

THE DONDOTHA AREA STUDY FIVE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THEMBA MBHELE

DONDOTHA: INTERVIEW 1

Household composition

Both Taki L's parents died. He is 25 years old and is the eldest of five children.

Background and diagnosis

Taki L's father was employed in the mines in Gauteng. His mother was working as a domestic assistant in Richards Bay. His mother and father passed away in 2000 and in 2001 respectively. His family originated in Dondotha.

Disease diagnosis

In 1998 Taki L's mother was the first to develop sores around her mouth. The following year she could hardly walk as her feet were swollen terribly. Although she was in that state she continued to work and she earned R600/monthly. On the other hand his father seldom came home. Most of the time he would remit money (R1000 monthly). The health condition of Taki L's mother worsened. She stopped working and by then she started soiling herself. Taki L's maternal aunt who was unemployed came to stay with them. She cared for his mother and worked the land. Taki L's aunt helped with taking her sister to the hospital, *sangomas* and faithhealers. Her conditions continued to worsen, she had diarrhoea and headaches. She passed away in 2000.

Two weeks before her death Taki L's father returned home after repeated letters asking him to come home. He used to be physically fit but at that time he was scrawny and had lost appetite. He was coughing incessantly and his saliva had traces of blood. He said he had TB. His head had shrunk considerably and his eyes were deep-seated. Taki L gave up schooling and did some casual jobs, which sometimes earned him R200 a day. He had resumed some of the roles of a household head, as he would attend '*imbizos*' called by the chief. Taki L's father came home with R5000 and that money was used for buying food and paying debts. The other portion was used for treatment of both parents.

When his mother died the household had to borrow R3000 and used their uncle as a guarantor and had to pledge 2 cows in case of default on repayment. His uncle helped in paying back the loan. By that time his father developed hallucinations and had a runny tummy. As his aunt could not properly attend to his father, he had to take over such responsibility and that meant having to stop going to town to pursue his casual jobs. Consequently, his family got affected, as they would go to bed with empty stomachs. His siblings were greatly affected by that. The principal of the school where his siblings were asked to meet him and the *Induna* arranged for some donations from the community.

In 2001 Taki L's father was admitted to the hospital and died two days later. The family was again thrown into a deep end financially as they had to prepare for the funeral. A local *mashonisa* was approached and two cows were pledged. His maternal uncle was again involved. R3000 was lent to them and after the funeral they had to start repaying the money.

In 2001 the company that Taki L's father worked for sent them a cheque for R10000. Part of that money was used to repay the *mashonisa* and they got the cows back. The rest was used for food purchasing and other domestic needs. Later Taki L returned to doing his casual jobs. However his job never had a guarantee for regular income. Sometimes he would return home empty handed. That forced him to sell three of ten cows so that the household would at least enjoy a comfortable lifestyle.

In early 2002 his father's brother came and said he had come to support them but that caused serious problems. He ill-treated their maternal aunt and she eventually left. The household temporarily succumbed to his authority but things started to sour when he sold some cattle on the pretext of providing financially. He also demanded Taki L's parents' death certificates so that he could apply for support grant for the family. Taki L confronted him about the proceeds from the sale of cattle but he could not produce any money. Taki L then reported the matter to the chief who threatened his father's brother with arrest unless he produced the proceeds. His father's brother

disappeared and it was clear that he had come to dispossess them. The onus to run the household again fell on his shoulders.

Land assets

The household owns a big area of land, which is about the size of a formal soccer ground. They have a big kraal and a vegetable garden. They work the land and sometimes their neighbours volunteer to help them.

Changes in land size

The landholding is the same as before. Taki L has thought of leasing part of the land (this would generate an income for them) but the local chief is against such a practice. The chief does allow that land be allocated to a neighbour but leasing is prohibited.

Making a living

Taki L who is the eldest is supporting the household. He is presently trying to secure a support for three of his siblings (they are still under the age of 18yrs). He is being helped by the paralegal office that is attached to the tribal court. He relies on neighbours, the community-based health workers as well as friends. The community organisation offering mentoring service for agricultural students often help them with agricultural expertise. He complains that there is a lack of manpower to do the home chores. However he and his siblings cultivate the fields together and the maternal aunt who left because of the ill treatment by their father's brother also occasionally comes in to help. He is in a process of persuading his maternal aunt to come back and work full time. They sell produce (beans, madumbis and mielies) from their fields to the local selling point, which was provided by the Department of Public Enterprise.

Other assets

The household has inherited livestock. It is difficult to look after them as he has to go to work and his siblings have to commute to school. Sometimes the livestock causes problems; they get into neighbours' fields and graze their crops.

Credit and debt

When the household's financial situation is tough, he borrows from friends and neighbours although they are often reluctant to lend him money, as he is young and not formally employed. However he makes sure that the money is repaid. He also occasionally borrows from the stokvel that is run by some trolley-pushers in town. Such money he uses for buying seeds.

Land transfers

No land has been transferred.

Social capital and power relations

Only a few relatives are there but they hardly help each other as a result of deep-rooted conflict, which dates back a long time ago. The household is not related to any community structures. Neighbours and friends are very important since they do help them in emergency cases. Taki L belongs to the stokvel run by trolley pushers. The members contribute R100 per month.

Resolving the crisis of the illnesses

Taki L feels that the situation at home is slowly stabilising although his main worry is that he is not formally employed. He has received offers to come and work in Gauteng but he is concerned about the other household members who may be left traumatised if he moves to Gauteng. To them he is a father figure.

DONDOTHA: INTERVIEW 2

4 orphans and the respondent (Jazz M) is a man of 27 years of age.

Father – Mzala
Mother- Sesi D

Until 1989, Mzala was working at the coal mine and he left after experiencing some severe chest pains which were aggravated by his excessive smoking of tobacco. He started coughing severely for almost 3 years. He was later diagnosed with TB and that's how he was put on pension. He showed the following symptoms;

His feet developed some black spots and swelling and this was attributed to witchcraft.

Loss of body weight

He was hospitalised for a year and he was told to stop smoking, but he continued smoking secretly as well as drinking some illegal traditional beers (*gavine*). The greater part of his pension money was used to buy liquor. Mzala's health deteriorated in such a way that he could hardly walk and he was advised to nominate somebody who can receive the pension money on his behalf. In order to provide medical care, his pension money was largely spent on medical doctors, faithhealers and *sangomas*. The family began relying heavily on Sesi D's income. She was heavily involved in farming activities as well as selling second hand clothes at pension pay-out point. According to Jazz M, Sesi D (his mother) was able to get R1500 from two pension pay-outs. In addition, she used to sell vegetables at the local market and she managed to buy 10 goats and 5 cattle with the money received.

In 1999, Mzala finally died and Sesi D spent R5000 towards the funeral and she also borrowed R4000 from the local stokvel. After 6 months, Sesi D started again with her normal work and she had to sell five goats in order to start servicing her debt. In 2000, Sesi D's debt was fully serviced. In the very same year, KZN experienced an outbreak of cholera and Sesi D contracted the disease in August of that particular year. Sesi D started visiting the local hall which had been turned into a "hospital" and by then she had the following symptoms;

- Runny stomach
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite

Sesi D could not work anymore and as a result Jazz M had to take over the running of the household and this was difficult as he was unemployed. He started searching for a job and started working as a motor mechanic at a certain garage. The income was irregular as they depended on motorists who came to have their cars fixed. Jazz M later realised that the garage that he was working for is a chop shop. This was after one of the hijacked victims confronted the owner of the garage about his missing vehicle. Jazz M was one of the suspects and as a result he left the job which earned him R100 per week.

His mother's condition deteriorated and Jazz M was forced to sell one cow for R3000 at the agricultural show. He later found a job and worked for a public works programme where he was earning R10 a day. Sesi D finally died in November of the very same year. Jazz M had to borrow R4 000 for the funeral. He had to provide a bedroom suite as collateral. With the assistance of his father's relatives, the loan was paid back in time.

Life after death in the household

The biggest challenge facing Jazz M especially after the death of his mother was to support the family. To do that means that he had to have a reliable source of income. For two months Jazz M worked as an assistant bricklayer earning R800 per month. After that Jazz M decided to go to Richards Bay to search for a job. While in Richards Bay, he stayed with his friends. His aunt took care of the children. Jazz M was able to get casual jobs and would sometimes return home with R200 – R300 per week. While he was away his aunt was busy organising child support grants for the other young members without consulting him. Apparently, she was working in collusion with some of the welfare staff personnel. He only got to know about this after he was informed by the *Induna*. By this time, his aunt had already pocketed R3000 and she mysteriously disappeared. The chief was informed about this and she was traced and found in Empangeni. She was ordered to pay back the money. After this incidence, Jazz M became formally recognised as the receiver of the welfare grants that collectively amounted to R1600 per month. Jazz M still gets some meagre income from casual jobs.

Impact of parent's death on land use, rights and administration

This household has a large track of land. However, Jazz M has secretly made a deal with one of the neighbours to lease a portion of the land. Apparently, leasing is not allowed in the area. The household get an income of R900 per year from this deal. His only worry is that if this is found out, the household will be penalised. He (Jazz M) uses 2 ha where he grows beans, maize and some cabbages. The crops grown are still the same as

before his parent's death. The lease agreement is a verbal one and he purposefully avoided a written agreement as the lessee could use this against him if ever there was a conflict. The land used to be 6 hectares. The land had been obtained by his parents through subdivision by the late Mzala's father. Mzala's father had many wives and he had to divide the land to avoid conflicts amongst his five children after his death.

The passing away of Jazz M's mother in particular affected their farming activities as the household is currently running short of labour. This is one factor that prompted them to lease the land. The crops produced are sold at the local market, but since the portion of the land has been leased, the produce that is sold has been considerably reduced. However, Jazz M still has the intention of utilising all the hectares in future. Jazz M prefers leasing the land than selling it because through leasing he still has secured right to land ownership and the household still has to keep the land for future use including the subdivision of the land with other children especially when they get married.

Although the terms of the lease agreement has been adhered to, there have been instances where the lessee has developed some arguments over land ownership and even threatened to expose the lease agreement. The lessee also made several attempts to even encroach on the other portion that does not form part of the agreement. This has, however, been sorted out. His relatives also tried to challenge Jazz M's ownership of the land claiming that he is still too young to own the land. Jazz M's ambition is to get a permanent job so that he can employ people to work the land and he will cancel the lease agreement.

DONDOTHA: INTERVIEW 3

Household composition

Manzi K is a 16 years old boy who has 2 younger brothers. They are orphans and have their uncle as the head of their household. The two younger boys are staying with the household neighbours.

The household origin

Manzi K knows that he was born in Dondotha and he is not aware of any migration that could have taken place. He only remembers that the land they own now belongs to his late grandfather.

Disease diagnosis

Manzi K's father died in 1996 due to a car accident in Empangeni town. By the time of his death he was no longer working as he was retrenched from his job in Richards Bay. His mother who was a main supporter of the household died in 2001 from pneumonia.

He thinks that his mother contracted this disease because she was most of the time exposed to harsh conditions like very cold weather. She used to work both as a domestic assistant as well as tilling the fields for her neighbours. She started by coughing; she would always complain of feeling cold and was sweating a lot. She continued to work even if she was sick, as there was no one else to rely on. Initially her ailment was treated by *sangomas* and faith healers who said she had been bewitched. She was subjected to artificial vomiting which herbs induced, but that served no purpose as her condition worsened. It was around 2000 and Manzi K's grandmother (who is now late as well) took his mother to hospital and she was diagnosed as having pneumonia. She was released from the hospital after a month and she was still sick hence she could not return to work.

Impact of the disease

While their mother was still working Manzi K and his little bothers were doing most of the home chores and he would also help with shepherding cattle for their neighbours and that earned him R100 a month. The grandmother was responsible for supporting them with her pension grant. His mother sold 5 goats in order to raise money for transport costs to the hospital and for buying food. The household was subjected to loans from moneylenders who gave loans at very high interests. The grandmother had to repay some of the loans with her pension. By time the children got expelled from the school because of outstanding school fees. Being faced with the difficult situation Manzi K decided to seek jobs from the neighbours and local shops. He worked for R10 a day or some ration of food. The household gradually depended on him and eventually he left school to attend to the needs of the household. By that time his mother could hardly speak or walk. The households got donations

from a church to which they belonged, it amounted to R500 and that was used to repay accumulated huge debts of the moneylenders.

During his mother's death in 2001 the household faced economic upheavals, as they had no money for the funeral. He said his uncle who had arrived to take care of the household had to approach the local *Induna* to ask if they could not offer some financial support. The *Induna* had to go from door to door to solicit funds and R2000 was raised. The family also had to sell 2 goats. After the funeral his uncle stayed with him and his younger brothers stayed with one of their neighbours who volunteered to keep and raise them. He paid school fees and clothed them at his own expense until the support grant was accessed.

Manzi K used to till the neighbours' fields and fetched woods for them and his uncle did casual work for white families. They are both supporting the household. They hardly resort to moneylenders because they will have difficulty to pay back. The chief and a principal of a local school have decided to help the household to get a support grant.

Land asset

Manzi K' household had a big area of land, about 4 informal soccer fields. His mother sold half of the land that was for cultivation to a relative who used it as a residential plot for R1000. The remaining land is used for growing crops like beans, mielies, madumbis and other vegetables. Manzi K was once asked why his household would keep the land that they were not using. That question made him to suspect that outsiders were buying for his parents' land. He nevertheless allowed them to come and assist him. The initial aim of these outsiders was to come and help Manzi K but later that arrangement turned out to be sharecropping (the neighbours and relatives who used to help him with cultivation would share the produce). They started showing competition for using their household land. At some stage there was a fight among these outsiders over the produce as one was claiming to have worked more than others. The *Induna* was called to intervene.

Since the arrival of his uncle cultivation of land was slowly coming back to normal. His uncle worked the fields most of the time with the hope to discourage sharecropping. The *Induna* advised the family to work the land effectively to discourage the outsiders to want to assist. Since his uncle had started working the land they had realised more produce some of which was sold at a local market. They had established a vegetable garden on the fields. Students from the agricultural college used to come and assist them with how to grow crops and they would also do soil tests and advise them on the types of crops to grow.

Other assets

The household financial situation has forced them to sell goats that they had.

Credit and debt

The household avoids borrowing money, as they cannot afford repaying loans. Sometimes they are forced to get food from the local shop on credit.

Changes in land size

The changes only occurred while Manzi K's mother was still alive.

Land transfers

The allocation of land to new outsiders was motivated by financial circumstances. They now need an extra piece of land to expand their farming activities.

Temporal land transfer

The household has been involved in a temporal land transfer, which was done unintentionally. Informal sharecropping was imposed on the household by some relatives and neighbours.

Social capital and power relations

There are more than 5 relatives in the area. The household is not related to any of the community structures. Manzi K's uncle belongs to a burial scheme.

Resolving the crisis of the illness.

Since one of the neighbours is looking after the other children the financial situation was improving slowly. However when there is enough money Manzi K and his uncle do contribute to the upbringing of the children. He has expressed the desire to get his younger brothers back home and said he is longing to return to school.

DONDOTHA: INTERVIEW 4

6 children staying with their aunt one of the children is a 21 year old lady known as Shella M

Family origin, symptoms and the development of HIV/AIDS

Due to political violence that erupted in the early 1990's, this family had to vacate from Dondotha to settle on the edge of the KwaMbonambi town. In 1996 this family returned back to Dondotha and this was after the end of the political violence. During this time, most households lost their assets (e.g. land, livestock, and houses). The most noticeable assets that this household lost are 10 herd of cattle and a large piece of land.

Vusi and Busi were married and had 6 children. Unfortunately, Vusi got retrenched in 1998 from a certain company based in Richards Bay. In 1999, Vusi got a job in Gauteng and by then Busi was working as a domestic worker in Empangeni. According to Shella M, when Vusi (her father) started working in Gauteng he would hardly come back home. Nevertheless, he never stopped sending money back home which was normally R1500/month. Vusi's long absence from home never bothered Busi much as she was also earning R700/month.

In 2000, Busi heard a rumour that Vusi was sick and at one stage he was hospitalised for a month. One day Vusi came back home claiming to be on a three weeks leave. He showed the following symptoms:

- Loss of weight
- Loss of appetite
- Difficulty in swallowing

One day Vusi collapsed and he was taken to the hospital where he stayed for 5 days. At this stage none of his family knew about the cause of the disease. In July 2000, Vusi went back to work and he disappeared for the rest of the year. In 2001, Vusi came back home again with some sores on the lips. This was a terrible setback for the family as he stopped working. He had a saving of R10000 in the bank, but most of the money was used on his treatment at the hospital. For instance, hired transport to the hospital would cost between R200-R300. As a result of his failure to respond to the treatment, Vusi was taken to a *sangoma*. It was believed that Vusi was suffering from some spiritual possession and he had to undergo the traditional healing process which cost R800. With no sign of improvement, Vusi was taken back to the hospital. One evening in 2001 Vusi died in his sleep.

According to Shella M, Vusi's death seemed to have badly affected Busi as she started talking alone. Two months after Vusi's death Busi started showing almost the same symptoms as that shown by Vusi. In addition, she also complained of stomach aches, a runny stomach and dropping-off of her hair. As a result she was taken to the hospital and one of the relatives insisted that she needs to be taken to a *sangoma* as well to see if there were any signs of food poisoning. A CBHW felt that she needed to be taken for a blood test. After some few weeks of *sangoma* treatment, Busi was taken to the hospital for a blood test where she was found to be HIV positive. At this time many relatives began to distance themselves from her. Her aunt decided to come and stay with this family so that she can start taking care of her and the children. Busi later died at the hospital.

Impacts of the illness and the resultant death in the family

When Vusi passed away the family contributed R4000 towards his funeral while Busi's funeral cost half that amount. In addition, their relatives also had some undisclosed financial contribution towards the funeral. After the funeral Shella M had to temporarily stay away from school so as to help with the domestic chores. This family was plunged into financial crisis as they could not even access the R5000 savings until after obtaining an affidavit and the support from the guardian as Shella M was a minor. With the assistance of the *Induna*, the household approached the moneylender, but the *Induna* was against this as he was concerned with the repayment

ability of the family. Their initial request was R3500 and they only got R1000 with an interest rate of 30% per week. The savings was taking too long to be accessed. On the other hand the moneylender started demanding back his/her money. By this time the loan was almost equal to the value of a cow. (*How much is the value of a cow*). They decided to give him the cow. A late penalty fee of R1800 was charged and as a result the cow was not enough to cover the debt. It was never clear how the penalty was calculated. In the absence of this money forthcoming, the moneylender took their bed and a TV. Eventually the money was released by the bank and when they went to pay the penalty the TV was non functional and he promised to repair it but up to date he has not done that. A case is before the chief.

Land use, rights and administration in relation to HIV/AIDS

Although their parents are now late, the household with the support of their aunt as well as the extension services still use the land to support itself. The land size is still the same as before the death of their parents. This household grows vegetables both for subsistence and the market. The aunt is currently working as a domestic worker in town. With the assistance of the paralegal office, she has applied for a children support grant. The aunt sometimes uses some casual labour both for domestic chores and for the cultivation of land. This household uses mostly unemployed women to cultivate their land as it is sometimes difficult to afford a span of oxen or tractor to plough the land. Apparently, they pay them R10 per day per worker. This household has no intention of selling the land as they see it as an investment asset.

Aunt belongs to a stokvel and the burial society and these do help in times of need.

Apparently the situation is stabilising but this family acknowledges that they will never enjoy the lifestyle that they enjoyed while their parents were still alive. Their hopes rest on agriculture and education and they do have a desire to increase the land size only if they can have capital to work the land.

DONDOTHA: INTERVIEW 5

Household composition

Annie S (60 years) lives in Dondotha and is a pensioner. She is a household head and takes care of 4 orphans.

The household origin

The family moved to the area in 1980. Originally the family stayed in Matshana, which is 70 km away from Empangeni. They left the area due to interfamily conflicts over land ownership amongst the extended family members. They initially found a plot outside a township of Ngwelezana and it was densely populated and that resulted in their fields being small. They further moved to Dondotha. They happened to know about the place from relatives who moved from Mathsana and came to settle at Dondotha. The relatives referred them to the local *Induna* who in turn referred them to the chief and thereafter they were allocated land.

During their trekking they lost 10 cattle as they could not transport them and they sold 5 cows to the community members so that they could have money to build a house while they stayed outside Ngwelezana. They had built a big house, which they demolished when they moved to Dondotha. Transportation of the building material to a new place cost them around R400. After they arrived at the new place they had to lodge with a local family and at the same time built a new house of their own.

Disease diagnosis

Annie S's son contracted AIDS in 1997 after working in Johannesburg for 10 years. He was married and had 4 children. Annie S's son and his wife died due to AIDS in 1997.

Annie S said her son unbeknown to them had several women friends and they only got to know about them after his death. He used to come home quite often and never showed signs of being promiscuous and he supported his family very well. Around 1996 he showed signs of being withdrawn and was restless. At the beginning of 1997 when he returned home it was clear that he was wasting away, his hair had lost its natural texture, he developed pimples on his face and his head had shrunk considerably. He never returned back to work and there was no income coming in. Luckily his wife used to save some of the money he sent her and bought livestock such as a few cattle, fowls and goats.

Annie S said that at that stage her son also started soiling himself and was in and out of the hospital. At one stage he was taken to *sangomas* and witchdoctors but his condition remained unchanged. His wife who was employed as a domestic servant at Empangeni had to quit her job to take care of him. Around middle 1997 his wife started wasting away and developed some hallucinations and was taken to the hospital where she was admitted for 2 weeks. She was diagnosed as having AIDS. At that time Annie S's attention was divided among her daughter-in-law at the hospital, her bedridden son at home and the grandchildren who needed help with their schooling. A week after her daughter-in-law was discharged from the hospital her son passed away.

All these were exerting terrible pressure on the household's cash flow. By that time Annie S was not receiving her pension as yet and the only money available was her son's savings that she could not access as she was not a beneficiary. Only his wife could but she was at the hospital. They managed to hire a car for the wife to go to the bank at Empangeni where she withdrew R5000. During that time the bank allowed Annie S's daughter-in-law to appoint her as a beneficiary. She could not appoint any of her children since they were all still young. Fortunately Annie S's son belonged to a burial society and so does the rest of the family. Out of R5000 the household had to repay the local shop R1000 and moneylenders R2600. They had to slaughter one of their cows for the funeral. After the funeral they sold two cows for R6000, as more money was needed.

The wife's conditions deteriorated and she was sent to the hospital but she was later discharged. She needed close attention and she was bedridden. Annie S could no longer do some of the home chores and she relied heavily on the children who also missed out on their studies. Her daughter-in-law's deteriorating conditions (soiling her clothes and vomiting) affected the children psychologically. At the same time there were rumours going around that both Annie S's son and his wife were promiscuous and such rumours reached their children. The community based health workers were the ones who supported the household, they counselled and advised the children. Annie S's daughter-in-law passed away at the end of 1999 and that again brought misery as the finances were almost depleted. They had to sell 2 cows and spent the money on funeral costs and another R1000 was withdrawn from the bank leaving a bank balance of R6000. That was the money for the children's future.

By that time she was no longer capable of doing any cultivation hence she hired casual labourers and agricultural students from a college. They grew onions, cabbages, beans and mielies. Her fields had good soil that was very productive. They sold most of their produce to the local market (they still sell) and they used to realise about R800 monthly.

Land asset

They have huge fields (about the size of 4 informal soccer fields) its size has not changed.

Other assets

They had to sell goats and cattle in order to supplement the income.

Credit and debt

She borrows money in extreme emergencies, e.g. when they are short of food. They also buy seeds using loans but this is very rare.

Land transfers

There have been neither land transfers nor has any land been taken away. Annie S refers to that land as the children's investment.

Social capital and power relations

There are more than 10 relatives in the area but the relations are not good. The household is not related to anybody within the community structures. The household head is affiliated to the burial society and stokvel.

Resolving the crisis

Although the situation has not stabilised the household is trying to return to normal. Their only hope is to focus on agricultural activities. However they are in need of capital to enable them to engage in more farming activities, for example buy more seeds, implements and be able to continue hiring more casual labour.