

'Airing dirty linen'

The problems of establishing a women's rights organisation in contemporary Swaziland



A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science in Practical Anthropology.

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation for the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Zanine Wolf

14 February 2002

Signed by candidate

Abstract

This dissertation is about the power of tradition to influence domestic behavioural norms in Swaziland. I set out to demonstrate that, although the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) has rendered itself indispensable to Swazi women, it still has a long way to go before realising its goal of the empowerment of abused women. This is due, primarily, to the organisation's adherence to international standards of women's human rights which cannot readily be applied in the particular context of Swaziland because they are resisted by those who seek to preserve what is claimed to be the traditional order. SWAGAA's counselling service is based on the premise that if an abused woman can be encouraged to make an informed, independent decision then she will have been empowered to take control of her life, and, ultimately, to free herself of the abuse. I argue that this approach, despite good intentions, is highly unrealistic in the locality of Swaziland. When a woman attempts to confront gender and/or domestic violence using the empowerment approach advocated by SWAGAA, she comes up against a number of entrenched ideological and practical constraints that undermine her power to negotiate. Foremost amongst these is the strong negative responses to any practice of 'airing dirty linen in public', such as consulting SWAGAA, for which a woman may be severely chastised. Women are reprimanded for seeking counsel beyond what are regarded as family boundaries because, they are told, by the police and by those around them, that this is inconsistent with acceptable and normative 'traditional' practice. I argue that the pressure placed upon women to adhere to practices of social organisation which are upheld as traditional, is rooted in a legacy of mistrust of foreign ideologies and practices. The leadership of the country has been, and continues to be engaged in an ongoing struggle to retain some semblance of what it regards as the traditional order. SWAGAA comes up directly against this legacy. Firstly, the women whom they counsel are constrained from making the individualistic decisions that SWAGAA wishes them to make. Secondly, women themselves are so embroiled in a social situation where men act as their advocates that they do not easily relate to the idea of individual empowerment. Yet SWAGAA persists with an approach that tries to undermine everyday normative practices, rather than working within the parameters of those norms. Its radical approach renders SWAGAA's counselling service too ambitious in Swaziland. What I thus advocate is an incremental approach that aims, gradually, to encourage women to empower themselves, given the persistence of the ideological and practical resistance to those attempts.

The photograph on the front cover is of the SWAGAA signboard outside the SWAGAA Head office in Manzini.

Acknowledgements

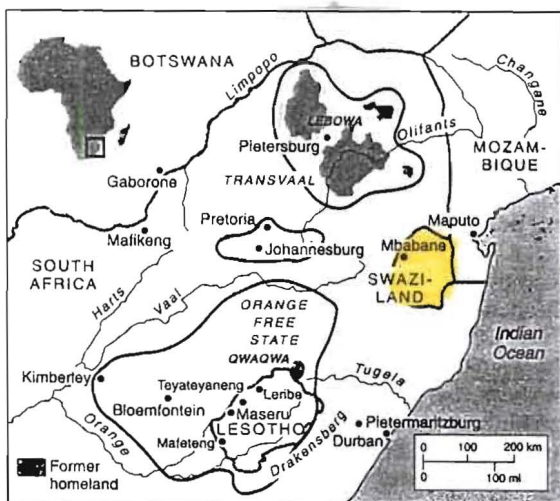
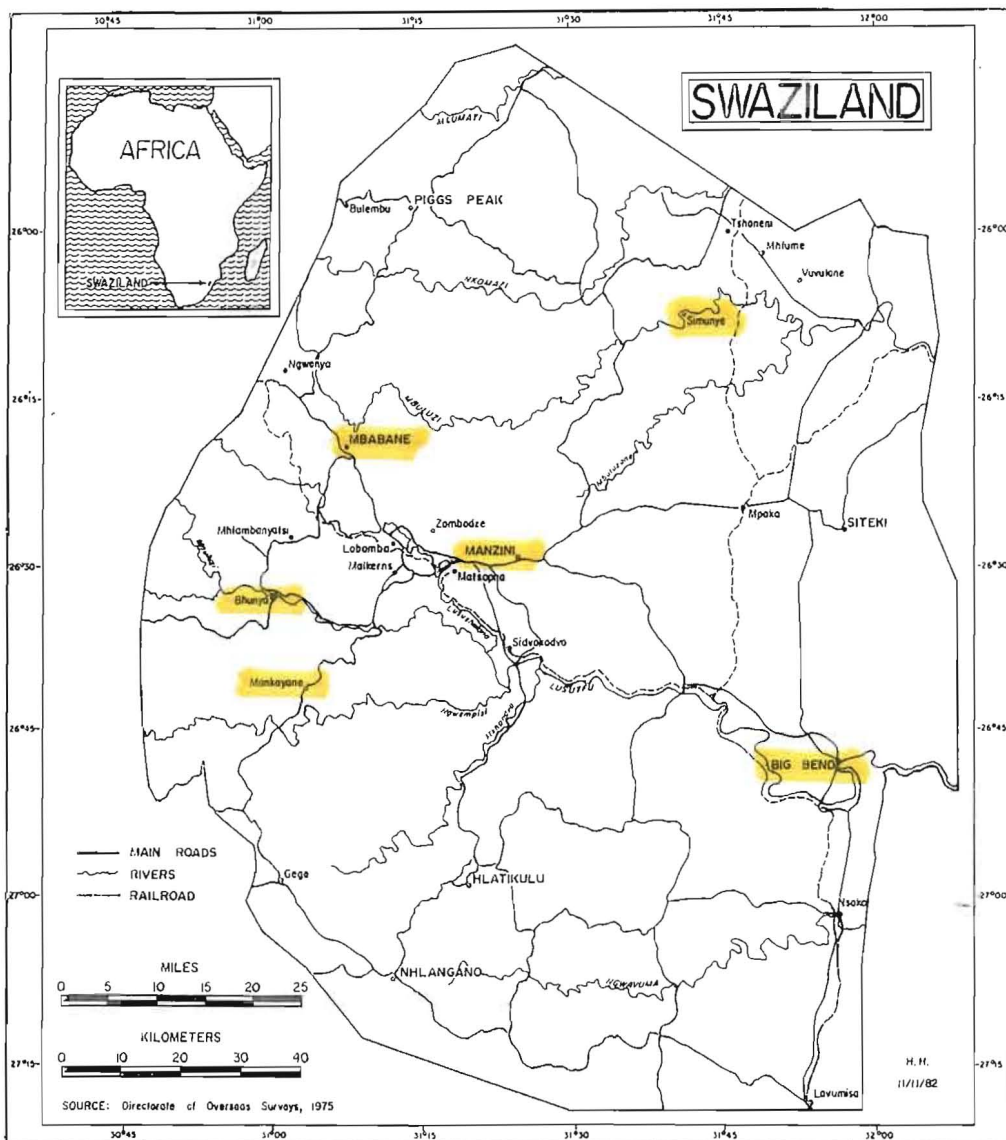
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Location Maps



Areas highlighted in yellow = SWAGAA offices in Swaziland

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List of Acronyms

NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
SWAGAA	The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

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Chapter One

Introduction

A woman in her mid-twenties takes a 40-minute bus ride from her rural home to Swaziland's commercial centre, Manzini. She is headed for the SWAGAA¹ office there, the biggest and busiest of six in the country, and the only one operating daily except Sundays.² The woman had completed some years of high school before entering a customary marriage and bearing children. She is presently seeking employment as a char or administrative assistant, though she has spent some years as a full-time homemaker. She is now on her way to SWAGAA, bearing the injuries sustained in a violent attack by her husband. Violence is not new to their relationship. Previously she had attempted to seek help using what Swazi people regard as the normative method of conflict resolution: she had sought counsel from family elders. But repeatedly she had been disappointed. The problem may have been temporarily alleviated, but soon the violence had recurred each time. Now, she will tell the SWAGAA counsellor who will see her, the reason she has had to come to SWAGAA is that her in-laws had earlier ignored her problems or underplayed the violence, while her own agnates had been almost as unsympathetic. Even when she had reported the violence to the police, she had been unsympathetically received, the police instructing her simply to return home and follow the traditional process of consulting her family elders. Hoping that an apparently autonomous organisation could possibly help her break the impasse, and having heard that SWAGAA was such an organisation, she has come to the SWAGAA office hoping that its personnel will intervene and solve her problems for her.

Arriving at the SWAGAA office, she enters the reception area to be greeted by wall-to-wall posters condemning abuse and acknowledging it as a crime. And she begins to be reassured that this is the right place for her, so she takes a seat in the reception area.

¹ The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse

² In addition to the Head Office, SWAGAA has satellite offices in the following areas: Mbabane (open Monday to Friday 8am – 4pm); Mankayane (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am – 3pm); Big Bend

Soon one of the SWAGAA personnel who are constantly in and out of the area greets her and, if a counsellor is free, she is invited into a private counselling room³. If no counsellor is available she is advised to wait for up to half an hour and to peruse the pamphlets and brochures distributed in the reception area, any of which she is free to take with her. They all advertise SWAGAA's services and contain information pertaining to abuse detection and prevention.

Because it is the woman's first visit to SWAGAA she is assigned to the first available counsellor. Had she consulted SWAGAA previously she would likely have seen the same counsellor as before. The counselling session has no time limit, and the woman takes as long as she feels she needs with her counsellor. Moreover, she is not obligated to pay the nominal R5 charge that is requested.

During the session the counsellor ensures she has completed a 'SWAGAA Counselling Intake Form' in order to record the woman's demographics, the alleged offender's details and a brief account of the problems the woman has experienced and details of the abuse she has suffered. The form also provides for the counsellor to record her own personal feelings and comments she may have about the case, and, in cases of returning clients, to note new information, intervention strategies adopted and problems or successes that have followed previous counselling⁴.

For the most part, the counselling session is structured so that the woman is able to talk freely and openly about her problems. The counsellor has been trained to assume the role of empathetic listener, and, time and again, counsellors explained to me the importance

(Tuesday and Wednesday 8am – 4pm); Simunye (Tuesday and Thursday 8am – 4pm) and Bhunya (Tuesday 8am – 3pm). See Map on page iv.

³ Only the Manzini office is large and well-furnished enough to offer a separate reception area and really private counselling room. This is because the Manzini office is in a rented building on a private piece of land. The Mbabane and Mankayane offices are situated in a room in the Outpatients department of the local government hospital and the woman might have to wait outside the office to see the counsellor/s on duty.

⁴ I found the 'SWAGAA Intake Counselling Form' extremely useful as a source, particularly since I was not allowed to sit in on the counselling sessions, which SWAGAA regard as strictly private and confidential. The information I present pertaining to the way in which the counselling sessions are conducted is therefore based on what counsellors and informants have told me about the sessions.

they laid on being able to listen. Thus clients, they stressed, were always allowed to talk until 'empty', to 'share' their problems and get everything off their chests.

Only once that process was over, did the counsellor herself take a more active role. She informed the woman of all the options open to her to attempt to resolve the problem, elucidating the potential consequences of each. And she then explained that the woman herself had to select one or more of those options as part of a process of personally making a decision for herself as to how to proceed.

Because SWAGAA is a small and relatively underresourced organisation, its personnel cannot follow through every case to its logical conclusion. SWAGAA therefore works hand-in-hand with a number of collaborating organisations. SWAGAA requires the assistance of the police in dealing with criminal offenses such as rape. It requires the assistance of Save the Children Fund personnel who have the mandate to investigate and intervene in child abuse cases, which SWAGAA does not. It relies on the NGO, Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), to provide legal advice to women. It relies on the Council of Churches, also an NGO, to hear and process maintenance cases. And it has to turn to the courts for peace binding orders, as only magistrates can issue those.

Depending on the decision she reaches after various options are put to her, the woman who has come in for help is now referred to one or other of those organisations. Which organisation is selected depends on the nature of her problem/s and on her decision once all the various possible options and their likely consequences are discussed with her. She may even be encouraged to go home to think about it before reaching a decision. But SWAGAA's policy is never to impose, either by pressurising for a decision or by recommending a particular option. At most, the woman is advised to return to SWAGAA for further counselling in order to reach a decision. Sadly, many do not return, even when no decision has been reached.

1.1 Argument and Dissertation Outline

This dissertation attempts to explain the reasons that many SWAGAA clients, while ostensibly very happy with the organisation's presence in Swaziland, are not wholly satisfied with the outcomes of their consultations with SWAGAA counsellors. For the most part, their sense of dissatisfaction derives from SWAGAA's inability and apparent unwillingness to actually intervene directly in order to help them address and resolve the problems of domestic abuse that they face.

The core argument of the dissertation is that the approach adopted by SWAGAA in its attempts to address gender and domestic violence in Swaziland is at odds with what are said to be the normative Swazi values and practices pertaining to conflict resolution within domestic relationships and within customary marriage in particular. As a consequence, SWAGAA fails fully to meet the needs of its clientele which is so embroiled in what are said to be Swazi traditions that the approach adopted by SWAGAA is too radical for them to benefit from, at least in the short to medium terms, which is where the problems for which they seek solutions are situated.

In order to demonstrate my point, I begin, in chapter two, by outlining what SWAGAA is and how it operates. I refer back to the composite case study presented above as the starting point for an analysis of the ideology that drives SWAGAA's activism.

In chapter three I argue how in most cases when a woman tries to resist abuse by adopting the approach advocated by SWAGAA, she comes up against a number of constraints over which she has little control and with which she is ill-equipped to deal. Broadly, these constraints are as follows:

- 1) The negative attitudes of the police in dealing with abused women
- 2) The negative attitudes and counter-responses of the perpetrator of the violence as a consequence of women consulting SWAGAA
- 3) The attitude that each family should retain a 'wall of silence' in order to maintain its integrity and family boundaries and the consequent pressure, therefore, not to 'air dirty linen in public'

4) Logistical problems relating to time and money required to consult SWAGAA

These constraints, each of which will be illustrated with an appropriate case-study, make it difficult for women to make the kinds of decisions that SWAGAA's approach requires they make, and significantly reduces the impact that SWAGAA is able to have in helping women to overcome violence.

In chapters three and four I argue that the attitudes that underlie the constraints listed are directly linked to the pressure that women are put under to adhere to a number of social structural principles pertaining to marriage in Swaziland. Foremost amongst these is what is claimed is the normative practice of turning to people within the family in times of marital crisis, as opposed to approaching an 'exogenous' organisation like SWAGAA, itself a very new phenomenon in Swaziland. Chapter three constitutes an exploration, based on my own research and on the anthropological literature on Swaziland, into what is said to constitute normative behaviour within a customary marriage. This is in order to uncover the logic underpinning the social structural principles governing marriages in Swaziland, principles which dictate that family problems be resolved by appealing to family elders for counsel. I then go on in chapter four to argue that at the root of this pressure to adhere to Swazi norms pertaining to marriage is a dominant theme in Swaziland's history. It is a tension between what are said to be age-old 'traditional' values and practices, and exogenous new ideas.

In chapter four I unpack Swaziland's recent colonial history, demonstrating how the country's leadership has been engaged in an ongoing struggle to maintain significant aspects of Swaziland's cultural autonomy in the face of colonial interventions which disrupted the earlier social order and Swazi people's lives. Emerging from this discussion is an analysis of the ways in which tradition has been employed in Swaziland as a cultural resource in order to resist the changes brought about through contact with the modernising world. This analysis is then linked directly back to the attitudes revealed by the constraints listed in chapter two. The discussion shows that in events where there is a perceived threat to the stability of the existing social order, in this case the intervention of

SWAGAA into customary practices pertaining to conflict resolution, those in power and those wishing to maintain the status quo commonly make claims that the ‘traditional’ order is being eroded by exogenous ideologies and practices. Such claims have the effect of undermining the effectiveness of an organisation like SWAGAA because its approach can then be said to create discordance in Swazi social life. As a consequence, women who wish to use SWAGAA’s services find themselves in a precarious situation.

I conclude the dissertation by suggesting that, if SWAGAA remains unresponsive to these particular constraints, then it is highly likely that women will lose confidence in the organisation's ability to provide effective, long-lasting solutions to the problem of violence. I go on to add that what is needed is an approach that is embedded in Swazi thinking on marital norms and is sensitive to the constraints that women face should they wish to utilise SWAGAA’s services in the way that the organisation intends, but without undermining the fundamental goals and philosophies of SWAGAA. In other words, I propose that SWAGAA needs to find an approach that resonates strongly with the dynamics of the particular locality of Swaziland rather than that it simply adopts a universalistic set of ideas to determine its approach. The approach that currently drives SWAGAA’s activism, is, I contend, unrealistic and too ambitious in a context such as Swaziland where women who wish to address gender violence come up against a series of very persistent ideological and practical constraints.

Before I proceed, in chapter two, to introduce SWAGAA’s structure and workings, I discuss the methods I used to gather the material I present here and comment on the nature of a research project conducted as a consultancy exercise, and the difficulties of translating the products of the latter into a formal dissertation for academic purposes.

1.2 Methodology

One of the methodological assumptions underpinning the approach of social anthropology is that one can observe and subsequently write about the social worlds of (other) people. The research method of participant observation, which is unique to anthropology within the social sciences, typically requires anthropologists to immerse

themselves in the everyday lives of the people they plan to study for an extended period of time, which can be anything from a few months to a few years. The aim of participant observation is to gain an in-depth understanding and first-hand account of the ways in which people construct and make sense of their lives. Gardner and Lewis (1996) have commented that, unlike anthropologists engaged in long-term participant observation with a 'blank slate', many anthropologists today enter a research site with a guided set of questions that will shape the nature of their research. The research that I undertook for the internship component of a masters degree in Practical Anthropology was of this nature, as I had been given a very guided brief by SWAGAA. I was briefed by the SWAGAA Director to undertake a Client Evaluation Study in which I was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the counselling service provided by SWAGAA. The output of my 8-week internship was to be a written report to the organisation in which I was to provide recommendations that might help the organisation improve its counselling service⁵.

In addition to my own personal conviction that it is unacceptable to justify violence against women, I have close family ties in Swaziland, as my parents have lived in the country for over 25 years. Swaziland thus seemed a perfect research site. In addition, I was excited at the prospect of engaging in an 'applied' anthropological exercise, in which the data that I collected had the potential to assist the organisation in its endeavour to address domestic violence.

Upon leaving the research site and returning to the University setting to begin the 'writing-up' process, however, I was faced with the task of converting the product of my research into a formal dissertation for academic purposes. I found this process very challenging. It was necessary to reconcile two contrasting approaches to anthropology, that is, applied or practical anthropology versus academic or 'pure' anthropology (Grillo and Rew, 1985). The data that my efforts had yielded during the internship was very much within the realm of the former. I was committed to producing a report for SWAGAA that I hoped would enable its personnel somehow to improve the services they

⁵ See Appendix 1 for a full version of the whole report, including the recommendations I suggested.

offered. I interpreted this as a practical exercise that entailed understanding the internal workings of SWAGAA and identifying any shortcomings that needed to be addressed. Yet, at the same time I was conscious of the need to generate data that would be sufficiently in-depth for an anthropological analysis of the ways in which gender relations in Swaziland impact on SWAGAA's ability to realise its goals.

When conducting interviews, I thus found myself trying to elicit two not always compatible sets of data. Firstly, I was interested to know how and in what ways, if at all, the counselling service had been valuable to clients. In my mind's eye this entailed a superficial investigation into people's response to the service they had received. I tried to elicit whether the client believed an organisation such as SWAGAA is valued and needed in Swaziland and, if so what kinds of relationships were developing between the organisation and such clients. But beyond that, I wanted to uncover people's perceptions of gender relations in Swaziland generally in order to produce the ethnographic data needed to form the basis of an analysis for my formal dissertation and as a necessary background for preparing my consultancy report. In order to do this, I realised, I would have to probe far deeper than merely asking practical questions about SWAGAA's ability to address domestic violence.

Producing the data necessary for compiling a report for SWAGAA worked well within the confines of the research setting, as I was able to interview clients on the premises after their counselling sessions. I had hoped, however, also to be able to spend time with individual informants beyond the SWAGAA office for purposes of collecting ethnographic, participant observation type research that would inform the analysis in my dissertation. For example, I had hoped to be able to visit people in their homes and observe how they interacted with those around them. Unfortunately, it was difficult to gain this kind of intimate and in-depth peek into people's lives, for reasons I discuss below. First, however, I describe a bit more about the interviewing process.

I spent the bulk of my 8-week internship during April and May 2000 based at the SWAGAA head office in Manzini, as this is the biggest office and has the largest number

of clients. Initially, I had thought to interview clients immediately following their respective sessions with a counsellor. But soon I realised that this was problematic. Clients usually felt very relieved and very appreciative after their counselling session and had only good things to say about the organisation. Although this was positive for SWAGAA, I felt that, to gain a more balanced client overview of the SWAGAA service, it would be more realistic also to interview clients who had visited the organisation in the past. My aim was to discover the value clients' attached to their visit, seen retrospectively. I hoped that doing so would provide an effective way of measuring the long-term impact of SWAGAA's service. I made use of SWAGAA's client files to randomly locate clients who had previously approached SWAGAA for help and managed to locate 12 people via telephone and to arrange interviews. Of these 12 people, I interviewed 5 over the telephone, 3 in their homes and 4 at their place of work.

As described in the composite case study at the beginning of the dissertation, the majority of clients are referred elsewhere by SWAGAA after a counselling session. SWAGAA's collaboration with other organisations such as the police, the magistrate's court, and other NGOs is an integral part of the service on offer, and I therefore felt it would be important to gain a sense of what usually transpires when clients leave the counselling room once they have been referred elsewhere. I thus began 'following-up' individual cases. Once a client had seen a counsellor and had been interviewed by me, I would accompany her (sometimes him) to the organisation she had been referred to. There I would silently observe the interaction between the client and the organisation's representative. I would then arrange to meet the client again after about a week for a second interview, to discuss what developments had taken place in the interim period, her feelings regarding her problems and her feelings towards SWAGAA.

By the end of the internship I had conducted a total of 54 interviews with SWAGAA clients. Of these 54, I followed up 20 individual cases where I met with the client once or twice after her counseling session. 42 of my informants were women, the majority of whom were in their 20s, married according to Swazi customary marriage, mothers, and unemployed. The remaining 12 were men. 6 of my informants were teenagers, 14 were

in their 20s and the remaining 20 were 30 years or older. Although women are the focus of this dissertation, SWAGAA does not discriminate according to age or gender and is equally committed to helping anyone who seeks out their services. I therefore hoped to obtain a spread of clients in order to assess SWAGAA's overall service and interviewed any clients who consented to grant an interview, irrespective of their age, gender or type of problem they were experiencing. The majority of my female informants were being sexually or physically abused, or both, by their husbands or partners. One female informant had been raped by her partner and another had been raped by a stranger.

To enhance the ethnographic data obtained from the interviews, I also conducted three focus groups discussions. Two of the groups were conducted in factories in the industrial area of Matsapha and the third was conducted in an open market place in the capital city of Mbabane. The first group consisted of 20 men and 5 women. The second group consisted of 11 women and eight men. The third group, conducted in the marketplace, consisted of approximately 6 women, with a number of curious passers by coming and going. During these focus group discussions I probed the issue of abuse by asking the following questions, although not in so tight an order, nor asked in the way they are presented here. My questions, used to stimulate discussion, were: What is abuse? Are women abused in Swaziland? If so, is abuse rife? Is it considered to be a problem? Why do people think that women are abused in Swaziland? What roles do both men and women play in the household and in the public sphere? The group discussions significantly enhanced my interview material and proved invaluable in the writing up process because they allowed insight into the nature of gender relations in Swaziland in a context that was removed and in no way connected to the research site nor necessarily to particular complaints of abuse.

In February 2001, 8 months after completing my internship, I returned to Swaziland for a week to conduct further research. My focus this time was on the SWAGAA personnel, rather than the people who utilise the organisation's service. I felt that, if I was to be writing about SWAGAA, what its personnel do and, most importantly, the way in which they do it, I would need to understand the thinking that motivates SWAGAA activists to

do what they do in the way that they do it. I thus interviewed the Director, the Counselling Programme Manager, the Education Programme Manager, the Counselling Programme Officer and 10 of the counsellors. In addition to interviewing each of the counsellors individually, I held two group discussions with counsellors. I also interviewed representatives from the organisations with which SWAGAA works hand-in-hand, as I was interested to know whether the attitudes displayed by personnel there regarding the work that SWAGAA is doing in Swaziland might reveal any existing weaknesses or strengths of the SWAGAA service.

I visited Swaziland again in January 2002. Although my reasons this time were personal, I had an opportunity to spend an afternoon at the SWAGAA Head office in Manzini, where I interviewed the Counselling Programme Manager for a second time. She had recently completed a Masters degree in Counselling at Durham University in the United Kingdom, and I was interested to know what new perspectives, if any, she had brought back with her.

1.2.1 Research Constraints

Being unable to speak siSwati was a significant research constraint, and I was obliged to conduct various interviews with the help of an interpreter. In the event that an interpreter was used I would ensure that the interpreter was not the same person who had acted as the counsellor and conducted the counselling session, as I suspected that the client might then hesitate to be open and honest in her assessment of the session in the presence of her counsellor. Although I explained to the counsellors that I would not be assessing their role as individual counsellors, a number of them admitted to feeling slightly nervous at the prospect of clients expressing dissatisfaction of the way in which counsellors conducted their sessions. It is thus possible that counsellors acting as interpreters might have been biased in their interpretations of clients views. The SWAGAA Counselling Programme Officer was instrumental in conducting and later interpreting and transcribing two of the focus group discussions.

One of the reasons it was difficult to develop ongoing relationships with SWAGAA clients and to gain deep insight into their personal lives beyond the parameters of the SWAGAA offices was because often follow-up appointments were not kept. Many of the clients did not have telephones, which made it difficult for me to confirm appointments, to re-schedule them, or, when they were missed, to find out why a client had failed to meet me at an agreed upon and designated time and place. I realise now that there is a multitude of possible reasons that women, in particular, might have preferred to terminate their relationship with SWAGAA. The constraints that women face are described in-depth in chapter three. Suffice it therefore to say here that because there is no support structure in place for women seeking redress for violence, women are often left no choice but to return to their abusive circumstances even after having sought an escape. It must be remembered also that many of the women that I had hoped to interview again did not want their husbands or families to know that they had been to SWAGAA. Many therefore explained to me that they would prefer it if we met at the SWAGAA offices rather than in their homes. In addition to this, because the issue of abuse is a highly emotive and sensitive one, it was at times difficult to communicate with abuse survivors. Some of the women were too timid, others too emotional to engage in an in-depth discussion. Some seemed simply unwilling to share their problems with a stranger. Of course, there were also some women who were extremely outspoken about the way in which Swazi women are treated. But they were in the minority. A consequence of all these factors is that, although I have a number of very rich and informative interviews, I would have liked to acquire more information about the individual lives of people beyond the confines of the SWAGAA premises. That is, I would have valued the opportunity to participate in and observe people's lives in order to better understand the things they would tell me in a SWAGAA counselling room in the light of their everyday lived realities. One disadvantage of this gap in my data is that, when analysing my material for the dissertation, I have had to rely on what people have told me about their lives rather than being able to work with information gathered through my own personal observations of the dynamics of gender relations in Swaziland.

Having outlined the logical progression of my thesis and described the methods used to gather the material I here present, I now proceed, in chapter two, to describe how SWAGAA hopes to address the problem of domestic violence in Swaziland. I describe, firstly, what SWAGAA is and how it operates, before moving into an analysis of the logic underpinning the organisation's activism.

Chapter Two

What is SWAGAA and how does it operate?

2.1 SWAGAA - Mission Statement and Objectives

The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) is a non-partisan, non-profit making, non-governmental organisation. According to its Mission Statement, SWAGAA is committed to creating awareness in order to decrease abuse, particularly physical and sexual abuse against women, men and children and to empowering survivors of abuse. SWAGAA aims to achieve these goals through its volunteers programme that involves counselling, education and advocacy activities.⁶

SWAGAA defines abuse as 'any pattern of behaviour that controls another person, causes physical harm or fear, makes someone do things they do not want to do or prevents them from doing things they do want to do. Abuse can be verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial. Abused women usually experience multiple forms of abuse'.⁷

In a corollary to its Mission Statement the organisation outlines its three main objectives as follows:

1. 'Empowerment of survivors of abuse through counselling
2. Positive change in behaviour and attitudes in preventing and dealing with abuse
3. Change in social, cultural and legal systems aimed at protection of women and children against abuse'⁸

2.2 The SWAGAA personnel

SWAGAA was launched on 12 October 1990 and was initially managed by volunteers who joined the organisation by paying a membership fee. A full-time counselling service

⁶ SWAGAA Mission Statement, Annual Report 1998/99

⁷ SWAGAA handout entitled 'Abuse', undated.

⁸ SWAGAA Mission Statement, Annual Report 1998/99

was introduced in August 1997. The organisation is almost totally reliant on external donors for its funding; financial limitations have been identified as a major constraint by the organisation⁹. The management of SWAGAA consists of a salaried Director, a salaried Counselling Programme Manager who manages and directs the counsellors, and a salaried Education Programme Manager who oversees the education campaign. All those who work for SWAGAA, whether as counsellors or education officers, are referred to as 'volunteers', as initially they worked on a voluntary basis with no remuneration. Due to successful fundraising this situation has changed and the organisation now has 7 full-time salaried counsellors. The remaining 21 counsellors and 7 education officers work on a part-time basis and are paid R25 plus transport costs for every four-hour session. All are Swazi women.

The recruitment process for counsellors is quite stringent. Those who wish to work for SWAGAA are requested to complete an in-depth questionnaire which aims to gauge their level of gender sensitivity. According to the Counselling Manager, a crucial attribute the organisation looks for is an ability to argue women's issues; that is, an ability to demonstrate an ideological commitment to the problem of gender violence. Successful applicants are required to attend a face-to-face interview with the organisation's management staff before they are finally accepted and begin the training course.

The majority of counsellors are in their twenties. Some are students at the University of Swaziland. Many are single women although some are married with children. A few are themselves survivors of abuse who are now committed to helping others who find themselves in similar situations to what they had earlier experienced.

2.3 SWAGAA's Education and Awareness Programme

Implicit in SWAGAA's Mission Statement is a commitment to achieve gender equality in Swaziland. Yet to do so is an enormous task, especially given the fact that the number of clients who visit SWAGAA is steadily increasing. In 1998, 511 clients utilised

⁹ International donors from who funding has been secured are Skillshare, The Department for international Development (DFID), Comic Relief (UK based organisation) and Bilance (Netherlands based organisation)

SWAGAA's counselling service. In 1999 the number of clients increased to 871; the number increased again in 2000 to 1658; and again in 2001 to 3792. SWAGAA hopes to address the problem of gender violence through an extensive awareness-creation campaign and through advocating for legal reform, particularly in the treatment of abuse cases. The organisation claims that there is a widespread need to generate information on abuse, and has therefore embarked on a bold and rigorous anti-abuse campaign involving various media.

As part of the campaign the organisation, in collaboration with CANGO¹⁰, produced a number of posters carrying a variety of messages all condemning abuse and identifying battery as a 'hidden crime' in Swaziland. 'Break the Chain of Silence' and 'You are Not Alone' are two of the slogans used extensively by the organisation on its posters and in its education programme. In addition, the organisation has produced a number of leaflets and brochures explaining the nature of the service it offers, and offering information pertaining to abuse. Other brochures carry information on rape and on child sexual abuse. Also used in the awareness campaign are banners, stickers, key rings and T-shirts. Again, all carry anti-abuse messages. Radio broadcasts have also been a powerful medium for informing the public about the existence of SWAGAA and the organisation's objectives, as have television broadcasts (for those people who do own a television set).

Every year, SWAGAA identifies a number of target groups which its members hope to reach through their education programme, conducted in the form of workshops. Groups that have been targeted previously include the police, nurses, rural health motivators, teachers and primary and high school children.

2.4 SWAGAA's Counselling Service – practice and ideology

As indicated in the composite case study with which I began, the role adopted by counsellors during counselling sessions is that of informed and empathetic listener. Counsellors are quick to stress that their role is not to *tell* clients what to do, but merely to inform them of all their options in a way that the client can make her own decision.

¹⁰ Co-ordinated Alliance of NGOs (Swaziland)

One counsellor summed this up as follows: ‘Don’t give sympathy and advice – give options and empathise. Don’t make the mistake of advising. You’ll be blamed (if the advice does not help) and the trust will be lost’ (19 April 2000). An undated SWAGAA brochure entitled ‘Battery: The Hidden Crime’ outlines four main objectives of a counselling session. They are very much in keeping with the way in which counsellors have articulated their perceptions of their own roles when explaining them to me. The objectives stated in the brochure are: to empower women; to help them regain their lost self esteem; to enable them to make their own decisions; and to provide ways for them to find the strength to move forward. Implicit in this set of objectives is a repeatedly stated belief that, through providing emotional support and reassurance, counselling will put a woman in a position where she is ‘strong’ enough to take control of her life. Indeed, as the Counselling Manager explained to me, SWAGAA has adopted what she called a humanistic approach to counselling. It is an approach, she said, which is based on the belief that ‘human beings are capable of directing their own cause in life, they are capable of self-growth. When they have problems, their ability to make decisions is hampered. That is where the role of the counsellor is helpful – to provide clarification, to help the person think more clearly about the problem facing them, and to point out the complications of the decisions they might make’ (SWAGAA Counselling Programme Manager, 14 January 2002).

The reason that counsellors deliberately refrain from offering very pointed advice is because they have been trained to do so and because they accept the principles underpinning the training. SWAGAA subscribes to a set of principles based on the idea of individual personal empowerment and SWAGAA counsellors are motivated to avoid actively advising clients what to do precisely because they have come to subscribe to the idea that personal individual empowerment is only attainable through a process of personal and informed decision-making. SWAGAA activists all believe that once a woman has made a decision about her future she has taken control of her life. As the SWAGAA Director explained to me: ‘the role of SWAGAA is that of supporting....encouraging a woman to make an informed decision, to empower her, and

to give assurance that she is still in control of her life' (17 May 2000). When I asked one of the counsellors to explain a 'typical counselling session' to me, she said:

The most important thing in a counselling session is to develop trust...after you have found out what the problem is, tell the client her options, and then tell her the pros and the cons of the options. The client then makes a choice. If she feels she has chosen the right option she must go out and try it and then come back and report what happened... Don't fall into the trap of doing too much for the client. She must only lean on you. If you want to empower her, don't do anything for her that she cannot do for herself (SWAGAA counsellor, 17 May 2000).

By implication then, if SWAGAA makes decisions for her then the client's own empowerment process has been disrupted. As the Counselling Manager pointed out: 'Clients won't feel empowered if you make decisions for them' (14 January 2002). Counsellors thus see themselves as instrumental only in helping a client to come to her own *informed* decision. They do not see themselves as ultimately responsible for making that decision and they are trained explicitly to refuse to take on the responsibility of doing so.

The way in which counsellors articulate their understandings of empowerment resonates strongly with the use of the word 'empowerment' in much of the development lexicon. It is therefore useful, at this point, to engage with the broad debate on the usefulness, or not, of development interventions, as this is the context in which an idea such as 'empowerment', upon which SWAGAA rhetoric and practice is so heavily reliant, was born.

The very idea of development has been radically critiqued by social scientists concerned with issues of power and inequality. Development projects, such critics point out, essentially entail introducing change into a given locality through planned interventions. The motivation for these interventions is the desire to 'develop' a locale that is perceived as being 'underdeveloped'. Sachs (1992) refers to Harry S. Truman's inauguration

speech on 20 January 1949 as the beginning of the era of development. In that speech Truman declared that the southern hemisphere constituted the 'underdeveloped areas' of the world and that these areas needed to be 'developed'. The United States, together with the other industrialised nations of the world in the post World War Two period, were heralded as an evolutionary model to which the undeveloped world should aspire. Implicit in the belief that the northern industrial nations were the epitome of 'modernisation' was an assumption that the 'underdeveloped' countries of the world were merely lagging behind the wealthier northern countries and would eventually 'catch up' and reach a similar stage of 'development'. Only the 'undeveloped' nations required the expertise of the developed world in order to reach the same ultimate goal of modernisation (Sachs 1992; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Hobart 1993). This thinking, in which development was perceived as a 'definable path of economic growth passing through various stages' (Esteva 1992:7) justified the interventions of the industrialised west into the lives of less industrially developed nations on the basis that the former were committed to helping the latter achieve a supposedly desirable state of industrialisation, or development.

The failure of many development projects to improve, even marginally, the lives of their intended beneficiaries, and the realisation that the number of people who live in abject poverty is on the increase rather than the decrease, has led to a re-thinking of the methods that development planners use to implement development projects. Central to the critique and the re-think has been an assertion that development projects that fail do so largely because of their implementers' attempts to impose their own particular logics and problem-solving skills in contexts where such ways of thinking may not necessarily apply. More specifically, a technocratic, scientific approach towards which development practitioners tend to lean to solve problems may not resonate at all with the logic of the intended beneficiaries of such development projects (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Pottier 1996; Rahnema 1997).

Critique of development practitioners who attempt to impose a project without proper and full understanding of local circumstances is very much one of anthropological concern, in

that it acknowledges that societies comprise differentiated individuals who may conceptualise and respond to problems in a variety of different ways. What has been called for by development critics opposing what they believe to be a top-down approach to development is a more people-centered approach in which development practitioners and those being developed can together find workable solutions to the problems of poverty and their effects on those whom development interventions are intended to assist (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Pottier 1996).

It is against this background that ideas such as 'participation' and 'empowerment' have been coined. As Singh and Titi (1995) and Rahnema (in Sachs, 1992) state, the idea of empowerment has been at the center of a reconceptualisation of development; an alternative approach to developing strategies for poverty alleviation. They argue that those seeking alternatives to development see empowerment of local people as the enabling mechanism for such people to combat poverty and achieve sustainable livelihoods. People's empowerment is thus a response to the state's failure to alleviate poverty and the consequent emphasis on moving towards developing people's own capacity to devise their own sustainable solutions to the problems they face. The main thrust of this approach is that, through socio-economic empowerment, individuals, communities and nations will 'obtain collective responsibility for their own future and become managers of their own development...(It) provides people with the capacity....to feel like masters of their own thinking and view of the world, and to achieve the desired level of well-being' (Singh and Titi 1995:19).

Focusing concern on issues of gender in development, Moser (1989) identifies the empowerment approach as one of a number of approaches that have been used in gender planning in the Third World. Like Singh and Titi (1995) she too describes the empowerment approach as one in which emphasis is placed less on power as a tool to dominate others, and more on empowerment as a process of developing the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength, in order that they are imbued with the power to make their own choices in life. In describing the broad usage of the word empowerment across a number of fields, James (in Cheater 1999) points out

that 'empowerment' has become so pervasive in the development lexicon that researchers ought to take great care when using such a word. Her explanation of empowerment does, however, concur with those put forward by the above authors in that she refers to empowerment as a process in which people are given the opportunity to use their own creativity and initiative to solve problems.

Parallels can be seen here with SWAGAA's understanding of empowerment, which is perceived as being a process in which individuals are actively engaged in initiating their own solutions to the problems they face. Women are encouraged to be self-reliant and to take responsibility for determining their own destiny. They are encouraged to turn inward and to find it within themselves to solve their problems, rather than being reliant on advice or 'expertise' offered by outsiders. It is because SWAGAA has adopted this approach that its counsellors are expected merely to be the enablers and facilitators of their clients' own empowerment, and that they therefore only guide their clients, rather than advise them, through what most clients regard as a confusing and difficult time. Counsellors are change agents, assisting and facilitating the introduction of change through a participatory interaction with the client. It is for this reason that clients are encouraged to talk as much as they need and for as long as they want and can. This is because it is a stated intention that counselling sessions not be one-way dialogues in which the counsellor imparts her knowledge to the client, who is then a passive recipient of that knowledge. Instead, such a session is intended to be an interaction, an exchange, where client and counsellor have an opportunity to share ideas that will equip the client with the ability to reach an informed decision of her own.

From SWAGAA's perspective, the perceived benefits of this approach are twofold. During the interaction between a counsellor and a client, the latter is expected to play a pivotal role in finding a solution to the problem of violence that she faces. She is thus, it is believed, empowered with the ability to act on her own for herself and in her own personal best interests. Moreover, by following such a path, the counsellor is absolved of responsibility or the need for taking the blame should the client's decision do little to alleviate the violence she is experiencing, or worse still, result in a situation of exacerbated violence.

In a chapter that serves as an overview of conceptual and theoretical issues pertaining to gender in Southern Africa, Meena (1992) analysed the approach that has been adopted by various organisations in southern Africa committed to empowering women. She outlines two features of the empowerment approach that can be applied directly to SWAGAA. Firstly, she points out, the southern African approach addresses the practical as well as the strategic needs of women. Practical needs are needs such as food, shelter, health and water, whereas strategic needs refers to ‘empowering women to take control over their own needs through providing them with the space and flexibility to make decisions on issues affecting them and society’ (1992:79). This second emphasis, on enabling women to take control of their lives through a process of decision-making, is, as I have described above, exactly what drives SWAGAA’s thinking on how to help women to overcome domestic and gender violence.

Secondly, Meena (1992) also describes what she refers to as a unique feature of feminism in the region, which is the linkage between activists and analysts in the empowerment approach. Here she is referring specifically to the combination of research, documentation and action that has been achieved by many women’s organisations in the southern African region. These three areas are encapsulated in SWAGAA’s Mission Statement as necessary and linked factors in the fight to eradicate gender and domestic violence.

I have made the link between SWAGAA and Meena’s (1992) summary to demonstrate that SWAGAA, like many other feminist organisations in Southern Africa, draws extensively on the thinking and practice of similar organisations in the region. This is evident too from SWAGAA’s close association with the Nisaa Institute for Women’s Development¹¹, a woman’s rights NGO in South Africa. Nisaa has been instrumental in helping SWAGAA to devise its approach to the problem of gender violence in

¹¹ Nisaa is opposed to all forms of oppression, exploitation, and violence against women. The organisation is dedicated to promoting and acknowledging women’s self and collective empowerment and their contribution to politics, economics, social and community based activities (<http://www.nisaa.org.za/about.htm>, 16 January 2002).

Swaziland. SWAGAA has borrowed the empowerment approach from Nisaa and, indeed, it is Nisaa who developed the training manual that continues to be used to train new SWAGAA volunteers. For guidance and inspiration on how to approach the problem of gender violence in Swaziland SWAGAA has thus turned its attention outward and its volunteers are made eager to embrace ideas and practices from other regional contexts. SWAGAA identifies itself closely with this sister organisation.

My research co-incided with what was called the White Ribbon Campaign, which SWAGAA launched in collaboration with Nisaa Institute for Women's Development. The campaign's aim was to encourage all men and women in Swaziland to publicly display a white ribbon, as a sign of a pledge never to commit or condone violence against women in the country. As we shall see below, its launch was marked by a public meeting at which speeches were made by both SWAGAA leaders and leaders of the Swazi government.

The ideology underpinning SWAGAA's counselling service draws not only from other women's organisations in Southern Africa. It also falls directly in line with international thinking on women's rights. SWAGAA's Director and Managers do not hesitate to align themselves ideologically with what they refer to as 'international instruments' for the recognition and denunciation of gender inequality, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). An example of this can be seen in the Director's public appeal to the Swazi Prime Minister when he attended the White Ribbon launch, and when she said:

Our other issue of concern is the delay in ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). We also had occasion to express this concern to Her Royal Highness, The Queen Mother, and we would like to express it to you as Head of Government because we have been advised that ratification of the convention lies within government mandate. We urge you therefore, Your Excellency, to deliberate with all concerned in this

matter and effect the necessary ratification (Khosi R. Mthethwa, SWAGAA Director, 5 May 2000).

Implicit in the wording of the Director's appeal is an expectation that, if the Government ratifies the Convention, then its agents will be obligated to abide by the women's rights standards enunciated in the United Nations Convention. The ratification of an internationally recognised convention is thus regarded by SWAGAA as a necessary step on path towards combating and eliminating gender inequality in Swaziland. It would also legitimate what SWAGAA is trying to achieve because such ideas have the financial and ideological backing of the internationally recognised United Nations.

The Director's attitude is shared by the Counselling Programme Manager who explained to me that what she called the humanistic approach adopted by SWAGAA in its counselling service, draws on material and ideas from literature on the 'basic principles of human rights' and the 'Human Rights Charter'. In those sources, she explained, one finds it stated that women are entitled to their basic human rights, as are men. Accordingly, such equality in Swaziland is something the organisation hopes to achieve through a women's empowerment process which emphasises women's 'emotional or psychological empowerment whereby somebody can make decisions for herself and withstand the pressure of the societal stigma that is attached to women who leave their husbands' (Counselling Programme Manager, 14 January 2002). In other words, SWAGAA aims to achieve the radical objective of enabling women to resist social pressures through adopting a mode of social intervention that is individualistic in its concern with personal decision making.

Counsellors too demonstrate an unwavering ideological commitment to ensuring that women are in a position to realise their individual and personal 'rights' as women. As one SWAGAA counsellor explained: 'SWAGAA is trying to empower women by making them realise they are full human beings, to stand for their full human rights' (30 April 2000). A 32-year-old woman, and a SWAGAA client, expressed a similar attitude when she commented on the lack of human rights standards in Swaziland, saying:

‘Abuse is very high (in Swaziland). Women aren’t even aware that they are being abused. They think they should respect their men. In Swaziland, most women don’t know their rights’ (1 May 2000).

It is hardly surprising that SWAGAA have bought into the rhetoric of international human rights norms and that ordinary Swazi women, such as the one quoted above, are beginning to talk about their ‘rights’. As Wilson has argued, human rights can be seen as one of the most globalised political values of our time (1997:1), and we should therefore not be surprised at their appearance in Swaziland. Donnelley (1989) makes a similar point when he says that virtually all states in the modern world have embraced, in speech and rhetoric at least, the human rights standards set out by the United Nations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Human Rights Convention. The leadership of SWAGAA has made it very clear that SWAGAA supports the ideals enunciated in international Conventions such as CEDAW and, as we shall see later, is of the opinion that any behaviour that goes contrary to international norms should be eliminated.

SWAGAA’s positioning on the issue of women’s rights is an important concern which will recur throughout my dissertation. It is important because it brings to the fore a dilemma which confronts many African countries whose social structures have been transformed by the introduction of new ways of thinking about the world, first through colonialism and more recently through globalisation. Specifically regarding the problem of gender violence in Swaziland and SWAGAA’s role in attempting to combat this problem, we need to ask to what extent the organisation’s embrace of exogenous ideas, such as those enunciated in United Nations Conventions, impacts on its ability to effect change in the everyday norms and practices of domesticity and gender relations in Swaziland. This question has particular salience for SWAGAA, which has adopted an approach to the problem of gender violence that, as will be demonstrated in chapter three, is diametrically opposed to the prevailing everyday practices and norms in Swaziland today.

The logic of my argument as it unfolds from here onwards is as follows. In chapter three I outline the constraints that hinder women's ability to make or to follow through on the kinds of decisions that are the consequence of acting in a way that will realise SWAGAA's goal of women's empowerment. I do this in order to demonstrate *how* the approach adopted by the organisation is incommensurate and at odds with everyday norms in Swaziland. I go on, in chapter four, to explain *why* SWAGAA's approach is incommensurate with everyday norms. I do so by arguing that in precarious and uncertain times the leadership of Swaziland has always appealed to the sanctity of tradition as the guarantee of the nation's stability. Because that has now become normal in Swaziland, it creates ideological and practical resistance to SWAGAA and its approach, both at government and local levels. SWAGAA, with its emphasis on what are perceived as values that are inconsistent and incompatible with Swazi norms, is thus regarded as a threat to the stability of family relations.

I conclude, in chapter five, when I suggest that SWAGAA's approach to the problem of domestic violence is too radical in the context of Swaziland. Firstly, I point out, it assumes that Swazi women have the strength, resilience and persistence required to overcome the social stigma of 'airing their dirty linen in public'. Secondly, I say, the approach is insufficiently responsive to the constraints that women face should they wish to confront the violence that characterises their lives. If the organisation hopes to truly transform women's lives, then it will need to re-align its approach such that its thinking is more in line with the normative values on gender and domesticity in Swaziland. The transformation of women's lives can only be a gradual process in Swaziland, as the structural and attitudinal constraints women face are so deeply entrenched that they undermine any impact that SWAGAA can have in the long-term if it does not adopt a more gradualist approach. Given that SWAGAA operates in a context where there are forces at play whose power and influence far exceeds that of the organisation itself, it cannot hope for or expect immediate changes in the ways women ordinarily understand and respond to the world around them. My argument is that the organisation ought therefore to advocate for incremental rather than immediate changes in local perceptions on the treatment of women.

Chapter Three

Limits of a SWAGAA approach: social structural constraints

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that the empowerment approach advocated by SWAGAA cannot easily be effective because of a number of social structural principles in place in Swaziland which hinder women's ability to exercise the agency required to make their own personal 'informed decisions' or to follow through on them. The social structural principles in question all appeal for validity to an image of the normativity of past practices, which are said to constitute 'tradition'. The constraints that women face as a result of the realisation of these principles, and their impact on SWAGAA's ability to effectively confront abuse, will be outlined below. Thereafter, I analyse the logic underpinning these social structural principles, showing how adherence to attitudes that underpin them frequently pushes women back into their abusive situations, because it undermines their ability to follow through on any decisions they may have made in an attempt to alleviate the violence directed against themselves.

3.2 The negative attitudes of the police

Case 1. Experiencing police negativity

Gcinaphi is an unemployed 31-year-old woman who has been repeatedly beaten up by her husband. Angered by the miscarriage of her unborn baby after a severe beating, she left her husband who has since threatened to harm her further. She visited SWAGAA on 11 May 2000. She said that she had never before been to the police because she had heard they do not listen and are rough. At SWAGAA, she said, one can talk with someone who understands one's problem.

Immediately following the counselling session I accompanied her to the police station to which SWAGAA had referred her. We were shown into a room where there were various policemen as well as a number of other people waiting to

speak to a police officer. During the time we were there we were afforded little privacy and everyone in the room was privy to Gcinaphi's story once her turn came to lay her complaint.

Looking down rather than making eye contact, Gcinaphi tentatively handed the SWAGAA referral form to the police officer who had been allocated to deal with her. He glanced at it briefly and handed it back to her. He then said that SWAGAA should be more specific about the cases that they refer. He said that when a woman has moved away from her husband and she does not want him to follow her, she should be referred to the magistrate's court for a peace binding order, as this is a legal matter that is out of the jurisdiction of the police. He assured me this was not because he and the police were unwilling to help. It was simply that it was a matter for the courts.

At this point a second officer, who had overheard the conversation, interjected. He said that they had been getting a number of such cases in the last few days, adding that SWAGAA's referral of many cases to the police reveals that SWAGAA does not take into account Swazi culture in which disputes within families should be settled 'internally'. He said that if SWAGAA took this rule into account they (both SWAGAA and the police) would have less work to do.

Gcinaphi remained silent throughout the police visit, despite my urging her to explain to the police officer why she was there. In part, I believe, her silence was because the police officer insisted that he could not press charges because she was married and had a responsibility to her children. He advised that the two families of the husband and wife should come together and sort out the problem. Then, turning to me, he asked somewhat pointedly whether SWAGAA's role is to help families reconcile, or to break them up. This provided the opportunity for another police officer who was present to say that he agreed that Gcinaphi's first responsibility was to ensure that she did not break up her family.

My presence as a kind of SWAGAA representative did little to give Gcinaphi the confidence to present her case convincingly. Nor did it seem to discourage the police officers from responding in a particularly unsympathetic manner.

Gcinaphi's demeanour when presenting her case was timid, and she was easily intimidated by the police officer attending to her in an abrupt and condescending manner.

Gcinaphi's story is not unusual in Swaziland. Indeed, of the 15 women who had consulted SWAGAA and told me about their experiences with the police after SWAGAA had referred them there, only two reported receiving a good reception and being helped. SWAGAA's counsellors and leaders professed to feeling helpless in this regard, adding that many women who were referred to the police were simply told to go back to SWAGAA. The organisation had been trying to address the problem by running a number of workshops with police officers that were aimed at increasing gender sensitivity. Yet SWAGAA personnel said that they found the negative attitude of the police crippling for both the women who approached them for help and for SWAGAA itself.

An important issue of concern that emerges from Gcinaphi's story, and one that is pivotal to my argument, is that the police in Swaziland are opposed to women consulting with SWAGAA because, they claim, their doing so is not in keeping with Swazi 'cultural' norms pertaining to conflict resolution within a marriage. It is for this reason that many police officers turn women complainants away, reprimand them for acting outside of that which is said to be dictated by traditional norms, and instruct them to go back home where they are expected to adhere to the norm of settling marital problems privately. Police officers who adopt this attitude justify their unwillingness to intervene in domestic abuse cases on the basis that doing so would constitute a defiance of acceptable norms pertaining to the resolution of domestic conflict. Not surprisingly, these same police officers also questioned the legitimacy of an organisation like SWAGAA in Swaziland and insinuated to me that the organisation is doing more to exacerbate than to reduce conflict between spouses.

Police officers' attitudes, such as those expressed above, help to consolidate what has become, effectively, the institutionalisation of domestic violence and its underlying principle that men are entitled to uphold the sanctity of tradition in instances where such tradition is perceived as being threatened. A tragic offshoot is that violence has become normalised to the extent that there is often little or no need for the perpetrator of an intra-domestic violent act to explain or justify his behaviour, other than to claim his actions are 'traditional'. A consequence is that some women too go so far as to accept that the use of force in attempts to solve domestic problems is part of the legacy they have to suffer as Swazi women. As if unconsciously willing to recognise its claim to traditionality, these women maintained that such abuse has always existed in Swaziland; only now, so the popular explanation goes, 'the population is bigger so you can see it more'.

The following sentiment expressed by a SWAGAA client says much about the extent to which violence as a mechanism of control has become internalised: 'There are so many women problems. Women need an organisation like SWAGAA because we always hide when we have problems. Because of our background. Maybe you observe your mother who is abused but she doesn't take action. She says 'this is the father of my children'(and therefore its justified)' (5 April 2000). It is clear from such statements, and from Gcinaphi's story, that violence is widely regarded as acceptable behaviour in a Swazi marriage. The following unquestioning comments, made by two men in a focus group discussion, offer further reinforcement: 'Men beat women because of a reason. No man can just beat a wife without reason' (3 April 2000); and 'it is true that some men do abuse women. But it is not necessary to report to SWAGAA if I beat my wife. But for men who abuse children sexually, they should be disciplined' (3 April 2000). These comments appear firmly grounded in the view that it is not only acceptable but also, in some circumstances, necessary for men to use force and violence to chastise their women or wives whose behaviour is perceived by their partners or husbands as being inappropriate.

3.3 The negative consequences of consulting SWAGAA

When women seek redress from the police for violent attacks they suffer at home, their efforts are commonly reduced to nothing by the insistence of the police that such women ought rather to have appealed to the socially accepted norm of consulting family members. The negative attitude of the police, revealed in their unwillingness to intervene in domestic abuse cases reflects a widespread belief that incidents of domestic and gender violence should be reported to other family members alone for arbitration and mediation. I discussed the issue of domestic conflict resolution during one of my focus group discussions. There men stated clearly and unequivocally that it is common knowledge in Swaziland that it is unacceptable to seek counsel from beyond the network of people which constitutes the family. Said one man:

I don't understand why a woman would want to go and report family issues in [to] a certain organisation like SWAGAA, and not report to family, like the elders of the family. It is uncalled for to take family problems to an organisation when the in-laws are there for solving problems (42 year old man in focus group discussion, 3 April 2000).

Thus while I was made aware of the principle that conflict should be resolved within the family by my interviews with the police, it is also clear that the police are therefore not alone in their condemnation of using avenues other than family structures to alleviate violence.

Women who are courageous enough to defy this heavily entrenched social norm run the risk of a violent counter-attack by the perpetrator of such violence. In some instances a woman who has had little success when she has approached the police for help with an abusive husband, applies for a peace binding order at the magistrate's court. When a woman applies for such an order, her husband, or the perpetrator of the violence, is then summoned by the magistrate's court to appear before the magistrate on an allocated date. When this happens, the magistrate will allow both parties an opportunity to speak and present their case, all the while acting as a kind of mediator. If the magistrate deems it

necessary s/he will then issue a peace binding order, which is an order from the court warning the perpetrator, or both parties, to maintain the peace. The peace binding order is usually valid for six months. Should the perpetrator ignore the summons to appear before the magistrate, or should the order prove unsuccessful in deterring him from violent behaviour, the magistrate can issue a warrant for the arrest of the guilty party.

Case 2. Limits of the legal system

Ntombi had applied for a peace binding order in the past but her efforts had served merely to exacerbate the violence to which she was exposed. Despite this, she had persevered with her efforts to resist the abuse. Yet, from the events that I will now describe it is clear that Ntombi was chastised again and again for her alleged defiance of her husband's authority. She had consequently decided not to use the legal system again.

Ntombi, a 25 year-old woman, had completed Grade 10 and was unemployed at the time of interview. She had been married 8 years and had two children. She visited SWAGAA on 12 April 2000. According to the SWAGAA Counselling Intake Form, Ntombi reported being physically, sexually and emotionally abused by her husband, who, she said, would beat her up for simply going out with her friends. This is her story, in her own words to me, as recorded in my field notes of the same day:

I have gone to certain places hoping to get help. I got help but the abuse never stopped... I have decided to walk away from the marriage. I have come to SWAGAA to get advice. I want to know how to get helped so my husband doesn't hurt me. He always comes looking for me saying I am his wife and nobody can tell him what to do with me. After I went to the magistrate's court for a peace binding order he beat me the same week, saying I think I am clever going to the magistrate and telling him our problems. He called me cheeky because I went to the magistrate. I then went to the police who sent me back to the magistrate. The police said

they do not have a right to put him behind bars. The police said they have a problem. Women come to them for help, then they change their minds and it makes their work difficult. I thought I would stay for the kids, but now it's too much. He threatened to kill me and the children with a hammer... I came today to get assurance from the magistrate that if he comes near me something will happen.

If only I was working, I could move out with the kids. I once heard about a SWAGAA meeting. I couldn't attend, but I think that they should happen; although people will talk about you if they know you're having problems. Maybe do it in a way where people can come forward without revealing it is them having the problem. It is a relief to know that other people have the same problem. These people have been abusing us for a long time.

My husband is a typical Swazi. Because he is a man, he says, nobody should tell him what to do, especially not a wife. A wife should take orders and do whatever he tells her to do. The laws are lacking, as women are not protected. One thing I've realised, my husband cannot say sorry. He believes people, family and friends should come between us to try and solve our problems. Abuse is a huge problem. Most people are still silent about it. I used to be silent too but I cannot anymore. The reason women stay is usually because of the kids. Most of them don't work and earn money, and are unable to support their children. If the husband would maintain them when they left, it would be easier for them to leave. But husbands always threaten to neglect women (12 April 2000).

I had arranged to accompany Ntombi to the magistrate's office the week after our interview, when, she said, she would be applying a second time for a peace binding order, as the first one had by then expired. It was an appointment she failed to keep. Twelve days later I called the magistrate's office (I was unable to find Ntombi herself) to enquire whether she had been to the office to apply for the

order. She had not. As I had no physical or postal address for her, I was unable to re-establish contact or to ascertain the reasons why she decided not to go ahead with the application. I thus had no way of knowing whether Ntombi had been able to remain firm enough in her resolve to leave her husband or whether the kind of fear and uncertainty she described during our interview had once again compelled her to return to her abusive home. I can only surmise, given that Ntombi's husband believes that 'nobody can tell him what to do with her', that her efforts to negotiate greater autonomy for herself within her marriage had failed and that, once again, she was trapped by the traditions so strongly upheld in Swazi society today.

The events contained within Ntombi's story demonstrate that women in Swaziland do not have ready or easy recourse to the law or justice system when confronted with violence, particularly in the event that the perpetrator of the violence happens to be the woman's husband. Ntombi had indeed been issued with a peace binding order from the magistrate's court. But the order did not guarantee her protection against her husband, in part because the police failed to act on it. The peace binding order was an insufficient deterrent against violence because of the widely held belief that a Swazi woman ought not to be 'airing her dirty linen in public'. Indeed, as we saw in case 1 when Gcnaphi approached the police for help they had stated explicitly that, as a Swazi wife, she had an obligation to 'keep her family together'. Yet, Ntombi, Gcnaphi and the many other women with whom I spoke insisted that the acceptable norm of turning to family members for help very seldom did anything to reduce the levels of domestic conflict or the violence that followed.

The series of constraints that women faced once they left the relative security afforded by the SWAGAA office were thus, as I will demonstrate in the next case, merely an extension of the attitudinal constraints that face them in their own homes.

3.4 Pressure of family to maintain family boundaries and the ‘wall of silence’ surrounding abuse.

Women in Swaziland are strongly discouraged by family members from interacting with SWAGAA. I heard of many cases of women who had sought refuge from violent attacks at their natal homes only to be sent back to their married homes by their parents and uncles. ‘Airing your dirty linen in public’ is an expression used widely in Swaziland to refer to all those who take their family problems outside of the home, be it to the police, the magistrate’s court, SWAGAA or any other person or organisation that does not constitute part of that person’s family. The expression is always used in a derogatory context. When a woman does actually approach the police for help, or consult with an organisation like SWAGAA, it is usually because the members of her family have failed to act in a way that can change the abusive situation in which she finds herself. Visiting SWAGAA is thus often a last resort, used only when other more conventionally acceptable avenues of conflict resolution have proved ineffective at best, and served, at worst, to exacerbate the violence.

Case 3. A culture of silence surrounding domestic abuse

Sibongile is a 28 year-old woman who has worked for SWAGAA as a counsellor for one and a half years. She joined SWAGAA after herself been in a violent marriage for a number of years and is now strongly motivated to work for the organisation because of her personal experience and a desire to help other women who may be in similar situations. She told me it was not until her sister told her that she would probably die in her marriage that she had found the courage to leave her husband. She sought temporary refuge with her sister who lives in Johannesburg. Upon returning to Swaziland, she moved from the rural area where she had lived in her husband’s home to the town of Manzini. She shared her thoughts with me:

I am from a rural area. I have scars all over my body from my husband. When I approached my family for help my uncles (my mother’s brothers) told me to go back to my husband because *lobolo* (bridewealth) had been

paid for me. When my husband beat me I would run away and my uncles would find me and take me back to my husband. SWAGAA should preach in the rural areas where there is a belief that a woman must die in her marriage (14 April 2000).

It is clear from the above sentiments expressed by Sibongile that women cannot always rely on their natal kin to help cope with domestic problems, as there exists an expectation that a woman remain in a marriage irrespective of the circumstances. Furthermore, despite the fact that women are continually told that they should turn to other family members in times of domestic crisis, a grievance I heard expressed over and over by abused women was that family elders, particularly the parents of a woman's husband, refused to listen to her problems, ignored them, or even, as one woman reported, reprimanded women for their inability to cope with the pressures of being a Swazi wife. Following are the attitudes expressed by two women in a focus group discussion regarding the attitudes of their in-laws. The discussion took place in a factory in the industrial area of Matsapha. There were 20 women and 5 men present and all the participants were factory employees:

Women generally fear their in-laws. In 1992 I thought about reporting the matter to the police and my in-laws said they would chase me away from the homestead. They look down upon you as a failure. They think you are not strong enough and that you are airing your dirty linen in public' (woman participant, focus group discussion, 3 April 2000).

You find that the man ill-treats the wife and beats her up, and the family elders keep ignoring it when you report the issue to them. The mother-in-law would usually pressure you not to tell anyone about the issue since it would cause conflict in the family (woman participant, focus group discussion, 3 April 2000).

The pressure that is placed upon women to adhere to the socially-sanctioned norm of settling marital disputes privately, and the fact that this norm very seldom does anything

to alleviate the abuse, perpetuates the culture of silence which SWAGAA is working hard to overcome, as women who realise they have nowhere to turn may submit to the violence and endure it in silence. This silence is in fact the unfortunate consequence of all the constraints outlined above. Should a woman be confronted with an unsympathetic police officer, should she receive a retaliatory beating for 'airing her dirty linen in public', or should her family express its disapproval of her consulting an organisation outside the family, such as SWAGAA, fear and uncertainty may compel her to abandon her efforts to seek help. In such cases, her efforts will have been reduced to nothing. Women in such a position are indeed left in a desperate situation. Even if they have tried a number of different avenues for conflict resolution, including family, the law and organisations such as SWAGAA they often find themselves forced back into the very circumstances that they would prefer to escape. Should any or all of these avenues fail, women are thus left little choice but to endure the hardship in silence.

3.5 Logistical difficulties

Often, in addition to the constraints faced above, women seeking an escape from domestic abuse and violence may be furthermore constrained by logistical difficulties. Many Swazi women live in rural areas and must invest a considerable amount of time and money in order to visit SWAGAA. They may not have the resources or the time required to undertake follow-up consultations with counsellors, or to follow-up with referral visits. SWAGAA is thus not always easily accessible to all women, especially if the kind of opposition from family we have seen earlier forces women to consult with SWAGAA without their family's knowledge. In such cases they have to 'sneak out', and that then also becomes a reason for their men to chastise and violate them.

3.6 Swazi marriage and kinship

I have described above the ways that Swazi women, and wives in particular, are constrained by a series of societal norms and rules that often preclude them from finding means to counter the violent and abusive situations they may find themselves in within their marriages. I have also suggested that these rules derive from a set of social structural principles that are regarded as part of Swazi traditionality and that dictate that

any problems that arise in domestic and family relations should be dealt with by seeking help only from others in the family network. I now attempt to explain the logic behind that set of principles because it is that logic that SWGAA needs to understand and deal with if its efforts are to be fruitful in the way its mission anticipates. In order to do so, I will rely on the insights of Hilda Kuper, an anthropologist whose relationship with the Swazi began as far back as the 1930s. Contained within her short classic ethnography '*The Swazi. A Southern African Kingdom*' (1963/1986) is a detailed analysis of the social organisation of the Swazi people in the 1930's. Her description of the structural principles underlying Swazi customary marriage sheds much light on the continually referred to custom of turning to family members to solve marital disputes, which is today upheld as the only legitimate way in which to solve marital conflict.

Already in 1950, anthropologist Radcliffe-Brown asserted that in order to understand any aspect of the social life of African people it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of their system of kinship and marriage. This is certainly true for the Swazi. Kinship is the social organisation of reproductive activity and the idiom whereby close relationships are explained in terms of reproductive processes and relationships. 'It is a system that provides for the solidarity, trust and cooperation that are functionally prerequisite both to group living and to sociocultural life' (Barfield 1997:268).

Kuper (1963) described 1930s Swaziland as a small-scale patrilineal society in which kinship by descent and ties by marriage greatly influenced behaviour. The social life of the Swazi was organised around the daily functioning of the homestead, an area of common living, the inhabitants which were determined by ties of kinship. A Swazi homestead typically comprised a man (described by Kuper (1947) as the headman), his wives, his unmarried brothers and sisters, married sons with their wives and children, and unmarried sons and daughters. In the centre of the homestead was the *sibaya*, or cattle pen, and dug into the *sibaya* were pits for storing grain from the fields. Kuper maintains that the siting of the granaries in the *sibaya* enabled the headman to monitor the food supplies used by the wives. The headman (*umnumzana*) was the patriarchal head of the homestead. He commanded the respect of the other household members and

was responsible for overseeing the smooth functioning of the homestead. The headman resided in the 'great hut', which also acted as a shrine to the headman's paternal kin, a category of kin to which the homestead was expected to show great respect, young female in-laws in particular. In polygynous homesteads, each wife was allocated her own hut and fields in an attempt to create a semi-autonomous social and economic unit where a mother would reside with her children, who, although legally bound to the patrikin, forged close emotional ties with their mother. Despite this arrangement, jealousy and rivalry between co-wives was inevitably a part of polygynous marriage (Kuper 1963/86: 18-24).

Polygyny was regarded as an ideal because the children of the wives could build up the lineage of the father, normally the headman, and the size and influence of his homestead. Reproduction was thus an essential consummation of a Swazi marriage and having more than one wife was symbolic of a man's social, political and economic status in society (Kuper 1963). In his analysis of the legal status of Southern African women, Simons (1968) also suggested that polygyny functioned to maintain social equilibrium in pre-colonial African societies. Moreover, he argues, polygyny was necessary because the subsistence economy of pre-colonial African societies meant there was little women could do in the way of gainful employment beyond the confines of the agricultural producing homestead. It would thus have been difficult to live independently of a family, and polygyny was a way of absorbing all young women into the security afforded by a family union.

Lobolo, another central feature of Swazi marriage, is known as bridewealth in the anthropological literature. It comprises the transfer of valuables, usually cattle, from the family of the man to the family of the woman. The transmitting of *lobolo*, Kuper says, was a means, symbolically, to legitimate a woman's children and to entitle them to the benefits and responsibilities of membership of this father's patrilineage (ie the patrilineage of the men from whom the *lobolo* was transferred). It also compensated the woman's patrilineage for the loss of her services and reproductive capacity. Moreover, says Kuper, *lobolo* was said to serve to guarantee the support and protection of the

woman and her children by the man and his patrikin from whom it came (1963:26).

Lobolo was, in addition, meant to act as a guarantee of the good behaviour of the couple, so that, should a husband ill-treat his wife, he might have to forfeit a further cow as part of the *lobolo* payment which were never completely finalised. (Armstrong and Nhlapo 1985).

So enduring was a Swazi marriage meant to be that, should a husband die, his wife would be inherited by one of his male relatives to bear children in the name of the woman's deceased husband. Conversely, should the woman die or prove to be barren, her own patrikin was obligated to provide a younger sister as a junior co-wife to bear children in her older sister's name. The former custom is known as the *levirate* and the latter as the *sororate* (Kuper 1963:24).

The reason for such customs, explains Kuper, is a structural one in that brothers are regarded as equivalents and sisters may replace each other to fulfill specific wifely functions. An arrangement whereby kin with a common social identity can serve as substitutes for each other is a testament to the following: Swazi marriage is essentially a linking between two families rather than a linking of two individuals. As a consequence, greater importance is attached to the kinship groups that are conjoined by the marriage than to the individuals who are married.

The social organisation of pre-colonial Swazi kinship systems, as described above, was such that marriage functioned to unite two patrilineal kin groups. It was said to be necessary for the survival and welfare of all in a pre-capitalist subsistence economy in which each kinship unit accrued sufficient labour to live off the land and support its members. Under such circumstances, in which each homestead was a self-contained unit comprised of people legally and morally united by customary marriage practices such as *lobolo* and polygyny, women's lives were encapsulated within the affairs of the wider social kinship group of which women became part at the time of marriage. It is crucial to understand the social structural principle in which a marriage serves to cement an extensive kinship and affinal network of reciprocal relations in order to explain why it

was necessary that family disputes be resolved within the private domain of the family, a principle that, as we have seen, persists today as part of the set of maintained traditions.

An obvious disadvantage of such a socially intertwined marriage system, particularly today where circumstances are so very different from the pre-colonial past, is however, the difficulty involved in terminating a marital union, should either the husband or particularly the wife so desire or require. If, for example, a woman decides she wants to leave her husband there are a number of considerations which will affect not only herself, but the stability and functioning of her kinship group. If she leaves her marital homestead, her natal kin are morally obligated to return the *lobolo* cattle to compensate the husband's family for the loss of her reproductive and labour capacity. This is problematic given that one of the men of her natal kin group may have been allocated and used the cattle accrued from her marriage to secure *lobolo* for his own marriage.

Simons (1968) captured well the manner in which *lobolo* functioned to ensure the permanency of the bond between the kin group of the wife and that of her husband, when he explained that:

Men and women cannot easily free themselves of the network of kinship claims, inherited debts and recurring obligations attached to the *lobolo* institution. It is because of this entanglement...that *lobolo* has persisted beyond its lifespan. A man needs his daughter's *lobolo* to meet the cost of her wedding, to assist a son to marry, or to pay an old *lobolo* debt. A new *lobolo* agreement can start a fresh chain of reactions to bind the coming generation (Simons 1968:94).

From the above it is clear that a Swazi woman who enters into a customary marriage cannot make a decision to leave her marriage without that decision impacting in some way on other members of her kin group and on the relationships between her own agnatic group, her husband's agnatic group and all those to whom both those groups have other affinal ties. Not surprisingly, then, the stability and functioning of the wider social entity is thought to supercede any personal domestic crisis that the couple may experience.

Deeply embedded in an inter-dependent marriage which so extensively links two kin groups in a wider social network is a sense of closure and containment of particularly a woman's life, in that she is obliged to behave in a way that will ensure the maintenance and continuity of the networks established and maintained by her marriage. A Swazi marriage, as it was described by Kuper for the 1930's, can thus be described as bounded in so far as being a member of both her natal and her marital kin groups entails the woman acting in accordance with a number of customs whose purpose is to ensure the successful integration of those two groups and their connections to others too. The custom of turning to senior kinsmen is just one of these. Swazi customary marriage, as it has been described above, cannot readily, therefore, make provision for the settling of disputes between couples by their separation, as it is in the best interests of the various kin groups to ensure and maintain the union of the couple. Kuper (1963) describes what happens when couples do come into conflict during the 1930s:

Should her husband maltreat her severely, she has no hesitation in berating him and, if necessary, running off to her people [natal kin]... Her people generally send her back for they are not prepared to return the marriage cattle, but they do inflict a fine on the husband for his offense. His behaviour is also largely controlled by the constant supervision of his senior kinsmen, who are interested in the security and extension of their lineage and by the pressure of his own mother, who depends on the services of her daughters-in-law. There is generally severe censure by a woman's kin as well as by her in-laws if she complains to the alien law of the Whites (Kuper 1963:28).

When women today appeal to organisations such as SWAGAA, the magistrate, or even the police, they are, effectively, 'complaining to the alien law of the Whites'. Yet many assert they have nowhere else to turn. What happens when they arrive at SWAGAA is two things. Firstly, they are afforded a great deal of emotional support and moral reassurance that violence against women is unacceptable. But then they are required to 'think more clearly about the problems facing them, to make their own decisions, and to

find the strength to move forward'¹². Whilst the latter is easily articulated within the space provided by an organisation which positions itself in line with exogenous ideas on achieving gender equality, in practice, and beyond the confines of the SWAGAA office, women are unable to exercise the agency required to make an informed, independent decision. This is because the police, husbands, fathers, brothers and anyone else wishing to preserve the current social order, for whatever reason, all continually stress the importance of observing 'age-old' methods of conflict resolution within the family. That is, they appeal to the primacy of tradition as the only legitimate way to confront violence.

Consulting an organisation such as SWAGAA does not constitute tradition, as it does not respect so-called family boundaries. Should a woman choose to follow this particular path of conflict resolution, she is strongly discouraged from doing so by those close to her and by those in authoritative positions because of the belief amongst the latter that doing so is at the expense of Swazi traditional practices. The effect is that women may be able, once they have managed to gain access to SWAGAA, to freely explore their problems within the confines of a counselling room. They may be able to understand their problems and the need for individual personal action that is based on their own rationally reached decision. But they may not be able to follow that through into the world outside the organisation's counselling room, nor manage their problems by taking, what has, within those confines, been decided as the appropriate action.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid the platform for my discussion in chapter four by arguing that women's attempts to resist abuse are undermined by an enormous amount of pressure, from family members and from social norms, to adhere to the custom of resolving domestic disputes within the confines of the home and family. Seeking counsel beyond the confines of the family in times of domestic conflict is regarded as not only unnecessary but strictly taboo, and a direct affront to acceptable Swazi practice, because such behaviour goes contrary to that which is said to be dictated by tradition. As a consequence of the strenuous attempts in Swaziland – discussed in chapter four - to

¹² SWAGAA brochure entitled 'Counselling', undated.

ensure the persistence of earlier principles of social organisation, women who attempt to adopt the empowerment approach advocated by SWAGAA, which requires them to make an 'informed' decision and thus behave in a way that is at odds with social norms pertaining to marriage, find themselves confronted by a series of entrenched ideological constraints. These constraints make it almost impossible to follow through on any decisions they may have made in the counselling room. Underpinning the persistence of such principles is the idea, constantly referred to by national leaders, that Swaziland is and always has been a traditional country.

I develop this argument in chapter four where I demonstrate how SWAGAA's attempt to fight against the consequences of traditionality as manifested in violence against women is too radical in Swaziland. It is too radical because it pre-supposes that abused women will be able to withstand the pressure of the social stigma that accompanies visiting an organisation like SWAGAA. In reality, the women with whom I spoke are, understandably, unable to successfully negotiate the obstacles they encounter, as these attitudinal and practical obstacles are so very pervasive and deeply entrenched in the wider society in which they live. They are so deeply entrenched because, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, a dominant theme in Swaziland's history has been a conflict, still present today, between that which was valued in the past, said to be 'tradition', and people's response to new ideas and ways of doing things as a result of increasing contact and ties with the outside world. A consequence in contemporary Swaziland is that the traditional is repeatedly valourised and held up as the only acceptable way.

Chapter Four

Local norms versus exogenous ideologies and practices: the reinvention of Swazi tradition

‘...the way of life of the European is such that it is individualistic and he has his own practices which are peculiarly his own. That is their tradition, but we have our own traditions too. No man can say that that one is not as good as the other one but I will say that mine is the better tradition. By way of illustrating what I am saying I’d like to point out that in the European culture you find that if I married a wife, my wife is my own and she is not a woman of the household of my family. A wife does not belong to the family but she is my own. I’m her husband and nobody else has got anything to do or to say to her. According to Swazi custom she is your wife, she is your family’s wife, belonging to the family as a whole. Among the Europeans if there is a misunderstanding in the house, the husband will run to the magistrate and report ‘oh my wife does not want to share a bed with me.’ If the wife has got some difficulty in the house she goes to report to the Court –and then the newspaper reporters are there and they are ready to report... Among us Africans, we feel that this is not good behaviour. With us, if a man had such a situation in the house, if it is the woman who is becoming difficult, he reports the matter to his parents. If his parents no longer lived, he reports to friends or relatives and they come and discuss the matter and get it over – it is not broadcast to the world so that everybody should know what’s happening... A family matter of that nature is referred to the King, to the Court only as a last resort, and we feel that that is a better procedure than to report everything to the Court rather than have it settled amicably at home (Speech by King Sobhuza, 23 April 1960. Quoted in Kuper 1978:216).

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three I demonstrated the extent to which SWAGAA has come up against the consequences of traditionality as manifested in violence against women. I showed that

women's attempts to resist abuse are often rendered futile because of a persistent belief that 'airing dirty linen in public' is a deviation from traditional Swazi practice. The words of King Sobhuza II quoted above reveal the emphasis that is placed on settling domestic disputes 'amicably' at home, and the associated denigration of 'broadcasting' what are regarded as private affairs. I will argue in this chapter that women are pressurised to adhere to what are upheld as traditional norms because of an ongoing conflict in Swaziland, clearly articulated in Sobhuza's above-quoted speech, between local everyday norms pertaining to behaviour within a marriage, and ideologies that are perceived as being foreign or imported.

Since the arrival of the first European settlers in the 1880s the leadership of Swaziland has demonstrated a commitment to striving to retain the autonomy of the Swazi people in the face of the social transformations brought about through extensive contact and interaction with foreign powers and interests. The insistence of the police and both a woman's own natal kin as well as her husband's kin that she observe the norm of seeking counsel from family members is precisely because of this tension, which is still pervasive in Swaziland today, between what is said to be the old and the new. SWAGAA therefore cannot hope to combat violence by positioning itself in direct ideological opposition to everyday marital norms and expectations in Swaziland, and to the beliefs underpinning those norms, because it will find itself confronted, as it already has, with opposition to its efforts.

The logic of my argument unfolds as follows. In the first half of the chapter I rehearse the contexts of a number of historical and anthropological texts that deal critically with the reign of King Sobhuza II, who ruled over the country from 1921 – 1982. This is in order to demonstrate that the tension between local values and exogenous values, which characterised much of Sobhuza's reign, is something so deeply imbedded in Swazi public life that it is replayed in the lives of women who have decided to confront violence in their marriages. When, in desperation, women in Swaziland turn to an organisation such as SWAGAA, and attempt to apply the guidelines offered by the organisation, they are verbally reprimanded or physically chastised for daring to act outside of norms which are

said to be age-old and thus acceptable. The unfortunate consequence is that women are pushed back into their abusive situations because of failed attempts to effect any significant changes in their lives. This will lead me, once again, to make the point that, until SWAGAA adopts an approach that is fully cognisant and responsive to the constraints women face as a result of consulting with the organisation, little can be done to actually empower women. As a concluding point to the dissertation, I comment on the reasons for the disjuncture that exists between the expectations that women brought into the counselling room with them and the way in which the organisation actually approaches the problem of violence. The aim is to demonstrate, once again, that the approach adopted by SWAGAA is insufficiently embedded in local understandings and attitudes towards conflict resolution within a Swazi customary marriage, attitudes that stem, in large part, from an ongoing determination in Swaziland to cling to what are said to be past practices.

4.2 King Sobhuza II and the rhetoric of traditionalism

Observers of Sobhuza II have been led to comment that a unique feature of his reign was that he emerged from the colonial period more powerful than he had been before (Potholm 1972). By the time Swaziland gained its independence from Britain in 1968, Sobhuza had successfully managed to consolidate his position as sovereign King. His skill and ability as a political leader are believed to have enabled Sobhuza to lead his people to independence. He was guided throughout his reign by a belief that the old and the new could be brought together in a symbiotic relationship, although his ultimate priority was with the maintenance of what he saw as the traditional order (Booth 1983; Levin 1997; Potholm 1972). In a homily at his Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1981, Sobhuza encapsulated his belief in this philosophy when he said:

The challenge facing you now is to preserve that which is good in your culture, and to adopt what is good in foreign culture regardless of where it comes from...if it proves necessary, a nation will take steps to revive the customs which made it whole in the past (in Booth 1983:78).

My discussion of Sobhuza's reign is divided into three parts. Firstly, I provide a brief outline of the historical events that preceded his ascension to the throne, in order to demonstrate the extent to which colonial interventions disrupted the social lives of people in Swaziland. Thereafter, I describe how Sobhuza managed to emerge from the difficult pre-independence years with his authority intact by appealing to the sanctity of tradition. Finally I integrate my discussion of the rhetoric of traditionalism underpinning Sobhuza's reign into the core argument of the dissertation, showing how the successful manipulation of tradition, regarded as necessary for the welfare of the Swazi nation, severely impedes women's ability to fight against violence in contemporary Swaziland.

4.3 Colonial interventions

Swaziland is a small landlocked country, lying between the Republic of South Africa and Mozambique in the southeastern corner of Africa¹³. It has an area of 17 364 square kilometers and a population of 966 000 (1997 estimate). Swaziland has an abundance of natural resources, including asbestos, iron and coal. This, coupled with Swaziland's strategic position in the area, has always attracted foreign interests. Following the discovery of huge gold deposits in the neighbouring Transvaal area in 1882, hundreds of predominantly Boer and British settlers entered what is now Swaziland in the hope of making similar discoveries. (Booth 1983; Forster 2000; Kuper 1963; Levin 1997).

King Mbandzeni ruled over Swaziland between 1875 and 1889, the period which co-incided with the arrival of these settlers. His dealings with the settlers were neither hostile nor belligerent but were to change the destiny of the Swazi people forever. In return for products of the 'civilised' world, such as cash, blankets, dogs, horses, guns and alcohol, Mbandzeni made his mark on the documents that were placed before him by the settlers, enabling them access to Swaziland's abundance of land and minerals. These transactions were similar to those that occurred in other parts of Africa that had been colonised by Europeans, and are known as concessions (Booth 1983; Kuper 1947; Matsebula 1976). The concessions that occurred under Mbandzeni's rule have been

¹³ See map on page (iv).

referred to by social theorists as the 'paper conquest' and as the 'documents that killed us' by Swazi people themselves. Kuper (1947) describes the concessions as a type of economic warfare, in that they included laws of land ownership that clashed with the traditional system, and settler claims to minerals not yet exploited.

The outcome of all this was a period of national unrest following the death of Mbandzeni, as settlers and national leaders disputed the concessions that had been granted by Mbandzeni. This was during an extended period during which, first, a relatively weak king Bhunu ruled (1890-1899), who was then succeeded by his mother, Gwamile, who ruled as Queen Regent until Sobhuza II was installed as king in 1921.

The concession documents indicated that Swaziland was in the hands of foreigners, yet the Swazi themselves maintained that Mbandzeni had never sold the land to the concessionaires. He had, they said, merely leased it out. Conflict over the concession documents was compounded by competition between Boer and British settlers, who were vying for control of the area, albeit for very different purposes. The Boers hoped to secure good arable land for farming and a route to the sea in order to establish their own port. The British on the other hand were interested in Swaziland for mining and commerce but also to thwart Boer attempts at annexation. The competing interests of Boer and Britons culminated in a convention and then a proclamation that had the effect of circumscribing the powers of the traditional rulers. In 1894 the two white power centres concluded a convention whereby Swaziland became a protectorate of the Boer-led South African Republic. The failure of the two foreign powers to consult the Swazi traditional leaders about the terms of the convention, as well as the introduction of a tax by the Boer administration, displeased the Swazi leadership immensely. The South African War broke out in 1899 and, following the defeat of the Boers by the British, Swaziland was declared a protectorate of the British Crown. In an attempt to settle the concession issue once and for all, the British administration appointed a commission to investigate the issue. Based on the findings of the commission, a Land Proclamation was declared in 1907. The Proclamation declared that one third of the land was to be reserved for Swazi use in what were to become thirty-two Native Reserves. The remaining two

thirds of the land was awarded to the settlers as freehold tenure (Booth 1983; Kuper 1947; Kuper 1963; Levin 1997; Potholm 1972).

The historical events described above demonstrate that King Sobhuza II inherited an unstable country in a complex world when he ascended to the throne in 1921. Colonial interventions had brought about dramatic transformations that continue, still today, to impact on the lives of Swazi citizens. Firstly, as a result of the concessions, it has been estimated that much more than half of Swaziland's land was conceded to the foreigners. The controversial 1907 land proclamation, the irreversible process of labour migration as the result of the imposed tax, and the mission schools which were administered by colonists and where they too were the teachers, were all regarded by the traditional leadership as a threat to the stability and authority of the monarchy. As a result of this series of deeply disruptive historical events the monarchy had become unstable, and it was against this background that, in the mid 20's, Sobhuza and his councillors began their deliberate attempt to revive the authority of the monarchy by embarking on a policy of what Macmillan (1985) describes as 'traditionalism'.

An awareness of the ideology and rhetoric of traditionalism underlying Sobhuza's reign is relevant for this dissertation in that, as a ruler, he was confronted with a dilemma that, although not unique to Swaziland, continues to this day. As the king of a colonial and then post-colonial state, he faced the challenge of appearing to strive to retain something he argued is Swaziland's unique cultural identity, whilst responding pragmatically to the social and political disruptions wrought by colonisation and also the opportunities created by engagement with a wider world. In doing so he was prepared to accept, and even to embrace, those foreign ideologies and institutions that were of benefit to the Swazi nation. He often spoke about being able to choose 'the best of both worlds' – to select those aspects of western culture which were good and to retain Swazi norms and practices that were equally good. When the incorporation of exogenous ideas and practices was, however, perceived as a threat to the stability of the nation and the power of the king, the presence, interests and ideas of the settlers were overtly challenged. When necessary, the Swazi leadership, under the guidance of Sobhuza, would mobilise

and challenge the authority of the Colonial administration. A notable example of this resistance was the delegation that set off to London in 1921 to petition against the 1907 Land Proclamation in which Swazis had lost two thirds of their land to the settlers (Booth 1983; Levin 1997).

The manner in which Sobhuza handled the difficult post-independence years forty years later was another testament to his firm resolve to preserve the authority of the monarchy against all odds. Two constitutional conferences were held in 1962 and 1963 respectively to discuss the issue of independence. Following repeated failures of the concerned parties to reach agreement regarding the terms of independence, the British put forward their own constitutional proposal in May 1963, which they then enforced in 1964. In response, Sobhuza declared a referendum in which the masses might demonstrate their support for the king. Out of a total of 122 000 Swazi voters, only 154 voted in favour of the British-constructed constitution. The British response, in turn, was to ignore this overwhelming result and proceed with the implementation of the constitution they had drawn up. Rather than decide to boycott the elections, Sobhuza formed the Imbokodvo National Movement, participated in the elections within the framework of the new constitution, and won. Upon gaining independence, the king moved quickly to solidify the power of the monarchy and continued to promote the rhetoric of traditionalism.

As Sobhuza hoped to restore Swaziland to what was regarded as her former traditional glory, he was deeply critical of the education being provided by the mission schools as he believed they would contribute to the disintegration of what he saw as the traditional Swazi way of life. In an attempt to wrest control of the educational system from the mission schools, Sobhuza proposed that the *libutfo*¹⁴ be introduced into the syllabus as an alternative to the boy scouts movement. Initially, the proposal was taken up and subjects such as Swazi history, custom and lore were introduced. This experiment proved unsuccessful, however, and was soon abandoned. Sobhuza also initiated serious

¹⁴ Each man was automatically recruited into a *libutfo*, which is an age regiment whereby males in the same age group form a recognised working team. Members of the *libutfo* were forbidden to marry until permission was granted by the king (Kuper 1963).

discussion about promoting siSwati as a written language as part of his attempt to restore the sovereignty of the Swazi people (Macmillan 1985; 1995).

In addition to the attempted revival of the age regiments Sobhuza also attempted, in this instance very successfully, to revive the *Ncwala* whose popularity had waned considerably as a result of colonialism. The *Ncwala* ceremony, whose participants had dropped substantially in numbers by the 1930s¹⁵, has been described as, amongst other things, a ‘first fruits ceremony’ but, most importantly, a celebration of the power and legitimacy of the king who symbolises the vitality of the nation (Booth 1983; Kuper 1963). The *Ncwala* is an elaborate ceremony in which the central figure is the King. Performance of this annual ritual by anyone other than the King is treasonous. The ritual lasts for nearly three weeks and takes place in late December or early January. It involves a great deal of organisation and preparation in which nearly every element in society is swept up into performing a specific role in honouring the ritualisation of the King (Booth 1983; Kuper 1947; Kuper 1964). I rely on Kuper’s first hand account of the climax of this ritual and its symbolism in the life of the Swazi:

The main event of the third day is the ‘killing of the bull’, the symbol of potency. The king strikes a specially selected black bull with a rod doctored with fertility and ‘awakening’, and the pure youths must catch the animal, throw it to the ground, pummel it with their bare hands, and drag it into the sanctuary where it is sacrificed. Parts of the carcass are used for royal medicine; the remainder is an offering to the ancestors. The ‘Day of the Bull’ fortifies the king for the ‘Great Day’ when he appears in his most terrifying image and symbolically overcomes the hostility of princely rivals...Later in the day, under the blazing sun, all the people, in full *Ncwala* dress, and with their king in their midst, dance and sing the *Ncwala*...toward sunset the king leaves them; when he re-emerges he is unrecognisable – a mythical creature – clothed in a fantastic costume of sharp-edged green grass and skins of powerful wild animals, his body gleaming with

¹⁵ Macmillan (1995) notes that during the reign of King Mbandzeni in the 1800s up to 15 000 warriors were reputed to have attended the ceremony. By the time Kuper attended for the first time in the 1930’s, the number had dropped to approximately 1000.

black unguents. At the climax he appears holding in his hand a vivid-green gourd, known as the 'Gourd of Embo' (the north), the legendary place of Dlamini¹⁶ origin...The old year has been discarded; the king has proved his strength, and the people are prepared for the future (Kuper 1963:74).

Given the centrality of this annual ritual in the lives of the Swazi, and its symbolic re-affirmation of the authority of the king, it stands to reason that a reluctance to attend or participate in this ritual of kingship is indicative of an unwillingness to recognise the authority of the traditional rulers. By the same token, a large number of participants is believed by the country's leaders to be indicative, superficially at least, of the support of their position. Following this logic, it makes sense that Sobhuza II aimed to re-introduce the *Ncwala*, and the symbolic and practical significance that it embodied, into the lives and the consciousness of the Swazi people, whose sovereignty was being threatened by colonialism. A re-assertion of the importance of this ritual in Swaziland was contingent upon the willingness of ordinary Swazi people to embrace values and practices that were valued in the past: that is, 'traditional' values, which as Sobhuza said 'made us whole in the past'. If Sobhuza was to successfully withstand the pressures of colonialism he believed it was thus imperative to instill in ordinary Swazi people a newfound appreciation and attachment to practices, such as the *Ncwala*, which were believed in the past to have ensured the stability of the kingship and thus of the Swazi nation as a whole. Herein lies the ideological power of tradition, which can be manipulated by those in power to represent the key to a nation's peace and stability, much as Sobhuza did during his reign.

King Sobhuza II did not hesitate to claim tradition as necessary for the welfare of the Swazi nation. Levin (1997) in fact maintains that the monarchy owes its hegemonic position in Swaziland to the creation and revival of traditions. King Sobhuza II, he says, was instrumental in the creation and construction of Swazi tradition as 'proven' and 'natural'.

¹⁶ Dlamini is the clan name of the ruling Swazi dynasty

Social theorists are conscious of the need to problematise 'tradition' because of a recognition that it is not a neutral idea; it is not used in a vacuum. Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) make this point when they assert that tradition can be used as a resource for people 'intent on gaining, maintaining or challenging existing power and privilege' (1988:40). In other words, in different times and places, and for different reasons, people can call upon tradition to validate their actions. The tendency to call upon the past to lend credibility to, or to validate questionable practices in the present, is regarded as highly problematic by social theorists because such claims are based upon the assumption that societies are static and do not change. As Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988) point out, even if present practices do in some way resemble past practices, they can never claim to be an exact replication of an earlier practice because of the inevitability of change.

I have focused in some depth on the reign of King Sobhuza II because his determination to battle the effects of change that resulted from colonisation by foreign powers, is a phenomenon that continues in Swaziland today. Police who receive SWAGAA referrals and husbands who discover that their wives have returned from consulting with SWAGAA are faced with a familiar dilemma, one firmly rooted in history, of having to reconcile that which was valued in the past, a past in which men were the authoritative leaders of the nation, with that which is rapidly changing. Their response, as was indicated in the violent reprisals many women experienced after consulting SWAGAA described in chapter three, is to dismiss that which is believed to constitute a threat to the authoritative traditional order as a corruption of Swazi ideology and practice.

Unfortunately, the women who are the focus of this dissertation have inherited the legacy of an age-old mistrust and sometimes even resentment of what are perceived to be western or exogenous institutions and ideologies. SWAGAA too has come up directly against the consequences of this legacy in that the women they attempt to help cannot make the kinds of individualistic decisions SWAGAA encourages them to make, precisely because of the power of tradition to influence people's domestic behavioural norms.

Sobhuza's attempt to revive the importance of the *Ncwala* ritual, and hence to re-validate his position as the undisputed traditional leader of Swaziland, is an ideological weapon that continues to be used by the current monarchy. During my research visit to the country, I came across the following debate in two local newspapers. It centered on the importance of the *Ncwala* ritual in the lives of ordinary Swazi people. The debate went as follows:

We have just finished another very successful *Ncwala* season; record numbers attended all the traditional events last year, showing clearly that our traditions and culture continue to play a vital role in the life of the Nation, as the guarantee of our peace and stability... We will continue to do all we can to maintain the unity, peace and stability that have sustained us throughout our history. These have been the foundations of our success, and, supported by our traditions and culture, they will continue to play the most important role in achieving our aim, of bringing improved living standards to all our people, ensuring a prosperous future for generations to come (*Swazi News*, February 3, 2001 in an article entitled: 'State opening of Parliament 2001 – Speech from the Throne')

And then, the following day, in response to the 'Speech from the Throne', the following response appeared in another local newspaper:

On the basis of using the *Ncwala* ceremony as a basis for the popularity of King Mswati, it should be explained why it was necessary in 2000 to have army, police and prison vehicles lined up from region to region to collect people to go to the *Incwala* ceremony. That on its own gives a sign that there is a great danger of decay setting in (*The Times of Swaziland*. February 4, 2001).

The two newspaper quotes above depict two totally different scenarios. The 'Speech from the Throne' creates the impression of a country loyal to its traditional institutions, whereas the second quote challenges this scenario by depicting a situation in which the traditional order is said to be rapidly unraveling. The contrast between these sentiments

reveals that attempts to preserve the traditional order by clinging to past practices (that are believed to have made that country 'whole' in the past) is still very much alive in Swaziland today. This is because the tension between tradition and modernity is also very much alive in Swaziland today and impinges enormously on SWAGAA's ability to help women confront violence. The kinds of responses that women who attempt to resist abuse experience, as outlined in chapter three, are an example of tradition being used as an ideological weapon to prevent continued change. Women's attempts to seek redress for the violence were blocked because of claims that those attempts were 'untraditional'. In a country like Swaziland whose modern history has been characterised by numerous and ongoing threats to what is upheld as the 'traditional' order, any accusations that one's behaviour is incongruent with traditional norms is bound to be taken seriously. This is in spite of the fact that women's lives have changed quite dramatically due to colonisation and other interventions. White (1984) and WLSA (1997) maintain that there is a growing trend in Swaziland towards the urban-residing nuclear family and an increase in the number of single mothers. Nhlapo (1990) documents similar changes and points out that there is a growing awareness in Swaziland of how women in other parts of the world have assumed control over their own lives. Indeed, already more than fifteen years ago, Armstrong and Nhlapo (1986) described a typical urban scene in Swaziland as one which is 'fully supplied with the trappings of Western culture' (1986:8). There thus exists a situation in Swaziland today in which women are strongly urged to adhere to norms derived from an ideal of the pre-colonial period, in spite of the fact that their own lives are often very different from this ideal. Given such a situation, it is not surprising that women are continually being silenced and pushed back into abusive situations.

4.4 Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to show that the kinds of responses that women elicit when they visit SWAGAA are located within a very specific socio-historical context. The negative responses of the police, the often violent responses of the perpetrators of the abuse and the reluctance of natal kin to provide a married daughter with refuge are the consequence of a legacy of battling against foreign ideologies and practices which have proved, in the past, to pose a very powerful threat to the social life of Swazi people and

the Swazi nation. So great has been the impact of colonial interventions in the lives of Swaziland's people, and so common has been resistance to those impacts, that it has become normative to contest ideologies which are regarded as exogenous and to attempt to reconstitute life in terms of what are seen as traditional organisational principles. The ramifications of this for women seeking a way out of a violent marriage have been enormous because the power of tradition to influence domestic behavioural norms completely undermines any successes women may feel they have had in exercising the personal independence or 'autonomy' advocated by SWAGAA.

I have stressed throughout that SWAGAA's approach to the problem of violence is one that relies on a method of counselling, the central assumptions of which are incongruous in the context of Swaziland. First and foremost, expecting women to be able to make an independent informed decision, and subsequently to act upon that decision, assumes that such women are able to exercise individual agency outside of social group constraints and with only personal interests at heart. I have shown in this and the previous chapter that it is seldom the case that women can do so, and that in fact women are constrained by persistent attempts to re-institute a social structural principle whereby they must function as adjuncts to a larger social group comprising extended kin and affines. A gap thus exists between the ideology that drives SWAGAA's own activism, which aims to equip women to be self-reliant and to take control of their lives through a process of informed decision-making, and the norms that dictate a Swazi woman's everyday existence. I develop this argument in the next chapter where I discuss the disjuncture that exists between the expectations that women bring into the counselling room with them and the way in which the organisation actually approaches the problem of violence. I do so to show how this amounts to an approach that is unrealistic in its goals, and to explain that it has led me, ultimately, to suggest that what is required is a more gradualist approach to the problem of violence that is able to work with the particular constraints that women face.

Chapter Five

Why SWAGAA should adopt a gradualist approach in the fight against violence

5.1 Introduction

The leadership of SWAGAA and the organisation's activists are very much aware that there are no permanent structures in place that guarantee women in Swaziland protection from domestic violence. Indeed, many of the counsellors are reminded of their absence whenever they experience the impact of police non-cooperation. SWAGAA personnel are also aware that a woman's decision to combat violence is a difficult one because, as the Counselling Programme Manager explained, 'there is a social stigma attached to leaving your husband'. Despite a context in which women have virtually no legal and very little moral support when confronting violence, SWAGAA hopes, nonetheless, to inspire women, through an emotionally supportive counselling service, to find the strength to 'move forward' and to overcome the social stigma that is attached to women who 'air their dirty linen in public'. Driving the organisation's thinking is a firm ideological commitment to principles enunciated by universally recognised organisations such as the United Nations. In positioning itself within the international arena, SWAGAA has put itself in a position, whether intentionally or not, where it now has to straddle a gap between the forces of traditionalism and the 'winds of change'. On the one hand the organisation is responding to a continually growing contingent of women who wish to effect change in their lives. These women are seeking alternative avenues for domestic and gender-based conflict resolution because the socially enforced and normative process of appealing to family members has proved to be not only ineffective, but often one that forces women into a situation where they are left with no other option but to 'suffer in silence'. On the other hand, however, the forces of traditionalism in Swaziland far outweigh any significant impact that the organisation is presently able to have, even amongst Swazi women.

I argue in this concluding chapter that SWAGAA does indeed have the potential to play a pivotal role in helping women in Swaziland to introduce the kinds of change into their lives that will provide the means for those women to avoid further exposure to the

violence they currently experience. But, in order to realise its stated goal of 'women's empowerment', I argue, SWAGAA personnel will need to work towards and become advocates for incremental change, rather than that they continue to attempt to impose and expect an overall and immediate change in the way women respond to the particular contexts they find themselves in. If SWAGAA hopes to achieve its ultimate aim of a change in the social, legal and cultural systems in Swaziland then it will need to re-align its approach in a way that is commensurate with the particular constraints and dynamics experienced by women in the present context of Swaziland, and that deals seriously with the social structural principles that underpin those constraints.

I begin the chapter with an account of the ways in which women responded to SWAGAA's counselling service in order to make the point that most women who come to the office for help bring with them a pre-conceived notion of how they expect the counselling service to be conducted. I then argue that, as a consequence, SWAGAA ought to take cognisance of such expectations and the reasons for them. I thereafter move into a discussion of some of the literature that deals with the tensions between what are described as international standards of women's rights versus local values and practices pertaining to women's rights. SWAGAA is an organisation which aligns itself with universal norms on women's rights. Yet its members operate in a context where realising those norms is difficult. It thus has to grapple with many of the complexities that I will bring to the fore when engaging with this literature. My discussion of that literature leads me to make the point that SWAGAA needs to consider an approach that is workable in the particular locality of Swaziland and that therefore takes cognisance of the persisting structural pressures and constraints that make it so difficult for women to achieve their desired goal of a life without abuse.

5.2 Women's responses to the counselling service

When I discussed clients' counselling sessions with them, many said that they felt 'grateful', 'lucky' and 'happy' to have been able to talk to someone about their problems. An overwhelmingly positive response was expressed about the counselling sessions, accompanied by statements of a tremendous sense of relief. The presence of an organisation denouncing

gender violence seemed to be a source of great comfort and reassurance to many, as was revealed in comments such as: 'if the counsellor was a person who was hard, I wouldn't have said a word. I revealed things I wouldn't normally,' and 'women need an organisation like SWAGAA because they have no power on their own to talk to men' (15 April 2000). This, however, was only one rendering of clients' experiences with SWAGAA. After my probing more deeply it became clear that the women had also anticipated that the organisation would intervene in some way on their behalf, be it legally or morally. Indeed, during my monitoring of a number of cases after the first counselling session, it became increasingly apparent that SWAGAA was providing only temporary relief, in the form of emotional support and reassurance, and that the more general circumstances of the survivors of abuse often remained unchanged following their having consulted SWAGAA. The majority of clients, be they women (or the occasional man), arrived at the SWAGAA office with the expectation that the counsellor would at least mediate, if not arbitrate in, or adjudicate on, their domestic disputes. They brought with them what appears to have been a widespread misconception that consulting with SWAGAA would yield some kind of resolution, that the counsellor would *tell* them how to solve their problems, or, at the very least, reprimand the alleged perpetrators for their actions. A number of clients thus believed that they would leave the SWAGAA office armed with a solution to their problem. I provide an example to illustrate how this misconception became evident in my various interviews with SWAGAA clients.

Case 4. Failure to fulfill client expectations.

Gugu, a 22 year old woman, told me that she was disappointed with what had transpired during her counselling session as, she said, she had come to 'get answers'. She explained that she had come to SWAGAA for help as her already violent husband had threatened to kill her. He was angered because he believed that she was having an extra-marital affair. During our interview, Gugu explained to me that she had come to SWAGAA hoping for an immediate solution to her problem. Once SWAGAA's role had been explained to her by the counsellor, she said, she had claimed she had understood. But later, she confided to me, she had really wished the counsellor would have called her husband and told him to come into the office and spoken to him, preferably sternly. In a sense, then, what Gugu

was seeking was an outside agency that would assume the authority alleged to reside with family elders, and would exercise the authority to resolve the conflict and ameliorate the violence she had been suffering.

Like most of the women I interviewed, Gugu did not anticipate that the counsellor would assume what she understood to be the neutral role they found the counsellors occupying. They expected that the counsellor would engage with the problem more directly and take a more active role in helping to resolve their situations of conflict. Yet, what clients are confronted with during a counselling service is an approach which takes them through a process that is exactly the opposite of that which they were expecting. Implicit in the expectation that counsellors should assume some kind of interventionist role is a belief that SWAGAA should mimic the role of active mediator traditionally reserved for family elders.

Earlier in the dissertation I described in some depth why it is that a woman loses her autonomy in 'traditional' Swazi marriage by being encapsulated within the functioning of the wider kin group of which she becomes a part upon marriage. I suggested that, because women are so pressurised to observe a principle whereby their own personal affairs are secondary to the functioning of their kin group, they cannot make individualistic decisions or exercise any real personal or individual autonomy. The implications of this for SWAGAA are huge because independent, individualistic decisions, made without the advice, concurrence or condolence of any male family members or elders, is exactly what SWAGAA requires women to make if they wish to 'empower' themselves. This is near impossible in Swaziland because, firstly, as I demonstrated in chapter three, women face too many ideological and structural constraints to make such decisions freely and easily. Secondly, and possibly more importantly, many women are so embroiled in a social system whereby decisions are made for them, usually by male family members, that they expect always to have to turn to others to act as advocates on their behalf. Such women cannot and do not easily relate to the concept of individual self empowerment and independent decision making; it has no resonance for them because, in their experience,

men have always controlled their lives and, consequently, they tend to subscribe to a set of social norms that ultimately support men's domination.

There is a wealth of literature on the position of women in Swaziland that describes the manner in which Swazi women are turned into subjects and which lends support to my contention that women are subservient to their male counterparts in all spheres of Swazi life (Adinkrah 1990; Armstrong and Nhlapo 1986; Booth 1983; Dlamini 1993; Nhlapo 1990; Kuper 1947). Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) has written extensively on this topic, citing women's propriety incapacity and the inheritance laws as evidence of gender oppression. WLSA (1998) conducted a study of the home in Swaziland and found that it is a place of conflict and contention. The authors of the study maintain that inability to sustain a marital relationship is seen as a woman's failure rather than a man's and that, therefore, women tend to remain in extremely hostile and destructive marriages because they fear the opprobrium that follows from their demonstrating an inability to survive abuse by their men. The stigma that is attached to a divorced woman exacerbates the tendency. Nhlapo (1992) reveals that, as part of women's explicit normative role as wives and child-bearers, it is they who are expected to be obedient, submissive and humble. These are values that women are expected to possess. Women, he says, are subject throughout their lives to constant supervision by various categories of men: their fathers, their brothers and on marriage, their husbands, husband's brothers and fathers. A consequence is that, once married, a woman needs permission from her husband to travel and may be subject to constant interrogations from other family members as to her movements. The tragic side effect of such a situation, in which a woman is seen as always the ward, under the guardianship of a male, is that physical violence is often used to chastise a woman who is perceived to have acted contrary to that which is regarded as acceptable behavior for a Swazi woman (Nhlapo 1992). Kuper described a similar situation in the 1930s, in which women were treated as minors, when she said: 'No equality is expected or desired between Swazi husband and wife. He is the male, superior in law, entitled to beat her and take other women. She must defer to him and treat him with respect' (1947:28). Dlamini (1993) and Adinkrah (1990) concur with this finding when they report that women in Swaziland, still in the 1990s,

were regarded as perpetual minors from 'the cradle to the grave'. Adinkrah states quite simply that 'the Swazi woman has no importance and has no rights', pointing out that although the King is vested with the authority to right the patent imbalance between men and women, it seems unlikely that he will (1990:19).

It is little wonder then, that abused women arrive at SWAGAA anticipating that the organisation will act according to the same principles that govern their everyday lives, particularly given a situation in which women's lives are closely monitored and subject to the control of their male counterparts, very largely because of an appeal to traditionality as a means of defining social norms. In chapter three I spoke about the earlier social structural principle, apparently still pervasive today, through which a women's life, upon marriage, became subsumed under the functioning of the wider kin group of which she became a part upon marriage. Such circumstances allowed little space for autonomous and individualistic decision-making because, as many of my informants explained to me during interviews: 'marriage in Swaziland is a union between two families, not between two individuals'. Both Jensen and Paulson (1992) and Nhlapo (1990) have recently commented on the persistent non-individual nature of Swazi marriages and the consequent impact on women's ability (or inability) to make independent decisions within the confines of the wider domestic unit. According to Jensen and Paulson (1992), polygynous Swazi customary marriages are characterised by a woman's obligations and duties to their extended families. Monogamous marriages, or those not contracted according to Swazi customary marriage norms, are characterised, in contrast, by individualism and autonomy, in which women have greater scope to make independent decisions. Nhlapo (1991) makes a similar point, although he goes on to problematise the non-individual nature of Swazi marriages, whether monogamous or polygynous, and he maintains that such a situation is inimical to the advancement of women's rights. He begins his analysis by pointing out, as I did in chapter three, that women in pre-Industrial African society were valued for their procreative abilities, as more children meant greater labour potential which in turn increased the wealth and prosperity of the husband's descent group. But, Nhlapo continues, whilst close kinship ties and collective responsibilities in many ways enriched and enhanced pre-industrial African communities,

it is problematic for women when, as today, the interests of the group are framed almost exclusively in favour of men. It is problematic, he says, because when the interests of the kin group are framed in favour of men, women are seen merely as adjuncts to the larger social group.

A woman's inability to exercise the agency required to make an independent decision has direct implications for SWAGAA in that a woman's autonomy determines to what extent, if at all, she will be able to benefit from the empowerment approach advocated by SWAGAA counsellors. And women have demonstrated that they are not yet ready to embrace the idea of personal individual empowerment, at least not in the way that it is understood by SWAGAA. The fact that many women freely expressed the wish that the organisation would adopt a more interventionist role is an indication of women's reluctance, due to their recognition of an inability to do so, to act according to SWAGAA's empowerment approach. I suggest that SWAGAA's positioning of itself in ideological opposition to practices that continue to occur on the ground may thus be too radical in Swaziland where many women's thinking is still so firmly entrenched in seeing, as normative, a set of relationships that make it impossible for them to free themselves of the bonds of Swazi wifehood, or at least of the bonds of their guardianship and tutelage by their husbands, brothers-in-law and brothers.

Not only is SWAGAA's approach too radical and therefore not conducive to the way in which Swazi women are forced, through socially entrenched norms, to live their lives. But the organisation hopes to empower abused women to help uproot deeply entrenched discriminatory attitudes and is consequently too ambitious. A woman who is experiencing abuse, and no doubt this applies to any woman in any part of the world, often feels downtrodden and powerless. Yet it is precisely these kinds of women upon whom SWAGAA is relying to overcome all kinds of societal pressures in order to confront gender violence.

As I have shown, a woman who comes to consult SWAGAA is faced with a double bind: not only does she experience violence in her most intimate relationship, which is why she

comes to SWAGAA, but the society in which she lives provides no recourse to institutions that she can trust to help her overcome that violence. SWAGAA is not oblivious to this fact. Yet it continues to pursue a policy of non-interference in which women are left to do something they have probably never done before, which is to assert their independence and personal autonomy in a context where men are and have always been the authoritative figures. In essence, SWAGAA hopes to work with already vulnerable women to attempt to reduce the structural vulnerability of all women in Swaziland. I suggest that it is politically naïve to expect that most of the women so encumbered by a host of internal and external constraining factors might be in a position to join forces with the organisation in its endeavour to eradicate violence. Some, a few, may well have the strength to do so. We have the example of some of the SWAGAA counsellors who are themselves survivors of domestic and gender abuse. But, for most, that leap of both faith and practice is by no means easy, and it behooves SWAGAA to realise that not all women in Swaziland are as strong as their counsellors.

This became clear when I was interviewing women directly after their counselling sessions. Many could not even verbalise how they planned to proceed or pin-point exactly what benefits they had received from the counselling session. They expressed gratitude for the way the counsellor had engaged them, but were uncertain as to what course of action they should now take. An example will illustrate:

Case 5. Uncertainty after a counselling session

Pindie is a 20-year-old woman who was raped and beaten by her boyfriend. She said of SWAGAA directly after her counselling session: 'SWAGAA is so helpful to everybody. The counsellor helped me because she told me rape is not a permanent condition and I can still be a good person when I grow up. She helped in building me up and giving me hope. I will spread the good gospel of SWAGAA' (9 May 2000). Despite these feelings of relief, Pindie was unsure whether or not she would press charges, even after being counselled by SWAGAA and being told that this is one course of action that she could take. When I contacted Pindie a week later to ascertain her progress, she told me that

she had decided not to press charges and that she had forgiven her boyfriend. She told me, too, that she believed he would never rape her again and if he did, she would go back to SWAGAA.

Although Pindie did not verbally commit to a particular course of action, a number of women did and said that they would take whatever steps were needed to take to fight the violence they had experienced. Said a 34-year old woman and abuse survivor:

‘SWAGAA is so helpful to everybody. If I am going to live for another 10 years I will suffer [if I remain] with my husband. And I don’t want that. The counsellor has cooled me down and now I am thinking of separating with my husband’ (11 May 2000).

Another woman, 29 years old and also in an abusive marriage told me that ‘I understand now that I can leave my homestead and have a better life away from the abuser’ (11 May 2000).

Yet, a woman’s stated determination to leave an abusive husband is not necessarily an indication of her ability to exercise the power needed to realise that decision, however vociferously she expresses her disapproval of her husband’s behaviour in a context, such as a SWAGAA counselling room, that enables her to do so. I outlined, in chapter three, the kinds of obstacles, both within the confines of the home and in the wider society generally, that confront women such as the two above who have decided to ‘walk away’ from their abusive homes and make it almost impossible for them to follow through on any decisions reached in the counselling room. Women are unable to make personal individualistic decisions partly because of the constraints that face them at the macro-level, but also, largely, because of the unrealistic zero-tolerance approach underpinning SWAGAA’s activism, which requires women to overcome those wider societal constraints.

In the next section I engage with the literature on women’s human rights in order to show how SWAGAA’s decision to ally itself with the international women’s rights movement has resulted in its zero-tolerance approach to violence, which in turn means that they cannot reach out to Swazi women and engage with them in a manner that is consistent

with the contexts of those women's everyday lives. And I go on to suggest that it is premature to adopt such an approach in Swaziland today, as most women there still cannot embrace ideas of individual empowerment, precisely because of a series of social structural constraints that themselves cannot be overturned in one fell swoop, certainly not without what will need to be a full-on revolution.

5.3 The debate on women's human rights

Working with them, I found a pervasive and probably accurate understanding amongst SWAGAA personnel that the values and practices pertaining to Swazi customary marriage are inimical to the advancement of women's rights. When asked to comment upon or describe the position of women in Swaziland, counsellors were quick to point out that women in Swaziland 'have no rights', 'they are subservient', 'unequal to their male counterparts' and 'are perpetual minors'. And, from what I have presented earlier, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion. When asked in turn what can or should be done about women's subservience, SWAGAA personnel articulated a number of possibilities; underpinning all of which was a strong sentiment that radical change is the only 'way forward'. Lindiwe is a counsellor who was particularly vocal about her dislike of Swazi customs pertaining to marriage when she said:

SWAGAA has a challenging role because it has to uproot cultural beliefs that are entrenched. Women in Swaziland are considered perpetual children. They are supposed to be dependent all the time. ...I hate polygamy. I resent having being born in one of those situations because of the prejudice, especially if you are the children of a wife who is not the favourite. I know the impact of being born in a polygamous family: the competition, the arguments over a man's estate once he dies. It should just come to an end... *lobolo* is also one of the things that has to change. It perpetuates the dominance of women – it is like the person has been purchased. They say it encourages friendship between the families, but that is not how it is practically. The cultural belief that you can rape your girlfriend also has to change. SWAGAA is trying to empower women by making them realise they are full human beings, to stand for their full human rights (7 February 2001).

Lindiwe's comments reflect a belief, shared by many of her colleagues, that local attitudes and practices severely impede women's development in the country. Lindiwe's position was one that echoed very clearly the ideas espoused by the SWAGAA Director in a speech she made at a 'Gender and Counselling Skills' course. She there made explicit her belief that domestic and gender violence in Swaziland must be eradicated, regardless of whether achieving such a goal might be at the expense of local or 'traditional' values and practices. Adopting a 'zero-tolerance' stance on the issue, she said:

Violence against women and children both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment of all who are affected of human rights and fundamental freedoms. *Any harmful aspect of traditional, customary or modern practices that violates the rights of women and children should be prohibited and eliminated.* Government should take urgent action to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women in public and private life, whether perpetrated or tolerated by the state or private persons (Khosi Mthethwa, SWAGAA Director, 29 September 2000. Italics added).

The tension between local values and practices and exogenous ideas which King Sobhuza II tried so hard to come to terms with, and which still pervades many facets of life in Swaziland today is clearly replayed in Director's speech quoted here. The Director makes it very clear that local values and practices pertaining to women and international standards regarding the treatment of women are irreconcilable; she expresses a belief that in order for the latter to have any noticeable impact, certain aspects of the former may have to fall by the wayside.

The issue of the applicability of universal notions of human rights in contexts such as contemporary Swaziland and other similar present-day African countries has sparked many debates amongst human rights theorists (Nhlapo 1994; Nhlapo 1989; Dlamini 1993; Donnelly 1989; Fox 1999; Howard 1986; Preis 1996; Wilson 1997). Broadly, the

conceptualisation of human rights is polarised into two camps: cultural relativists and universalists. Cultural relativists argue that the idea of human rights is a distinctly European cultural product born out of the European Enlightenment. Given that the human rights discourse can be located in a specific historical moment, then, it is argued, imposing this particular brand of moral logic on societies which have different conceptualisations of rights, if any, is eurocentric. The main thrust of the argument put forward by the cultural relativists is thus that human rights cannot readily be applied in contexts where people's ways of understanding the world differ from those of modern Europeans and North Americans out of which the idea of human rights was born. Relativists argue, further, that the ways in which people will understand and respond to claims and demands regarding human rights need to be understood in terms of the internal cultural logic of each particular society. In 1948 the American Anthropological Association (AAA) adopted a relativist stance on human rights by rejecting the eurocentrism that its members believed was inherent in universal human rights norms. Consequently, there have been suggestions by human rights theorists that anthropologists have failed to speak out in situations where human rights abuses have occurred. To offer one example, Merry (in Wilson 1997) recounts an experience in which her students asked her why anthropologists had failed to criticise genital mutilation, to which she responded: 'of course they did, but they tried to understand it in terms of that culture...these anthropologists wanted to avoid ethnocentrism' (1997:28). I return again to the issue of cultural relativism later when I account for my own position on the issue of women's human rights.

In contrast to the cultural relativists, those in the universalist school argue that human rights principles ought to, and can only be universal. Claims to such rights can therefore be made in any context and across different times and spaces. Those challenging cultural relativists do so by pointing out the potential for repressive regimes to reify culture and use it to justify behaviour on the basis that it is 'our culture', by using a quite outdated notion of culture where there is no differentiation by age, class and gender, and that does not respond readily or even at all, to change (Fox 1999; Howard 1986; Wilson 1997). Nhlapo (in Maphai 1994) states that such cultural relativistic claims impede the

advancement of women's rights because, according to such arguments, there is 'nothing that is simply bad' (1994:189). Like Nhlapo, Donnelly (1989) too is critical of claims made by African governments and state agents that the preservation or reconstitution of tradition after the withdrawal of colonial forces is in the interest of peace and stability. He cautions that social theorists ought to be wary of what he calls extreme cultural relativism in which governments manipulate and attempt to reinstitute a 'dying, lost or even mythical cultural past' (1989:411). Often, he says, references are made to an idealised 'traditional' past whereas, in reality, many of those traditional structures have long been disrupted by foreign influences, many of which those in power are very loathe to abandon, especially when they offer material benefit to the local elite.

Donnelly's analysis resonates strongly in the situation I have been describing in Swaziland. As we have seen, there are many people in Swaziland who employ a relativist argument as a means of justifying violent behaviour against women, and who do so on the basis of claims to be upholding age-old Swazi traditions. The police for example, have questioned the legitimacy and relevance of an organisation like SWAGAA in Swaziland on the basis that it is 'unSwazi' or 'not our culture'. Inherent in the accusation by the police that SWAGAA's operatives are diametrically opposed to the sanctity of 'tradition' is an assumption that a practice said to constitute part of a people's 'culture' does not warrant or require further explanation or justification. Quite clearly, the Swazi police's challenge to the position, adopted by SWAGAA, that there ought to be a universal set of norms that determine the perception and subsequent treatment of women in Swaziland, rests on such an assumption of the unquestionability of tradition. Underpinning such an attitude is a recognition, reminiscent of the rhetoric of traditionalism that guided Sobhuza II throughout his rule, that such ideas, based as they are on ideas borrowed from foreign contexts, constitute a threat to local ideologies and practices and are tantamount to an interference in the lives of the Swazi people.

The debate on whether or not the idea of human rights can be applied in all societies across the world is pertinent for SWAGAA in that its activists have tried for themselves to resolve the dilemma regarding the tension between local values and practices and

international norms by accepting, apparently uncritically, the rhetoric of women's rights espoused in the internationalist positions I have described above. SWAGAA's stated position is that, ideologically, it adheres uncompromisingly to international norms on women's rights, irrespective of whether its positioning clashes with the existing cultural logic underpinning Swazi society. Indeed, the Counselling Programme Manager expressed the opinion that it is precisely because of the prevalence of discriminatory and oppressive local practices that universal norms are required to confront violence against women. She explained to me that SWAGAA has to draw heavily on the ideas espoused by 'international instruments' for women's rights precisely because there is 'so much abuse of women's rights in Swaziland'. She and her SWAGAA colleagues thus see a radical departure from local values and practices as the only solution to the problems that women face.

This line of thinking, in which traditions are regarded as entrenched obstacles to the introduction of, and fight for, gender equality, echoes earlier thinking in much of the development literature, in which traditions were regarded as simple obstacles to the introduction of new, supposedly more advanced ways of thinking about and reaching the ultimate goal of development. During the development era, the propagation of science and technological development as the solution to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment was at the expense of local or traditional forms of knowledge which came to be synonymous with 'primitive' 'simple' or backward' (Alvares 1992; Rahnema 1997; Wright 1994). Escobar (1995) too is very critical of what he describes as the appropriation of western, scientific knowledge as valid, relevant, progressive and ultimately superior, as this allowed the west to construct and subsequently act upon the world in a particular way, which was the imposition of their own knowledge system as the panacea to the problem of poverty and 'underdevelopment', at the expense of local solutions to the problem of poverty. Knowledge about the third world, according to Escobar (1995), was created and orchestrated by the industrialised west through the imposition of labels such as 'poor', 'undeveloped' and 'ignorant' in the post world war two period. Specific interventions, in the form of development projects, were in turn devised to remedy these 'ills' and to speed up the evolutionary process of development

and the demise of traditionality. Through the incorporation of ideas such as 'empowerment', by urging the leadership of Swaziland to ratify the CEDAW convention, and by expressing the attitude that SWAGAA is 'working at loggerheads with Swazi culture', SWAGAA has aligned itself with this kind of internationalist thinking, which at times entails a rejection of local norms. For SWAGAA this turns out to be an impediment to the organisation's goal of realising gender equality.

As I have demonstrated, SWAGAA's approach is at odds with the everyday reality that characterises a Swazi woman's life because it is unrealistic to assume that Swazi women are able to overcome the constraints they face, even if they share SWAGAA's condemnation of what are perceived to be discriminatory attitudes towards women. Women's decisions to try and alleviate or avoid abuse are complex and fraught with difficulties that derive from a series of persistent ideological and practical constraints. For reasons of dealing with the colonial presence in Swaziland, the leadership of the country have in the past, and continue in the present, to stress the importance of tradition as essential to the well-being and preservation of the Swazi people as a nation. Persistent claims to traditionality have created a situation in which, in all facets of Swazi social life, behaviour that runs against the principles of 'decency' (as espoused by universalist notions of human rights) can be justified on the basis that such practices are in the best interests of the Swazi people. One example of this, which has been pivotal to my argument, is the hostility women experience when they go beyond that which is allegedly prescribed by tradition by appealing to an external organisation such as SWAGAA for help with domestic problems. They are violently chastised for daring to act outside of that which is upheld as traditional that, in turn, has the effect of undermining their attempts to resist the very abuse about which they are concerned and complain.

I have showed earlier that women are not only constrained by discriminatory attitudes which they lack the power to change, but that they are themselves so entrenched in a social system that has always treated them as minors and adjuncts to the wider social group that they expect SWAGAA to apply these same principles when confronting violence. They anticipate that the counsellor will assume an authoritative role and

instruct them what to do, in a manner similar to the constant monitoring and control that is exercised over their lives by various categories of men. Once inside the counselling room, however, women find that the responsibility regarding a future course of action becomes solely theirs. Consulting with SWAGAA thus requires women to adopt an individualistic stance, despite the fact that claims to traditionality have created a situation in which women's autonomy is subsumed under that of her kin group. There thus exists a wide conceptual gap between the expectations that women bring into the counselling room with them and the approach used by SWAGAA in the counselling. The gap stems, in large part, from SWAGAA's unwillingness, itself derived from international norms, to embrace some of the local cultural norms that are a part of every Swazi woman's everyday existence.

My analysis of the ideology underpinning the activism of SWAGAA has thus led me to conclude that the organisation is too ambitious in its goals because it fails to contextualise its work. That women enter the counselling room with an expectation, which is then not met, is testament to the fact that the organisation has failed, largely, to respond to the micro-level problems that Swazi women face in a way that those women can readily relate to.

Secondly, a consequence of an inherent mistrust in Swaziland of foreign ideologies as a result of colonial intervention and of the subsequent attempt to re-institute traditional practices is that women cannot use SWAGAA's service in the way that the organisation intends because they are reprimanded for what is perceived as a defiance of customary norms. Yet the organisation persists with advocating an approach that requires women, unrealistically, to transform normative thinking on gender relations within a marriage. Furthermore, the organisation simply does not have the resources necessary to confront and effectively address such a widespread social problem in the way it would prefer.

Keeping in mind that SWAGAA is working in a context fraught with challenges to both itself and the individual women who use its service because they can no longer tolerate the violence that characterises their lives, I put forward a number of recommendations in

my consultancy report to the organisation which were intended to suggest ways that SWAGAA might render its counselling service more realistic and thus more accessible to Swazi women. My primary concern in recommending what I did was to suggest ways that SWAGAA might work more closely with women in a way that would create the space for those women to resist the forces of traditionalism that they will likely encounter at every step on the road in their fight against violence. To hope that women will be able to make autonomous individualistic decisions in a context which successfully prevents them from thinking or acting according to individualistic principles is unrealistic. I was therefore motivated to put forward the recommendations, which I outline below, by an understanding that came from having recognised empirically that assuring a woman that the behaviour of her husband is reprehensible and encouraging her to make her own decision does not translate into a readily deployed practical solution to help that woman overcome the constraints that bind her to the abuser, nor, indeed, can it begin to transform the normative structures that determine what is expected behaviour of a woman in Swaziland.

5.4 Where to from here?

My primary recommendation to SWAGAA in my consultancy report was that SWAGAA needs to seriously consider extending its service beyond the parameters of the counselling room in order that women can be better equipped to deal with the multitude of attitudinal and practical difficulties they will likely encounter. I argued that it cannot be assumed that, because a woman is thought to have been made aware of all her options, she is equipped with the tools of self-empowerment. Rather, I suggested, it should be assumed that telling a woman she has a range of different choices marks only the *beginning* of her struggle, as any decisions she might reach will inevitably need to be carried out within a system that is resistant to change. Practically, I said, extending SWAGAA services beyond the confines of the office would entail a closer monitoring of individual cases, particularly in instances where the client is referred elsewhere, for example the police, the magistrate's court or a collaborating NGO. Successful collaboration with other organisations and with the police, I pointed out, was crucial because, once women leave the SWAGAA offices they are commonly confronted by a wide variety of obstacles over

which neither they nor the counsellors have any ready means of control. As a consequence, I said, the emotional support and reassurance gained from the counselling session, although extremely valuable, is often insufficient to sustain a woman in her fight to end the domestic violence that brought her to SWAGAA at the start.

I also went on to point out that a potential consequence of offering a service that is restricted to the confines of a counselling room is that an organisation such as SWAGAA may, in a context such as present day Swaziland, ultimately alienate itself from the very people whom it seeks to help. SWAGAA's ever growing reputation has the potential to lead to its been seen as no more than a 'place for people with heartache'. In such a case, I argued, it will then come to be seen simply as a refuge for women with problems, and not as an organised body with the resources and personpower to successfully confront and ultimately eradicate violence against women. On its own, a public rhetorical rejection of practices that are believed to be inimical to women's development can have little impact if not accompanied by the deployment of resources that really create the space and protection to enable women to make the kinds of decisions that SWAGAA's activities are intended to empower them to make.

At the time I prepared these recommendations I was concerned with an issue that I have touched on repeatedly in this dissertation, which is the need for SWAGAA to develop an approach that resonates with the local context. I asserted that the ramifications of SWAGAA's advocating an approach that is in keeping only with international standards on women's human rights, but which makes little sense, in practice, when introduced into a locality such as Swaziland, are that the organisation can do little to actually empower women.

This issue, which underpins the thinking in my recommendations, has been influenced by my use of various insights that derive from anthropology. In grappling with the complexities involved when an organisation advocates for gender equality in a context where gender inequality is rooted in patriarchal domination, which is in turn sanctioned by tradition, I have tried to locate my analysis within a contemporary anthropological

framework. Postmodern anthropology, which currently dominates much anthropological thinking, is characterised by an attempt to shift away from understanding and categorising the world according to grand narratives or totalising frameworks. What is argued for, instead, is an analysis that takes into account social processes at the micro-level: that is, an account of social life that is sensitive to the complex and multiple ways in which individuals understand and construct the world around them. Postmodern anthropology, then, advocates for an approach in which people engaging in a particular locality, be it in an attempt to introduce change or simply to study that society, are sensitive to and aware of the dynamics of that particular society (Gardner and Lewis 1996; Eyben 2000).

By proposing that SWAGAA re-align its methodology in a way that recognises and tries to deal with the negative attitudes of the police and the perpetrators of abuse, and also to accommodate the fact that women are so embroiled in a social system whereby they are so subjected to men's demands and domination that they may not be able to make and act upon an informed decision, I too have advocated for an approach that takes cognisance of the dynamics of the local context. I have thus suggested that SWAGAA work with rather than against the constraints experienced in Swaziland. I suggested this because SWAGAA's approach of attempting to introduce reform in Swaziland, while commendable in many respects, can be seen to be overly ambitious because, rather than work within the constraints of the particular locality in which it finds itself, the organisation hopes to override existing norms simply because they are (correctly) deemed to be an impediment to women's empowerment.

What I have tried to demonstrate is that the context in which SWAGAA operates is bigger and more powerful than the organisation itself. The employment of tradition as an ideological defense against exogenous ideologies and 'foreign' practices predates SWAGAA. The leadership of Swaziland have been engaged in an ongoing struggle to retain some semblance of what is claimed to be the traditional order. Because SWAGAA openly condemns many normative values and practices pertaining to marriage in Swaziland, it can expect that powerful interests attempting to preserve their position in

society will resist its activism. Consequently, if SWAGAA hopes to encourage women to extricate themselves from their abusive domestic relationships, it ought, as an organisation, to re-think its approach and develop a methodology whereby its activists can engage with the problems that women experience when they begin the difficult process of addressing the violence they experience. There has to be recognition that eradicating violence and empowering women to make and act upon informed decisions can only be a gradual process, undertaken by means that are in keeping with the ways in which Swazi women, and those around them, ordinarily think and behave, while all the while trying incrementally to undermine the very norms that dictate that behaviour. If SWAGAA cannot reconcile its own condemnation of normative practices that it believes reinforce and perpetuate violence with the reality of the constraints that prevent women from freeing themselves of violence, then it will fail to do anything but momentarily relieve women from the emotional trauma that is a consequence of violence. SWAGAA cannot hope to engage Swazi women on the issue of empowerment unless they investigate what empowerment means, and can mean, to such women, given the social structural constraints by which their lives are limited.

5.5 Conclusion

My criticisms notwithstanding, one needs to realise and celebrate the fact that SWAGAA has been instrumental in helping women to begin to address the problem of domestic violence. More and more Swazi women are utilising SWAGAA's services as word continues to grow amongst those who find themselves in abusive circumstances that there is a place where people with such problems can go. This is due in part to SWAGAA's education and awareness campaign and in part to word of mouth. The statistics presented in chapter 2 reflect this rapid growth. SWAGAA has clearly come a long way in helping women to feel more confident to speak out against violence, rather than to internalise it as normative. But, unless the organisation finds a way of ensuring that women are able to make the kinds of decisions that the organisation intends them to make, it will have an even longer way to go in ensuring the permanence of the desired outcomes of its service.

This is because the implications of the construction of tradition as has occurred in Swaziland and attempts by those in formal positions of power to re-institute past practices in an ever-changing context, are immense for women. This immensity and complexity is compounded further by SWAGAA's radical approach, which assumes that women have the strength and resilience to overcome domestic behavioural norms which have been dictated by the power of appeals to tradition that pervade almost every aspect of Swazi society. It may be that the persistent urging of women to adhere to what are claimed to be traditional practices fails to consider that such practices make little sense in contemporary Swaziland, where many women are leading lives very different from that of their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers. Indeed, in today's Swaziland context a woman may very well need to 'air her dirty linen' in public because she may have no family elders to whom she can turn for advice when she is confronted by domestic problems. And it is precisely then that SWAGAA's good offices are crucial. Yet, for SWAGAA to be able to meet the demands placed on it as an organisation to help abused women, its members and activists need to understand how and why the traditions around marriage and gender relations in contemporary Swaziland have been reconstituted, and how they constrain women's opportunities to work to eradicate the gender violence that they experience.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the pervasiveness of reconstituted traditionality in contemporary Swaziland is a product of a long anti-colonial struggle that has embedded it deeply in today's Swazi way of life. This is clear in the way that the present King, Mswati III, has responded to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, when he proclaimed recently that the *umcwasho* would be re-instituted in Swaziland. The *umcwasho* is comparable to the age regiments of the men, and comprises sets of unmarried virgin girls, who wear an *umcwasho* uniform so that they are easily identifiable. Men are forbidden from having sexual intercourse with girls belonging to the *umcwasho*. If they do, they are fined a cow. Its earlier purpose was to instill a sense of obedience and discipline amongst the youth and to promote chastity (Kuper 1947). King Mswati III has proclaimed that the re-institution of the *umcwasho* in the early 2000s is a response to the spread of AIDS in the country. He and his councillors hope that enforcing a curb on sex

will help combat the spread of AIDS. But, once again, the re-institution of a tradition for dealing with new contextual problems has resulted in greater subservience of women. The *umcwasho* requires women (not men) to mark publicly, by their dress, that they are virgins, irrespective of whether or not they wish to do this. SWAGAA has the challenging task of straddling the gap between this line of thinking, in which it is believed that the re-institutionalisation of traditional practices might stem the tide of change, and its own radical position on women's rights in Swaziland. An incremental approach would seem to be the best way to address the challenge.

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APPENDIX 1

**A Client Evaluation Study conducted for and on behalf of the Swaziland Action Group
Against Abuse (SWAGAA).**

April – May 2000

By Zanine Wolf

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse is a non-partisan, non-profit making, non-governmental organisation. SWAGAA is committed to creating awareness in order to decrease abuse particularly physical and sexual abuse against women, men and children and to empowering survivors of abuse. SWAGAA, through its volunteers program, will achieve this by implementing counseling, education and advocacy activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report is concerned with the attitudes, needs and concerns expressed by the clients (men, women and children who are survivors of abuse) who visit SWAGAA on a daily basis. As a fast growing service organisation committed to empowering their clients, SWAGAA realised the need to conduct research into the feelings of their clients towards the organisation. The purpose of doing this was twofold. Firstly, it would enable the organisation to identify the areas in which they are currently providing a strong and valuable service so that these areas can be built upon and developed further. Secondly, it would reveal any problem areas that need to be re-evaluated so that the needs of the clients are not only adequately but also effectively met.

Abuse, in all its forms, is an escalating problem in Swaziland. My task in this report is not to recommend ways in which the problem can and should be alleviated on a national level. Instead, my aim is to suggest ways in which SWAGAA, as an organisation dedicated to the eradication of violence in all its forms, particularly against women and children can best serve the needs of the individual client.

There are two important considerations that significantly affect SWAGAA's ability to meet the needs of clients. Firstly, SWAGAA is totally reliant on external donors for funding and presently cannot afford to employ counsellors as full-time salaried staff. The implications of this in terms of service provision are great, as counselling is the cornerstone of SWAGAA's activities. Thus, in order to continue serving a steadily increasing number of clients, it is imperative that SWAGAA is in a position where they can invest in human resources, their most valuable asset.

Secondly, SWAGAA cannot work independently in addressing the problem of violence facing the country. In order to be effective in eradicating violence SWAGAA has to work in collaboration with a number of government and non-government organisations, such as police, hospitals and the legal courts. Client needs cannot be met until the referral system between these various bodies is strengthened.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH METHODS

This was a qualitative study. Rather than relying on quantitative data, clients' voices are quoted directly throughout the report in an attempt to convey as rich and in-depth a representation of clients' responses as possible. A total of fifty-four semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with SWAGAA clients. The research was conducted over a period of eight weeks. Two days were spent in the satellite office of Mbabane, one day in the rural Mankayane office and the remaining time in the Head office in Manzini.

My role as participant observer allowed me to gain valuable insight into the daily functioning of the Head office. It also enabled the generation of useful information through the daily interaction and informal discussions with the counsellors and the Counselling Programme Officer. To enrich and further complement the data generated from the interviews, three focus group discussions (FGD) with groups of approximately twenty-five were conducted with men and women who are not SWAGAA clients. Two of the FGD's were conducted with factory workers in Matsapha and

one was conducted in a market place in Mbabane. Topics discussed were the role of men and women in the family and in the wider community, and what kinds of behavior is believed to constitute abuse. The Counselling Programme Officer was instrumental in leading and interpreting the FGD's which were conducted in Siswati using a tape recorder.

2.2 CLIENT SAMPLE

CLIENT INTERVIEWS	
▪ Telephone Interviews	5
▪ Directly After Counselling Session	22
▪ Previous Clients (Home visits)	3
▪ Previous Clients (Work Visits)	4
TOTAL	34

CLIENT INTERVIEWS-FOLLOW UP CASES	
▪ Telephonically	9
▪ Home visits	3
▪ Worksite Visits	3
▪ Accompanied to referring agency	7
▪ Failed to attend scheduled appointment	2
TOTAL	20

2.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The subject of abuse is a highly sensitive and personal issue and needed to be approached as such. The help of counsellors was enlisted by requesting that they ask the client if they had a few minutes to talk to me after their counselling session. The counsellor would usually explain my role as a student conducting research into the service provided by SWAGAA. If the client consented to grant me an interview, the counsellor would decide whether or not an interpreter was needed, in which case a different counsellor would act as interpreter. Before beginning the interview, clients were assured that it was not necessary for them to disclose the details of their case and permission was asked to write their answers down.

2.4 RESEARCH CONSTRAINTS

The task of following up individual cases was at times made difficult by clients failing to attend scheduled appointments. Reasons cited were prior obligations like work and family. Other clients did not have telephones and could not be contacted to ascertain why they did not keep their appointments. A further constraint was that home visits requiring an interpreter could not be conducted if there were more pressing concerns at the office. I was also constrained by time. The following up of individual cases can be a lengthy process involving court dates and hearings scheduled far ahead. As a result, many of the cases I began following up are still in progression.

3. WHY THERE IS A NEED FOR THE SWAGAA SERVICE

Marriage in Swaziland is viewed as important in family formation and is therefore a logical and inevitable option for women. However, the home is often a place of conflict and contention for women. (WLSA; 1999:23).¹ Being unable to sustain a marital relationship is regarded as a women's failure thus women have learnt to internalise and live with domestic violence. Women may remain in the most hostile and destructive marriages because of the stigma attached to a divorcee. Furthermore, a Swazi marriage is essentially a link between two families rather than two persons and family conflicts are regarded as a private matter that should be dealt with in the family. There is a strong ethic of consulting senior family members, especially in-laws, to resolve domestic disputes. Yet SWAGAA statistics show that the number of clients is increasing steadily. In 1998, 511 cases of abuse were reported. In 1999 the number increased to 871. The total number of clients who have visited SWAGAA up until the end of March 2000 is already 543. Why then are women increasingly seeking help beyond family structures and turning to external organisations like SWAGAA to assist them with problems? This is what clients had to say about the need for an organisation like SWAGAA :

'Women have so many problems. They need an organisation like SWAGAA that can help them because we always hide when we have problems. Because of our background. Maybe you observe your mother who is being abused but doesn't take action and just says 'this is the father of my children'.'

'Abuse is a problem in Swaziland because people don't know their rights.'

'Swaziland needs an organisation like SWAGAA because abuse is happening everyday.'

'Parents and family don't help. They send you back to your married home because of lobola. Our mothers say they had the same problems but had to endure it. The problem is Swazis like cattle too much. There is resistance to change because parents don't approve of the new generation of divorcees and widows.'

'Females have no power to talk to men.'

'We women fear going to the Police because your neighbours look down on you as a failure, not strong enough and airing your dirty linen in public.'

'Us parents will pass away soon and our children will be orphans. They need someone to protect them from abuse.'

'Women have many problems. SWAGAA gives them self-esteem to stand on their own. To empower them – men think they can abuse women because they have nowhere to go.'

'SWAGAA is a shoulder for kids to cry on. If children are not getting love at home they can get love from SWAGAA. They will not be school drop outs and street kids.'

'We need an organisation like SWAGAA for when a man is not happy with his wife. There are men, although not many, who are suffering as a result of their women. I have observed that SWAGAA is not just for women but also for men.'

Abuse is a violation that permeates all sectors of Swazi society. A client can be male or female, a child or an adult, educated or uneducated, employed or unemployed, married or single. The range of problems that counselors are presented with daily varies enormously. Many clients come to SWAGAA with a number of problems and may be experiencing one or more of the following types of abuse: verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, financial. Although the list is endless, the following are typical of the kinds of problems a client may be experiencing: rape, attempted rape, incest, abusive husbands or boyfriends, abusive children or neighbors, disobedient or disrespectful children. A number of clients came to report cases of suspected or known child sexual or other abuse, others come because boyfriends/ husbands are refusing to maintain their children. Women come because they have decided to leave their

¹ Women and Law in Southern Africa, 1999. Family in Transition: the experience of Swaziland. Ruswanda Publishing Bureau

husbands/boyfriends and want advice and reassurance. Men come because they are having problems with their wives/girlfriends. Men and women come to seek counselling on how to deal with infidelity. Teenagers come because they cannot confide in and communicate with family and friends. Clients may even come to inform SWAGAA of a course of action they have decided upon so that SWAGAA is alerted in case the consequences put them in danger.

When asked to describe SWAGAA's role in helping the individual client, the Director had the following to say:

'The role of SWAGAA is that of supporting and encouraging, making the person feel like they are still worth a life and restoring the human in them. Give assurance that they are still in control of their life.'

This sentiment was echoed by one client who observed that:

'SWAGAA is a place for people with heartache.'

Whilst SWAGAA's growing recognition as a refuge for people with problems is certainly one of its strengths, this perception of the organisation by the public is not without its problems. People come to SWAGAA with a number of expectations that, due to SWAGAA's limited financial and human resources, cannot be fulfilled. The result is that clients may leave SWAGAA dissatisfied with the service they received. Ensuring that SWAGAA clarify its role as a service provider to survivors of abuse and the limitations thereof is an important recommendation that is addressed at a later stage in the report.

4. RECEPTION ON ARRIVAL

The Manzini office, the largest and busiest of the SWAGAA offices, does not have a formal receptionist to meet and greet clients. Although a full-time receptionist would be ideal to attend to clients and answer telephones (currently done by any staff member available), formalising the recruitment of the counsellors first is of more pressing concern. The current system did not appear to inconvenience clients as the waiting area is in the main thoroughfare through which there is constant movement of staff. In my observation, clients were always attended to promptly and politely. Clients themselves reported that they received a warm welcome and respect on arrival.

One client did complain that she felt 'rushed' because of the queue outside, saying that the counsellor should listen until the person is 'empty'. The recent recruitment of two of the counsellors as permanent staff in the Manzini office has meant that there is now always a counsellor available to attend to clients. The logical extension of this and something that was suggested by the counsellors is that there is a need for another counselling room to accommodate both the growing number of clients and the recruitment of permanent staff.

The Mbabane office, which is located in the Outpatients Department of the Government Hospital, does experience problems with clients having to queue. The reason for this is that there is only one counsellor on duty and SWAGAA only has one room available to them for counselling. However, whereas previously the office was only open three days a week, SWAGAA has introduced a new initiative to open the office everyday, which should reduce the number of clients having to queue. What they may also like to consider is having two counsellors on duty everyday instead of just one. I spent two days at the Mbabane office and on both occasions the counsellors had to forgo lunch to attend to clients. Speaking to them at the end of their shift they admitted to feeling drained and exhausted and commented that another counsellor was needed to assist with the counselling sessions.

5. SWAGAA ACTIVITIES

The three main activities identified by SWAGAA in the Mission Statement are counselling, education and advocacy.

5.1 EDUCATION

The Education Programme is concerned with creating public awareness on issues surrounding abuse, particularly sexual and physical abuse against women and children. SWAGAA has an Education Programme Manager as well as one full-time and three part-time education officers. Regular workshops are conducted which are aimed at

informing the public about prevention and dealing with abuse. Specific social cohorts that have been targeted are primary schools, youth groups, womens' groups, police, nurses and traditional/community leaders. SWAGAA also has a radio and television programme advertising its services.

It is interesting to note that although SWAGAA produces a fair amount of literature on abuse in the form of brochures and pamphlets, none of the clients I interviewed had come to hear about the existence of SWAGAA through this literature. These brochures offer advice on how to detect and deal with abuse and can be found in the reception area of all three offices. Whilst this information no doubt benefits clients who visit the office, it may be worthwhile if SWAGAA considered distributing the brochures to the wider public. What is lacking, and something that was commented on by three male clients, is that there is no indication in the literature that males may also be survivors of abuse.

Ten clients had come to hear about SWAGAA through the radio programme and a further four had seen the Education Programme Manager promoting SWAGAA's services on the television. Three women had heard about SWAGAA through their mothers' who had urged them to visit SWAGAA. Two women in abusive relationships had initially approached the police for assistance who in turn referred them to SWAGAA. The majority of clients who I interviewed had come to hear about SWAGAA through a friend/acquaintance/family member who had themselves visited SWAGAA and found the experience positive. Thus it appears that through a strong word of mouth, at least by previous clients who benefited from SWAGAA's service, the knowledge of SWAGAA's existence is growing rapidly.

5.2 ADVOCACY

Working hand-in-hand with the education programme is the advocacy programme, which, according to the Education Programme Manager, 'aims to speak on behalf of people who are unable to speak for themselves.' Upon entering the SWAGAA office, the immediate impression is that you have entered a pro-active organisation where violence is not tolerated. The many posters in the reception area convey a very strong anti-abuse message. These posters encourage women and children to 'break the silence' and speak out against abuse, which the posters state is a crime punishable by law. As in the case of the brochures mentioned earlier, SWAGAA may wish to consider displaying these posters where they will be visible not only to SWAGAA clients, but to the wider community. The posters are written in both English and Siswati and are illustrated to make them accessible to illiterate people too.

Recently SWAGAA, in collaboration with Swaziland's Ministry of Home Affairs and NISAA Womens' Group in South Africa, launched the White Ribbon campaign. The campaign is a public pledge never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women. The launch began with a march around Manzini town and was followed by a programme in which prominent community leaders, including the Prime Minister, were invited to speak on behalf of women in Swaziland. A female survivor of abuse was invited to come forward and present her testimony of her battle and victory against abuse. This gesture is very much in keeping with SWAGAA's objective to try and change social, cultural and legal systems by encouraging survivors of abuse to come forward and seek help by verbalising their problems.

6. COUNSELLING

I will now turn to a closer analysis of the third objective, and the one that is central to understanding the focus of this report. That objective is the

Empowerment of survivors through counseling

This is not to suggest that the other activities are in any way peripheral to SWAGAA's concerns, only that it is the one directly concerned with and affecting the clients who visit the office daily.

Two kinds of counselling are offered by SWAGAA. The first is a toll free crisis line in which clients can receive counselling over the telephone. The second is what SWAGAA refer to as 'face-to-face counselling' and takes place when a client visits the office to receive counselling.

SWAGAA has ten counsellors, one of whom also holds the position of Counselling Programme Officer and two of whom have very recently been employed on a permanent basis. The remaining seven work on a voluntary basis with no remuneration except for an allowance that covers the cost of lunch and bus fare. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to sit in on a Debriefing Session with the counsellors. A clinical psychologist, who has volunteered her services to counsel the counsellors, was also present at the Debriefing Session. It is an opportunity for counsellors to express any issues or concerns that may be on their minds. My observation at this meeting was later confirmed through discussions with the counsellors. Although dedicated to their jobs, many counsellors find the work challenging and emotionally draining. One counsellor commented that she finds it difficult not to take her work home with her. Another commented that she gets headaches as she finds the responsibility of counselling abuse survivors stressful. Counsellors who have dependants pointed out that making ends meet is often difficult; one counsellor confided in me that she would have to seek work elsewhere to support her children.

6.1 TELEPHONE COUNSELLING

At the beginning of this year Post and Telecommunications installed a toll free counselling line and SWAGAA have since received 1600 calls. This service, although not without its problems, one of which is a large number of crank calls, is much needed by members of the community who cannot access the office. Due to time constraints, I was unable to speak directly to clients who had used the telephone counselling service. However, the attitudes expressed by the counsellors indicate that SWAGAA needs to consider installing another toll free line to accommodate the number of calls. Clients who utilise this service often have a multitude of problems and sufficient time is required to assist these clients. Counsellors worried about 'blocking' other calls felt pressurised by this time constraint and admitted that the counselling they provided may have been less than adequate. The installation of a second toll free line will eliminate this problem and thus improve on the quality of the telephone counselling. A second counsellor will need to be assigned to assist with the installation of the second line.

On two occasions during my research I observed that despite the fact that the telephone counseling line was ringing, the telephone counselling room was unattended. In both instances the counsellors were assisting with an influx of face-to-face clients, leaving no counsellors available to cover them. It is hoped that the recent recruitment of two permanent staff will reduce the likelihood of such instances occurring.

6.2 CLIENT RESPONSES TO THE FACE-TO-FACE COUNSELLING SERVICE

When a survivor of abuse comes to SWAGAA seeking help they may 'carry with them 'a heavy suitcase full of anger, hatred of themselves and the perpetrator, low self-esteem, betrayal, dirt, worthlessness and many other feelings.'² Speaking to the clients immediately after their counselling sessions there was a tremendous sense that they had gained what many of them came for: emotional unburdening. Some of the expressions used by clients to describe their feelings immediately after their visit were:

'Heavy load off my chest; relieved to be able to speak to someone about my problems; warm welcome; pain eased; respect on arrival; relief and comfort; tips; the pressure I had has gone down; I am now calmer than before; I am healed spiritually'

It is clear from the emotions expressed above that the counsellors provide many clients with a great deal of comfort and emotional support during the counselling session. The comments also mirror a skill highly regarded and continually emphasised by the counsellors themselves. That skill is the ability to be a good listener; to reassure the client that they will be provided with a willing ear. Some comments by the counsellors to this effect were:

'Let the client feel at home so they can relax. If they are crying, let them cry. As she goes out the counselling room she should feel better'.

'Let her talk. Show that you are listening. The client must see that you are concentrating'.

² SWAGAA, 2000 p.11 Perceptions on Child Sexual Abuse. Webster Publishers, Manzini

'You must introduce yourself and establish a rapport with the client so she can feel comfortable. Often they have lost everything, including trust.'

During my informal discussions with the counselors on how they perceive their role, counsellors often made reference to the following two definitions of counselling:

1) 'face-to-face communication in which one person helps another make decisions and act on them.'³

2) 'It is a process whereby clients learn to think more clearly about problems facing them, to make their own decisions and to find the strength to move forward.'⁴

Counsellors were unanimous on the following point: their role is to empower the client through advising them of all the options available to them and the possible consequences of each. The empowerment, it is believed, comes through enabling the client to make an *informed* decision.

The perceived benefits of counselling as outlined above were in many ways mirrored by the clients' reflections of what they gained from the counselling:

'The way they (counsellors) speak to you opens the brain on how to act upon the problem you are facing.'

'Things seem simpler now'

'If the counsellor was a person who was hard I wouldn't have said a word. I revealed things I wouldn't normally.'

'Helped me to think straight. Considerations before committing myself. It's good to get an outside, independent decision.'

'Although I don't know what the outcome will be, I feel positive.'

'It will be useful if I can apply the counselling I got today.'

'Now I understand I can leave my homestead and have a better life away from the abuser.'

'I was helped because the counsellor told me rape is not a permanent condition and I can still be a good person when I grow up. The counsellor helped in building us up and giving us hope. I will spread the good gospel of SWAGAA.' (Mother)

'My children were free from what happened because they (counsellors) were always kind. They helped to explain everything to them.'

'SWAGAA is so helpful to everybody. If I am going to live for another ten years I will suffer with my husband and I don't want that. Now I am thinking of separating with my husband. The lady has cooled me down.'

'I like the way the counsellor spoke to me. I hope it helps.'

The gratitude expressed by these survivors towards their counsellors was unmistakable. Although many could not verbalise what course of action they planned to take or pin-point exactly what benefits they received, they seemed content in the knowledge that an organisation like SWAGAA merely existed. The presence of an organisation denouncing gender violence is a source of great comfort and reassurance to many, and exceeds any expectations that they may have had.

7. CHILDREN

³ SWAGAA Voluntary Counsellors Procedure Manual

⁴ SWAGAA brochure entitled 'Counselling'

Regrettably, children are not prominent in this report. As many of the counsellors confided in me, abused children are fragile and untrusting of strangers and gaining their trust may take a long while. The parents of these children expressed their gratitude to SWAGAA for providing a safe and nurturing environment for the children. Two young girls who are now regular SWAGAA clients have built up a close and trusting relationship with their counsellor. Their mother wished to thank SWAGAA for providing them with toys to play with and making them feel protected.

I did sense a degree of uncertainty in dealing with child abuse cases amongst a number of the counsellors. Reasons given for this were although counsellors had been on a child counselling training course, it was felt that the training provided was too theoretical, rather than making use of practical techniques such as role-play. In addition to this, because child abuse cases are not dealt with on a daily basis it is still relatively unfamiliar territory for many counsellors.

SWAGAA may wish to consider re-assessing the handling of child abuse cases by delegating a select few to deal with the children. More familiarity with these cases over time will result in more confidence and hence greater expertise in dealing with abused children.

8. CLIENT MISCONCEPTIONS

My research findings revealed that there is a discrepancy between the way in which counselling sessions are conducted and the expectations that clients bring with them into the counselling room. Implicit in the following comment made by a counsellor is the fact that clients do arrive at SWAGAA with pre-conceived ideas of the way in which they expect counsellors to respond to their problems:

'You have to explain to the client at the beginning that counselling is for talking and healing. Our job is to give you options, not to tell you what to do. Otherwise the client may get angry if you don't tell them what to do.'

The assumption on behalf of clients that counsellors would mediate between the parties involved in a domestic dispute was inescapable. Many clients did not expect that counsellors would remain neutral. They anticipated that rather than remaining passive, the counsellor would intervene legally or morally on their behalf. A number of clients also expressed the desire that the counsellor would reprimand the perpetrator for his actions. The following case studies illustrate this point:

Three clients, all of whom were male, came to the office not so much for counselling as to enlist the services of SWAGAA in intervening in a dispute on their behalf. The first client was particularly vocal about his disapproval of SWAGAA's passive role. He left the office issuing SWAGAA with an ultimatum and threatening to kill his wife and child if the matter had not been resolved on his return in two weeks.

The second client, a 35 year old male who works for the Breweries, was convicted of Child Sex Abuse and spent a year in jail. He came to SWAGAA seeking compensation from the accusers for his legal costs, but more importantly, he wanted SWAGAA to bring the child in for counseling so that the 'truth' would come out.

The third client, a 50 year old teacher who lives in Manzini, brought with him a letter he had written to his children. He requested that the counsellor call his daughter in and present her with the letter, instruct her to respond, counsel her and then request that he come back again.

Further comments indicating that there was an expectation that SWAGAA would intervene or act as mediator in a dispute were:

'I think SWAGAA should call my father and ask him to provide food and assistance, at least until the matter is resolved.'

'I expected to find many people inside who would question me and tell me to take them to the man. I do not want to go to the man but I can show them where to go.'

'Who will call the man and tell him to give me money for the children?'

With regard to mediating between the parties involved in a domestic dispute, SWAGAA has adopted a strict policy of non-interference, on the basis that a person has to seek out counselling of their own accord. Their position in regard to offering clients advice is equally clear. Says one counsellor:

'Don't give sympathy and advice- give options and empathise. Don't make the mistake of advising. You'll be blamed and the trust will be lost.'

This is in sharp contrast to the following comments made by clients who were interviewed after their counselling session:

'I came today for some answers'

A 39 year old male client who works for the Road Transport Board had the following to say:

'I came to SWAGAA today with a problem and expected a solution. Now I may go home and try and solve the problem on my own, maybe by kicking my girlfriend. SWAGAA is to blame for this.'

'I want someone to help me immediately with my problems'

While the source of these expectations remain unexplored in this report, it needs to be expressed that it presents a problem for SWAGAA that needs to be addressed immediately. It is a problem that cannot be ignored because clients walk away from the office dissatisfied with the service they have received. The likelihood that they will terminate their relationship with SWAGAA is great, rendering the counselling ineffective. It is strongly recommended that SWAGAA incorporate into its education programme an explanation of the nature of the counselling service that is on offer ie what it is the client can hope to expect from a counselling session and the potential benefits and limitations thereof.

Client responses discussed thus far are largely a reflection of clients who were interviewed immediately following their counselling session. In order to get a more realistic sample of clients a number of home visits and worksite visits were conducted. Clients who were targeted were ones who had been to SWAGAA a few months previously as the aim was to discover the value they attached to their visit retrospectively. This was thought to be an effective way of measuring the long-term impact of SWAGAA's service.

It is difficult to assess the reasons why clients do not come back, as individual cases are not followed up unless the client returns to SWAGAA for further counselling. Although counsellors do urge their clients to continue their visits or call the office to report on the progress of their case, in many instances clients do not and are unable to do so. The client may be pressurised by family members not to continue their interaction with SWAGAA. They may also be constrained by the expense of having to travel long distances to receive counselling. Or, once a client leaves the security of the SWAGAA office they may encounter a number of obstacles that they are not financially or emotionally equipped to deal with. Abuse is a violation that often leaves a person feeling downtrodden and worthless. If such a person comes into contact with an unsympathetic police officer or is hindered by lengthy bureaucracies, it is not unlikely that they will 'give up' and return to their abusive homes. Counsellors need to take cognisance of this, make the client aware of the likelihood of such an event taking place, and urge the client to return to SWAGAA for further assistance should they encounter any obstacles.

A client may leave the office never to return because the counselling and advice that they received has had a positive impact on their lives. But, more importantly, clients may not return because they see little or no value in continuing the counselling.

I have identified two clients who, it appears, may not continue using the SWAGAA service. The first client, a 28 year old female who lives in a rural area and is unemployed, had the following to say:

'The counselling session was not helpful because my husband is thick-headed. I know him well and the advice I received will not work with him.'

The second client, an adult male who was involved in a conflict with his wife said:

'I have been to SWAGAA before and the advice I got was bad because I thought the problem would improve but it didn't. I have come today to explain the matter again and get more advice.'

A 37 year old client I visited at his work who did not come back echoed similar sentiments. He questioned whether the counsellors were professionals as they took his wife's side in a matter that he perceived as clear and straightforward. The conflict revolved around his wife wanting her furniture after he had re-married. He explained that these are the sorts of problems that lead to people being killed, citing his case as an example. If the client came to his house wanting her furniture back he would defend his property. SWAGAA, he maintained, should try and prevent these things from happening.

Another client that I visited at home had been to SWAGAA approximately seven months earlier. She is a 35 year old nurse and works at the Government hospital. Her experience was not positive and she too criticised SWAGAA's inability to remain neutral. She came seeking advice because she found herself in the middle of a conflict between her daughter and her new husband. SWAGAA advised that one of her options would be to send her daughter to go and live with her (client's) mother. This angered the client because she thought this should have been a last resort. The fact that the counsellor suggested her daughter respect her step-father angered her even further, prompting her to say that:

'Because the counsellors are Swazis they have this gender thing. I will tell a man he is wrong even if he is the king. I will not respect a man just because he is a man. Two visits to SWAGAA were enough for me to decide that I needed to go somewhere else. I then went to a psychologist who was very good as he never took sides. He listened to my story and then tried to combine all three stories.'

One female client never came back to SWAGAA because she was misinformed about the service that she would receive. She was under the impression that SWAGAA would be able to assist her in getting a divorce, both legally and financially. The client is a South African who married a Swazi man and she is currently unemployed. Her sister had accompanied her to SWAGAA seeking help for a drug-related problem and was equally frustrated at not being helped. Clients who leave the office dissatisfied are often the clients who arrive with a misconception about the service they will receive. Other commonly held misconceptions expressed by clients regarding the nature of the SWAGAA service are:

- SWAGAA has its own police force to protect both clients and staff
- SWAGAA has the mandate to take people to court
- SWAGAA can assist in drawing up wills and in filing for divorce
- SWAGAA can intervene when the police refuse to do anything
- SWAGAA can mobilise the police into taking action

SWAGAA's stand on its counselling role is clearly set out and was equally articulated by the counsellors themselves. That role is that the counselling offered is not of an advisory nature but is rather a process of empowering the client through informing them of all the options to them so that an informed decision can be made. The above examples however, demonstrate that this message has not been clearly conveyed to the people who approach SWAGAA for assistance, and re-inforces the recommendation that SWAGAA needs to clarify its counselling role.

Less clearly articulated is where SWAGAA's responsibility to the client begins and ends: does SWAGAA's commitment to empowering the client end once the client leaves the SWAGAA office? This is of great significance as referrals are an important part of the SWAGAA service. Of the 54 clients I interviewed, 34 were referred to

another agency. The next section attempts to examine the effectiveness of SWAGAA in working with these collaborating bodies. The importance of investing in human resources, that is, full-time salaried counsellors as opposed to volunteers, is of crucial importance here as it will significantly enhance the service provided by SWAGAA in two areas. Counsellors' skills will be developed so that they are adequately equipped to deal with complex cases, specifically child abuse cases and cases that require legal intervention. Secondly, the availability of full-time counsellors will lessen the currently heavy work-load, thus enabling individual cases to be carefully monitored and followed through.

9. THE REFERRAL SYSTEM

I have identified five collaborating bodies who work hand-in-hand with SWAGAA in attempting to meet the needs of clients. They are:

- Police
- Magistrates Court
- Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA)
- The Council of Swaziland Churches (COC)
- Save the Children Fund (SCF)

A client who is referred to another agency is provided with a 'SWAGAA Referral Form', which is completed by the counsellor and contains the client's details and the reason for referral. There are no written documents detailing the responsibilities of each agency and the result is that inappropriate referrals occur. The consequences of this for the client can be dire as they may eliminate their chances of being correctly attended to by the appropriate agency. There is a collectively agreed upon but unwritten understanding of which cases get referred where. A synopsis of this is as follows:

Rape and Child Sexual Abuse cases are referred to the police, provided the client wishes to lay a charge. Child Sexual Abuse cases may also be referred to 'Save the Children Fund' if the client's family wish a home visit to take place. Maintenance cases are referred to the Council of Churches. Assault and battery cases are referred to the police if the client wishes to lay a charge, or, alternatively to the Magistrates Court for a peace binding order.

In an attempt to gauge how well clients are received at these agencies, and the extent to which they are assisted, I accompanied seven clients to the various referral agencies.

▪ GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

9.1 POLICE REFERRALS

SWAGAA's working relationship with the police is fairly complex and exists on two levels. The management at SWAGAA maintains that they are supported by Police Headquarters, which is evidenced by the fact that two senior police officers serve on two of SWAGAA's committees (Council and Advisory Committees). Despite this co-operation at a senior level, many junior front desk police officers are not sensitive to the issue of abuse. Yet it is these police officers who receive and deal with the SWAGAA referrals. Concerns expressed by counsellors regarding the way abuse cases are handled at police stations were affirmed by observing three female clients who approached police seeking assistance. All 3 clients are under the age of 30, live in a rural area and are unemployed. Their partners (one, a husband; the other two, their boyfriends) had physically abused all three clients. The first client was displaying visible signs of abuse (a recovering black eye). She presented her referral letter to the police officer who did not read it. As I could not understand what was being said the policeman relayed to me afterwards that he could not lay a charge because the man is her husband and she has a responsibility to both him and her children to keep the family together. He then asked me whether SWAGAA's role is to reconcile families or to break them up, which results in children turning to crime. The client was told to go home and bring the two families together to try and reconcile. The client was afforded little privacy as the interview was conducted in a crowded room.

The other two clients received much the same response during their police visits. Both women had moved away from their boyfriends' homes and, fearing their boyfriends' violent reactions, came to the police seeking protection. One police officer's response was:

'SWAGAA should be more careful about the clients they refer here. Firstly, when a women has moved away from her boyfriend or husband and she does not want him to follow her, they should be referred to the Magistrate's Court for a peace binding order.'

At this point the Desk Officer interrupted and assured me that it is not because the police don't want to help, but because it is a legal matter that it is out of their jurisdiction. He commented that they had received a number of such referrals in the past two weeks.

The other police officer continued saying:

'SWAGAA does not take into account Swazi culture. Disputes within families should be settled in the family. If SWAGAA paid attention to this they would not have so much work to do.'

The third client wished to lay a charge against her boyfriend but was told there was insufficient evidence. The demeanour of all three women when presenting their case was timid and the male officers easily intimidated them. Two of them left in tears and were visibly distressed. A number of clients had been to the police to report cases of abuse before coming to SWAGAA, and reported receiving a similar reception. The following are clients' accounts of their experience with the police:

'When you tell them your problem they don't listen and are rough.'

'You don't have any privacy and they ridicule you. They don't give you any time to speak freely. They say, what is the point if you are going to be together again the next day.'

'I went to the police and got negative attitudes. They chased me away and said I should go and talk to my family. They said they cannot get involved with such a case.'

'Police say they have a problem. Women come to them for help and then change their minds (about laying a charge) and it makes their work difficult.'

'I am glad I came to SWAGAA because I went to the police on my own once before and they never helped.'

Counsellors should be cognisant of the fact that police officers are often reluctant to involve themselves in abuse cases. If they feel that police intervention is required because a person's life is in danger, they should either accompany the client to the station or call the station and inform them of the details of the case before the client arrives. Despite these attitudinal problems, the SWAGAA management are confident that Police Headquarters are prepared to liaise with SWAGAA in conducting workshops to encourage sensitivity of front desk officers in dealing with such cases.

Whilst workshops may certainly be an effective way to begin addressing the problem, SWAGAA will need to consider ways to monitor the cases that get referred to the police. What is discussed at workshops may not always correspond with what is taking place on the ground.

9.2 MAGISTRATE'S COURT

Peace binding orders obtained through the Magistrate's Court are partially effective in deterring perpetrators who have respect for the law, however, they are not without problems. The two concerned parties are summoned to appear before the Magistrate who will mediate and try and resolve the conflict. If the abuse occurs again the perpetrator may be sentenced to a term in jail.

A female client whom I visited at home had been to SWAGAA nearly a year ago. She is unemployed and lives in a rural area with her husband and teenage son. She was referred to the Magistrates Court and was issued a peace binding order and has since had no problems with her husband. Even though she acknowledges her husband has reformed due to fear for the law rather than respect for her, she is very grateful for the protection it has afforded her. Another woman was not so lucky. Upon receiving his summons to appear before the magistrate her boyfriend beat her up and threatened to kill her.

The two examples cited above indicate that further monitoring is required if SWAGAA is to be successful in eradicating violence in the long term. In the first example, SWAGAA cannot safely assume that the husband's fear for the law will be consistent over time, specifically once the peace binding order, which is only valid for six months, has expired. Similarly, in the second example, contact with the client needs to be maintained so that SWAGAA is alerted should the violence continue.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

9.3 WOMEN AND LAW IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

WLSA, like SWAGAA, is a non-governmental organisation. Research into issues surrounding women in Southern Africa is their main objective, although they also provide free legal advice to women. Should a woman decide to take her case to court, WLSA can arrange a lawyer as they work with lawyers who agree to lesser fees and installments.

During a discussion with a representative from WLSA who deals with the majority of SWAGAA referrals, the following transpired. She commented that over the previous three weeks they had received an influx of SWAGAA clients. Her concern was that many people come to WLSA with a referral form from SWAGAA but are not informed as to why they have been sent there or how WLSA could assist them. While the WLSA representative acknowledged that legal advice cannot be given in a vacuum, she commented that SWAGAA clients often present themselves carrying a lot of emotional baggage and are unable to isolate the legal aspect of why they have been referred. Many SWAGAA clients were also under the impression that WLSA could represent them in a court of law, whereas the nature of WLSA's service is primarily advisory.

It was suggested that perhaps there should be more communication between the two organisations in the form of workshops. These would be mutually beneficial in that both organisations could learn more about what the other one does. Making provision on SWAGAA's 'Intake Form' for WLSA to record their interaction with the client will ensure a more professional referral process and will enable individual cases to be referred back to.

9.4 THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The Council of Churches deals with maintenance cases effectively and, as far as I could assess, with few complications. The father of the child is issued with a letter explaining to them the legal consequences of not maintaining their children, and inviting them to attend a meeting at the Council offices together with his spouse. If a third letter is not responded to, the case is referred to an attorney for legal action. As with WLSA, the Council of Churches works with attorneys who agree to lesser fees/installments or, alternatively, the legal fees are deducted from the maintenance money if the case is successful. A number of the maintenance cases I followed up are still in progression, as the Council had assisted the client in securing an attorney to represent them. All these clients reported that the service they received was good and they were confident that the outcome of the case would be positive. SWAGAA's role in serving the client's needs ceases once the client has been referred to the Council, as the Council follow up all individual cases until maintenance is ensured.

9.5 SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND

Save the Children Fund is another non-governmental organisation. The effectiveness of the working relationship between SWAGAA and Save the Children Fund is difficult to assess as each case is handled individually. Child sex abuse cases are usually incest cases, which gives rise to a number of difficulties. The ultimate decision on how to deal with the case is usually decided upon by the parents, who may be unwilling to acknowledge the problem to preserve the family name. This is a concern that was expressed by the Doctor who refers a number of clients to the Mankayane SWAGAA office. Because of the sensitivity involved in handling these cases and because each one may differ from the others, the ways in which SWAGAA can and should interact with SCF has not been formalised in any way. There is no official referral form and the details of each case are not recorded. As child sex abuse is a growing concern in Swaziland, it is recommended that the cooperation between SWAGAA and SCF in dealing with abuse cases be dealt with in a more formal manner. The recording of the events surrounding each case will generate crucial information and statistics that can be referred back to and analysed. It may also promote discussion on how to deal with particularly complex cases.

What arises out of the discussion above is that informing a client of all the options available to them does not necessarily mark the end of their struggle against abuse, but may be the beginning. What this means for SWAGAA is that they need to extend the service they are currently providing beyond the confines of the counselling room, and ensure continuity and closure of individual cases by monitoring the progress of each individual case. A few practical suggestions to this end are offered in the next section.

10. FOLLOWING UP INDIVIDUAL CASES

Observing the ways in which counsellors record client information shed light on the ways in which individual cases are monitored. Immediately following a client's first visit, a 'Counselling Intake Form' is completed. It is meant to contain the client's demographic data and details of the individual case. Provision is also made for counsellors to record any personal feelings they may have regarding the case. The 'Counselling Intake Form' of a client I visited at work in no way corresponded with the actual details I was offered by the client about her case. Whereas this particular example may have been a one off-case of human error, it is crucial that client information is recorded accurately and timeously.

If a client has visited the office previously, a 'Counselling Revisit Form' is filled out. It is the responsibility of the counsellor to establish whether or not the client has used the SWAGAA service previously, and thus to ensure continuity of individual cases by using the correct form. Yet, of the five return visits that I interviewed, three new Intake Forms were completed, rather than referring back to the original form. Three previous clients I visited had been to SWAGAA more than once yet 'Revisit Forms' had not been completed.

A female client who lives in a rural area suffered many years of abuse at the hands of her alcoholic husband until he was deterred by a peace binding order. She had the following to say:

'Perpetrators like my husband who have been reformed should speak to other men and tell them that it is possible. We should target the drinking places, because that is where the men hang out.'

When asked how this could be done, she said through television or radio.

She further added:

'People like me should write a story about my life with the abuser and how sweet he was when I met him.'

Being able to go public with such success stories will not only convince people of the effectiveness of SWAGAA but it may deter the incidence of abuse occurring in the future. Unless the progress of individual cases is closely monitored by SWAGAA, it is unlikely that there will be many similar success stories. Hence, the importance of extending the role of counsellors beyond the parameters of the office is vital in ensuring closure of individual cases. This entails maintaining contact with the client until counselling is no longer required or until the case has gone through all the necessary legal proceedings.

In following up individual cases, home visits may need to be conducted in cases where clients do not have telephones. SWAGAA is currently constrained by time, money and human resources and therefore cannot always conduct follow-up home visits and phone calls but this is a long-term objective worth considering. In the interim, a simple yet effective measure that can be introduced is making provision on the 'Intake Form' for counsellors to record any progressions or set-backs pertaining to the case.

The handling of the following two cases re-inforces the importance of following-up on individual cases.

A nine-year-old female client who was raped by her brother visited SWAGAA in February 1999. Although the case went to court the perpetrator was released because the witnesses turned against her. The case has since been referred to the High Court. On visiting the client at her home both she and her mother expressed a desire to re-establish the relationship with SWAGAA. Despite the fact that over a year had elapsed and the 'Intake Form' advised that the client needed further counselling, the counselling sessions were not continued.

Clients who choose to take their case to court are in many ways prolonging the trauma and are faced with having to re-live the experience. It is important that these cases are more closely monitored as the client may require emotional support and reassurance for the duration of the legal proceedings. Meeting these needs of the client will involve re-defining SWAGAA's role and their responsibility to the client. Referring the client to the police or the legal courts should not mark the end of SWAGAA's responsibility to the client. SWAGAA should aim for closure on cases of this nature and assist the client through the entire process of dealing with abuse so that cases become success stories rather than being 'abandoned' before the case has been resolved.

A counsellor whose client was a rape survivor had been keeping in contact with a police officer regarding the court date, the details of which were not recorded on the Intake Form. As the client did not have a telephone, the police officer would communicate any information through the counsellor. This type of crucial information needs to be recorded so that the details of the client's case are kept up-to-date at all times.

11. CONCLUSION

SWAGAA is a pioneer organisation in that it is the first of its kind in Swaziland to advocate for the eradication of violence, particularly violence against women and children. The counselling service that SWAGAA provides to survivors of abuse is highly valued by the clients, who, immediately after their counselling session, expressed their appreciation for the counsellors' emotional support and understanding. What this report has recommended, however, is that SWAGAA re-define its role as a service provider by extending the role of counsellors beyond the parameters of the counselling room. It cannot be assumed that the client will be empowered to take control of their lives once they leave the SWAGAA office. Hence, counsellors should ensure that each individual case is closely monitored and followed up, until the client feels confident to terminate their relationship with SWAGAA.

In order for this to be accomplished, SWAGAA needs to invest in its human resources, as was recommended at the outset of the report. The recent recruitment drive of employing two full-time salaried counsellors needs to be continued until no counsellors work on a voluntary basis. Fully trained counsellors who possess the skills to deal with complex cases need to be available at all times to fulfill a multitude of roles:

- An additional counsellor is required to assist with clients at the Mbabane office; an additional counsellor will be required should a second crisis line be installed, as was recommended; the building of another counselling room in the Manzini office to accommodate a growing number of clients will also require more counsellors.
- The counsellors role in providing emotional support should be extended beyond the counselling room as clients need continued support throughout the entire process of dealing with abuse. In keeping with this, counsellors should make clients aware that a number of obstacles may be encountered, and provide assurance that SWAGAA can assist them if necessary.

12. A SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS SUGGESTED IN THIS REPORT

12.1 AWARENESS CREATION

- Continue the radio programme as this is reaching a lot of people.
- Clients felt strongly that there is a need to focus the awareness campaign in rural areas as abuse is apparently most rife in these areas. Because many people do not have access to radios or television, they may not know of the existence of SWAGAA. Nhlngano, Hlatikulu and Siteki were the most commonly cited rural areas that clients would like to see targeted.
- Awareness on the nature and potential benefits and limitations of counselling should be incorporated into the awareness programme. This will ensure that the public gains a better understanding of the nature of the service provided by SWAGAA.
- Emphasising that SWAGAA works hand-in-hand with a number of collaborating bodies will make the public aware of the constraints faced by SWAGAA.
- Ensure that SWAGAA's commitment to helping both men and women is clearly communicated in the awareness creation campaign. Men should also be represented in posters and in the information distributed in the form of brochures and pamphlets.

12.2 CAPACITY BUILDING OF COUNSELLORS

- Continue the current recruitment drive to employ counsellors as full-time salaried staff. This will promote a stronger sense of commitment to and affiliation with the organisation, hence increasing accountability on behalf of the counsellors for individual cases. As counselling is a skill that is learned over time, a greater sense of commitment will also improve the capacity of counsellors in dealing with complex cases.
- The Debriefing sessions promote harmony and better communication between counsellors as they allow counsellors to exchange information and share ideas. These should be continued.
- Counsellors should be encouraged to have sessions with the clinical psychologist who has volunteered her services. This will reduce the stress levels associated with such an emotionally demanding job.
- Select a small team of counsellors to deal with child abuse cases. Familiarity in dealing with these sensitive cases will result in increased confidence and hence enable counsellors to build upon learned skills.
- Investing in human resources by increasing the availability of counselling staff will allow more than one counsellor to be on duty in the Mbabane office. It will also allow counsellors to leave the confines of the office to accompany clients to the police station.

12.3 FOLLOW-UP OF INDIVIDUAL CASES

- To render counselling more effective, cases that require legal intervention need to be followed up so that the value gained from the counselling is not lost should the client encounter bureaucratic delays.
- Counsellors need to be more meticulous about the completion of 'Intake Forms.' The 'Revisit Intake Form' should be used for returning clients. The Counselling Programme Officer should be assigned the task of ensuring that the relevant forms are being used correctly.

- To make follow up of individual cases possible it is necessary for counsellors to record any information about further developments pertaining to the case. Success stories can then be used to demonstrate to the public the effectiveness of SWAGAA's service.
- Extend 'Intake Forms' to make provision for a 'Follow up' section.
- Revise the 'Referral Form' so that provision is made for the relevant referral agency to document any further developments.
- Devise a 'Referral Form' for child abuse cases referred to Save the Children Fund. These forms can be retained for future reference.

12.4 POLICE REFERRALS

- Continue to strengthen the existing relationship with police Headquarters so that attitudinal problems experienced on the ground can be addressed. Organise training workshops and awareness creation programmes for front desk officers who receive and deal with SWAGAA clients. Educate them on the detrimental effects of abuse and encourage sensitivity in the handling of these cases.
- Advocate for the delegation of female police officers to handle abuse cases.
- Organise workshops for front desk officers and SWAGAA counsellors to facilitate discussion on the responsibilities of each so that inappropriate referrals do not occur. These will also foster greater communication between the two groups.
- In the interim, counsellors should accompany clients to the police station and liaise with the police on their behalf if necessary.

12.5 NETWORKING WITH COLLABORATING BODIES

- Conduct workshops for counsellors and representatives in the referral agencies. This will enhance and promote a deeper understanding of the responsibilities of each service provider. This will also enable counsellors to furnish their clients with all the necessary information pertaining to costs, correct attire and operating hours of the referral agency.
- The responsibilities and services provided by each referral agency to be translated into a written text that can be readily referred to.