



Livelihoods in the Kunene Region

The Kunene Region of north-west Namibia is an arid and semi-arid environment. Rainfall in the study areas of southern Kunene varies annually, but is between 100-300mm on average. In the more westerly parts of the area there is less rainfall. It is also a vast area with varied topography. Water sources are mainly subsurface relying on boreholes with diesel, wind and a few solar pumps, and with earth dams and springs in the rainy season. Unlike Caprivi there are many biophysical and topographic differences between areas of Kunene.²²

In the study areas within Kunene livelihoods are primarily based on livestock keeping, gardening, and limited employment (formal and informal, including piecework). These activities are supplemented with the use of natural resources for food, medicine and occasionally for sales.

Goats and cattle are the critical assets for supplying meat, and milk and to raise cash. They form the foundation for people's livelihoods. The types of stock vary between areas and ethnic groups. The areas where fieldwork for this study was conducted were primarily, but not exclusively, in the area formerly known as Damaraland.²³ The livestock kept are principally goats and to a lesser extent cattle. Poultry, donkeys and horses are also kept. Goats are used for their meat (household consumption) and for sale (locally and further afield to neighbouring freehold or commercial farmers). Generally access to marketing opportunities for livestock is poor. Cattle are also sold, but are used primarily for milk products and slaughtered and consumed locally. Horses and donkeys are used for transport purposes. Hiring out donkeys and carts can provide a source of income for people. There are also strong cultural values associated with livestock, particularly cattle. In northern Kunene these associations are particularly strong among the Herero and Himba communities, cattle being used for rituals, ceremonies and the payment of fines (see Talavera *et al.* 2000 for details). In addition, and in a similar way to Caprivi, goats and cattle are seen as a 'bank account' and a reserve in times of need (since people can always sell them). Seasonality is important for people's livelihoods and livestock (goats and cattle) movements follow the availability of grazing and water. The management of livestock is time consuming and often means that, due to the large areas and scarce resources, livestock from different families and kin networks are deliberately pooled for management purposes or sometimes they graze together in open areas. Joint grazing helps to strengthen social networks, but can also lead to conflicts over ownership and management (Vaughan and Katjiua 2002).

People supplement their farming activities by utilising a range of wild resources including wildlife and veld products. A large number of uncultivated plant species are traditionally collected and used for food and medicinal purposes. The collection of foods such as honey, seeds, and mopane worms is common, and for some people these foods (and sometimes, medicines) provide a valuable resource for dealing with lean periods, during droughts for example (see Katjiua forthcoming). Mopane worms are particularly significant in some areas and have a market value in the urban centres in the north-central region. In fact people from outside the region often come after the rains to harvest these resources. Natural resources are also important traditionally and culturally (Sullivan 1998a and 1998b). Veld foods are often highly nutritional and are a good supplement to the largely meat, milk, and maize-based diet. Wildlife, both huntable game (springbok, kudu and oryx) and small mammals (like springhares), are also hunted (illegally) and consumed.

Small gardens are planted in the wetter 'vlei' areas on good soils or close to homestead water points. The cultivation of grains is a seasonal activity, and maize and millet predominate. Gardens supply fresh vegetables and supplementary fodder for some livestock. Gardens for vegetables are often supported by hand watering or rudimentary irrigation systems (Vaughan and Katjiua 2002).

Summary:

- Livestock keeping, gardening, and limited employment supplemented with the use of natural resources (for consumption and sale) are key.
- Goats and cattle are the critical assets (for consumption and sales).
- Goats and cattle are seen as a 'bank account'.
- Access to markets for livestock is poor.
- Seasonality is important – livestock movements follow the availability of grazing and water.
- Gardens supply fresh vegetables and supplementary fodder for some livestock.

Regional livelihood contexts

Kunene has a much lower population density than Caprivi. For most of Kunene there are between 0.01 and 1 person per km² (Mendelsohn *et al.* 2002: 162). In the two study areas the population density was at the higher end of this distribution (with between 1 person in 4 km² and one person in 1 km²) (Humphrey and Humphrey 2003). The total population for the region was recorded at 68,224 people and a total area of 115,000 km² (GRN 2001b). The spread of the population is uneven across the region, with higher densities in areas surrounding the small urban centres, where there are schools, shops, clinics and other services. For two

²² See Humphrey and Humphrey 2003 and Vaughan and Katjiua 2002 for a background description of the study areas.

²³ Some household survey work and a number of interviews and participatory meetings were also held in Erongo Region. Culturally and in terms of the livelihood characteristics and biophysical environment parts of Erongo Region included in this study are very similar to the other field sites and are here included in the analysis.



of the WILD study area conservancies, Humphrey and Humphrey reported that the average household size was between seven and five persons (Torra and ≠Khoadi //Hôas respectively) (2003: 9,17). The WILD/EEU survey of three conservancies in Kunene and one in Erongo (Suich 2003) supports findings relating to average numbers of persons per household (five on average) (Suich 2003:41), as does national census data (GRN 1991, 2001b) and other agricultural surveys (Talavera *et al.* 2000).²⁴

The WILD/EEU survey (619 households in four different conservancies) revealed that 38% of respondents over 20 years of age had had *no* formal education. This compares with the 1991 National Census, which reports that for the region as a whole just under one third of the population (aged over 15) had never attended school. Access to school for Kunene learners is poor, with only 43% being within 5 km radius of a school facility that offers grade one (Mendlesohn *et al.* 2002: 178). Such low access rates provide an indication of both the physical distance learners are from schools, but also the low number of available schools. In Kunene, school enrolment rates are the lowest in the country but still stand at 86% of girls and 76% of boys aged 7-12. The WILD/EEU survey only found that one per cent of those surveyed had completed any form of higher education. For those currently of school age, of the 619 households surveyed in 2002 in Kunene and Erongo, 12% of households have children not attending school because of an inability to afford school fees or other school-related costs (Suich 2003: 41).

The health status of people in Kunene can be gauged through access to secondary sources. It was not a direct part of WILD research, but is nevertheless an important contextualising factor and a measure of poverty. Life expectancy in Kunene is one of the highest in the country. Despite the rapid rise in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Namibia as a whole, infection rates in Kunene are the lowest in the country. Death through other causes, for example, malaria and tuberculosis is also among the lowest in the country (Mendlesohn *et al.* 2002: 172). Access to health care facilities, however, is generally poor. Only 46% of the population have access to a clinic within a 10 km radius of their homes. The reasons for the low death rates generally can, in part, be attributed to the low population densities in the region. Also the vastness of the region accounts for why access to clinics is poor.

In addition to the above, the other indicators (the HDI and HPI, and Gini Coefficient)²⁵ provide a measure of the poverty status of the population in Kunene. Kunene has a slightly higher than average HPI compared to the country as a whole, and a relatively low HDI. The average HDI for Namibia is

0.65; for Kunene it is 0.59. The Gini Coefficient (that measures inequality) suggests that there is less disparity between households in Kunene than for the country as a whole, but Kunene has a slightly higher score than Caprivi (0.59 compared to 0.55). These measures don't capture the variation between households at a local level and include data from urban areas such as Khorixas and Opuwo. This will tend to distort the picture for the rural areas, but they do provide some measures of the status of the Kunene population compared to other regions and the country as a whole.

Summary:

- Population is uneven across the region with higher densities near small urban centres (1 person in 4 km² and 1 person in 1 km² in the two key study areas).
- 38% of respondents over 20 years of age had had *no* formal education.
- Access to school for Kunene learners is poor.
- 12% of households have children not attending school because of an inability to afford school-related costs.
- Access to health care facilities, however, is generally poor.
- There is less disparity in income between households in Kunene than in the country as a whole.

Livelihood priorities

The livelihood priorities of those people involved in this study in Kunene and Erongo were clearly oriented towards the production of livestock (both small and large stock, i.e. sheep, goats and cattle). Data from the WILD/EEU survey (n=619 households across three conservancies in Kunene and one in Erongo) suggests that 44% of households surveyed owned cattle, and 77% owned goats. Livestock were also ranked as the most important contributor to livelihoods (own use and sales) by 46.5% of households. This compares with only 13.9% who ranked formal employment as most important and 1.3% who cited crop production as the most important. Qualitative materials also support these findings, as the following statement suggests.

"Livestock are the foundations and pillars of our livelihoods." (Otto Hamaseb 06/12/01, cited in Vaughan *et al.* 2002)

There are fewer opportunities to raise cash than reported for Caprivi. The most important sources of cash income were livestock sales (ranked first by 37%), followed by pensions (ranked first by 24.7%), and then formal employment (ranked first by 15.8%). The same pattern was evident in respect to the second most important sources of cash (these being ranked in order of priority as livestock sales, pensions and then formal employment). Seventy-five-point-six per

²⁴ It is worth mentioning that these figures should be treated with some caution, since Talavera *et al.* report that the population data available for Kunene as a whole is sometimes unclear and contradictory (2000: 30).

²⁵ See footnotes 4, 5 and 6.



cent of respondents reported no third sources of cash (Suich 2003: 45). For some community members, pensions (40.7%), remittances from relatives in urban employment (23.6%), and local employment opportunities are also significant. Survey material, participatory research and household case studies lend support to these findings. Other WILD research (Vaughan and Katjiua 2002) highlights, in more detail, the extent to which different livestock strategies are priorities for people. Key issues associated with livestock production strategies include: disease control, accessing drugs and veterinary services (both the high cost of payment and contacting services to deliver); accessing quality breeding stock; access to regular and functioning markets for selling livestock at good prices; and access to quality grazing²⁶, especially close to water points and homestead areas.

Only 18% of households surveyed (or 111 households) practised any crop production or gardening. Of these only a very small proportion sold any crops (<2%). In addition crop production and sales were only ranked first or second in importance by less than 3% of respondents. Plant-based and wildlife resources would appear to be more significant in terms of their contributions to household livelihoods (i.e. consumption). Of those natural resources that were utilised over the 12-month period preceding the survey firewood was used by 98.1% of households, medicinal plants were used by 39.3%, insects by 35.7%, building poles by 28%, and edible plants by 27.5% of households. Very few households actually sold any of the resources they harvested indicating that they are primarily used for consumption. Less than 1% recorded any sales in the 12 months preceding the survey. The exception here was the sale of insects by 7.4% or 45 households.

In ranking exercises carried out during the WILD/EEU survey, most respondents only ranked natural resources as third, fourth or fifth most important contributions to livelihoods and few ranked them as contributing to cash incomes.²⁷ Natural resources provide a complement to other activities, and although they were not ranked as the most important (first or second) they were nevertheless included as components that contribute to livelihoods. Taken as a component of livelihoods (any rank) WILD/EEU data suggests that building poles and wildlife use (wild animals) play an important role in supporting livelihoods. One hundred and eighty households or 29% ranked wildlife as important to livelihoods (any rank) and 123 households or 19.8% ranked building poles as important. Other natural

resources, for example, reed harvesting and craft making were only cited by 25 and 40 households respectively (4% and 6.4%).

Summary:

- First livelihood priority is the production of livestock (consumption and sales).
- Limited range of strategies and resources.
- Most important sources of cash income were livestock sales; pensions; and formal employment.
- Livestock production strategies and issues: managing disease control; accessing drugs and veterinary services; accessing quality breeding stock; access to regular and functioning markets; access to quality grazing, especially close to water points and homestead areas.
- Plant-based and wildlife resources more significant than cropping in terms of their contributions to household consumption.
- Just under one third of households reported wild animals as important for livelihood (consumption).

Cash incomes

Formal employment among those of working age (n=1,720) who were surveyed by the WILD/EEU team in 2002 was found to be 9.2% or 158 individuals. Forty-eight per cent over the age of 16 had *no* income. Sixty-two individuals were involved in CBNRM or tourism-related enterprises as their main occupation (3.6% of the workforce²⁸). In Kunene the average annual income (per income-earning individual over 16) is just over N\$4,500²⁹. Average annual household income, based on WILD/EEU survey data, is just over N\$8,000³⁰. To explore further the options available to people in respect to their income-earning potential we can compare the incomes from a variety of sources (as above for Caprivi). Table 11 illustrates average incomes from a variety of sources compared to the average household income of N\$8,000. In a similar way to the analysis presented above for Caprivi it is important to recognise that households will meet their income requirements in a combination of ways. In some cases more emphasis will be placed on certain strategies and activities than others. Table 11 is merely meant to represent the average incomes from a variety of sources and to allow comparison with average household incomes. Cattle sales followed by pensions contribute the most, but the sales of natural resources and goats (both live sales and meat) are also important sources of cash. The aim of presenting this material is to provide a foundation upon

²⁶ Access here includes the need to negotiate with traditional authorities, with the conservancy committees or commercial farmers to access grazing during drought periods.

²⁷ See Annex 3, Table 1, Section A3.3.1.

²⁸ Defined as those between 16 and 65 and not attending school.

²⁹ As derived by the IIED from the WILD/EEU survey data from four conservancies in the Kunene/Erongo Regions (Torra, #Khoadi //Hôas, Ehirovipuka and Sorris Sorris). Refer to Suich 2003 for further information on this survey.

³⁰ This figure included the highest income earners who sold significant levels of stock. One farmer for example recorded sales amounting to N\$43,200. This would tend to skew the data in favour of higher average annual incomes. The figure of N\$8,000 is probably therefore somewhat higher than the 'real' average annual incomes.



which it becomes possible to compare other sources of income if and when they become available; cash payouts from collective revenues from tourism, for example. In Torra the 2003 conservancy payout amounted to N\$630 to each registered member. During the period of this study N\$630 could cover basic grocery costs for a Bergsig household for three months.³¹ It is also interesting to note that the payout of N\$630 was almost equivalent to the average amount raised from the sale of live goats and is equivalent to 8% of the average annual income recorded for households in the region.³²

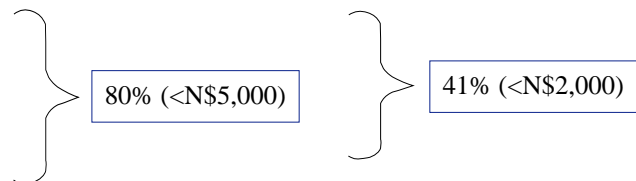
Table 12 shows the annual income bracket of households surveyed – the percentage in each. This illustrates that 80% of people fall below the N\$5,000 mark, and 41% fall below the N\$2,000 mark. If we calculate this in terms of the poverty datum line of US\$1 per day, this means that 41% earn less than US\$0.68 per day (see footnote 9 above).

Table 11: Kunene: Average household incomes from different sources

Source of income	Average amount (N\$)	% of average hh income (N\$8,000)
Cropping & gardens		
Maize sales	127	1.5%
Tomato sales	88	1%
Livestock		
Cattle (live sales)	3,651 ³³	45.6%
Poultry sales	39	0.4%
Goats (live sales)	623	7.7%
Goats (meat sales)	612	7.6%
Natural resources		
Reeds ³⁴	430	5.3%
Tourism employment	9,000	112%
Cash payout (Torra only)	630	8%
Pensions	3,000	37.5%

Table 12: Annual income of (income-earning) households in Kunene and Erongo

Income bracket	% of respondents
<N\$100-250	2
N\$251-500	4
N\$501-750	5
N\$751-1,000	6
N\$1,001-1,500	11
N\$1,501-2,000	13
N\$2,001-5,000	39
N\$5,001-10,000	10
N\$10,001-25,000	5
N\$25,001-40,000	2
N\$40,001+	1



Summary:

- 48% over the age of 16 had *no* income.
- 9.2% of those surveyed, of working age, had formal employment.
- 3.6% of the workforce involved in CBNRM and tourism-related occupations.
- Average annual household income is just over N\$8,000; average individual income is N\$4,500.
- 80% of people earn less than N\$5,000 per year.
- Most important sources of cash: livestock sales; pensions; and natural resources.

Differentiation and wealth

There are patterns to the relative importance of sources of income (for example, survey respondents and others who were subjects of this study agreed on the importance of pensions and stock sales), but these vary between households and individuals. It is worth therefore considering in brief

some of the issues associated with differences between households. The following data is not directly comparable to that presented for Caprivi, and this requires some explanation.

While cattle and goats are clearly important to people’s livelihoods in the Kunene Region and certainly within the conservancies that were the subject of this study, surprisingly they do not easily become indicators of livelihood security as they were for Caprivi. In qualitative research and particularly the participatory workshops that WILD conducted (see Vaughan *et al.* 2002 and Vaughan and Katjiua 2002) the measure of someone’s status and wealth was, however, closely related to cattle and goat stocks. This is supported by other materials for Kunene (see for example Talevera *et al.* 2000), and is particularly the case for cattle in northern Kunene. However, within the study

³¹ A monthly grocery cost of N\$220 was derived from the total costs of the following groceries: maize meal, flour, sugar, coffee/tea, cooking oil, matches, salt, soup/spices, onions, soap (fuel costs were not included).

³² Where a household has more than one conservancy member the income for households may be much more than this.

³³ Sales for three-month period only.

³⁴ Only two households surveyed in the Kunene and Erongo Regions sold reeds. These are collected in the dry river beds.