

Chapter 14

Livelihoods, Food Security and Poverty

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Enjoying vegetables harvested under the DRFN's Livelihood Support Programme (LISUP) at Skoonheid Resettlement Farm in Omaheke Region in 2012

14.1 Introduction

A common characteristic of San communities in pre-colonial and early colonial times was that hunting and gathering played a significant role in terms of livelihood strategies. San communities were increasingly deprived of access to natural resources – and thus saw their opportunities for hunting and gathering diminish – during the last century, although land dispossession had already

commenced much earlier (see section 3.2, pages 24-25). Circumstances and developments differed according to area, the impact of colonialism in the area, and San relationships with people of neighbouring ethnic groups. Many San became farmworkers on commercial farms (e.g. in Omaheke, Oshikoto, Kunene and Otjozondjupa Regions); some found their livelihoods increasingly linked to, and dependent on, neighbouring ethnic groups (e.g. in Ohangwena, Omusati and Omaheke Regions); and some continued hunting and gathering – at least for a while – on land that was not yet occupied by others (e.g. in Kavango, Ohangwena and Caprivi Regions), or land which had been designated as a protected area or game reserve (e.g. the Hai||om in Etosha until the 1950s). In the 1970s, a small number of San were granted a homeland – called “Bushmanland” – in the areas known today as Tsumkwe District West and Tsumkwe District East in Otjozondjupa Region.

After Namibia’s Independence in 1990, San communities had to further adjust their livelihood strategies. For example, many San were dismissed as commercial farmworkers as a consequence of the introduction of the Labour Act 6 of 1992,¹ and they had to seek new livelihoods in nearby towns (e.g. Gobabis, Outjo and Tsumeb), or alternatively they went to communal areas occupied by other groups (e.g. in Omaheke Region). Others moved to group resettlement projects under the National Resettlement Programme implemented by the Namibian Government, or, more recently, to the resettlement farms planned for San communities by the San Development Programme (SDP) resorting under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). The competition for communal land as a resource for livelihoods (i.e. livestock grazing and agriculture) increased further in the communal areas (e.g. in Ohangwena, Omaheke and Otjozondjupa), and San communities found themselves even more restricted in their use of natural resources due to the increased exploitation of the land and the erection of illegal fences.

The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Programme implemented by the government over the last 15 years has uplifted many rural communities, but only a limited number of San have actually benefited from it: those in former Bushmanland (where the San form the majority of inhabitants); and, to a more limited degree, those in the Bwabwata National Park (BNP) (Kavango/Caprivi), in the Mashi Conservancy (Caprivi) and in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy (Ohangwena) (see the applicable regional chapters). As discussed in more detail in Chapter 13 on access to land, the resettlement projects and farms where the San now live do not yet provide sustainable livelihoods for their beneficiaries, who are usually highly dependent on outside support (from both the government and NGOs).

In the following sections we present the San Study findings regarding the main livelihood strategies employed by the San in Namibia. Later, the results of the wealth-ranking exercises conducted during the field research are discussed, giving insight into participants’ perceptions of poverty and the internal stratifications of San communities, and their perceptions of their situation as compared to that of other Namibian communities. Thereafter, based on our research findings, we assess San strategies for coping with food insecurity, and discuss the role of external support for San livelihoods. Finally, we draw conclusions and offer recommendations concerning San livelihoods.

14.2 Current livelihoods strategies

San in Namibia today generally survive through Old Age Pensions, food aid (mainly the San Feeding Programme under the OPM), and casual work and piecework (the difference between the latter two is explained on pages 468-469). Other livelihood strategies are pursued to varying

¹ Repealed and replaced by Labour Act 15 of 2004, which was then replaced by Labour Act 11 of 2007.

degrees, depending on the ecological, socio-economic and political circumstances of individual San communities, and on the extent and quality of external support initiatives.

14.2.1 Pensions and social welfare grants

Namibia is one of only six sub-Saharan countries that provide a monthly, non-contributory pension to its elderly citizens (Pelham 2007: 1). At the time of our research, every Namibian citizen aged 60 and older residing in the country was entitled to receive a monthly pension of N\$550.² Namibia inherited the concept of a non-contributory pension from the South African Government at Independence, but made substantial changes to it – by way of the National Pension Act 10 of 1992 which forms the regulatory framework under which the Old Age Pension is currently administered in Namibia.

The Old Age Pension was identified as a very significant livelihood strategy among the San across the regions, chiefly because it provides a regular income to the beneficiaries and their dependants. Indeed, in many San households at all of our research sites, this pension is the main regular source of household income, or even the only regular source. The Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (NHIES) of 2009/2010 found that 20.1% of Khoisan speakers in Namibia rely on pensions³ as their main source of income, which is nearly double the national average of 11.1% (Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) 2012: 57).⁴ The San use the Old Age Pension money to cover the costs of basic items such as food, clothing and school-related necessities. However, the financial support provided by a pension recipient to a San household is often eroded by an ongoing crippling debt burden; in fact most of the pension money is spent on settling household debts on the day of the pension payout, leaving very little to survive on for the next month – and resulting, of course, in new debt commitments.

In addition, a number of challenges were said to be limiting the San's access to Old Age Pensions. For example, inability to register for the pension was a common complaint at most sites in all of the study regions (see also National Planning Commission (NPC) 2012a: 65). The San explained that this was due to their lack of national documents (an ID and/or birth certificate being essential for registration) and their inability to afford transport to towns to register for a pension. The lack of national documents is most widespread in remote villages where a significant number of San live. These problems are compounded by a communication barrier between the San and civil servants (due to their differing languages), which was said to hinder the acquisition of national documents. In some areas – such as Xeidang village (Kavango Region), Farm Six settlement (Oshikoto), Okaukuejo restcamp (Etosha, Oshana), Makaravan settlement (Caprivi) and Skoonheid Resettlement Project (Omaheke) – San also cited a misrepresentation of their ages (i.e. under 60 rather than 60+) on their IDs as a reason for their not receiving an Old Age Pension. Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan 2012/13 to 2016/17 (NDP4) states that 91% of people aged 60+ receive an Old Age Pension (NPC 2012a: 65). Although quantitative data about Namibia's San population is missing (see section 1.2.9, page 13ff), based on our findings it can be reliably assumed that many of the 9% not receiving an Old Age Pension are San – others being members of other marginalised groups. Moreover, those San whose IDs wrongly reflect an age younger than 60 would not be covered in the NPC data.

² In April 2013 the amount was increased to N\$600 per month.

³ The NHIES 2009/2010 included "State old age pension" and "Pensions from employment" under "Pension" (NHIES 2012: 209).

⁴ See section 1.2.9 (page 13) for the need to treat these figures with some caution: although they must be regarded as only a rough reflection of the situation, they do give an indication of approximate tendencies in the absence of better data.

14.2.2 Food aid

Food aid is provided by the government and is often the only measure by which San are prevented from starving. The San benefit from a number of different types of food aid, including drought relief food, food for work, and the OPM San Feeding Programme (SFP). Drought relief food – which is an emergency response collated by the OPM's Directorate of Disaster Risk Management – is given to all Namibians who face hardship because of severe drought, irrespective of ethnicity or language group. Food for work is given on condition that people work on infrastructure projects that are of public benefit, such as road construction. The SFP, under the OPM's Division of San Development (DSD), targets the San as a group vulnerable to food shortages because of their marginalisation.⁵ Alarming, 19.5% of Khoisan speakers rely on drought relief assistance and in-kind receipts⁶ as their main source of income (NSA 2012: 57), compared with 1.6% of the national population on average.

Information provided by the San Study participants regarding the frequency, quality and quantity of food distributed to them reflected inconsistencies both within and across the regions.⁷ Moreover, the San were rarely sure of what kind of food aid they had been receiving (i.e. food received under the drought relief programme or food distributed under the SFP), making a detailed analysis of the support they receive difficult.⁸ In some areas food distribution appeared to be quite regular, while in many areas it was said to be sporadic. Just as the frequency of delivery varied considerably, so too the quantities of supplies under the SFP could be inconsistent, though they tended to include one or two 12.5 kg bags of mealie-meal and one or two 750 ml bottles of cooking oil per household per month, and possibly (very rarely) tinned fish or beans. However, those responsible for the distribution of food may determine the quantity given out according to the size of the household. Despite these irregularities, food aid proved to be an important source of food for the San in all regions surveyed in this study, with the exception of Omusati Region where the San reportedly received only the drought relief food that was also provided to members of other ethnic groups.

Reported inconsistencies in food-aid provision imply that the San communities which are regularly in urgent need of these supplies for their food security cannot bank on receiving it regularly. Also, the monthly rations fall far short for many households,⁹ and moreover, mealie-meal and oil alone – even if supplied in sufficient quantities, which was not often the case – cannot prevent malnutrition as they lack protein and other essential nutrients.

14.2.3 Casual work and piecework

Casual work and piecework are also important livelihood strategies for San households.¹⁰ 'Casual work' refers to the non-pensionable and informal work arrangement whereby an employer pays the worker a wage at the end of the month or a specified period (e.g. for herding livestock). 'Piecework',

⁵ See www.sandevlopment.gov.na/san-feeding-programme.htm.

⁶ In the case of Khoisan-speaking households, this would include the food received from the SFP under the OPM.

⁷ Despite several attempts, we were unable to schedule an interview with the OPM staff responsible.

⁸ This is further complicated by the fact that the programmes have changed over the years.

⁹ The *Emergency Food Security Assessment in Communal and Resettlement Areas of Namibia* (OPM 2013: 11) calculates, for example, 12 kg of cereal and 1.8 kg of pulses as an individual adult ration per month. Therefore it is obvious that 12.5 kg (or occasionally 25 kg) of mealie-meal per household does not suffice to support even a small household, and the average size of Khoisan-speaking households is 4.7 persons (NSA 2012: 27).

¹⁰ Overall, 47.2% of Khoisan-speaking households in Namibia rely on salaries and wages as their main source of income, compared to 49.2% of the population in general (NSA 2012: 57). However, given the high unemployment rate among the San, it is clear that most of these 'salaries and wages' derive from casual work and piecework.

on the other hand, is an informal labour arrangement whereby the employer pays a pre-agreed amount after a much shorter period (often just a few hours) for a smaller-scale task. Various kinds of casual work and piecework are available to the San, such as clearing crop fields, cultivation tasks, repairing houses, fetching water for shebeen operators, collecting firewood and herding livestock. These types of labour are remunerated with money, food items and/or non-food items, and where the medium of exchange is money, the rates vary from one site to another and according to the job done. For example, in parts of Ohangwena Region at the time of our field research, cultivation work paid between N\$20 and N\$50 per day, while in Kavango a similar form of piecework paid only up to N\$20 per day, from which N\$5 would be deducted for food provided by the employer. Payment also depends on the agreement reached between the employer and worker: the types of piecework done by San men usually differ to those done by San women, and specific cases in Ohangwena revealed that women earned less money than men for piecework in general. Furthermore, across the regions there was less piecework and casual work available for women than for men. San children might also do piecework to supplement the household income, and this appeared to be an accepted practice in most San households across the regions, even though it had the potential to compromise the children's access to education.

The availability of piecework and casual work depends on the location of the San communities. For example, in rural villages where the majority of residents are San (e.g. remote villages in Nyae Nyae and N̄a Jaqna Conservancies in Otjozondjupa Region), such work is generally scarce. In rural areas where the majority of residents are members of other ethnic groups who engage in crop cultivation or animal husbandry (e.g. in Caprivi, Ohangwena and Omusati Regions), opportunities for piecework and casual work are better – in terms of both quantity and diversity. For residents of settlements (e.g. Oshivelo in Oshikoto Region) and resettlement projects in the vicinity of commercial farms (e.g. resettlement projects in Omaheke Region), piecework and casual work on these farms are available at certain times of year. In general, however, opportunities for remunerated work are most likely to be found in urban areas (e.g. Rundu, Katima Mulilo, Outjo and Gobabis).

In rural areas the availability of piecework and casual work is also always dependent on the seasons: in crop-farming regions such as Omusati, Ohangwena, Kavango and Caprivi, opportunities for piecework increase in times of tilling, planting and harvesting, and in general there are more opportunities for casual work in these northern crop-growing areas compared to the drier, eastern parts of the country.

Construction and maintenance activities can provide another source of income for San people, if and when San are hired for such work in their own communities or in communities in surrounding areas. Often, however, such work will only be available to the San if it is organised by NGOs with donor support. The government and the private sector (both working through public tender procedures) have very rarely organised employment projects of this nature specifically targeting the San as casual workers or temporary employees. There may be scope for more opportunities in construction and maintenance if the San can be brought together and organised. For example, between October 2012 and May 2013, the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) and the Habitafrica Foundation engaged local San people in the Drimiopsis and Skoonheid Resettlement Projects in brickmaking, the construction of dry sanitation units, and the upgrading of the water reticulation network and kindergarten facilities. About 50 temporary employment opportunities were created in the process, which generated a combined income of N\$289 000 for the San workers concerned over a period of seven months.

14.2.4 Employment

The wealth-ranking exercises carried out in this study underscored that very few San are formally employed, especially in the skilled labour market, and this is substantiated by the Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2009/2010. According to the NHIES data (and our own calculations based on that data),¹¹ 50% of the Khoisan speakers who were considered to be ‘economically active’ were actually unemployed (NHIES data set, NSA), as compared with 34% of the Namibian population in general and 37% of the rural population (NSA 2012: 44).¹² This underlines that unemployment among the San is considerably higher than among other language groups in Namibia.

Of those Khoisan speakers whom the NHIES 2009/2010 categorised as “employed”, 61% were engaged in “agriculture, forestry and hunting”, but only 13% of the employed Khoisan speakers were engaged in “subsistence farming”, since the majority (64%) stated that they were ‘paid as an employee by private employers’ and 11% ‘by government’ (NHIES data set, NSA). This implies that many of the San who engaged in “agriculture, forestry and hunting” did so on a remunerated or paid basis, but based on the findings of this San Study, the authors have concluded that, contrary to the NHIES categorisation, this work is usually undertaken as casual work or piecework rather than through formal employment contracts (see section 14.2.3). Moreover, San people’s remuneration for agricultural work (casual or piecework) in the rural areas can take many forms: money, food (e.g. maize-meal or *mahangu* (millet) flour), and even alcohol (e.g. *otombo* – home-brewed beer).

Nevertheless, both our research (see section 14.3.3) and the NHIES 2009/2010 indicate that salaries and wages are important for the San; in fact 47% of the Khoisan-speaking households considered “salaries and wages” as their main source of income (NSA 2012: 57). In this sense San households are quite different from the average rural Namibian household, in that “salaries and wages” are the main source of income for only 30% of rural households in Namibia generally, and subsistence farming is normally more important as the main source of income (40% of households). On the other hand, only 4% of Khoisan-speaking households cited subsistence farming as their main source of income (NSA 2012: 57). The relative importance of salaries and wages for the San perhaps underscores the importance of immediate returns for work for a significant portion of the San population (see also Chapter 15 on culture, discrimination and development).

NGOs and community-based organisations working with the San do employ a number of San as staff members. For example, at the time of our field research, the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) had four San employees (including the Namibian San Council Coordinator),¹³ and most the employees of the Kyaramacan Association in the BNP were Khwe.¹⁴ In Otjondjupa Region, the Nyae Nyae and Nꞁa Jaqna Conservancies offer employment

¹¹ The authors had to request access to the NHIES 2009/2010 data set to compute the unemployment rate among Khoisan speakers as the NSA had not disaggregated employment and unemployment by language group in its NHIES report.

¹² The NHIES 2009/2010 asked all persons aged eight years and older about their economic activity status during the seven days prior to the reference night. A person was regarded as having worked if he/she had worked for at least one hour for pay, profit or family gain during that period, or had a job or business or other economic or farming activity to return to. Thus, people who had worked for at least one hour but had not engaged in any other economic activity or paid work (e.g. students or homemakers) were considered to be ‘economically active’ and hence part of the labour force (NSA 2012: 40). To be considered ‘unemployed’ by the NHIES 2009/2010, a person had to meet three criteria, i.e. he/she had to be: (1) without work; (2) available for work; and (3) actively looking for work. For determining a broad unemployment rate, only the first two criteria are applied, and for a stricter rate, the third criterion is applied to exclude people who are not actively looking for work (NSA 2012: 44).

¹³ Information provided by Victoria Haraseb, WIMSA, 11 November 2013.

¹⁴ Information provided by Friedrich Alpers, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), 26 June 2013.

opportunities to a few Ju|'hoansi and !Xun, mostly as game rangers and tour guides. At the time of our field research, Nyae Nyae had 23 Ju|'hoan employees and Nṛa Jaqna had a total of 12 !Xun and Ju|'hoan employees.¹⁵

14.2.5 Gathering veldfood and hunting

Our study found that veldfood remains a significant contributor to the San household diet, albeit to varying degrees. A number of tubers, berries, fruits and worms were identified as supplying relish for eating with the maize or *mahangu* obtained as food aid or from piecework and/or crop fields. Gathering such food is seen as both a cultural practice and a way of supplementing insufficient and irregular food supplies, and participants in the research discussions at most sites were able to list a number of veldfoods with which they were familiar. However, gathering activities today are restricted by people's limited access to land (see Chapter 13 on access to land). Most San groups now have very limited access to veldfood, as most of them live:

- in settlements and on resettlement farms on commercial land (e.g. in Omaheke, Otjozondjupa, Kunene and Oshikoto Regions); or
- in urban areas (e.g. Outjo, Gobabis, Katima Mulilo and Eenhana); or
- in areas adjacent to small-scale farms (e.g. Xeidang village in Kavango); or
- on communal land where land is shared with cattle farmers from other ethnic groups, and where access to land can be further impeded by the erection of illegal fences (e.g. in the area of Goreseb village in Omaheke and on Farm Six in Oshikoto); or
- in national parks (the core zone of the BNP and the whole of the Etosha National Park); or
- in areas used by other ethnic groups where an overexploitation of natural resources has taken place (e.g. in Caprivi and Ohangwena).

San groups living in conservancies, on the other hand, have fairly good access to veldfood, thus gathering still plays an important role in sustaining livelihoods and diversifying the inhabitants' diet.

A few San at a number of research sites across the country admitted that they still hunt small game occasionally – especially in times of hunger – but hunting was rarely reported to be a significant livelihood strategy today. This is partly attributable to hunting being strictly regulated in recent times – initially by the Nature Conservation Ordinance No. 4 of 1975, and since 1996 by the Nature Conservation Amendment Act 5 of 1996; indeed the latter has outlawed hunting in many areas. In addition – as in the case of veldfood gathering – population growth and the occupation of land by farmers from other ethnic groups have reduced San people's access to land, thereby limiting their opportunities to hunt, and privately owned land and parts of communal areas have become inaccessible to San who would otherwise hunt and gather there. Moreover in certain areas wildlife numbers have been considerably reduced or have disappeared altogether.

Nyae Nyae Conservancy is an exception in this regard because the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) explicitly accepts hunting in the traditional manner there, and the conservancy and the MET have agreed on guidelines to serve as regulations for “traditional hunting”. These regulations restrict the hunting of certain species, and allow for the use of ‘traditional’ hunting tools only (e.g. bows, spears and traps), i.e. they forbid the use of guns, horses and dogs. Therefore, in the villages of Nyae Nyae Conservancy, and uniquely at our research sites in this conservancy, hunting was regarded as an important livelihood strategy.

¹⁵ Information provided by Lara Diez, Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDFN), on 19 October 2013.

14.2.6 Subsistence crop production

According to the NHIES 2009/2010 data, “subsistence farming” was the main source of income for 23.1% of all households in Namibia (NSA 2012: 57). (Although not explicitly stated in the NHIES report, this is assumed to include both animal husbandry and crop production.) Subsistence farming by the Khoisan-speaking population is significantly lower, with only 3.7% of all Khoisan speakers recorded as subsistence farmers.

The factors that generally limit the San’s involvement in crop production are largely attributable to a lack of access to land, unfavourable climatic conditions, a lack of agricultural equipment and limited support in the provision of the required farm inputs. A shortage of fencing material or backlogs in the maintenance of fences to stop roaming livestock from destroying crops also play a role (see Omusati chapter, page 306). Another major factor is the pressure among the San to earn income to meet immediate household needs through working for direct gain. In certain areas (e.g. in Ohangwena Region), this practice has been further influenced by the missionary presence in the past (a factor which is discussed in detail in Chapter 15 on culture – see e.g. section 15.4.1 on page 513). However, none of these factors apply to all San groups in the same way: in Omusati and Caprivi (outside the BNP), for example, a lack of access to land was not observed as a hindrance to crop production, but the lack of fences and equipment for sustainable crop production did hinder this activity. Conversely, at research sites in Kavango and Oshikoto, a lack of access to land was identified as a major constraint to subsistence crop farming by the respective San groups, and a lack of fences also played a role (e.g. in Tsintsabis Resettlement Project in Oshikoto).

According to the NHIES 2009/2010 data, a mere 11.7% of Khoisan speakers own land for crop production, and only 18.6% have access to land for this purpose (NSA 2012: 112). In line with these statistics, crop production was rarely mentioned in our research discussions as one of the most important livelihood strategies for the San. Nevertheless, at certain sites agriculture was reported to contribute to the San livelihoods to considerable though varying degrees. Following is an overview of the importance of crop production for San livelihoods at various research sites:

- At some sites there was no crop production taking place.
Examples: Wiwi village and Ndama neighbourhood (in Rundu) in Kavango Region; Mushangara village in the BNP; Corridor 13 settlement, Goreseb village and Blouberg Resettlement Project in Omaheke Region; Oshivelo settlement in Oshikoto Region; N#animh village in Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Otjozondjupa Region; and Ouholamo neighbourhood, Omiishi neighbourhood, and Oshikoha and Onane villages in Ohangwena Region.
- Small-scale backyard gardening was taking place, providing small amounts of crops and fresh produce which was usually consumed by the household within a couple of days/weeks.
Examples: Kanaan neighbourhood (in Epako, Gobabis) in Omaheke; Etosha Poort ‘location’ (in Outjo) in Kunene; Okaukuejo restcamp in Etosha National Park, Oshana; Tsintsabis Resettlement Project in Oshikoto; and Xeidang village in Kavango.
- Small-scale crop production with the produce lasting for a few weeks/months was taking place.
Examples: Likwaterera village, Mushashane village and Omega I Resettlement Project in Kavango; Mulanga and Dam/Bito villages in Caprivi; and Mangetti Dune and Luhebo villages in N#ana Jaqna Conservancy, Otjozondjupa.
- Small- to medium-scale crop production was undertaken at resettlement projects in Ohangwena and Omaheke through substantial amounts of external support from the Namibian Government, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the DRFN and the Habitafrica Foundation (see section 14.5.3 on external support for crop production, page 488).

- Significant crop production without major external support, and which contributed significantly to the San's livelihoods, was taking place at all sites in Omusati Region. Depending on rainfall patterns and amounts, the crop produce would last the San households from a couple of months to a year. A major factor in this regard is the fact that the San at the Omusati sites have access to residential and farming units on the communal lands which they inhabit.

14.2.7 Livestock

Although Namibia is a country known for its livestock production, animal husbandry does not contribute significantly to the household incomes and food supplies of any San group. Our study found that the majority of San either did not own any large or small stock, or owned very limited numbers, and the NHIES 2009/2010 data also reflects this finding (NSA 2012: 112).¹⁶ This does not mean that the San at the various research sites do not attach great value to large or small stock: a considerable proportion of the San in all regions surveyed, and especially those who had been employed as farmworkers on farms in the central regions of the country, aspire to farming with livestock to support their families. We did record some instances in different regions where a few San individuals owned cattle and/or goats. For example, in Xeidang village (Kavango), two young men had bought goats with money earned from casual work on commercial farms. (Accumulating some savings from the money earned from casual work generally takes a long time, and the period of accumulation depends largely on the size of the household.) In some cases remuneration for casual work had been in the form of an animal (e.g. in Xeidang and in Goreseb village in Omaheke. At many sites, most of the San households also kept free-range chickens, which they might sell or (occasionally) eat.

Nevertheless, our research underscored a number of factors that limit the San's opportunities to farm with livestock. First and foremost, the purchase of livestock requires money – which most San simply do not have. Secondly, access to grazing land must be secured.

Over the years, various stakeholders have sought to address these constraints by donating livestock to San communities, but these initiatives met with varying degrees of success. At a number of sites, government programmes such as the Draught Animal Power Acceleration Programme (DAPAP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), and donor programmes such as the Rural Poverty Reduction Programme (RPRP) and the Namibia-German Special Initiative Programme (NGSIP), have provided large or small stock with the aim of improving the San beneficiaries' livelihoods. For example, in Goreseb village (Omaheke) and at Tsintsabis Resettlement Project (Oshikoto), a few San owned some goats and cattle respectively through a project supported by the government (see Chapter 4 on Omaheke and Chapter 6 on Kunene, Oshikoto and Oshana), and in 2009, Skoonheid Resettlement Project received approximately 240 livestock from the NGSIP under the overall coordination of the NPC Secretariat. In 2013 the NGSIP donated more livestock to various San communities around the country: in Omaheke, for example, the San communities of Corridor 17-b settlement, Donkerbos-Sonneblom Resettlement Project and Epukiro Post 3 settlement benefitted from livestock donations (see section 14.5.4 on external support for livestock projects, page 491, for a discussion of these donations).

¹⁶ According to the NHIES 2009/2010 data, 15.1% of Khoisan-speaking households own cattle and 11.2% own goats. (The only other language groups of African descent with little ownership of cattle and goats are the Nama and Damara at 15.2% and 25% respectively). By contrast, the numbers for other groups of African descent are much higher: Caprivians 58.7%; Herero 51.9%; Kavango 39.6%; Owambo 40.9%; and Tswana 38.6%. German- and Afrikaans-speaking households also exhibit low ownership of cattle and goats, but this can be attributed to the fact that the majority of these households rely primarily on formal employment for their household income (NSA 2012: 112).

However, our study has found that only a few San farmers manage to continue farming with the donated livestock over an extended period (see section 14.5), and although they benefit from milk for their own consumption, they rarely have excess animals to sell to generate a cash income.

14.2.8 Small businesses and trade-based income-generating activities

According to the NHIES 2009/2010, “business income” is the main source of income for only 2% of Khoisan-speaking households (NSA 2012: 57). This finding coincides with our finding that only a few San engage in ‘small business’ – meaning, in this context, the activity of buying items such as sugar and tea in larger quantities and then repackaging and selling them in smaller quantities, or producing and selling food items such as *vetkoek* (deep-fried dough/pastry) and home-made ice. San were observed operating *cuca* shops (a.k.a. *shebeens*¹⁷) at research sites in Omusati but nowhere else.

Although San at many sites had tried to earn additional income with small businesses in the past, none of the participants in our research discussions considered this to be an important income-generating or livelihood strategy. This relates to the fact that customers – mainly San in the same community, who are equally poor or even poorer than the person running the business – would often buy on credit, and the San businessperson would then feel uncomfortable asking them to pay off the accumulated debt. (This is related to the importance of sharing in traditional and current San cultures, which is discussed at length in Chapter 15 on culture.) The lack of both a cash income and commensurate purchasing power experienced in all San communities, and the San’s very limited capacity to invest money in a small business operation, play a role in the failure of San to become businesspeople or to succeed in business. A third factor mentioned in many research discussions is the lack of experience and training in business activities such as accounting, which is linked to the generally high level of illiteracy among the San population.

14.2.9 Sale of natural products (informally)

The San Study found that San in different parts of the country tried to earn some additional income by selling natural products informally (i.e. without the technical support of NGOs, donor-funded programmes and/or private-sector intermediaries). These products include *omajova* (termite mushrooms) harvested during the rainy season in Oshikoto Region, grass for thatching houses (e.g. in Ohangwena and Omusati), firewood or wood for fencing and construction purposes (many regions), and Devil’s Claw (e.g. in Caprivi outside the BNP). The income from informal sales is irregular and the amounts are often small – at times a daily income covers only the costs of provisions for the day, e.g. relish for mealie-pap, or *otombo* – hence the end result is similar to that of certain types of piecework (e.g. payment in kind for fetching water for *shebeens*). The sale of Devil’s Claw, on the other hand, can generate an income of several hundred dollars per bag, however the harvest usually takes several weeks, and, as is the case with Old Age Pension money, this income is often spent immediately on essentials such as food, clothing, school hostel fees and paying off debts.

14.2.10 Sale of crafts (informally)

San women and men at many sites sold crafts – carvings, bows and arrows, knives, jewellery, baskets etc. – on a self-organised informal basis, without any external support (e.g. in Kunene, Oshana and Ohangwena), but several factors were limiting their success: limited access to materials, a lack of quality control, a lack of business and financial skills, and constrained access to markets.

¹⁷ See footnote 3 on page 48 for an explanation of these terms.

14.2.11 Income-generation activities (IGAs) with external support

A number of IGAs are supported by NGOs – often in partnership with one another – examples being the DRFN, the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation of Namibia (NNDNFN), the Centre for Research, Information and Action in Africa – Southern African Development and Consulting (CRIAA SA-DC), Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) and the Omba Arts Trust.

The Sustainably Harvested Devil's Claw Project (SHDCP) financed by the **Millennium Challenge Account-Namibia** (MCA-N) and implemented by **CRIAA SA-DC** in partnership with the **NNDNFN**, **DRFN** and **Habitafrica Foundation** is one IGA benefiting San. The Kyaramacan Association (KA) in the BNP and the Nyae Nyae and Nꞑa Jaqna Conservancies hold certificates from Ecocert (international certification organisation) for their Devil's Claw, meaning that the produce that they offer for sale is formally certified as organic. At present, no other organisation in Namibia can offer this certification for its harvested Devil's Claw, thus the KA, Nyae Nyae and Nꞑa Jaqna are currently in an advantageous position with respect to the marketability of this product.

According to the MCA-N, the average annual production of Namibian Devil's Claw has increased from a meagre 46 metric tons from 830 producers in 2009 to 215 metric tons from 2 254 producers in 2012. Accordingly, the income generated from Devil's Claw sales amounted to US\$67 000¹⁸ in 2009 and US\$482 000 in 2012. Thus far the primary importers of Devil's Claw have been Germany, Poland and France. Namibia is the world's largest supplier of Devil's Claw, gaining foreign exchange earnings of up to US\$2.8 million in 2012 (all figures from Cole et al. 2013: 17).

CRIAA SA-DC data conveys that this organisation was supporting 459 harvesters in the BNP, 479 harvesters in Nꞑa Jaqna and 68 harvesters in Nyae Nyae in 2012. Around 46% of all these harvesters were female. The average annual income per harvester was N\$1 561 in the BNP, N\$1 330 in Nꞑa



¹⁸ Cole et al. (2013) used the exchange rate of N\$8,8 to US\$1, though recognising that the rate could have been less in 2009.

Jaqna and N\$1 361 in Nyae Nyae. Although these amounts do not suffice to meet individual and/or household cash needs, they are important earnings given the scarce cash-earning opportunities available to San men and women generally.

The **Omba Arts Trust** (OAT) has been instrumental in promoting crafts as an IGA in Nyae Nyae Conservancy (Otjozondjupa Region), Ekoka Resettlement Project (Ohangwena), and Drimiopsis, Skoonheid and Donkerbos-Sonneblom Resettlement Projects (Omaheke) (see Box 14.1). Craft sales could earn an average of N\$60 554 per annum for each of the five producer groups.¹⁹ Craft sales have become increasingly important for the livelihoods of the beneficiaries. For example, in Omaheke the number of San involved in OAT-supported craft production increased from approximately 30 women at Skoonheid in 2007 to a total of 91 women and men at the three resettlement projects in 2010, and currently over 100 women and men in the three projects are actively engaged in craft production. The combined income from sales for these three projects has increased from approximately N\$92 000 in 2010 to N\$125 000 in 2011 and N\$158 000 in 2012 (DRFN and Habitafrica 2013: 76). This implies that the annual income per craft producer increased from approximately N\$1 000 to N\$1 580 in the period 2010-2012. This income helps San women (and to a lesser extent men) to meet some basic needs such as purchases of maize-meal, cooking oil, tea, sugar and soap, thus it contributes to improving the food security of households involved in craft production. Other benefits of the OAT-supported activities are described in Box 14.1.

Box 14.1: Supporting San livelihoods and culture through crafts and art: Omba Arts Trust

By Karin le Roux, Director, Omba Arts Trust

The Omba Arts Trust is a registered Namibian trust that aims to support the sustainable livelihoods of marginalised communities through the development, sales and marketing of quality Namibian products. Operational since 2004 as an independent trust, its work commenced in the early 1990s through the craft programme of the Rössing Foundation, one of the key players in the research and development of the craft sector in Namibia after Independence. Omba focuses on training and development, retail, wholesale, and the export of quality Namibian products. All of the products have been designed and developed either with rural producers or in conjunction with designers, and all are rooted in local culture, making them uniquely Namibian. Omba supports 13 groups (some 450 producers) in nine regions: 60% of producers are San from six communities in Omaheke, Otjozondjupa and Ohangwena Regions, and over 95% of all producers are women.

Omba and San craft

Omba collaborates with a number of partners working with San communities, including DRFN, IRDNC and NNDFN, and has been developing contemporary ranges of craft and art products for nearly 18 years. Omba's approach to San craft is market driven, so those products and materials that would appeal to Omba's niche markets – tourism and high-end galleries – are targeted. By far the largest market is for Omba's range of products (ostrich eggshell jewellery, textiles, paintings, sculpture and prints) that are rooted in San culture, and which utilise existing skills but have a contemporary twist. Product development is essential to meet market requirements, as is branding. We have branded the products coming from the resettlement projects in Omaheke and Ohangwena under the 'Art-i-San' range, and these, together with the Nyae Nyae and West Caprivi products, are sold in the Art-i-San shop and the Namibia Craft Centre – both located in the Old Breweries Craft Market complex in Windhoek.

¹⁹ The N\$ amounts recorded in this paragraph are the chapter authors' calculations based on figures provided by OAT.



Examples of the Art-i-San range of crafts: a beaded throw-pillow case and jewellery made from ostrich eggshell



Nyae Nyae Conservancy

Crafting beads made from ostrich eggshell is a 40 000-year-old tradition among the San of southern Africa. In the 21st century, some San communities in Namibia – especially the Ju’hoansi of Nyae Nyae Conservancy – continue to make jewellery from sustainable supplies of ostrich egg shards. There are an estimated 250 producers in Nyae Nyae, mostly women.

The synergy between Omba’s market and production in the field has resulted in an exciting new range of contemporary San-made products that has not only supported crafters in the conservancy, but around which a host of informal traders and other marketing operations in the region thrive today. A number of individuals and church-based organisations buy and sell Nyae Nyae products, but Omba remains the principal customer of **G!hunku Craft** (the conservancy’s enterprise). Continual quality and design inputs from Omba have kept the products contemporary and marketable.

Okongo

A request from WIMSA and UNESCO in 2002 to develop a craft initiative at the San resettlement project of Ekoka, Ohangwena Region, led to a different approach. A field visit to the area revealed a desperately poor community with very few cultural or other resources that would make a craft programme viable. Instead, Omba decided to introduce art workshops and try to draw on the innate creativity of the San. It also facilitated a baseline survey. Several art workshops were conducted, and a group of artists emerged from those individuals who showed interest and perseverance. As a result, oil and watercolour paintings and lino prints have been exhibited regularly in Windhoek as well as in South Africa and overseas. Motifs have been used from the artworks in a textile range (Art-i-San) printed in South Africa, and each year artists receive a royalty on metres sold as well as money from the sale of the artworks themselves. This model has proved to be quite successful, despite its challenges. Omba continues to hold workshops with donor support, and has been able to sustain an annual income for a group of artists. In 2012 new artists were added, with the group now totalling 12 (7 men and 5 women).

A craft programme has also been implemented in partnership with DRFN since 2011, incorporating another resettlement project called Oshanashiva – however logistics in the field continue to be a challenge and progress has been slow.

West Caprivi (BNP)

IRDNC, and more recently the Kyaramacan Association, have been working with Khwe women in West Caprivi, and their products are marketed through **Mashie Craft**. Omba is the main wholesale customer for these products.

Achievements and benefits

- The income from craft and art sales remains the only cash income (other than pensions) that most of the Omba-supported San communities receive.
- Fifty-six percent of Omba's total purchases in 2012 went to San communities, with an average increase of 27% in income for San producers from the previous year.
- With larger amounts of money earned, artists and producers are able to invest their money more wisely (improving homesteads, investing in crop production, opening savings accounts etc.)
- The health and overall wellbeing of the Skoonheid community has improved as a direct result of the craft income (personal communication from Dr De Kok).
- Long-term and trusting relationships are being developed. Being socially connected enables individuals to get involved in opportunities that build their social networks and strengthen relationships among their peers and communities. Such activities support self-actualisation and reinforce people's self-esteem and identity, enabling individuals to develop a sense of belonging in their communities and the wherewithal to contribute to those communities.
- The craft and art initiatives build on the strengths and natural skills of the San, and the producers show improved self-esteem and confidence as well as a consciousness and pride in San culture.
- Leadership development in women through the skills they gain in attending workshops and interacting with their communities. Xoan||an Aliee, the first female chairperson of Nyae Nyae Conservancy, was the craft manager for a number of years. In other communities crafters/artists have been chosen to represent their communities at workshops, conferences, exhibitions and trade shows nationally and internationally.
- Omba invites leaders from all of the groups it supports for an annual peer review workshop. San leaders enthusiastically engage in the group discussions and present plans etc. to the participants. This has been an excellent vehicle for integrating San groups with crafters all over the country.
- Omba is growing a body of work of contemporary San art in Namibia. The San share a unique, common visual language, not only regionally (e.g. contemporary San art from Kuru, Botswana, and Smidtsdrift, South Africa) but also historically, with similarities in style and content (e.g. the Bleek and Lloyd collection of paintings and drawings produced by !Kung and Xam children in the 19th century).

Challenges

- The remoteness of most San communities results in many logistical and financial challenges in the supply chain.
- Lack of formal skills mean that projects require long-term support and mentoring in order for groups to manage systems on their own eventually.
- Group dynamics and community politics create problems for leaders. Regular interventions are required.
- Mismanagement of money by group leaders and/or intermediaries affects morale and sustainability.
- Materials need to be sourced locally or regionally and dispatched to groups. This requires additional administration, therefore operational costs are considerably higher.
- Most of the craft groups require long-term mentoring and support, and donors' short funding cycles makes this challenging. Stop/start interventions impact negatively on motivation.
- With rapidly changing culture and exposure to modern media and textbooks in schools, the innate and unique visual language of the San will gradually disappear. We have a moment in time to capture this for posterity.

14.2.12 Other tourism-related activities

In Nyae Nyae and Nǀa Jaqna Conservancies, activities linked to living museums, tourism and trophy-hunting concessions also contribute to the income of the Ju|'hoansi and !Xun households. There are two popular living museums in Nǀa Jaqna and Nyae Nyae, namely the Grashoek Living Museum and the Living Hunters Museum respectively.²⁰ The Ju|'hoansi and the !Xun in Nyae Nyae and Nǀa Jaqna also earn dividends from conservancy-run income-generating activities.

To conclude, San in all regions lack self-sustaining livelihoods. They are extremely dependent on external support (chiefly pensions and food aid), and to make a living they pursue a range of activities (often in combination) on the fringes of society. Their incomes are small; mostly they cover only the daily needs of an individual or a household. This situation is unlikely to change in the near future unless the approaches to San development are better coordinated and are restructured to facilitate the long-term support that San communities clearly need to finally achieve livelihood sustainability.

14.3 Wealth and poverty among the San in Namibia

Namibia is currently classified as a middle-income country, based on its per capita annual income, which was US\$4876 in 2010 (one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa). The country's economy grew at a rate of 3.8% in 2011 compared to 6.6% in 2010, representing a significant decline, but it was expected to stabilise at 4% in 2013 (African Development Bank (ADB) 2012: 3). Despite this upgrading to the 'middle-income' category, Namibia has one of the worst levels of inequality in the world. In 2012 the Gini coefficient for Namibia was estimated to be 0.59 (NSA 2012: 141). Although this is a slight improvement on previous figures, it implies that the richest 2% of households (1.1% of the national population) enjoy 16.8% of the national income, while the poorest 25% of households (36.8% of the population) contend with 7.2% of the national income (NSA 2012: 139). The *Human Development Report* of 2013 ranked Namibia at 120 out of 197 countries, with an HDI ranking of 0.63 (UNDP 2013: 154). According to the 'basic needs approach' used in the NHIES 2009/2010, 19% of Namibia's population are poor and 10% are severely poor (NSA 2012: xi-xii). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has noted that this poorest proportion receives a mere 0.6% of the national share of income and expenditure (UNDP 2009: 197).

The NHIES 2009/2010 found that 54.9% and 37.1% of Khoisan speakers suffer from poverty or severe poverty respectively (NSA 2012: 164; see also Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2009: 38).²¹ Jauch reports that Khoisan speakers comprise one of the language groups that are worst affected by poverty in Namibia (Jauch 2012: 4), and that they represent one of the lowest rates of per capita consumption in the country (Jauch 2012: 126). According to the NHIES 2009/2010, per capita income for the Khoisan-speaking households amounted to N\$6631 per annum, while the national average was N\$14559. With N\$5777, the Rukavango-speaking households registered a slightly lower annual per capita income than the Khoisan in 2009/10, which may be attributed to the fact that Rukavango households are larger than San households on average (NSA 2012: 135).

In this San Study we were interested to find out about the San's perceptions of poverty and the criteria they used to assess poverty levels both within their own communities and in comparison

²⁰ The average annual income of the living museum at Grashoek since 2008 has been estimated at N\$457720 based on figures from the NNDFN and the chapter authors' calculations.

²¹ 'Severely poor' implies a per capita income of less than N\$277,54 per month, whereas a household is classified as 'poor' if the per capita income is less than N\$377,96. The two categories overlap, meaning that a total of 54.9% of Khoisan-speaking households were classified as 'poor' or 'severely poor' (NSA 2012: 151, 164).

to neighbouring groups, and at times in comparison to other San groups living in differing socio-economic situations. We used a wealth-ranking exercise at the research sites to assess the perceived socio-economic stratifications in each San community. This method was also used to determine the characteristics of different socio-economic groups within each community and the criteria for evaluating them, and to assess coping strategies of the poor and very poor San. In addition, the opportunities for moving up the social ladder and the risks of losing wealth and socio-economic status were reviewed.

At all research sites, the San perceived themselves to be the poorest population group compared to other ethnic groups in their respective neighbourhoods – although at some sites participants acknowledged that a few members of neighbouring ethnic groups were also poor. The participants at all sites categorised the majority of their community members as either ‘extremely poor’ or ‘poor’, but the perceptions of poverty and the criteria applied to distinguish between wealth categories differed somewhat from one region and site to the next. In the first place, some participant groups identified three categories of wealth (e.g. ‘poor’, ‘middle’ and ‘rich’), whereas others identified five or even six categories.²² A key example of differing wealth-distinguishing criteria across regions is as follows: in Omusati, many of the poorest San had a crop field (albeit unfenced), whereas in the BNP and Omaheke, having or lacking access to a crop field or small garden distinguished the poor from the very poor, and in Kunene, Oshikoto and Oshana, access to a crop field or garden was not mentioned at all as a criterion for any wealth category.

In the following subsections we draw overall conclusions from the findings of the wealth-ranking exercise at each site, with a view to identifying general patterns.

14.3.1 San living in extreme poverty

In general, San people living in extreme poverty were characterised by the features listed below. The sites listed for each feature are *examples* of sites where the applicable feature was mentioned:

- **Hunger** – Kanaan neighbourhood, Blouberg Resettlement Project and Corridor 13 settlement (all in Omaheke), Ndama neighbourhood (Kavango) and Etosha Poort ‘location’ (Kunene).
- **Being without family who can assist** – Skoonheid Resettlement Project (Omaheke) and sites in Nyae Nyae and Nṁa Jaqna Conservancies (Otjozondjupa).
- **Depending on others** – Oshivelo settlement (Oshikoto), Okaukuejo restcamp (Oshana) and Omega I Resettlement Project (BNP).
- **Having disabled or physically weak household members** – Oshivelo and sites in Nyae Nyae and Nṁa Jaqna.
- **Lacking proper clothing** – Ndama and Xeidang village (Kavango), Oshivelo and Tsintsabis Resettlement Project (Oshikoto), and sites in Omusati.²³
- **Excessive alcohol consumption** – Okaukuejo, Oshivelo, Tsintsabis, Corridor 13, Kanaan (regions cited above) and Makaravan settlement (Caprivi).
- **Lack of adequate housing/dwellings** – Corridor 13, Okaukuejo, Etosha Poort, Oshivelo, Omega I and sites in Omusati.

²² The terminology varied. In the Bwabwata National Park (BNP), participants distinguished, for example, between ‘very poor’, ‘poor’, ‘better off’, ‘lower rich’, ‘medium rich’ and ‘rich’. In Kunene Region the categories were ‘very poor’, ‘not so poor’, ‘middle class’, ‘better off’ and ‘rich’. In Omusati Region the categories were ‘very poor’, ‘poor’, ‘middle’, ‘rich’ and ‘very rich’. In Omaheke Region the categories were ‘very poor’, ‘poor’, ‘halfway’, ‘better off’ or ‘moving forward’, and finally ‘wealthy’ or ‘wealthier’.

²³ The authors of the chapters on Ohangwena and Omusati did not provide an overview of the wealth-ranking exercise per site, but only a regional overview (see pages 252 and 307 in Chapters 7 and 8 respectively).

- **Limited opportunities for piecework or casual work** – Oshivelo, Blouberg and sites in Omusati and Ohangwena; or **the opportunities are limited to low-paid piecework only** – Xeidang, Ndama, Omega I, Mushashane and Mushangara villages (BNP), and sites in Ohangwena.
- **Not having a household member with a pension** – Okaukuejo, Ndama and sites in Ohangwena; or **many household members depending on just one pension** – Etosha Poort.
- **Not having access to a garden, or having access to only a small garden** – Skoonheid, Luhebo and Mangetti Dune villages (Otjozondjupa), Xeidang and Wiwi village (Kavango), Omega I, and sites in Ohangwena; or **not having fences around fields** – Omusati.
- **Not owning any livestock and/or not being able to access or use livestock** – Skoonheid, Ndama, Likwaterera village (Kavango), Omega I, and sites in Omusati and Ohangwena.
- **A general lack of assets and household items** – Likwaterera, Skoonheid, Blouberg, and sites in Omusati and Ohangwena.

At most sites, participants categorised between 50% and 80% of the San households as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. Very few San were categorised as ‘better off’ (often the second wealthiest group) or ‘wealthy’ / ‘rich’ / ‘very rich’. In Omusati and Ohangwena, the San who were receiving the War Veteran Pension (discussed in section 14.3.3) were explicitly categorised as much better off than the rest of the San. Otherwise, at most sites, formal employment was the determining factor for being categorised as better off or even rich, and at many sites, ‘using the money wisely’ (i.e. not wasting money on alcohol or unnecessary luxuries) was mentioned as an accompanying factor.

14.3.2 Food insecurity

The household food situation appeared to be a central distinguishing feature in the wealth rankings of the San, both among themselves and in comparison with members of other ethnic groups. At several sites in Kavango, Kunene and Omusati, it was said that the poorest San would beg for food, and conversely, ‘being able to eat what one wants’ (in terms of both quantity and frequency) was seen as symbol of wealth. However, as discussed in the next section of this chapter, at all the research sites the majority of San were found to be food insecure; these San had no more than two meals a day, and they depended on irregular and uncertain food supplies. There were also reports of instances and periods (e.g. during the dry season) of some San having to survive on only one meal per day, which was supplemented by drinking tea with sugar – hence the statement in Omaheke that “tea is the boss” (see Chapter 4, page 55). The very poor, such as households with elderly members who did not receive a pension and who were not strong enough to carry out any kind of work, would usually be vulnerable to food shortages in both quantity and quality; they might survive on one meal per day on a regular basis, usually consisting of *mahangu* or maize porridge (see Chapter 7 on Ohangwena Region, page 250).

The food consumed usually consisted of a porridge of *mahangu* (in northern regions specifically) or maize (all over the country). San who had access to gardens or crop fields might be in a position to supplement the staple diet of *mahangu* or maize with beans (cowpea) or fresh corn at certain times of year, although these secondary sources of food would be consumed less frequently. Other supplementary foods mentioned included veldfoods (e.g. berries, tubers and mopane worms) and milk or fat (not necessarily from livestock belonging to the San, but rather, most frequently, from other community members’ livestock). Discussion participants at many sites across the regions stated that they rarely ate meat, although meat was generally considered to be an important source of food. Pensioners occasionally bought fresh vegetables, meat or fat on Old Age Pension payout day, and rice and macaroni were also listed among the food items which are less frequently bought and consumed (see for example Chapter 6 on Kunene, Oshikoto and Oshana, page 197).

Across all research sites and regions, the San generally viewed themselves as more food insecure and thus poorer than members of other ethnic groups. However, there were isolated cases, such as at sites in Omusati where the San thought that some Owambo households were just as food insecure as they were, if not more so.

It has to be noted that gathering veldfood was not mentioned as an option for escaping extreme poverty; instead this was considered to be a coping strategy. This is due to the fact that in most areas, veldfood has become difficult to source due to the lack of access to land where it might be found. Thus it cannot be said that the veld provides sufficient food to overcome food shortages.

In the following section we describe in more detail the factors that discussion participants perceived as determinants of the socio-economic situation of San households. This information can provide important insights into potential development strategies that might be adopted in future to improve the livelihoods of the San.

14.3.3 Determinants of the socio-economic status of San households

Alcohol abuse

Discussion participants strongly associated excessive use of alcohol with poverty – however it was impossible to determine whether alcohol abuse was a cause or an effect of the impoverished circumstances of the people concerned. At various research sites across the regions (e.g. Oshivelo settlement and Tsintsabis Resettlement Project in Oshikoto and Skoonheid Resettlement Project in Omaheke), an improvement in a person's standard of living or socio-economic status was said to be possible only if he/she stopped drinking: a group of young Hai||om men in Oshivelo attributed their escape from extreme poverty to their decision to stop drinking alcohol; and at Tsintsabis, several people mentioned that they had been in the poorest category but had found that they could improve their standard of living by refraining from alcohol. Some San communities (e.g. that of Skoonheid) reported that they had tried to ban alcohol from their environment in an effort to ensure that the San could make progress in life, and the community of Donkerbos-Sonneblom Resettlement Project (Omaheke) had managed to keep alcohol out of the project site for several years until recently. Such efforts do not always enjoy the support of non-San people residing or working in the vicinity, some of whom want to continue selling alcohol to the San – often with devastating effects on the general wellbeing of more vulnerable members of the San community.

Casual work and piecework

Although piecework and casual work are major contributors of cash income for San households, very rarely were these forms of work mentioned as means to escape poverty; they were generally regarded merely as means to help San families to meet their basic daily needs. In fact, the very need to engage in such work was seen as an indication of poverty. This perception is due to the uncertain availability, unsafe conditions and poor remuneration associated with piecework and casual work, and possibly also the lack of awareness of the legal steps that might be taken to address these issues (see the recommendations at the end of this chapter).

Old Age Pensions, War Veteran Pensions and other social welfare grants

Discussion participants considered pensions and other social welfare grants (e.g. grants for orphans and vulnerable children and people with disabilities) as important means to avoid extreme poverty.

For this reason, households in which one or several members received a monthly pension or grant were rarely categorised in the wealth-ranking exercises as ‘very poor’ or ‘extremely poor’. At some sites, however, it was stressed that the number of dependants living off one pension/grant as the main source of household income affected the household’s ability to address extreme poverty: if many dependants were supported by one pension or grant, the household might still be classified as extremely poor. Specific examples were reported at many sites (e.g. Okathakanguti village in Omusati) where San households with a recipient of a pension or grant were nonetheless categorised as extremely poor because they had many dependants (in some cases over 10). The perceptions of the San who participated in our research confirmed that the government has made some progress towards eradicating extreme poverty with non-contributory social grants such as the Old Age Pension, but a number of challenges have yet to be overcome, above all the backlog in registration (NPC 2012a: 63).

San in the Omusati and Ohangwena considered those who received a War Veteran Pension – a one-off payment of N\$50 000 and N\$2 500 per month subsequently – as having succeeded in improving their standard of living, thus no recipient of this pension was considered to be very poor or poor. However, very few San are eligible for this payment.

Crop fields and agricultural equipment

Crop fields and agricultural implements were considered to be essential for poverty reduction. Generally, those San who owned or who had access to crop fields were regarded as better off than those without. This applied particularly to research sites in the northern regions where crop cultivation forms the basis of rural livelihoods, and also to some sites in the eastern and central regions. Having a crop field was dependent not only on access to land in the first place, but also on the availability of equipment (e.g. ploughs and oxen) to cultivate the field. (Crop fields were distinguished from gardens, which are usually located around people’s houses and do not generate much food in comparison to crop fields).

Livestock and other animals

Those who owned cattle and goats were considered to be better off than those without, and owning large numbers of livestock (especially large stock) was seen as a way to avoid poverty, since a certain number could be sold off when in need of extra money. However, ownership of large herds of large stock appeared to be the exclusive preserve of members of other ethnic groups; our study found that just a handful of San across the sites owned large stock, and none of them owned a large number of stock. Many households kept chickens, and the flocks varied in size, but owning even a larger flock did not make a significant difference in wealth ranking due to the relatively low economic worth of poultry.

Employment

Formal employment was seen as a very important determinant of wealth, i.e. a key means to avoid being poor, because it offered a regular income in the form of a salary or wage that could also be used to invest in other assets (e.g. livestock and fencing material). San households with members who were formally employed – for example in the Namibian Defence Force, Namibian Police, Ministry of Education (teachers, cleaners and hostel matrons), Ministry of Health and Social Services (nurses), wildlife management or commercial farming – were generally ranked higher in the wealth-ranking exercises.

Physical assets

At many sites, discussion participants referred to assets (household assets, brick house, car, etc.) to characterise members of the wealthier categories. However, physical assets were outcomes rather than intrinsic features of wealth, in the sense that the opportunity to engage in formal employment was the chief determinant of whether or not a household was able to invest in such assets. Thus, in the absence of opportunities for regular employment, most San households were asset-poor: the extremely poor members of communities (including a few non-San groups at some sites) were described as lacking adequate dwellings, blankets, clothes and shoes, let alone assets.

Physical assets are central to coping with environmental or economic shocks (e.g. droughts, floods, loss of employment or a long-term economic downturn), and contribute to reducing household or community vulnerability to adverse circumstances. The recent Emergency Food Security Assessment in Communal and Resettlement Areas in Namibia (EFSA), for example, established a clear correlation between food security and ownership of physical assets in the applicable communities (OPM 2013: 19-20). San participants in our study shared similar notions. For example, participants in Etosha Poort 'location' in Outjo, Kunene Region, said that employed Hai||om who then lost their jobs would be able to sell off their furniture piece by piece when in need of cash.

Social networks

For San, social networks are important for alleviating the brunt of poverty only to the extent that they address immediate shortages, particularly in household food supply. This type of support finds expression in the practice of sharing that has characterised San culture throughout their history. (As already noted, this practice is discussed at length in Chapter 15 on culture.) Sharing – a meal, food aid, harvested food, rations from piecework, etc. – plays an important role in decreasing the effects of hunger among members of extended families, and has historically helped San to survive in times of desperation. However, in the longer term, sharing limits a household's ability to increase its wealth and improve its wellbeing. This is because generally the San are already eking out a living at best, thus their social networks have little to share. Remittance support is virtually absent in San households, and where it does exist, its impact is negligible if the household income is shared by numerous dependants. Of course, very few San are formally employed, and those with formal jobs in cities/towns find the necessities of life there (rent, food, transport, etc.) to be so expensive that they have very little to share in form of a remittance to their families back home. For this reason, remittances were not considered to be a potential route out of poverty.

14.4 Coping with food insecurity

14.4.1 General coping strategies

In section 14.3.2 we conveyed that food shortages and food insecurity are common phenomena in most San communities in Namibia, if not all – although there are differences between households in a single community and between research sites. A number of interlinked factors are responsible for the limited food security in San communities, and these are dealt with in the regional chapters. Overall, the lack of access to land limits subsistence crop production and animal husbandry as well as hunting and gathering, and a lack of education and possibly discrimination in the job market limit employment opportunities for San. Additionally, government food-aid supplies do not suffice to sustain entire households and are irregular in many places, and pensions (especially the Old Age Pension) and other social grants do not reach many San who are eligible to receive them.

Maxwell and Caldwell developed a Coping Strategy Index (CSI) as an indicator of household food security in order to increase understanding of food insecurity and the coping mechanisms that people in different countries and different contexts apply. The CSI is based on the question, “What do you do when you don’t have adequate food, and don’t have the money to buy food?” (Maxwell and Caldwell 2008: 2). The CSI has to be adapted to a specific given context, and the list of coping strategies below was used in the recent EFSA.

Box 14.2: Coping Strategy Index (CSI) (OPM 2013: 46)

In the past 30 days, how frequently did your household resort to using one or more of the following strategies in order to have access to food?

- Skip entire days without eating?
- Limit portion size at mealtimes?
- Reduce number of meals eaten per day?
- Borrow food or rely on help from friends or relatives?
- Rely on less expensive or less preferred foods?
- Purchase/borrow food on credit?
- Gather unusual types or amounts of wild food/hunt?
- Harvest immature crops?
- Send household members to eat elsewhere?
- Send household members to beg?
- Reduce adult consumption so children can eat?
- Rely on casual labour for food?
- Other?
- Have you sold any household assets to buy food?
- Have you sold any household assets to pay for health care/medical expenses?

The answers to the questions are weighted according to the frequency at which the behaviour has occurred. The higher the ranking in the index, the more food insecure the household is.

In the course of our research it became evident that most San households applied many of these strategies quite often. The poorest San households in many communities were said to skip eating for a whole day relatively often, and just a small fraction of San across the research sites could report that they regularly ate three meals per day. Most San households ate two meals per day on average, and there were indications that very poor San get by on one meal per day, at least for certain periods of the year. Many (if not most) households relied on less-expensive or less-preferred food (mostly mealie-meal), and most households purchased/borrowed food on credit (especially if food aid was irregular). Wild food was gathered to varying degrees,²⁴ and harvesting of immature crops was a coping strategy in areas where San engaged in crop farming – as in Xeidang village in Kavango, for example, where the Ju|’hoansi participants said that they sometimes harvested immature maize cobs to avoid starvation.

Across the research sites, the discussions on sharing revealed that household members would often go elsewhere to eat, and at many sites it was said that the poorest members of the San community would also beg for food – mostly from non-San households as they were considered to be better off. Reduced adult consumption of food to enable children to eat was also reported at many sites, and

²⁴ As gathering is a traditional livelihood strategy among San communities, it cannot be strictly classified as a ‘coping strategy’.

a very common strategy at all sites was the practice of undertaking casual labour to earn a small income to buy food, or even in exchange for a supply of food. The last two questions, i.e. relating to selling household assets, are less relevant in the case of the San because few have assets to sell, but this was mentioned in Etosha Poort 'location' (Outjo) as a coping strategy that relatively better-off San might employ when in need of cash.

In addition to the coping strategies mentioned above, San households employ a number of other coping strategies to address continuous food shortages, two of which are discussed in the next two subsections.

14.4.2 Fostering children

Reportedly in Kavango, Ohangwena and Omaheke Regions it is common practice for San families unable to afford the costs of food, education and other basic needs to arrange for their children to be fostered by non-San families who would be better able to care for them. The child become part of the foster family, and it is far from unusual that the San parents never see their child again. Manja Stutzriemer's account of her case study in Nkurenkuru (Kavango) indicates that fostering of San children is very common there, but arrangements can be rather informal, and this often produces conflicts between the San and the foster households (Stutzriemer 2012).²⁵ One major problem is that San children living away from their families are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. For example, our research brought to light cases of fostered children who had never attended school, and instead worked for the foster families as herders and domestic workers – mostly in exchange for food and clothes – in clear violation of the children's rights (see also Stutzriemer 2012).

A feasibility study of livelihood support to San resettlement projects in Ohangwena conducted in 2007 revealed that the practice of fostering San children was not uncommon in the area (Dirkx and Ayisa 2007b: 13-14), with a total of 42 cases across three resettlement projects reported – although some were historical cases and the children concerned had reached adulthood by 2007. For example, at one project four people reported that they themselves had been fostered by non-San families during childhood. Hunger was said to be one explanation for San children going to live with non-San families: it was claimed that San parents might be forced to give a child away when they realised that they could not feed the child properly. Allegedly they were “easily convincible” in times of dire need, when other people offered to take care of their children. Some of the children concerned still lived close by, so their parents could visit them, whereas other San parents had been unable to maintain regular contact with their children, either because the foster family lived far away or because the parents simply did not know to which village or town the child had been taken. Allegedly there were also cases of foster parents forbidding visits by the San parents. Some fostered children had been looked after well and were allowed to attend school, whereas others were prevented from continuing their schooling and were merely used for domestic work or agricultural labour. Community members consulted in the study in 2007 also raised the concern that foster parents were benefiting from the state Foster Care Grant, as opposed to the biological parents benefiting from child welfare grants that the state makes available for vulnerable children – because the San parents had not known about such grants, the differences between grants and how to apply for these grants (Dirkx and Ayisa, 2007a: 16, 22).²⁶

²⁵ Every San person interviewed by Stutzriemer had lived with a Kwangali family at some stage in his/her life (Stutzriemer 2012: 9).

²⁶ The child welfare grants are administered by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare – see www.mgecw.gov.na for details on the grants available. Some San parents might qualify for the Maintenance Grant at least.

It is therefore clear that the practice of fostering San children needs much more attention with a view to preventing it (if possible) or at least minimising potential abuses and exploitation.²⁷

14.4.3 Alcohol

In many San communities (e.g. in Ohangwena, Omusati and Kavango Regions), alcohol was reportedly used as a means to alleviate hunger (see also Nyang'ori et al. 2006: 1943). The low-priced local brews (e.g. *otombo* and *okanyatau*) sold for N\$2 per one-litre jug in parts of Ohangwena, for example, are more affordable for San than most types of food. Discussion participants in Ohangwena, Omusati and Kavango reported that they also gave their children alcohol as an alternative to food. Excessive use of alcohol has been identified as a serious challenge among the San (Nyang'ori et al. 2006: 1943), especially in Ohangwena (see Chapter 17 on health). The number of *cuca* shops around Ouholamo neighbourhood (Eenhana) and in three of the four resettlement projects in the vicinity of Okongo increased considerably between 2007 and 2013, but local headmen, traditional authorities (TAs) and regional councillors do not seem to be concerned about these developments.

14.5 The role of external support for San livelihoods

The San receive various forms of external support, ranging from food aid and livestock donations to comprehensive livelihood support programmes which, among other things, strengthen capacity in community development and local leadership, agricultural development, and income diversification through craft development, cultural tourism and wildlife tourism. In this section we present our findings regarding external support alongside the experiences of the research team members based on their long-term involvement in livelihood support projects, and we map these against the San perceptions of poverty and wealth in their communities. It is beyond the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive comparison of the various livelihood support initiatives and their impacts on San livelihoods, but we do provide some information on promising approaches, required pre-project considerations, avoidable mistakes and the need for further investigation in specific areas.

14.5.1 The San Feeding Programme

The food supplies provided by the San Feeding Programme of the OPM are certainly needed in a number of San communities to prevent starvation. Nevertheless, this intervention must be viewed as an 'emergency' programme only, and one that does not help the San to escape extreme poverty. Furthermore it carries the risk of entrenching long-term dependency on food handouts, and for this reason, careful monitoring of the programme is needed (see also the recommendations at the end of this chapter).

14.5.2 Income-generating projects

No discussion participant at any site mentioned income-generating projects (e.g. craft production and Devil's Claw harvesting) as a means to significantly improve the lives of San, mainly because these support projects have generated relatively little income to date; most have generated only N\$1 000-2 000 per annum for the people involved (see pages 475-476). It should be emphasised,

²⁷ Certainly, transactional sex – which was mentioned at various sites in different contexts – can also be understood as a strategy for coping with poverty or food insecurity. However, since participants were hesitant to speak about transactional sex in more detail, we are not able to provide more data on this topic in the context of livelihoods.

however, that such projects do provide the producers with a cash income which is urgently needed to cover the costs of basic necessities such as food, clothes and soap, as well as the costs of health care and necessities for school and for agricultural activities. The projects supported by the Omba Arts Trust (see Box 14.1), for example, provide a number of other important benefits apart from enabling the crafters to purchase basic necessities: they increase the crafters' self-esteem, inculcate a work ethic and pride in their own culture, empower them (a benefit of particular importance for the women), improve their leadership skills, reduce their dependency on handouts, and help to improve their health and their access to health care – all benefits which in turn benefit the crafters' households and communities on the whole.

14.5.3 Crop-production projects

Box 14.3: Two crop-production projects supported by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN)

Ohangwena Region

The Emergency Food Security Assessment in Communal and Resettlement Areas in Namibia (EFSA) (mentioned on page 484) found crop production to be the major source of livelihoods for 41% of Ohangwena's general population (OPM 2013: 18). Most San in this region do not have their own crop fields; the only San who do are those in the resettlement projects in Okongo Constituency (Onamatadiva, Ekoka, Oshanashiwa and Eendobe). These four San resettlement projects were supported by the Livelihood Support Programme for San (LIPROSAN) implemented by the DRFN with funding from the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) in the period January 2009 to July 2013.^a Crop production in these projects consists of rain-fed *mahangu* production combined with cowpea, groundnut, sorghum and watermelon cultivation. The yields depend largely on the amount of seasonal rainfall and the amount of attention given to the crops. If there is a good rainy season, the households can live off the harvests for periods ranging from two to four months, but in a poor rainy season the households tend to consume the produce harvested within one or two months. The amount of land available for cultivation is another critical factor that limits production in three of the four projects, and the beneficiaries do not usually manage to harvest as much as the neighbouring Kwanyama farmers do because the San fields are smaller.

Omaheke Region

San at the Skoonheid, Drimiopsis and Donkerbos-Sonneblom Resettlement Projects have benefited from the Livelihood Support Programme II (LISUP II) of the DRFN and the Habitafrica Foundation, co-funded by the MLR and AECID (see Box 4.1 on page 52 for an overview of LISUP). LISUP II provides, inter alia, technical support for rain-fed and irrigated crop production. Between 2007 and 2013, households at Skoonheid and Drimiopsis experienced improvements in food security through a combination of rain-fed and irrigated production (Skoonheid), or irrigation alone (Drimiopsis). At Donkerbos-Sonneblom only rain-fed crop production is possible.

Irrigated crop production in Drimiopsis and Skoonheid tends to consist of two cultivations of maize along with cowpea (in spring and summer), followed by a short fallow period during the winter months. Alternatively, a combination of maize, cowpea, squash/pumpkin and butternut is planted in the summer months, and this is followed by the cultivation of winter vegetables such as beetroot, carrot, onion and spinach. Once matured, the produce is collected from the gardens on a daily basis and is eaten fresh. This contributes to improved food security for two to three months twice per annum. Individual beneficiaries also sell small amounts of surplus crops to generate some cash when it is needed.

Rain-fed crop production at Skoonheid and Donkerbos-Sonneblom consists mostly of maize and cowpea cultivation, with a combination of groundnut, butternut, squash/pumpkin and watermelon. The rain-fed yields of course depend on seasonal variations in rainfall. In the years 2008–2011 the yields were fairly good, but in 2012 and 2013 they were substantially smaller. In poor rainfall years the harvest may yield enough for consumption for three months at most. In years with better rains, the harvests improve household food security for more than three months. In 2011, for example, up to 45% of households at Skoonheid stored and consumed their rain-fed crops for up to five months after the harvest.

Regarding the **combined impact of irrigated and rain-fed crop production**, The LISUP II annual report for 2012 indicated that during the post-harvest season (i.e. the beginning of the dry season), 70% of the households at Drimiopsis and Skoonheid were able to consume three or more meals per day. Towards the end of the dry season, 45% of the households could consume three meals a day (DRFN and Habitafrica 2013: 76). It may therefore be concluded that the livelihood support contributed to advances in both the number of meals and the diversity of foods consumed by the beneficiary communities, especially over the difficult dry period of the year.

The examples of Skoonheid and Drimiopsis demonstrate that crop production (especially irrigated production) can provide a very important household food supply for the San. On the other hand, lessons from these projects make clear that considerable amounts of external support and intensive mentoring and monitoring are required for any meaningful long-term benefits to be realised.

^a The MLR took over the livelihood support from the DRFN on 26 July 2013, hence the DRFN is no longer responsible for these project communities.

Discussion participants at the resettlement projects and many other sites regarded crop production as an essential means to escape extreme poverty, and crop production projects have proved to have positive outcomes for household food security among the San, as described in Box 14.3. The general issues of long-term technical support, mentoring of farmers in technical and institutional aspects, facilitating active collaboration among farmers, and improving local leadership capacity to support collaborative crop-farming practices are all important, especially as San illiteracy levels are high and their capacity to learn new skills independently (e.g. crop and soil fertility management) is relatively weak. These issues are even more relevant in San communities which are not homogeneous, such as some resettlement projects in which San and non-San people, or San of different language groups and family backgrounds, are brought together as beneficiaries.

Other aspects pertinent to the success of crop-production practices with the San are as follows:

- **Distinguishing appropriately and realistically between capacities that can be built and those that may be difficult to build within a designated period:** Experience with livelihood support through LISUP II in Omaheke Region, for example, appears to provide evidence that the San can become relatively accomplished subsistence farmers if they are trained in basic and standardised crop-management practices. As far as the northern regions are concerned, this means that the San might learn to cultivate a crop field in the same manner as their non-San neighbours, following relatively standard cultivation methods and practices. However, on larger production units such as resettlement farms, strategic farm-management decisions concerning the regeneration of soil fertility, sustaining/improving rangeland quality and carrying capacity, producing enough food and/or generating enough income to sustain the number of resettled people, require advanced agricultural knowledge and skills – which the San do not necessarily possess, and which might be difficult to build up within the normally relatively short lifespans

of development projects. This is not due only to the generally low levels of education of the resettled San; it is also due to the fact that San farmers, like the majority of other beneficiaries of group resettlement projects, are not necessarily invested in the development of their farm as a production unit per se, as they are more concerned about the survival of their families and thus about issues linked to household food security. This posits an entirely different individual focus, which by implication precludes or excludes crop commercialisation or production for purposes of income generation. Consequently development partners such as NGOs may need to provide the necessary technical support on a long-term basis.

- **Provision of inputs:** In any part of the country where San are involved in crop production, whether rain-fed or irrigated, the provision of inputs such as seeds, organic manure or chemical fertilisers, pesticides, agricultural implements and fencing materials has to be thought through and organised. Most San communities reside in remote areas and lack means to collect/obtain farm inputs timeously, so their agricultural activities are often disrupted or delayed. A basic drawback of the agricultural support administered by the MAWF is that it renders agricultural extension services only, although recently it has been possible to obtain seeds and fertiliser from the MAWF on a subsidised basis – but the availability of seeds such as drought-resistant millet fluctuates from year to year. As a result of strategic choices made after Independence, the main task of the MAWF Department of Extension and Engineering Services (DEES) has been to share information with farmers, and consequently it is not generally concerned with the timely supply of inputs required for crop production.
- **Access to draught power:** This access for San has to be thought through and promoted – for example by increasing the scope of training for San beneficiaries in the MAWF Draught Animal Power Acceleration Programme (DAPAP). This would imply that an entire San community, as opposed to just a handful of community members, would have access to, and would benefit from, the draught animals, ploughs and cultivators donated.
- **Namibia Specific Conservation Agriculture (NSCA):** This aspect is linked to the latter. Among San people interested in crop cultivation, sufficient means should also be made available to promote NSCA based on ripper furrowing, rather than traditional methods of ploughing, since tractor ploughing is expensive for most San, and also compacts the Namibian soils too much, thereby reducing crop output – especially in the northern regions which are characterised by relatively heavy rains. NSCA – more commonly known in Namibia as Conservation Tillage or Liwa Nawa – is based on the principle of in-field water harvesting in the rip furrow system, whereby 300 mm of rainfall is converted to an effective 520 mm available for plants in the base of the furrow. NSCA is not only based on the introduction of ripper furrow practices, but also it looks into crop-management practices, such as promoting increased root-depth penetration, weeding and the provision and application of kraal manure and fertiliser packages to boost crop yields. Trials undertaken between 2005 and 2013 in Omusati and Kavango (i.e. north-central regions), have proved that under proper NSCA management practices, yields of *mahangu*, maize and cowpea may be 200% to 600% larger than the average output of 300 kg/ha that traditional management practices produce (Namibia Resource Consultants 2013). Thus NSCA implies not only that agricultural output can be increased in Namibia's common crop-production regions, but also that regions which have thus far been considered marginal in terms of crop production, such as Omaheke, could potentially be transformed into rain-fed crop-producing areas for the purpose of ensuring household food security. Adequate technical support for introducing NSCA practices among the San would again be a basic requirement.

14.5.4 Livestock projects

As section 14.2.7 of this chapter conveys, San at certain research sites considered livestock to be an important means to strengthen their livelihoods. However, even though large and small stock could have positive benefits for the agricultural asset base of the San, and for food security and nutrition – since milk, fat and meat serve to diversify the food consumed by the families who own domestic animals – so far livestock husbandry has not emerged as an important way of supporting San livelihoods at most research sites.

Stakeholders involved in implementing the livestock projects mentioned in section 14.2.7 have done so on the understanding that many of the beneficiaries were previously employed as farmworkers on commercial and communal livestock farms, and thus would be knowledgeable enough to make a success of these initiatives from the outset. This has proved to be a somewhat faulty assumption, as very few San beneficiaries (in particular) have adequate financial means and assets with which to turn livestock farming into a successful operation, regardless of their technical expertise. Moreover, since the livestock projects are characterised by limited degrees of post-project support, the benefits of these projects are often short-lived: although some training in animal husbandry is usually provided initially, the medium- to long-term mentoring of San beneficiaries in terms of animal husbandry, vaccination programmes, rangeland management and livestock marketing is usually not provided for in a comprehensive manner. The lack of means, knowledge and skills on the part of the beneficiaries is therefore compounded by a lack of ongoing technical support and mentoring. This usually has negative effects on the reproduction and survival rates of the livestock donated, especially over the dry season and spring season, and during prolonged droughts. Acute food insecurity among the San is also a factor that limits the survival rates of the livestock donated. A further factor affecting the success of livestock-donation projects is a lack of in-depth feasibility studies that address the veterinary, rangeland/carrying capacity, water management, organisational and marketing issues before the projects are implemented.

14.5.5 Increasing San employment

The government has made some efforts to improve the employment situation of the San in Namibia. For example, the government included the following statement in replying to the recommendations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in *Namibia: Third Periodic Report, 2002-2009*:

“Employment opportunities. The National Government has given directives to all Ministries and Regional Governments to apply affirmative action principles in terms of the law to employ the San people. Many of the Ministries including the Ministry of Defence, Safety and Security [sic] have relaxed the requirements for employment when employing the San people in the Defence and Police Forces.” (ACHPR 2010: 7)

Also, the OPM Division of San Development (DSD) has reported that it helped qualified San to find employment by recommending them for vacancies in government agencies.²⁸ Further, the OPM supports San education with the aim of enhancing their chances of finding formal employment. However, DSD records show that most of the supported students are Hai||om and Khwe, especially at tertiary level (OPM-DSD 2011 and 2012),²⁹ which might mean that other San groups – such as

²⁸ See www.sanddevelopment.gov.na/youth-skills-development-and-employment-opportunities.htm.

²⁹ “List of Learners and Students under the San Development Programme 2011” (OPM-DSD 2011) and “New Applicants for the year 2012” (OPM-DSD 2012).

the !Xun minorities in Kavango and Ohangwena Regions, the !Xun and Ju|'hoansi in Otjozondjupa and the Ju|'hoansi and !Xoon in Omaheke – will continue to be poorly represented in the formal labour market, especially in positions requiring tertiary education.

In general, most of the participants in our research discussions welcomed the livelihood support projects, but at the same time they were highly critical of many of them. In the workshop with San representatives held in Windhoek in January 2013, we asked the participants to identify strengths and challenges of projects supported by the government and NGOs. In response, participants cited examples of projects which they deemed successful, and key reasons for the successes. For instance, a particular livestock project in Omaheke was considered successful – as opposed to a subsequent one in that region which was said to have failed thus far – because proper training had been provided, as well as monitoring (by the newly established project committee). Conservancies were also considered to be successful projects, because, by virtue of their traditions, San communities have a genuine interest in, and profound knowledge of, working with wild animals and nature.

The workshop participants identified a number of reasons for project failure:

- inadequate consultation with the communities (or potential beneficiaries);
- insufficient opportunities for active, effective participation by potential beneficiaries/participants;
- a lack of transparency, and inadequate information provided on the project, its objectives and implications;
- a lack of cultural sensitivity;³⁰
- a limited sense of project ownership on the part of the San;
- suspicions relating to poor management of project finances in some projects;
- insufficient training (e.g. in farming projects);
- perceptions that donors sometimes dictate the planning, implementation and/or management of projects;
- language barriers;
- inadequate market research before project implementation (e.g. sewing and breadmaking projects);
- a frequent lack of adequate baseline studies, feasibility studies, scoping assessments and evaluations; and
- inadequate coordination among the stakeholders.

In sum, those short-term support efforts which lack consultation with the potential participants, and participation by the participants, and which also lack *a priori* research and *posteriori* support and coordination among the stakeholders, are doomed to failure.

14.6 Conclusions and recommendations

14.6.1 General conclusions and recommendations

The San Study found that despite many efforts to improve the livelihoods of San communities in Namibia in a sustainable manner, by and large most San households are still eking out a living through unsustainable livelihood strategies, and remain highly dependent on external support. Although the livelihoods of San groups in Namibia are manifestly constrained by abject poverty, not

³⁰ The workshop participants cited the example of the coffin-making project initiated by the OPM, which had failed, purportedly because of the 'cultural' perception among the San that building coffins for deceased people is a bad omen, in that the coffin builder will face the same fate as the deceased in the near future.

all San households are equally poor, and the levels of poverty of the different San groups vary on the basis of:

- access to natural resources, especially land;
- remoteness of the area, which has implications for access to education, availability of healthcare facilities and access to government grants such as the Old Age Pension;
- availability of income-generating opportunities (including piecework);
- the extent and quality of external support; and
- the existence and government recognition of a particular group's traditional authority (TA).

One of the immediate indicators of poverty recorded among the San groups throughout this study was **food insecurity**. With very little income, constrained access to natural resources and inability to engage in food-crop production, San households generally have a very meagre and inconsistent food supply. This situation stems from their historical displacements from prime land and its abundant natural resources, and the systematic injustices which they have suffered under colonial governments and at the hands of private farmers (Anaya 2013: 9). A consequence of all this is that San groups have faced **ever-increasing limitations of access to and/or ownership of land and its resources** (e.g. veldfoods) on which their traditional livelihood practices were based. Their attempts to adapt to other forms of production, including crop production and livestock farming, have been further frustrated, to a large extent, by the challenge of landlessness. But past land dispossession is not the only factor determining the poverty that most San in Namibia experience today. Their **lack of education, circumscribed capacity to assert their human rights, the prevailing stereotyping of San, internalised discrimination** and their **lack of a strong political voice** are other crucial factors contributing to their current situation. (These factors are discussed in detail in the other chapters in Part III of this report – including the concluding chapter.)

Unable to rely on hunting and gathering, or to engage in the crop production and livestock farming activities that sustain other rural communities in Namibia, for decades most San have resorted to **casual work and piecework** as a principal means of earning a living, supplemented by the food aid, pensions and grants provided by government. Informal piecework and casual work arrangements currently provide meagre incomes for San households, hence they can barely cover their basic needs, and consequently face a number of day-to-day challenges.

Casual work and piecework are generally exploitative and low-paid; most agreements are informal and verbal, and in every region covered, there were complaints of employers defaulting on payment agreements – in one of four ways: paying less than the amount initially agreed upon; paying late; not paying at all; or changing the payment method, i.e. the employer decides to pay in kind (e.g. with food or alcohol) instead of cash. Various kinds of impromptu 'contracts' are still common in rural areas, but the general power imbalances between the San and non-San people aggravate the situation greatly. At many research sites there were reports of San being routinely remunerated with food and alcohol instead of cash for informal labour undertaken for non-San people. Dishonouring labour agreements to the extent reported in the field is an egregious form of labour exploitation that requires a concrete response in terms of the Labour Act 11 of 2007 (see Box 14.4 on page 499 and the recommendations on piecework and casual work). Some of the very poorest San communities – prime examples being groups in urban townships, the !Xun in the BNP and many !Xun in Oshana and Oshana-Namaland – rely to a very great extent on doing piecework and casual work for non-San neighbours, and external support for them is marginal if not absent. Most of these poorest groups have no recognised TA.

In areas where San communities have **access to land** (albeit limited), their livelihood strategies are more diversified. This is the case, for example, in Nyae Nyae and Nǃa Jaqna Conservancies

(Otjozondjupa), in Caprivi, in the BNP and at the resettlement projects supported by LISUP II or LIPROSAN. Gathering – and in Nyae Nyae also hunting – crop farming, animal husbandry and tourism-related activities contribute to the livelihoods of the San in these places, though to varying degrees. However, as mentioned in Chapter 13 on access to land, secure land tenure is not guaranteed in these areas either, therefore securing land rights for all San groups should be a priority in the process of addressing San development in Namibia.

San in group resettlement projects elsewhere often lack **income-generating or food-producing opportunities** as a result of uncoordinated and insufficient post-resettlement support. The San Resettlement Programme under the OPM tends to relocate San to resettlement farms in remote areas, where there are few opportunities for piecework and casual work. For as long as the lack of development of sustainable livelihoods on resettlement farms continues, the project ‘beneficiaries’ will remain at risk of being forced into further destitution, given their previous dependence on piecework and casual work and the lack of replacement income-generating activities for them to pursue in their new communities.

Despite the many challenges that the **TA institution** faces in San communities (see Chapter 19 on consultation, participation and representation), the recognition of separate TAs for the San has reportedly helped the groups concerned to gain government attention and support, and our own research has borne out this perception.

We are left asking what stakeholders working in cooperation with the San can do to reduce the poverty of the San in Namibia in a sustainable manner. What are the preconditions for sustainable livelihood support, and what approaches should be treated with caution or abandoned altogether, based on poor success rates in the past?

Before we present our own analyses based on our field research as well as the long-term experience of research team members in San project support, we present inputs from the San representatives in the workshop held in Windhoek in January 2013.

The representatives recommended the following for improving projects:

- Ensure adequate dissemination of information on programmes and projects.
- Strengthen the monitoring of and by the San TAs. This was recommended because the OPM channels most of its support for San communities through their respective TAs, and purportedly the support did not always trickle down to all community members equally, and information about support opportunities (e.g. the OPM Student Support Programme and job opportunities at specific institutions) was not disseminated adequately throughout the communities.
- Ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of every project.
- Make use of the skills that project participants already possess to train others at all levels and thereby empower the whole project community:
 - Determine what skills the participants already possess.
 - Place skilled participants in positions which give them responsibility for the project, and have them train others, rather than merely employing people at random to do unskilled work for which no training is needed, or skilled work which they are already capable of doing;
- Change the approaches to projects:
 - Ensure sufficient time for training: as a rule it takes at least five years of assistance to ascertain whether or not participants can continue the project on their own.
 - Take a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach, e.g. ask the local San what projects they need rather than have consultants design projects from their desks in Windhoek.

In the following paragraphs we extend or add detail to the representatives' recommendations, based on the findings of our field research and the experiences of research team members in the implementation and management of San projects.

In general, livelihood projects must **aim to diversify the San livelihood strategies**. It is common knowledge that households with diversified livelihoods are less vulnerable and better equipped to cope with shocks. Chapter 19 on consultation, participation and representation spells out the consultation procedures that should be followed to ensure that livelihood support initiatives are designed to support San in their efforts to become self-reliant and less dependent on external support. In this regard it should be noted that requesting project participants to contribute in kind and/or in monetary terms to such initiatives instils in them a certain degree of responsibility or 'ownership' of their own development initiatives.

Long-term initiatives should be complemented by **short-term strategies** that help San to meet their immediate needs while they work towards long-term sustainable livelihoods. Any approach to San development has to be flexible and participatory, and must progress at the pace at which the participants feel comfortable, rather than being based on standard project implementation periods and project deadlines that participants and other stakeholders need to meet to comply with donor procedures or satisfy government's priorities and needs.

Developing livelihoods means that different actors and sectors have to provide certain **services**: health, education, water supply and sanitation services; income-generating projects; and habitat protection (e.g. forest conservation). Different stakeholders thus need to collaborate on a regular basis to ensure efficient support to communities. **Coordination between stakeholders** is crucial for the sustainability of interventions, and specific efforts are needed to create the platforms where such coordination can be organised in a constructive manner.

As far as working with San communities at local level is concerned, rather than organisations appointing clerks/bureaucrats who have no experience in community development, it is preferable that **qualified community development officers** be employed, as these people have the necessary expertise and are motivated to work with the San. The attitude, motivation and intercultural skills of the individual staff members involved are at least as important as, for example, technical know-how in crop or craft production. Those locally based officers should act as project facilitators while the respective San communities drive the development on the ground. With the proviso that such development is executed *with* the San rather than *for* the San, full commitment from all stakeholders remains pertinent for successful development, and this commitment should also serve to increase the autonomy of the San. San people in different areas of the country have expressed the wish to be supported so that they can take charge of their own development rather than being guided by other groups and stakeholders on what direction their development should take.

Regarding the concerns raised about the strategic management capacity and technical capacity of San communities (section 14.5), civil society, development partners and government may need to start thinking in terms of **new types of partnerships** with San communities, i.e. partnerships that would allow for distinctions to be drawn between various support approaches, based on the disparate needs of different San communities.³¹ Generally speaking, development partners may need to formulate strategies that more comprehensively address the delivery of technical support services and farm inputs (equipment, etc.), and the marketing of farm outputs, based on more business-orientated collaborative partnerships. Last but not least, it is necessary to establish

³¹ See also the recommendations on San in resettlement projects at the end of Chapter 13 (page 461ff).

and promote continuous monitoring and action-orientated learning processes between the San communities and the development practitioners involved with them, to ensure that projects and programmes continually build the capacities of the San and keep addressing their needs and aspirations.

14.6.2 Specific recommendations

With regard to the various San livelihood strategies, the following is recommended:

Food aid

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) recommended the following after its mission to Namibia in July/August 2005 (ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 131): "Food aid and drought relief should be monitored on a regular basis and local officials should be given adequate means to enable them to deliver food aid to the communities." Our study has found that this recommendation is still far from being realised. If the San could count on **fixed quantities and qualities of food and deliveries at fixed times**, this would certainly improve their food security and decrease their dependency, because they would know if and when they would need to find other sources of food, and would be free to engage in other activities instead of waiting for possible food-aid deliveries. Furthermore, it is strongly recommended that the OPM regularly conducts needs assessments in all San communities, taking into account seasonal variations in food availability, so that the supplies of food aid can be adjusted accordingly (e.g. to avoid supplying food when San are harvesting their own crops). The OPM should also develop a phase-out strategy for the San Feeding Programme, with a view to replacing it with sustainable livelihood projects implemented in consultation with the San communities. As a first measure in this regard – as also recommended by San representatives in the workshop in January 2013 – the government should undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the San Feeding Programme, and determine whether or not livelihood projects would be more effective in the long run in terms of spending and positive outcomes for the San. If deemed more effective, community members must be included throughout the planning and implementation phases, and government would have recognise and fulfil the need for its long-term extensive and coordinated commitment to these projects.

Old Age Pensions and other social grants

Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4) identifies the following, inter alia, as key challenges with regard to extreme poverty in the country (NPC 2012a: 68):

- Many extremely poor households do not access the social grants to which they are eligible.
- Civil registration is too slow, in large part because many people eligible for grants lack official documents.
- Research into the causes of extreme poverty in Namibia is lacking.

Our research has confirmed that these challenges apply to the San communities surveyed, thus we endorse the NDP4 recommendations for addressing them (NPC 2012a: 68) – recommendations which have particular relevance for the San (and other marginalised communities):

- Identify the households currently living in extreme poverty, and design support mechanisms to assist them in moving up the socio-economic ladder.
- Review legislation to address civil-registration blockages, and increase the number of registration points.
- Strengthen research capacities.

Our research provided some insights into the causes of extreme poverty, but it was beyond the scope of this study to undertake in-depth research in remote areas of Kavango, Ohangwena and Omaheke Regions (e.g. Eiseb in Omaheke) where some San communities are living under the very worst of conditions and yet receive the least external support.

Apart from the strategies recommended in NDP4, we recommend employing San of the relevant local language groups in offices as translators (on a part-time basis), to facilitate registration for pensions and other social grants. Likewise, San youth could be engaged part time in health outreach programmes so that illnesses such as TB can be more proactively addressed among the San.

Crop production

Discussion participants at most of our research sites viewed crop production as a means to escape (extreme) poverty, therefore special attention should be paid to encouraging and supporting crop production in San communities. For a start, feasibility studies should be carried out in the various regions in consultation with the applicable communities. As part of these studies, or as a separate undertaking, previous and current San crop-production initiatives should be compared, and their strengths and weaknesses identified and evaluated with a view to extrapolating best practices and lessons learnt. When the crops of San in a national park (i.e. the Khwe and !Xun in the BNP, Kavango and Caprivi) are damaged by wildlife, the people concerned should be entitled to compensation from the government – as the ACHPR recommended in reporting on its mission to Namibia in 2005 (ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 130). These crop producers should also be provided with protected areas where wild animals cannot enter and destroy the crops. Furthermore, appropriate measures should be taken to minimise destruction of crop fields belonging to San by free-ranging animals belonging to non-San communal farmers. Lastly, as the ACHPR recommended (ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 130): “The government should provide appropriate agricultural training to those San members who wish to engage in either crop or cattle farming, or both They should all be trained in farming techniques and provided with the necessary farming tools and equipment.”

Finally with regard to crop production, experiences have shown that both long-term support and locally-based support are needed to make crop production sustainable and successful in terms of improved food security (see also section 14.5).

Livestock

Livestock projects have the potential to improve the rural livelihoods of San people, provided that they receive sufficient technical support on a medium- to long-term basis, and that the capacity of those engaged in the projects is sufficiently strengthened. This would require technical support and close mentoring in areas such as animal husbandry, water-demand management, rangeland management and livestock marketing. If stakeholders are serious about engaging San in livestock farming, then a comprehensive approach to supply- or value-chain development is called for – meaning that (a) the supply of farm inputs and services (e.g. veterinary services) that vulnerable groups such as the San would require to succeed in livestock farming, and (b) the off-take of their livestock, would have to be properly facilitated and technically supported.

In terms of the choice between large stock (cattle) and small stock (goats and sheep), various factors would have to be weighed. San generally tend to favour donations of cattle. Status may play a role in this regard, but the San reported that they would be more reluctant to eat cattle (as opposed to goats) – presumably because the parties who donate livestock would view the consumption of cattle

more unfavourably (probably because cattle have more monetary value than goats). On the other hand, the reproductive rate of small stock is considerably higher than that of cattle, and so, if the growth of the livestock population and income generation through livestock sales are to be specific objectives of any livestock support initiative in San communities, then the choice of small stock, and goats in particular, should be advocated and promoted.

In connection with animal husbandry and crop production – and in view of the challenges of building technical and strategic-management capacity for agricultural production among the San (described above and in Box 14.3 on crop production) – development partners and the government should provide resources for research to identify appropriate institutional partnerships between San communities and civil society for enabling higher agricultural output. This is especially pertinent to group resettlement projects: the latest thinking in this regard reverses previous models somewhat in promoting the establishment of business partnerships between stakeholders (e.g. NGOs) and beneficiary communities – much like the private-public partnerships that have been realised between private lodges and conservancies in recent years. Such partnerships would enable civil society or the private sector to lead farm production both strategically and technically so that higher agricultural outputs can be realised, with the aim of supporting the beneficiary communities in terms of food security, nutrition and income. This basically involves more market-orientated and business-like approaches to San communities' agricultural production, incorporating aspects of agricultural service delivery and delivery and management of farm inputs and equipment, as well as supply-chain management and marketing of agricultural output. Given that such an approach to increasing agricultural output among resettled San involves close mentoring, and also, in all likelihood, the presence of a farm manager or agricultural extension officer on the farms concerned, the social and institutional aspects and risks of such arrangements would have to be covered in the research.

Income-generating activities

Income-generating activities are a crucial approach to providing San individuals and households with an all-important cash income. Therefore, NGOs and the government should make specific efforts (see also ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 131) to increase opportunities for the San to engage in income-generating projects and enterprises. In so doing, specific attention should be paid to:

- prior consultation with the proposed participants;
- prior research to ascertain whether there are markets for specific products or services; and
- cultural aspects, i.e. projects which exploit the cultural knowledge and skills of the beneficiaries should be prioritised.

Piecework and casual work

Piecework and casual work are also important means to provide San individuals and households with a necessary and relatively immediate cash income. Projects implemented by NGOs and the government often overlook the importance of piecework and/or casual work to the San, and focus on income-generating activities or subsistence farming, realising only later that in some cases the beneficiaries might have preferred to engage in piecework or casual work instead of working in their own fields, for example – not least because piecework and casual work provide a cash income more immediately. Our research has clearly revealed the importance of piecework and casual work for the majority of San households, but it has also revealed the exploitative nature of many of these informal arrangements. Yet, importantly – and until a specific situation proves the contrary – pieceworkers and casual workers are deemed to be 'employees' and are thus covered by the Labour Act 11 of 2007 (as amended – see Box 14.4).

Box 14.4: The implications of the Labour Act 11 of 2007 (as amended by the Labour Amendment Act 2 of 2012) for piecework and casual work

Recently, section 128 of the Labour Act 11 of 2007 was amended by the insertion in the Labour Amendment Act 2 of 2012 of section 128A dealing with “**Presumption as to who is an employee**”.

Act 11 of 2007 defines an “employee” as anyone who received remuneration for work done. Since the Act did not prohibit the employment of casual workers, it was not illegal for anyone with contractual capacity to agree to casual employment in terms of common law, although, significantly, the Act did not make explicit provision for casual workers as a discrete group. The definition of “employee” in the Act was therefore very wide, and a fixed-term employment contract could arguably include a person doing casual work from time to time. However, section 128A in Act 2 of 2012 deems a person to be an “employee” if certain conditions prevail, irrespective of the type of contract or arrangement between the parties. Thus the onus is shifted on the wage- or remuneration-paying person or entity to show he/she/it is not engaged in an employer/employee arrangement. Section 128A provides:

“For the purposes of this Act or any other employment law, until the contrary is proved, an individual who works for or renders services to any other person, is presumed to be an employee of that other person, regardless of the form of the contract or the designation of the individual, if any one or more of the following factors is present:

- a) the manner in which the individual works is subject to the control or direction of that other person;
- b) the individual’s hours of work are subject to the control or direction of that other person;
- c) in the case of an individual who works for an organisation, the individual’s work forms an integral part of the organisation;
- d) the individual has worked for that other person for an average of at least 20 hours per month over the past three months;
- e) the individual is economically dependent on that person for whom he or she works or renders services;
- f) the individual is provided with tools of trade or work equipment by that other person;
- g) the individual only works for or renders services to that other person; or
- h) any other prescribed factor.”

Since only one of the listed factors has to be present for a worker to be presumed an employee, workers doing piecework or casual work for an individual or company are deemed employees in terms of this Act – at least until the contrary has been proven. Thus this provision has important implications for San doing piecework or casual work, whose labour situation could improve substantially as a result.

Campaigns targeting San communities and potential employers should be conducted to raise their awareness of this provision and other apposite legislation – notably Labour Act 11 of 2007 and the minimum wage agreement in the agricultural sector (see Chapter 12 on farmworkers, page 426) – and to provide insight into the relevant labour laws. Furthermore, San paralegals should be trained to assist the San – whose rights are vulnerable to violation in this regard – to take the necessary legal steps to assert their employment rights: a working knowledge of the legislation would give the San much more bargaining power in negotiating remuneration, working conditions, etc.

Formal employment

Participants in our research discussions viewed formal employment as the key route out of poverty. In the long term, education is the most important precondition for landing a formal job (see also Chapter 16 on education), but in the short term other measures can be taken to ensure that a certain number of San become employed.

In its report published half a decade ago, the ACHPR recommended the following (ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 131): “The government should ... give priority to the employment of San members to fill vacancies. The government should ensure that labour laws are enforced so that proper working conditions are ensured for the San.” As emphasised repeatedly in this San Study report, however, it remains the case that few San have formal employment.

At nearly all of our research sites, participants emphasised formal employment as a fundamental way for them to escape poverty. Our study findings suggest that the affirmative action approach could be utilised to address current imbalances in the workplace – as also recommended in the ACHPR’s *Namibia: Third Periodic Report* (ACHPR 2010: 6). In responding to these ACHPR recommendations, the Namibian Government states that it “has given directives to all Ministries and Regional Governments to apply affirmative action principles in terms of the law to employ the San people,” and reportedly ministries have relaxed their requirements when employing the San (ACHPR 2010: 7), but much more must be done in this regard (see Box 14.5).

Box 14.5: Affirmative action and socio-economic development opportunities for the San

By Peter Watson

The San are disadvantaged relative to other Namibian ethnic or tribal groups, primarily due to the historical deprivation of resources and the lack of meaningful access to formal education which has placed them among the lowest wage earners in Namibia. As largely unskilled workers, they have limited employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector. Despite Article 20 of the Constitution of Namibia, which provides that all persons have the right to education, the persistent low level of education and lack of access to government support undermines any improvement of the socio-economic status of the San.

Article 23 of the Constitution makes provision for the implementation of affirmative action laws and policies to redress the imbalances created by past discriminatory laws and practices in Namibia.

Although much effort has been made to address the wrongdoings of Namibia’s apartheid history through affirmative action laws and policies – such as the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 of 1998 as amended by Act 6 of 2007, the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme and the resettlement programme – as well as various black economic empowerment (BEE) schemes, there has been no significant benefit for San communities. At present, many San are in the employ (or under the control) of farmers in communal and commercial areas, or are working for other types of employers, and are often subjected to unfair labour practices, forced labour and inadequate living conditions. As a result of their abject poverty generally, the San are trapped in an endless cycle of dependence and vulnerability.

The amended Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 of 1998 (AAA) has as its main purpose the implementation of measures to redress inequalities in employment and create equal employment opportunities in line with Articles 10 and 23 of the Constitution. The AAA establishes an Employment Equity Commission (EEC) and provides for the creation of affirmative action programmes that should redress the discrimination and disadvantages experienced by persons within three statutory designated groups because of past discriminatory laws. These groups are racially disadvantaged persons, women and persons with disabilities. Section 17(2) of the AAA describes certain policies that could fall under the affirmative action programme – such as the elimination of employment barriers, providing training programmes, and giving preferential treatment to people from the designated groups. Section 17(3) sets out guidelines according to which the EEC can evaluate whether

or not a specific group is equitably represented in a given workplace environment. Strict guidelines are set out under section 19 with regard to preferential treatment of designated groups. The Act also provides for a “relevant employer” to which the Act shall apply, and these are registered with the EEC. Article 22 provides for voluntary affirmative action in respect of employers who are not relevant for the purposes of the AAA.

It is a historical fact that the San people were marginalised by discriminatory practices even prior to colonialism and Independence, mostly as a result of their ethnic origins. Since the AAA section 18 defines “racially disadvantaged persons” as “all persons who belong to a racial or ethnic group which was or is, directly or indirectly, disadvantaged in the labour field as a consequence of social, economic, or educational imbalances arising out of racially discriminatory laws or practices before the Independence of Namibia ...”, it is clear that the San fall within the ambit of this legislation.

However, even though the legislation is in place to redress imbalances in the employment sector, it equally applies to the majority of Namibians who are not white men without disabilities. The AAA does not give the Minister or the Commission powers to add to a designated group. Section 18 is quite clear that it is only the three designated groupings that apply for the purpose of the Act, and this invariably means that there is no special treatment for marginalised San community members and that they must therefore compete with all other affirmative action candidates – and given that the San are the most uneducated and most poverty-stricken of citizens, and generally lack access to the affirmative action socio-economic development policies, they remain on the fringes with little prospect of socio-economic development.

Section 23 of the AAA requires relevant employers to create three-year affirmative action plans, essentially specifying the affirmative action measures to be implemented by them, and section 24 requires relevant employers to carry out consultations with the representatives of their employees in this regard. So it is feasible for relevant employers to make provisions to specifically allow preferential treatment of San people within their group of racially disadvantaged staff due to past discriminatory laws and practices as a result of their (San) ethnicity. Taking such measures implies implicit acknowledgement that there is a justifiable basis for discrimination between classes of racially disadvantaged people as a result of past ethnic discrimination and practices between people who fall within this group, for the same reasons that discrimination between unimpaired white males and racially disadvantaged people, for example, is justifiable (despite Article 10 of the Constitution). The same principle would apply – that ensuring equality between the groups requires levelling the playing field.

The register of relevant employers includes any office, ministry or agency in the public service identified as such. Thus government offices, parastatals and government-owned enterprises are relevant employers and subject to the provisions of the AAA. In view of this, it is also feasible for the government to issue specific directives regarding the employment of San as preferential, for the same reasons outlined above.

We therefore recommend that affirmative action specifically targeting the San as part of the designated group of “racially disadvantaged persons” should be applied by government and other “relevant employers” in accordance with the Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 of 1998.

Hunting and gathering

The government does not currently appear to consider gathering and traditional hunting as falling within the categorisation of ‘livelihood strategies’ insofar as land where such economic practices have been prevalent in the past may now be regarded by government as ‘underutilised land’

(MLR and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) 2012: 5). Several projects (e.g. a small-scale farming scheme in Kavango Region) similarly overlook the fact that the San still use specific areas for gathering quantities of veldfoods that contribute to their livelihoods and food security, as they have traditionally done in the past. The situation in conservancies such as Nꞑa Jaqna and Nyae Nyae is different because the San are allowed to collect veldfood within designated areas of the conservancies (despite the various challenges dealt with in Chapter 5 on Otjozondjupa Region and Chapter 13 on access to land). To give the San the option of using gathering (and potentially hunting) as livelihood strategies, the government should consider establishing conservancies in areas where the San could be supported by experienced NGOs such as the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO), IRDNC, the NNDFN and the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF). Furthermore, when the future of communal land is discussed, the government and other stakeholders should investigate whether the area/s under consideration is/are used by the San (and others) for veldfood-gathering purposes (or had been used historically for this purpose), and formulate their decisions accordingly.

In addition, there should be an investigation into the possibility of issuing Special Game Licenses (see Chapter 13 on access to land). The exception made for Nyae Nyae Conservancy, where San are allowed to hunt with traditional weapons, should be extended to other San communities (e.g. in the BNP) (ACHPR and IWIGIA 2008: 131).