

CHAPTER 3

THE BABINA-CHUENE WOMEN'S MULTI-PURPOSE PROJECT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As was indicated in Section 1.2.1, **food security** refers to the availability of food or access to enough food for an active and healthy life by all people at all times. **Food insecurity** (see Section 1.2.2), on the other hand, refers to food shortages, a temporary decline in a household's access to enough food and/or a continuously inadequate diet caused by the inability to acquire food (World Bank 1986:1). Food insecurity is one of the underlying elements of **malnutrition** and death, as people who cannot grow or buy enough food suffer from **undernutrition** (Foster 1992:27).

Each and every individual has the right to food and to food security. Hungry people cannot work, while hungry children cannot learn. Without a well-nourished, healthy population, development is not possible (CSIR 1997a:7).

In this chapter, links between the food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and unemployment are examined. The focus of this chapter is the Bochum food

security project, that is, the origin of the project, its goals, objectives and funding (governmental and donations). It is in this chapter that the results of the interviews and questionnaires are discussed. The main focus is how the project operates, its authority structure, how the project is run and how the associated clinic and the day care centre operate. Discussion is based on the situation of the project during the time of the research, on the lives of the people involved and on whether the families in the study area are able to feed themselves since the implementation of the project. The level of education of the people taking part in the food security project is also a matter of major concern. In interviews and questionnaires, the question of income was raised and that is also discussed in detail here, as is how the people in the project market their produce. Finally, how people evaluate the project is briefly discussed.

3.1.1 Poverty and unemployment

Poverty manifests itself in various ways, that is, a lack of income, hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or no access to education and other basic services, inadequate housing and homelessness and unsafe environments. The poverty of women is also characterised by a lack of participation in decision-making in all walks of life (Hobson 1994:5).

Poverty affects men and women, but, because of the gender division of labour and because women bear the responsibility for the family's needs, women often bear a greater burden. Women have to manage household needs under conditions of extreme poverty (Department of Health and Welfare 1999:17).

In the study area, unemployment among females is higher than among males (De Villiers *et al.* 1996:20). Women are employed in positions with lower status than men are, and therefore women earn less than men do. Females are in the majority in the informal sector employment, where wages are generally lower and there are no social benefits. Most female-headed households are poor. Working women are faced with increasing pressures in reconciling parenthood with work responsibilities. Early childhood development programmes in the study area are insufficient to meet the needs of working women. Households headed by women are also financially vulnerable, as fathers do not always pay for the maintenance of their children (Malambo 1988:147).

These circumstances (poverty and unemployment) form the background to the Bochum project.

3.2 THE ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

Ms Fraser Moleketi, at that time the National Minister of Welfare, initiated the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project at Vergelegen (Bochum) in 1995 as one of nine projects aimed at the alleviation of poverty and the empowerment of women (especially single parents with children under the age of five), one project in each province. An amount of R1.4 million was set aside by government for each of these projects. Officials of the Department of Health and Welfare in each province were requested to identify projects where the need of the people was the greatest (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The philosophical basis for developing such food security projects was the belief that women are the central figures in the family and society, and form the bulk of the poorest of the poor (Department of Health and Welfare 1997:2). Community projects should therefore create an enabling environment for women and young children and should initiate development that is sustainable. There should be a strong focus on the education of children, especially on early childhood development. Self-development through capacity-building and multi-skilling for the purposes of income generation and job creation were also emphasized in the project (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The officials from the Department of Health and Welfare in the Northern Province conducted preliminary research in six villages in the Bochum district and confirmed that in these areas malnutrition was common and people were affected by various diseases related to malnutrition. These villages are Vergelegen, Papagaai, Windhoek, Bergendaal, Bultfontein and Grootdraai. The officials used statistics from the My-Darling Clinic, which indicated that a large number of children under the age of five in the area had diarrhea, scabies, kwashiorkor and respiratory problems. They also found that most of the mothers were unemployed. Hence they argued that if a food security project was implemented, it would help the mothers at least to be employed part-time (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The officials then drafted a business plan for the food security project to be implemented. The plan met the requirements and satisfied the objectives set by the National Department of Health and Welfare. Important considerations in the approval of the project on national level included the following (Department of Health and Welfare 1996:16):

- the involvement of local stakeholders;
- the control and decision-making should be on the local level;
- the project should be led and owned by women participants;
- the costing should ascertain financial survival;
- there should be markets for the sale of products;

- there had to be continuous reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

After the project's approval at the national level, the Northern Province's Department of Health and Welfare was awarded funding to start the food security project that is now running in the Vergelegen village in the My-Darling District. The food security project benefits the other five mentioned villages, although the central village to benefit is Vergelegen.

After money was allocated to the Northern Province, the *dintona* (headmen) of the six chosen villages (Vergelegen, Papagaai, Windhoek, Bergendaal, Bultfontein and Grootdraai) were contacted and were informed of the project.

3.3 THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The overall goal of the project was to be achieved through **specific objectives** as set out by the Department of Health and Welfare (1997:2):

- The first objective was to improve the health and nutritional status of the people staying in the particular rural area where the project would be implemented. The food supplements produced would reduce malnutrition-related diseases in the area among women and children.

Women and children would also be given health education through the project.

- The second objective was to provide children under the age of five with early childhood development opportunities. A place of care would be established to provide an environment that was safer for the children than before and where their chances of healthy growth and development are increased.
- The third objective was to ensure that the participating families received additional social services.
- The fourth objective was to equip women with skills so that they can be economically independent, and to develop the skills and capacity to enhance their personal overall functioning.
- The fifth objective was to increase educational and training opportunities for women so that they could provide for the basic needs of their families. Education and training for women would also provide them with knowledge of how to deal with difficult situations, for example, drought.

The **vision** of the food security project was thus to establish an enabling environment that promotes human capacity and ensures self-reliance and social well-being.

Spokespersons indicated that the success of the project would enable the rural people in the six villages in the Bochum area to have access to fresh healthy vegetables at low cost. The villages would also have access to early childhood development services. Women of the six villages participating in the project would be given employment opportunities in the project. A local market would be opened and vegetables produced through the project would be sold at lower prices than at other vegetable markets. The money that people would get from selling vegetables would ensure a strong and sustainable project and so improve people's lives.

According to spokespersons, vegetables from the garden were to be marketed at local hospitals, namely the Helen Franz and Blouberg hospitals, as well as at Helen Franz School and in neighbouring villages. Spokespersons also indicated that, at a later stage, the market was to be expanded to the Dendron (Bochum town) businesses and chain supermarkets.

The food security project was designed from the beginning to be a community-based project for single mothers who were involved right from

the start of the project when the bush was cleared (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

Choosing people to participate in the project was not easy for the officials, as the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare do not stay in the same area and cannot specify who is really poor and who is really suffering. They took the selection criteria to the *dintona*, and asked them to select 120 women (20 from each village) who fitted the selection criteria.

The selection criteria used for women that were to participate in the food security project are set out below. The women had to (Department of Health and Welfare 1997:5):

- be unemployed and have children under the age of five;
- come from very poor and isolated communities;
- come from families where no one is working;
- come from communities which are particularly stable and have the potential for development; and
- have a desire to generate income and to be self-reliant.

The women selected did not receive state support and had to fall in the age group described as young to middle-aged (Department of Health and Welfare 1997:5). The women were selected from the six identified villages,

Vergelegen, Bergendaal, Papagaai, Windhoek, Bultfontein and Grootdraai (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The food security project at Vergelegen village in the Bochum My-Darling district is locally known as the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project. The name of the project was chosen because Babina-Chuene is the totem of the Bagananwa people (see Section 2.2).

In this food security project, the focus is on rural women who have children under the age of five, because the ultimate target group of the project is young children under the age of five. Provision was also made for appropriate education to enhance these children's early learning, growth and development through the project (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.). The food security project sought to provide unemployed women with basic life skills, training and employment opportunities, and to develop and support self-reliance (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The food security project implemented at Vergelegen village is a vegetable garden where products such as cabbage, spinach, tomatoes, onions, beetroot, carrots, beans and maize are produced. The Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project is a vegetable garden initiated and funded by the Department of Health and Welfare. Officials from the Department of Agriculture gave people taking part in the food security project training on how to plant

vegetables. Officials from Environmental Affairs in the Northern Province installed a water pump at the food security project.

The Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project was funded for three years (from August 1997 to July 2000). It was designed to be sustainable once funding stopped.

The women taking part in the Babina-Cheune women's multi-purpose project have to sell the produce for the project as a whole. The women are given a monthly allowance of R180.00, but if there are no profits in a particular month, the women receive no additional income.

3.4 FUNDING

3.4.1 Government funding

The project was to be funded by the government for three years, from August 1997 to July 2000 as set at in Table 2 (overleaf). Thereafter, the project had to sustain itself.

Table 2: Project funds

1 st year	R400 000
2 nd year	75% of R400 000 which is R300 000
3 rd year	50% of R400 000 which is R200 000

Source: Department of Health and Welfare (1996:5)

3.4.2 Donations

A donation was received from SASKO (Die Suid-Afrikaanse Sentrale Korporasie - a private company, producing bread). From SASKO, the food security project received three containers that are used as follows (Department of Health and Welfare 1997:23):

- a daycare centre for children whose mothers are participating in the project;
- a market stall for keeping and selling products; and
- a multi-purpose centre, which can be used, for example, for a mobile clinic, for a pay-point centre and also for training.

TRANSNET assisted the project with containers, as well as materials for utilisation on the project. Donations from TRANSNET included trousers, T-shirts and coats for the people participating in the project.

3.5 THE BUDGET

The money given to the Provincial Government for the food security project was allocated as set out in the three tables below (Department of Health and Welfare 1996:8):

Table 3: Cost of the physical implementation of the project

Water supply materials	R71 956.78
Fencing materials	R8 425.25
Training by the Department of Agriculture	R4 000.00
Total capital cost	R84 382.03

Source: Department of Health and Welfare (1996:7)

Table 4: Operation and maintenance costs

Materials	R8 556.89
Maintenance: Diesel	R14 600.00
Electricity	R9 600.00
Administrative cost	R2 500.00
Consumables	R4 000.00
Transport	R5 000.00
Daycare	R49 961.08
Total	R94 217.97

Source: Department of Health and Welfare (1996:7)

Table 5: Summary of costs

Capital costs	R80 302.00
Material for operation	R8 556.89
Maintenance	R24 200.00
Administrations costs	R2 500.00
Salaries (participants)	R221 400.00
Consumables	R4 000.00
Training	R4 000.00
Transport	R5 000.00
Day care centre	R49 961.08
Total	R400 000.00

Source: Department of Health and Welfare (1996:8)

3.6 PROJECT OPERATION

3.6.1 Authority structure

The project was introduced at the **national level** to build capacity at the provincial level. The staff supplied at the **national level** (Department of Health and Welfare) operated as project managers and they managed the project implementation and evaluation. The staff from the national level gave some guidance and support to the provincial staff (Department of Health and Welfare) and also developed policies and principles. At the

national level, officials networked with government initiatives and facilitated relationships with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and implementing organisations (Department of Health and Welfare 1998:4).

The **Provincial** Department monitored the project and provided support to the implementing organisations. Monitoring involved ensuring that the project's implementation was on target, and that the requirements and criteria of the project were met (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The work of the facilitators at the provincial level in Pietersburg was to interact with implementing organisations. The facilitators visited and monitored the implementation of the food security project at Bochum (Manamela 1998: Pers.com.).

At **local** level, a consortium has been established to take care of the management of the project. The consortium is constituted from the representatives of relevant stakeholders. So, for example, the Department of Agriculture is responsible for the practical and theoretical training on land preparation, seed planting, harvesting, and marketing on site to all the women participating in the food security project (Department of Health and Welfare 1998:6).

The Department of Agriculture will build the capacity of the people to supervise the project to ensure that quality is sustained. An official of the Department of Agriculture served as the project manager and adviser for a two-year term. He worked with one woman who was to take over the process, that is, the administration, budgeting, implementation and maintenance of the project, once government disengaged from the project (Phoshoko 1998: Pers.com.).

Local expertise and local labour was used to erect the fence that surrounds the food security project, to install the irrigation system and to prepare the land for the food security project. The work was executed by women selected to participate in the food security project.

3.6.2 The project

The land consists of a garden of five hectares, fenced in by a 2.4m high fence.

There is a bore-hole at the project, next to the vegetable garden. It has a pump 60m below ground level. Officials stated that it is recommended that a maximum abstraction rate of 3,5 l/s, that is 12,6 square metres per hectare, is maintained for, at the utmost, 8 out of every 24 hours. The bore-hole might be overexploited if the prescribed recharge period of sixteen

hours per day is not followed, resulting in forced abandonment of the scheme due to water shortages (Department of Health and Welfare 1997:7).

Officials from the Department of Agriculture state that the borehole water is potable (drinkable). They also indicated that the water is suitable for irrigation. The Department of Agriculture's officials, however, mentioned that irrigation from the borehole would induce salination unless salts are leached regularly and water tables are kept low by adequate drainage. This was the officials' responsibility, but the skills would be transferred to the women. The irrigation system consists of an electric and a diesel engine, and 500m of piping has been installed (Phoshoko 1998: Pers.com.).

3.6.3 A clinic and daycare centre

A mobile clinic is available for people in the study area. Spokespersons regard the clinic as a place of care. Spokespersons are confident that their children will grow healthier and their development will improve due to the fact that this service has been introduced.

A day-care centre was also implemented for children whose mothers take part in the food security project. The children are cared for at the crèche by women who do not work in the garden but look after the children while their mothers are busy in the garden.

3.7 HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

As was already stated in Section 1.2.1, rural households were the main research subjects of the study. Rural households involve families or individuals who live in one house, who share meals, earnings and expenditure, and who take part in the management of the household and render services to it. A rural household is a basic production unit. Household characteristics that influence food production become important to this study, because they affect household food security either directly or indirectly. Such characteristics include household composition, the number of people fed, the level of education and household income (Malambo 1988:113).

A household in the Bochum area is normally a family that consists of a husband, wife, children and sometimes grandparents. The study focuses on families headed by single females who have children under the age of five. The mother in this instance is the only person responsible for bringing food into the family.

In this research, respondents were asked to provide information on the size of their households. This information is important to the study, because the

number of persons in the household determines the amount of food needed in the house.

In most rural areas, where females head households, household food insecurity arises because enough food may simply not be available from production and some families may not be able to acquire or purchase food (Malambo 1988:14). Family size plays an important role in both the above mentioned cases. One key issue could be a shortage of labour as the mother may be the only adult in the family while the rest of the family members are children, which is a reason why women need to work together to create enough labour (Malambo 1988:14).

To ascertain the number of people in each family who need food, respondents were asked to indicate the number of adults and children to be fed in their families. It was found that, on average, families consist of three adults (that is the mother and grandparents of the children) and three children.

3.7.1 Level of education of participants

Today, education is very important, and is a key element of human and economic development. Respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education they had obtained in order to give the researcher a

general idea of the level of education of the people in the study area. The results indicated that 30% of the heads of households interviewed had no formal education, 49% had some primary school education; most had not completed Standard Five (Grade Seven), but they had completed Standard Three (Grade Five). Of the respondents, 19% had some secondary school education, even though they had not finished Standard Ten (Grade Twelve), and only 2% had college education.

Most of the respondents with primary education said that they could no longer read nor write, as they had attended school a long time ago and did not spend much of their time reading or writing. That is why the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare had taught them how to write. At least they now know how to write their names. The low percentage of people with secondary education among the project participants can be attributed to the migration to larger urban areas of individuals with such higher qualifications, due to a lack of job opportunities in rural areas.

3.7.2 Household income

Farm work is the only source of income for most of the people living in the study area. Unfortunately, women (especially single women) are not given enough land where they can plough for their own families. In the study area, land is only given to male persons, according to spokespersons.

It is obvious that the women in the food security project should work very hard and produce more, so that, when they sell the produce, they get a higher income from the produce. The money does not belong to the individual but to the whole food security project. It was stated by the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare that the more the women produce, the better their chances of increasing their income, and of ensuring the sustainability of the project.

An additional source of income is beer-making. Local beer is one commodity for which there is always a demand and beer can be produced by virtually everyone. Women make beer and it is then sold to raise cash for their families (Manamela 1998: Pers.com.)

Another source of income is remittances from relatives working in urban areas. Women mostly appeal for assistance to their brothers or relatives who are working, more especially those who are working far away (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

3.8 THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE STUDY AREA

It is important to involve the people who are to take part in the project when first implementing the project. The people involved should come first

in every development that concerns them (Coetzee 1989:8). The officials stated that they wished to help the people develop. For development to be continuous and sustainable, the individuals concerned should be involved at the grassroots level in the process of planning and implementation. In this case, such an approach really helped the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare to ensure that their development structures are suitable to the people they wanted to develop (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The officials from the Department of Health and Welfare mentioned the fact that, before the food security project started, there was poverty in the Bochum district, especially for women. Survival was very difficult in the six communities, compared to the present situation. Through the help of the food security project, a lot has changed. The cause of problems was primarily that skills were lacking - women were without hope (Manamela 1998: Pers.com.).

3.9 MARKETING OF PRODUCE

The officials from the Department of Health and Welfare and the women participating in the project mentioned the aspect of marketing as being very important. Both groups (women and officials from the Department of Health and Welfare) stated that the women should have direct access to and control of the profit and that they should avoid depleting the market (by

eating all the produce). They should see to it that their market is sustained (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.). All the people involved in the food security project, particularly the women who are participating, should have the potential to be leaders, so that all of them can make some input in building their project. The women should also have a sense of ownership, that is, the idea that the food security project belongs to them. They should avoid a market chain, that is, they must not work hand in hand with ‘middle men’, as the profit must then be shared. The participants should only look at direct selling opportunities (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

The approach of the women participating in the project should be business-oriented. This means that they should sell good products, for example, not very green or bad tomatoes or immature spinach, to the customers. If a good product is produced, the project will be effective, because the product will be seen to be worth buying. So, for example, if the women were to expand their work to sew clothing, they should not display unfinished dresses, as incomplete dresses do not look good and customers will not be interested. The products should be well-finished and displayed clearly so that the customers are interested in what they see (Phoshoko 1998: Pers.com.).

The people selling the products are the women participating in the food security project and they were given skills to manage the selling processes.

All the participants should focus on the skills needed by saleswomen and they should have the ability to attract and persuade customers (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

It is the responsibility of the national Department of Health and Welfare to offer women an opportunity to participate in the project. This office is funding the project and even makes it possible for the women to be trained. Two problems the officials from the provincial Department of Health and Welfare mentioned are that the national office uses a long process to make funds available and that communication channels are ineffective. The participants in the food security project stated that they had the necessary skills, but the provincial department indicated that participants were not properly trained or prepared, prior to receiving government funding and training (Mothapo 1998: Pers.com.).

3.10 PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This section looks at the views of specific groups of people concerned with the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project. The views are those, firstly, of the officials of the government departments concerned, secondly, of women participating in the project and their families and, thirdly, the views of the community and women not taking part in the project. In order to evaluate the success of the project, three questionnaires were used for

the three above-mentioned groups. This section sets out the questions and discusses the answers received. Questionnaires are named A (officials), B (participants) and C (non-participants). Question numbers are indicated which correspond with the areas examined. Response rates were as follows: 5 officials responded (a 100% response), 37 participants responded (a 55% response rate) and 20 non-participants responded (a 100% response rate).

3.10.1 Who knows about the project that runs in the area and what is it all about? (A1,2; B1,2; C1)

The question of whether the people know about the project was asked in order to get a clear introduction to the people and to be sure that the respondents knew what the researcher was talking about. The question about what the project is all about enabled the researcher to ascertain whether the researcher and the respondents had the same idea about the project or not.

The officials obviously knew about the project and its name. The officials described the project as a vegetable garden. All the women participating in the project and the non-participants knew about the project that runs in their area. They also stated that the project is a vegetable garden.

3.10.2 The origin of the project (A3,4;B3, C2)

Most of the participants and non-participants were confused about the correct year. Of the interviewed women, ten said that the project started in 1996, while twenty-one said it started in 1997, three were uncertain and three did not know.

To check whether the majority of women had given the correct answer, this question was also asked of the officials of the provincial Department of Health and Welfare in Pietersburg, who stated that the project was introduced to the people in 1996 but that it started to function in 1997. This delay in implementation might be the reason why respondents were confused about the date when the project started.

3.10.3 Who was involved in the planning process of the project? (A5; B4)

This question was asked to determine the role of the local people in the planning process of the project, and to determine whether the project was properly introduced to them.

The respondents indicated that the local people and *dintona* of the six villages, including the officials of the Provincial Department of Health and

Welfare, were involved in the planning process of the project. The respondents stated that the local people and the *dintona* from Vergelegen, Windhoek, Papagaai, Bergendaal, Bultfontein and Grootdraai had selected women in accordance with the criteria (see Section 3.3) to participate in the food security project and that no favouritism was involved in the process.

3.10.4 What were the criteria used to select participants and why? (A6,7,8,9,10,11; B5; C3,4)

The question was asked to find out whether the participants knew or could give the criteria used for selecting the people to take part in the food security project and secondly to give the reason why and how the criteria were used.

The women participating in the food security project gave three different answers. Twenty-seven stated that the participants are single women with children under the age of five. Seven mentioned that the participants are from poor families (both husband and wife not working), while three respondents were not sure about what the criteria for participation were.

The officials indicated that the project is for single women with children under the age of five and not working.

It would seem that the criteria for participation were fairly well known among participants, while the people not taking part in the food security project were not certain about the criteria used.

3.10.5 The impact of the project on the standard of living (A28,32,33,34,35,37,38; B6,30; C7,8,17,18)

Questions were asked to determine the perceived impact of the project on the standard of living of the participants.

All the respondents (participants and non-participants) mentioned that their lives had improved and that even those of people in the neighbouring villages had improved. They stated that their nutritional status was better as they eat fresh vegetables from the project. They also stated that their children are no longer suffering from diseases related to malnutrition (diarrhea and kwashiorkor).

In the interviews, participants also indicated that their children now go to school as their mothers are able to pay the school fees derived from the salaries which mothers get on the project. The respondents explained that, before the introduction of the project, their children were always hungry and they could only sleep or isolate themselves from the others due to their

misery. They now even said that their children look happy and are able to meet challenges outside the home.

Children at the project's day care services get care and the officials from the provincial Department of Health and Welfare check their health. The respondents from the food security project mentioned that they think they are progressing and that, especially if the new programmes can be implemented, they will survive and improve their quality of life.

In interviews spokespersons also indicated they are aware that their children under the age of five are provided with developmentally appropriate education to increase their chances of achievement and learning.

The respondents stated that, with the help of the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare, the community's pregnancy rates are lower compared to those in previous years, because women have access to contraceptives and the health officials are there to help. The babies born are said no longer to be unhealthy. Birth weights have increased and infant mortality rates have decreased, according the officials (Pootona 1998: Pers.com.).