

**Traditional Leadership in the Northern Province:
A Focus Group Study
March 1999**

INTRODUCTION

This research project was carried out in the Northern Province at the request of the Department of Constitutional Development and Provincial Affairs through its Minister, the Hon. M. Valli Moosa. The purpose of the research was to gather information from people in the selected villages about traditional leadership, for inclusion in the Department's status quo report on the same subject. Participants were asked questions that required them to go beyond describing each structure but elicited responses that were comparative in nature. The outcome has been a very clear articulation of the feelings of men and women, young and old, who are very close to the actual implementation of government policies in South Africa.

The research was conducted by Street Law, a human rights and democracy education NGO with offices across South Africa's nine provinces. It was supported by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) through a grant from USAID. NDI is a US based democracy support and political development NGO working in South Africa. Professor Nomthetho Simelane, of the University of Swaziland Political Science Department, analysed the data and drafted the report. NDI and Street Law worked in collaboration on several similar research projects in the Free State, KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape, and have conducted other focus group research on Constitutional Education in South Africa (1997) Voter Education in Lesotho (1997) and , Voter Education in South Africa (1998/99).

The participants from the focus groups of all age groups revealed a great deal of confidence in traditional leaders which could only be explained by contextualising the relationship between these leaders and their communities. The fact that traditional leaders have existed from time immemorial within their communities is one factor. The long standing cultural bonds accompanied by certain customs and traditions that have evolved over time have contributed to a specific value system. It is this value system that makes it difficult for some people in traditional communities to conceive of situations in which Chiefs are elected rather than appointed on the basis of custom. Almost all participants could not conceive of a procedure which departs from the well known hereditary system. When respondents were probed further on the issue of succession they simply said "it has always been done this way" and that they "see no need to change this procedure".

At another level the fact that traditional leaders have encouraged the mechanism of consultation via several structures such as through advisors, holding meetings with their followers and taking collective decisions rather than unilateral decisions tends to make their administration more popular, transparent and even more acceptable than the decisions of other levels of government.

The consultative approach appears also to enable traditional leaders to be more empathetic to the communities they lead. For this reason most participants were of the view that their traditional leaders would not engage in activities which would be detrimental to their interests.

Where there appears to be a shift in people's views was in the area of project-related development such as electrifying areas or constructing roads. Respondents said that local government should have direct responsibility in such instances, with a provision that traditional leaders are kept abreast of any such developments.

The results of this research seem to suggest that for the cohesion of rural and semi-rural communities where traditional leaders exist, they have a role to play in the new political dispensation. There should be little concern for the issue of ethnicity because there are many intervening factors such as the absence of kingship for the different ethnic groups and the politicisation of the South Africans by the struggle for liberation. In some areas of the Northern Province, a positive element is the coexistence of different ethnic groups in the same place.

METHODOLOGY

Focus groups are guided discussions conducted among several groups of people using a set questionnaire. Individual groups usually comprise a homogeneous set of people, and several groups are conducted to ensure that a cross-section of society is reached. The discussions are then transcribed and analysed comparatively to produce a report.

Focus groups are an well-known method of qualitative research. Through their emulation of human group interaction and social communication, participants tend to explore feelings and orientations. This form of research is known for its ability to explore below the surface, and to provide in-depth and reliable measures of how categories of people feel and are likely to react in specified situations. It is for these reasons that focus group methodology was selected as the appropriate form of research for this project.

The focus group discussions were undertaken from the 9th to the 12th September, 1998 in the Northern Province. The participants were selected randomly in specific communities. It was required that they be of a certain age, say 18-35 years for the category of “young participants”, and 36 and above for the category of the “old participants”. The language of the participants had to be a common one and men were grouped separately from women.

The discussion guide (see Appendix I) was designed in consultation with the Department of Constitutional Development and in keeping with its terms of reference for producing the Status Quo Report on traditional leadership. The report follows the order of the discussion, beginning with a “mood” section that attempts to contextualise the substance of the discussion within the general feelings and opinions of participants. The discussion centred on traditional leadership and related issues, but a few other questions were asked about the 1999 national elections.

Research moderators from Street Law were trained according to the outline in the first section of the discussion guide. Moderators also had to be competent in the language of the focus group they moderated. Moderators in the same language had to consult and agree on the translation of key concepts and the general direction of questions in the guide in order to avoid introducing contradictory interpretation of the questions posed. The languages used were Ndebele, Pedi, Tsonga and Venda. Street Law also provided all translations and transcriptions. In analysing the research, Prof. Nomthetho Simelane observed all the groups and reviewed the transcripts.

The geographical spread of communities from which the focus groups were organised covered the length and breadth of the Northern Province including areas in the border areas such as villages and townships in Bushbuckridge.

Location and Composition of Focus Groups - Northern Province

Date	Location	Demographic description	Number of Participants
9.9.98	Dzumeri	Men, 18-34 years	8
9.9.98	Ndengeza	Men, high school students unemployed 18-27	10
9.9.98	Tshixwadza	Men, pensioners, 40-86 years	10
10.9.98	Ga-Sekgopo	Women, unemployed 30-60 years	10
10.9.98	Ga-Sekgopo	Men, unemployed 40 yrs & above	8
10.9.98	Potgietersrus	Women, unemployed & pensioners (ages 36-100)	8
10.9.98	Tshixwadza	Women, 40-70 years	10
10.9.98	Tshixwadza	Women, students 17-25 years	10
10.9.98	Tshixwadza	Men, students 17-20 years	10
10.9.98	Potgietersrus	Women, students and others 18-35 years	9
11.9.98	Shatale	Men, 17-34	10
11.9.98	Shatale	Men, 35-66 years	10
11.9.98	Thula-Manashi	Men, employed	8
11.9.98	Thula-Manashi	Women, employed 35 years & above	9
12.9.98	Phelindaba	Men, unemployed 18-25 yrs	10
12.9.98	Thlavekisa	Women, unemployed & students 18-35 years	10

MOOD AND ISSUE CONCERNS

In this category it was intended to establish the views of focus group participants on the broad issue of the direction South Africa had taken after the 1994 national election as well as establishing if those interviewed recognised any tangible change in their immediate vicinity after the Local Government elections of 1995. At another level more specific questions were fielded on various areas such as which of the government structures were more accessible and responsive to the people.

The thrust of the questions raised in this section prompted the participants to reveal their feelings about democratic change within their local environment. Most of the participants, both men and women, young and old, tended to reduce change to simple tangible conditions such as employment and basic services. In the view of most participants there was simply no change for the better broadly speaking. In fact some argued that economic and social conditions had deteriorated in certain areas from what they used to be before the 1994 national elections.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S DIRECTION AFTER 1994

The question on whether South Africa was moving in the right direction or not tended to elicit a response which indicated that most people were disappointed with what they considered to be unfulfilled election promises. The government is perceived to be unable to satisfy the electorate. It was expected that the new government would improve the quality of life of the ordinary citizens by creating more job opportunities and generally providing the basic services such as health care, sufficient schools as well as provide enough teachers, electrify residential places, provide adequate telephone lines, build houses and roads - in short develop a good and solid infrastructure in order to improve the quality of life of those disadvantaged by centuries of political and economic discrimination.

"It is a complete mess because nothing is right"
(Old woman, Shatale Village)

*"Our lives are still the same as they were during the apartheid government.
There is nothing which shows that we have a new democratic government"*
(Young man, Tshixwadza Village)

*"Nothing has changed from this government, there are teachers and other
educated people who are not employed, roads, schools are not in good
condition"*
(Old woman, Thula-Manashi)

The issue of crime was pervasive. In very broad terms most focus group participants revealed that they were not impressed with the efforts presently taken by the state to deal with crime. The police came under very sharp criticism. Whilst on this question, it is important to point out that most participants felt that there was a correlation between the lack of employment opportunities and the spiralling of crime in the country.

*"Crime is rife because of unemployment and the fact that our youth do not
attend school. The government must create jobs to alleviate the problem of
crime"*
(Young woman, Shatale Village)

According to the focus group participants, government officials and politicians undermined the trust and confidence of the electorate in the political system to such an extent that some people felt that the previous government was better than the present one.

It is important, however, to point out that there was a minority view among some of the more discerning participants that South Africa was certainly moving in the right direction because there was no way in which the present government could be compared to the previous apartheid regime. The new government introduced democracy, civil

liberties and human rights for the majority of South Africans who did not enjoy any such freedom under the previous regime.

According to this view, the new dispensation is very significant for all South Africans. The group which held this view tended also to feel that the new government was trying to meet the aspirations of the citizenry but that it could not possibly do this in a short period of four years; the government was said to deserve more patience from the electorate and that it should be given an opportunity to deliver on its promises.

"I do not see any problem with the government, because even if you can refer to the histories of new governments you will find that there was never a new government which delivered services in the first five years. I am hopeful that if we can have a one-party state, then the ANC will be in a position to deliver services"

(Young man, Phelindaba)

"We are facing the right direction because there are lots of changes around this country since we elected this government" *(Young man, Dzumeri)*

Some participants were of the view that the ANC government is biased in favour of its members to the exclusion of non-members of the party.

"We are going in the wrong direction because when we want our needs to be addressed, they tell us that we must join the ANC first"

(Old woman, Shatale)

It is important to point out that the government comes under criticism even from its own stalwarts especially among young men. This was particularly evident amongst young men in the Bushbuckridge area. At another level the government is criticised for bias in favour of more prominent people and ignoring the ordinary citizens.

"Our local councillors only address the problems and needs of prominent and respectable people. If you are an ordinary citizen, they either take time attending to your problem or be biased against you"

(Young man, Shatale Village)

"People in government only do good things for areas where they come from"

(Young man, Phelindaba)

At the time this survey was taking place there were crises in the SADC region. It was the view of some participants that the government acted more swiftly in other countries within Southern Africa than it did within its own borders.

"South Africa is concerned more with helping other countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Lesotho with the army and the police, when they are needed in the country. We had problems in Richmond, Groblersdaal and Bushbuckridge, but the government took time to solve them"

(Young man, Shatale Village)

PERCEPTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS

In the case of local government and its impact on the different communities, participants in all age groups tended to register very negative views on the overall performance of councillors. The latter were generally perceived as self-seeking and ineffective. They seemed to be quite inaccessible and are probably the main reason people tended to be so disenchanted with the government of the day. As a result, when participants were asked who they are likely to approach when they have problems they would point to the chiefs. This response was more predominant with the older participants but even some of the young men and women thought that chiefs were more in touch with the

people than the councillors.

Councillors were not only perceived to be detached from their constituencies but were seen to be self-seeking and in some instances corrupt. At another level councillors did not inspire confidence because of their youthfulness. When pitted against traditional leaders, particularly chiefs, older women and men participants preferred chiefs.

"We elected the local councillors and the civic association who are supposed to serve us, but they are not effective"
(Young man, Phelindaba)

"The local councillors are the ones who are doing more damage to our village. They are corrupt and mismanaging funds meant for projects"
(Young man, Phelindaba)

VIEWS ON WHO IS APPROACHED WITH PROBLEMS

This question was raised to assess the accessibility of councillors vis-a-vis traditional leaders. The older men and women tended to register that they were more inclined to approach chiefs when faced with problems. This was because they were more comfortable and, in some instances, confident that their problems would be handled discreetly than when dealt with by councillors. Some of the older participants felt that chiefs were more familiar with their problems because they lived closer to their subjects than did councillors. The problems referred to chiefs appeared to be family problems as well as conflicts between different families.

The younger participants would prefer to deal with local government structures but pointed out that in most instances, councillors failed to rise up to the demands of their leadership roles. Some of the younger participants did not think that there is a role for chiefs whilst others felt that there was still a role to be played by traditional leaders.

Some of the data gathered during the group discussions indicated that people used both the traditional and local government structures when addressing their problems. One old man from Tshixwadza said "we go to the civic association and the chiefs or headmen" when asked who they go to when they had problems.

"We actually take our problems to the chief or the headman, because we are under their rule. If they are unable to solve our problems, they refer us to the magistrate. The civic association is there to help when their advice is needed."
(Old man, Tshixwadza)

"We report our problems to civic organisations and local councillors though they don't do anything to help us as the community"
(Young woman, Thlavekisa)

THE IMAGE OF TIHOSI OR TIDUNA

The perception of traditional leaders is generally quite positive even though most participants do not necessarily desire overt political participation for chiefs. The previous section revealed the apparent weakness of local government structures and the negative views participants had for this tier of government. Lacklustre performance appears to have persuaded participants to stick with what was more familiar to them. We have seen how the older generation especially relied more on chiefs than elected councillors. Participants tended to see a definite role for traditional leaders and perhaps this is not surprising if the views expressed in the previous section are kept in mind.

The older participants, especially the older women, argued that chiefs and other traditional leaders have a role to play. Some of the participants were of the view that the status of traditional leaders has been dented by the new political order. They are said to no longer enjoy the level of esteem they enjoyed in the past. There are various reasons advanced for their 'lower' status - some of their authority has been assumed by local government and this means that they no longer have the same clout as before, because resources are now in the hands of the local

government. Some participants felt that this is good because resources are now controlled by democratically elected structures.

Some younger participants held a different view of traditional leaders to that of the older participants. They argued that traditional structures are archaic and have no place in the future, they should rather be replaced by elected structures.

Another contrary view from younger men especially was that some traditional leaders had been part of the previous non-democratic regime and therefore see young people as rebellious and disrespectful. This group cannot see these leaders changing such negative perceptions about the 'militant' youth of yester year.

Referring to the significance of traditional leaders one participant said

"They are important because we know that whenever we have problems we report to them, unlike the local councillors and the civic association who are not helping us in anyway"
(Old man, Shatale village)

This appears to give a sense that traditional leaders are filling a vacuum caused by the ineffectiveness of councillors.

"The headmen and chiefs are the ones who attend to our problems"
(Young man, Phelindaba)

"It is important to have them (chiefs) because they are part of our history, tradition and culture. They still have important roles to play in addressing our needs and problems"
(Old man, Tshixwadza)

"The chiefs and headmen used to rule us well, but now the new government structures are sidelining them. There was law and order under their rule, so it is about time that they are recognised for what they are"
(Young man, Shatale village)

On this issue of traditional leadership what comes out clearly is that they are considered relevant and necessary but most participants tend to compare them with councillors and civic structures. This would appear to suggest that if elected leaders would perform their functions satisfactorily, people may not see their role as important as they tend to see it in the prevailing circumstances, where councillors are perceived as virtually ineffective.

A question was raised about the appointment of chiefs and whether they should be elected or not. The view of most respondents was that chiefs are hereditary. It seemed quite acceptable to continue with this system of appointing chiefs even though a few young participants thought being chief by birth did not present an opportunity to obtain the services of the best man or woman for the job.

Response to the question whether the government should be involved in the appointment of traditional leaders was that:

"The government should not be involved because they know nothing about who should be the successor. That should be left to the family and elders, as they know exactly how to go about that"
(Old woman, Tshixwadza)

This view was countered by some young man from Ndengeza:

"According to me, the government must take part by sending people together"

with the chief's family to appoint the new chief and also has ideas from the history of the village and the country. If the government can take part, this can be done in a good way"
(Young man, Ndengeza)

This view is supported by another similar one from an old man who pointed out that:

"Times are changing, we must have a new way of electing chiefs and headmen. This role is becoming useless, because they know that their positions are permanent, hence they are not working hard to address our needs. If the system was like that of electing government officials, they would work hard to address our needs, knowing that if they do not work hard, they will not get the votes next time"
(Old man, Ga-Sekgopo)

On the issue of political neutrality of traditional leaders, it was the view of most participants across the whole spectrum of the different groups that chiefs should not be partisan as they look after the interests of all members of the communities they lead, regardless of the political affiliation of members of these communities.

It is only in some extreme situations where participants argued for political party involvement. In those instances where people supported political involvement, it was because they were concerned with what they perceived as marginalisation of chiefs. In other instances disenchantment with councillors pushed some people to support the participation of chiefs in party politics.

On the other hand there were participants who were mindful of how chiefs dabbled in politics during the days of apartheid. Those who were favoured by the previous system were elevated to very powerful positions which were invariably used against the popular democratic movements.

"The chief was the leader of Sofasonke Party which collapsed in 1993. It was like the IFP because they did not even want to see anyone wearing an ANC T-shirt and it had old people as its members. The chief was totally against political activity besides his political party"
(Young man, Phelindaba)

Arguments against political party involvement were:

"The chiefs and headmen should not be politically active because they lead people who have diverse political homes. If they can be involved in politics they will be biased against people who do not belong to their political parties. They will also try to influence people to vote for their parties"
(Old man, Shatale village)

"They are not involved in politics because they know that their tribes have different political beliefs. We have members of the ANC, PAC, NP and DP. The chiefs and the headmen should always strive to unify their tribes, so any involvement in politics would jeopardise unity"
(Old man, Tshixwadza).

TRADITIONAL LEADERS ARE BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH COMMUNITIES

Responses to the question that chiefs and headmen know their communities better were an overwhelming agreement amongst most participants in all age groups that this is so. There was a sense in which most participants felt traditional leaders provide a basis for moral and social stability as they tend to give direction as well as promote law and order within their various communities. Participants were also of the view that chiefs are the ones better placed

to allocate land because they are familiar with the history of the area and are likely to make correct decisions about where different people should live or farm.

"I think this (land allocation) must be done by our chiefs because local councillors do not know the whole village well, so they cannot tell people where to farm or to build houses. Chiefs and their helpers are the people who know the place well and they can tell people what to do and where"
(Old woman, Thula Manashi)

FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

The functions of traditional leaders are closely linked to their historical and customary role within the African communities where they have always existed and played the role ostensibly of ruling. This is the overall function which is perceived by residents as a right and privilege of traditional leaders.

The predominant structure that exists in the Northern Province right across all villages administered or partly administered by traditional leaders is that of Headmen in charge of villages falling under a Chief. The Headmen are assisted by messengers and advisors who are either appointed or elected on the basis of their active participation within their various communities. Advisors tend to be people who have made a contribution to the community but they also come from relatives of Chiefs and Headmen often because they enjoy a better status as a result of their family origins.

The normal procedure is that the Headmen are approached first in the event of a problem. The research survey indicated that most problems are taken to Headmen who often are able to solve these problems. In the view of the focus group participants almost all problems can be taken to Headmen. There was a sense in which respondents felt confident there was no problem which would be outside the jurisdiction of traditional leaders. If the problem was of a specific nature requiring specific attention the Headmen or Chiefs tended to refer it to a particular relevant forum i.e. a police matter to the police.

In the event that a Headman was unable to resolve a problem he would refer it to the next upper stage which is that of the Chief. Respondents pointed out that if the correct procedure of approaching the Headmen first is not followed the Chief would request that it be followed first before the matter is brought to the Chief.

Decisions which affect the group are often taken only after due consultation with the people usually through the mechanism of meetings. The fact that even government decisions which affect a specific community are taken after due consultation with the people tended to be more popular with communities. This is why the majority of the focus group participants, when asked who they support - the Chiefs and Headmen or government - said the former. The substantive argument here was that the traditional leadership does not take unilateral decisions but consults members of the communities first before they take a final decision.

Functions which were identified as falling under the jurisdiction of traditional leaders were more specifically allocation of land, maintenance of law and order and conflict resolution encompassing various levels starting with family problems and extending to the broader community. These functions are regarded as critical for the stability of the communities. Due to the significant role played by traditional leaders in the general cohesion of the communities they lead, those areas which have no Chiefs because of the death of a Chief, for instance, find themselves at ends and are crying for this vacuum to be closed. **Ga-Sekgopo and Ndengeza** are such areas, the people feel that they will not have any direction until the chief is appointed.

"We want to have a new Chief because without it there is no order and a clear direction."
(Old woman, Ga-Sekgopo).

RELATIONS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL LEADERS AND OTHER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

In some areas such as Shatale although the role of traditional leadership is appreciated there is a sense in which the people feel the role which was played by these leaders can be taken over by such structures as a TLC. One should hasten to point out that Shatale is a township, some respondents held a view that government should regulate traditional leaders in Shatale. It is important to realise that this was generally a minority view as most participants identified better with decisions taken by traditional leaders (probably because of the element of consultation which accompanies the taking of these decisions) than those taken by elected government.

In the view of most participants it was desirable that elected government co-operated with traditional leaders. It is important to recognise the conflict that emerges as a result of parallel and/or conflicting authority between traditional leadership and local government especially. It was the view of the majority of participants that all the different levels of elected government as well as the traditional leaders should be strengthened rather than weakened because a strong government all-round with a proper vision should find it easier to advance development. Whilst it was recognised that development should be handled by elected government especially the local government it was emphasised that traditional leaders should be involved in decisions affecting development. The rationale for involving traditional leaders was that they were always concerned about the interests of their communities and were therefore unlikely to work against those interests. Another reason advanced in the arguments to involve traditional leaders was that they were more familiar with the needs of their communities than members of elected government. Co-operation amongst different structures with traditional leadership was evident in Tshixwadza.

*“The Chief and Headmen work together with the Civic Association. Whenever there are problems they sit together and find a solution”
(Old woman, Tshixwadza)*

I think this is very positive and it should be encouraged as well as popularised because it proves that it is possible for the different structures within the communities to re-enforce each other in their different efforts to promote the interests of their communities. At another level it is important because co-existence of this nature is new; defining together what should be done will also help the different structures refine their understanding of their separate roles in a more positive light.

Although there were not many instances of tribalism in the northern part of the Northern Province the issue of tribal discrimination was raised, both the Pedi and Ndebele felt discriminated against ostensibly in the public sector. They argued that most offices are filled by Tsonga and Venda people.

COMPARISON OF NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Although some participants did not quite appreciate the subtle differences amongst the three levels of government, those who did were very clear on what the functions of the three different levels of government were. There was a very keen understanding of what the perceived shortcomings of the national government were and how these weaknesses affected the two lower levels of governments.

The national government came under criticism for its inability to deliver on its election promises which ostensibly were identified as creation of employment opportunities, improving the education and health systems by providing sufficient schools, clinics, teachers, building houses and generally encouraging development particularly that of the infrastructure of most of the black areas. However some participants acknowledged that some areas have been improved from what they used to be under the previous government. Introduction of electricity was seen as a positive step even though there were those participants who felt the speed with which this was done was not satisfactory. Bureaucracy is blamed for some of the problems related to poor delivery of services.

“The National government is very slow in delivering services because the Local government informs the Provincial government of our needs, who will then take the matter to the National government. At the moment we are confused and frustrated, because their term of government is ending, so if they do not win the 1999 elections it will mean that the services that they promised us will

not be delivered"
(Old man, Ga-Sekgopo)

The above quotation would appear to indicate a frustration with too much government. If the different tiers of government do not function effectively there will be a tendency to pass the blame to each other. That is apparently what creates this sense of hopelessness on the part of the electorate.

"Since the new government took over, unemployment is rife. In the past, our children got jobs as soon as they graduated, but these days they are suffering as if they never prepared for their future"
(Old woman, Tshixwadza)

Although the national government is criticised for failing to deliver there is a sense in which participants recognise the uplifting role it has played by taking over from a previous unpopular government. This general positive view is accompanied by other more specific positive views about the national government. This is captured from some participants, for instance one old woman commented that:

"The national government is doing a good job because as women we are now equal to men in all respects. We are now allowed to do jobs which were historically meant for men, we get same salaries and can earn more than men"
(Old Woman, Shatale village)

Another woman from the same village as the one quoted above commented as follows:

"I am happy with the national government because now everybody has rights, unlike before when only whites had rights"
(Old Woman, Shatale village)

The views of participants on the national government reflected a balanced assessment of its performance in the past four years because although it came under strong criticism for failing to deliver on its promises it was given credit for what it had done for the general public.

The provincial government in the Northern Province is perceived very negatively. It is seen as a non-performing government which is detached from its constituency and unfamiliar with the problems and needs of the various communities. The existence of the border issue is a thorn in the flesh for most people, in fact it appears to make the situation very tense. At another level the provincial government is perceived as corrupt and therefore unable to exercise proper financial management of the province.

At another level the provincial government is compared with the previous homeland government. The latter is perceived as having been better because it is argued that services were good, unemployment and crime were not as high as they are under the present government.

In comparing the national and provincial governments it was the general view of participants right across the different age groups that the national government is better than the provincial government.

Some of the more discerning participants were of the view that there could not be much difference between the two levels of government because the same political party controlled both governments. Other participants were also of the view that the national government should provide sufficient resources to the provincial government so that the latter could carry out its mandate without hindrance. This point tended to be countered by the argument that there was mismanagement of funds at the provincial level.

The local government level was identified as the worst of the three levels of government. Generally participants were of the view that the local government was closest to them and therefore it should have tried to implement its policies. It was seen as having dismally failed to deliver on its election promises. In the view of some of the

participants, the local government's performance is the main reason why the new government appears to have been unable to deliver on its election promises.

In comparing the three levels of government the national government appears to receive more support than either the provincial or local governments. However, what is clear from this survey is that most people expect more from all three levels of government.

Views expressed on co-operation between councillors and traditional leaders were such that the majority of the focus group participants thought it would be a good idea if councillors worked together with chiefs and headmen. The consensus was that this would augur well for development in all spheres, and since development was one critical area for most of the communities surveyed it seemed a welcome idea. It was, however, difficult for participants to expect such co-operation and teamwork to be possible in the short term.

There were those participants who felt that the councillors have undermined the authority of the traditional leaders to such an extent that it would be difficult for the two camps to break bread together.

VOTING IN THE 1999 ELECTION

The immediate reaction to the question whether participants would vote in 1999 was no, it is useless to vote because nothing is done. Some well considered responses varied between those who felt it was too soon to expect the government to have been able to respond to all the aspirations of the people and those who felt it was important to exercise one's democratic right to vote for a political party of their choice.

Some of the more disillusioned people clearly stated that they would not vote at all because political parties made promises they did not keep. In those areas affected by the border dispute, some participants said they would not vote because they were disgruntled.

"We are not going to vote because of the fact that we are forced to fall under Northern Province, which is not practical. Our nearest town is Nelspruit, which is the capital of Mpumalanga, while Pietersburg is far away"
(Old woman, Shatale village)

In Shatale the border dispute appeared to loom very large as the single most important factor influencing participants either not to vote or to vote for a different political party, see the following comments from old women in Shatale village.

All the eight participants in the Shatale village focus group registered negative to the question 'will they vote in the 1999 election?'

It is important, however, to indicate that there were those participants especially amongst the youth who indicated that they will vote for the government for various reasons including the contention that it probably needs more time to enable it to deliver on its promises.

"I think we must vote next year and vote for the ANC again, otherwise we will end up voting for the National Party and other historically white parties which will take us back to the apartheid system"
(Young man, Phelindaba)

SERVICES REQUIRED IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

The most critical need in all villages covered by the survey was water. This was followed by the need for employment opportunities, then services such as electricity, road communication, telephones, building as well as maintenance of schools, more teachers and clinics, increased availability of medicines.

SERVICES REQUIRED BY AREA

DZUMERI

- Water, people travel long distances to fetch water
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Rate of crime high
- Hospitals inaccessible because of distances to covered

GA-SEKGOPO

- Shortage of water

GIYANA

- Water (the water is salty and there is fear it could be a health hazard)
- Lack of medicines

What has changed for the better is that some settlements are electrified and this appears to apply to quite a few areas covered by the survey

NDENGEZA

- Water is the most critical requirement
- Renovation of schools
- Infrastructural development generally
- Teachers are not sufficient

PHELINDABA

- Shortage of water
- Lack of employment opportunities

POTGIETERSRUS

- No water, *otherwise services such as electricity, new roads were delivered in some areas*

SHATALE

- The border crisis is a major issue
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Projects are not seen through and causes a lot of frustration among the residents

THLAVEKISA

- Water is scarce
- Pensioners have problems receiving their money regularly

Points of delivery: houses have been built, and electricity and water pipes have been installed

THULAMHASHI

- Corruption is rampant
- Water is scarce
- Cemetery needs to be cleared
- Lack of schools
- Pensioners face some problems getting their money

TSHIXWADZA

- Water is scarce
- Crime rate is high
- Lack of employment

- Electricity and roads required

APPENDIX I

DISCUSSION GUIDE SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE SEPTEMBER 1998

NORTHERN PROVINCE

1. INTRODUCTION (15MINUTES)

A. Introduce yourself

B. Explain what focus group is ...

A discussion not a conversation

Nor right or wrong answers, just ideas and opinions

Feel free to disagree with other people in the group

Every one should participate, because everyone's opinion is important

C. Explain the purpose of the group ...

Sponsored by the National Democratic Institute, which is not associated with government or any political party, and the Street Law.

To better understand how the local leaders feel about the direction the country is going in and about some of the issues we are facing

One of many groups, all across the province

D. Explain tape recorder ...

So I can listen later and take notes

Names will not be used, every thing is confidential

E. Explain presence of others ...

Researchers working for NDI to give then a different perspective
Interpreter

F. Have participants introduce themselves

First name

Job or leadership position

II. MOOD (20 MINUTES)

(Try to hear from every one at least once during this section)

A. 7 minutes: if you had to use one word or phrase to describe your feeling about South Africa these days, what word or phrase would you use ?

B. 4 minutes: Let's think about the direction the country is going in. Do you

think its going in the right direction or the wrong direction ? Why do you say that ?

C. 4 minutes: Think about how things are going here in your village. Are things going in the right direction or the wrong direction ? Why do you say that?

D. 7 minutes: In 1994 South Africa started its democratic transition. Since then, how have things changed here in your village?

What has changed since the local elections in 1995 in the Northern Province?

What has changed for the better? What has changed for the worse ?

What are the biggest problems here?

III. Leaders - Part I (28 minutes)

A. 10 minutes: Think about the problems you face here in your village. Who can help you solve them ?

Who do you go to when you have problems? Who are the leaders who can help solve the problems you face ?

Who are the leaders in the village? What do they do? Tell me something about them.

Have new people become leaders in your area since the local elections? How has it changed?

B. 10 minutes: Are TiHosi or Tinduna important in this area?

What do the TiHosi or Tinduna in this area do? Imagine I am from another country visiting here for the first time. How would you describe to me what TiHosi or Tinduna do?

Since the elections, has their job changed ?

Do TiHosi and Tinduna have more powers or less power than they used to ? Why do you say that ?

C. 5 minutes: How do you decide who becomes TiHosi and Tinduna in this area? Who decides?

What's good about that? What's bad?

D. 3 minutes: Are TiHosi and Tinduna in this area politically neutral or not really?

What's good about that ? What's bad?

IV Level of government (39)

In South Africa, we now have many levels of government. There is the national government, there is the provincial government, there is local government, and there are Tihosi or Tinduna. I would like to talk about how

we can compare each of these parts of government.

A. 7 minutes: First what are your impressions of the national government?

How is the national government doing ? What are they doing a good job on ?

What are they doing bad on?

(PROBE for both good and bad)

B. 8 minutes: Do you know who your Member of Parliament is ?

How often do you see your Member of Parliament ?

Some people say that after we elected Members of Parliament they went off to Cape Town and we have not heard from them since. How do you feel about that statement,

do you agree or disagree with it?

C. 8 minutes: What are your impressions of how the provincial government here is doing? What are they doing a good job on ? What are they doing a bad job on?

Why do you say that?

(PROBE for both good and bad)

What is the difference between the provincial government and the national government?

What problems are better for the provincial government to work on?

Is the provincial government better or worse than the national government?

Why do you say that?

D. 8 minutes: Now let's think about local government. What are your impressions of how the local government is doing? What are they doing a good job in, and what are they

doing a bad job on? Why do you say that ?

What is the job of the local government? What kinds of problems is the local government responsible for ?

Since local government was voted in 1995 what has changed ?

Have things gotten better or worse? In what ways better? In what ways worse?

How does local government compare to the local government in other places ?

Is local government functioning in this area ?

E. 8 minutes: How often do you see your local councillors? What is their job?

What should they do ?

What kind of problems can you take to your local councillors and get help on ?

What kind of problems can local councillors help solve ?

What kind of job are civic associations doing in this area? What are they doing a bad job on?

V. Leaders - Part I (37 minutes)

A. 10 minutes: How would you compare what local councillors do to what TiHosi and Tinduna do ? How would you explain the difference?

What kinds of problems are better solved by TiHosi or Tinduna, rather than

local councillors? (PROBE for specific examples)

Who do you feel is responsible for the development of the community?

B. 10 minutes: Have you ever known TiHosi or Tinduna to disagree with decisions made by other government officials ?

Who did you agree with more? Which side were you on ? Why?

C. 7 minutes: Should TiHosi or Tinduna be able to overrule decisions made by elected part of the government ?

When should TiHosi or Tinduna be able to overrule decisions made by elected part of the government ?

D. 10 minutes: Now that we've talked about it how would you summarize what TiHosi or Tinduna should do ? What their job is ?

How would you summarize what the other levels of government should do?
Local government? Provincial government? National government?

Of all these levels - TiHosi or Tinduna, local government, provincial government, national government - which one affects this village the most?
Why do you say that ?

Which one do you rely on the most to solve problems? Why do you say that ?

VI. Arguments (26 minutes)

Now, I'd like to get to your reaction to some arguments that other people have made, concerning this subject of TiHosi or Tinduna and other levels of government.

A. 8 minutes: Some people say that TiHosi and Tinduna are the ones who know our communities best, and it is important for them to have a say in all the decisions made by government that affect our communities.

How many of you mostly AGREE with that statement ? How many DISAGREE?
(COUNT OUT LOUD)

How do you feel about that statement?

Are there some kinds of decisions TiHosi or Tinduna should have a say in and some they should not ?

Who would sort this out ?

How should this be decided?

B. 8 minutes: Let me read you a different statement. Some people say that TiHosi or Tinduna are important to our history, culture, and local communities, but that our newly elected government should have the final say about the laws that affect us all. They say that TiHosi or Tinduna should play a ceremonial role only.

How many of you mostly AGREE with that statement? How many DISAGREE?
(COUNT OUT LOUD)

How do you feel about that statement?

Should TiHosi or Tinduna only play a ceremonial role, or should their jobs also include other things ?

C. 5 minutes: Which do you agree with more - that TiHosi or Tinduna should have a say in most decisions, or that the elected government should have the final say? Why do you feel that way ?

D. 5 minutes: In the end, which is more important - to have strong TiHosi and Tinduna or to have a strong elected government? Why do you say that?

Can you have both at the same time?

How can this be resolved?