



Young Researchers Philanthropy Initiative •

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A Perspective from the Maphumulo Rural  
Community in KwaZulu-Natal

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# Young Researchers Philanthropy Initiative

*Centre for Civil Society*

*School of Development Studies*

*University of KwaZulu-Natal*

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*Landscape with homesteads, Osabeni area, Maphumulo*

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# Introduction

The search for a path towards greater social sustainability and the need to mobilise resources for development purposes have led to an interest in the place of philanthropy within development discourses. In mainstream development, philanthropy is regarded as the transfer or giving of resources from rich to poor with the poor cast solely as beneficiaries. The philanthropic or giving act in this instance is considered to be motivated by the spirit of charity where the rich give to the poor out of free volition. The poor are therefore assumed helpless and dependent on help from the rich in order to end their poverty. These perceptions and assumptions are firmly entrenched within Western understandings of philanthropy and fail to consider various contexts and cultural practices in different parts of the world. There is consequently little research examining how philanthropy is viewed and practiced in less developed countries and how local philanthropic acts can be incorporated into development planning and programming.

Research conducted so far shows that philanthropy in its broader perspective is practiced differently in different parts of the world. In Southern Africa, the term 'philanthropy' is hardly used; instead, the word 'help' is used to denote a philanthropic act (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). This research has been motivated by findings from a University of Cape Town (UCT) study by Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) conducted in four countries in Southern Africa: Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The thrust behind the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study was to understand and describe within the context of poverty, how and why people who are poor help each other and how philanthropic impulses and behaviours are expressed and

organised in Southern Africa. Findings from this study show that poor people are not passive beneficiaries of philanthropic acts as assumed in Western thinking. According to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004), there is a form of help or giving that occurs between and among the poor whose motivation and effect have not been adequately understood within the development sphere. This research seeks to examine the various forms of giving that occur at local community level among poor people in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and what motivates such giving.

## Rationale for the Study

The persistent rising levels of poverty in Southern Africa have prompted the questioning of some of the assumptions apparent in mainstream philanthropy. In an effort to eradicate poverty, community development initiatives have in many instances failed to engage those people they are meant to benefit with regard to both resource mobilisation and policy implementation (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). Beneficiaries of development are dismissed as helpless objects waiting to be rescued by external good Samaritans. According to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004), the living realities of poor people, such as how they live their day-to-day lives and their survival strategies, have been poorly understood within philanthropic thinking and public and development policy frameworks. In addition, little is known about why people in poor communities give and receive from each other and what motivates them to give. As a result, organised philanthropy or vertical giving (where the rich give to the poor) has been practiced with little knowledge and recognition of the indigenous and organic

forms of community philanthropy<sup>1</sup> or horizontal philanthropy - giving between and amongst the poor (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). For decades, poverty eradication has been at the centre of international development and social change with different development ideologies having been applied. Yet in many African countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty persists. Dia (1991) cites the failure of the state as the provider of public goods and the chronic weaknesses in the local institutions as the biggest barrier to economic development in sub-Saharan Africa. Dia attributes this to current development efforts which he argues are influenced by development ideas from the west, enshrined in Western values. The development efforts, as Dia (1991:1) puts it, have been based on three key assumptions:

- (1) “a mechanistic and linear conception of history and development which assumes that every society must go through the same stages before it can achieve development, (2) a technological approach to institutional development and management assuming that western methods and techniques are the only road to modernisation, and (3) an ethnocentric approach to culture that assumes that the basic goal of any society is to achieve the same values characterising the so-called ‘developed’ countries i.e., spirit of enterprise, profit motive, material security, and self-interest.”

The conclusion of this assumptive approach, according to Dia (1991), is that development in Africa must be stimulated using ideologies and techniques from the industrialised Western countries. The same ideological assumptions have been held

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “community philanthropy” and “horizontal philanthropy”, meaning giving between and amongst the poor, will be used interchangeably in this paper.

within organised philanthropic thinking, where the poor are often assumed to be objects of development and always on the receiving end. Evidence to date, and findings from the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study, point to the fact that such assumptions are not valid. As Dia (1991: 2) points out, “western values are not always compatible or congruent with traditional incentives and behavioural patterns common in most African countries.”

Whilst mobilising of resources for development has often been regarded as the role of the state, research shows that resources mobilised between and among beneficiary citizens themselves, are a crucial component in the fight against poverty and injustice (Wilkinson-Maposa et al 2004). Within general philanthropy, a major concern has been and still is the issue of over-dependency on external resources and the sustainability of such development when the external resources cease. The Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study found that giving between poor people was a common phenomenon that was, and is, part of people’s social fabric, deeply rooted and morally grounded in their everyday lives. This horizontal philanthropy culture, according to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004), has operated from time immemorial as a vital element of survival and progress yet little research has been done to fully understand how such philanthropic behaviour can be mainstreamed into development planning and programming.

The approach to community development places emphasis on finding ways and developing models that will stimulate and increase the flow of resources available to address issues of social deprivation and poverty. This study included an attempt to engage the inhabitants of Maphumulo, a low wealth rural community in the Maphumulo Municipal area within the Ilembe District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, in a probing conversation within the context of some of the development debates outlined

above. The purpose of such a probing conversation was to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of giving that occurs among this community focusing on their motivation(s) for giving; the relationships of giving that exist and the levels and circumstances under which giving occurs. An overall objective was to explore people's knowledge and experience of giving in order to gain an understanding of how community philanthropy can contribute to poverty alleviation both theoretically and in practice. Furthermore the study was an attempt to understand how members of this particular community perceive their role in making their community a better place to live, in the midst of persistent social problems such as high levels of unemployment, HIV/AIDS and food insecurity that currently define the plight of rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

In examining giving within the Maphumulo community, this study takes into consideration the notion of *Ubuntu*, exploring whether this is a philosophy still present within this community, upon which development initiatives can build. *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy that has gained popularity as a building block that could anchor and sustain development initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa and some have even suggested that if applied to the wider world, "could give a new and profound meaning to the global debate on human rights" (Ramose, 1999). Broodryk (2002) defines *Ubuntu* as "an ancient African worldview based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family." Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) subscribe to this notion and contend that *Ubuntu* is the cornerstone of social philosophy of the African culture that places emphasis on compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and harmony in the interests of building a community. Samkange

(1980) adds other attributes in defining *Ubuntu*, also known as *hunhu* in the Shona dialect, stating that the *Ubuntu* philosophy “espouses the spirit of humaneness that has for a long time underpinned African life values through the promotion of peace, observance of the law, being compassionate and having respect for life and respect for the natural environment” (Samkange, 1980). Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2004) point out that horizontal philanthropy is part and parcel of people’s social fabric which is a derivative of the *Ubuntu* philosophy. This study will explore, through the case study of the Maphumulo community, notions and practices of *Ubuntu* in KwaZulu-Natal.

## Philanthropy

There are currently five modes of exchange that tend to predominate giving according to Habib et al (2008: 22) and these are:

“economy of commerce involving market actors; economy of obligation incorporating the state and nuclear family; economy of fear, which is essentially about crime; economy of affection, which focuses on the extended family; and the economy of volition reflecting voluntary giving by all role-players.”

According to the literature, understanding the motivation for giving is not always simple and straightforward. People are said to be frequently guided by convention, i.e. giving as a social and cultural norm or principle of belonging to a community. Furthermore, the action, motivation and transaction of giving cannot be easily separated (Wilkinson-Maposa et al 2004). Research findings by Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) show that one

cannot assume motivation is always explicit or one-dimensional. An impulse to help, and the act itself, could be informed by one or more reasons or a combination of many reasons. A person who receives help is said to be motivated by 'need' and need is explained as a product and condition of poverty. This means, according to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004), that one has to accept that one is in need before receiving help. If one does not see oneself as in need of something, one will not accept the offer of help. From an opposite perspective, receiving help through giving can be informed by obligation, since to reject the offer of help can be construed as being rude. To avoid offending those who offer the help and to avoid damaging one's reputation in the community, accepting help is almost always obligatory (Wilkinson-Maposa et al 2004). Whilst these findings from the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study are informative, there is still a need for further contextualised research to avoid generalisation that may fail to capture contextual differences within different communities.

Current philanthropy literature suggests that much of the giving that occurs is inspired by religious belief. According to White (1998), the relationship between observing religion and giving is very strong. Christians, for example, are expected to give ten percent of their monthly income to the church. This is known as the tithe and is mandated by the bible (Everatt et al 2005). This form of giving is also motivated by other reasons such as religious beliefs that the more one gives, the more one shall receive. This is confirmed by the findings of the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study which found that it is common for altruistic or generous help to be prompted by religious beliefs, including a search for 'blessings' (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). Informants in the Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004 study made reference to God and religious teaching, both Christian and Islamic, as well as the

'rules' of the church in explaining their motivation for giving. Informal dwellers in Namibia, for instance, said they gave to people because whenever one gives to people, God gives back to the giver (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004).

Western European and American scholars are the most prominent contributors to the literature on philanthropy and giving. However, this has begun to change as there is evidence globally of organised private, voluntary activity (Everatt et al, 2005). Three main assumptions are implicit in the philanthropy literature. The first is the assumption that giving is an act generally undertaken by richer, more resourced sections of the community and directed toward less resourced sectors (Everatt et al, 2005). Second, it is normally assumed that giving is more likely to come from people who have been financially successful, and third, those who have retired and accumulated wealth and assets. There are many reasons cited that motivate wealthy people to give. These include gaining status, prestige and respect in society (Everatt et al, 2005). Regardless of the motivations behind it; giving in this instance is an altruistic act. Altruism is defined as a "social behaviour carried out to achieve positive outcomes for another rather than for the self" (Rushton, 1980:8 cited in Wolfe, 1998: 37).

The practice of philanthropy appears to be well established as research conducted in the United States reveals that virtually everyone claims to give. According to White (1989) nine out of ten people in the United States report giving when questioned. Similar studies conducted in South Africa show that the vast majority of South Africans give in one way or another (Habib et al, 2008). The term 'giving' in this instance refers to the philanthropic act of transferring resources from one individual to another or helping someone considered to be in need.

The importance of giving and philanthropy in South Africa

has been overlooked by academics, policymakers, and other key stakeholders, yet giving and philanthropy form a large part of the South African tradition and culture, and impact positively on the country's citizens (Habib et al, 2008; Everatt et al, 2005). Examples of philanthropic activities and initiatives in South Africa include, but are not limited to, the *Daily News* Milk Fund, the SABC Touching Lives, Red Nose Day, and Casual Day. There are also professional bodies that give; bodies such as the Nelson Mandela Foundation, previously known as the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, and the Desmond Tutu Peace and Education Trust (Everatt et al, 2005). These forms of philanthropic activities and initiatives are organised, formal and vertical; with the 'well-off' members of society coming together to support the poor. It is, however, not only the wealthy that give to the poor. In the midst of this formalised and professional giving is also a variety of giving that is perhaps not very visible, which operates in different contexts for community and individual-based giving (Everatt et al, 2005). This form of giving is horizontal in that the resources flow from one poor individual or community to the next.

Horizontal philanthropy refers to the poor looking after their fellow poor. Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) highlight six elements that support the horizontal philanthropy concept. The first refers to resource mobilisation and circulation. The second refers to help circuits - according to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004), under poverty conditions people feel obliged or duty-bound to help each other because in the context of poverty and survival, a great deal of help is based on mutuality and reciprocity (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). The third element refers to creating a sense of 'community' through the lens of help. The fourth element is a reference to the public and collective consciousness; in poverty stricken areas resources are not left idle or reserved, instead they

are used and stretched to help as many people as possible and to last as long as possible (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004) within a community. The fifth element involves the rules of help. The term 'community' according to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) is not a simplistic construct that can be easily conceived of and defined. It is dynamic, complex and multi-layered. This means that community consists of a diverse set of elements that is emphasised by *Ubuntu* principles of compassion, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and harmony. According to Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) the three main factors that appear to guide community are proximity, need and a common or shared condition. This alludes to the physical distance between the neighbours or relatives, the help that is sought or given as well as a shared condition such as poverty. Furthermore, community is shaped by specific types of need. This means that a person will receive or give help to another based on the type of demand and the required response. Moreover there is a tendency to turn to those who understand your situation by virtue of their own experience and condition (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004), so poor<sup>2</sup> people turn to other poor people for help. The sixth element centres on the effects of help and the way people who are poor mobilise, circulate and recapitalise their resources.

The four areas which emphasise communal interest over the individual that stood out in the UCT study were funerals, school fees, making a living and dispute resolution (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). At the individual and household level those who have more resources than they need at a particular time help others by giving away some of the resources to those who need them.

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2        The word poor is used reservedly keeping in mind that people who may be thought of or seen by others as poor may not necessarily consider themselves poor.

In the case of savings clubs and associations, individuals pool their resources and save together for a specific purpose and then distribute the benefits among members by taking monthly or weekly turns of receipt (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004).

Three main categories of giving or help highlighted in Everatt et al (2005) which were not emphasised in the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study are: provision of care for the young, the sick, the disabled, and the elderly; the transfer of material resources between members of a family; and the provision of advice and psychological support. In low wealth communities none of these three categories are regarded as philanthropy or charity by the giver when the recipient is a member of their extended family, group, or community. Instead these actions, as Everatt et al. (2005) posits, are simply viewed as part of the responsibility or obligation of belonging to a family, extended family or community.

Poor communities in South Africa have within them entrenched indigenous systems, instruments and mechanisms that assist them in coping with the economic hardships that they experience. These are systems and schemes such as *stokvels*, burial societies, and the general day-to-day assistance through material and non-material means, including emotional support (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004; Everatt et al, 2005). *Stokvels* can be defined as community-based financial arrangements which are used for different purposes and can have either individual or broader developmental uses for the community (Everatt et al, 2005).

## Study Context

The research area of this study is Maphumulo, a rural settlement in the Ngubane Traditional Authority within the Maphumulo

municipal jurisdiction. Maphumulo Municipality is one of four municipalities within the Ilembe District. It lies approximately 65 kilometres north of eThekweni (Durban). In the north, Maphumulo is bordered by the Tugela River and in the south it is bordered by Ndwedwe and KwaDukuza local municipalities.

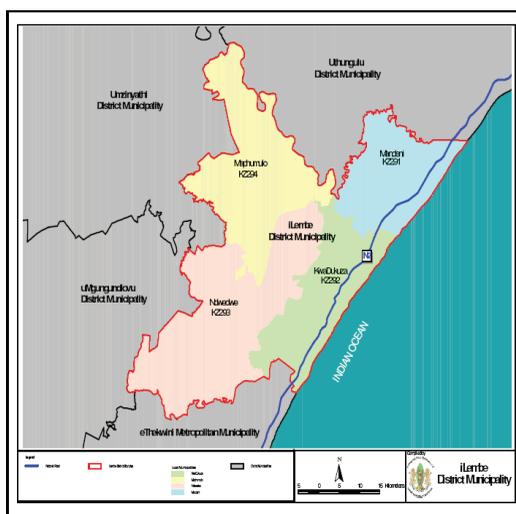
According to the 2001 census, the Maphumulo municipal area has a population of 120,643 people with approximately 22,149 households. About 56% of the population is female and the overall population is largely composed of young people who make up almost 55% of the total.

The dominance of women in the rural areas has been explained as resulting from weak local economies as men often leave the rural areas to seek work in urban and peri-urban settlements or other regions of the country. The elderly population in Maphumulo make up 5% of the population signifying a high dependence ratio within the municipality area.

## Maphumulo

Maphumulo is an agricultural area with sugar cane being the main commercial farming crop. A large percentage of the population is settled in the rural area where the steep mountainous terrain has limited agricultural potential. Unemployment is extremely high, at 68% (Community Survey, 2007. Statistics South Africa). Illiteracy is very high with 44% of the population categorised as functionally illiterate and 7% not having had any education at all (Census, 2001).

The main sources of income, according to the 2010 Municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), are from social services and migrant work in the manufacturing, trade and farming sectors. Most people in the area rely on social services



grants and informal trading for their daily subsistence. Most of the area is dry, steep, degraded and not suitable for subsistence farming. From the interviews, it seems that the area is now more prone to drought than in the past, when the land was fertile and endowed with thickly populated forests, and when inhabitants could depend on rain-fed subsistence farming and livestock husbandry.

In terms of health, HIV and AIDS are reported to be a major problem. Although there are no official area statistics on HIV and AIDS, the municipality cites the provincial prevalence as being 30%. According to the 2007 community survey, the size of the population in Maphumulo municipal area declined from 120,643 to 109,157 between 2001 and 2007. Households are reported to have declined in the same period from 22,149 to 19,934. The Maphumulo IDP (2010) attributes the decline in the population and number of households to deaths from HIV and AIDS. Most of those affected by and dying from HIV and AIDS are reported to be young people (IDP, 2010).

## Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to explore why and how people help each other in low wealth rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal. This study opted to follow the Wilkinson-Maposa et al, (2004) study's rationalisation of converting the phrase "philanthropy of community" to the term help, which is a more commonly understood term at all levels of society. The term philanthropy, widely used in the United States of America (USA), is not well known in most African communities. In the USA, philanthropy is generally regarded as the private and voluntary transfer of resources from the wealthy for the benefit of the public (Johnson, 2007). Philanthropy is generally understood to be charity that is extended on a out of free will rather than as an obligation (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2004).

Current literature on philanthropy and giving has to a large extent been dominated by Western European and American scholars and, as Muzondidya and Chiroro (2008) argue, this notion of philanthropy as portrayed in the literature and its implied assumptions reflect an industrialised Western world view. Such notions and implicit assumptions may be difficult to apply in the African context. Muzondidya and Chiroro (2008) further state that the patterns of giving and obligation that apply in the Western industrialised world are fundamentally different from those of the developing world and in particular to the African context of philanthropy. While in most developed countries, philanthropy is regarded as a voluntary act towards public good inspired by generosity and altruism, in most African countries giving as noted from the literature, is more influenced by specific identity based on blood, kinship and residence (Everatt et al, 2005).

Many African societies consider helping members of the community a moral obligation rather than charity. Given the important role philanthropy plays in furthering development, it is hoped that this study will make a contribution to the emerging literature on philanthropy in South African communities, which is currently sparse. Furthermore the study hopes to contribute to an understanding of how low-wealth communities mobilise their limited resources and make them work for the benefit of the whole community in order to address communal problems. It is also hoped that this understanding will be developed further so that it can contribute to the existing body of knowledge in relation to philanthropy, community and sustainable development.

## Research Questions

The Maphumulo study, like the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study, is an attempt to understand why people who are poor help each other. Two fundamental questions were posed in both studies:

- (1) How does the notion of community philanthropy, distinct from its operational concepts in other parts of the world, play out in Maphumulo?
- (2) How is the philanthropic impulse and behaviour of the Maphumulo community organised and what are its forms, motivations and purpose?

## Research Methodology and Design

### *Grounded Theory*

In order to answer the research questions, a grounded theory approach was adopted. The term ‘grounded theory’ is derived from the notion that theory is rooted in everyday experiences or observation of the phenomenon being studied. The approach was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. It uses a “systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 24). The approach begins with the raising of research questions that are neither static nor confining. Theoretical concepts emerge from the research data, and linkages are developed between the theoretical concepts and the data. We have chosen to use grounded theory because little information exists about why and how people who are poor help each other, and less is known about how indigenous philanthropy is expressed in African rural communities. One of the reasons for choosing grounded theory as a research approach was that adopting theories with origins in other geographical locations and time periods could, as Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) have put it, close out alternatives. According to these authors, the objective of the use of grounded theory in their study was not to prove or disprove any existing theory, but to set apart and interpret a type of human behaviour within a specific context. Strauss and Corbin (1998: 9-10) note that grounded theory is based on the following assumptions:

- the need to gain first-hand information taken from its source;
- the relevance of theory, grounded in data, to the development of a discipline and as a basis for social action;

- the complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action;
- the belief that persons are actors who take an active role in responding to problematic situations;
- the realisation that persons act on the basis of meaning;
- the understanding that meaning is defined through interaction;
- a sensitivity to the evolving and unfolding nature of events (process); and
- an awareness of the interrelationships among conditions (structure), action (process), and consequences.

### *Research Focus*

The main focus of the research, which is qualitative in nature, is the nature of giving that occurs in poor communities and what motivates such giving. Qualitative research was considered ideal in this case as the study sought a deeper understanding of a particular community in its natural setting. In qualitative research, a researcher systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the research question through the systematic collection of evidence. Using qualitative research makes it possible to obtain information about the human side of an issue, for example beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships between individuals. Another aspect of qualitative research is that it is effective in helping to identify intangible factors such as social norms, ethnicity, religion, and other factors such as *Ubuntu*, whose importance in the research may not be readily apparent.

## Research Design

In order to answer the research questions utilising grounded theory, three main aspects of giving were established that resonated with the research questions in order to facilitate documentation and analysis of the interactive process of horizontal giving among poor communities. The categories used are actors, transactions and motivation; these are shown diagrammatically in Figure 1 below, adapted from the study monograph by Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004).

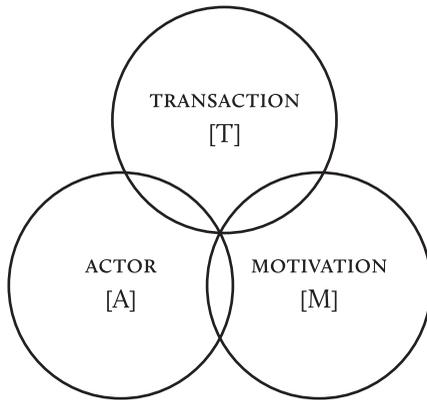


FIGURE 1: A philanthropic act: adapted from the Wilkinson-Maposa et al, (2004) monograph

Actors represent the giver or receiver of help and answer the question of 'who' one gives help to or receives help from. Transaction denotes the 'what' – the nature and type of help one gives or receives. Motivation indicates the 'why' aspect or impetus behind the giving and receiving of help. Any philanthropic act can be seen as a decision-making process where people decide to

give help to or receive help from someone or somewhere, and the nature of the help could be material or non-material. Behind these decisions are mediating or influencing factors.

Unlike the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study, this research did not inquire from respondents what they understood by the term 'help'. The interviews began with an informal conversation informing respondents of the nature of the study and its purpose. Respondents were asked whether they had recently received or given help and the nature of the help. Further probing questions were asked, such as:

- Who do you give to or help and from whom do you receive help?
- What motivates you to give or to receive help?
- Does distance from where you live determine who you give help to or receive help from?
- Is the giving culture in your community the same as it was when you were young? If it has changed, what has changed and why do you think it has changed?

In order to understand the giving culture, respondents were asked if they received any help from the state and the nature of such help. They were also asked what they would like or expect the state to help them with.

One of the objectives of the study was to explore the virtues of the *Ubuntu* philosophy to establish if respondents in the study area were familiar with it. If they knew about it or had heard about it, they were asked what they understood *Ubuntu* to mean. The following specific questions were asked:

- Do you know what *Ubuntu* is, have you heard about it?
- What do you understand about *Ubuntu*?

- Is it something you practise and is it something that is practised in your community?

Respondents were then asked to give their general comments on *Ubuntu*. This enabled people to bring out as much of their knowledge and ideas as possible and to elicit their deeper feelings and perceptions about this African philosophy.

### *Data Collection*

In grounded theory, data are usually collected using interview techniques, although not exclusively (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Data could be collected through different methodologies that may yield information regarding social interaction. These may be data collection through observing and recording interactions, focus group discussions, secondary literature reviews, or obtaining perspectives from key informants involved in the social interaction. In order to answer the research questions, a number of probing questions were generated which formed the basis of the household interviews. The questions were used as guides to probe more deeply into the topic to obtain as much information as possible that would allow insight into the implicit or explicit rules of the giving/helping culture within the community.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with purposively selected household members. Local perspectives were also obtained from identified key informants within the community. The selection of the data collection method was based on consultative inquiries with the local leadership, in this context the municipal Mayor, on what was feasible within the study area. The widely scattered households in the area and the death of the

local *Induna* (village headman) made it impossible to organise focus group discussions with the *Induna*'s assistance, which, according to local tradition, would have been required to mobilise community members for focus group discussions.

### *The Sample Frame*

The study population was Maphumulo, a relatively low wealth community in the Ngubane Traditional Authority Area located within Maphumulo Municipality in the Ilembe District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. The sample consisted of 21 households and four key informant interviewees representing one public institution, one NGO and two CBOs. The selections were made using the snowballing method.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analysed using the grounded theory coding and categorising system. Grounded theory has three basic elements: concepts, categories and propositions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In grounded theory, analysis of data often begins as soon as the first segment of data has been collected. This is considered necessary in order to direct subsequent interviews and observations, and to make sure that all the relevant data is included in the next set of interviews and observations (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Furthermore the data analysis involves going through the datasets and developing concepts through a coding system. Emerging concepts are grouped in categories and subcategories based on their commonality. The categories are further analysed and integrated to build the theoretical framework. It is the emerging

concepts and categories from the data that lead to the emergence of a theory.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. In the preliminary steps, data were first ordered using a MS Excel spread sheet that allowed reviewing for completeness through comparison of notes taken during the interviews with the transcribed notes from the recorded interviews. In the initial ordering, data were aggregated by household. The first stage of analysis involved a synthesis of the ordered data, identifying, extracting and coding key points that were relevant to the research questions. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), coding is a form of content analysis of the interview text to identify key points; codes are appended to the key points to facilitate further analysis and grouping of common themes. Once the key points were coded, the second stage involved a further analysis, grouping the codes according to themes and emerging concepts. The emerging concepts were grouped together according to their commonality and further analysed to establish thematic categories and subcategories. The third stage of the analysis constituted the interpretation of the data as analysed at the second level and from existing literature to attempt a new theoretical understanding of how and why poor people help each other.

## Research Findings

This section presents the findings derived from the responses to the cluster of questions posed to the household respondents. The findings are narrated under the Actor/Transaction/Motivation categories as well as the changing nature of help, state help and the *Ubuntu* categories in line with the core research questions. The answers to the questions reflect the perspectives of the people of

Maphumulo regarding what motivates them to give and receive help as well as the nature of the help that is given.

*Actors - givers and receivers of help*

Nearly all the respondents indicated that they had neither helped nor received help recently. When asked who they help and who helps them, the majority of respondents said they received help from neighbours, family and close friends. Family in this instance constituted parents, parents-in-law, siblings and grandchildren.

Homesteads in the Maphumulo community are widely dispersed and are structured in such a manner that family households are clustered together. For example, one homestead would have several houses, each constituting a household; the parents reside in one house and the sons and their families in the others, with help extended across the family network within the homestead. Proximity was said to matter the most by the majority of respondents in terms of where help was sought and given. Most residents provided or received help from neighbours close by. In two of the 21 households where interviews were conducted, two married female respondents said they travelled to the homes of their families of origin, some distance from where they lived, to seek help. In general, according to the Mayor, distance mattered. People in the community “are assisting people who are in the same village like neighbours not at a distance. They are not moving more than five kilometres to assist or ask for help. The group of families assist one another if there is any disaster of fire and floods. Neighbourhood is very strong, they do things collectively”.

Although most of the respondents said they can ask for help from any neighbour, others expressed selectivity in their help-

seeking behaviour. Others preferred to ask for help only from neighbours they had good relationships with and trusted. An often stated reason of asking for help only from those “you trust” was fear or mistrust of some neighbours thought to be using bad muti (traditional medicine). The other fear was of neighbours who were described as “the ones that talk or gossip too much”. This, according to one respondent, “makes you feel bad ... instead of asking from those people, I prefer to go without.”

### *Transaction – nature and type of help*

The villagers in Maphumulo have a number of helping and giving arrangements and help takes two forms, material and non-material.

#### **Material help**

Most of the households indicated that giving that occurred within the community took the form of borrowing, which they referred to as *umnana* in isiZulu. In most cases such borrowing occurs when they run short of necessities such as food, small household utilities (matches, candles), money, household implements and sometimes clothes. In most cases when one borrows money from a neighbour, one is expected to repay it. In cases where one may fail to repay the money, one can offer a fowl or livestock as a form of repayment. As one respondent indicated, “If I am stuck and have no food or money, I go to my neighbour to borrow. If I do not find money to pay back I give them a fowl in return.” Some respondents indicated that they do not require neighbours to return the food borrowed from them. The reason given was that when they are

in need of supplies they will borrow from the same neighbour - a form of reciprocity. Other respondents indicated that they assess the wealth status of the household that has borrowed from them to determine whether to ask them to repay or not. A relatively wealthy household will be expected to repay, but not a relatively poor household.

### **Non-material help**

In addition to material help, household members in Maphumulo help one another in times of crisis in various non-material ways. A few months prior to the field visit, a homestead was destroyed by fire. Most of the community members interviewed indicated that they extended help to the family in one way or the other. Some said they gave blankets, clothes, food, and school uniforms to help the family recover from the disaster. Other non-material help was given during funerals: in addition to contributing food and beer, people offered their labour at funerals. Women will help with the fetching of water and cooking and men take part in the gathering of firewood, digging the grave and slaughtering the cow. This type of assistance, according to the respondents, is regulated by customs within the Zulu culture. When asked who coordinated the giving of the help, the respondents stated that there was no formal coordination of help during times of crisis, but that people knew what to do because of their socialisation within the community. Other non-material help that featured included prayer, counselling and providing shelter. Some respondents indicated that they prayed for people and others said they come together to pray. Other forms of non-material help were caring for the sick and doing household chores for elderly people in the community.

Young people from the community said they helped the elderly with their daily chores of fetching water and firewood. This, according to elderly people, was often rewarded by small tokens such as sweets to express their appreciation and to motivate the youngsters, who are not necessarily paid for the services rendered.

### *Motivation*

Different respondents identified numerous factors that motivated them to give and receive help. Need was in all cases described as the motivating factor. Most of the respondents indicated that they were taught to give by their parents or that they grew up seeing their parents giving help to other people. One respondent reported that she takes in strangers and looks after them because she grew up in a family that did so, and also that her church teaches her to give without expecting anything in return. Some respondents said their giving and sharing was motivated by a desire in their hearts or out of friendship. This was often expressed in terms such as “it comes from the heart, it is out of love”. One respondent said “I give because I grew up struggling and know what it is not to have”. At times respondents said they helped their neighbours who were poor without them asking for help. “We know the very poor households ... when I observe that they do not have something and if the thing is there in my house, I give them”. Others said they were motivated to give by the spirit of good neighbourliness in the community. A young male respondent contended that the Mayor motivates giving and helping and leads by example by providing transport costs for some funerals and paying for the purchase of the funeral cow.

In his response to the question of the giving culture in the

community, the Mayor thought the culture of *Ubuntu* motivated people to help one another: “Within *Ubuntu* there was a culture called *ukusisa* in *isiZulu*. Previous time, *Ubuntu* was very strong in our community, people liked to help and give each other. For example the community were practicing *ukusisa* as the way of giving and helping the poor people by giving a cow, goat or chicken for five or ten years”. *Ukusisa*, according to the Mayor, was “placing livestock in another’s kraal for him to look after and use for ploughing or for milking”. The Mayor added:

“That culture of giving was used especially for those who did not have cows or goats and in times of poverty to give somebody to look after so that his family will get milk. After a period of time when that cow has had calves, the owner of the original cow is not going to take the calves, he is going to leave them with the family so that they can have their own cattle ... That was what our father did in the community ... That culture of *ukusisa* was used by the man to man”.

Respondents claimed that families still practise *ukusisa* as a way of enriching their family members.

### *The changing nature of the helping and giving culture*

There was general consensus among respondents that the helping and giving culture had changed over time. An interview with the Mayor highlighted some of the changes that have taken place over time:

“The culture of helping still exists but it seems to be disappearing because of the lack of capital. Previous time, people were using what they had, they were not using money. They were using cattle, goats, chicken and if you harvest more in your garden you shared with other people, especially crops”.

According to the Mayor, in the past people used to help each other in different ways. Apart from *ukusisa*, people helped each other through another form of help called *ilimo*, which is no longer widely practised. For instance, if a family was struggling and did not have a house, the community would mobilise and build a house for the family. This form of help was extended even to working in the fields. If someone was unable to plough, the community would come together and plough the person's field and the beneficiary would only prepare food and/or beer to feed the volunteers.

Poverty in the community was cited as one of the reasons why helping and giving had declined. Respondents mentioned unemployment, drought, the rising cost of food, state grants, selfishness, hard hearts, lack of trust, love of money and laziness as factors they thought had caused the helping and giving culture to decline. An elderly female respondent said, "When we were young we used to grow our food, but now we have to buy from the shops and food is expensive." In the past, people said they had good rains and could grow their own food. Because of drought in the area, people can longer grow food or keep livestock. Some respondents mentioned that the desire to give and share might be there, but households do not have enough to give because they now have to buy food, which is expensive. Others thought that people of today had become selfish and loved money: "They will not give you for free, they want you to buy." Another reason given was that people were lazy; an elderly male respondent commented that "people are too lazy to work these days, they just want help." Comments that illustrate the reluctance of some respondents to give or help follow: "people are selfish, they will say they don't have even if you know they have"; "people will choose to throw away food rather than to give to those who are starving".

State social grants were also blamed for the decline. Some of the respondents mentioned that because of the state grant, people are no longer giving as much as they used to in the past: “They will say you got money and will not give.” A female respondent nevertheless said she thought the state grant was making people give because they now have money and can afford to give. Although this study did not explore the relative contribution of the grants to total household income, it is clear that the households visited rely significantly on child grants and pensions. Almost all the households visited were beneficiaries of either the pension or the child grant or both.<sup>3</sup>

### *Ubuntu*

With the exception of one household, most of the respondents said they knew what *Ubuntu* was and gave their different perspectives on what they understood it to mean. *Ubuntu* was described as follows: helping one another, kindness, being sensitive to others, caring about other people, taking the problems of others to be yours, honesty and humility, willingness to listen to you and help you, love and trust, living well with others, giving freely and from the heart, the ability to resolve disputes among people, giving to the poor, and a respecting and supportive culture.

From the young respondents’ perspectives some of the boys interviewed considered sharing beer as a sign of *Ubuntu*, while girls of the same age included assisting one another with school work as part of *Ubuntu*. For them *Ubuntu* also meant respect for elders and

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3 Pension grants are R1,080 per month per person and child grants are R250 per month per child.

good behaviour. Respondents agreed that although there were still some elements of it in the community, *Ubuntu* was declining.

From the respondents' definition of *Ubuntu* and their general comments, it was apparent that *Ubuntu* is a major motivating factor for the horizontal giving that occurred within the community. The Mayor narrated his experience as a young man, explaining that he was taught about *Ubuntu* at school as a school subject and at home by his parents, and that this has moulded him into what he is today. When the new government came to power, however, *Ubuntu* was removed from the syllabus and replaced with an English version called Life Orientation.

Most interview respondents blamed the loss of *Ubuntu* for the erosion of the giving and helping culture in the community. Social ills in the community such as crime, the increase in HIV and AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, too much alcohol consumption among youth and drug abuse were blamed for the loss of *Ubuntu*. Respondents typically reported that children no longer have respect, educated people look down upon those who are not educated, young people no longer take advice from their parents or elders in the community as used to happen in the past, there is too much drinking among young people, young people are unruly at school, teachers and parents are no longer able to train or discipline their children into becoming responsible adults, and girls no longer observe cultural practices such as preserving their virginity and playing hard to get when proposed to by boys. An elderly female respondent had this to say: "Girls did not get pregnant easily, if boys proposed love, girls were hard to get but today, a boy asks only once and the girl says yes and they have sex the same day." This elderly lady also complained about loss of *Ubuntu*, saying "we no longer practise what we used to practise to make girls not like men – taking out hot blood from their private

parts so girls will not like boys at young age ... girls now think older ways were stupid”.

Contributing to the loss of *Ubuntu*, according to respondents, was the monetised economy in which parents no longer have time to spend with their children because they are always at work trying to raise money to support the family. The government and its child protection laws was also blamed for the loss of *Ubuntu* and for causing chaos in communities as parents and teachers struggle to discipline children. In one case, a child who had been spanked by its father is said to have called the police, who arrested the father; this incident reportedly sent a message to parents and teachers that punishment options are limited and a message to children that it is possible to disobey elders and get away with it. Some respondents argued that the human rights laws are to blame for uncontrollable bad behaviour of the youth. Some argued that the child grants, although helpful, resulted in out-of-marriage pregnancies, as young girls saw falling pregnant as a way of acquiring money without having to work for it.

### *Discussion*

Current studies have begun to challenge the application of uniform models of development across countries without taking into account diversity. The same holds true for universal assumptions about and interpretations of what constitutes help and what being “poor” means in the field of philanthropy. Conventional philanthropy argues that in order to help the poor out of poverty, resources have to flow from outside the targeted population. Common remedies have been to adopt development strategies applied in other parts of the world without consideration of

possible indigenous solutions. Focus has also centred on money as the most important asset in the transformation of communities considered to be poor. The Maphumulo research findings suggest that there are practices already embedded within communities in South Africa that could be recognised and built upon to ensure greater social cohesion and sustainability. Such practices could be used to design programmes with communities that incorporate traditional practices such as *ukusisa* and *ilimo*, which affirm the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.

Horizontal philanthropy as practised in Maphumulo, and in contrast to vertical philanthropy, exhibited characteristics that were to a large extent similar to those found in other parts of Southern Africa recorded in the Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study. Findings from the Maphumulo study show that help is mainly extended through exchange of material goods such as food, money, clothes, blankets or household and gardening implements, matches and candles. With regard to material goods, help was mainly exchanged through a form of borrowing or lending, with items sometimes returned at some time in the future and in some instances not returned at all, based on social relations that assumed reciprocity (“when I need I will also borrow”). This form of exchange or helping pattern follows the “unwritten yet widely understood (set of) customs or rules that govern supportive behavior” (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004: 81).

Findings from Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) study reflected that under poverty conditions, people feel obliged or duty-bound to help each other because of the context of poverty and survival and that a great deal of help was based on mutuality and reciprocity (Wilkinson-Maposa et al, 2004). This notion did not emerge in Maphumulo. Most of the respondents said they were not obliged to give and gave freely. They could choose to give or

not to give and this had to do with their personality (compassion, helpfulness or selflessness). Some said people will refuse help for fear of being bewitched. They said there were always suspicions of people using *muti* to cause bad things to happen to others. It is clear, in the case of Maphumulo, that the culture of helping and giving is declining for a variety of reasons.

The conclusion by Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004) that poor people are generally selfless and will put their individual concerns aside in order to satisfy other people's needs was not fully or unambiguously supported in this study. Four outstanding areas of help were outlined by Wilkinson-Maposa et al (2004): funerals, school fees, making a living and dispute resolution. They argue that a person who receives help is motivated by the need to receive help, and they describe the need as a product and condition of poverty. While this is true to a certain extent, it is not always the case according to the Maphumulo findings. A person may receive help not necessarily because they are poor but because there is a need for help and the community is socialised into offering help in certain circumstances.

### *Conclusion*

The Maphumulo research confirms some of the findings of the Wilkinson-Maposa (2004) study with respect to horizontal forms of philanthropy and its links with reciprocity and cooperation. It differs, however, with regard to some of the motivations for the practice of horizontal philanthropy. The research also questions assumptions implicit in the relevant literature in terms of philanthropy flowing from rich to poor, philanthropy as defined by financial giving, the formal institutionalisation of philanthropy

and philanthropy being motivated by altruism (Habib et al, 2008). Various understandings of the *Ubuntu* philosophy also emerge with regards to the practice of *ukusisa* and *ilimo* and suggest that indigenous forms of philanthropy, although evolving and possibly declining, have a firm place in South African communities and require further consideration within development discourses.

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