

Chapter 20

Overall Conclusion

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A San family in Corridor 15, Omaheke Region, in 2008 (Photo by Gertrud Boden)

The “Reassessment of the Current Status of the San of Namibia” (referred to herein as the “San Study”) was initiated in 2010 to investigate the status of San in Namibia two decades after Independence, and 10 years after the last comprehensive study on the San was undertaken, namely the “Assessment of the Status of San in Namibia”. The recommendations of the assessment in 2001 were comprehensive (see Suzman 2001b), and we refer to them (in Box 20.1 on the next page) as a reference point for this study conducted in 2011-2013.

Since 2001, a few of the recommendations (those *italicised* in Box 20.1) have been partly or fully realised, in particular through initiatives implemented with the aim of decreasing the marginal status of San communities in Namibia. Most important of these is the San Development Programme (SDP) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), initiated in late 2005 (see pages 28-29).

Box 20.1: Conclusions and recommendations of the Assessment of the Status of the San of Namibia 2001

James Suzman recommended the establishment of a multi-sectoral programme targeting San as a development priority, as opposed to subsuming San rights issues in a simplistic economic framework. He identified four key areas for intervention: **development and empowerment; education; access to land; and leadership and representation**. His recommendations in these key areas are as follows (*the italicised areas are those in which some progress has been made*):

Development and empowerment

- Development initiatives for San must work on the principle that empowerment is development. Top-down development initiatives disempower San and ultimately render them more dependent on welfare.
- Programmes and initiatives must be “culturally sensitive” and attempt to work with and through existing social and cultural structures rather than against them.
- Activities must aim to enable San to determine the direction and pace of their own development within reasonable parameters.

Education

- *Develop educational resources for major San language groups.*
- Continue the co-operation of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture with stakeholders in the Intersectoral Task Force on Educationally Marginalised Children
- Establish an education programme that is sufficiently flexible to cope with the socio-cultural and material problems faced by San learners.

Access to land

- *Prioritise (de facto) San and other landless Namibians under the Agricultural Land Reform Act (ALRA) in terms of resettlement policy.*
- Overhaul the resettlement application procedure to ensure that San and others are able to apply for resettlement more easily.
- Ensure adequate San representation on land boards in communal areas.
- *Implement resettlement programmes for San in accordance with the letter of the law and stated policy.*
- Abandon co-operative resettlement projects.

Leadership and representation

- *Assess outstanding San traditional authority claims in terms of the requirements stipulated in the Traditional Authorities Act.*
- *Continue donor and NGO support for institutional development and capacity building in San CBOs and traditional authorities.*
- Intensify encouragement of San participation in local and regional politics.
- *Continue donor and NGO support for cultural programmes.*

Suzman 2001b:144-145

In 2011, in a brochure entitled *Empowering Marginalised Communities in Namibia* (OPM 2011), the OPM expressed its dedication to:

- ensuring that the national laws and policies affecting marginalised peoples are effectively implemented across all national institutions;
- strengthening awareness campaign strategies on the plight of marginalised communities;
- improving the coordination of the different initiatives aimed at supporting the development of marginalised communities in Namibia; and
- ensuring that the adopted international legal frameworks on marginalised communities are effectively implemented at national level.

The existence of a specific government office dedicated to ameliorating the situation of San communities provides a promising framework for empowering San communities in Namibia. Furthermore, in Namibia's Fourth National Development Plan 2012/2013 to 2016/2017 (NDP4), the welfare of San communities falls under the eradication of extreme poverty (NPC 2012a: 62-69).¹

Despite these efforts, the perception of many San in Namibia in 2013 is that they are “left behind” or “scraping the pot” – as the title of this report reflects. Where is the discrepancy? How do we reconcile the existence of a comprehensive government programme specifically designed to address the needs of the San with the perception of the San themselves? During the course of our study we heard several explanations for this discrepancy, provided by various stakeholders – above all government officials and NGO representatives, but also San representatives. Essentially, three reasons were proffered: some San were just ignorant about what has been done for them; ingratitude on the part of the San; and a discursive strategy on the part of the San to ensure future support.

Our research has proved the contrary: the vast majority of the San do in fact experience serious marginalisation in Namibia, manifested in poverty and food insecurity, a lack of secure access to land and natural resources, a lack of education, a lack of access to services, discrimination and limited political representation. In the subsections of this chapter, we summarise the nature of the marginalisation described in detail in this report. Finally, we suggest an overall explanation for the ongoing marginalisation of the San in the face of so many efforts to help them, and offer overall recommendations based on our research.

Livelihoods and poverty

The San Study participants generally considered themselves to be “poor” or “very poor”. At most research sites, the participants ranked between 50% and 80% of the San households in their respective communities in one of these two lowest wealth-ranking categories. Very few households were categorised as somewhat better off, and only *very* rarely was a household ranked in the wealthiest category. These self-evaluations match the findings of our livelihoods analysis (Chapter 14); the San's overall access to food and income is indeed highly insecure.

The majority of San households at most of the sites depend to a substantial degree on government support for their survival. The Old Age Pension (N\$600 per month at the time of writing) is the most common and most consistent source of income in Namibia's San communities, and for many of them, food aid is the most reliable source of food. Research participants reported a high degree of reliance on both of these sources for their survival. In addition, San communities and individuals employ a variety of strategies to secure small amounts of cash (or in some cases food), including casual work (often seasonal) and piecework for neighbouring groups, depending on circumstances and availability. The sale of natural products or crafts occasionally brings additional but minimal income. Some individuals attempt to gain extra income by engaging in business on a very small scale – for example, buying food items at a shop and selling them in smaller quantities at home, or producing and selling *vetkoek* (‘fat cakes’, consisting of deep-fried dough).

Other San livelihood strategies focus directly on gaining access to a food source. Our study found that the gathering of veldfood is still a very important livelihood strategy for San communities,

¹ NDP4 does not specifically mention San communities, but it acknowledges that households of “certain language groups” are “prone to extreme poverty”, and presumably San households are included here. According to NDP4, the government will expand its social protection system to these households, which are currently excluded from this system, and yet are severely affected by poverty (NPC 2012a: 67).

but it is highly seasonal and limited in most areas by a lack of access to land. Despite various efforts by stakeholders – and the aspirations of the San themselves – to improve their livelihoods through animal husbandry, this livelihood strategy plays a minor role in most San communities. Some communities cultivate crops, but only on a relatively small scale, and this is dependent on environmental circumstances, access to land and external support. Harvests are usually consumed within a couple of days, weeks or months; they do not suffice to provide households with staple food for an entire year. NGOs support crop cultivation on a larger scale, and this has contributed to improving food security, but sustainability has yet to be achieved (see the subsection on limited post-settlement support, next page). Despite these limitations, however, the San participants in our research generally regarded access to crop fields and agricultural implements as essential for poverty reduction; generally they viewed community members with such access as better off than those without. Likewise, those who owned cattle and goats were considered to be better off than those without. Although owning large numbers of livestock (especially large stock) was seen as a way to avoid poverty, ownership of large herds was generally regarded as the exclusive preserve of members of other ethnic groups. Formal employment was viewed as a major determinant of security, mostly because it offers regular cash 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). However, again, research participants often reported that other ethnic groups were more likely to receive jobs. These are all relevant findings which should be taken into consideration in future programme planning and implementation.

Certainly, poverty is not unique to the San; many other Namibians are equally poor. However, no other ethnic group in Namibia has such a high proportion of poor and very poor members. This widespread poverty among the San is attributable to a combination of numerous factors which are interrelated and partly conditional upon each other. Our analyses of the study findings brought to light the key factors – which accord, by and large, with the key factors identified in the 2001 study:

- lack of access to land / lack of secure land tenure;
- limited post settlement support / lack of access to productive assets;
- very low levels of education;
- discrimination and culture; and
- limited political representation, participation and consultation.

In the following subsections we briefly describe each of these factors.

Lack of access to land/lack of secure land tenure

“The Government of Namibia should step up efforts to address the problem of landlessness of San groups and to carry out initiatives to secure for them rights to land and do so, to the extent compatible with the rights of others, in accordance with their historical or traditional land tenure patterns.”

– James Anaya, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2013, p. 19

The vast majority of San households do not have secure land rights. As is the case for most of the other (rural) Namibian communities, access to land is critical for many San households, especially those in remote areas, but it is even more important for San communities because their educational qualifications are so low, which limits their employment opportunities. Securing land rights is one of the most urgent issues to address in respect of the San in Namibia.

Access to land has improved somewhat for a few of Namibia’s San communities since 2001: Nꞑa Jaqna Conservancy in Otjozondjupa Region was gazetted in 2003; San and non-San residents in

Caprivi and Kavango Regions were granted user rights in the Bwabwata National Park (BNP – a.k.a. West Caprivi) as of 2006; and several resettlement farms have been purchased for some San communities under the OPM's SDP – in Kunene, Oshikoto and Otjozondjupa. However, as conveyed in the regional chapters, even the communities with access to land face serious threats at present: residents of Nǀa Jaqna Conservancy are battling with illegal fencing; Nyae Nyae Conservancy residents are struggling with an influx of Herero farmers with cattle; an influx of Mbukushu people and their cattle in the BNP is compounded by the fact that the Khwe and !Xun have no *de jure* right to reside in the park; and on the San resettlement farms, none of the beneficiaries have received any title deed in their individual names, the influx of outsiders is not controlled, and there are few or no sustainable livelihood strategies available to the beneficiaries.

For many San communities, access to land and natural resources has been reduced or threatened since 2001: for the !Xun and Ju|'hoansi in Kavango, access to land is threatened by the development of small-scale farms; Hai||om on Farm Six in Oshikoto lost access to land and resources when a large part of “their” land was allocated to Owambo farmers and their cattle; many San communities in communal areas (especially in Ohangwena and Omaheke) lost access to land due to the (illegal) fencing of large tracks of land; and Hai||om in the Etosha National Park are being pressurised to leave the park by, inter alia, excluding them from benefiting as tourism concessionaires.

As San culture is very closely linked to (ancestral) land, the lack of land has a major impact on the respective cultures of the San groups. Our findings indicate that the few groups still living on their ancestral land without too much influx of outsiders – such as those in Nyae Nyae and the BNP, and to a limited degree the Hai||om on Farm Six – have maintained a much stronger sense of cultural identity than other groups. For example, the San in Omusati cannot speak a Khoisan language anymore, have adopted many of the cultural traits of their Oshiwambo-speaking neighbours, and have become a regional “underclass”. Commercial farmworkers and San in townships have also lost their cultural identity to a large extent.

Limited post-settlement support / lack of access to productive assets

In 2001, resettlement was viewed as a promising step forward in helping to alleviate the problem of landlessness among the San (see Box 20.1, “Access to land”). However, the approach employed by the government was the **group resettlement scheme**, which, due to negative experiences as from the mid 1990s, was *not* recommended in the 2001 assessment report (Suzman 2001b). Our study has shown that San in group resettlement schemes face specific challenges associated with their high degrees of illiteracy, their cultural background and their recent history of marginalisation, and generally acknowledged constraints to common property resource management play an important role as well. These four challenges require comprehensive strategies for post-settlement support for San living in group resettlement projects, which take cognisance of the need to strengthen their technical and collaborative capacity for resource management. Instead, the post-settlement support rendered to San in these projects from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s focused mostly on improving access to farm assets, equipment and inputs, in the hope that the San would take charge of the management of such resources so that they could become self-reliant after a certain period of government support. Building technical management capacity received relatively little or inadequate attention initially, with the result that the provision of equipment and inputs spawned dependency on their continued and free supply. When capacity strengthening was eventually put on the agenda (circa 2005 or a little later), the organisations involved in providing such training encountered severe constraints relating to the high levels of illiteracy and the common property resource management problems. This has again been underscored by recent experiences in resettlement projects where some advances in food security have been made with the combined support of the government and

NGOs – for example in projects supported by Komeho Namibia in Kavango Region, and by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) in conjunction with the Habitafrica Foundation in Omaheke (in all these cases with financial support from the government and/or donors). In this regard, when 40 or more families have to share natural resources on a farm, it appears to remain difficult for the San to take charge of the joint management of the farm inputs, equipment, gardens and/or livestock, let alone the management of the supply chain and marketing processes. Thus, one can state that the government's continued focus on group resettlement schemes – in recent years again promoted by the OPM for the San – and the strategies employed in these projects, have not necessarily paid adequate attention to:

- technical and collaborative management capacity, which is needed to turn vulnerable farmers like the San into productive farmers; and
- structural constraints associated with high levels of illiteracy, common property management problems, remoteness and market inaccessibility.

Similarly, agricultural extension services rendered to San farmers on communal land seem to yield few positive results. Generally the extension services focus mainly on the sharing of knowledge of traditional methods of crop production and animal husbandry, but hardly address the widespread lack of access to draught power, the requisite access to markets and/or the timely delivery of farm inputs (e.g. seeds, manure/fertiliser, pesticides for crop cultivation, and vaccines, dips and veterinary services for animal husbandry) to resource-poor farmers. San, like other farmers in remote areas, basically have to acquire these farm inputs from the private sector and are responsible for accessing markets themselves. In more recent years, seeking to improve access to farm inputs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF) has subsidised ploughing and weeding on farms in the northern communal areas, and has also provided drought-resistant pearl millet (i.e. the variety known in Namibia as Okashana 2) and fertiliser packages on a partially subsidised basis. Similarly, to overcome the ploughing constraints facing poor rural farmers, the MAWF implemented its Draught Animal Power Acceleration Programme (DAPAP) serving poor farmers, including San, in the northern communal areas. But, despite some San in these areas gaining access to draught power and drought-resistant pearl millet as a result of these MAWF efforts, the costs associated with the fertiliser packages and ploughing, even though subsidised, have often proved prohibitive for most of the San, and thus have greatly impeded their potential gains in agricultural output.^{2,3} The impact of the DAPAP has also been piecemeal for the San, as relatively few San were trained, and the San beneficiaries were expected to share the donated ploughs, cultivators and oxen with fellow community members, which often resulted in limited ownership of these productive assets, and consequently neglect of the animals and equipment donated.

In short, the strategies thus far deployed by different roleplayers in support of San farmers in group resettlement projects and in the northern and eastern communal areas have not yet managed to adequately address structural constraints associated with high levels of illiteracy among the San, their cultural background and their history of marginalisation. Likewise, the roleplayers have not yet found comprehensive strategies or solutions that would sustainably address San farmers'

² Limited government attention to the promotion of Namibia Specific Conservation Agriculture (NSCA), which is better adapted to the variable climatic conditions in Namibia, has also implied that many farmers in the northern communal areas, including San, have been excluded from valuable extension services that could have increased their crop output (see also the recommendations in this chapter).

³ The free provision of fully subsidised millet seeds for the San occasionally creates its own backlash. In Ohangwena Region there have been accounts of neighbouring farmers attempting to convince San farmers who had received fully subsidised pearl millet seeds that it was better to plant traditional varieties of pearl millet. Clearly this was an attempt to convince the San to exchange part of the subsidised drought-resistant millet seeds for the traditional variety that takes longer to grow and is less adaptable to dry spells and drought.

limited access to farm inputs and/or draught power, or which would strengthen their joint resource management capacity and/or their capacity to manage supply chains and market access. Thus, the near absence of adequate and comprehensive agricultural support services for San living on remote group resettlement farms or in remote parts of the northern and eastern communal areas implies that those San interested in improving their living conditions through farming are forced to rely on their own often limited means, which generally results in a low-input-and-low-output type of farming, with very meagre returns.

Discrimination and culture

Most San participants in our research reported experiencing discrimination at the hands of ‘others’ in Namibian society, including public servants, and they cited many examples (e.g. in the education and health sectors, other public services and the formal job market) to illustrate how discrimination contributes to San poverty and marginalisation. Discrimination against San in the past and today stems in part from the fact that they are still often perceived as lacking culture; as ‘primitive’ or ‘uncivilised.’ Many outsiders are ignorant about San cultures and traditions, and this ignorance leads many to perceive the San way of life as ‘backwards’ and thus something to be overcome, rather than as a resource to be incorporated and built upon. This discrimination clearly has a negative impact on their self-esteem, their access to public services, their political participation and representation, their educational achievements and their employment opportunities.

This study has found that the lack of information and consequent widespread lack of knowledge about certain lesser-known but fundamental aspects of all San cultures are posing obstacles to San development:

- **Subsistence practices and land-use patterns:** San communities in Namibia have experienced major changes in their subsistence practices over the last century, and hunting and gathering are practised to a very limited extent today (as described throughout this report), but many aspects of their former way of life – such as their “foraging mode of thought” (see, inter alia, Barnard 2002: 5) – are still maintained and even enhanced.
- **Moral obligation to share:** Egalitarian levelling and sharing mechanisms still play an especially important role in food-distribution mechanisms, and come into play in new manifestations in contemporary life, such as the sharing of cash (including Old Age Pension money).
- **Strong mechanisms of levelling:** This ‘egalitarian’ aspect of San culture was always present in their former leadership structures, but today it poses a struggle for the San in developing strong and widely recognised *hierarchical* leadership structures (discussed in more detail further on).

It is crucially important that these fundamental aspects of San culture are taken into account in the planning and implementation of any San development initiative. In addition, it is critical to develop site-specific approaches that take into account the specific circumstances of the San community concerned, and to elicit the active engagement of the participants/beneficiaries.

Low levels of education

Their extremely low levels of education is a factor that feeds into the cycle of poverty in which San communities find themselves. Namibia’s education policies are progressive in terms of meeting the educational requirements of its minorities, but not all of these policies are enforced, and the reality on the ground still reflects gross inequalities in educational access and attainment. Recent quantitative research consistently shows that San communities are by far the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the system. This statistical picture is confirmed by the data gathered in this San

Study, which found that although the majority of San children (but far from all) attend school in the lower-primary grades (Grades 1-3) – especially if there is a school in close proximity to their homes – there is a sharp decline in the enrolment of San in upper-primary and secondary school grades. The reasons that research participants cited for the high and early dropout rates among San learners are manifold, and reflect an interplay of economic, cultural and social factors. Overall, a number of reasons cited in similar ways across the research sites indicate that for all San groups the root causes are the same:

- poverty;
- discrimination;
- village remoteness;
- cultural mismatch (language and differences in cultural and social practices);
- inappropriate curricula;
- a lack of role models; and
- teenage pregnancy.

Their generally low level of education severely affects the economic situation of the San. They cannot compete in the formal job market and hence are highly dependent on menial work. Difficulties persist in accessing information, dealing with official paperwork, and developing skills, capacities and the confidence to secure other rights. This situation begets a vicious cycle of poverty that very few San are able to escape.

In 2013, the compulsory contribution to the School Development Fund (SDF) was abolished in all public primary schools, thereby rendering primary education free of charge (in principle) for all learners in these schools. Although the San were already exempt from paying school fees by virtue of being a marginalised ethnic group, this exemption did not go far enough for many of them, due to their inability to cover other school-related costs (transport, clothing, toiletries, etc.), but also due to a lack of implementation of the exemption by local school officials (e.g. some children were still being sent home because their parents could not contribute to the SDF or could not afford to buy a school uniform). In addition, the stigma attached to being exempt from payment led to discrimination against San learners and parents in many cases. Although the abolition of school fees will help in general, many San families will still be financially incapable of covering other school-related costs. In addition, free primary education will not have much impact on the pattern of dropout at the start of secondary school, and on the extremely low levels of San enrolment in tertiary education.

Further, improvement in the educational and economic situations of the San is not only about access to existing mainstream education. Appropriate education would be tuned in to the needs of San children and their communities. This includes education that is rooted in their cultural values, and which recognises and builds on their own knowledge foundations, and provides a comfortable and protected living environment while at school – rather than the hostile environments of hostels at many schools, especially secondary schools. Furthermore, the issue of mother-tongue education is a critical one; San children are extremely disadvantaged in this regard in Namibia's schools today. A quality education for San children and communities will be one that takes all of these elements into consideration, and which – most importantly – responds to the specific needs, aspirations, cultures and realities of the respective communities served.

Limited political representation, participation and consultation

Political representation is a major principle underlying any democratic system; one that ensures the participation of citizens in decision-making processes. The San are seriously under-represented in most such structures in Namibia. At the time of writing, no San individual is a Member of

Parliament, and only one San person is a regional councillor (a Ju|'hoan woman in Tsumkwe). The San are under-represented in local structures including community development committees, water point committees, regional development committees and school boards, and where they do participate, they often feel that they are not listened to and are not respected. According to our research participants, the majority of the San do vote, but most feel that they are not able to make any real difference in Namibian society, and most do not see the value of the democratic system and doubt its ability to protect their interests. Clearly, therefore, many San do not experience the feeling of participating as citizens in a democratic country.

The first San traditional authorities (TAs) were recognised in 1998. During the last 15 years – especially since the implementation of the SDP in 2005 – the government has increased its efforts to guarantee the representation, consultation and participation of the country's San, primarily through the recognition of five San TAs: the Hai||om TA in Kunene, Oshikoto and Oshana Regions; the !Xun and Ju|'hoan TAs in Otjozondjupa; the Ju|'hoan TA in northern Omaheke; and the !Xoon TA in southern Omaheke. This recognition is a precondition for San representative institutions to effectively consult with government on issues relating to San development. In general, the participants in our research said that they regard the TA institution as an important instrument for making their voices heard. Indeed, the government has regularly consulted the officially recognised San TAs on development issues in their respective communities.

Nevertheless, simply having a TA does not guarantee political representation, for many reasons. One reason is that some San communities do not fully accept their TAs: three of the five recognised TAs face serious challenges in respect of community support. Common complaints that participants at the relevant research sites levelled at their respective TAs were: nepotism; a lack of transparency and communication; pursuing personal interests instead of community development; and corruption. These issues of conflict between communities and their TAs are at least partly due to the fact that the TA institution⁴ does not accommodate the traditional leadership structures of San societies. Until recently these societies were founded on egalitarian values, and they lacked a strong internal hierarchical structure with formal leadership roles – as such a model did not accord with their way of life. Nowadays they need to adapt to this new institution to attain some level of political participation, and it is not surprising that conflicts between communities and their new 'authorities' arise.

Furthermore, San in Kavango, Caprivi, Omusati and Ohangwena Regions do not have their own government-recognised TAs, but instead fall under the jurisdiction of other TAs, depending on where they reside in a given region. The majority of the Khwe in West Caprivi (Kavango Region) have fought for more than a decade for the recognition of their TA, but the Mbukushu chief claims that they fall under his authority – and some Khwe men have been integrated into his TA structure. The Khwe in Caprivi Region are under the authority of the Mafwe TA. Therefore, at least a third of all San in Namibia have no recognised TA representing their interests as San at national level.

Aware of the shortcomings of the TA system for San representation, the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA) facilitated the establishment of the Namibian San Council in 2006, in order to create a second representative body to conduct advocacy work on behalf of the Namibian San communities. Currently this body is composed of 14 members, representing the San in areas with recognised San TAs, and the San in West Caprivi and Ohangwena. In 2012/13 the council members underwent a series of capacity-building workshops. It remains to be seen whether this body can eventually become an effective San representative body at both national and international levels.

⁴ As provided for in the Traditional Authorities Act (TAA) 25 of 2000, which repealed and replaced the Traditional Authorities Act 17 of 1995.

Ultimately, the issue of leadership is connected to all of the issues described above. Effective and culturally appropriate representative leadership structures would allow the San to have a stronger voice in the issues that affect them, including the allocation of land and educational issues, and it would also enable San communities to address issues of discrimination more effectively. Several issues have to be considered in efforts to support San and build the capacity of San representatives, and these issues have bearing not only on leadership but also on development in general.

Currently there are very few San who are both qualified and willing to act as representatives of their communities in their negotiations with 'others' (including government, bi- or multilateral organisations, and sometimes NGOs), or even to become part of these institutions. The reasons for this are numerous, but key reasons are: extreme marginalisation; discrimination by other groups, leading to a lack of confidence; very low levels of education; and former egalitarian values which discourage placing oneself in a position of authority. Taking on a leadership position can place one in an uncomfortable situation if one's community is uncomfortable with the hierarchical nature of representative leadership. Allegations of misconduct and demands to share the perceived benefits of a prestigious position can be difficult, even for good leaders. Often the benefits of becoming a community representative are perceived to be less than the costs. These dynamics complicate San participation in decision-making processes, and thwart the proper representation of San interests.

Another major challenge to the establishment of San representative structures is the lack of a common 'San identity' at grassroots level. The broader categorisation of San (a.k.a. Saan, Bushmen and, in Botswana, Basarwa) was imposed by outsiders and has persisted for centuries due to perceived similarities in language, culture and livelihoods – despite the great variation within the category of 'San'. In general, participants in our research identified themselves as belonging to a specific San language group in a defined area, rather than as 'San' – a term which many reportedly do not like to use. The lack of a shared language further complicates the issue of a common identity. Nevertheless, a strong unifying San or 'indigenous' identity would certainly help the San to find a common voice to address the problems that they face, and to make this voice heard. An overall common identity does not evolve overnight, but it might develop over time if the members of the various communities come to recognise the opportunities and benefits connected to this overall 'San' or 'indigenous peoples' identity, and if they find ways to achieve the necessary political organisation.

Although a few San TAs have been recognised and the Namibian San Council has been established in the years since 2001, adequate political representation, participation and consultation is still a long way off. This is a pressing matter which has to be addressed to achieve long-term results in respect of San empowerment and development. The representation and leadership issue is intertwined with all of the other issues and concerns that San communities face, in particular those of securing access to land, reducing discrimination, improving access to relevant educational opportunities and attaining educational qualifications.

Gender

Another major and overarching concern is that a full commitment to gender mainstreaming is still lacking in many of the programmes and projects targeting San communities. Faced with the extreme poverty of San communities, stakeholders often ignore the gender issue in their efforts to improve the livelihoods of all members of a given community. However, this San Study has shown that gender inequality in San communities has increased tremendously over the last century, with the following corresponding problems arising and escalating over time:

- **Gender-based violence (GBV):** Often triggered by alcohol abuse, GBV is a major problem in most San communities today, and is attributable to a number of interrelated prior problems. Changes in gender ideologies as communities shift towards a hierarchical model in which men are ‘superior’ to women, and men’s frustration with unemployment and poverty, are major causes of the increased violence. The lack of law enforcement compounds the problem of GBV.
- **Formal education:** Completion of formal education is a challenge for both boys and girls in San communities, but girls are more disadvantaged than boys in the sphere of formal education, the key factors being sexual harassment, the need for more financial resources to buy toiletries (including sanitary items), teenage pregnancy and early marriage, and lower self-esteem.
- **Health:** San women are in a more vulnerable position than San men with regard to health, not least because women tend to be the ones who take care of the health of other family members. In addition, all the issues around accessing healthcare facilities and trained personnel during pregnancy and childbirth place women at a higher risk of complications and emergencies in the reproductive period of their lives. Those San women who engage in exploitative sexual relationships with (economically better-off) non-San men are also highly vulnerable to exposure to HIV infection.
- **Participation and representation:** Today there are several outspoken San women in leadership positions. This can be attributed to Namibia’s progressive gender policy framework (although insufficiently implemented as yet), the engagement of NGOs that strive for gender balance, and relatively higher levels of education, with an attendant increase in self-confidence, in recent cohorts of San girls.

Some of the gender-related problems that San women face are the same as those faced by many women of other ethnic groups in Namibia, but the situation confronting San women is compounded by the multi-dimensional inequality that they experience when class and ethnicity enter the fray – an experience which they share with many other indigenous women around the world (Sylvain 2010).

Our research has made evident that a concerted effort to mainstream a gender perspective in all San development initiatives is urgently needed. By failing to implement gender mainstreaming thoroughly, stakeholders in San empowerment and development risk broadening the stratification along gender lines in San communities.

Recommendations on the way forward

This San Study has brought to light the manifold and interrelated factors causing and maintaining the marginalisation and poverty of the San communities in Namibia. It has also made possible the formulation of region- and topic-specific recommendations. Further, the participatory approach employed in the study enabled us to identify many reasons for the lack of success of government and NGO initiatives aimed at reducing the levels of San marginalisation and poverty.

Major cross-cutting issues (i.e. issues relevant to all regions and all topics) are *the lack of*:

- an integrated strategy;
- a focus on empowerment;
- coordination between stakeholders;
- participatory involvement and consultation in all stages of project implementation;
- cultural sensitivity in the design and implementation of projects;
- long-term initiatives and commitment, including a local presence at grassroots level;
- adequate monitoring and evaluation of projects; and
- organisational capacity building.

In the following subsections we offer specific recommendations on these cross-cutting issues.

Developing an integrated strategy

Currently, different stakeholders, taking different approaches, are imposing different development strategies on San communities. Some of these strategies are more effective and more appropriate than others, but in any case, this lack of coordination is generally problematic. Without an integrated strategy, initiatives supporting San will remain patchy and rather ineffective, and stakeholders will continue to risk impeding each other's efforts – see the regional chapters for specific examples of how this can happen.

A major step towards addressing this concern would be the development and adoption of a **specific policy on indigenous peoples/marginalised communities in Namibia**. This would give stakeholders a common set of guidelines to direct their development efforts, and would inculcate a *rights-based* approach to development. The UN has already recommended such a policy in its *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Namibia*:

“Formulate a white paper in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and [in this process, take into consideration] recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities ...” (United Nations General Assembly 2011b: 18).

Namibia accepted this recommendation along with all others in the review report, and the Office of the Ombudsman is in the process of developing a first draft of this white paper. It is recommended that the findings of this San Study be taken into account in this process.

Further, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has recommended that Namibia **ratify ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples** (ILO169) (ACHPR and IWGIA 2008: 26). This would be a major step forward, and could go hand in hand with the policy recommended above. Along with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), ILO169 would reinforce the protection and recognition of indigenous minorities at national level (see also ACHPR and IWGIA 2008: 26). Furthermore, ILO169 and UNDRIP provide frameworks for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), which could go a long way to addressing the shortcomings in consultation, empowerment, cultural sensitivity and organisational capacity described above.

Improving coordination

Coordination among all stakeholders is a precondition for successful development. This study has shown that uncoordinated efforts by various stakeholders are counterproductive for development initiatives. In this regard, a **National Coordinating Forum on Indigenous Peoples/Marginalised Communities** should be formed to ensure integrated, multi-sectoral, coordinated and systematic development, in line with the recommended integrated strategy. This National Coordinating Forum should be composed of representatives of the San TAs, the Namibian San Council, the SDP in the OPM, the relevant line ministries, national NGOs (i.e. members of the San Support Organisations' Association of Namibia) and international development partners.

Furthermore, **Regional Coordinating Committees on Indigenous Peoples/Marginalised Communities** could be established, which could deal in more detail with the specific problems of San in each region. Such committees should include representatives of the OPM, regional councils, line ministries, NGOs working with the San in each region, San TAs and/or other TAs under whose jurisdiction the San live, regional representatives of the Namibian San Council and representatives

of San CBOs. Regional coordination could also be strengthened through improved information exchange among the existing Regional Development Coordinating Committees.

To ensure San participation, funds would have to be allocated for transporting and accommodating the San who attend the meetings of the coordinating bodies, at both national and regional level.

Improving monitoring and evaluation

Quantitative data is essential for adequately evaluating, in detail, poverty reduction and other development efforts. Quantitative data would also be a means to compare the wellbeing of San communities with that of other Namibian communities. Undeniably, 23 years after Independence, ethnic affiliations still play a role in the redistribution of wealth and resources in Namibia (see also Daniels 2004: 44). Quantitative data on the basis of language categories as provided by the National Planning Commission or the Namibia Statistics Agency do not reliably capture socio-economic differences between the country's ethnic groups, e.g. the various San groups and the Himba (another marginalised indigenous group in Namibia). Only the government can provide comprehensive and reliable quantitative data, and we urge the government to (a) include in the census and various survey questionnaires one question on ethnic affiliation, and (b) analyse specific data accordingly, or otherwise make the data accessible to others for analysis. This recommendation is in line with a recommendation of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in 2008:

“... that the State party conduct studies with a view to assessing and evaluating the level of enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by the different ethnic groups in the State party, based on which the State party should strengthen its efforts in combating poverty among marginalized groups as well as its measures aimed at promoting equal opportunities for all persons.” (CERD 2008: 6)

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made a similar recommendation in 2007:

“The Committee calls upon the State party to enhance its collection of data in all areas covered by the Convention, disaggregated by sex **as well as by ethnicity** [chapter authors' emphasis], age and by urban and rural areas, as applicable, in order to assess the actual situation of women and their enjoyment of human rights and to track trends over time.” (CEDAW 2007: 2)

Attention to San communities with little external support

Perhaps the most difficult issue to address is that of the high number of San communities and individuals who are ‘falling through the cracks’ and receiving very little or no attention and external support. These communities and individuals are, inter alia, San living in extreme geographical marginalisation (e.g. those on Farm Six in Oshikoto Region and in the Eiseb Block in Omaheke Region), San living in townships (e.g. Epako in Gobabis, Omaheke), San working on commercial farms and San living in communal areas where other ethnic groups are the majority populations (e.g. in certain parts of Omaheke, Ohangwena and Kavango Regions). Our study has found these communities and individuals to be among the poorest San in Namibia.

These communities and individuals need urgent attention and support. Better access to public services, improved infrastructure, organisational capacity building and awareness campaigns on human rights and the channels to be followed to secure these rights would be first steps, and just these steps would have a considerable impact on improving the current living conditions of the people concerned.

Closing remarks

The aim of this study was to provide a solid basis for future policies, programmes and projects for and with San communities in Namibia, in order to finally ensure that San communities have equal opportunities and enjoy equal rights in Namibian society. The study has shown that the situation is complex, and that factors influencing the current marginalisation of the San are interrelated and conditional upon each other. It has also made it clear that concerted efforts are needed.

All told, improving the situation will depend on the political will and commitment of the Government of Namibia, the commitment and capacity of civil society, and last but not least, the initiative and advocacy of the San themselves.



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