

# Community Feedback - outcomes and priorities

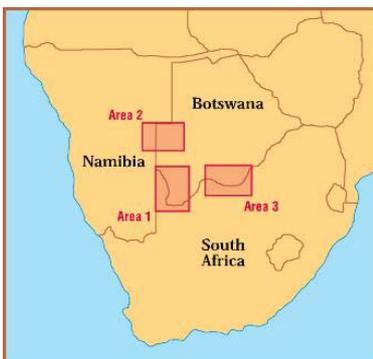
No. 13

## **PANRUSA Briefing Notes**

**PANRUSA, Poverty Policy and Natural Resource Use in Southern Africa. A DFID funded research project at the University of Sheffield UK.**

### Key Points

- Rural communities across the region have similar concerns and priorities about their lives
- Main themes inc: land, appropriate advice and support for livelihoods, consultation and advice about the policy process, polarisation and poverty.
- Some unrealistic expectations need to be tempered with realistic understandings about sustainability (economic and NR related)
- Feedback on PANRUSA research was positive



### Research areas:

- 1 Arid southwest:
  - a) Mier, South Africa
  - b) SW Kgalagadi, Botswana
2. Semiarid northwest:
  - a) Ghanzi Dist, Botswana
  - b) Omaheke, Namibia
3. Dry sub-humid southeast:
  - a) NW Province South Africa,
  - b) Barolongs, Botswana

This briefing provides an overview of the outcomes and priorities of the people attending the community feedback sessions held in July 2001.

### Community concerns and policy interpretations

The community meetings were well attended and numbers ranged between 25-45 people at each meeting. After the PANRUSA presentation (see BN1F) people were given the opportunity to comment and feedback on the material presented.

Overall feedback on the research was positive and a number of themes were clearly identified. These themes demonstrate the similar concerns facing rural communities across the region, despite living in different countries, within different dryland environments, and often following very different livelihoods pathways. Each comment was back up by locally specific evidence.

### Land

Land was raised as an important issues in ALL areas.

- There is a perceived shortage of land for both arable crop and livestock production (Areas 1,2&3).
- The land question was recognised as operating at different scales - communities saw the need for structural reform to redress the unequal distribution of land (2b, 3a). However there was also recognition of local level problems associated for example with fencing in communal rangelands and the impact this has on other resource users (1b, 2ab).
- There was real concern about the viability of the size of land units and the implications this had for viable and sustainable livelihoods.
- However, little mention was made of the limiting potential of ground water in these areas and link to access to land.
- Fencing - In areas 1 and 2 the issue of fencing was widely discussed. Communities acknowledged that fencing polarises well-being and that certain communities and wealthy individuals were benefiting from enhanced access to NRs while the poor were excluded.

**Bokspits Kgotla, comments from local farmer (left) being translated by our research assistant (right) who is also a local farmer in the SW Botswana region**



### **Appropriate advice and support for livelihoods**

- Extension services are insufficient and inconsistent. Farmers and NR users want more advice but often find services lacking. However they also recognised that there is a lot of experience and expertise within the communities which could be tapped and shared more effectively (all areas).
- Lack of infrastructure to support policies:
  - markets are non-existent or very poor in many areas. This means economies have stagnated and the consequent impact on livelihoods is marked (1b).
  - Lack of banking opportunities in many rural areas means that people are investing or 'saving' in other forms of 'financial capital' (e.g. livestock). This has important impacts on NR use and availability, and can inhibit people's ability to diversify their livelihoods against risk (1b, 2ab, 3ab).

### **Consultation and feedback in the policy process**

- Inefficient bureaucracy and lack of feedback on grant/programme applications discouraged diversification of livelihoods. Failure to explain why grants were unsuccessful prevented and discouraged people from trying to improve their livelihoods (1b, 2ab).
- Some communities felt they had been forgotten by their government and that governments lacked effective consultation processes (1b, 2b, 2ab).

### **Polarisation and poverty**

- Communities recognised that some people do very well from particular policies while other individuals fall into poverty traps (all areas).

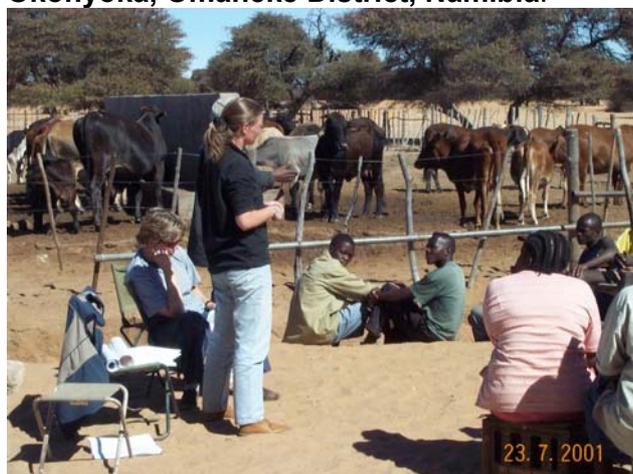
- Some pointed out the need for policies which could support different people in different ways i.e. policies which recognised that not all rural people are the same (1b, 2b,3ab).

### **Unrealistic expectations?**

Community feedback on different topics at times combined unrealistic expectations, tempered with some real concerns about sustainability issues.

- The perceived need for more land was rarely connected with the issue of the sustainability of ground water supplies.
- The rate of policy change since independence in Namibia and the end of apartheid in South Africa highlighted some of the differences across borders. While rural electrification in South Africa has progressed rapidly in NW Province, areas of Botswana remain isolated from such basic schemes. Electrification in settlements in SW Botswana (from supplies across the border in South Africa) could help solve the fuelwood crises in these communities. Communities in close proximity across borders are aware of differences and see such changes.

### **Community meeting at the central borehole, Okonyoka, Omaheke District, Namibia.**



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