

Abalimi Bezakhaya – Social Ecology in Practice.
A Vision of Poverty Relief and Environment Regeneration
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1 Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| List of Figures | ii |
| List of Tables | ii |
| List of Abbreviations and Acronyms | ii |
| 1 Introduction | 1 |
| 2 Theoretical background | 1 |
| 3 Research Methodology | 3 |
| 3.1 Development of the research process for the case study | 3 |
| 3.2 Field Research in Crossroads, Khayalitsha, Nyanga and Phillipi | 3 |
| 3.2.1 Harvest of Hope (HoH) | 4 |
| 3.2.2 Nyanga Garden Centre | 4 |
| 3.2.3 Fezeka Community Garden | 5 |
| 3.2.4 Abalimi Field Team | 5 |
| 3.2.5 Trustee of Farm and Garden Trust and co-founding member of Abalimi | 5 |
| 4. Results and analysis | 6 |
| 4.1 Poverty reduction and restoration of dignity | 6 |
| 4.1.1. Improved nutrition and food security | 6 |
| 4.1.2. Additional income generation | 6 |
| 4.1.3. Dignity and empowerment | 7 |
| 4.2 Skills development and training | 7 |
| 4.3 Harvest of Hope | 8 |
| 4.4 Soil fertility and ecology | 10 |
| Conclusion | 10 |
| Reference List | 11 |
| Acknowledgments | 12 |
| Addendum A - Socio economic indicators | 13 |
| Addendum B - Abalimi Bezekhaya Management Questionnaire and interview guide | 14 |
| Addendum C - Abalimi Bezekhaya Micro Farmer's Questionnaire and interview guide | 16 |

3 List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 - The research area | 3 |
| Figure 2 - Fezeka Community Garden | 4 |
| Figure 3 - The Harvest of Hope production cycle | 10 |
| Figure 4 - Documenting and weighing produce as it arrives at the pack shed | 10 |

4 List of Tables

| | |
|--|---|
| Table 1 Categories of urban agriculture farmers | 2 |
| Table 2 Interviewees, location and length of interview | 5 |
| Table 3 Client visits to Khayalitsha and Nyanga Garden Centres (2010 – 2014) | 6 |
| Table 4 Gender and number of registered micro farmers (2012 to 2014) | 7 |

5 List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Abalimi | Abalimi Bezekhaya |
| DAFF | Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries |
| F & G Trust | Farm and Garden National Trust |
| HoH | Harvest of Hope |
| NGC | Nyanga Garden Centre |
| NPO | Non-Profit Organisation |
| OPG | Old Persons Grant |
| SASSA | South African Social Security Agency |
| SEED | Schools Environment education and Development Program |
| SPSS | Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support |

Abalimi Bezekhaya – Social Ecology in Practice.

A Vision of Poverty Relief and Environment Regeneration

“People are not inherently poor – nor are they destined to remain so.”

(Farm and Garden National Trust)

6 1 Introduction

The rationale for this case study is to understand how Abalimi Bezekhaya and over 5000 micro-farmers in Crossroads, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Nyanga and Phillipi and surrounds have challenged the grip that poverty has had on the community. The inequality and social injustice has far-reaching socio-economic implications. A still unequal education system, inefficient service delivery, high crime rates, high unemployment and inadequate housing are but a few of the challenges experienced daily. The legacy of Apartheid, rapid urbanization and development all had contributing roles.

A social ecologist perspective recognizes the need for balance between Anthropocene and Ecocentric viewpoints, especially in the research area of the Cape Flats. The activist research method, encouraging engagement with key role players through interviews, visiting their place of work and working side by side at the Abalimi Bezekhaya packing shed is used. The emphasis is on gathering first-hand knowledge and understanding how people’s lives have changed, the challenges they experience and solutions they have implemented. It will also focus on training methods, the importance of accessible lifelong learning for professional development; marketing skills and organic farming methods.

The results and findings will highlight whether micro farming practices have managed to restore dignity and generate income in an impoverished area, to the extent that the model designed by Abalimi Bezekhaya can be “franchised” in other areas. Abalimi Bezekhaya will be referred to as Abalimi in the rest of the paper.

7 2 Theoretical background

Specific elements highlighted in the selected literature review are contained in this case study. Realising that we live in a complex, non-linear world, a dynamic systems approach to the research is needed. This stance stems from an educational activist research background anchored in real life experience. Furthermore, farming on the sandy soils of the Cape Flats can be successful within a social ecology perspective, which recognizes the interconnectedness between the natural environment and the people who rely on it for their well-being. It also promotes civil movements such as Abalimi. .

Urban agriculture is unique in that it exists within the urban and peri-urban areas of cities (Albertson 2012). The plots are often on derelict land, located between pylons or in the cramped yards of dwellings. Land use zones can further complicate matters but an advantage of small scale vegetable farming is the low amount of permanent infrastructure needed to start production. The Urban Agricultural Policy for the City of Cape Town clearly explains the concept of urban agriculture (City of Cape Town 2007). The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), and Abalimi have similar categories of urban agricultural farmers, based on scale of operation, yet for this case study, the term micro farmers is used (Table 1) (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries 2013 and Abalimi (2015).

Table 1: Categories of urban agriculture farmers

| Organisation | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 3 |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| DAFF | Small producer type 1 | Small producer type 2 | Small producer type 3 |
| Abalimi | Survival and Subsistence micro-farmers | Livelihood micro-farmers | Commercial micro-farmers (Community Gardens) |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| Description | Primarily for home consumption – small garden plots | Home consumption and selling excess at markets or outlets such as HoH. Community Gardens Plots between 100 and 500m ² . Additional support from DAFF or Abalimi | Entrepreneur status yet classified as informal sector due to lack of VAT registration or taxes. Proven record of Category 2 to gain extra support, ie a sustainable enterprise. |
|--------------------|---|--|---|

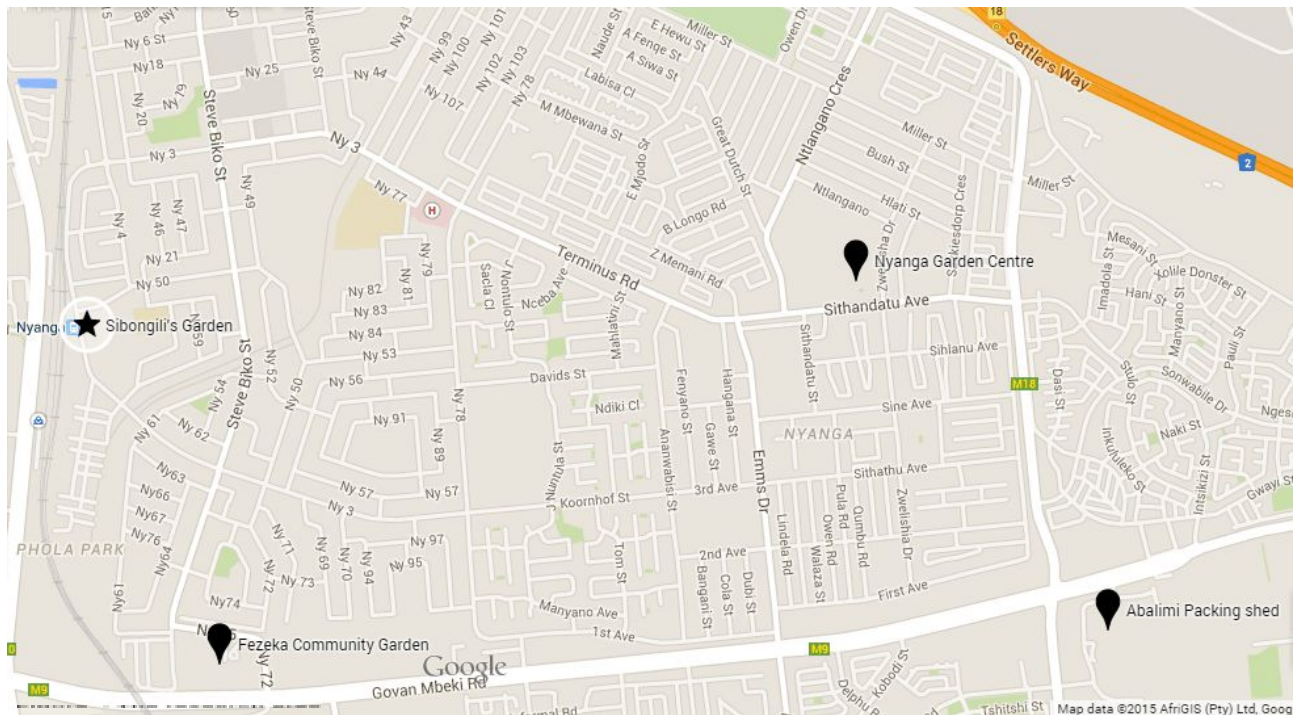
Sources: Abalimi (2015) and Department of Agriculture, Farming and Fishing (DAFF) (2013)

Brundtland's sustainable development definition focuses on "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Hopwood, B., Mellor, M. & O'Brien, G. 2005:39). The needs of the Crossroads, Guguletha, Nyanga and Philippi disadvantaged communities are not unique in a South Africa divided along socio-economic lines. Poverty and inequality reduction, within the context of an urban agricultural environment, is one of the necessary ways to achieve sustainable development in these areas. Without equality, development is not sustainable. These four suburbs, or townships, form part of the Cape Flats and fall under the City of Cape Town. The 2011 Census lists the following data specific to the Municipality: unemployment rate (23.9%); youth unemployment rate (31.9%); dependency ratio (43.6%); no schooling aged 20+ (1,8%); completed secondary school (15,6%) and number of agricultural households (34 383) (Statistics South Africa 2015). The statistics show an improvement since the 2001 Census yet the Gini coefficient indicates a more sobering picture.

The Gini coefficient for South Africa stands at 60.0, the second most economically divided country in the world. This indicator represents the gap between the rich and poor in South Africa and the resultant growth of a dual economy (World Bank 2015) "The very accumulation of wealth creates poverty" and "everyone falls under the burden of the dualistic economy" (Barkin 2011). Employment opportunities, access to a real equitable education system, food security, service delivery, a comprehensive health service, housing and a safe, affordable transport network are some of the needs required now and for all South Africa's future generations.

In the meantime, while waiting for government and private funding solutions, a community driven non-profit organisation, with a vision to finding lasting solutions to the challenge of poverty, inequality and food insecurity became active. In 1983, the Catholic Welfare launched the project, and in 1990, it became known as Abalimi Bezekhaya with the following vision, "To improve sustainable food production and environmental greening amongst the poor in Cape Town. The focus is on skills development through training and supporting people and organisations who wish to practice organic horticulture and micro farming. We promote sustainable development while encouraging initiatives which renew, build and conserve social organisation, self-responsibility and the natural environment" (Abalimi 2015).

There are two divisions in the organisation: The Development Division, focusing on skills development and training and Marketing, centering on Harvest of Hope – a box scheme, which distributes organic products to ethical consumers (Dunn 2010 and Anderson 2012).



The local inhabitants, in partnership with Abalimi, also took responsibility to address their own situation, resulting in a rise in dignity and an increase in general well-being. This came because of a “hands up, not hand out” approach (Mills 2015). As a civil society movement, there is evidence of action, a willingness to transform and learn, all supported by a deep-seated yet humble pride in one’s achievements. The ability to feed one’s family and to bring in a small income from “selling over the fence” is a measurable outcome. Micro farming began to define peoples place in the community.

8 3 Research Methodology

Activism research is an empirical research method, incorporating qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods. Its objectives are threefold. Firstly, it helps to “understand the root causes of inequality”, secondly, the actors or participants in the research willing take part, and finally, the “formulation of strategies to transform conditions” are discussed with the different role players (Hale 2001:13). This approach can often encourage future research as a consequence of the findings.

The interview process is informally structured around a designed set of closed and open-ended questions. The researcher listens to the stories and builds layers of questions to gather further information. This meant questionnaires acted as a guideline. Often the story moved in an unplanned direction, which can reveal valuable insight into future research questions. Two related questionnaires were prepared, one for the micro-farmers and the second for the Abalimi management team. In this way, the data collected could be verified using the triangulation method. The research of Dunn (2010) and Albertson (2012) proved valuable at this stage of the questionnaire design.

As a single case study, it has limitations, and there is not one truth or one perspective. How an economist or soil scientist may have approached it could raise different issues, and this is a character of true scientific research.



Figure 2 - Fezeka Community Garden

9 3.1 Development of the research process for the case study

Rob Small, a trustee of the Farm and Garden National Trust, and a founding member of Abalimi, was approached concerning researching Abalimi as a case study. Written permission was granted and it was agreed that, he would be “kept in the loop”, have an opportunity to read the final paper before submission and keep the case study on file for future reference. This is in the interest of the preservation of intellectual property and is in line with Activism Research. Every Tuesday a tour of Abalemi and the Harvest of Hope pack shed is organised, which I attended. The information received on the tour and the humble enthusiasm of the micro farmers and Harvest of Hope workers confirmed that I would like to focus my case study on this project. This was a living example of how people, over a thirty year period, could successfully use the soil to reduce poverty and raise food security in a sustained manner while farming in the “cracks” of the City of Cape Town.

10 3.2 Field Research in Crossroads, Khayalitsha, Nyanga and Phillipi

There were twelve interviews over a 10 day period, between the 2 March and 10 March 2015. All interviews were personally arranged prior to the interview day. Unfortunately Sibongile, at the community garden in Gugulethu was not available. His input would have added an additional element to the case study as he is a livelihood micro farmer moving towards a fully commercial enterprise, with the support and advice from Abalimi.

All the interviews occurred within a 3 km radius of the Abalimi headquarters, located in the Philippi Business Centre (Figure 1). The interviews are organised chronologically and discussed in greater detail in the next section (Table 2). Photographs, with permission from the people featured in them, provided visual evidence of soil quality, variety of crops and organic farming methods used.

Table 2: Interviewees, location and length of interview

| Interviewees | Date of interview | Location | Length of interview |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Harvest of Hope (HoH) Rachael McKinney | 2 nd March 2015 | Abalimi Board Room | 1 hour 5 minutes |
| Field Team Dave Golding | 2 nd March 2015 | Abalimi offices | 1 hour. |
| Nyanga Garden Centre Mama Bokolo | 3 rd March 2015 | Nyanga Garden Center (NGC) | 1 hour 35 minutes (extended due to excessive heat) |

| | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Micro farmers: (female) Nina, Philipina, Nancy and Lulama. | 4 th March 2015 | Fezeka Community Garden – in the office come store room. | A combined interview that lasted 1 hour |
| Field Team Members Christina Kaba, Liziwe and Zodidi Langa. | 10 th March 2015 | Abalimi Board Room | 55 minutes |
| F & G National Trust Rob Small, Trustee | 10 th March | Abalimi pack shed | 1 hour 45 minutes |

3.2.1 Harvest of Hope (HoH)

The Harvest of Hope marketing manager has found her “perfect job”. She has been working at HoH since January 2015 and is from the United States of America where she obtained professional marketing and project management experience.. She has an extraordinary drive and is committed to Abalimi’s vision of eradicating poverty through employment, while supporting the physical and social needs of individuals (Abalimi 2015). McKinney (2015) says that “the impossible is possible, and that poverty does not have to exist”.

The core business of HoH is the box scheme which relies on, and markets to, conscious, ethical consumers in the City of Cape Town. Her role is to work with the role players, including micro farmers, trustees, Field Team members and significant interested partners.

3.2.2 Nyanga Garden Centre

Mama Bokolo originally worked in a factory in Observatory but then graduated to micro farming and now helps with training and running the garden centre. The Nyanga Garden Centre is one of two Centres that supply manure, seedlings and training to the registered micro farmers, projects and other walk in clients. The centre is in the grounds of the Nyanga Clinic, so it benefits from the security at the clinic. It is within easy walking distance to people’s homes and the quantities purchased are small enough to for easy transportation purposes. Table 3 shows the number of visits to both Garden Centres between 2010 and 2014. There is a decline in 2014, which is under review, especially considering the number of registered micro farmers has increased over the same time period.

Table 3: Client visits to Khayalitsha and Nyanga Garden Centres (2010 – 2014)

| Garden Centres | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Khayalitsha Garden Centre | 1365 | 1641 | 1467 | 1122 | 780 |
| Nyanga Garden Centre | 2564 | 2349 | 2078 | 2224 | 1324 |
| Total | 3929 | 3990 | 3545 | 3346 | 2104 |

Source: Abalimi (2013 and 2015)

Mama Bokolo will be retiring in 2017 and might move to the Eastern Cape where she aims to head up a local community garden which will include livestock. She believes that it is not retirement, but entering a new phase which could also include ecotourism and introducing tourists and visitors to local indigenous customs.

3.2.3 Fezeka Community Garden

Appointments were organised the day before the interview, but on arrival, it transpired that the message was not conveyed to the rest of the group. They were however gracious and the interview could go ahead. Originally, each person was to be interviewed separately, but owing to the miscommunication, a group interview was conducted, which in hindsight worked out well, as one woman translated a few of the questions into isiXhosa.

Nina, Philipina, Nancy and Lulama were born in the Eastern Cape and came to Cape Town between 60 and 70 years ago. They are senior citizens receiving SASSA pensions and have supplemented their grants by working in the subsistence category community garden. This was a direct result of being significant, yet not sole, bread winners in their households and so that they did not become victims of poverty. The direct income from the farm averages about R600 per month per person, however, added to this is a daily supply of fresh food. The households, range from young children to senior citizens. Two ladies are responsible for five family members, one looks after six and the other, seven, making a total responsibility of 23 people. Their previous occupations included health worker, domestic worker, flower arranger and counsellor. The love of gardening and the social elements draw them together.

3.2.4 Abalimi Field Team

The Field Team is the link between HoH and the micro farmers. Christina Kaba, Zodidi Langa and Liziwe's roles are crucial. They are highly motivated, hard-working women with a wealth of knowledge gained through intensive training, and a hands-on experience in their own gardens and plots. They have an interest and willingness to share good practice, while still involved in their own professional development through lifelong learning.

The management questionnaire served as a guideline for a group interview. This was decided on as they have common roles, yet each person is responsible for a different division within the Field Team. Christina Kaba is a trustee of F & G Trust and has been politically active at grass roots level for decades. She is also a member of the Abalimi Governing Board. Zodidi Langa's chief responsibility is the packing shed and link between the community garden farmers and HoH. Liziwe is responsible for a group of micro farmers as well as training.

Dave Golding, the Field Production Support Manager and has been involved at Abalimi for many years, being also a co-founder of Abalimi. He has a passion for what he does, and has been instrumental in co-establishing the Khayalitsha Garden Centre (with Christina), was involved in the Manyani Peace Park and the Greening projects all around the townships including Mitchells Plain. He is currently focusing on production management, mentoring and developing an Organic market gardening apprenticeship, directed at the youth (Abalimi 2014). Finally, Rob Small.

3.2.5 Trustee of Farm and Garden Trust and co-founding member of Abalimi

Rob Small is an activist with experience in Southern African food security projects since the late 1970's. These include; Operation Grow Soweto (General Manager), Inqubela Rural Development Project, (Founding Director), Operation Hunger Agriculture Programme (National Manager) and Abalimi Bezekhaya (former Director and co-founder) (Abalimi 2015). He is efficient, knowledgeable, and a businessperson while still championing for the marginalized and disadvantaged.

Rob believes “only ethical individuals can be true caretakers, stewards and leaders (and that) such people are not motivated by personal wealth or self-aggrandizement (ambition). They are motivated at core by practical love for others, for nature, and for life first, self-interest second. Sustainable farmers of the future and indeed sustainable farmers of the present day, always turn out to be such people” (F & G Trust 2015).

The interview focused on gaps in the research and the way forward, as a NPO.

11 4. Results and analysis

Reflecting on the analyses of the interviews and data gathered, nine themes emerged. Due to the scope of the case study, four themes will be analysed which are directly linked to the research question of sustainable development as a necessary condition for poverty and inequality reduction, and environmental regeneration. They are: 1) Poverty reduction and restoration of dignity; 2) Skills development and training; 3) Marketing and Harvest of Hope and 4) Soil fertility. The additional themes of crime, land reform, rezoning of land use, greening the city and curriculum development at schools can form the foundation for future research projects.

There are over 5 389 registered Abalimi micro farmers, the majority being subsistence farmers working on small plots at their homes and over 42 Community Gardens, which currently supply HoH. Each Community Garden has an average of four farmers connected to the project. There are three categories of Community Gardens, namely: subsistence, livelihood and small-scale commercial farms. No farms are yet fully commercial enterprises.

12 4.1 Poverty reduction and restoration of dignity

Involvement in the Abalimi project has brought tangible financial and nutritional solutions to the micro farmers and their extended families, solutions that have motivated the neighbourhood and seen a 32.3% growth in the number of registered micro farmers between 2012 and 2014. In 2014, 677 of the micro farmers worked in Community Gardens.

Table 4: Gender and number of registered micro famers (2012 to 2014)

| Micro farmers | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|----------------------|-------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Females | N/A | 2 143 | 2 536 |
| Males | N/A | 1 962 | 2 364 |
| Gender not specified | N/A | 438 | 495 |
| Total | 3 650 | 4 543 (355 are 35 or younger) | 5 389 (378 are 35 or younger) |

(Source: Abalimi 2015)

The benefits that the micro farmers have experienced first-hand and described in the interviews are:

4.1.1. Improved nutrition and food security

Access to a variety of organic vegetables has led to an improved quality of life. “Previously we only ate carrots and onions, now, we make stews and eat aubergines and different vegetables throughout the year” (Fezeka Community Gardeners 2015). A healthier life style will also positively affect the economy by increasing productivity and human capital. The importance of nutrition in the first 1000 days of a child’s development and cooking methods to retain the nutritional value of the dishes were discussed.

4.1.2. Additional income generation

Results from the 2011 Census indicate that in the City of Cape Town, 47% of households earn less than R3 200 per month. The same data however for the suburbs of Crossroads (81%), Gugulethu (71%), Nyanga (74%) and Philippi (78%) is cause for concern. Added to this, the average unemployment rate for the four suburbs is 41.3%, which is 16.4% higher than the City of Cape Town (City of Cape Town 2013). Any additional income derived from micro-farming activities has a direct and an immediate effect on families.

The money that they have saved by planting their own vegetables; HoH contracts and “selling over the fence” to neighbours and local informal sector traders has boosted their monthly household income. Nancy

said, “we have extra money for our children and their school books” and an increase in the ability to make different choices (Fezeka Community Gardeners 2015). This confirms that “Political, economic and social choices, available to all, may be the best route to achieving sustainable human and economic development”. (Wise 2001:57).

When asked leaving at 1pm on most days, they said it was due to additional responsibilities of looking after grandchildren and other household duties. It appears as if no intergenerational activities occur at Fezeka, nor are the children encouraged to play at the garden after school or in the holidays. The subcontracted Public Works workers also left at 1pm. There is however, a sense that production levels could increase which would then also increase the monthly income. The Fezeka farmers however saw themselves as farmers and not businesspersons, which could hamper moving the Community Garden to the next operational level, from livelihood to commercial production.

4.1.3. Dignity and empowerment

The “hands up, not hands out” philosophy is empowering and liberating, and valued by the women interviewed. No sense of entitlement was expressed, always a focus on “we can lease the land” or “we can learn from others”. Work brings dignity and empowerment, a sense of purpose and place in a community that historically has struggled. “It gives us hope” (Bokolo 2015). However, not everyone in the community appreciates the important role micro farmers play. They are not farm labourers, but informal sector micro farmers. Mama Bokolo has generated enough extra income to buy a car, which has raised her standing in the community. “They would sometimes laugh at me because I am a farmer, but one day when it rained, my neighbour was waiting outside my door so I could give her a lift!” (Bokolo 2015).

The increase in the number of registered micro farmers is not only a result of high unemployment in the area, but testament to the change in quality of life. “If you can do it, why not me” (Kaba 2015)? Can micro farming be the way out poverty? Do social grants and financial support from government act too much as a cushion to prevent the Fezeka Community Garden moving up a category? Various studies focusing on poverty reduction via the Abalimi network seem to suggest this (Albertson 2011). It is however, the aim to encourage self-sufficiency and self-determination, and one way to achieve this is through access to skills development and training.

13 4.2 Skills development and training

“The poor are the critical actors and the starting point, and the priority, is meeting both their basic short-term needs and their long-term security” (Chambers 2001:63). The skills development and training offered to the micro-farmers is an example of long-term security. It is about capacity building and realizing the potential in everyone who would like to become a micro-farmer.

On average 3.5 % of adults in the four areas have no schooling, higher than the 1.8% average for the City of Cape Town. Linked to this, only 31.75% aged 20 and above have completed Grade 12 or higher, once again lower than the 46% of the whole City of Cape Town. (City of Cape Town 2013) By implication, this means that access to tertiary education would be difficult and even registering for a NQF Level 1 Mixed Farming Practice, seem challenging.

Abalimi has designed 24 training courses around the principles of organic farming and business management and biodynamic agriculture methods are being introduced. The training and startup costs are subsidised (up to 80%), by Abalimi and partner organisations, and include the following training programs:

- Basic Training Course – 4 day basic vegetable gardening (R35 to attend)
- Workshops on composting, mulching and other organic farming methods
- Horticulture for Indigenous flora (5 x 3 week module)
- Integrated Land Use Design at schools (focus on caretakers)
- Horizontal learning (twice per year)
- Farmers Meetings (twice per year)
- Mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging young farmers (planning stage)

Liziwe, Golding, Bokolo and Liziwe organise most of the training sessions at the Nyanga Garden Centre, which is the main training facility and supply center for the Nyanga region (includes Crossroads, Gugulethu, Langa, Mitchells Plein and Philippi). There is another training centre in Khayelitsha. Liziwe (2015) said she “never thought she would be working for an NPO, working in gardens and training people” while Golding (2015) is very interested in “mentoring young farmers”. Between 2012 and 2014, 742 farmers completed the Basic Training Course. The Field Workers have an important role to play in the continuous professional

development of the micro farmers, especially for those who work in the Community Gardens or who have the potential and interest to expand their micro farming operations. The weekly visits by the Field Team create an opportunity to motivate the farmers and to share examples of best practice. All of the Field Team, and Garden Centre workers have graduated from micro farmers to the positions they now fill. They all continue to farm their own plots, which mean the experience they share is relevant. The Farmers meetings and Horizontal learning sessions, which each occur twice a year, is an opportunity to encourage and learn from each other. It is democracy in action, and where open dialogue is practiced.

A point raised by the Field Team is that Abalimi is “a happy place and there is no judgement, you push yourself yet motivation is so important” (Kaba 2015). These values are important in capacity building. When an unemployed micro farmer, with no or little schooling and subsequent literacy difficulties, attends and completes the Basic Training Course, he or she will often, for the first time experience a sense of achievement. Raised self-esteem and a sense of place and value in society are reached. For a marginalised person this is a life changing moment. Furthermore, the skills learnt and practiced are transferrable to the Eastern Cape. Bokolo (2015) says her community is waiting for her to help start planting but she also feels that they should rather get on with it and not wait for her.

A concern expressed by the micro-farmers and Field Workers is a shortage of farmers under 35 years old. In 2013, 7.81% of the 4 543 registered farmers were under 35 and in 2014, the figure dropped slightly to 7.01% of 5 389 farmers (Abalimi 2015) Small (2015) believes attracting emerging farmers is a worldwide phenomenon and struggles to be financially viable. Even if the Media promotes organic farming it focuses on the traditional mainstream consumer model. Future farming methods, or agri-business, is increasing mechanisation and factory production, which will reduce the labour force. However Small (2015) emphasises that examples of best practice such as Abalimi, Green Road (Stellenbosch) and Siyavuna in KwaZulu Natal are successful against great odds, “and so the flame can be passed on” when this is realised. In a few instances, intergenerational involvement is working, especially in the more successful Community Gardens and this is important for the youth to see. The Fezeka Farmers (2015) said “bring young people; we don’t want to lose the work we have done” but they also need to encourage this to happen.

The Department of Agriculture, Farming and Fishing back the concern of young farmers, described in The Strategic Plan for Smallholder Support (SPSS) and the AgriBEE Fund report (DAFF 2013 and DAFF 2014), however the report states that they are not reaching the young farmers for a number of reasons, including lack of skills and leadership within the organisation. Successful micro farmers are encouraged by Abalimi to register for AgriBEE smallholder funding. Any form of assistance to improve the situation of the micro farmers is encouraged, especially when it leads to increased production and job creation. The DAFF funding includes infrastructure development (fencing, equipment, borehole pumps, irrigation, and storage facilities); fertilizers and seeds; capacity building and training; business, financial and technical support over a three-year period. The conditions of funding are in the DAFF reports and the application forms are available on the DAFF website. All applications are processed through Elsenberg (DAFF 2013 and DAFF 2014). Kaba (2015) explained that it can take a year, but the funding, valued at R120 000, not cash, has changed the lives of many, but more must happen. Langa (2015) made an interesting comment concerning fertilizers. The organic principles taught at Abalimi means that the micro farmers are choosing not to accept fertilizers, and have asked that fertilizer funding is allocated for extra equipment.

Finally, from an education perspective, Agricultural Science, Agricultural Management Practice and Agricultural Technology are three learning areas in the CAPS curriculum, which can introduce young people to farming practices and management, already at school level. With the additional support of SEED – an outdoor classroom initiative – the learners can make informed decisions about choosing farming as a career path even with the negative publicity or perception linked to farming.

14 4.3 Harvest of Hope

In 2008, Harvest of Hope, primarily a box scheme, was launched to provide a long-term sustainable market for organic crops produced in the Community Gardens. Kaba (2015) said, “If we could not eat or sell all our crops “over the fence” then they rotted”. It is the link between the ethical consumer and the organic farmer, and furthermore focuses on “creating jobs and enabling the poor to help themselves and earn a living with dignity” (Harvest of Hope 2008). Abalimi bought produce worth R501 220 from the farmers in 2012 and in 2013 this increased to R565 251.



Figure 3 - The Harvest of Hope production cycle

The box scheme functions throughout the year so coordination between agricultural production, handling and storage, packaging, distribution and marketing and the consumer is vital for a successful operation (Figure 3). Picking lists are required based on the number of orders placed via the internet booking system. The Field Team is mainly responsible for the contact with the Community Garden Farmers and the Packing Shed, however, planning for each harvest starts four months before picking occurs. The consumers expect value for money and variety, the micro farmer a financial return on their crops and the HoH team good quality products and long-term commitment from the consumer and micro farmers. None of the role players can act alone. To understand the complexities involved in this dynamic integrated system necessitates a collective spirit of community involvement, which is a vehicle towards reducing the inequality between two polarized worlds.



Figure 4 - Documenting and weighing produce as it arrives at the pack shed

The 42 Community Gardens currently supplying HoH receive about 50% of the price of the box and the balance used for operating costs. The vegetables, collected at the Community Gardens, and then delivered to the packing shed, where every product is quality controlled and weighed (or countered). This ensures accuracy so that each Community Garden receives the correct payment for goods delivered. The Production team determines the price, based on market analysis, and monthly deposits go direct into individual bank accounts. On the 24 February, 291 small boxes (eight items for a family of two) and 153 medium boxes (11 items for a family of four) were packed and distributed to 444 clients at 29 pickup points around the Cape Peninsula. One of the most difficult challenges to face is whether organic farming is financially sustainable and whether the clients are buying for organic reasons or as conscious ethical consumers. If it is purely organic, then HoH is just another outlet competing against Woolworths and P'nPay.

“If you fail the earth, then we fail humanity” a quote by HRH Prince Charles will lead the discussion into the next section.

15 4.4 Soil fertility and ecology

Sustainable Livelihood Thinking, proposed by Chambers (2001) highlights the importance of restoring and improving the land because it is the livelihood of those acting as stewards to the land. If the soil is fertile, production will increase, leading to an increase in opportunities and food security. One way to achieve this is to form partnerships between professional bodies and the poor, therefore knowledge is shared (two ways), leading to sustainable development. This is a philosophy practiced at Abalimi.

Furthermore, the expert knowledge gathered, through trial and error, over the past thirty years has confirmed to Abalimi that the organic (to become biodynamic in future) and permaculture approach to micro farming works in the Cape Flats. Firstly, it is organic in nature and relies on companion planting, crop rotation, fallow land as well as mulching and composting. Secondly, regeneration of depleted soils and raising the soil fertility levels is important for future generations of farmers, and thirdly, the farmers themselves are valued (Kritzinger 2015). The sandy soil, the wind and regular winter floods further challenge the micro farmers. To move from subsistence to livelihood requires an area of at least 500m² and regular composting with organically sourced manure.

The Nyanga Garden Center sells seedlings and manure to the micro farmers in the area. In 2010 and 2011, sales amounted to R336 387.19 and R530 077.00 respectively while in 2012, the figure was R85 957, 07. The higher figures for 2010 and 2011 were because of adding large quantities of manure to the sandy soil thereby raising the soil's fertility levels. Alternate solutions are available in conventional farming practices, namely: 1) add artificial fertilizers, 2) transport top soil to the farms and 3) use tunnels. The first option is not organic, the second very expensive and the third, not only expensive but allocation of tunnels to community gardens would be difficult to decide, although in some gardens (mainly in Khayelitsha) Abalimi is experimenting with tunnels to boost production.

The Community Gardens and small plots act as green lungs in an otherwise stark environment. While interviewing the micro farmers at Fezeka, ladybirds, butterflies and a variety of birds were flying around, a result of improved soil and plant life.

16 Conclusion

Activism research was appropriate in the context of micro farming on the Cape Flats. The amount of data gathered through interviews and the literature review exceeded what is required for a case study, yet it served as a guide to understand how Abalimi functions. Spending time with key role players was a privilege, especially finding out first-hand what really matters to them and how they meet challenges. However, a second opportunity to revisit the micro farmers, to spend time with Sibongile and to interview a few customers can add value to the case study.

A socio ecological approach from an education perspective was the way chosen to approach the case study. The connection between the micro farmers and the environment is crucial, a respectful meeting of the Anthropocene and Ecocentric schools of thought. The land, a natural resource, is the means for survival at the least, and a sustainable income at best for the micro farmers. Training and the sharing of knowledge further strengthen this. There is constant dissemination of knowledge at all levels, from the Basic Training Course to the biannual farmers meetings held at the pack shed in Philippi. However, it would appear that the Field Team, who are at the forefront of weekly input, need additional team leaders to appointed, especially with Harvest of Hope looking at ways to expand the box scheme beyond the 450 current clients.

The question whether micro farming can lift people out of poverty is ongoing. Documentation shows that over 5000 micro farmers are benefiting at one level or another, through increased nutrition or household income. The citizens of the Cape Flats are amongst the poorest in the City of Cape Town, especially the four areas chosen, so any reprieve, especially to do with food security is welcomed, and when it is from a “hands up, not hands out” approach it is more sustainable. Abalimi's focus is on self-determination and self-reliance and yet it is a challenge to move micro farmers from subsistence livelihood, to livelihood commercial levels of operation. This is not only to do with the soil, or that many farm part-time, but it seems to also be about not wanting to or not been able to work beyond 2 pm in the afternoon? The question around childcare and other household duties was raised, but this needs further investigation for fuller understanding.

Related to this is the low number of micro farmers below the age of 35. It would be easy to assume that the youth have alternate work, yet looking at the unemployment levels, that does not appear to be the case. Dunn (2010) and Albertson (2012) noted the aging population, and all those interviewed, so it remains a cause for concern. It is important to note however that:

- regular incomes have been established and younger people are becoming interested to join in.
- In Khayelitsha some community gardens have attracted young farmers and there is increasing interest from young people, as incomes from micro-farming grow.
- Abalimi is piloting a Young Farmers Training Centre in Khayalitsha.
- The Abalimi Farmer Register shows that younger people are increasingly taking up Home Gardening, which is often the first step towards becoming an income earning micro-farmer (Small 2015).

Harvest of Hope and the Garden Centres are looking towards expanding operations, a two-fold proactive measure taken by the Management Team. The current economic climate has predictively reduced donor funding to NPO's, and a possible increase in movement of people to the City of Cape Town with the hope of finding work may, result in an increase in the registration of new micro farmers. Hopefully some will choose micro farming first, instead of a stop gap or turn to micro farming as an intergenerational move to expand current production. HoH will also investigate encouraging new ethical customers to sign up for weekly deliveries, a difficult task in a competitive market with the likes of Woolworths and PnP.

Linked to this is the need for additional farming land. The expanding city is putting food production in the greater Cape Town under threat, hence the promotion of urban agriculture by the City of Cape Town on small pockets of land. The sandy soils of the Cape Flats pose numerous problems for the farmers, but it is important the local government continue to fund and support the local micro farmers, even if Abalimi is already doing so. This is not just about the soils fertility, but job creation, as vegetable farming is labour intensive. A future research project could focus on the Philippi Horticulture area that is under threat from expanding residential areas as well as the effect this could have on ground water supplies in Cape Town.

To conclude, creation of jobs, poverty reduced, especially at survivalist level, food security, restoration of dignity, biodiversity and the soil and has improved. The number of registered micro farmers continues to increase but the future is to attract the young emerging farmers by highlighting examples of best practice, such as Abalimi, Green Road and Siyavuna, and by promoting an alternative ethical consumer model.

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19 Addendum A - Socio economic indicators

Table Socio economic indicators of four suburbs in the City of Cape Town, 2011 Census

| Socio economic indicators | Crossroads | Gugulethu | Nyanga | Philippi | City of Cape Town |
|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| Black African | 96.7% | 99.0% | 98.8% | 94.1% | 39.0% |
| No schooling | 7.2% | 2.2% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 1.8% |
| Aged 20+ completed Grade 12 or higher | 27.0% | 37% | 31.0% | 32.0% | 46.0% |
| Labour force employed (aged 15 - 64) | 55.0% | 70.4% | 55.5% | 64.0% | 76.0% |
| Unemployment rate | 44.5% | 39.6% | 45.2% | 38.2% | 23.9% |
| Monthly income less than R3 200 | 81.0% | 71.0% | 74.0% | 78.0% | 47.0% |
| Monthly income less than R6 400 | 93.0% | 86.8% | 92.3% | 92.1% | 38.5% |
| Live in formal dwellings | 53% | 52% | 67.0% | 44% | 78.0% |
| Age group 15 to 24 | 21.0% | 19.3% | 20.7% | 21.0% | 18.4% |
| Age group 15 to 64 | 68.5% | 70.4% | 69.3% | 70.2% | 76.0% |
| Average household size | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| Population | 36 043 | 98 468 | 57 996 | 191 025 | 3 740 025 |

(Source: City of Cape Town (2013))

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| 20 Addendum B - Abalimi Bezekhaya Management Questionnaire and interview guide | |
| 1 | What events triggered the process? |
| 2 | What values underpin the organisation? |
| 3.1 | When did the project start? |
| 3.2 | Is the Project based on any other African or Sub-Sahara Model? |
| 4 | Where did the original plot start? The environment? |
| 5 | How did this situation come about? – Initial vision? And HoH? |
| 6.1 | Who are the main beneficiaries? |
| 6.2 | Why does it work so well? |
| 7 | Sustainable development is: “Development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. |
| 7.1 | Can one talk about sustainable development if there is on-going poverty and inequality ? |
| 7.2 | The needs of the people – what needs do you think are most important for the micro-farmers? |
| 7.3 | Future generations – is Abalimi sustainable if the youth do not get involved in the micro – farms? |
| 7.4 | Are there incidences where family members have grown or taken over the work from their parents or older family members? And is it successful? |
| 7.5 | The “ cracks ” where the micro farms are being established – how has the ecology of the area changed? Has the soil improved? Wild life returned? |
| 7.6 | Some of the ladies mentioned climate change – is a connection made between their role of greening the cities and therefore reducing the effects of air pollution? Does in their training course? |
| 7.7 | Corporate social responsibility and carbon points – is there an option to use this tactic to encourage business involvement in supporting the micro-farmers? |
| 7.8 | The (R) evolution that is being kept at bay – there is a world-wide movement of Blessed Unrest – does that encourage your organisation – or does it confirm that what you are doing is correct? |
| 8 | Leadership |
| 8.1 | Within the organisation. An organogram. How does HoH fit in? |
| 8.2 | Community leaders? |
| 9 | Decision making |
| 9.1 | How are decisions made? |
| 9.2 | Accountability and inclusivity? |
| 9.3 | What power relations exist in the area? Esp in relation to space and resources |
| 10 | Government involvement |
| 10.1 | The ladies were saying that when one shows a willingness, then local government will step in to help eg the bore holes, the shed, tools etc. Is there then any obligation towards the local government? |
| 10.2 | Changing of governments? ANC and DA? Changing attitudes? |
| 10.3 | Links with the Urban Agricultural policy of 2007 for Cape Town? |
| 10.4 | How else has government been involved? |
| 11 | Funding: |
| 11.1 | Donations? |
| 11.2 | Skills training? |
| 11.3 | Self-funding through the HoH? |
| 12. | Land Use conflict? |
| 12.1 | Shared with schools? / clinics? Any lose due to shack dwellers? |

| | |
|-------|---|
| 12.2 | Conflicting perceptions of land values? |
| 12.3 | Free or subsidised? |
| 12.4 | Polluted land – degraded? And littering? Ecology? |
| 13 | Profitability |
| 13.1 | Size of plot vs produce? 500m ² |
| 14 | Clients |
| 14.1 | HoH |
| 14.2 | Restaurants |
| 14.3 | Food schemes – eg Peninsula School Feeding Scheme. |
| 14.4 | Which one is the most profitable? Which one pays the best? |
| 14.5 | Do the box scheme people do it for the cause – or to be seen, or noticed? A bit of green washing? The increase in price? |
| 15 | Organic micro-farming |
| 15.1 | Certification? |
| 15.2 | Role of biodynamics and Permaculture.- |
| 15.3 | Water – grey or borehole? Metered – paid? |
| 15.4 | Ditches / swells? |
| 15.5 | Seedlings vs seeds |
| 15.6 | Infrastructure – storage, fencing, buildings / containers? |
| 15.7 | How small is micro? |
| 15.8 | Companion planting? / mixed for weather? |
| 15.9 | Fertilizers? |
| 15.10 | Crop rotation |
| 15.11 | Pots and other containers |
| 16 | Training? |
| 16.1 | Levels and transferrable? |
| 16.2 | Micro / conservation/ landscaping |
| 16.3 | Leadership training – farm management? |
| 16.4 | Visiting other centres for example the Orangezicht farm in Cape Town? |
| 16.5 | Sustainability Index? |
| 17 | Challenges |
| 17.1 | Land use |
| 17.2 | Sufficient land use |
| 17.3 | Productivity due to ill health or malnutrition |
| 17.4 | Flooding and natural disasters / fires |
| 17.5 | Market |
| 17.6 | Start up costs? |
| 17.7 | Xenophobia? |
| 17.8 | Women leadership? |
| 17.9 | Security and theft? |
| 17.10 | Other? |
| 18.1 | What is your vision for next 3 years? |
| 18.2 | I watched a video where Abalimi model was being encouraged – any outcome of that? |

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|----------|--|--|--------------|--|-----------------|--|
| | 21 Addendum C - Abalimi Bezekhaya Micro Farmer's Questionnaire and interview guide | | | | | |
| A | Personal details and background | | | | | |
| 1 | Were you born in Cape Town? | | | | | |
| 2 | If not – where were you born? | | | | | |
| 3 | How long have you lived in Cape Town, Langa or Khayalitsha | | | | | |
| 4 | In which year did you move to Cape Town? | | | | | |
| 5 | How has Cape Town changed since you moved here (or since you were a child if you were born here)? | | | | | |
| 6 | People always comment about Khayalitsha / Langa as an area where there is a good community spirit and people look out for each other. Do you feel that still exists? | | | | | |
| 7 | How many people are living with you? | | | | | |
| | 0-1 | | 2-3 | | 4-5 | |
| | | | | | 6-7 | |
| | | | | | More than 7 | |
| 8 | Are you the main bread winner? | | | | | |
| 9 | Is anyone in your family receiving a social grant, UIF, pension or disability grant? | | | | | |
| 10 | Do you think Micro-farming is a way out of the poverty cycle? Has it increased your standard of living and that of your house hold? | | | | | |
| 11 | What is the total income that you earn per month from the community garden? | | | | | |
| | R0 – R600 | | R600 – R1500 | | R1500– R2500 | |
| | | | | | R2500 – R4000 | |
| | | | | | R4000 – R6000 | |
| | | | | | More than R6000 | |
| B | Micro farming activities | | | | | |
| 12 | Why are you farming? Is it for food, financial, interest or all of the reasons? | | | | | |
| 13 | How long have you been a micro farmer? | | | | | |
| 14 | What does it feel like to be a farmer in an urban area? What do you friends think about it? | | | | | |
| 15 | How has the project changed your life? | | | | | |
| 16 | The gardens and micro-farms are greening Langa and Khayalitsha. Do you think people around you notice the difference? | | | | | |
| 17 | Do you see yourself as a business woman as well as a farmer? How does that feel? | | | | | |
| 18 | Will you continue to farm or would you leave it if a different opportunity arose? | | | | | |
| 19 | Do any of your children show interest in farming with you? Or grand children? | | | | | |
| 20 | What products do you plant and harvest? Summer | | | | Winter | |
| 21 | Which crops are the most profitable? | | | | | |
| 22 | How do you decide how much you must plant and what variety? | | | | | |
| 23 | Which crops are the most challenging to farm? | | | | | |
| 24 | Do you have room for livestock such as chickens and goats? | | | | | |
| 25 | Were you in previous employment or unemployed at the time? | | | | | |
| 26 | Are you part of a community project / garden – or an individual farmer? | | | | | |
| 27 | How many people farm with you? | | | | | |
| 28 | What is an advantage of working in a small group or/ on your own? | | | | | |
| 29 | What is a disadvantage of working in a small group or / On your own? | | | | | |

| | |
|----|---|
| 30 | Has the group changed over the years? If so – why do you think? |
| 31 | Describe the decision making process in the group? |
| 32 | As a group – how do you work out who gets what income from the sales of the crops and who pays for water and seeds? |
| 33 | How many plots do you have? And are you planning to develop more? |
| 34 | Do you have access to:/tools (communal)/water (bore hole or municipal metre)/electricity |
| 35 | The farming is mainly organic – what farming practices do you do that is good for the earth? |
| 36 | The soil or sand is a challenge – how do you make it fertile again? |
| 37 | What is the most exciting aspect of farming? |
| 38 | What do you find the most challenging about farming? (weather, sickness, hard work, soil, failed crops) |
| 39 | Where are the youth? Why do they not seem to be involved in farming? |
| 40 | What problems do the youth experience growing up in a city? |
| 41 | Do you think the youth realise that farming is a business and that they can become entrepreneurs |
| 42 | How many hours do you work a day? Could you work longer hours to increase the yield? |
| 43 | Which is your busiest day? |
| 44 | Do you supply crops to Harvest of Hope? |
| 45 | Who are your other customers? |
| 46 | How do you determine prices? |
| 47 | Do you pay anyone to help you farm? |
| 48 | What do you do with the harvest that you don't / can't sell? |
| 49 | Who supplies the seedlings and seeds to you? |
| 50 | Can you buy on credit if it is through Abalimi? |
| 51 | Does local government help micro-farmers? |
| | Training |
| 52 | Have you been on the 4 day training course offered by Abalimi? |
| 53 | What part of the course was the most important for you? |
| 54 | Do you receive advice from any another organisation? If yes please explain |
| 55 | What else would you like to learn? |
| 56 | How has Abalimi helped you? |
| 57 | How can they help you further? |
| 58 | Vision: Where do you see yourself in 3 year time? |