

POVERTY ON OUR DOORSTEP

**UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION OF THE INDIVIDUALS WHO
SPEND THE NIGHT IN FRONT OF 134 PRETORIUS STREET AND THE
POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF ERECTING A FENCE
TO KEEP THEM OUT**

**Michael Aliber, Jacques du Toit, Zakes Langa, Mandla Msibi, Shirona
Parthab, Ben Roberts, and Fhumulani Thaba**

January 2004

Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Research approach.....	2
2	Findings from interviews with the residents of 134 Pretorius	3
2.1	The ‘population’ and the sample.....	3
2.2	How people ended up on the streets of Pretoria.....	4
2.3	Survival strategies	6
2.4	Perceived advantages and disadvantages of 134 Pretorius	7
2.5	Alternatives	10
3	The consequences of a fence?	12
	Appendix A Plan for fence.....	13
	Appendix B – Aide memoire	14
	Appendix C - List of interviewees with descriptive information	15
	Appendix D Selected photos	16

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Every night the pavement in front of the HSRC's main office in Pretoria is filled with scores of people who come here to spend the night. They tend to drift in gradually from 7 pm onwards, and most disappear again by daylight. Although for the most part these people are invisible to those of us who work in the HSRC building, there is a growing sense of unease among HSRC staff and a feeling that 'something should be done.' A fence has been proposed, part of the function of which would be to prevent public access to most of the space in front of the building (see diagram in Appendix A). One concern is that the nightly crowd presents a health hazard to people working at the HSRC building. Keeping the premises clean has become a major daily task for those who tend to them. On the other hand, some HSRC staff express concern that erecting such a fence would be thoughtless and insensitive, not least because poverty is one of HSRC's principal areas of focus, if not *the* principal focus. Notwithstanding that HSRC is not a service agency, how can we simply push poverty away when it appears on our doorstep? Does our social responsibility only extend to collecting, analysing and disseminating information?

At a senior management meeting in February 2003, two executive directors agreed to explore possible options in respect of the 'fence dilemma.' A research proposal was circulated in early March 2003. A meeting was held among staff members of IRRD, SAMM, and other research programmes on Friday 14 March in order to discuss how to proceed. Despite an apparently high level of interest, nothing happened. The reason why nothing happened is not altogether clear.

One contributing factor was certainly the receipt by the HSRC in late March of a letter from the Gauteng Department of Health. The letter was written by two inspectors who had visited the HSRC premises on 18 March 2003, seemingly in response to a complaint lodged by the HSRC. The letter is headed, "REPORT ON COMPLAINT OF UNHYGIENIC CONDITIONS AT HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL BUILDING: PRETORIA," and the inspectors' findings were that "the area was in a very dirty and untidy condition" and "a strong odour was evident." Of the letter's five recommendations, the first was that "a fence should be erected to maintain the problem," the meaning of which is clear notwithstanding the incorrect (and ironic) language. (In a subsequent telephone conversation with Mr. Loykisoonal, the Senior Environmental Health Practitioner who was one of the inspectors and who drafted the letter, Mr. Loykisoonal conceded that erecting a fence would likely redistribute rather than eliminate the hygiene problem, and stated that he would welcome working together with the HSRC to identify possible options.)

Months passed. In mid-November 2003, alarmed at the possibility that a fence might be erected before the consequences for our 'co-residents' had been explored, a small group of concerned HSRC staff came together to examine the possibility of proceeding with a research effort without the formal backing of the HSRC. The research plan that was put together was essentially a pared-down version of what had been proposed in March.

Conducted at our own expense and almost entirely in our own time, it does not pretend to be the scientific, comprehensive, well-balanced study that we would have preferred. Interviews with municipal and provincial officials were not undertaken. The full costs to HSRC of cleaning and scrubbing were not calculated. A literature review was not conducted, nor was the issue of 'homelessness' in the context of socio-economic change in Pretoria explored.

Other relevant stakeholders, such as the Department of Social Development and the South African Police Service, were not consulted.

Whereas a more complete research effort might have been able to identify and evaluate different options and to advise the HSRC on a course of action (or inaction), the objective of this small exercise is much more modest: to assist members of the HSRC community take stock of the possible consequences of erecting a fence for the roughly 100 people who sleep in front of the HSRC building every night.

Despite having had to largely 'go it alone,' we would however like to acknowledge with thanks the cooperation and assistance of various HSRC staff members, not least those in Security and in Building and Facilities Management, as well as the encouragement and support of numerous other colleagues.

1.2 Research approach

The research approach consisted of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with a sample of individuals who spend the night in front of the HSRC building at 134 Pretorius Street. The interviews were semi-structured in that the interviewee was engaged in a discussion during which he or she was encouraged to touch on a number of pre-determined issues and questions (see the aide memoire in Appendix B). The logic of the selection of these issues and questions was that the importance of 134 Pretorius Street could be understood by knowing who the people are, why they are here, how they survive, and what alternatives they know and make use of.

The interviews were conducted between 1 and 19 December 2003, either in front of the HSRC building or just within the entrance to the building. Each respondent was offered R10 as a gesture of gratitude for his/her participation. About five individuals declined to be interviewed; about three individuals who were approached appeared to be mentally disturbed and could not be interviewed; and on a handful of occasions the person approached was intoxicated and could not be properly engaged in discussion until later in the evening or on another evening. In total 35 individuals were interviewed. The interviews were recorded on micro-cassette, and later summarised in writing by the interviewer. Interviewees were selected arbitrarily, but not according to a rigorous random sampling scheme.

Before embarking on the interviews, the team considered the ethical issue of how to present the purpose of the research to the interviewees. The concern was that to interview people without explaining the issue of the proposed fence would be dishonest, while on the other hand telling people about the fence might alarm them without us knowing how to deal with their reactions. With some consternation, ultimately the decision was taken to not mention the possibility of the fence when approaching people, but to explain the fence issue if interviewees asked why we were conducting the research. One consequence of this approach is that interviewees were generally not asked to speculate as to what would be the consequences for them if a fence were to be erected.

2 Findings from interviews with the residents of 134 Pretorius

2.1 The 'population' and the sample

No attempt at an accurate count was made on any of the evenings during which interviews were conducted. A rough 'guesstimate' – and one shared by IISRC's Security staff – is that on an average evening there are roughly 100 people sleeping in front of the IISRC, plus a small handful that sleep down the street in front of the court. Of these 100 people, there are about 5 women versus 95 men; and 10 white and 5 coloured people versus 85 Africans. These are impressionistic figures based on about eight evening visits to the HSRC building to conduct interviews.

A total of 35 interviews were conducted (see Appendix C). Among the 35 interviewees, 2 are women versus 33 men; and all but one is African, versus one white person. The reason for the under-representation of whites and coloureds in the sample is that all but one of the non-Africans approached declined to be interviewed. The fact that the two people conducting the interviews are African may have contributed to the reluctance of whites and coloureds to be interviewed.

Focusing still on the sample, Table 1 reports interviewees' first language, and Table 2 reports interviewees' places of origin.

Table 1 - First languages spoken by interviewees

First language	Number
Setswana	8
Northern Sotho	7
IsiNdebele	4
Xitsonga	4
IsiZulu	3
Sesotho	3
SiSwati	2
Tshivenda	1
IsiXhosa	1
English	1
Other (Bemba)	1
All	35

Table 2 - Provinces and places of origin of interviewees

Province/place of origin	Number
Mpumalanga	9
North West	8
Limpopo	5
Free State	4
Gauteng	3
KwaZulu-Natal	2
Eastern Cape	1
Northern Cape	1
Zambia	1
Ireland	1
All	35

The picture that emerges is that the sample is ethnically diverse, though perhaps not as diverse as the population itself.

Arguably a more useful way of disaggregating interviewees by place of origin, albeit arbitrary, is to distinguish those coming from 'nearby' (e.g. Gauteng as well as certain towns in North West such as Ga-Rankua, Hebron, etc.) from those coming from farther away. Divided this way, 10 interviewees are from nearby, 23 are from elsewhere in South Africa, and two are foreigners, specifically from Zambia and Northern Ireland.

The average age across all interviewees is 42 years. The distribution of ages is as follows:

Table 3 - Distribution of ages of interviewees

Age	Number
20-29	4
30-39	12
40-49	10
50-59	8
60+	1
All	35

Few interviewees could be described as youth or as elderly. The vast majority rather are middle-aged. It turns out that those coming from 'nearby' (as understood above) are on average slightly older than those coming from farther away, at 45 years versus 41 years. However, the difference is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Finally, interviewees were asked when they first started staying at 134 Pretorius. Although responses do not necessarily imply continuity in staying at 134 Pretorius, in practice, most people who stay at 134 Pretorius do so more or less continuously.

Table 4 - When interviewees arrived at 134 Pretorius

How long ago started staying at 134 Pretorius	Number	Percentage
1 year ago or less	14	40%
2 years ago or more	14	37%
5 years ago or more	7	20%

A large proportion (40%) of interviewees have been at 134 Pretorius for a year or less, but by the same token more than half (60%) have been at 134 Pretorius for more than a year. A significant proportion (37%) have been staying at 134 Pretorius for two or more years, and one fifth (20%) for five years or more. If one excludes interviewees in their 20s, the proportions change to 35%, 39%, and 23%, respectively, because as one might expect, younger interviewees tend to have arrived more recently.

2.2 How people ended up on the streets of Pretoria

In the course of the discussions, interviewees were encouraged to explain how they ended up living on the street in Pretoria. Table 5 summarises, based on categories that were developed after-the-fact.

Table 5 Main reasons for coming to Pretoria

Why ended up in Pretoria	Number
Looking for work	27
- retrenched	11
- company closed down	3
Family problems and looking for work	3
Looking for assistance	3
Commute from nearby home	2
All	35

By far the main reason interviewees are in to Pretoria is to look for work. This includes 11 people who were retrenched from their jobs, and three who lost their jobs when their companies closed down. Of those who were previously employed, many list skills in the construction and engineering trades, e.g. George who had been a welder, Tilfred who worked in the automotive industry for 29 years and who had a variety of machine-working and engineering skills, Chris who had been a plasterer, Luke who had worked with electricity, and Adam who had been a steel fitter for eight years.

It should also be noted that some of those who had lost jobs had been working in the Pretoria area already, thus it was not a question of moving to Pretoria but rather of staying here. Also, as indicated above, about 10 interviewees are from communities quite close to Pretoria.

Of those who came to Pretoria looking for better opportunities, some appear disillusioned in that their expectations have not been realised. However, notwithstanding their marginal existence, others indicate that Pretoria still has much more to offer than where they came from. Titus, for example, a 35-year-old from Parys, Free State, prefers staying on the street in Pretoria to staying in Parys, even though he only manages to find occasional piece jobs.

Three interviewees are in Pretoria for a combination of family discord or misfortune, and economic necessity. This includes Jolene, an African woman who, when her husband died, decided to leave home because of friction with her in-laws; Julia, a 45-year-old woman originally from Northern Ireland, who for some reason was unable to access her husband's savings after he 'died in the mines' at their home in the Free State; and Jonas, a 33-year-old man from Sharpeville, Gauteng, who is on bad terms with his close relatives.

The category of those who are in Pretoria 'looking for assistance' also includes three people. First, Crispin a 53-year-old Zambian man who describes himself as an inventor, came to Pretoria to seek assistance from the CSIR after an invention or patent of his was allegedly stolen and sold. Second, Ishmael, a 31-year-old man from Botshabelo, Free State, was a member of a land reform project near his home; after the project became plagued with internal problems, Ishmael decided to come to Pretoria to seek assistance from the Department of Agriculture and the Land Bank. Third, Bheki, a 31-year-old man from Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal, originally came to Pretoria in search of work, but subsequently sustained an injury from a car accident. Upon release from hospital in Atteridgeville, he moved to 134 Pretorius Street in early 2003 to pursue a claim with the Road Accident Fund, and in particular to maintain pressure on his lawyers, who he suspects of stealing from him.

Finally, two of the respondents use 134 Pretorius as a convenient place to stay during the week although their homes are quite nearby. For example, Stanford is a 57-year-old man originally from Tzancen, Limpopo, but whose wife and children stay in Mabopane. Stanford

rooms Pretoria in search of piece jobs, and because he earns so little money economises by only returning to Mabopane on weekends. The situation is similar with Alexander, a 44-year-old man who travels home every weekend to Stinkwater, North West, to be with his wife and three children. Alexander scours Pretoria for piece jobs mainly in shopping malls, and cannot afford to go home every day.

In practice, there is not always a real distinction between these commuters, and some of the interviewees who were counted in the 'looking for work' category. For example, Sello, a 36-year-old man from Upington, Northern Cape, guards and washes cars in front of the HSRC, and with his earnings manages to call home to his wife and two children weekly, and travel home monthly. Benjamin, a 34-year-old man from Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, roams the Pretoria area for piece jobs, and travels back home once per month, or failing that at least calls. Having said that, the situations of Sello and Benjamin are more the exception than the rule, in that they appear to be able to earn more money than is the norm.

One could summarise by saying that interviewees have tended to end up on the streets of Pretoria due to some kind of misfortune: jobs loss, death of a breadwinner, trouble with family members, or some kind of problem which it is hoped an office in Pretoria will be able to solve. However, the most common sort of misfortune would appear to be the absence of economic opportunities in the place from which the interviewees originate.

2.3 Survival strategies

Interviewees were asked to describe what they do during the day and how they manage to survive. The main 'survival strategies' are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6 – Main survival strategies

Strategy	Number
Roams in search of piece-jobs	21
Goes to pick-up points in search of piece jobs	4
Roams and goes to pick-up points	3
Collects recyclables	3
Parks cars	1
NA*	3
All	35

* These three people are those in Pretoria temporarily while looking for assistance.

Overwhelmingly the main strategy is the search for 'piece jobs', 'stop-gappers', etc. The main strategy for finding piece jobs is to roam around Pretoria and outlying areas and directly ask for work. Interviewees reported different variations on this: some focus on residential areas, where they look for gardening jobs or jobs related to other domestic tasks; some go around to industrial areas on the outskirts of Pretoria; some focus on commercial businesses in central Pretoria; and some focus on government departments. Many if not most use their own mixture of these strategies.

The other way of trying to get piecework is to go to pick-up points, usually adjacent to large shops that sell building supplies. Of these, there are at least two well known ones within a 10 minute walk of 134 Pretorius Street. Some interviewees alternate between roaming and going to the pick-up points. One disadvantage of roaming is that it can be quite fatiguing. Robert, a 37-year-old former farm labourer from Mpumalanga, takes occasional days off to sit in the

park, because all of his job search is done on foot. However, Jackton, a 42-year-old man who arrived from Mokopane, Limpopo in 2001, states that the pick-up points are becoming overcrowded as ever more people come to Pretoria in search of work. Because the chances of getting a piece job at a pick-up point decline as the day progresses, some spend the morning at the pick-up point, and if they fail to get anything there will start roaming in the afternoon.

The other two survival strategies mentioned by interviewees are collecting and selling recyclables, and parking cars. Those who have visited 134 Pretorius late in the evening will be familiar with the trolleys laden with cardboard (see photos in Appendix D). However, the collection of recyclables is undertaken by only three of the interviewees, and only one man (Sello, mentioned above) relies principally on guarding and washing cars.

Interviewees were not asked what they earn from their various activities, but some did happen to mention specific figures. One of the recyclers, for example, indicates that on a typical day, someone doing what he does is able to earn around R20 or more. Sello, the man who guards and washes cars, indicates that he earns between R40 and R70 per day. However, Bertus, who washes cars on days when he fails to get a piece job at the local pick-up spot, earns around R10 per day from that activity. Finally, Benjamin, mentioned above, is able to earn enough from piece jobs to be able to afford the return trip home to Bushbuckridge almost every month.

On the other hand, many respondents refer to not being able to afford frequent travel even to family close by, for instance the R14 return fare to Mabopane or the R20 return fare to Stinkwater. Other interviewees complain about the 50 cent charge to use the toilet facilities at the nearby taxi rank on Skinner Street. However, the biggest evidence that most of those who reside at 134 Pretorius are just eking by is that they overwhelmingly rely on the food distributed for free by local religious groups, and some report only being able to eat the three or four times a week when the soup kitchen comes by. The role of soup kitchens is discussed more in the next section.

One disturbing finding is that a number of interviewees appear to be eligible for government benefits that they are not receiving. For example, Bheki, in addition to not managing to procure compensation out of the Road Accident Fund, has not been able to qualify for a disability grant because he does not know how to get the necessary physician's report. Siphokazi was injured in the leg around 1995 and later had a stroke, such that he can no longer do heavy work, but when asked about a disability grant says that he is 'in the process of sorting it out.' Abby, a 66-year-old man, had applied for his old age pension in July 2003, but as of December 2003 was still waiting. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to suggest that the people who spend the night at 134 Pretorius Street are predominantly those who 'fall through the cracks'; a surprising number report that their children at home receive Child Support Grants.

2.4 Perceived advantages and disadvantages of 134 Pretorius

The value of 134 Pretorius was approached from various angles, including asking interviewees what they liked and disliked about it, what the alternatives are and how they compare to 134 Pretorius, and whether they know who occupies the building.

One thing is absolutely clear from the interviews: the value of 134 Pretorius to the people who spend the night here has nothing to do with the fact that the HSRC owns the building or the Department of Social Development is a tenant. In fact, only one respondent is aware that the

building has anything to do with government, and one other knows that it is the 'Human Sciences Research Council.' Most interviewees have no idea, nor any interest.

Below is listed the frequency with which different perceived advantages or 'likes' about 134 Pretorius were mentioned. The middle column reports how many times a particular characteristic was mentioned as the first advantage (not that interviewees were asked to rank the advantages, merely that it happened to be mentioned first), and the right-hand column indicates the number of times a particular characteristic was mentioned at all.

Table 7 Perceived advantages/'likes' of staying at 134 Pretorius

Advantages/'likes'	First advantage mentioned	Number of mentions
Free food	13	19
Safety (near police)	8	20
Close to opportunities	4	7
Shelter	1	7
Friendliness of others	1	7
Low transport costs	1	2
None	1	1
Other	1	1
NA	5	5
All	35	69

Among the 'first mentions', the availability of food is the most important. In fact food is made available three or more evenings per week, usually by a Muslim religious group that sets up just on the other side of Schubart Street.

According to HSRC Security, the reason for setting up there rather than at 134 Pretorius itself is that HSRC Security earlier asked various religious groups who operated soup kitchens directly in front of the HSRC building to leave. This included at least two church groups, neither of which still operate soup kitchens in the immediate area. HSRC Security was concerned that if too much food was available in front of the HSRC too consistently, more homeless people would be attracted to the site, and the hygiene and waste problem would become even worse. This may well be true, however even despite succeeding in limiting the amount of free food available close by, free food still constitutes one of the main benefits of staying at 134 Pretorius as perceived by interviewees. However, the idea that food is one of the main reasons for staying at 134 Pretorius is in a sense misleading, in the sense that the food is available at 134 Pretorius (or very close by) presumably because the charities that provide it are trying to make it available to people where they can be found in relatively large numbers. If for some reason the people residing at 134 Pretorius were to relocate en masse to some other address in Pretoria, very likely the soup kitchens would follow.

The advantage of 134 Pretorius that turns out to be more intrinsic to the address is its being across the street from Pretoria's central police station. The sense of security afforded by proximity to the police station was the first-mentioned advantage by the second largest number of interviewees (8), and was the most mentioned of the advantages of 134 Pretorius overall (20). Although it was not expressed as such, it stands to reason that security is of such great importance because of how vulnerable people are when they are sleeping.

This is not to suggest that 134 Pretorius is safe for the people who reside here, but it is perceived to be better than some of the alternatives (see 2.5 below). Interviewees still

complained of robbery, occasional violence, and general bad behaviour, but relative to what they fear they would experience elsewhere this is considered mild.

The relationship with the police is curious. Unfortunately, the rushed nature of this research was such that no interviews were conducted with the police officers or police officials themselves. However, from the statements of interviewees it appears that on the whole the perception of the police among those residing at 134 Pretorius is one of appreciation and gratitude, with one interviewee mentioning that the police are 'kind', and another indicating that some police officers sometimes give out food. This is notwithstanding that numerous interviewees recalled being chased away from the pavement in front of the police station itself.

Other advantages of 134 Pretorius rate quite a bit lower in the estimation of interviewees. Not surprisingly, the shelter from rain afforded by the colonnade is also cited as an advantage of 134 Pretorius, but a far smaller number of interviewees mention it than mention food and safety. Some responses clearly reflect a perception about the advantages of staying in west-central Pretoria generally rather than at 134 Pretorius specifically (i.e. 'close to opportunities' and 'low transport costs'). A surprisingly large number of interviewees mention their appreciation of the sense of warmth and friendliness among the people staying at 134 Pretorius.

The disadvantages and 'dislikes' mentioned are equally diverse, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Perceived disadvantages/'dislikes' of staying at 134 Pretorius

Disadvantages/'dislikes'	Number of mentions
Drunkenness/noise/bad behaviour	17
Poor hygiene	6
General dislike of life on the street	4
Crime	3
Other	2
NA	11

The most commonly mentioned dislike of interviewees is the noisy, drunken behaviour of certain others who stay at 134 Pretorius. It is difficult to know how many people are responsible for this disruptive behaviour, but the casual observation by the interviewers is that only a handful of those staying at 134 Pretorius are in a position to buy alcohol on a regular basis. There is one woman in particular (who was not interviewed) who appears to be responsible for a large share of the alcohol-related disruption, and who is even well known to HSRC staff for her erratic and sometimes aggressive behaviour.

The second most commonly mentioned dislike about 134 Pretorius is the poor hygiene. Interviewees complain that people tend to relieve themselves anywhere.

A number of interviewees express the view that, although 134 Pretorius is better than the alternatives, having to sleep here is still far from a desirable lifestyle. Interviewees bemoan sleeping in the open, as well as 'living on the street' in general.

2.5 Alternatives

Interviewees were asked whether they sometimes stay at places other than 134 Pretorius, and if so what are the relative advantages and disadvantages of these other places. Apart from those who periodically leave 134 Pretorius to visit their homes, in general those who reside at 134 Pretorius do not alternate between 134 Pretorius and other sites. However, some interviewees mention having used alternatives in the past:

- Crispin, the Zambian man mentioned above in connection with the stolen invention, stayed for one month in mid-2003 at an inner-city shelter for refugees funded by the Jesuit Refugee Service; however, because he was not granted asylum by Home Affairs, he was eventually asked to leave.
- Upon arriving in Pretoria in September or October 2003 to look for work, Itumeleng, a 38-year-old man from Bothaville, Free State, initially tried to stay at Church Square, but was chased away by security guards.
- Johannes, a 27-year-old man from the nearby town of Hebron, North West, describes how when he first came to Pretoria in 1999, he stayed on the street for one year in Marabastad; however, Marabastad was too violent, and then in any even he and others were forced to leave by the city council.
- Abby is a 66-year-old man who started staying at 134 Pretorius in late 2002. In June 2003 he relocated to a parking area near the Technikon Pretoria, but disliked being there on his own and was far from any soup kitchens. He returned to 134 Pretorius after one or two months.
- Julius, a 25-year-old man who recently arrived at 134 Pretorius, stayed for a brief while near the New Apostolic Church further down on Pretorius, but relocated for reasons that are not clear.
- Kevin, a 36-year-old man who was retrenched from the mines after 11 years of work, arrived in Pretoria in 2001 and for a few days stayed at a taxi rank. He then made the acquaintance of someone who told him about 134 Pretorius Street and decided to relocate here.

Apart from these direct experiences, a number of interviewees mention alternatives that they know of or have contemplated:

- David, a 46-year-old man who arrived at 134 Pretorius in 2002, refers to the advantages of staying at 134 Pretorius relative to staying at 'the pipelines.' 'The pipelines' apparently refer to construction sites where homeless people sometimes stay temporarily, because these sites are easy to get access to and can provide reasonable shelter; however, the pipelines are thought to be dangerous.
- Bertus, a 43-year-old man from the East Rand who also came to 134 Pretorius in 2002, indicates that at one point he thought of staying in Sunnyside, but then decided that Sunnyside is too dangerous.
- Sello, the man from Upington who parks cars, at one point considered staying in an informal settlement near Atteridgeville or Mamelodi, but then judged that the transport costs into Pretoria would be too great.

Among all of these examples, however, and apart from the exception of the shelter for asylum seekers, it is notable that there is not one mention of an organised shelter of any sort. It is not clear whether organised shelters are absent in Pretoria, or whether interviewees are simply unaware of them. However, given the evident efficacy of word-of-mouth, which is how many of those residing at 134 Pretorius find out about it in the first place, it seems unlikely that interviewees are simply ignorant of shelters to which they might rather turn.

3 The consequences of a fence?

This study does not allow us to say with any certainty what would likely happen in the event a fence is erected along the lines of the one proposed. The remarks that follow are therefore largely speculative, albeit grounded on the findings from the interviews.

In the event that a fence is erected, the few who are able might be induced to abandon their present economic strategies in favour of something safer but less remunerative, for example commuting daily into Pretoria, rather than weekly or not at all.

For the rest, the feeling of the research team is that it is unlikely people will move far. Given the over-riding importance of security - relative to shelter and most other characteristics apart from free food - in all likelihood people will attempt to stay close to the police station. First and foremost, this would mean spreading along the more restricted pavement between the street and the new HSRC fence. This would mean that some but not all of HSRC's concerns about hygiene would remain.

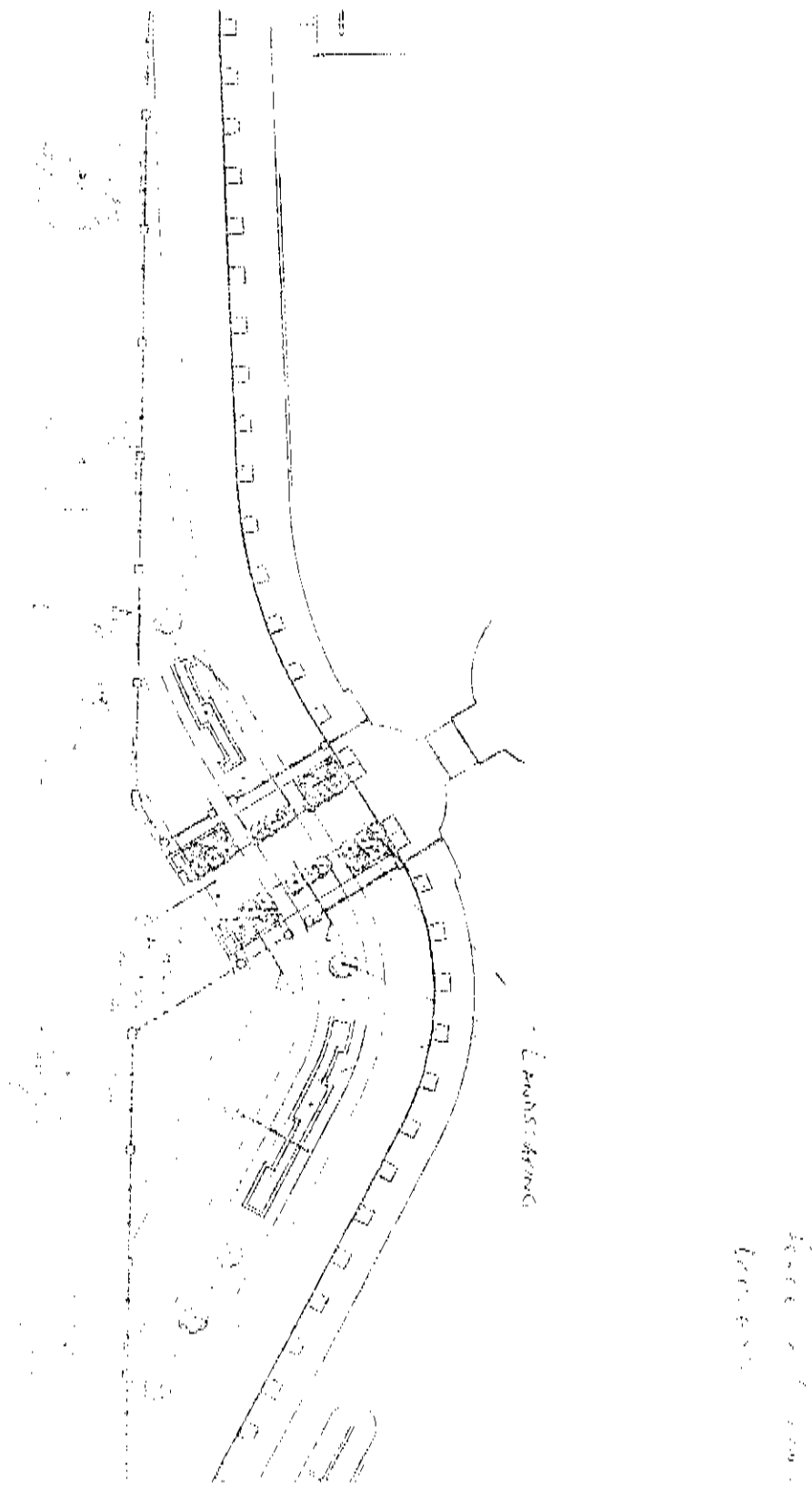
To some extent, people might also relocate to the pavement in front of the court to the west of the police station, to the pavement in front of the building to the east of the HSRC building, and possibly into the police station's parking facility to the west of the HSRC building. This last possibility is the most interesting, because roughly 20-25 individuals are accommodated there already with the consent of the police, and in principle there would be capacity for one or two dozen more. In addition, because police are passing in and out all night, it affords the same sense of protection as the area directly across from the police station. However, these premises offer no toilet or washing facilities, and most people staying there relieve themselves on the street-side of the wall enclosing the parking area.

As for the impact on people's lives, that is also difficult to predict. One point is that the erection of a fence would not likely cause people to go hungry, or at least it would not cause them to go more hungry than they already are. In the event they do not move far, they will still be close to the same soup kitchens; if instead they rather do move, then they will likely find other soup kitchens or the soup kitchens will find them.

To the extent people manage to maintain proximity to the police station, then the impact on their personal safety will probably be modest. For those who are not successful in staying close - for example if they end up too far east or west on Pretorius - the perceived and actual impact could be dire.

The single recommendation offered by this report is that the HSRC would be prudent to delay the decision to erect a fence at 134 Pretorius Street. Time and resources need to be devoted to a proper evaluation of the options, and genuine consultation is needed with possible partners, including the Department of Social Development, the South African Police Services, and the Gauteng Department of Health.

Appendix A - Plan for fence



Appendix B - Aide memoire

Biographical data

- Gender
- Age
- Race
- Mother tongue

Personal histories/stories

- Where is the interviewee from originally, and what is the interviewee's background?
- Does the interviewee consider himself/herself homeless?
- What are the circumstances that led the interviewee to be homeless, or to be here?
- Where was the interviewee just before becoming homeless and what was he/she doing?

Survival strategies

- Where does the interviewee go during the day? How does he/she survive?
- Does the interviewee receive any benefits/services from government?
- Does the interviewee have an ID book?
- Who does the interviewee rely on in times of need?
- Does the interviewee still have family somewhere? Any contact with them?

134 Pretorius

- When did the interviewee first start coming to 134 Pretorius?
- How many nights per week does the interviewee spend the night here?
- Are there some times of year that the person comes here more or less? Why?
- How are new-comers treated/accommodated/dealt with?
- What are the 'rules' that govern how things function on a given night? Is anyone in charge?
- What are the main things the interviewee doesn't like about staying at 134 Pretorius?
- Does the interviewee know what the building is used for?

Alternatives

- At what other places has the interviewee stayed in the last month or so? Describe these other places (e.g. if anyone runs them and if so who, what the interviewee likes about them, how many people generally stay there, etc.)
- Does the interviewee spend more time at 134 Pretorius than at these other places?
- What are the advantages of 134 Pretorius?
- How important is it for the interviewee to be able to come here versus other places?

Appendix C – List of interviewees with descriptive information

Number	Name*	Gender	Age	Population Group	Language	Where from	Arrived at 134 Pretorius
1	Jason	Male	56	African	SiSwati	Nelspruit – MPU	January 2003
2	Crispin	Male	53	African	Bemba	Zambia	August 2003
3	Ismael	Male	31	African	Sesotho	Botshabelo - FS	December 2003
4	Joshua	Male	57	African	N. Sotho	Hamnanskraal – NW	June 2002
5	Abby	Male	66	African	N. Sotho	Hamnanskraal NW	October 2002
6	Johannes	Male	27	African	Setswana	Ilebron – NW	2000
7	David	Male	46	African	IsiNdebele	Belfast – MPU	2002
8	Tilfred	Male	52	African	Setswana	Ga-Rankua – NW	2001
9	Bheki	Male	31	African	IsiZulu	Newcastle – KZN	early 2003
10	Chris	Male	44	African	IsiNdebele	KwaNdebele – MPU	January 2003
11	George	Male	29	African	Setswana	Sasolburg – FS	November 2003
12	Phuti	Male	44	African	N. Sotho	Standerton – MPU	1995
13	Titus	Male	35	African	IsiZulu	Parys – FS	February 2002
14	Bertus	Male	43	African	N. Sotho	East Rand – G	April 2002
15	Jolene	Female	58	African	Setswana	Mamelodi – G	1999
16	Itumeleng	Male	38	African	Sesotho	Bothaville – FS	October 2003
17	Julius	Male	25	African	Setswana	Pankop – MPU	December 2003
18	Luke	Male	58	African	N. Sotho	KwaNdebele – MPU	2002
19	Stanford	Male	57	African	Xitsonga	Tzaneen – LM	1995
20	Michael	Male	37	African	Xitsonga	Mabopane – NW	September 2003
21	Thabo	Male	35	African	N. Sotho	KwaNdebele – MPU	1998
22	Julia	Female	45	White	English	Northern Ireland	March 2003
23	Benjamin	Male	34	African	Xitsonga	Bushbuckridge MPU	June 2003
24	Jackton	Male	42	African	IsiNdebele	Mokopane (Warmbaths) – LM	2001
25	Robert	Male	37	African	SiSwati	Likazi (Nelspruit) – MPU	February 2003
26	Alexander	Male	44	African	IsiNdebele	Stinkwater – NW	March 2002
27	Kevin	Male	36	African	Setswana	Lehurutse (Rustenburg) NW	2001
28	Adam	Male	47	African	IsiZulu	Hamnarsdale – KZN	1998
29	Jonathan	Male	40	African	N. Sotho	Tshoeneespoort – LM	1999
30	Peter	Male	31	African	Setswana	Marapyane – NW	2003
31	Amos	Male	38	African	Xitsonga	Tzaneen – LM	2001
32	Gabriel	Male	45	African	Tshivenda	Venda – LM	1995
33	Jonas	Male	28	African	Sesotho	Sharpville – G	2003
34	Siphokazi	Male	53	African	IsiXhosa	Matatiele – EC	1995
35	Sello	Male	36	African	Setswana	Upington - NC	1997

* All names are fictitious.

Appendix D – Selected photos

