they have no voice to protest against their condition and no power to demand its alleviation. They have no position from which they are able to press their claims.

Their problems are indeed becoming increasingly familiar to the public. The press now presents more and wider coverage of the affairs of the poor, than was formerly the case.

The poor areas might have suggested a picture of some sort, but the detail of the picture was always missing. What I wish to do is to introduce a town which was formerly a nameless, faceless void.

One good reason for concerning ourselves with the poor, is common decency and humanity. There is something essentially offensive about extreme inequalities in the conditions of mankind. And it is hardly possible to exaggerate the differences that exist.

Before describing the conditions in which the poor of Philipstown live, it is important to give a clear definition of 'poverty' as experienced in Philipstown.

People may both eat and live in a physiologically adequate manner but still see themselves, and be seen by others as poor. The starting point for my analysis and any analysis of poverty must be how people themselves experience their own life situation and whether this is confirmed by others. The category 'poor' is created through interaction and has a social reality only to the extent that the parties to the interaction agree on the criteria which define the categorization.

It is a necessary condition for poverty that there are real differences in material standards within the population. It is only in cases where the 'better-off' and the 'worse-off' agree on a low evaluation that the real situation of poverty arises. This is the situation of the population in Philipstown.

Haralambos (1980) gives an adequate measurement of poverty, he refers to it as 'subjective poverty'. This refers to whether or not individuals or groups feel they are poor. The concept of subjective poverty is important since to some degree, people act in terms of the way they perceive and define themselves.

Coaks and Silburn who conducted a major study of poverty in Nottingham, argue that 'poverty has many dimensions each of which must be studied separately but which in reality constitute an interrelated network of deprivation (Haralambos 1980)'. The vicious cycle in which poverty breeds poverty occurs over time, and transmits its effect from one generation to another. There is no beginning to the cycle, and no end (quoted in Moynihan, 1968).

These two statements contain a kernel of the theory that views poverty as a positive feedback system, that is, a system in which each part reinforces the others and so maintains the systems as a whole. This theory argues that the various circumstances of the poor combine to maintain them in poverty. They are trapped in the situation with little chance of escaping. Substandard food and housing are not cheap. This is the paradox of poverty. Poverty is expensive.

THE HISTORY OF PHILIPSTOWN

Philipstown was founded in 1863 and named after Sir Philip Wodehouse, then the Governor of Cape of Good Hope. To help the farmers with their farm products especially wool, he put up a 'wolwassery' (a wool cleaning factory) in the bed of the Hondeblaf River. Employees of this factory were housed as near as possible to their area of employment. The main town developed around these peoples houses which, I understand, later became their property. As the population grew, the non-European Community (Africans and 'coloureds') acquired property west of the town but still in the municipal boundary. They were regarded as part of the Philipstown Community.

After 1948, a new housing scheme was started to accommodate the growing Black community. Those who had property in the town were moved to the new housing scheme. As far as I know the idea of this expansion was merely to accommodate that section of the community which expanded rapidly, and not to move them from the 'white areas'. Even the local primary school which was housed in a few church buildings was moved to a state school in the new housing scheme. Quite recently another housing scheme was built west of the existing area to house the African community.

The African and 'coloured' community of Philipstown live together without any racial separation, but this is only in the old housing scheme. Anybody can get a house where a house is available, be it under the municipal or the Administration Board. These facts, or some of them, are subject to correction. They were supplied to me verbally, since the older generation could not read or write.

A book supplied by the Town Clerk of the area, ' 'n Beeld van Philipstown oor 100 jaar, 1863-1963', by Eugene van Heerden states that there are diamonds in the Philipstown area. In 1951, a variety of diamonds were found on the farm Lekkerfontein. The geologist, Professor Scholtz, reported that although the diamonds were small, it was possible that there might be bigger diamonds in the area. The farm was fenced in and the De Beers Mining Company had some interest in the prospective contract and mineral rights. That there are diamonds is a fact, all that needs to be done is to determine whether the development of mining will be profitable.

The farmers feel, that should a mine develop, there will be a shortage of farm labour because they will have to compete with the mines for cheap labour. Philipstown will also be forced to grow into a mining town bringing in industrialists which might force farmers to sell their farms. The farmers are trying very hard to keep Philipstown the way it is, a sheep farming area. Because a lot of farmers have been moving out of the Karoo to bigger towns, an organisation was started to save the Karoo from dying. Philipstown is also a member of the organisation: R.O.E.P. (Red Onse Eensame Plaagland) Save Our Lonely Karoo. The aim of the organisation is to try and recruit more farmers and to encourage them to continue sheep farming in the Karoo in order to save it.

A further development started in the late '60s; the Orange River Project. The main aim was to build water canals pumping water from the Orange River to the smaller rivers and to nearby towns. The idea of a hydro-electric scheme was included in the major scheme. One of the canals, which was to lead to the Whitesand area, was going to be the longest canal ever built in the land, to measure 560 miles and would supply 132 000 morg of water.

The project began and continued for a few years, but was never completed. It was stopped five or six years ago. While it still lasted it provided people with employment and hopes of bettering their life styles. The houses which accommodated the workers are now standing empty.

I could not obtain information on why the project was never completed. The action committee for the Orange River Project consisted of people from around Philipstown and it therefore involved Philipstown directly.

RESULTS

The results of the study are mainly descriptive. I was not trying to test any hypotheses but was hoping to understand life among the poor. This does, however, raise the issue of simultaneous explanation. The results will, therefore, be a description of the housing and the services that go with them, the health services and the health of the people, their education, and whether, in Philipstown, education can be a measure of getting people out of poverty. Life stories have been used to illustrate how the people themselves feel about their situation.

HOUSING

Millions of the poor in the world live in sub-standard squalid housing. The shanties or the shacks found in rural areas often look like remnants from an earlier era. The barrenness of housing of the urban poor is sometimes hidden behind the facade of an ordinary looking row of houses. Yet the interior may reveal serious decay, falling plaster, holes in the wall, gaps in window frames, rats and roaches.

The Presidents' Commission on Income Maintenance Programmes (1969) stated that physical conditions of the homes and neighbourhoods in which the poor live, and the crowding that often occurs, have severe effects on health as well as on social and behavioural patterns. The struggle to meet basic physical needs under depressing and frustrating living conditions undermines attempts to escape from poverty.

The total Black population of Philipstown is 5 900 consisting of 3 500 'coloureds' and 2 400 Africans. Although the government census claims that the population is 5 900, far fewer people live in Philipstown because most of the working age people are working outside Philipstown in the bigger towns and cities and live there for most of the time, and the majority never return to Philipstown even for short periods.

Philipstown is divided into two areas, the Administration Board area, and the Municipal area. The Administration Board area was developed as an African housing area and the Municipal area as the 'coloured' housing area. Due to the shortage of houses, these places are occupied by both 'coloureds' and Africans. There are different types of houses available under the Administration Board and the Municipal Board. There are 154 houses in the Municipality and 140 in the Administration Board area in the old location. The new location consists of 101 units under the Administration Board.

The municipal area consists of shanty tin 'houses' (the people of Philipstown call these 'die skutskrale!'); rondavels, and both the Municipal and Administration Board area have two-roomed and four-roomed houses available, and both also offer single room accommodation (Rooi Blok). The Administration Board area has another kind of housing available. These are eight-roomed

houses with one family occupying two rooms. These types of dwellings will be examined separately to illustrate the services available to the people and the amount of rent the people have to pay.

Type A: 'Skutskraale'

The place became known as 'Die Skutskraale' because it was used to keep stray animals, and the owners of the animals had to pay to allow their animals to be released. What used to be an animal pound is now inhabited by human beings.

The shelter or 'house' consists of pieces of corrugated iron and cardboard. Some use their donkey carts as shelter. The shelter is no bigger than $1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ m. in size, with an average of 4 people living in the shelter. When asked what happens when it rains, the people said that they have to sleep in garbage bags which they collect from the bins in town. Some said that they cover their blankets to make them waterproof.

At the time I undertook the study, there were no toilets available. According to the people living there, there used to be one toilet, but it has been closed down. The people now use an old quarry as a common toilet. It is merely an open space away from any prying eyes.

There are about 20 - 25 shacks, depending on the number of families living there at the time. The people have to ask for water from nearby houses which have running water. The 'rent' was 50 cents a day for the ground with the people renting the space that they occupy because they have to build their shacks themselves. The 'rent' system was abolished in 1983. Most of the people living there say they only use these as temporary housing and cannot afford to stay in a brick house as they have to keep moving from one place to another. They are all sheep-shearers and when the shearing is over they have to move to other farms looking for work.

It is one thing to talk about poverty as an outsider looking in, and another to actually experience poverty as a member of the community. For an illustration of how the people who are living in the 'skutskraale' feel about their situation, I used a case study of one of the residents.

Oom Hans is a resident of the Skutskraale. He has been living there for some years, although he does not know how long. He moved from place to place but always came back to the Skutskraale because he regarded it as his 'permanent base'. He has nine children and all of them are grown up. He has been separated from his wife for a long time, not because he chose to be separated from his wife, but because of poverty. He could not support a family on his salary and thought it best that his wife should go and find work on another farm. He does not even know where his wife and some of his children are. This is what he has to say:

'What you are looking at is what I have been working for all my life, this donkey and the cart that I built myself. And in the corner are all my possessions'.

(These are his cooking tins, his rusted plate and an old vegetable rack which he uses to pack his cooking utensils and his clothes. There are also two dirty torn blankets in a heap in the corner).

'Not very much, is it?'

When asked if he was still working and what kind of job he was doing, he said:

'I am too old and tired to go to the farms now. All I do is to go around looking for work, doing gardening for the Blacks living in the area and for the Whites in town, and doing piece-jobs (whatever needs to be done), and that is how I earn my living. I have nine children, all of them grown up. One of my sons is also living in the Skutskraale and he is a sheep-shearer like the others. He shares his shack with four others who are also in his profession. Sheep-shearing is something you have to master, to be able to be a good shearer.

When I used to be a shearer we were paid fifteen cents a sheep, and I understand that now they are paid twenty-five cents a sheep. The sheep-shearing "profession" is handed down from father to son. Life is going on and what can we do about our situation, nothing if you ask me, absolutely nothing.

If we get kicked out of this place we cannot go to the farms, because the farmer will only allow us on his farm if there is some work that needs to be done; when it is done we have to go because he does not need us any more. Where can we go? We cannot keep on moving about and besides, I am too old now (68 years). All I am waiting for is my dying day.

I still think that we are lucky to have a roof over our heads and we should thank God for that. Maybe one day, he will also give us better houses with brick walls and taps in the yard. Life at the Skutskraale is tough, you cannot think of tomorrow because it will be like today anyway.'

What Oom Hans said gives an indication that poverty is a circle. His father before him was a shearer and very poor, he was a shearer and his

son is a shearer and also very poor. There is no way of escaping, no way of improving one's position. There is no way of escaping the vicious circle of poverty. The people have resigned themselves to it, they have accepted their situation and plan to do nothing about it because they see no way of getting out of that kind of situation. Oom Hans asked what they could do about their situation, and he was convinced there was absolutely nothing they could do.

Yes, poverty breeds poverty. I chose this story because I feel that Oom Hans is a typical example of the poorest people. He represents all those who work for survival, that is working to be able to eat and survive. He is a person who has none of the necessities of life. He has no bed, no proper roof over his head and no family that he can call his own. Although he has children and a wife somewhere, he cannot call them his own. Poverty divided his people and made strangers of the members of his family.

Type B: Rondavels

These are round, mushroom-like buildings. They consist of a single round room which is a bedroom, a kitchen, a diningroom and a bathroom all in one, because the people eat, sleep, cook and bath in the single room. One of my key informants told me that the rondavels have been standing there for more than 52 years. She told me that since she was born, they have been there and that was 52 years ago.

'In all the years, they have never been repainted or renovated in any way', said Auntie Bettie who is a resident at the rondavels.

They have a single window and most of them have no window frames or window panes; when the open square which is supposed to be a window is closed, the people just push a piece of cardboard into place to close the gap. The rondavels have no yards of their own; they are scattered around at random in one area. The residents of the rondavels complain that the roof leaks when it rains and because they have dirt floors, the room becomes muddy and their bedding gets wet.

Those families who can afford to build a toilet and maintain it have their own private toilet, otherwise they have to use public toilets provided for the people living in the rondavels and the 'Red Blocks' (Rooi Blok), that is 24 families sharing 6 toilets. These families also have to share one water tap. None of the rondavels have electricity. The rent is R13,51 a month.

To illustrate what poverty does to people, what living conditions it creates for them, and how the people who are living under such conditions feel about their situation, I have chosen Auntie Bettie's story.

Auntie Bettie is 52 years old and has been living in Philipstown all her life. She lives with her bedridden mother and her brother who receives a disability grant because he suffers from tuberculosis. The mother receives a pension. Auntie Bettie does not work because she has to look after her mother.

Before the family moved to the rondavels, where they are now living, they were lodgers in a two-roomed house. They moved because the house was overcrowded. There were seven adults and six children staying in the two-roomed house.

She said:

'Ons was op mekaar, and being poor reduces you to become a beggar. If you have no money to buy food you have to go and beg the shopkeepers to give the food on credit. You have to submit to humiliating slurs from the shopkeeper, you must call him "Baas" and call his wife "Miesies" his children "Kleinbaas" and "Klein Miesies"'.

Auntie Bettie used a phrase to explain the situation:

'Ek kan maar sedie is 'n Boetie Boetie dorpie'.

Because the house only has a single room, when she wants to bath or get dressed, she has to go to other people's places or her brother has to move out. The mother, the brother and Aunt Bettie all sleep in one room. The mother who is old, sleeps on the bed and Auntie Bettie and her brother sleep on the floor, on the same piece of mat with their heads facing opposite directions.

'Ons moet maar kop-en-punt slaap want daar is nie genoeg plek nie. If people are living like this, then they lose respect for each other. How can you respect each other when the mother, the father and the children are all sleeping together? If a person gets visitors, he or she cannot receive them properly. You have to sit outside in the open with your visitors because there is no room in the house. You cannot even offer them a place to sleep if they need accommodation, because there is only one room. It is very humiliating'.

She thinks that the place is suitable for old people who are on pension, but for young and healthy people, Philipstown has nothing to offer. She says that the place is dead, there is no sport, no halls for recreation there is absolutely nothing going on.

The old woman, Auntie Bettie's mother, says she was born and educated in Philipstown. She has never left the place, because she had nowhere to go. She intends staying in Philipstown although the conditions are as bad as they are. She says that she is waiting for her dying day which might bring joy because the Bible says that if you suffer now, you will live happily ever after.

'It is no wonder we get so sick. Look at the filth, look at the way the houses are all almost breaking down. There's no running water in the houses and the state of the common water tap is disgusting, and ten to twelve people live in a room where there isn't space enough to move around. Most of the houses have dirt floors, several are nothing but storerooms. We hardly have any furniture, some families haven't even got chairs and have to sit down on empty cans or broken stones. Fleas and bugs? There are plenty of them. You couldn't live in a worse place than this' says the old woman.

A commonly held sociological fiction is that the physical conditions of poverty (e.g. availability of food and shelter) are not significant determinants of behaviour, or at least they are relatively unimportant, for sociological analysis because of their non-social character. I feel that these are very important in the discussions of poverty, because people normally behave according to their situation. The poor usually associate with people who are in the same situation.

Type C: (Rooi Blok) Red Block

These units are called the 'Rooi Blok' because they are made of redbrick and red soil. The 'red block' units in the Municipal area, are one and a half-roomed and those in the Administration Board area have only single rooms. They are attached to each other to form a continuous row of houses.

Firstly, I will deal with the 'red blocks' in the Municipal area. These houses, which only have one and a half rooms, are attached to each other; four in a single row, and there are four rows. They have dirt floors and those which have cement floors, have holes in the floor, and the walls are not plastered. There are some traces of plaster on the walls in some of the houses, and the people say that the walls were plastered but the plaster fell off.

Twenty-four families share one water tap and six common toilets, four families to each toilet. The houses have no electricity and there are

no yards. For the one and a half rooms the people pay R18,50 per month.

Secondly, there are the 'rooi bloks' in the Administration Board area. These have single rooms and there are only 14 houses to a single row and these form 2 rows. These also have dirt floors, no electricity, and the walls have never been plastered. The people share six toilets with the people living in the rondavels, that is, 14 families from the 'red block' and 10 families from the rondavels share 6 toilets and one water tap. The other 14 families from the 'red block' share their toilets with the people living in the 'white block'. The people have to pay R25,00 a month for rent.

The 'red block' in the Administration Board area was provided for the people as temporary housing where a squatter camp existed previously. The camp was demolished 32 years ago and the 'red block' was built as temporary housing. The people feel that conditions were better when they lived in the squatter camp because then they could build shacks big enough to accommodate the whole family. Now the conditions are worse because they all have to make do with the single room which is very small for a family of five.

Type D: (The 'White Block') 'Wit blok'

These are available in the Administration Board area. They are eight-roomed houses with a single family occupying two rooms. They have a front yard and a separate entrance to their yards. These are called 'Wit blok' because they are plastered outside and have been painted white. The inside of the house has cement floors and the walls have not been plastered. Ouma Anna had something to say about the houses:

'The walls are not plastered and I am lucky because I have a 'makoti' (daughter-in-law) who plastered the walls with some soil because we were beginning to choke on the dust. The roof leaks when it rains, and that means extra work for 'makoti' because the plaster comes off and she has to re-do the walls. The roof has been darkened by smoke and that makes the house very dark at night because we have to use candles.'

These houses have no electricity. The people have to pay R23,40 a month in rent for the two rooms. They have to use public toilets and a common

water tap with 36 other families. I understand that the 'White block' and the Municipal 'Red block' (which the people normally call 'die oumens skema' to differentiate it from the other 'red block') are mainly used to house pensioners.

Type E: Two-roomed Brick Houses

These are available both in the Administration Board area and the Municipality. They have two rooms, a separate toilet for each family with water taps in their own yards. The walls are plastered and they have cement floors. There are two houses attached to each other, that is, the houses only have a front yard and only one side of the house has a yard. (Semi-detached). The yards are fenced and have a separate gate.

The houses have no electricity and the people pay R18,00 in rent per month. Those living in the Administration Board area have to pay R24,00 for the same kind of housing.

Type F: Four-roomed Houses

These houses, like the two-roomed houses, have their own yards, have plastered walls and cement floors. They also have private toilets. The families living there are also allowed to connect electricity from the street lights and have electricity in their own houses. These houses are mainly used to accommodate teachers from outside who come to teach in the area. The rent the people pay is calculated according to their salaries. Those living in the Administration Board area pay R28,00 a month for rent. Looking at the kinds of housing provided in the two areas, and the services that go with them, one can see that there is not much difference between the two areas. The only difference lies in the amount of rent the people pay in different areas. The Administration Board area has a much higher rent for the houses, even for those which are identical to the ones found in the Municipal area. See Table 1 for a comparison of the rents in the two areas. It is important to state that even though I differentiate between the two areas, there is no boundary separating the two areas. The different areas are intermingled. It is not easy to differentiate between the different areas by merely looking at the place socially.

TABLE NO. 1
RENT PAID PER MONTH

Type of Housing	Administration Board	Municipal
Skutskraale	-	free
Rooiblok	R25,00	R18,50
Rondavels		R11,50
Witblok	R23,34	
Two-roomed Brick Houses	R24,00	R18,00
Four-roomed Brick Houses	R28,00	Calculated according to Salary

In June 1983 the people of Philipstown were issued with notices that the rents were going to be increased with effect from that July. They were only given three weeks' notice, and at the beginning of July the rents were increased. The people tried to organise to fight against the increased rental. Due to lack of leadership, the organisation did not get very far; after the first meeting with the Town Clerk the people did not continue the fight. The poor have no fighting spirit left in them; they have used it all up fighting to survive and to stay alive.

HEALTH

Philipstown has no hospital to serve the people living in the area. The nearest hospital is in De Aar, and if there are any serious cases, these are taken to Kimberley Hospital.

The only health service that is available to the people is the local clinic which is manned by one qualified sister and an unqualified nurse. I understand that there are nurses who come in from Kimberley to help with vaccinations. There is also a resident doctor who started working at the end of 1982.

No fees are paid at the clinic, but there is a charge for the doctor's services. The people have to pay R6,00 to see the doctor. Those who cannot afford it, go to the magistrate and pay 50 cents and are given a letter to see the doctor without payment. Pensioners do not have to pay for medical attention.

There is an ambulance service very recently established. Before this; the people had to provide their own transport to get the sick to De Aar Hospital in cases of emergency. When asked what happened in cases of emergency during the night, the nurse said that the people had to try and do what they could until morning, and therefore a person who might have been saved if he had reached hospital in time could die.

The clinic provides people with all the medical treatment. It does not, however, deal with the delivery of babies; it does not have a maternity section, but only provides prenatal and postnatal care. The nurses stated that what happens in between is not their business.

'Die Oumas in die lokasie doen dit'.

The grannies in the location act as midwives.

Looking at the conditions in which the people themselves live, and in which the babies are to be born, one perceives the dangers of letting the people deliver their babies themselves. There is a great danger to the mothers' and the babies' lives because there are no provisions for complications in labour, and if the baby is premature, the baby stands no chance of surviving. The clinic itself cannot deliver babies because there are no instruments to help the nurse to do so. The responsibility therefore devolves upon the grannies in the location.

The most common diseases in Philipstown are gastroenteritis and tuberculosis, among adults and malnutrition in children. Gastroenteritis is brought about by drinking home brewed beer and corn beer, sold exclusively by the Administration Board. It is important to bear in mind that gastroenteritis can kill.

The kinds of diseases and the number of patients treated, are shown in Table 2 on the following page.

This information is not a reflection of the number of unhealthy or sick people in Philipstown. It only indicates the number of people who have been treated or are being treated at the clinic. The doctor has his own reports which I could not obtain. The nurses from Kimberley also draw up their own reports which were not available to me. There are also hundreds of other people who do not consult the clinic or the doctor. The reports

do not give an indication of how many patients have been transferred to hospital or the number of pensioners who are treated at the clinic.

TABLE NO. 2
KINDS OF DISEASES AND NUMBERS OF PATIENTS TREATED PER MONTH

Disease	Total No. of People treated in June 1983	
	Coloured	African
Psychiatric	14	25
Childrens diseases	110	98
Tuberculosis	92	76
Venereal disease	34	32
Leprosy	2	-
Rheumatism	40	49
Gastroenteritis	70	38
Malnutrition	206	186
Other	320	265

Information from the clinic's monthly report (June) 1983.

There is enough medication available from the clinic, but no instruments at all. The nurse feels that there should be some improvement in this area and hopes to receive instruments from the Health Department.

One can understand the health of the people by relating it to their living conditions. Firstly, there is no proper sewage system available. Those who have toilets, use the 'bucket system', and these are collected twice a week. If they get full before the time of collection the people empty them into the streets or at the back of their yards.

Conditions around the water taps are very unhygienic with no adequate drainage for waste water and as a result the area around the water taps looks like a swamp. Children are allowed to defecate anywhere where they can find a space, even near the water supply.

Conditions at the Skutskraale are the worst in the area. There is malnutrition and the children are small for their age. People share their living space with their animals, the donkeys, dogs and chickens. They cook in the open using their tins as pots. These tins are rarely washed because the water is collected in other areas. Their drinking water has to stand in the open where it becomes polluted. Donkey and horse droppings are used as fuel because the people cannot afford coal and wood. Personal hygiene is also lacking because there is no privacy and as a result, people cannot bath properly. One even said that they do not wash at all in winter because it keeps them warm anyway.

Because most of the families have dirt or cement floors which have holes, when the house is being cleaned, there is always dust and the houses are never really clean.

The housing conditions contribute to the ill-health of the people. There are many families which have members suffering from rheumatism and tuberculosis. Thirteen families complained that their houses are infested by ticks, fleas and other pests. One woman even said:

'Die vlies is lastig maar 'n mens raak gewoon daaraan.
Hulle pla ons nie meer nie. Hulle is maar tog ook die
kinders van die huis as 'n mens se kan se.'

In Philipstown, because they live under poor conditions the people's health will almost always be poor.

Their diet also influences their health. The diet of the people can be determined by the income of the family and the amount of money spent on food. The income of the families I studied ranged from R15,00 a month to R150,00 a month. Almost all the families claim to be spending \pm R40,00 on food. Given their total income, and deducting rent and other expenses, it is impossible for them to still have \pm R40,00 left to buy food. Let us take for example Mrs. D's monthly budget. She is a domestic worker being paid R30,00 a month while her husband is a labourer at the railway station receiving R85,00 a month. Their total monthly income is R115 per month to keep 12 dependants.

Her husband stays in De Aar and only comes home at the end of each month. He has to buy his own food while he is in De Aar. With the total income of the family and its expenses, it means that he only gets R7,00 a month

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT
Rent	R23,34
Paraffin & Candles	R25,00
Transport	R14,00
Church levies	R 4,00
Food	R40,00
Cleaning Materials	R10,00
TOTAL	R126,34

for his food. It is also impossible for a family of twelve to live for a whole month on R40,00 worth of food. To supplement the income Mrs. D. has informal economic activities in her household.

Most of the small families spend no more than R20,00 on food. It is possible for them to spend so little on food because their diet consists of 'Afval' (lungs, tripe, trotters etc.) and pap (porridge). One can understand why the people's health is unsatisfactory: they eat an incomplete diet.

While visiting one of the families in the 'Witblok' I noticed that the baby who was not more than 3 months old, was fed condensed milk diluted with water. One cannot expect such a baby to grow up being healthy.

Because the poor are often isolated or without transport, they have restricted access to proper medical attention. The care they do receive is often too late and of poor quality. Yet the relative need for health care is greatest among those groups - infants, expectant mothers and the elderly - which form a disproportionate number of the population in poverty.

Poor nutrition during pregnancy can hinder foetal brain development and increase the probability of premature birth. This early birth damage, perhaps followed by frequent illness, further malnutrition, crowded and unsanitary living conditions, is exacerbated by lack of medical attention, and may affect the adult's ability to obtain adequate employment. The health problems of the poor are not invisible. The glazed eyes of children, children who are too small for their age, are easily recognised even by an untrained observer.

EDUCATION

A major presumption of the war on poverty is that education and training are especially effective ways to alleviate poverty. Education has consistently been a favoured means of social improvement especially for the poor.

Ouma Anna, who is living in the 'Red block' seems to agree with this presumption.

'Youngsters do not go to school long enough, they drop out at an early age and go out and work.'

According to Ouma Anna, education can help people escape poverty, but she also says that we cannot blame the youngsters because they are forced to leave school at an early age so they can work and help the family financially.

'Look at my grandson, he passed his standard six very well and he wanted to continue with his education but my daughter cannot afford to keep him at school. What a waste of brains.'

She feels that the families do not see that if they can just sacrifice five more years, then they will win out because with a higher education the child will have a lot of doors open for him, and that would mean more money.

'Things are different these days. I remember a time when all the good jobs were reserved for the white people because those were the only people who had education. Now things are different, even Africans and Coloureds can work in the banks, the post office and fill other good paying jobs. But the problem with our people is that they cannot afford to keep their children at school, because if they do, the family will starve and by the time the child has obtained his good paying job there will be no family left to enjoy the benefits.'

Some families do sacrifice those extra years but they do not always win out. Firstly, because there are no job opportunities in Philipstown and the youngsters are forced to move to bigger towns to look for better paying jobs. Most of them never remit money to their families and if they leave Philipstown, they leave for good and never come back.

Secondly, even if they get better paid jobs in the bigger towns, they just about manage to buy food and keep up with the fast life of the cities which is new to them. After satisfying all these needs, there will be hardly any left to send home. Thus, higher education in children does not help the

families in any way because it might help the individual to escape the circle of poverty, but the family will remain caught up in the circle.

If we examine the relationship between educational credentials and occupational reward, we notice that high qualifications, in and of themselves, do not lead directly to highly paid jobs. The main factors accounting for occupational reward are the individuals' class, race and sex. A male matriculant who decides to work in Philipstown will find that he is at a disadvantage because he will have to compete against male and female whites who might even have far less education than he has. If he is lucky enough to get the job, he will be forced to settle for less pay because this is calculated by looking at his class background. Because he is from a poor Black family, and the family manages to survive on very little money, he is expected to survive on that meagre salary.

Bowles and Gintis stated that education reproduces inequality by justifying privilege and attributing poverty to personal failure. (Haralambos 1980). Education efficiently disguises the fact that economic success runs in the family, that privilege breeds privilege. If we agree with the presumption that education can be an effective means of getting people out of poverty, then we place the blame for educational failure on the child, his family, his neighbourhood and the subculture of his social group.

The school-going children of Philipstown are deprived of the important skills which are essential to high educational attainment. Their environment is not only poverty stricken in economic terms but also in cultural terms. There is a meagreness of intellectual resources in the home and surroundings.

Philipstown has only two primary schools and no secondary or high school. If they want to further their schooling they have to go to De Aar which is far from Philipstown. The fees are high, and because their families are not living there, they have to pay board and lodgings and sometimes the conditions are overcrowded. They also have to buy books and school uniforms and all this costs money which their families cannot afford.

Children from the farms around Philipstown are even worse-off because there are no farm schools available. Most of the farm children start school

at the age of 12 or 13. It is very difficult for these children to concentrate because they have to compete with 7 year olds who learn faster than they do. Frustration causes these children to drop out of school and as a result they never get any meaningful education. The highest drop out rate is in standard 3 and 4. Forty per cent of total sample. These are all the people who are over the age of 20.

The relationship between academic credentials and occupational reward is not particularly close. In particular, income is only weakly linked to educational attainment. Education has little effect on economic inequality.

There are some people who have passed standard eight but they earn the same salary as those people who have no education; less than R50,00 a month.

There is a need for schools in Philipstown because school-going children are in the majority. Forty three per cent of the sample was below the age of 20. These are the people who are going to go to high schools, but because there are no high schools, they are forced to go out and work after completing standard six. The only jobs they can get are on the farms and these are low paid jobs. The women go into service and become domestic workers who are not better off than farm labourers.

AGE	EDUCATION	% OF TOTAL SAMPLE
All ages	No education	34%
10 years and above	No education	29%
20 years and above	Sub A - Std 5	35%
20 years and above	Std 6 - Std 10	9%

ATTITUDES

Our reliance on education as the ultimate public policy for curing all problems, economic and social, is unwarranted at best and in all probability ineffective.

Ouma Mitta is a pensioner who is a resident in the 'Red block'. She has to pay R25,40 in rent every month. She also has an account at the local shop where she buys her food on credit. Everything she buys on credit is entered in her book, and when she gets her pension, she takes it to pay her debts. This is how she feels about her situation:

'I had to ask my daughter to let her three children come and stay with me. I cannot cope with the housework and I am too old to carry water from the water tap. The children help me a lot. It was also a relief to my daughter to bring them to me because she has nine children, and sending three away will give her a breathing space. Three less mouths to feed.'

She feels that the conditions are getting worse because of rising food prices and rent.

'The prices keep on going up and the money that we get cannot keep up with the rising cost of living. The area is so dry that we cannot even plant vegetables. Even if the place was not so dry, we would not be able to plant vegetables because we do not have yards and the houses are not fenced in.'

When asked what their diet consisted of she replied:

'We only eat meat when I have money to buy meat and that is only (afval), tripe, trotters etc. I always buy my meat cash. We only eat in the morning and in the evening. In the morning we eat pap and coffee and sometimes bread, always homemade and in the evening we eat pap and meat, that is, if I have money to buy meat; otherwise we have to make do with cabbage, or tomatoes and onions.'

She feels that the best paid people in Philipstown are those who build roads, dams etc. These, she says, are the people who can work themselves up because they have enough money, but because drink is a problem, they squander their money on drink and as a result they are not better off than the sheep-shearers.

'I do not see a way out. If I could have a small business of my own which can bring me money, then it would mean a lot to me. But all this needs money to be started, and I do not have the money. I do not even have money to buy clothes. I went to Kimberley for a check-up and I saw a beautiful black skirt in one of the shops. I went in and asked the price. I had enough money to buy the skirt but then I thought of my grandchildren. I decided there and then not to buy the skirt because I could use the money to buy food for my grandchildren and myself.'

Ouma Mitta blames their situation on the lack of job opportunities and lack of financial resources.

Mrs. Witbooi has her own definition of poverty and she has good reason to define poverty in her way. She says:

'Poverty is not knowing where your next meal is going to come from, and always wondering when the council is going to put your furniture out and always praying that your husband must not lose his job.

To me that is poverty.'

She says that they cannot manage on her husband's salary because after buying food and paying the rent there is no money left, and there are eight mouths to feed. She has a son who is ten years old, and she hopes to get a grant for this child because he has lost the use of his right hand.

'There are a lot of families in Philipstown who are poor. But the problem is that poverty is not something that you can measure on a scale e.g. in kilograms. Two families might get the same amount of money e.g. R95,00, the one might survive on that income, the other not, because of the number of people who are dependent on that income.'

It is important to note that pay may be defined as low in relation to the circumstances of the individual. Thus a wage which may provide a family of four with a reasonable living standard, may reduce a family of eight to poverty. It is equally important to note that it is sometimes the case that it is not the size of the family that plunges the family into poverty but the third or fourth child.

The circumstances of the poor may therefore not be due to family size, but due to low wages.

'The council has even introduced a 'stop-order' system of paying rent among the farm workers. The farmer deducts rent money and pays the rent for them. At first we thought that the farmer was paying rent out of his own pocket.'

This is one way in which the people are forced to work for one farmer for fear of losing their houses if they leave and look for better working conditions and better wages.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the poor in Philipstown live in substandard housing. Conditions are often over-crowded, unsanitary and constitute a health hazard, reinforcing the danger to health caused by inadequate diet. Decaying dwellings can undermine their will to improve the situation and escape from poverty.

They have inadequate diets which can have various consequences. The situation is made worse due to minimal provision of socialised medicine and the high charges of private medicine which are often beyond the means of the poor. Frequent illness and low energy levels can sap the drive and determination needed to escape from poverty.

Education will not be able to help these people in any way. It does not necessarily follow that if their children get a higher education, they and their families would escape poverty. Those with minimum education move out to work in big towns and cities and never come back for fear of being caught up in poverty again. They can also not afford to improve the situations of their families because they occupy low-paying jobs. Poverty is a vicious cycle from which it is difficult but not impossible to emerge, although the poor tend to think it is impossible to escape. Education alone will not be able to help the people out of poverty. It is only able to tackle a part of an enormous problem, the problem of social inequality. Poverty will only be eradicated with the removal of inequality in general.

Efforts by the poor to promote their interests and secure public support are weakened by the 'shame of poverty', a stigma which remains alive and well in Philipstown.

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COMMUNITY WORK

Community work in Philipstown is taken care of by Mr. Buffel. He is a pensioner himself but is still working because of the shortage of teachers. He draws pensions and grants for the under-privileged people.

He pays the accounts after the people have bought food on credit at the shops. He makes sure that their expenditure does not exceed their income by too much. He has to do this, because if he doesn't the people will spend all their money at the beerhalls. Thus he sees that the people eat food rather than drink beer.

He buries the dead, seeing to their funeral arrangements. One of the residents of the skutskraale passed away, but there was nobody to see to his funeral arrangements except Mr. Buffel. Although Mr. Buffel is retired, he still teaches; he is teaching the third generation in Philipstown at present. He is also the local church leader. The statistics in table 3 below show the number of people who are dependent on government grants and pensions (these only deal with the people in the sample and not the population as a whole).

TABLE 3

Total % of people dependent on government grants: 22%.

Income Type	Total		Gross Total
	Male	Female	
Old Age Pension	5%	12%	17%
Disability Grant	5%	4%	9%
Welfare Grant	8%	11%	19%

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Town Clerk of Philipstown feels that the conditions of the poor are getting worse by the day and sees the problem area being the area where the pensioners are housed. He sees poverty in Philipstown resulting from lack of job opportunities. The only jobs that the people around Philipstown can get are on the farms or in the local shops and the municipality, and because the workers are not skilled in any way they are paid very low wages.

According to him the situation started deteriorating and getting worse in the past few decades due to depopulation. Farmers and local white people started moving out because there were no improvements and development was very slow. He feels that the poor can improve their situation by moving to bigger towns to seek work there. The pensioners' state cannot be improved in any way because they cannot work anymore, and he feels that they are the one group of people that will never be able to escape the vicious circle of poverty.

He claims that in 1980 schemes were started to try and upgrade and improve the town and the services. The Council realised the people's situation and took up the matter, and development is expected in this year. They are also going to promote the sales scheme. The prices are going to be fixed as low as possible with the effect that renting a house will be more expensive. The people of Philipstown do not earn enough money to buy houses and the Town Clerk says that loans will be provided and these will be calculated on income, and, as such, the people will not be required to provide securities in order to get the loans. Those people with low income will get assistance from the Department of Community Development.

The Municipality is at the moment trying to negotiate with the Administration Board to give up control of the houses that are situated in the old location, this, the Town Clerk claims, is one reason why the Municipality has not been able to build new houses for the people and this resulted in over-crowding.

Improvements have also been made at the clinics. There are two clinics, one in the European area and the other in the Black area. Each of the clinics has two qualified sisters and one unqualified nurse (at the time of my study, the clinic in the township only had one qualified sister). Philipstown has

never had a resident doctor, the doctor only came once a week, but at the moment they have one resident doctor.

He feels that one other cause of poverty in Philipstown is the lack of education among farm workers and their children. Improvements are also expected in this area and a school hostel is on the priority list. This hostel will mainly house farm children attending school in Philipstown. At the moment these children are accommodated by families living in the area, because of over-crowding it has been impossible for these students to cope with their school work.

I heard of these improvements a year ago and they came up again this year.

FIELD WORK AMONG THE POOR IN PHILIPSTOWN

The fieldwork on which the paper is based was carried out over a period of three weeks - a very short period. It is too short for a complete study of the people if one is using the ethnographic method of research. This method requires a person to follow and participate in the population's whole life cycle. There might not be anything significant taking place at that period, and one can therefore not claim to understand fully the community and its way of life.

I began work after having spent some time in Philipstown in 1982 and 1983. This enabled me to work easily among the people because I was no stranger to them. It also gave me the chance to prepare my study along the right lines, because I knew that the people speak Afrikaans, and that the majority cannot read or write.

My stay in 1982 and 1983 also enabled me to use the participant observation method through which the most adequate data are obtained, through participation in the life of the community being studied. Whereas an interviewer with a questionnaire merely seeks answers to questions which have already been formulated from an outsider's point of view, the participant observer tries through participation to learn to think as the people do themselves, and to experience the same conditions as those in which they live. Thus she makes friends. She tries to take part in all manner of daily activities. She endeavours to 'behave properly' from the point of view of the people in that particular place, thereby affecting minimally the flow of life which she observes.

I must say it was sometimes very difficult to abide by the rules of the ethnographic method. I cannot claim to have lived among the poor people in Philipstown, experiencing the same conditions as those in which they live. I stayed with one of the privileged families which does not fall under the category 'poor'. It is not that I found the conditions among the poor below my standard, but just that there was no other place for me to stay.

I sometimes did not behave 'properly' from the point of view of the people (the poor). The people of Philipstown show great respect for the people who are better-off than they are. The only people that they see as better-off than themselves are the teachers, priests, and other professional people.

I was automatically placed among the privileged because I associated with the privileged family with whom I stayed. To show respect, the people call these privileged people 'master' or 'sir' and 'madam' (meester en juffrou); this even applies to the children of the professional people. It happened that I was also called 'Juffrou' even by the elderly people. I could not understand, and sometimes I used to forget how to react. I was expected to call them by their first name, or call them Uncle or Aunt. The poor in Philipstown are like one huge family of aunts and uncles and children.

When talking to elderly people or grown-ups I used to address them as Mr. or Mrs. (Meneer en Mevrouw) and that put them off. I wanted to make friends, but instead I made 'fans'.

There always seemed to be that gap between myself and the poor. They were expected to watch the way they spoke to me, they were always on guard.

I wanted them to open up and be themselves, and sometimes it was very hard to get them to do just that.

I explained to the people that I was part of a group doing research on the socio-economic situation in the Karoo. I had to gain the confidence of the poor, and thus assess the trustworthiness of my information. I never told my poor friends they and their private lives would play as material for the paper. I felt that if I had told them what role they would play, their responses could be influenced, some would try to be very impressive and some would even exaggerate their situation. I therefore tried to avoid invalid information entering into the project.

The purpose of my paper apart from giving a close description of the lives of poor people in Philipstown, is to try to contribute in two ways to improving their condition. Firstly, it is my hope that increased knowledge and understanding will lead to greater sympathy and, at best, to a greater will to help activity. I also hoped to open the eyes of the people themselves, show them that they can use what little they have to try to change their situation. Education is free and can help them if, and only if, they keep their children at school.

I feel that even with the problems I encountered I somehow managed to win the confidence of the people; they are very hospitable, so even though I sometimes made mistakes in my behaviour, they still trusted me and managed to brush that off because I was a stranger.