

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Survey of aspects of rural poverty
in Clarens and the surrounding
areas and of certain aspects in the
black townships of Bethlehem and
Harrismith

by

Christine Walwyn

Carnegie Conference Paper No. 41

ISBN 0 7992 0729 2

S U R V E Y

Survey of aspects of rural poverty in Clarens and the surrounding area *and of* certain aspects in the black townships of Bethlehem and Harrismith.

1. Clarens

- (a) Historical survey and the growth of the population.
- (b) The general conditon of the township.
- (c) The legal standing of the community council.
- (d) Rents
- (e) Opportunities for building houses.
- (f) Medical facilities.
- (g) Recreational facilities.
- (h) Employment oportunities.
- (i) The position of the following categories of the population -
 - (i) old age pensioners;
 - (ii) Children - school going, pre-school and infants;
 - (iii) wages and working conditions of those employed;
 - (iv) those unemployed.

II. The surrounding areas of Clarens

- (a) Farm labourers -
 - (i) average wages;
 - (ii) Living conditions
 - (iii) working conditions
- (b) Squatters

III Bethlehem and Harrismith will be dealt with under the same headings as Clarens but in less detail

1. CLARENS

a) HISTORICAL SURVEY AND THE GROWTH OF THE POPULATION

Clarens township started life as a very small township on a farm land. It was proclaimed as a township in 1912 and was handed over to the Oranje Vaal Administration Board in 1978. Previously it was run by Clarens Municipality. The population is growing at an alarming rate partly due to natural expansion and partly because there is nowhere else, other than Qua Qua or as squatters on the farms, where the people can live. The township is expanding toward the soccer field and unless more land can be found there will be no recreational facilities at all, as the space now allocated to the soccer field will become residential.

The number of permanent residents is estimated to be approximately 800 at the present date.

b) THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE TOWNSHIP

Since the community council is supposedly autonomous, there is no money from outside sources for building and services.

As a result the services are practically non-existent.

The condition of the roads is appalling, there are taps only on street corners, there is no electricity and twelve pit toilets for the entire township of 800, residents. Permission has now been given by the Oranje Vaal Board for residents to dig a pit toilet in each stand.

There are three church buildings, a stone Dutch Reformed Church in very good condition, a Methodist Church made of corrugated iron which is extremely draughty and in the winter gales howl and chatter like so many banshees. The Anglican Church at present is unusable as one wall had to be taken down. It will be rebuilt soon. The Church is made of dressed stone. The Church committees are all fairly active and there is a resident priest for the Dutch Reformed congregation and visiting priests for the Methodist and Anglican.

LIVESTOCK

Each resident is allowed to keep one cow on the common surrounding the Township. The common is the property of the Clarens Municipality which charges R1-00 per cow per month. This common is extremely over-grazed and in drought conditions and in the winter the cattle become very thin and often die. Their owners do not have the money to buy fodder necessary in the dry months. These cows provide a valuable source of protein and their well-being is important to their owners. Perhaps a community scheme could be devised whereby the residents could plant pastures and enhance the value of the common. There are wet areas where this should be possible. In the township itself residents may keep chickens.

1. CLARENS

B(1) VEGETABLE GARDENS

Each plot is $25m \times 50m$ and there is consequently room for a vegetable garden depending on the number of buildings on the plot. Unfortunately there is not sufficient water to water these gardens which is discouraging. However almost every house has a flourishing garden.

(c) LEGAL STANDING OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The community council is supposedly autonomous but all decisions have to be referred to the Oranje Vaal Administration Board for approval.

1. CLARENS

RENTS

The rent per stand is R12.85 per month. This will be increased to R14.75 in July.

The wages of the residents are relatively low and rent payments represent a sizeable portion of their income. The money for the rent is paid to the municipality where it is used to pay for water, refuse removal and cleaning of the toilets.

Rent payments are made to the Oranje Vaal Board. The Board pays R30-00 per month to the Clarens Municipality for refuse removal, R80-00 per month for water, R21-00 for water for the community school. There are 60 stands in Clarens Township.

The income from the rent is R771-00 per month.

Expenditure, taking into account water and refuse amounts paid to the Clarens Municipality and wages for the cleaner, is approximately R440-00 per month.

The difference between income and expenditure should be put back into Clarens Township but where does it go?

1. CLARENS

(e) OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING HOUSES

Those who want to build their own houses may do so. The erf remains the property of the Oranje Vaal Administration Board and the 99 year lease period is applicable. The Board grants loans on the following basis, a 10% deposit on the loan, and 16 1/4% interest on the loan payable over 20 years. However salaries are generally not high enough for residents to obtain loans. In addition the nearest brickyard is 35 km away and the nearest building supply merchant in Bethlehem 45km away. The prices of building materials are very considerably higher than in the big centres.

Many houses in Clarens have been started but stand for years before they are completed, as the owners cannot afford to continue the building.

1. CLARENS

(f) MEDICAL FACILITIES AND THE GENERAL HEALTH

Due to the efforts of the local white community and with contributions from the province, a clinic has been built within the Clarens Municipality. There is a European doctor and nurse and a black nurse. The fees for a visit to the clinic are 50cents for those earning under R100-00 per month. Those who earn in excess must pay R8-00 per visit.

The clinic is very well run and the team of doctor and nurses have done an outstanding amount to improve the health and well-being of those in Clarens and the surrounding areas.

Family planning programmes are carried out and extensive inoculations of babies and children are implemented.

The last year there have been two cases of T.B. in the township and one child died of gastro-enteritis.

On the whole most of the population live to a ripe old age, the chief diseases amongst the adults being heart diseases and

of the liver. There is a considerable amount of venereal disease with resultant sterility and if children are born to those suffering from this disease they are very often retarded or deformed. This disease is however treated as soon as it is discovered and only recurs when construction workers come into the area.

(9)

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Recreational facilities are practically non-existent. There is a soccer field which has not been levelled and otherwise, at present, nothing.

However a community centre will be built in the next few months with money donated by a Johannesburg Trust. This centre will be used for cottage industries such as fruit drying, leather tanning on a small scale and the manufacture of local curios.

This centre will hopefully induce a community spirit which is lacking at present. It is hoped that clubs will be formed for all sections of the population and that there will be film and cinema shows. The soup kitchen for pensioners, functioning in a private home, will be housed in this hall and extended to pre-school children. The pensioners' soup kitchen has formed the basis of the first club in Clarens. It is called the Mthuso Club which means the Help-me Club. Members pay R1-50 for two months and for this they receive a cup of fortified soup a slice of bread and fruit, in season, three times a week. There are two cooks, members of the club, who receive a small remuneration. The club members each have a vegetable garden and there is a competition for the best garden at the end of the season. On soup days there is quite a social gathering and always much to talk about. Christmas was the occasion for a very good party and real Bantu beer which was excellent.

The idea of making the soup kitchen a social club was the pensioners' idea and is one which could be implemented with advantage in other country districts. The pensioners said that they did not need charity but welcomed the idea of a club and a chat over a cup of soup. After their pensions have been paid there is a meeting of the club when membership fees are paid, the members cards are stamped and suggestions made for the running of the club and changes in the soup recipes.

1. CLARENS

(h) EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In satellite towns such as Clarens there is considerable unemployment. The white community in Clarens provides a certain amount of job opportunity but the community is small. It is possible for people from Clarens to work in the area covered by the Oranje Vaal Board but the problem here is that it is difficult to find work in the industrial areas of Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark without travelling. There is no money to pay the cost of the taxis or the train to look for work.

The Municipality employs 15 workers and the Maluti Lodge 18/20.

1. CLARENS

(i) THE POSITION OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF THE POPULATION

(i) OLD AGE PENSIONERS

Since the inception of the soup kitchen the physical well being of the group has improved and the clinic reports there is very little illness amongst them. The old age pension is R114 per two months (still referred to as fifty pounds). It is paid at the Clarens Post Office which is relatively close. On pension days one of the shops and the butcher provide soup for the pensioners as those from the farms have far to travel. I spoke to a few of the pensioners and their accounts were as follows:

ESTHER lives in a small room and has no income other than her pension. She has a broken leg dating from a car accident in 1974. She received a small compensation but has not been able to work since. Without the soup she would subsist on mealie meal only. She never gets away from Clarens. The bus fare to Bethlehem is R3-00 return the taxi to QuaQua is R4-00 single and to Fouriesburg R4.00 single.

MARIA MOKWENA has long been widowed. She receives the old age pension, but out of this she must pay the rent and feed two grandchildren. Sometimes the childrens' father sends money to help.

ANNA MTEMBU, MARTA AND SELINA live on their pension only.

HENDRIK LANGOELE is a disillusioned man. He is a pensioner who worked for twenty years for Cape Asbestos. At the end of his term of employment he received no pension and no bonus.

The pensioners I spoke to all buy similar items during the two months when they must eke out their pensions. They purchase either a half or a whole bag of Mealie meal. Mealie Meal in Clarens costs R31-00 per 80kilogram bag and R21-00 per 50 kilogram bag. Other items are 4 packets of candles, 1 packet matches, 1 paket sugar, 1 packet tea, 1 tin or packet of coffee and if possible they buy meat twice a week at R1-00 per week. In summer if it rains, thy get vegetables from their own gardens and from friends on farms.

1. CLARENS

(i) (i) They dread the winters as fuel is expensive, coal is not often available and wood is R1.20 per bag.

These old people do not have money to buy clothes as the pensions must all be spent on rents, food and fuel.

They must rely on the help of friends to buy clothes and blankets. The cheaper clothes stores are out of reach as a trip to Bethlehem costs R3.00 return.

In order to obtain a pension, pensioners must travel to the magistrate's office in Bethlehem. This often means two or three trips and a great deal of frustration and expense before the pension is finally granted.

1. CLARENS

(i) (ii) CHILDREN

The school going children are relatively healthy. There are 462 children in Clarens Community School and the clinic reports that there are at present only four with T.B. Venereal disease and pregnancy do cause problems. Family planning has helped to reduce the number of pregnancies, venereal disease is still a problem, particularly when itinerant construction workers come into the area.

Some of the children who come to school from the farms do not get sufficient food. They leave home to walk the seven or eight kilometres to school and back, and work at school all day and eat only when they return at night. The Headmaster and the Clarens Clinic asked me to start a feeding scheme. This is now running smoothly and the children can buy soup at 2 cents a cup. There is a need in the area to educate parents to feed the school going children. The children should be given something substantial to eat before they leave for school and they should take something with them to eat at school. The Headmaster Mr. Sjane, says that he has persuaded the younger children to bring food to school but amongst the older children there is still resistance to this idea.

PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

Pre-school children are again relatively healthy. There is milk available for most and vegetables from the plots in the township. Clarens area grows abundant fruit and in the summer there is more than enough for all. In the winter the children have a craving for oranges and it would be advisable to try to set up a small store where oranges and basic dry foods could be sold at cost.

1. CLARENS

(i) (ii) INFANTS

The infants are on the whole healthy. There is gastro-enteritis in Clarens Township but these are treated and there has only been one death in the past year. The babies are enoculated regularly and the clinic keeps meticulous records of all families and babies and the inoculations are kept up to date.

(i) (iii) WAGES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THOSE EMPLOYED

The wages vary from very low i.e. R20-00 per month to approximately R160-00 per month.

Daily rates for gardeners are ± R4-00 per day two meals included. Domestic workers live in the township and work from 7a.m. to 3p.m. two meals included. Most domestic workers do not work on Sundays and work a half day on Saturdays. Some have annual leave paid, others may take leave which is unpaid as they have to put somebody in to work for them.

The Municipality employ 15 workers at a rate of R2-00 to R14-36 per day. The Maluti Lodge employ 18/20 at an average of R90-00 per month.

These are the only two sources of extensive employment as to date there are no industries in Clarens and surrounding areas.

1.

Those unemployed

- (iv) In Clarens Township there are a considerable number unemployed. The problem begins with the school leavers who are normally unable to find work.

The men can find a certain amount of work in Clarens and a small number work on the mines. There are opportunities for employment in the factories at Sasolburg and Vanderbijlpark but it is difficult for people from the Clarens area to find money for the bus and train fare to seek employment in the Vaal Triangle.

There is a recruiting office for the mines in Harrismith but the quota is limited.

The women can find some work in Clarens as domestic workers. The lack of opportunity for work other than domestic, gives rise to frustration and a reliance on alcohol. The result is that many of those unemployed become unemployable.

The solution in these rural areas would be the establishment of employment agencies or more efficient labour bureaux, to enable work seekers to escape from the small satellite townships in the rural areas.

1. CLARENS

II THE SURROUNDING AREAS OF CLARENS

(a) FARM LABOURERS

(i) Wages for farm labourers vary enormously. Tractor drivers are paid R120 per month of the average. An unskilled labourer may receive as little as R20.00 per month. Some farmenrs still indulge in the iniquitous practice of payment on a pèce basis. i.e. so much for a crop harvested. From one of these farms there has been one case of pelagra and this month one of ^{malisima Malomas} ~~maronus~~. ~~Maronus~~ is a rare disease in this area. It is caused by almost total starvation.

(ii) LIVING CONDITIONS

Houses are normally tribal mud houses, although some farmenrs have built brick houses. On most farms the workers can keep one or two cows, a few sheep and chickens, ducks and pigeons. They all have vegetable patches and on many farms there are one or two lands set aside for the lobourers' mealies, vegetables and millet. These lands are planted with the farmer's machinery. Wood and water is normally freely available except on farms further from the mountains where there are few trees and often little water.

One of the biggest problems amongst the farm communities is lack of recreation. There is usually a soccer field on each farm but otherwise there are no recreational facilities, with the result that alchoholism is a real problem. Farm labourers often start drinking on Fridays and drink solidly until Sunday nights. Most farmers provide an 80kg bag of mealie-meal per family, (labourer, +wife+children). On farms there is sufficient milk available, meat and vegetables. Lack of adequate transport to the bigger centres means that farm communities are forced to shop at local stores where goods are often approximately a third more than in the supermarkets. Mealie meal for instance at the Clarens Store is R32 per 80kg. In Bethlehem the price is R22-50 per 50 kg, but the bus to Bethlehem is R3.00 return and it is impossible to carry the 80kg mealie meal to the bus stop in any event.

1. CLARENS

- 11 (ii) If a chain of non profit making stores for basic food stuffs could be set up throughout the rural districts the population would benefit enormously. Another method of dealing with the problem would be subsidised trucks which would travel from point to point selling basic items such as sugar, candles, milk powder, mealie meal, soya beans, soup powder. Perhaps this organisation could in turn purchase items made by the local communities such as grass brooms, skins, etc.

In Clarens there is excellent medical attention for the rural community at the clinic. As ever the problem for the farm communities is transport to the clinic. Most farmaers do however assist. Payment at the clinic is 50c per visit, innoculations for babies are free and a careful check is kept on all babies providing that the mothers bring them to the clinic or to the innoculation centres. Cases that require hospitalisation are taken to the hospital in Bethlehem by ambulance. Clothing is a problem for families whose only source of income is from farm wages. They cannot afford to buy clothing from the local stores where the price is high and therefore have to survive on clothing handed out or purchased ^{by} ~~from~~ their relatives in the towns. Here again a system of "clothing vans" travelling from farm to farm could assist the people.

DENTAL CARE

On the whole the teeth of the farm populations are in good condition. However refined mealie meal and white sugar are doing a great deal to affect the position. A dentist running a clinic at Witzieshoek suggested that the schools run dental care classes. Ash, when toothpaste is not available, is a good substitute. In Clarens the doctor has to act as the dentist.

Education

There are four farm schools in the immediate vicinity of Clarens. These schools start at Sub A and go up to Standard 2. The children then continue at the Clarens community school up to Standard 4. From this standard they must go to school in Bethlehem or Qua-Qua but few can afford this. The standard at the Clarens community school is adequate but the farm schools are overcrowded and there is one teacher for fifty children. The children have to walk long distances to school each day, as there are inadequate schools. To reach the Clarens community school many children walk over 20 km per day.

(iii) WORKING CONDITIONS

Labourers start work at approximately 7a.m. They have a half an hour bread for breakfast, an hour for lunch and the day finishes at 5 p.m. On some farms the working hours are considerably longer depending on the seasonal demand.

11. (iii) All farm labourers do not work on Sundays except a skeletal staff remains to milk and perform routine jobs. A few farmers expect their staff to work on Saturdays. Very few farmers give actual leave although the staff are given a week or two at a time depending on the seasonal demand for labour. Farmers are obliged by law to pay workmen's compensation and to claim in event of injury. However the procedure is so involved that very often farmers do not claim for minor injuries. ^{when} a claim is made ~~but~~ here again there is a problem - that ^{is} the Workmens Compensation Board will often sue the farmer if there is a possibility of negligence. Suggestions for improvement of working conditions.
1. Minimum wage stipulated by law.
 2. Compulsory paid annual leave
 3. Payment for overtime enforced by law
 4. Unions for farm labourers
 5. Workmens compensation claims more easily paid and education for farmers on how to claim.
 6. Recreational facilities.

II (b) SQUATTERS

The position of squatters on farms is generally pitiable. They are on the farms on sufferance and liable at any moment to be turned off by the farmer or the police. In return for squatting the old system still prevails and squatter have to work for the farmer when required for little or no compensation.

Squatters are generally families of the deceased man, old age pensioners and families of men who are working in the urban districts or ^{on the mines} ~~are miners~~. They do not receive the standard mealie-meal ration and most squatters do not keep cows or sheep.

If they are removed from the farms in this area they are deported to Qua Qua, and from farms in the Ficksburg area to Onverwacht.

BOHLEKONG (BETHLEHEM)

Bohlekong is a large municipality with a population of approximately 37,000.

It was established in 1877 and gained its autonomy in February 1984. It has a fully fledged community council of 11 and its own council chambers.

Bohlekong is well laid out and relatively spacious. There is a soccer stadium with lights for night matches. There are 3 tennis courts, two large halls, one for recreational purposes and the other for meetings and cinema shows. There is a new library and 6 primary schools and 2 high schools.

The two main problem areas in Bohlekong are the health of the residents and the numbers of unemployed. T.B. is on the increase and in 1983 there were 204 new cases. The district nurses find it extremely difficult to ensure that the T.B. treatment is maintained as there is no municipal ambulance in Bohlekong and the district nurses do not have transport. On rainy days or if the patients are too old or too ill, many patients cannot get to the clinic for treatment. In 1983 there were 21 cases of kwasiakor and numerous cases of gastro enteritis. Here again lack of transport severely hinders the clinic staff in following up on cases and carrying out necessary health visits. In 1983 the following deaths were recorded by the clinic:

Gastro enteritis	-27	
Kwasikior	- 7	
Malnutrition	4	
Bronchitis	3	
Pneumonia	3	
others	13	
Stilborn infants	23	
<i>Lepra</i>	3	<i>known cases.</i>

BOHLEKONG

There is a new and well-equipped hospital serving Bohlekong but there are no public ambulances to transport patients. Some lives are lost owing to this lack of transport as the fares for taxis and private ambulances are often out of the patients' reach. In Bohlekong there are approximately 1276 pensioners. Most of these pensioners live with their own families in which case they are relatively well cared for. Those who live in rented back rooms generally do not receive a balanced diet. To try to help these people and the T.B. patients the clinic run a soup kitchen where soup is sold on weekdays for 10c a cup.

UNEMPLOYMENT

There is a high percentage of unemployment in Bohlekong. The group most affected by unemployment is the school leavers' group. There are a limited number of factories in the adjoining town of Bethlehem and work in these factories is difficult to find. Here again it is difficult to get to the Vaal Triangle to seek work and the mine recruiting office is in Harrismith.

There are a considerable number of women unemployed but the white population of Bethlehem is expanding and there are now more domestic workers positions available.

FURNITURE SHOPS

In Bethlehem as in most rural towns of any size, all the well known furniture stores are represented by these stores lead to a great deal of hardship and bitterness. Customers are often inveigled into entering into hire purchase agreements which they cannot afford to keep up and after a struggle payments lapse and the furniture is repossessed. These stores spread their tentacles into the farming areas and one often sees loads of furniture being transported not only away from Bethlehem but in addition back to the stores. One knows only too well the events leading up to the load of furniture being transported back to the shop. Extensive education programmes on hire purchase contracts and purchase of motor vehicles on instalments are essential.

In Bethlehem as in most rural towns there are burial societies and benefit societies which mushroom overnight only to disappear as fast as they came.

HARRISMITH

Phomalong has a population of 7,000 and is still administered by the O.V.A. Board. There are eight schools, a clinic, football, netball and softball fields. Creche facilities are inadequate, most of the houses are two-roomed only and there is considerable overcrowding. There is no public library, ~~There is a~~ community hall but no indoor recreational centre.

Here, as in Bethlehem and Clarens, there is a high percentage of unemployment. Work seekers may try to find employment in the Vaal Triangle and on the mines. There are a certain number of factories in Harrismith itself and the town, 3km from Phomalong provides job opportunities for domestic workers and shop assistants. The wages for domestic workers are between R30 and R50 per month, and for factory workers from R30 to R40 per week. There is a great deal of competition for jobs in Harrismith, as Harrismith is the nearest point for work-seekers from Qua Qua.

Rents are high in comparison to wages. The monthly rent is R28 to R30 per month. Pensioners with ~~an~~^{no} other breadwinners to help struggle to survive, as the monthly rent accounts for almost their whole pension. There is one tap per house, sewerage is the bucket system, often not emptied. There is electricity in Phomalong and house owners can have this installed.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL FACILITIES

The health of school going children is generally good, there is a high incidence of pellagra amongst adults, the result of a high alcohol consumption.

Kwasikor is rare, the incidence being approximately 5% Most cases of kwasikor are from the farms and the townlands.

T.B. is on the increase. At present there are 76 cases being treated at the clinic. The clinic is a ^epreventative clinic only and is funded by Harrismith Municipality and the province. The hospital is approximately 10 km from Phomalong on the other side of Harrismith. There is no ambulance and the taxi fare to the hospital is R10-00 As the clinic is a preventative clinic only patients must go to the hospital. However they cannot go to the hospital without a letter from a doctor. A visit to the doctor costs R8-00, ~~the~~ taxi fare to the hospital R10-00

HARRISMITH

42

At the hospital there is a further R5.00 to pay - R23.00 for medical treatment when one earns possibly R30 per month or has to subsist on a pension. What a state of affairs!

There is a soup kitchen at one of the creches for pensioners. The clinic staff would like to run a soup kitchen at the clinic for T.B. patients but this is not permitted.

The Harrismith Municipality will not pay the extra electricity costs.

The clinic sisters told me that they would like transport to visit patients, facilities for a soup kitchen, a social worker, to help visit alcohol, and to run health and social education programmes and a mobile clinic to carry out immunisations on the farms.

In Harrismith once again all the big furniture companies are represented as are the second hand car dealers, benefit and burial societies.

CONCLUSION:

Poverty in the rural areas means to many, malnutrition, disease, lack of adequate educational and recreational facilities and inadequate choice of merchandise away from the big centres. It means the poor have no choice of employment and it means boredom and frustration. It means, in addition, no freedom of movement: freedom to move out of one's area to seek work or purchase in supermarkets or move to better schools and hospitals, or go away for a holiday. These things are totally out of the reach of many residents in rural areas.

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.

The Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa was launched in April 1982, and is scheduled to run until June 1985.

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:

SALDRU
School of Economics
Robert Leslie Building
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7700