

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Microstudies in Gazankulu: Study
of 8 villages in two districts
of Gazankulu

by

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STORIES OF IMPOVERISHMENT

1. INTRODUCTION - METHODOLOGY

My husband and I have lived for over 30 years in the remote areas of the Northern Transvaal, amongst the Tsonga people. We were, therefore, well placed to witness the changes which gradually took place, and are still taking place in the rural communities of this area. Our daily contacts with so many Tsongas of all walks of life give us insight in some of the problems which appeared as a result of so many changes in the social, economic and political conditions.

The appeal by the Carnegie Inquiry for first hand factual information on poverty and development encouraged me to visit 8 villages and to discuss with a small group of inhabitants the processes of change, as they perceive them and the consequences of such changes in their daily life.

I chose for my studies villages which I have known for 30 years, which appear to me rather typical of the two districts of Giyani and Ritavi and where I have good contacts.

My respondents were men and women, generally above 40 years of age and from various standards of education. I did not use a questionnaire and, in most cases, led the people to discuss the various topics I had listed. All interviews were conducted in Tsonga and I found people very keen to give information when they realised that the purpose of the inquiry was to look for solutions to the problem of poverty.

The main areas of change I have studied are: population, infrastructure and environment, family life, standard of living and social problems. I have deliberately omitted health problems as they are widely covered by other papers.

11. DESCRIPTION OF THE VILLAGES - PROCESS OF CHANGE

The 8 villages chosen for the study can be divided into two groups:

A. The first group is composed of 4 villages situated in a typical rural area, far from any urban centre, where agriculture and cattle farming are still predominant (GIYANI district).

B. The second group is composed of 4 villages, situated near urban centres (Tzaneen, Phalaborwa) or white farmers and where people are much more economically dependent from white employers (RITAVI district).

Traditionally, each Tsonga family had its own "village" composed of a few huts and a kraal and where lived the extended family. The huts were surrounded by the fields and grazing areas.

From 1964, the government started resettling people in rural villages of 200 to 400 families. Each family received a stand of more or less 1500 m², each stand having just enough room for one nuclear family. These stands were demarcated by the agricultural extension officer along "lines" or roads, cutting one another at square angles. The adjacent areas were divided between grazing and ploughing areas.

When one discusses the process of change with the people, they always speak of their ways of living "before the lines" and "in the lines" ("malayineni" in Tsonga). In fact, the resettlement "in lines" brought tremendous changes in the lives of the people, some for the better (roads, communications, schools, community organisation, water, etc.), some for the worse (scattering of the enlarged

family, lack of privacy, lack of toilet facilities, problems with chickens, cattle, distance from the fields, etc.). As one respondent said: "Problems and diseases spread too easily in the lines."

All the villages I have studied had undergone this process of resettlement, but none was moved to a different area.

Although the purpose of these resettlements in lines was to redistribute the land in a more adequate manner, in most cases the fields were not demarcated and camps for the cattle were not erected, and are still not now.

a. NGOVE, DZUMERI, GUWELA, MZILELE
(see map 1).

People have been living in these areas for more than 40 years, but the villages as we see them now, have been established from 1964, where people were forced to apply for stands in the demarcated areas.

1. Population

There is a general increase in population. At Dzumeri, which is situated near the border with Lebowa, many people moved in in 1964 from Lebowa or from neighbouring white farms. The village has now over 500 families. The people who came to settle there had different customs and traditions and, still now, they do not form a homogeneous community.

In contrast, Mzilele and Guwela (10 and 20km from Dzumeri) have remained very homogeneous communities. The population growth is a natural growth and the villages are still small (150 families). This can be explained by the fact that

these villages are more distant from the main roads and difficult to reach.

Ngove is different again, as it is situated near the tarred road and the Giyani township. The population growth is also a natural one, as the chief has never accepted people from outside. Only in these last two or three years have some "foreigners" settled there. For this reason, Ngove never developed as a slum area for Giyani, as it is the case for the other villages around Giyani.

The general increase in the population has influenced the economy of the villages, whereas the composition of the population (heterogeneous or homogeneous) has had a definite effect on the appearance of social problems. This will appear clearly from the following paragraphs.

From statistics obtained from the Department of Agriculture and Forestry (Gazankulu), it appears that two thirds of the population are under 20 years of age. The school population at present is of 170 000 children, with an increase of roughly 10 000 per year.

2. Infrastructure and environment

a. Water

In all 4 villages there are boreholes, some of which became dry during the drought. During 1983, a system of reticulation of water from the Hudson Ntsanwisi Dam, at Giyani, has been installed, which brings clean water to all villages situated North of the Molodotsi river (over 100km of pipes). Dzumeri will get water from the new dam built on the Middle Letaba river, which has just been completed. There was a general consensus that the water situation has

greatly improved through the efforts of the Gazankulu government.

b. Roads and transport

Roads have also greatly improved. Bridges have been built and bus services run fairly regularly from each of these villages to Giyani. Taxis are also available, but not so regularly.

Bus fares are expensive: from Mzilele to Giyani R1.90 single trip. Children who attend the high school about 15km away pay R7.00 per month for transport.

c. Fuel

Wood is becoming very scarce in most places. In Dzumeri and Ngove, people pay R2.00 per load. A family uses about two loads per month and more in winter. The officials of Nature Conservation make people pay heavy fines if they are found in the possession of a piece of green wood. So far, nothing has been done to establish fire wood plantations or other sources of fuel (e.g. community gas plants, etc.).

Electricity will soon be available at Ngove.

d. Post and telephone

All these villages depend on the Giyani post office from where they have fetch their post (40 km or more). Most school principals carry the post bags to and from Giyani. This creates problems during the school holidays when it is difficult for the people to get their post. Telephone lines have reached only Ngove. There is radio communication between the clinic at Dzumeri and the Giyani hospital.

e. Shops

There is one shop and one cafe in each village. At Dzumeri, many businesses have been established (bottle store, lounge-restaurant, butcher, cafes) but none belongs to the Dzumeri people.

In all these shops, the prices of goods are usually high due to transport costs and lack of competition. People have to buy from these shops, as they are too far from other shops.

f. Schools

There is a primary school in each village, most of them not much older than 15 years. There is a junior secondary school at Mzilele and Ngove and a high school about 5 km from Dzumeri. The primary schools are too small for the number of children. At Guwela, the first brick building has been partially erected in 1983. It is not yet completed as the inhabitants could not raise more funds (they have already paid R20.00 per family). Before the drought killed all the cattle, school attendance for boys was irregular as they had to look after the cattle. From all respondents, it was clear that to look after cattle has become incompatible with school work and another solution should be found, if people should be encouraged to start cattle farming again.

At Dzumeri, Guwela and Mzilele, parents used to sell a head of cattle to pay for school fees, books, uniforms and transport. Mothers mentioned several times during my visits that 1984 will be a very difficult year as there are no more cattle to sell (average cost for primary school, Std.1 to 5: books and school fees : R25.00; school uniform : R33.00). The junior secondary schools are not overcrowded, but lack equipment and qualified teachers. They seem however to have better results than the bigger schools in the townships.

This is most probably due to the low ratio of students per teacher and the close supervision of the teachers by the principal.

School is compulsory and families are fined 20c when a child misses school without reason. This, however, does not prevent the high number of children who leave school before the end of Std.2.

3. Family life

The situation varies according to the geographical situation of the village. The more remote the village, the more traditional and homogeneous is the population, the stronger are family ties. At Guwela and Mzilele, any pregnant girl is forced to get married to the child's father. There are no single mothers, but the respondents had to confess that such marriages did not always last very long and that the young woman would then come back to her parents with the child.

At Dzumeri and Ngove, the respondents said rather hopelessly: "Marriages nowadays last just 2 or 3 years, many girls do not get married and grandmothers are caring for grandchildren, while the mothers try to get some work. Men often do not care for their families. When they come back at Christmas or Good Friday, they do not bring anything to their family. The time when the return of the father or the brother was a time of rejoicing and happiness is long past."

In all the villages, there are still many strong couples, especially over 40 years of age, but there is no doubt that there is a general crisis of the family. There are more and more divorces and separations and as often marriages are not recorded in the husband's reference book, he can easily contract another marriage or, at least a customary union.

Polygamy is coming back under a new form: the husband has two or three wives established in different villages; as this represents a financial burden, it leads to the neglect of one or other of the wives.

One woman told me: "For our husbands, we are just their old age home or their hospitals, they really come back to us when they are too old to work or when they are sick." Nowadays, many come back badly damaged by the abuse of drinking.

This situation leads to a wide spread neglect of children. Many single mothers have to go and work and leave their children in the care of an old lady who often cannot cope with the responsibility. Children are not properly fed, they get used to doing what they want and do not learn to obey. If the mother remains at home to look after the children, then she has no money to buy food.

The situation of the elderly people is also difficult, as often their children are scattered and do not look after them. Few receive the old age pension and often those who receive it have to look after their grown up children and grandchildren. I heard of many cases where three generations were living on the pension of the grandfather or grandmother.

There was a general complaint about young men remaining idle at home, not looking for work, living out of stolen goods they sell.

Could this not be the result of the absence of the father and the lack of identification of the boys with a male adult?

4. Standard of living

In all four villages, people's incomes used to come from their fields and cattle farming. With the increase in population, few families can have fields now or cattle. At Ngove, many of the fields have been taken for a sisal plantation. Men then started to look for work in towns far away.

Three years of drought have shown the vulnerability of these villages : all the cattle have died, there has been no harvest, which means that the little money men send from the towns has to be used for the essential, that is food primarily, and there is no cash available for transport, clinic fees, community projects, etc.

In all four villages, apart from those with steady employment, like teachers, nurses, businessmen, all respondents confirmed that they are poorer now than twenty years ago. This feeling is not only caused by the lack of money, but also by the high standard of living introduced by those who earn more. New needs have been created which can only be satisfied by money.

Monetary economy has created classes in a society where there was no class. One woman said: "In the past, people used to share and help each other, now nobody wants to help unless he is paid for his services."

Many women go and work on white farms, specially from Dzumeri, being fetched and brought back home in lorries in the most unhealthy conditions. They earn between R24.00 and R28.00 per month and are absent from home from 5h30 in the morning to about 19h in the evening.

As far as ploughing the fields is concerned, it was clear from my respondents that the young women are no longer prepared to go and work in the fields. They prefer to work for cash. At Ngove, they prefer to work in the sisal plantation where they earn about R70.00 a month, rather than to go in their fields, although the work is just as hard.

This situation is a clear indication that the whole question of crop production has to be reconsidered on a new basis.

As far as cattle farming is concerned, the traditional way of looking after cattle is in direct conflict with the school and new ways should be devised, like camps with proper fences, quality instead of quantity, etc. At present, the lack of grazing makes it impossible to bring back cattle in this area, but the question of the re-establishment of new herds of cattle should be discussed, as it will be impossible for the people to buy cattle. A young man at Ngove told me: "My father lost his cattle in 1948, then in 1964 and in 1983. In 1948 and 1964, he managed to rebuild his herd (about 200 head of cattle), but now it will be impossible, there is not enough grazing areas and there is nobody left to look after the cattle."

Some women are doing needlework, crochet and knitting and sell their finished products. As people live far from shopping centres, they sell easily.

5. Social problems

In the three villages of Ngove, Mzilele and Guwela, where the population is homogeneous, social problems are few. There is no crime, nor violence, people are not afraid to visit each other at night, they do not lock their huts at night. There is not much drinking and this is not a problem.

By contrast, at Dzumeri, where the population is larger and very heterogeneous and which is situated on main roads, social problems are many. There are many young people loafing around and stealing. Drinking is widespread. Family disorganisation, child neglect, lack of care for the aged are rife in an overpopulated area where there is no hope to make a living from the fields and no hope to get work.

6. Possible solutions

As there is no hope of creating paying jobs for the whole population, people should be helped to become more and more self-supporting, food wise and cash wise.

In villages like Ngove, Guwela and Mzilele, agricultural co-operatives should be established for those who want to be farmers.

Facilities for vegetable gardens (fences, water, tools seeds) should be provided on a loan basis, so that each family could grow its own vegetables, either individually or in community gardens.

Schools and clinics should be provided free or as free as possible. Plantations of firewood should be established and the possibility of organising community gas plants should be investigated.

Training of women in housecrafts, gardening, children care, handwork, should be given in order to raise their income by selling homemade articles. I wish here to acknowledge the good work done by the care groups and some churches in this field. Unfortunately, in all four villages, there are no such projects and people are very much left to themselves.

I think that, if such steps as mentioned above could be taken in the immediate future, it would be possible to consolidate many of the rural villages and encourage their inhabitants to stay there, specially seeing that the social organisation is still strong enough.

In places like Dzumeri, it would be essential to see that farm labourers earn better salaries. Small industries and labour intensive public works should be planned on a permanent basis and not only as drought relief schemes. People should be encouraged to buy local products made in the small industries.

Old age pensions should be granted to all people above 65 years. Creches would be a proper solution to child neglect, but at least feeding schemes would be a first step towards helping the working mothers. In a village near Giyani, one of the women organised a feeding scheme where children pay 5c per day and get a mug of fortified soup and a piece of bread. The cooking is done by the care group members. When the health inspectors visited the school and the baby clinic, they found that all the children were looking well and there was no case of malnutrition. The scheme is self-supporting.

Food production and job opportunities should be increased in ways that reduce poverty and inequality and distribute widely the extra income needed, if the poor are to buy the extra food produced. Growth should be combined with social justice.

B. MAFARANE, BONN, BURGERSDORP AND-DAN

(see map 2)

These four villages are situated along the tarred road going from Tzaneen to Lydenburg, 15 to 25km from Tzaneen, 80km from Phalaborwa.

1. Population

These villages are heavily populated. People have come to settle there from white or black farms (to avoid paying taxes on black farms) or have been resettled there from adjoining areas, which were proclaimed grazing or ploughing areas.

At Burgersdorp, where people started to settle in 1964, fields have never been distributed and all surrounding areas are covered with bush.

Each village has more than 500 families. At Dan, there are two lower primary schools which each counts more than 1000 children.

Part of the village is occupied by people who have come from Dzumeri and Ngove looking for work and who have brought their families with them. They have not been given stands and the area developed more like a slum of the Nkowankowa township or even of Tzaneen.

2. Infrastructure and environment

a. Water

Water is still a problem, although the government is trying to sink boreholes and to equip some of them with diesel engines.

b. Roads and transport

The roads are good and transport is easy, specially for those who commute to town. Bus tickets are expensive. From Dan to Tzaneen, the monthly ticket is R10.00, which is sometimes paid by the employer, but not always. As the area is densely populated and the distances are small, there are no great communication problems.

c. Fuel

Firewood is expensive and scarce. Electricity will soon be available at Burgersdorp, but only the more wealthy families will be able to afford it. People use coal, paraffin or wood, but it must all be bought.

d. Post and telephone

There are a few post offices in the area, but not enough considering the density of the population. Telephones are available in the villages.

e. Shops

Shops are available, but most of the people buy their food in Tzaneen and local shops are poorly supported. There is a bottlestore in each of the four villages, a lounge and a few cafes.

f. Schools

Schools are all overcrowded, at the primary and at the secondary level. Accommodation is poor, although the schools are many. All the children can attend school up to Std 10 level without having to go to boarding school.

Some respondents complained that bursaries were given to children whose parents could well afford to pay for them and that some poor children had to leave school, although they had good results.

At Dan, one principal of a lower primary school mentioned that many children do not come regularly to school and drop out soon, due to lack of home supervision. Both parents go to work and leave the children alone during the day, hoping that they attend school.

3. Family Life

Family disorganisation is also apparent. One area of Mafarane has been set aside for unmarried mothers and this has become a village of prostitutes. The children of the same mother often have all different fathers.

Many women are now trying to claim maintenance and it seems that the chief sends his police to check whether the father has paid or not. At Burgersdorp, however, I was told that fathers pay maintenance only for a few months and then disappear.

All the respondents showed real distress while describing the family disorganisation. Very young girls become pregnant (12 years) and the homes are full of children without fathers.

As most of the mothers are working, these children are left under the care of old ladies or bigger children, which creates many problems.

At Dan, which is situated near the Nkowankowa township, one old man described how his sons remain at Nkowankowa after

work, spending their evenings at the beerhall or the lounge, coming back home late or not at all. One of his sons is a police man and is stationed far from home (about 100km). As he was not coming home regularly and did not send money, his young wife went to see him. She found then that he had asked for a site near the police station, had built a house and taken another wife. When I asked the old father what would happen with the first wife and her children, he just sighed and said that she would have to go back to her own parents.

4. Standard of living

In 1950 and until 1964, most of the people were living from the land. With the resettlement of the people and the population growth, people gradually stopped ploughing and started to look for employment in the towns. This was also the time towns like Tzaneen and Phalaborwa started to grow and more jobs became available.

Since then most of the fields have not been ploughed. The main reasons given by my respondents were as follows:

- fields have not been demarcated and people feel helpless about it: the local induna puts the blame on the agricultural extension officer, who in turn puts the blame on the next officials, etc. Bureaucracy superimposed on traditional structures contributes to the impoverishment of the people: they feel powerless and often say things like: "We don't know, they say we cannot plough, fields have not been distributed, nobody knows why; We have to give money to the chief, but we don't know for what."
- people would not reap anything as the cattle would eat it all as nobody looks after the cattle (children are at school).

- many have no cattle to plough and tractors are too expensive.
- people prefer other jobs.

At Mafarane, most of the fields have been taken over by the Shangaan Tsonga Development corporation. The corporation ploughed the fields and sowed the seeds. The local people were offered shares (R5.00 per hectare per year for five years) and had to clean the fields and harvest. Part of the harvest would repay the cost of ploughing and seeds. Only five people took shares. The rest of the fields had to be cleaned by the corporation and most of the crops were stolen. What was left was taken by the corporation to cover its costs. After that, the fields were not ploughed again and people are just waiting to see what will happen.

Nowadays, most people work in the local firms. In most families there are one or two breadwinners. The women work mostly on the local farms, specially from Mafarane, Bonn and Burgersdorp, where they earn R24.00 per month. Better educated women work in Tzaneen where they earn from R20.00 per month. Very few women remain at home. When I asked one young woman who earns R20.00 per month how she copes with her children, she just looked at her father and said that her father was helping when he receives his old age pension.

In all four villages, the standard of living differs greatly from one family to the other and social classes have appeared, specially among the younger people (30-40 years). At Burgersdorp, there are more families with a higher degree of education and greater income. Such people belong generally to the third generation of Christians and have a long tradition of education.

There was a complaint at Burgersdorp that work at the local hospital was no longer given to the widows and poorer women as in the past, but to any women, even to those with a working husband.

At Mafarane, many people have small vegetable gardens, whereas at Dan vegetables are few due to lack of water.

People seem to have a regular cash income which allows them to plan their expenses, but in many cases it is most inadequate, to say the least.

It appears that many husbands are back from the towns, having lost their jobs because of the recession. Many do not find jobs at home.

5. Social problems

These four villages are rather urban than rural and have most of the social problems encountered in urban areas with, in addition, the inherent problems of rural areas: lack of privacy, lack of facilities, high density of population, scarcity of jobs, cultural crisis accompanied by a lack of awareness of what is happening, low wages. Violence, crime, theft, drinking problems are all there. One old man told me that he dares not go and visit his neighbour when it is dark, as he might well be attacked. Young girls have been killed recently at Dan and the police rarely find the culprits. People do not bother to call them any more.

Family disorganisation and child neglect are also present.

111. CONCLUSION

Stories of impoverishment?

Yes, in so many respects.

From 1950 to 1983, communities and families have disintegrated, they have lost their main source of income through population growth, resettlements "in lines" and bureaucratic inefficiency. Their alternate sources of income are inadequate and they use most of their energy to survive amongst growing difficulties and social problems. People do not feel secure and prefer not to think of tomorrow.

Worse still, people have lost the feeling that they can contribute to the development of the villages. Decision making processes escape more and more from them, as most of the decisions are taken at Giyani, the capital of Gazankulu.

In the midst of the process of this impoverishment, there are some rays of hope which show the way to a real development:

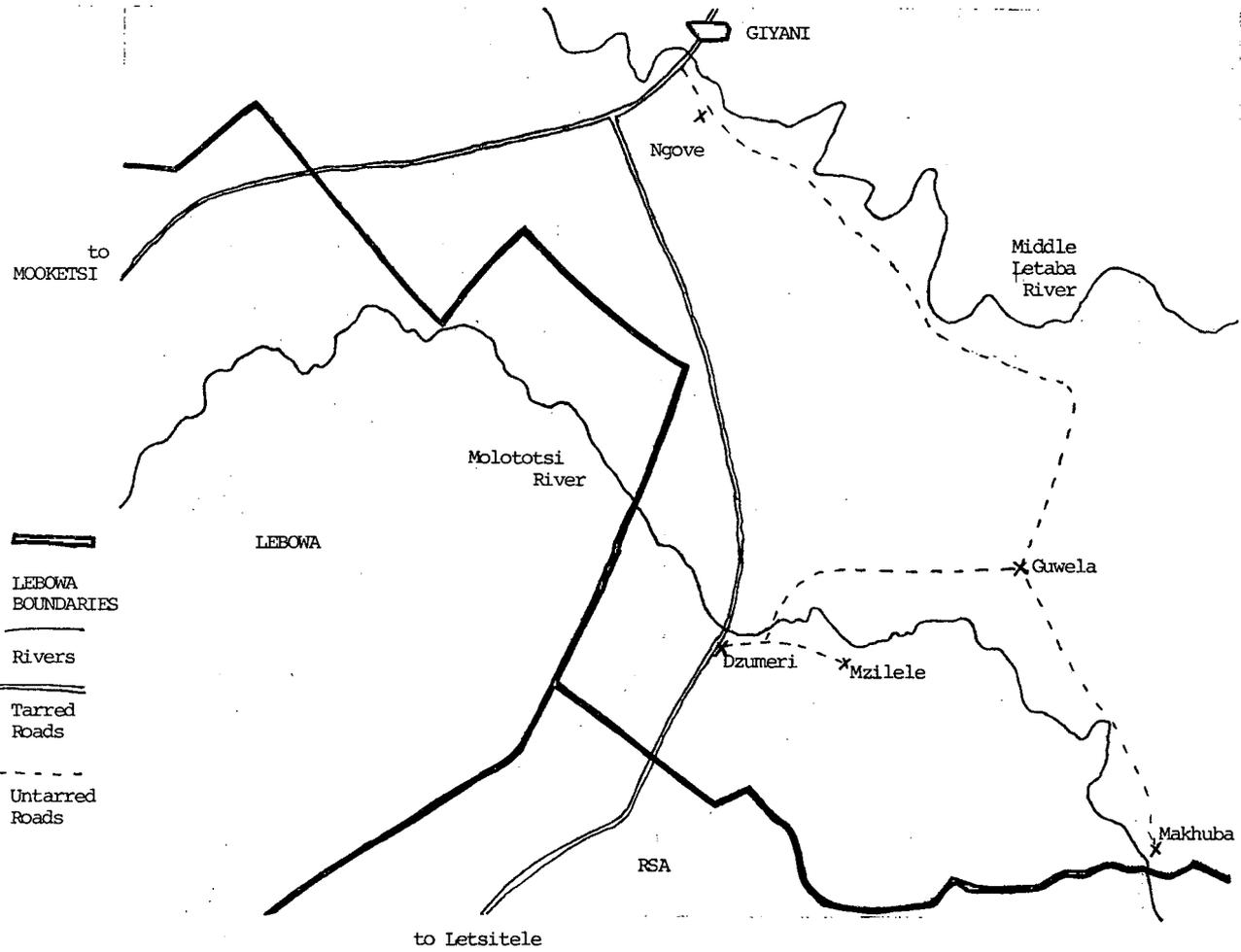
- a. The readiness of some government officials to listen to the people, to improve the infrastructure and resources of the area.
- b. The care group movement where people learn to become responsible for their lives, where they develop a new awareness of their problems, their causes and possible solutions...
- c. Some churches which have embarked on local projects of community organisation and development, where people learn to work together for the benefit of all.

People appreciate such efforts and see their value, just as one of my respondents told me at the end of our discussion: "We thank you for having come and helped us to talk about our problems. Now we see better our situation and we may even try to do something about it."

Let us, however, never lose sight that the main resource of these rural areas is the people themselves, with their wonderful gifts of human understanding, humour, and perseverance, with their astonishing ability to keep going.

May these people be helped to rediscover their power and to find the way to use it to overcome their poverty and to lead their villages towards a real development.

MAP NO. 1: GIYANI



to
MOOKETSI

GIYANI

Ngove

Middle
Letaba
River

Molototsi
River

LEBOWA

LEBOWA
BOUNDARIES

Rivers

Tarred
Roads

Untarred
Roads

Gwela

Dzumeri

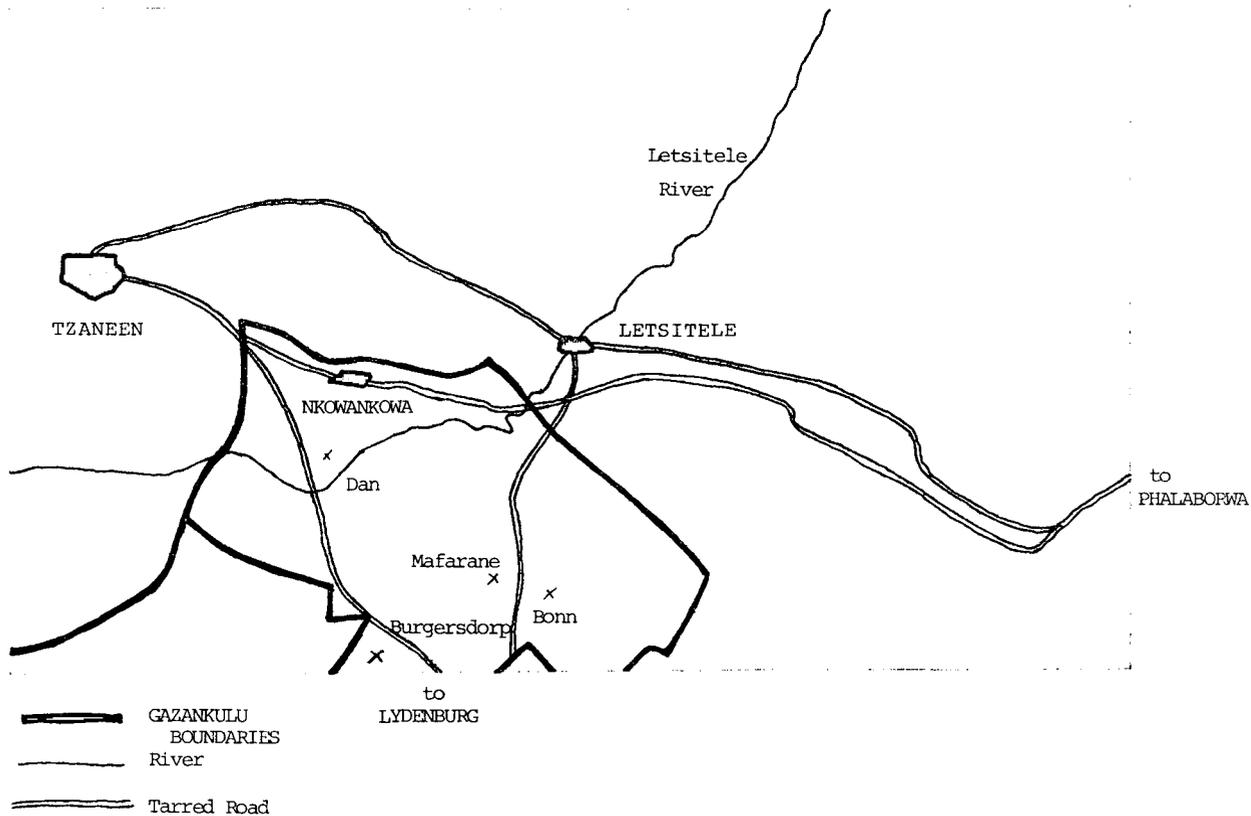
Mzilele

Makhuba

RSA

to Letsitele

MAP NO. 2: RITAVI



These papers constitute the preliminary findings of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, and were prepared for presentation at a Conference at the University of Cape Town from 13-19 April, 1984.

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Quoting (in context) from these preliminary papers with due acknowledgement is of course allowed, but for permission to reprint any material, or for further information about the Inquiry, please write to:

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