

**CRAFTING A LIVELIHOOD: LOCAL-LEVEL TRADE IN MATS AND  
BASKETS IN PONDOLAND, SOUTH AFRICA**

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**DECLARATION**

I declare that “Crafting a Livelihood: Local-Level Trade in Mats and Baskets in Pondoland, South Africa” is my own work, that all other sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Zwoitwa Makhado

November 2004

Signature .....

Supervisor: Dr Thembela Kepe (University of the Western Cape, South Africa)



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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CRAFTING A LIVELIHOOD: LOCAL-LEVEL TRADE IN MATS AND BASKETS IN PONDOLAND, SOUTH AFRICA.**

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**Mphil Thesis, Land and Agrarian Studies**

This study explores the dynamics of local-level trade in plant-based mats and baskets in Khanyayo village, Eastern Cape. These dynamics include social aspects of harvesting, resource tenure and trade. Additionally, and perhaps of major importance, the study attempts to explore the contribution of the trading in mats and baskets to the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people. To achieve these objectives, a strategy comprising two elements is used. Firstly, a review of the literature and secondly, empirical research in the form of a case study of the crafting of and local-level trade in mats and baskets in Khanyayo village. The central argument of this thesis is that even though this trade is dynamic, it makes a significant contribution to the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people and therefore should be recognised and acknowledged by outsiders seeking to alleviate poverty in the area.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The challenge of alleviating poverty, especially of the rural poor, is a universal one. South Africa is also faced with this challenge, as well the challenge of redressing the inequality among people caused by the apartheid government. In addition to many strategies often suggested for addressing poverty of the rural poor, including industrialisation and agriculture, is the important role that local natural resources can play in improving poor people's livelihoods. A growing body of literature on rural communities in the developing world reveals that rural people depend greatly on local non-timber forest products (NTFPs). This dependence is mostly among the poor and may be driven by the need for goods (such as food, fodder, fuel, medicine and construction material), income and employment (Neumann, 1998). A number of studies have been conducted internationally on the importance of and the role played by NTFPs, and it has been found that they are used mostly by the poorest who face more frequent food shortages (Neumann, 1998). An interesting link between poverty and the commercialisation of NTFPs has also been noted. Countries in South and Central America, South Asia and tropical countries in Africa have seen several studies conducted on this subject (Romanoff, 1992; Thomas, 1996; Falconer, 1992). Over the last twenty years or so several studies have been carried out on this subject in South Africa (See Cawe and Ntloko, 1997; Kepe, 2002 for Transkei; Shackleton and Shackleton, 2000 for Bushbuckridge and Cunningham, 1987a for KwaZulu-Natal).

This documented research, globally and in South Africa, indicates the importance of NTFPs to rural livelihoods. However, the way in which these NTFPs make a contribution to rural livelihoods differs from area to area. What is used in a particular area depends on what is available and what people prefer. In other words, the use of natural resources is primarily dependent on both biophysical and social factors. In some cases, the NTFPs may be available but not socially acceptable for use by local

people. Those that are used extensively may be rapidly depleted, something that is a major concern to botanists and environmental activists (See Heinsohn and Cunningham, 1991; Cawe and Ntloko, 1997).

It is therefore important for Government and development agencies to understand how NTFPs contribute to poverty alleviation in different parts of the country. For example, it is necessary to ask whether it is the contribution from trading in NTFPs or the direct consumption of NTFPs that improve livelihoods of a particular area. Having said that, studies in South Africa show that there is a well-developed trade in many NTFPs (Cocks and Dold, 2002; Kepe, 2002; Kepe 2003a), but the details of the trade are yet to be more fully explored. This thesis, using a case study of crafts in a village on the Wild Coast of the Eastern Cape, aims to provide a better understanding of trade in NTFPs. A study conducted by Kepe (2003b) in the Eastern Cape showed that craftwork from grass and sedge, particularly from *Cyperus textilis*, is a significant component of the livelihood of the Mpondo people who live in Ngwenyeni village. This is because they have values ranging from the direct use (e.g. sitting mats and baskets) to the indirect use (e.g. as a symbol of sharing during traditional ceremonies). However, Kepe's study did not pay particular attention to the dynamics of trade in crafted material. Thus, this study seeks to supplement this earlier research by exploring the dynamics of local trade and to seek an understanding of its contribution to poverty alleviation.

This thesis research is conducted as part of a study funded by the South Africa-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD), which focuses on the local-level trade of NTFPs in South Africa. It is a collaborative project between the University of the Western Cape (UWC), the University of Transkei (UNITRA) and Rhodes University (RU). Its overall research question is, 'What contribution does locally-initiated trade in NTFPs make to rural livelihoods in South Africa and what are the constraints and opportunities that communities,

households and individuals face when pursuing this option as a form of income generation?’

My case study constitutes one of five components of a SANPAD-funded post-graduate scholarship project. The other studies are being conducted by post-graduate students at Rhodes University and the University of Transkei.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary aim of this study is to explore the dynamics of local-level trade in plant-based mats and baskets in Khanyayo village, Eastern Cape, South Africa. These dynamics include the social aspects of harvesting, resource tenure, and trade. It also includes institutional issues such as legislation that enhances or restricts the degree to which local people could benefit from the trade or direct use. A secondary aim is to explore the contribution of the trade to the livelihoods of people who are directly and indirectly involved.



More specifically, the study has the following objectives:

- to document different livelihood strategies adopted by different people at the local-level and to observe changes of these over time;
- to record the important plant species that are harvested and used in the crafting of mats and baskets;
- to assess the different routes, pathways and processes of local-level commercialisation of mats and baskets in Khanyayo;
- to explore the challenges to and opportunities arising from the mat and basket trade.

## **1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **1.3.1 The choice of Khanyayo as a study area**

Khanyayo is one of the villages where there is an intense use of natural resources and NTFPs due to poverty, among other things (Kepe, 2002). Besides the fact that my supervisor, Dr Thembela Kepe, is familiar with the area, having done much of his research in Khanyayo, this village also has a history of having conflicts of resource use including land, medicinal plants and grass, which makes it appropriate and relevant for my study to be conducted in this village. A case study in the Eastern Cape, particularly in Pondoland, also seemed appropriate as much fewer case studies have been conducted in this part of the country, compared to other provinces (See Shackleton and Shackleton, 1997). This study area was also chosen because, according to previous research, in the Eastern Cape, including Pondoland, craftwork made from non-timber plants has been in use for centuries (Hunter, 1979; Beinart, 1982; Cawe and Ntloko, 1997; Kepe, 2002). However previous studies conducted in this study area (Kepe, 2003b), even though they focused on rural livelihoods, placed more emphasis on ecological and social determinants of realized value of craftwork, access and control over the raw material used and political issues around the resource. This study hopes to contribute to these earlier studies by focusing on dynamics around the local-level trading of these craft materials and also its contribution towards rural livelihood.

### **1.3.2 Summary of methods used for data collection**

This study attempts to analyse the dynamics of local-level trade in mats and baskets in Khanyayo, and multiple methods were needed to ensure reliability of data through triangulation during data collection (Pretty, 1994). Pretty (1994) defines triangulation as cross-checking information by using several methods in the process of learning and comparing the results derived from various methods used. Once a proposition has been confirmed by one or more methods, the uncertainty of its interpretation is

greatly reduced. However, due to limited time, not every individual in the community was interviewed. In order to gain more insight, I spent as much time in the village as I possibly could (54 days), often taking transect walks with villagers. Chambers (1997) describes transect walks as systematically walking with local guides and analysts through an area, observing, asking, listening, discussing, learning about different zones, soil, land uses, vegetation, crops, livestock, local technologies, introduced technologies, seeking problems, solutions and opportunities; and mapping and diagramming the zones, resources and findings.

A questionnaire was used and a number of households were asked questions relating to their ownership of household assets, sources of household cash income, the extent to which the household is involved in the trading of mats and baskets. In total, 52 questionnaires were administered. The aim of the questionnaire was to survey a representative sample of the population so that a generalisation of the responses could be made (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). However, semi-structured interviews were also conducted because in some cases the explanatory power of questionnaires could be limited and they are usually standardised and not designed to suit individual circumstances and they do not allow interviewees to explain their experiences in depth (Chambers, 1997).

Semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used to determine the sources of raw materials and their availability. They were also used to determine the institutional and tenure arrangements around the access to and control over the raw materials used for making baskets and mats. These semi-structured and participatory interviews were conducted with harvesters of raw material, weavers of baskets and mats, traders and those who are involved in all the stages of production. Focus group interviews were also conducted and more data was collected through the observation process. In all, there were five focus group interviews, with numbers of respondents in groups ranging between five and ten.

Some of the advantages of using interviews (semi-structured and participatory research) as research methodology are that it allows the researcher and interviewees to have a far more wide-ranging discussion and it also allows the respondents to raise issues that the interviewer may not have anticipated (Chambers, 1997). More importantly, it allows the interviewees to relate their own experiences by describing and explaining their lives in their own way (Flowerdew and Martin, 1997). Secondary material was also reviewed. These include published and unpublished articles, books, as well as government documents from the Internet. Findings and data collected are presented in maps, diagrams, tables and textboxes.

In Khanyayo people speak Isimpondo (a Xhosa dialect) and I am not fluent in it. This meant that I had to enlist the services of a translator. Bongiwe, the translator, is 30 years old and has a Technikon education. She lives in Khanyayo and is therefore familiar with the village and its activities. For my translator to be familiar with the questionnaire and the questions used for group interviews, we had two days of training and questionnaire testing, with the help of my supervisor. By the time we started administering the questionnaires, I was also familiar with the proper way of asking the questions in ‘proper Isimpondo’ and I could easily translate this into English.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study could potentially provide policy makers and implementers, as well as local practitioners with an array of information that could help in the following situations:

- Estimating and acknowledging the economic and social value of crafted mats and baskets in the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people.
- Realising and acknowledging rural people’s diverse livelihood strategies.
- Assisting policy makers of important specific aspects to be taken into consideration when planning and implementing development initiative

programmes that could have a positive and significant impact on rural people's livelihood strategies.

- Assisting conservation officials in their understanding of rural people's livelihoods and their use of natural resources and therefore to be considerate when making policies that are concerned with the overuse of natural resources.
- Assisting environmental and social researchers by possibly presenting new perspectives on the old problem of poverty alleviation versus biodiversity conservation.
- Benefiting the local people themselves through being able to make informed decisions regarding the management of their natural resources.

### **1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There were some limitations in the process of attempting to achieve the aims and objectives stated above. Firstly, as suggested above, the Khanyayo people speak Isimpondo, in which I am not fluent. However, with the help of my supervisor, who has extensive research experience in the area, I had secured the services of a translator. Several key issues and meanings could have been potentially lost without reliable translation. Secondly, the Eastern Cape is in many ways very different from the Limpopo Province, where I come from. This is in terms of cultural practices, which often give the researcher a better insight into the many livelihood activities of the local people. In spite of my attempts to try and bridge this gap through learning as fast as I could, this insight was missed some of the time. Thirdly, due to the high levels of unemployment currently existing in South Africa in general and in the Eastern Cape in particular, the research was sometimes associated with some form of income generation opportunity coming from outside. At times, this influenced the way people responded to some of the questions. Fourthly, the question of the distance between Cape Town (where I am based) and the case study area, is potentially problematic. It takes two days to drive to Khanyayo. Besides the

potential hazards associated with driving long distances in South Africa, I did not manage to be present in Khanyayo on regular basis. A lot can happen in-between my trips there. There were designated periods of fieldwork, which did not always coincide with times when crucial lessons were to be gained from the field. Lastly, the time allocated to this study was limited, given that this is a mini-thesis and the academic requirement is that it be completed within a year.

In spite of all these potential limitations, I believe that I managed to gain as much information as possible. My attitude was that most studies are often conducted in the midst of a host of limitations. With the assistance I received from my supervisor, my translator, the funders of the project and the people of Khanyayo, I was able, I believe, to conduct a fairly competent piece of research.

## 1.6 THESIS OUTLINE

This thesis comprises five chapters:

- **Chapter One:** Introduction.
- **Chapter Two:** Literature review. The chapter reviews literature relating to challenges faced by post-apartheid South Africa with regard to poverty; current government strategies to alleviate poverty and the importance of rural people's own strategies of survival and how they need to be enhanced. It also highlights the importance of subsistence agriculture, craft materials and the collection of natural resources, including NTFPs (from the local environment) to rural communities.
- **Chapter Three:** Description of the study area. This chapter outlines the biophysical, social and political background and assesses the current livelihood strategies of the Khanyayo people.
- **Chapter Four:** Crafting-related livelihoods. This chapter discusses the dynamics of local-level trade in crafted mats and baskets in Khanyayo, and attempts to provide a better understanding of the trade in NTFPs, as well as its contribution to



the livelihoods of people who are directly and indirectly involved in these processes.

- **Chapter Five:** Conclusion and research findings. The aim of this chapter is to summarise the major findings emerging from both the literature review and the analysis of the case study.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter outlined the context of the study by identifying the research question and providing a motivation for why it is necessary to be researched. It also discussed the aim and objectives of the study; the research design, the significance and limitations of the study.



## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

South Africa is a complex country and its history is marred by a legacy of extreme racial inequality dating back to the apartheid era. The post-apartheid government is currently facing a number of challenges, not least of which is the problem of widespread poverty. During apartheid the greater share of the wealth and resources of South Africa was in the hands of the white minority, while the majority of the population, black people, lived in poverty or were vulnerable to becoming poor (Shepherd, 2000). Resultantly, the majority of black people in this country continue to live under conditions of extreme hardship and livelihood insecurity, often with a lack of access to basic social services, housing and the means to support themselves and their families (NFAP, 1997). Recent research reveals that over 70 percent of the country's poorest people reside in rural areas, and over 70 percent of all rural people are poor (May and Roberts, 2000, cited in Kepe and Cousins, 2002). Those most vulnerable to poverty are households headed by women, the elderly and people affected by HIV/ Aids (Kepe and Cousins 2002). De Swardt (2003) goes a step further in analysing the poverty situation in rural South Africa, contending that most of the rural poor are chronically poor, in that they remain in poverty for periods of five years or longer. According to de Swardt (2003), there are five central aspects underlying chronic poverty in South Africa: (i) historic asset depletion; (ii) post-1970s economic restructuring; (iii) rural poverty; (iv) high levels of inequality and (v) the HIV/Aids epidemic. The scope of this thesis does not allow for further analysis of these aspects of chronic poverty, but it suffice it to say that poverty in South Africa is an extremely complex matter.

Underscoring the complexity of poverty in South Africa is the fact that the definition of poverty has been subjected to rigorous debate among policy analysts and researchers. Poverty means different things to different people, including the poor (May, 2000). According to Krishna Kumar *et al* (1996), poverty connotes the notion

of the state of economic well being; it connotes a state of deprivation. On the other hand, the World Bank (1994, in May, 2000:) defines poverty as the inability to attain the minimum standard of living. According to May (2000), the perceptions of the poor themselves are a good way to derive an appropriate conceptualisation of poverty in South Africa. May (2000:5) goes further to point out that there is an emerging consensus, which sees poverty as “generally characterized by the inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living”.

This chapter aims to review the challenges faced by post-apartheid South Africa with regard to poverty, current government poverty-alleviation strategies and the importance of rural people’s own strategies of survival and how these strategies need to be enhanced. The importance of subsistence agriculture, craft materials and the collection of natural resources to rural people are also highlighted. Following this introduction, which reviews poverty in South Africa, highlighting how rural people are hardest hit, the first section deals with both government and rural people’s strategies of addressing poverty. The third section discusses how subsistence agriculture and collection of natural resources from local environment is important to rural people. The fourth section reviews literature, global and South African, on plant-based rural crafting and discussing its importance to rural livelihoods. More specifically, this section identifies popular crafts and trade in them. This discussion is then narrowed down to mats and basket weaving in the former Transkei. The fifth section looks at what, according to the literature, enhances or restricts the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods in South Africa. The chapter concludes by presenting a conclusion.

## **2.2 DEALING WITH POVERTY: GOVERNMENT AND RURAL PEOPLE'S RESPONSES**

### **2.2.1 Government's strategies to alleviate poverty**

While the post-apartheid government has committed itself to improving the lives of the people of South Africa, and having identified poverty eradication as one of its top priorities (Ngwane, Yadavalli and Steffens, 2001), the question being asked by observers is "How?" (Woolard and Barberton, 1998). The government's response to the country's sluggish economic growth, persistent poverty and high levels of inequality appears to be an integrated approach that seeks to link economic growth with development (May, 2001). Since the first all-race elections in 1994 there have been at least three broad policy frameworks that could be seen as constituting the government's attempt to outline a development strategy for reducing poverty (Kepe 2002). The first one, a policy framework document known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), was released by the African National Congress (ANC) just before the 1994 elections (ANC, 1994). This later became a government White Paper. The key goal of the RDP, in its attempt to integrate growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution into a unified programme, was to provide access to basic services such as water, electricity, health, housing and education to the poorest people. However, with the goals of the RDP being very broad, it was difficult to measure their achievement in a quantitative sense. For example, one of its goals is "addressing the moral and ethical development of society" (May, 2001:307). This is not easy to measure. The RDP, as Kepe (2002) observes, was abandoned after only two years, although this was not done officially. However, to this day many of the government's programmes dealing with the improvement of the welfare of South Africa's poor people are arguably still based on the principles of RDP.

In 1996 the government released the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy as a response to the country's vulnerable macro economic situation.

The GEAR strategy identified many of the structural weaknesses in the economy that inhibit growth and employment creation, and focused attention on market-based policy measures to address them. The GEAR strategy recognised that accelerated job creation is essential to achieving a sustained reduction in inequality, and that substantial job creation would require structural transformation to achieve higher and more labour-absorbing growth within the economy (May 2001). GEAR made it clear that government believed that private sector investment is the key to economic development. However, GEAR was criticised and seen by many as cruelly abandoning the poor (Kepe, 2002). The most commonly noted criticism, among several others, is that GEAR is more concerned with boosting investor confidence than with embracing the main goals of RDP, which included economic growth, employment and redistribution of resources in such a way that they reach all population groups in South Africa (Adelzadeh, 1996). More specifically, GEAR is widely viewed as a government strategy that does not have the potential to contribute to the reduction of rural poverty (Blake, 1998; Mather and Adelzadeh, 1998). Despite these criticisms, government promoted several programmes that sought to attract as much private sector investment as possible, with the hope that benefits would trickle down to the poor. Among these, for example, were the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs), intended to target areas of the country that have both unrealised economic potential and great need. When the SDIs were first introduced in 1996, it was envisaged that rural people from the disadvantaged areas would benefit through employment, partnerships with external investors, deriving income from leasing out their land and the improvement of the local and regional infrastructure. However, the SDIs have been widely criticised for the lack of a clear implementation strategy and being inconsiderate of the real needs of the rural poor (Kepe, 2001).

In 2000 the government formulated a ten-year plan called the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS), which looks towards the horizon of 2010 (Government of South Africa, 2000). The ISRDS is designed to realise the vision

that would attain socially cohesive and stable rural communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people, who would be equipped to contribute to growth and development. It aims to bring change to South Africa's poorest areas, by coordinating existing departmental initiatives and programmes in these areas. The implementation approach adopted by the ISRDS takes the form of development nodes, where there would be geographic targeting of resources in places that have both need and opportunity. However, the approach developed for integration will eventually be applicable to the entire country. To date, there are more than 50 pilot nodes that have been identified and targeted and some are still due to be released (Government of South Africa, 2000). The overall co-ordination and monitoring of the ISRDS has now been assigned to the Department of Provincial and Local Government, but was previously assigned to the Deputy President's office. It still needs to be seen whether this strategy will reach its goals.

In addition to the three broad policy frameworks discussed above, several government departments developed strategies for dealing with poverty, within their existing policy frameworks. In August 2001 the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) introduced a sub-programme of the redistribution programme called the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme (Jacobs *et al*, 2003). This programme was introduced in order to provide land, mainly for full-time emergent black farmers (Andrew *et al*, 2003). There has been an increase in the size of land grants available under LRAD, depending on the contribution made by the farmer. As a result of these changes, there have recently been a growing number of better-resourced small family groups or individual households accessing land through the land reform programme. More often than not, these households have access to some form of off-farm income and have pooled their resources to acquire the land (Hall, 2003). However, there have been some critics of the LRAD programme. According to Andrew *et al* (2003), LRAD is shifting away from providing land for the poor to providing land for agricultural purposes to those who have the means to

farm. The argument continues that LRAD indicates the lack of confidence on the part of the authorities in the ability of the rural poor to engage in agricultural production for self-provision or for the market (Andrew *et al*, 2003).

Another attempt by government to target the poorest of the poor, is the initiative by the Department of Social Development (DSD) through which the National Food Emergency Scheme (NFES) was established. The NFES is a government response to provide interim relief measures to households and potential beneficiaries severely affected by food insecurity and the price escalation of basic food items (Department of Social Services and Population, Gauteng Provincial Government, 2003). The scheme forms an integral component of the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme (IFSNP) developed by the Social Cluster departments. The Mkambati area in the Eastern Cape, which is the case study area for this thesis, is an example of these poor areas where food parcels are distributed to poor communities. The main concern about this strategy, however, is that in most cases these food parcels are not received by the poorest, instead the elites in these poor areas are the ones who benefit<sup>1</sup>.

In 1997 the government introduced social assistance grants for children, to target those in lower income households, in an attempt to support child growth and development (Redi, 2003). Social assistance for children is provided in the form of three types of grants: the Child Support Grant for eligible children under nine, whose parents or caregivers cannot afford to feed and clothe them; the Care Dependency Grant for disabled children up to the age of 18; and the Foster Child Grant for people caring for children who are not their own (Sunday Times, 2003). However, at least in the case study area, there is still low public awareness about the Care Dependency Grant and the Child Foster Grant.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based on my own observation during fieldwork in Khanyayo village, Wild Coast, April to May 2004.

It needs to be noted that, as shown in this discussion, not all government-initiated poverty-alleviation strategies reach those in need. A combination of factors is responsible for this. The key question that needs to be answered therefore is, “How do people in rural areas continue to survive despite this poverty?” The next section attempts to shed some light on this.

### **2.2.2 Rural people’s survival strategies**

Despite the government’s efforts to redress the imbalances of the past, particularly the attempt to alleviate widespread poverty in rural areas, experience indicates that government’s efforts alone are not adequate. Rural people’s active participation in deriving their own livelihoods is clearly essential. Hence this section focuses on rural people’s livelihood strategies that complement and supplement those initiated and promoted by government.

In discussing rural people’s survival strategies in the light of the poverty discussed above, it is important to understand that livelihood diversification is a crucial element of any of those strategies. Several researchers agree that the livelihood base of rural households in many African households is multiple and diverse (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Shackleton et al, 2001; Kepe, 2002). Rural livelihood diversification is defined as the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living (Ellis, 2000). This diversity includes the land-based strategies of arable farming, livestock husbandry, the consumption and trade of natural resources and migrancy. In many situations, rural people engage in a combination of livelihood strategies, for example, agriculture, small and micro enterprises, wage labour, claiming against the state (social pension and disability grants), claiming against the household and community members (remittances, work parties, outright charity), unpaid domestic labour, illegitimate activities and non-monetised activities such as barter and exchange (Makgope, 2000). Numerous households are known to be



surviving on these strategies. The diversity, multiplicity and dynamic nature of rural livelihoods are often aimed at managing risk, reducing vulnerability and enhancing security (Cousins, 1999). More importantly though, livelihood strategies are determined by the availability of resources, in terms of access to and control over these resources, as well as by biophysical factors (Scoones, 1998; Kepe, 2002).

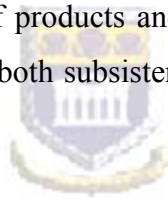
However, there is an overwhelming perception that in the communal areas of South Africa, many ways in which rural people diversify their livelihoods through relying on land-based livelihood strategies make insignificant contributions to overall livelihood well-being. As Shackleton *et al*, (2001) point out, residents of communal areas are largely seen as being reliant on transfers from urban areas or on government. However, although cash from urban and government sources is the mainstream of rural economy in many areas, the multiple and diverse livelihood base of rural households is not widely recognised (Cousins, 1999). The government should aim at improving the livelihoods of rural people, and special attention should be paid to the poorest people. More importantly, one small way in which this support could be given is that a great deal of support should be directed towards the development of local institutions which are tasked with overseeing the management of common property resources in order to maximise production and ensure the sustainable use of resources, which will contribute towards the sustainable livelihoods for the poor (Andrew *et al*, 2003).

### **2.3 SUBSISTENCE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN RURAL LIVELIHOODS**

As stated previously, South African rural communities engage in crop cultivation and livestock farming, albeit at varying scales depending on a number of factors, as some of their livelihood strategies. Rural people produce crops both for consumption and for sale. Livestock remains a critical component of the livelihoods of millions of households in the rural areas of the country, although they are unevenly distributed

between households. The contribution of livestock to rural livelihoods is much more significant than it is currently estimated (Shackleton, *et al*, 2001). According to Cousins, (1996), rural people are involved in livestock farming for different reasons, which include slaughter for feasts or home consumption, cash from sales, milk for home consumption, as a form of investment, for funeral purposes, for paying bride wealth, for the sale of hides and skins and for transport purposes.

In addition to subsistence agriculture, rural communities throughout the world make use of a range of natural resources in their environment to make a living. Such uses include the direct use or consumption within the household, and harvesting for income generation (Shackleton and Shackleton, 2000). Of the 40% of South Africans who live in rural areas, about 2 million households benefit from plant resources and other natural resources (Gillespie, 2001). In South Africa indigenous forests and woodlands sustain a wide range of products and services. Rural communities value forest and woodland resources for both subsistence and commercial purposes (Kepe, 2002).



Non-timber forest products play a significant and often critical role in providing subsistence and cash income to a large part of the world's population. (Pimentel *et al*, 1997). The people involved in NTFP extraction and processing are more often than not among the poorest in their societies (Neumann *et al*. 2000). For example, Browder (1992 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) notes that extractor households are the poorest non-Amerindian group in the Amazon region. In South Asia, Thomas (1996 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) notes that tribes, such as the Girijans, are considered to be the most economically impoverished community in India. Girijan NTFP collectors in Kerala display a heavy dependence on forests, where the average contribution of NTFPs to a total tribal income was 58%. And in Sub-Saharan Africa, studies from Ghana conducted by Falconer (1992 in Neumann *et al*, 2000), indicate that it is the poor women, generally the poorest members of rural society, who are reliant on NTFP extraction, sometimes for their livelihood.

Cavendish (1997 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) conducted a study based on data collected from 213 Zimbabwean households, to address a number of questions, which among them was whether the commercialisation of NTFPs make any contribution to the reduction of poverty. The results again indicated that poorer households are more dependent on NTFPs than richer ones. As in Guatemala (Margoluis, 1994), the commercialisation of NTFPs fills a significant income gap for the poor. Cavendish points out that there is dramatic and significant reduction in measured poverty when NTFP income is included in household accounts.

Rural poor people in South Africa also rely on NTFPs as one of the contributions to their livelihoods. Most rural people use fuel wood, wooden utilities, grass hand-brushes, edible insects, wood for fences or kraals, medicinal plants, bush meat, wild honey, spinaches and reeds for weaving (Shackleton *et al*, 2002). Some resources such as thatch grass are harvested at particular times of the year, whereas others are available throughout the year. Households may collect seasonal resources and process and/or store them for use later in the year when supplies are diminished (Shackleton *et al*, 1998).

### **2.3.1 South African case studies of the use of NTFPs**

Several studies dealing with the domestic use and sale of NTFPs have been conducted in South Africa. A study conducted by Kepe (1997) emphasizes the importance of NTFPs to the livelihoods of rural people living in Khanyayo, near the Mkambati Nature Reserve in the Eastern Cape. Kepe describes in detail the importance of natural resources such as medicinal plants, thatch grass, wood products of various kinds, fuel wood, grazing for livestock and wildlife and the significant contribution these natural resources make towards poverty eradication. Poverty in the former bantustans, for example, makes it impossible for many rural people in this area to afford any other form of housing other than mud and thatch. Thatch,

therefore, is used for roofing in the villages and is also gathered for sale, mostly in the local market (Kepe, 1997). It is mostly women who gather thatch grass, and more often than not, they are also heads of their households. Many women also gather other kinds of plant material such as medicinal plants, for sale. A wide range of medicinal plant species is gathered from the village grazing areas and indigenous forests, and also from the nearby parastatal farm and nature reserve. Tree bark, roots, tubers, leaves and stems are gathered at great effort for sale on the Durban market, mainly by poorer women in the villages, but also by herbalists for use in their local traditional healing practices and, increasingly, for sale as well. According to Kepe (1997), gatherers can sometimes make a profit of R500 per two to three-week trip to the city, when the market is good. In Khanyayo trees are also used to provide timber for fuel, poles for building and fencing, and to make a range of other products like yokes and sleds, which are used by most households. Some fuel wood is also sold for cash and the money contributes mostly to household income. During the dry seasons, the woodlands in Khanyayo provide the people with fuel wood, thatching grass, poles for building, timber for crafting and carpentry, and some wild fruits. This case study is an example of the importance and contribution of natural resources to rural livelihoods.

A number of studies of the use of and trade in a variety of 'veld' or 'secondary' products in the Bushbuckridge region of the Central Lowveld savannah zone in the Mpumalanga province also reveal high economic values, a degree of commercialisation and substantial potential for the enhancement of rural incomes (Shackleton, 1996; Shackleton *et al*, 1998; Shackleton *et al*, 2000; and Shackleton *et al*, 2002). Products that have been investigated include edible herbs and fruit, reeds, thatch grass, fuel wood, carving woods and wood roses. Edible herbs and edible fruits were recorded as being used by most households. *Sclerocarya birrea* or the marula, which is of particular importance, is valued for its taste, and can be made into beer, and the kernels of which are also used for home consumption or for sale. Few households obtained significant incomes from trading, but even casual trading

provided vital supplementary income for low-income households (Shackleton *et al* 2000).

From the study conducted in Mpumalanga by Shackleton and Shackleton (2000) it was found that *Phragmites* reeds used for roofing, thatch grass and wood roses were widely collected and used by households. Most households sold one or more different products, for some this was for supplementary income only, but for others it was their sole source. Women were primary harvesters with the exception of thatch grass, which was cut by both women and men. Much trade was local and ad hoc, but some products were processed and sold on external markets (Cousins, 1999).

Research has revealed the importance of subsistence agriculture and the collection of natural resources from the local environment, to rural people in most parts of the world (Cousins, 1999; Shackleton, 1996; Shactleton *et al* 2001). Plant-based rural crafting and its trade are also important components of rural livelihoods both in South Africa and the rest of the world.



## **2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF HANDICRAFTS TO RURAL LIVELIHOODS**

The study of rural handicrafts is a relatively neglected area in the growing literature on rural small-scale industry across the developing world. Recently, a growing body of research on rural handicraft<sup>2</sup> production in the developing world stresses its untapped development potential as well as its importance in addressing rural poverty (Rogerson and Sithole, 2001). According to Rogerson (2000) the potential of rural non-farm production, which includes handicrafts, has received considerable attention

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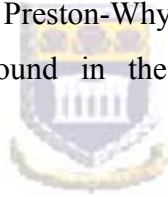
<sup>2</sup> The term ‘handicraft’ is subject to different interpretations. In some cases the term is narrowly defined to refer to tourist or decorative crafts, such as bakit and wood carvings, in other cases, the term is widened to include utilitarian goods, the production of which involves manual skills such as blacksmithing and tailoring, as well as other artisanal activities such as carpentry, masonry and bakery. Sometimes the terminology ‘cottage industries’ is also used to refer to groups of rural handicraft producers (Rogerson, 2000)

in generating employment and income opportunities in rural areas in Asia and Africa. Several studies around the world have confirmed the continuing significance of rural handicraft production to rural livelihoods in many parts of the developing world (Cunningham, 1987a; Cawe and Ntloko, 1997; and Cawe, 1999). A number of studies on forest-based or wood-based small-scale enterprises have highlighted that small forest-based enterprise activities constitute one of the largest sources of non-farm income in the rural areas of developing countries (Townson, 1995 in Neumann *et al*, 2000). The research conducted by Pye (1988 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) on artisans in several Asian countries highlighted the local importance of different forms of rural handicraft manufacture to rural livelihood. Rutten (1990 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) highlighted the critical contribution of the production of woven grass place mats to rural survival in rural Philippines and Smyth (1986 in Neumann *et al*, 2000) highlighted the contribution of bamboo weaving to rural livelihoods in Indonesia.

Other studies concentrate on the importance of handicrafts particularly for the livelihoods by rural women (Bishop and Scoones, 1994; Swain, 1993 in Neumann *et al*, 2000). However, gender differentiation and the exploitation of subordinate rural women producers are common in the developing world experience of handicraft manufactures. For example, in the rural areas of Botswana craft-making is very sex-specific with women working primarily with natural plant fibres from trees and reeds while men work mainly in wood metal (Terry, 1984 in Neumann *et al*, 2000). Women in such rural areas are seen primarily as dependants or people who have to depend on men for their survival for the rest of their lives. This was argued in the study conducted by Smyth (1986) in Indonesia. The study which was carried out in the bamboo weaving economy of rural Indonesia (Smyth, 1986) concluded that women are not appropriately seen as self-employed, but rather as dependent workers, as a result of their lack of opportunities and their poor control over the productive<sup>3</sup> process and reduced access to markets. Lace making in rural India represents a classic example of the putting-out system, with rural women producing a luxury

handicraft commodity for export markets via a chain of middlemen. Smyth (1986) shows clearly how these women are invisible producers defined as housewives and childcarers, dependent on male breadwinners, and pursuing lace manufacture in their leisure periods.

In South Africa the handicraft sector was also relatively under-researched and little was known of its essential characteristics, workings and developmental potential until the 1980s. According to Rogerson (2000), it was during the 1980s when a number of humanitarian agencies and NGOs began to promote the manufacture of rural handicrafts as a much-needed source of income and productive employment, particularly in the former homeland or bantustan areas. Alongside this growing interest in the developmental potential of rural crafts in the era of late apartheid, there began to occur the first serious academic research into the South African rural handicraft economy. The works of Preston-Whyte (1983; 1984) were of considerable importance in breaking new ground in the academic understanding of rural handicrafts in South Africa.



The contribution of non-timber plant-based craft making to rural livelihoods in South Africa has been documented in several studies over the last two decades. These include the studies conducted by Cunningham (1987a) in KwaZulu Natal, by Cawe and Ntloko (1997) in the former Transkei, by Shackleton and Shackleton (2000) in the Bushbuckridge area and by Kepe (2002) in the Ngwenyeni village, Eastern Cape. The weaving of mats and baskets is one form of craft making in South Africa that has emerged as a popular option, both for sale and for home use. This is evident in all the studies listed above.

In the former Transkei<sup>4</sup>, craftwork made from non-timber plants has been around for centuries (Kepe, 2002). Beinart (1982) reports that during the nineteenth century

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<sup>3</sup> Their dependence on men for their raw material supplies.

<sup>4</sup> Now known as the Eastern Cape.

most households in Pondoland were crafting their own material for building purposes. Hunter (1979) argues that craftwork among the Mpondos was an essential part of their lives. Even in the post-apartheid period, craftwork in rural Pondoland is still a crucial element of the people's livelihoods. According to a recent study conducted by Cawe and Ntloko in Port St Johns (1997) the Mpondos use the *Flagellaria guineensis* plant to make baskets for domestic use but mostly for the tourist market. Kepe (2002) also recently reported that in most rural households in Pondoland, craftwork is still part of the people's daily lives. The Mpondos in Khanyayo, according to Kepe (2002), use mostly the *Cyperus textilis* to make, among other things, sitting and sleeping mats, food mats and collecting baskets. These crafts are either sold to other villagers or in town but are mostly given as gifts to other villagers during traditional ceremonies. However, despite this contribution, there are factors that either enhance or restrict the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods in South Africa.

## **2.5 FACTORS ENHANCING OR RESTRICTING THE CONTRIBUTION OF PLANT-BASED CRAFTS TO RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Despite the contribution of NTFPs to rural livelihoods, there are factors that enhance or restrict the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods in South Africa. After the democratic elections of 1994 there have been several changes in legislative, policy and institutional frameworks for biodiversity management. These include seven policy processes which were initiated in the environmental field alone, including those relating to environmental management, biodiversity, forestry, water, fisheries, sustainable coastal development, and integrated pollution control, as well as a range of relevant policies concerning land, energy, trade and industry, tourism, education and science and technology (Wynberg, 2002). Access to land is one of the factors that could affect plant-based craft making by rural people and environmental and land legislation and policies may determine this access.



### 2.5.1 Land Legislation

Following many years of apartheid which resulted in many racial imbalances, particularly with regard to land, the government has implemented its land reform programme and this programme has introduced many laws, which impact both positively (encourages access to natural resources, which include plant resources) and negatively (restricts access to natural resources) on people's livelihoods.

#### *The Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994*

During the apartheid years, many rural people were removed from land that they occupied and benefited from. In many cases, removals of rural people from their land also meant that they lost access to natural resources occurring on the land that they lost (Kepe *et al*, 2000). Laws under the apartheid period strictly forbade people from utilising resources inside these protected areas, even if they were once owners of the land on which these occur (Hall, 2003). Therefore, when the land reform programme began in 1994, this brought hope for the communities who lost land and rights to use natural resources in protected areas. More specifically, the Restitution of Land Rights Act<sup>5</sup> 22 of 1994, made it possible for people to regain their rights to land. These rights presumably also meant that people could gain rights to natural resources. According to this Act, a person or community dispossessed of property after 19 June 1913 as a result of past racially discriminatory laws and practices is entitled, to the extent provided by an Act of parliament, either to restitution of that property or to equitable redress.

Some communities and persons were dispossessed of their land for the protection of the environment and natural resources. These communities are now able to claim their land back through the restitution programme so as to gain back access to their

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<sup>5</sup> The basis for restitution is provided by the 1993 'interim' Constitution, Section 25(7) of the 1996 Constitution, and Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994 (as amended in 1997)

land and resources. This is a case of legislation enabling people to enhance their benefit from NTFPs. However, if the restitution process fails to facilitate the return of land rights to rural users, the use of NTFPs is often restricted.

#### *Communal Property Association Act 28 of 1996*

After acquiring back the land under both the restitution and the redistribution programmes, individuals or communities should be able to hold land as theirs. There are presently two options of tenure in the rural areas of former bantustans, namely, individual freehold and group or communal ownership. Communities applying as groups for transfer of land must constitute themselves as land-holding entities. This Act enables communities to form juristic persons, to be known as Communal Property Associations (CPAs) in order to acquire, hold and manage property on a basis agreed to by members of a community in terms of a written constitution and to provide for matters connected therewith (Government of South Africa, 1996a). This is a legal mechanism whereby groups of people can acquire and hold land in common, with all the rights of full private ownership (Lahiff, 2001). In this case, a community may use this Act to secure their land holding, and in that way they may hold, manage, have access to plant resources and land where these plant resources occur. They may also benefit commercially from these resources if they wish to do so. This Act has a positive impact on rural people's access to and use of plant resources, but it could have negative implications if people over-exploit what is available on their land (Kepe, 2002).

#### *Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act 31 of 1996*

This Act serves to provide for the temporary protection of certain rights to and interests in land, which are not otherwise adequately protected by law; and provide for matters connected therewith (Government of South Africa, 1996b). The operation of this Act has been extended annually and remains in force (Lahiff, 2001; Hall, 2003). Most of the rural people who utilise and benefit from plant resources are from

the former bantustans, and therefore this Act protects their rights to land and the resources that may occur on that land, which may include plant resources. This Act also has a positive impact on rural people's access to and use of plant resources.

*Communal Land Rights Act 11 of 2004<sup>6</sup>*

This Act seeks to provide for communities, families, households or persons to obtain legally secure tenure on communal land. It seeks to provide for general principles applicable to land tenure rights and also provides for leases of communal land for the benefit of communities, including development purposes. It also attempts to provide a third option over and above individual ownership and land transfer to legal entities (Ntsebeza, 1999). This applies to instances where transfer of land has not been applied (Kepe, 2002). In this case the state remains the nominal owner of land, but unlike in the past, will strengthen the land rights of occupants.

This Act, like the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act 31 of 1996, also seeks to protect rural people who reside in the former bantustans (most people who use plant resources reside in the former bantustans), which means that their property rights would be protected through this Act, even in cases where transfer of land from the state was not applied for. They may also lease communal land and plant resources that occur on that land for the benefit of communities, including for development purposes (Government of South Africa, 2004). Through this Act rural people can secure tenure on communal land or the state remains the nominal owner of land, and strengthen the land rights of occupants. This means that they would have access to and could use plant resources occurring on the land. In this way, this Act could impact positively on rural people's livelihoods. However, as alluded to above, stronger rights to land and resources could also threaten biological and economic sustainability of the resources in question.

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<sup>6</sup> Passed on 20 July 2004

## 2.5.2 Conservation policies and legislation

The post-apartheid government also introduced many environmental laws and policies, which could impact both positively and negatively on people's livelihoods and rural people's access to natural resources. In this case the focus is on plant resources.

### *National Forestry Act No 84 of 1998*

This Act embraces a completely new approach to forestry by recognising the links between community, conservation and commercial forestry and at the same time promoting wider access to and use of forests (Fabricius *et al*, 2003). The government is attempting to promote a thriving forestry sector for the benefit of all South Africans<sup>7</sup>. In terms of the National Forestry Act, every individual has a right to reasonable access to South African state forests, both indigenous forests and plantations. People who are in charge of administering the State forests have to provide rules of access and have the authority to enforce any restrictions. People need a licence to use state forests for certain activities. Such activities include: removing forest produce for commercial purposes, cutting, disturbing, damaging or destroying any other forest produce, using forest roads for commercial operations, cultivating land, establishing and managing a plantation (Government of South Africa, 1998a). However the Act recognises that many people depend on forests for their day-to-day survival (Wynberg, 2002). Therefore, communities that live near state forests do not need a licence to collect dead wood or to remove produce, such as mushrooms, herbs and plants, from the forest for household use. They may also use roads in the state forest to reach their destination. Access to forests is subject to certain conditions<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Which are: Firewood and other forest produce can only be taken for domestic use and not for sale.  
No live wood may be taken from the forest  
A person can only take as much wood out of the forest as he/she can carry

Forest officers are always there to see that individuals and communities use state forests responsibly and that the conditions for access to the forests are being followed. Forest officers are allowed to search persons, seize goods or arrest anyone who does not abide by the rules. This Act encourages the use of forest resources but there are conditions attached (Government of South Africa, 1998a). It acknowledges the importance of plant resources to rural people, but at the same time protects the plant resources.

*National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998*

This Act acknowledges that environmental management must place people and their needs at the forefront of its concern, and serve their physical, psychological, developmental, cultural and social interests equitably (Fabricius *et al*, 2003). However this development must be socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable. According to this Act sustainable plant resources and environmental management must be a priority and encouraged in order to promote the responsible use of plantation (forests), ensure the continual growth of trees, be of benefit to communities and ensure the conservation of the environment (Government of South Africa, 1998b). This Act, in a way encourages, and at the same time restricts the use and access of rural people to plant resources. Even though it places people and their needs at the forefront, it has the environment's best interest at heart. There are also conditions that come with this access and use and not every plant resource is available for use.

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Firewood cannot be collected before sunrise and after sunset.  
No hunting is allowed

### *National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Bill of 2003*

The last twenty years have witnessed a significant shift of natural resource management strategies, in South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and throughout the world (IUCN, 1999). The Biodiversity Bill is one of the strategies South Africa took to manage natural resources. This Bill is aimed at ensuring the long-term survival in nature of the species or ecosystem. Its purpose is to provide for the protection of species that are threatened or in need of national protection to ensure their survival in the wild (Government of South Africa, 2003). This Bill restricts the use of natural resources including plant resources, by rural people for the purpose of insuring long-term survival in nature of species or ecosystems. It permits the use of some natural resources but stresses the importance of conservation and management. This focus on conservation of the resources rather than on use, arguably works to the advantage of future generation more than the present (IUCN, 1999).

#### **2.5.3 Marketing**

In rural areas the markets that exist are often small and insecure as a result of low incomes, seasonality, poor access to large markets and severe competition among producers (FAO, 1987). According to Arnold (1994) many handicraft producers face a number of market-related problems (e.g. the inability to have sufficient produce to make it profitable to meet the marketing costs). Such problems are often compounded by low entry barriers which often results in severe levels of competition between producers, resulting in reduced profit levels to the extent to which it is very difficult to generate the surpluses needed for reinvestment in improved productivity and growth.

#### **2.5.4 Infrastructures**

Infrastructures also have a great influence on the extent of the contribution made by plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods in South Africa. In most rural areas there is a lack of much needed infrastructures, such as roads, telephones and marketing stands. This makes it difficult for producers to market their products due to, among other things, inadequate communication facilities, poor transport services due to lack of proper roads and the long distance to be covered to get to marketing areas. However, Rogerson (2000) argues that, with improved rural road infrastructures, the markets of certain traditional rural crafts are exposed to stiff competition from products of larger, often urban-based producers. For example, factory-made furniture may increasingly displace its artisanal alternative; baskets, mats or hats made from synthetics may displace those produced from natural raw materials as a result of changing consumer tastes. Overall, rural handicraft producers require both improved access to markets and improvements in marketing of their products (Townson, 1995).



#### **2.5.5 Cultural practices**

In South Africa, especially in rural areas, there are local cultural practices, which are still in evidence today. These practices can both restrict or enhance the use of plant-based crafts among rural people. It is argued (Cousins, 1999) that culturally and socially constructed roles are usually unequal in terms of power, decision-making and ownership of resources. This may mean that men have more opportunities of inheriting and owning natural resources than women in rural areas, which is a disadvantage for women because for natural resources to contribute to people's livelihood they should be able to access and if possible have control over them. If rural women have access to and control of natural resources, it may contribute more to the alleviation of rural poverty since most rural women practice plant-based craft making (Heinsohn and Cunningham, 1991) and there is also a growing number of

female-headed households in rural areas due to a number of factors (e.g. husband being a migrant worker or death caused by HIV/Aids) (Kepe, 2002).

### **2.5.6 Local institutions<sup>9</sup>**

Local institutions may determine the contribution and access to natural resources by rural people. ‘Institution’ is a concept that is theoretically understood differently. According to North (1990, in Kepe, 2002), the new institutional economics and related disciplines see institutions as regularised social interaction or practices structured by rules or norms, and could function both formally and informally. On the other hand there is also a body of research that sees institutions as a constellation of social interactions and processes, which are embedded in practice (Peters, 2000 in Kepe, 2002).

The establishment of rights of access to and the control over natural resources is essential, in order for plant-based crafting to benefit rural people. In rural areas there are multiple ways in which villagers could gain access to and control of natural resources. These may be through being allocated a piece of land by traditional authority, inheritance, bribery, legitimised stealing and many others (Kepe 2002). Other institutions may include local organisations, committees and projects through which people may gain access to and control over natural resources.

### **2.5.7 Scientific research**

Studies conducted in South Africa have shown and acknowledged the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods (Kepe, 1997; Shackleton and Shackleton 2000; Rogerson and Sithole, 2001; Kepe, 2002; Kepe 2003b; Twine *et al*, 2003). These studies argue that plant-based crafting plays a significant role in rural livelihoods and

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<sup>9</sup> Is defined as regularised social interactions or practices structured by rules or norms, and can be seen as both formal and informal (Knight 1993, in Kepe 2002).



the alleviation of rural poverty. Studies such as these enhance the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods.

Although it is evident that plant-based crafts play a significant role in rural livelihoods, and also contribute to rural poverty reduction, other studies have been conducted that criticise plant-based craft-making (Cunningham, 1987b; Heinsohn and Cunningham, 1991; Cawe and Ntloko, 1997; Cawe, 1999). These studies argue that over-harvesting and uncontrolled harvesting might lead to their depletion and, in some cases, their extinction in the wild. Arguments such as these could restrict the contribution of plant-based crafts to rural livelihoods in many ways, for example, when policies are formulated and implemented based on such research (Kepe, 2002).

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviewed poverty in South Africa, highlighted how rural people are hardest hit, assessed government strategies to alleviate poverty and considered how rural people's own strategies of survival need to be taken seriously. It showed the value of subsistence agriculture and natural resources, referring to a range of NTFPs, and how they have been shown to make a significant contribution to poverty reduction in different parts of the world and also in South Africa. It was evident through the case study of crafts that rural handicrafts make a significant impact on rural livelihoods, particularly with the focus on the production of baskets and mats in the former Transkei. However, there are factors that either enhance or restrict the impact of NTFPs and some of those factors were discussed.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE STUDY AREA**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

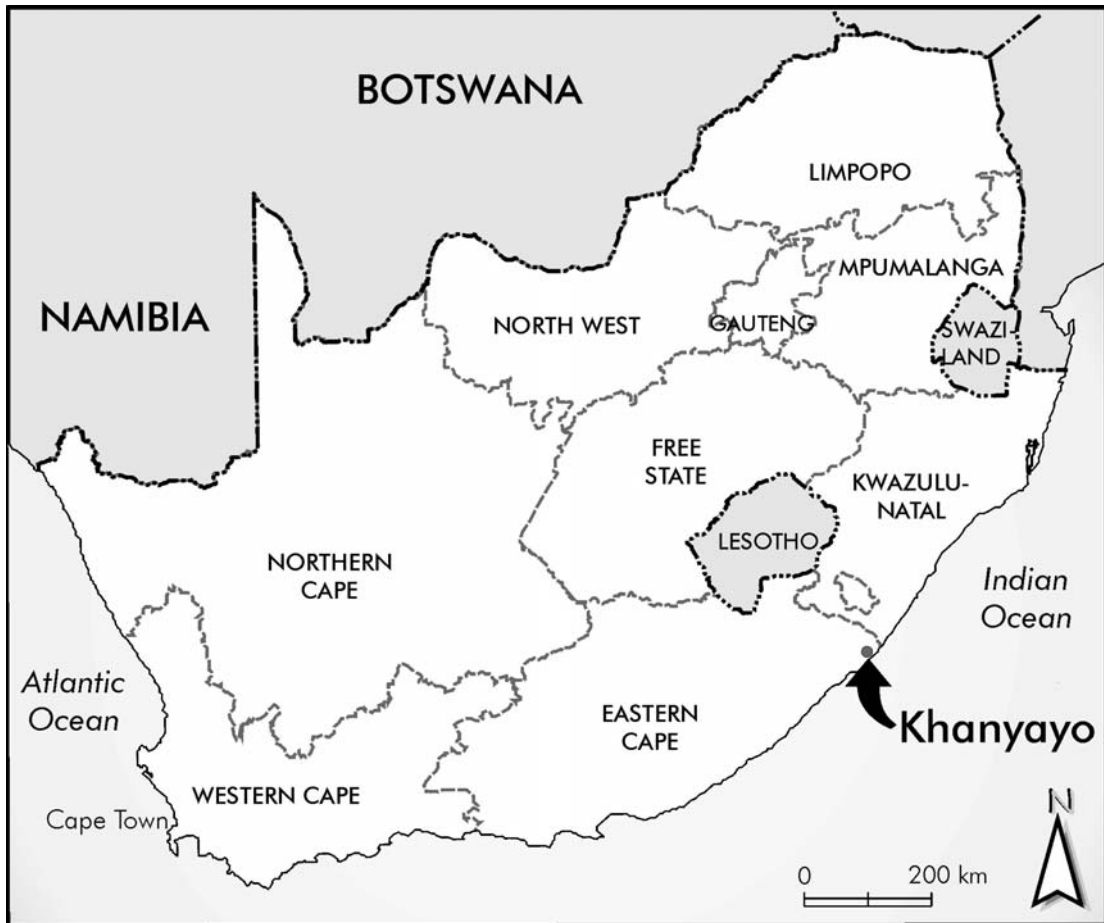
This chapter provides a brief description of Khanyayo village, the case study area, covering both the biophysical and social aspects. This discussion is necessary for understanding the role that the trade of plant-based crafts has on local livelihoods, as well as ecological and institutional factors that determine the availability of the resources used in making these products. A brief biophysical background will be presented, including the physical location of Khanyayo, climate, soil conditions and vegetation. A discussion of the social and political background of the area will be presented, more specifically, the formal and informal structures affecting the livelihoods of the local people will be considered. The discussion will then focus on current livelihoods, as well as other poverty alleviation strategies that are planned by both local people and outsiders. The final component of this chapter will consider the land claim lodged by the Khanyayo people and others.

### **3.2 BIOPHYSICAL BACKGROUND**

Khanyayo is located on the Wild Coast, a coastline area of about 300 kilometres between the Great Kei River to the South and uMtamvuna River to the north. The Wild Coast forms part of the former Transkei, which has since 1994 become part of the Eastern Cape Province. The area within which Khanyayo is located is traditionally also known as Eastern Pondoland. Khanyayo is located about sixteen kilometres inland, between the Mtentu and Msikaba Rivers. To the east of this communal settlement is the former Transkei Agricultural Corporation (TRACOR) (state) farm which is about 11 000 hectares and the 7 000 hectare Mkambati Nature

Reserve, which, while currently under state management, are often seen as part of Khanyayo (See map)<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 1: Map of South Africa showing study area**



### 3.2.1 Climate

Khanyayo is a summer rainfall area, with a mean annual rainfall of about 1 200mm, of which at least 50 mm being expected every month of the year. However, despite

<sup>5</sup> The Khanyayo people were forcibly removed from these areas in 1920, to make way for a government-controlled leper reserve. The local people have since lodged a claim for this land (Kepe, 2002).

this abundant rainfall, crop production is limited by poor soil conditions. The soils are sandy, highly leached and relatively shallow (Kepe, 1997). This high rainfall is also one of the factors that attracted immigrants from other parts of the former Transkei to Khanyayo through most of the twentieth century (Beinart, 1982). In addition to good rainfall, the area has an average temperature of 20 °C, a factor that presents an opportunity to attract all-year tourism.

### **3.2.2 Vegetation**

For various reasons, including the relatively high rainfall and type of soils in the area, the Wild Coast section on which Khanyayo is located is known for its rich biodiversity. Grasslands that cover as much as 80 percent of the local vegetation dominate the vegetation of the area. Patches of sub-tropical forests are found in riverines and coastal dunes by the coast. Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR contain most of this highly regarded vegetation (Prinsloo, 2000). In fact, many of the plant species found in the area are endemic and near endemic species, including those used for medicinal purposes and for plant-based craft-making (Kepe, 2000). There is a widely held perception among outsiders that these grasslands are mismanaged, through irregular burning and overgrazing by livestock (Kepe, 2002). However, Kepe and Scoones (1999) have argued that while it may be true that the quality of the grasslands is quite poor, local people engage in a range of strategies, including seeding, burning and soil enrichment, to encourage particular vegetation to emerge, to serve a variety of individual and household livelihood interests.

### **3.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES**

The Khanyayo are the descendents of Bumbantaba, one of the chiefs who was given refuge by the then Mpondo's chief Faku during the Shaka raids in the nineteenth century (Kepe, 2002). The Khanyayo settled on the banks of the Mtentu River on both the Bizana and Lusikisiki sides. Following the annexation of Pondoland in

1894, the Khanyayo people were forced to split their numbers in half, with some remaining in Bizana, while others became part of the Lusikisiki district. The Khanyayo who became part of Lusikisiki were then allocated a new chief, even though they remained loyal to their original chieftaincy in Bizana (Kepe, 2002). The political misfortunes of the Khanyayo were not limited to this. In 1920 they were forcibly removed from the land they had settled on, to make way for a leper colony. That land is now the Mkambati Nature Reserve and the TRACOR farm.

Khanyayo is an Administrative area, which since the demarcation process by local government in 2000 is part of wards 22 and 23 of Qawukeni Local Municipality, under the O.R. Tambo District Municipality<sup>6</sup>. Each ward has its representative councillor and due to its uniqueness of falling into two wards, Khanyayo has two councillors (Councillor Joyi for Ward 22 and Councillor Mbane for Ward 23) and ward representatives. These representatives are responsible for forwarding people's complains, queries and comments to the councillors who then act on them. Where boundaries overlap, there appears to be competing jurisdictions over land between different ward councillors and traditional leaders. However, according to Councillor Joyi<sup>7</sup>, when conflicts arise between councillors and traditional leaders or between the two councillors, they are dealt with in a civil manner.

### **3.3.1 Socio-economic structure of Khanyayo**

The Khanyayo Administrative Area falls under the Thaweni Tribal Authority, comprising six administrative areas. A headman, under the authority of Chief Zwelibongile Mhlanga, heads each of the administrative areas. Each administrative area, including Khanyayo, is further divided into several sub-villages (*izigodi*), which are further divided into several neighbourhood groupings (*izithebe*). Khanyayo is divided into seven sub-villages, which are, Sicambeni, kwa-Zitha, Mgwedweni,

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<sup>6</sup> Mrs Zoleka Capha is the Executive Mayor of the O.R. Tambo district Municipality.

<sup>7</sup> In one of the conversations I had with him.

Mdumazulu, Nayintsentse, Ngwenyeni and Njanda. The leaders of *izithebe* are elected by the villagers and are referred to as sub-headmen (*Oonozithetyana*) and they report to the headman of the Khanyayo Administrative Area. The headmen then report to the senior chief, who is the head of Thaweni Tribal Authority. When villagers request land or lodge a complaint against each other, they first go to the sub-headman and then he takes the matter to the headman if he is unable to or not allowed to deal with it. Infringement on natural resources is locally considered a minor crime which can be settled by sub-headman and headmen. The headmen report only serious crimes to the police. However, the definition of 'serious crime' is locally contested. There are instances of rape and arson that are never reported to the police. While the headmen (in Khanyayo) receive a monthly allowance from the government the sub-headmen are not paid any form of allowance. They depend mostly on handouts from the headmen, from such things as cash from fines, use of the village stamp (for which people are charged R5<sup>8</sup> whenever they need it). Many sub-headmen have become disillusioned and refuse to perform their duties, due to the lack of financial benefits.

### **3.4 LIVELIHOODS IN KHANYAYO**

Rural livelihoods are diverse and complex (Chambers and Conway, 1992 in Kepe, 2002) and Khanyayo is not any different. During my stay in Khanyayo I learned that all seven sub-villages have similar characteristics in terms of livelihoods options. Just like many rural people worldwide, people in Khanyayo also diversify their livelihood sources for survival purposes. However, it needs to be noted that this diversity is facilitated by several factors, ranging from the availability of physical and social assets, to the people's ability to turn these assets into livelihoods. Some of these dynamics will now be addressed.

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<sup>8</sup> During this period a rand was about R6 to the US dollar

### **3.4.1 Infrastructure**

As part of the former Transkei, Khanyayo has an extremely poor infrastructure. Electricity and running water are not available. People rely on streams for water and other sources of energy, such as solar energy and fuel wood. They walk long distances to collect both fuel wood and water. Roads are equally inadequate, often making it almost impossible to reach certain parts of the village by car. On rainy days, even the main road running through the village is often damaged. There are four schools in the village, and these include two primary schools and two secondary schools. There is no school in the village that goes up to grade twelve. The nearest school, which has grade twelve is Zwelibongile Secondary School, which is almost two hours away in Khanyayo village, by foot. Those who do not wish to walk this distance daily, have an option of taking a bus or settling in Mkamela for the duration of the academic year.



Access to health facilities is also not adequate. In previous years villagers would walk long distances or take a bus to either Holy Cross Hospital, which is more than 40 kilometres from the village or to Mkambati Clinic, which is about 11 kilometres from the village. These were the nearest health centres to the villagers. However, all this changed eight years ago when community members decided to collect money and ask the government to help them build a clinic. Now there is a clinic in the village, which opens four days a week. Nevertheless, on occasions, there have been situations of shortage of medicine from the clinics and Holy Cross Hospital.

### **3.4.2 Livelihood strategies<sup>9</sup>**

In Khanyayo the people have developed complex systems of livelihoods, which combine a wide variety of assets, activities and social relationships. As mentioned

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<sup>9</sup> Most of the information in this section is based on own observation and interviews during field research, as well as on Kepe (2002).

earlier in this chapter, there are multiple livelihoods strategies in Khanyayo. These strategies are discussed below.

### *Agricultural production*

Agriculture is the most dominant livelihood strategy in the area. Crop production appears to be the major activity that guarantees basic livelihoods for villagers, in spite of poor soil conditions. Most of the households are involved in crop-production, mainly for consumption and to a smaller extent for sale. In terms of labour, most households rely primarily on household labour, mutual aid (*ukuncedisana*) or work parties (*amalima*) (Kepe, 1997). The planting season begins in the middle of September, while harvesting takes place between May and July. Maize (*umbona*) is the most popular crop, followed by taro (*amadumbe*), sweet potato (*ubhutata*) and various crops such as pumpkins and beans. In previous years crop production was mainly for home consumption. However production for cash is becoming more popular as money is now seen as a valuable possession in the village, more so than it was in previous years. Agricultural production in this area is, however, not practiced as much as it used to be. Some argue that this is because today's generation does not like engaging in agricultural practices and older people are dying, while others blame it on rainfall (rainfall is not as good as it used to be). This, among other things, contributes to a number of fields being left fallow, and some villagers asking for maize meal from neighbours or buying it from local stores and town stores, for amounts ranging between R95 and R105 per 50-kilogram bag and R130- R140 per 80 kilogram bag (2004 prices). School also contributed to these fallow fields, as nowadays, unlike in the past years, most children go to school, resulting in less labour being available to help in the fields. Most, if not all villagers commonly practice subsistence agriculture, collection of thatch grass for domestic purposes, the use of water resources and fuel wood collection.



### *Use of natural resources*

Harvesting of natural resources for subsistence consumption and trade is of increasing significance for poor villagers, particularly women, in Khanyayo. These natural resources include medicinal plants, herbs, thatch grass, fuel wood and sedges for making mats and baskets. Medicinal plants are obtained in communal lands, with some people growing other types of medicinal plants in their home yards. Villagers harvest mostly medicinal plants for the purpose of selling at the popular market area in Durban. Thatch grass, fuel wood and sedges for mats and baskets were also obtained from the communal area in the past, but increasingly people also grow them at home both for home use and sale. The trades in medicinal plants and plant-based crafts are the most popular trades among villagers. However, most of these uses and trade are seasonal, as these plant materials grow seasonally. Collection of sand from the Dlabula River for sale is also a common practice among villagers. Traders sell this sand to building construction companies and ordinary villagers. The buyers pay the sand miner R70 for a truckload of river sand.



### *Formal employment, commuter employment and piece jobs*

Formal employment is one of most important livelihood strategy in the area, but there are not a lot of people who have formal jobs. Those with formal jobs either work in local schools as teachers, in the clinic, in Mkambati Nature Reserve or as police. Some of the people working in these areas (e.g. teachers) commute daily, while some do so weekly. Whether the commuter goes back home or not, sometimes depends on whether s/he has money to commute back home after the period they set for themselves to go home (e.g. a week). Other villagers can only manage to get piece jobs when they are available either from other villagers, nature reserve or anywhere were they manage to find these kinds of jobs. This may include weeding, house cleaning, building a fence or looking after somebody else's livestock as a herder. Payment is either in cash or in the form of food or agricultural produce.

### *Self-employment*

Self-employment is also one of the livelihood strategies in the village. This mostly includes building houses, livestock stalls and brick and roof making. The majority of people involved are men who gained skills while they were migrant workers, even though women are also involved (Ngaliwe, 2004; Kepe, 2002).

### *Kin dependency and informal adoption of children*

Kin dependency is important for deriving livelihoods in the area. Most people who are jobless, no matter what their age is, would depend on relatives and only help with either household chores or field cultivation. There is also a common practice in this village of helping the needy in return for some other form of favour. For example, orphans or children with parents who are unable to support them, are informally adopted by other households, who would be able to support them. When one adopts, the agreement is that the adopter should be able to feed, clothe and maintain the child at school and in return the child would be helping around at home and in the field or with whatever the adopter needs to be helped with. Villagers, mostly older people with no children or who have children, but who do not stay at home, are involved in this kind of agreement.

### *Social grants and migrant remittances*

Pensions play an important role in the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people, with old-age pensions being the most dominant, followed by child support grants. Old-age pensioners receive R740-00 per month, and the qualifying ages are sixty for females and sixty-five for males. An amount of R170-00 per month is given to the guardians of children of up to eleven years who have lost one parent or whose parents cannot afford to support them. If, for example, the household income is less than R1200-00 per month, children from that household qualify for child support grants. Some

villagers argue that the child support grant is one of the things to be blamed for the increase in teenage pregnancy as they see children as some kind of survival strategy.

Of the households receiving migrant remittances, the most common ones are those who are headed by elderly people who also receive old-age pensions with few households depending on migrant remittances as their only source of income. However, in most cases households with migrant workers rarely receive any income from them or do so not on a regular basis.

### *Small businesses*

More and more villagers are getting into the business of selling grocery items, cooked items and beer. The trading of grocery items is practiced mostly by households that are considered to be wealthier than others. Some of them also sell cooked items (e.g. fat cakes). Beer selling is also common and it is commonly practiced within the female-headed households. The beer being sold can either be traditional beer – home brewed – or bottled beer purchased from stores.

### *Prostitution*

Prostitution is common in the village. Girls or young women see it is a way of survival. The nature of prostitution varies widely, with both local prostitution and that which takes place in major centres such as Durban. Those who practice prostitution in towns and cities, send money to relatives in the village on a regular basis. Others, especially girls, have older lovers within the village, who occasionally buy groceries for them and their families. Most parents are aware of these practices, but feel helpless, because they feel that if they restrict their children, it would mean cutting that particular income.

By way of conclusion for this section, it should be noted that rural livelihoods have certain characteristics, one of them being that they bridge the rural-urban divide,

whereby people from rural, peri-urban and urban households combine wages, remittances and informal-sector earnings with rurally-based earnings, government pensions, trade in plant material and claiming through social networks (Cousins, 1999). This was evidently so from the Khanyayo livelihood case study section above.

### **3.5 LAND CLAIMS, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMITTEES IN KHANYAYO**

Since about 1990, when democracy was introduced in a situation where traditional authorities had been dominant, the political terrain in Khanyayo has become more complex and less stable over time. The complexity of the political terrain in Khanyayo has also contributed to the power dynamics, in terms of the multi-layered struggles between diverse actors and the process through which resource tenure is continuously renegotiated. In Khanyayo a host of actors has pursued a variety of competing objectives in relation to control over and access to natural resources. At a local-level, the main actors have been, firstly, the villagers of Khanyayo, strategising both individually and collectively to maintain the contribution that natural resources make to their livelihoods. Natural resources, as discussed in the previous section on livelihoods, play a major role in the livelihoods of villagers in Khanyayo. This primary set of interests, although differentiated by livelihood strategies and systems, has united the Khanyayo people behind a powerfully articulated demand for the restoration of their land rights.

A number of committees, most of which are also aligned to the two major political parties in the area – the ANC and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) – have since the early 1990s been battling for control of the turf in the area. These include the land claim for the Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR land, the SDI development project and the control of revenue from the sale of sand and other natural resources from the area.

With regard to the land claim, the Khanyayo people formed the Khanyayo Mkambati Development Forum (KMDF) in 1996 to lead their fight for land rights in Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR. However, there was another committee known as the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) that represented the interests of neighbouring villages, in fact arguing that the Khanyayo people should not be the sole claimants of the Mkambati land. Up until the claim was settled in July 2004 the two committees have been the source of numerous conflicts within and outside Khanyayo. More details about these dynamics are found in Kepe *et al* (2000).

Closely linked to the fight for the control of the land claim process was the fight for the control of the benefits that were expected from the SDI. According to Kepe (2001), the SDI was supposed to attract investment into the area, with the people who hold land rights in an area being the primary beneficiaries. The KMDF and JMC were therefore engaged in a long battle to win people's favours as legitimate representatives of the local people in both the land claim and negotiations for development. Unfortunately, the SDI never yielded any fruit. By the end of October 2004, tensions between these committees were still high, despite numerous attempts by government to mediate the conflict (See Kepe, 2001).

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided an overview of Khanyayo village, focusing on the biophysical aspects, as well as different livelihood strategies in the area and their characteristics. This chapter provides the base of the thesis in that it describes the case study area and its characteristics. The next chapter presents the case study of the crafting of mats and baskets in Khanyayo and the contribution of its use and trade on local villagers' livelihood.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CRAFTING OF MATS AND BASKETS IN KHANYAYO**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Production of non-timber plant-based rural handicrafts in Africa is increasing significantly. This sector is dominated by rural women and is widely recognised as an important element in addressing rural poverty (Kepe, 2003b, Bishop and Scoones, 1994). In South Africa there is little doubt that these products play a significant and often critical role in providing subsistence and cash income for rural people. This has been researched and acknowledged by several South African researchers (Heinsohn and Cunningham, 1991; Cunningham, 1997; Cawe, 1999; Kepe, 2002; Cocks and Dold, 2002; Kepe, 2003b; Cocks and Wiersum, 2003). According to Kotze (2001), the principal areas of woven-fibre craft production in South Africa are, among others, the former KwaZulu particularly in Zululand and Uthungulu, and also the Pondoland region of the Eastern Cape, particularly around Lusikisiki.

The previous chapters have laid the foundation for this chapter. In Chapter One the research problem, objectives of the study and what the study aims to contribute to the world of research were provided. Chapter Two reviewed challenges faced by post-apartheid South Africa with regard to poverty and how to deal with it. In that chapter, the importance of craft material to rural livelihoods, and as a contribution to several strategies by local people to fight poverty, were also highlighted. The case study area of Khanyayo was described in Chapter Three. What this chapter aims to do is to present a case of the dynamics of the local-level trade in crafted mats and baskets in Khanyayo, providing a better understanding of the NTFPs trade, as well as its contribution to the livelihoods of people who are directly and indirectly involved in the processes.

Studies in South Africa show that trading of many NTFPs exists and is currently developing in many other parts of the country (Kotze, 2001; Cocks and Dold, 2002;

Kepe, 2002). However, the details of the trade are not yet fully understood. For example, a study conducted by Kepe (2003b) in the Eastern Cape reveals that craftwork from grass and sedges, particularly from *Cyperus textilis*, is a significant component of the livelihood of the Mpondo people. The study by Kepe (2003b) demonstrates that the Mpondo people, using *Cyperus textilis* (locally known as *uluzi*-singular and *imizi*-plural) make at least four items, which are all crucial in the maintenance of the Mpondo way of life. These items are sitting mats, sleeping mats, food mats and collecting baskets. In Khanyayo sitting mats are almost exclusively used by women for sitting on, with sleeping mats being used for sleeping in households with no beds, or a limited number thereof. The most common use of food mats in Khanyayo is to serve meat for different neighbourhood groupings during feasts (Kepe, 2003b). Baskets are mostly used for collecting various items and this can range from collecting harvested crops, ground maize, to measuring food items that are given to others as payments (Kepe, 2003b). In addition to all these uses, Kepe (2003b) argues, is the social and cultural significance of these items, in the sense that they are prominent during gift exchanges associated with certain cultural events, and that local people argue that they feel more connected to the Mpondo way of life when they use these materials.

However, Kepe's study did not pay particular attention to the dynamics of the trading of these materials. This chapter therefore seeks to supplement this earlier research by exploring the dynamics of local trade and to seek to provide an understanding of its contribution to poverty alleviation. This chapter comprises six sections: Section 1 is the introduction; Section 2 provides the demographic profile of the people who are involved in the trade in Khanyayo; Section 3 focuses on the materials used in the production of mats and baskets; Section 4 deals with the trade of these products, as well as the dynamics and contribution of this trade to the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people; Section 5 deals with the challenges associated with involvement in craft-related livelihoods; Section 6 covers the lessons for research with regard to craft-

making resources and their trade as a key to the livelihoods of the people of Khanyayo.

#### **4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN MATS AND BASKETS: LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES**

In almost all of Khanyayo's seven sub-villages there are people or households directly and indirectly involved in the manufacture of or trade in plant-based woven products. During fieldwork, the plan was to get equal numbers of people involved in the trade from each sub-village. However, due to the fact that the sub-villages were of varying sizes in terms of population, that was not possible, as the number of people involved in crafting-related livelihood were more or less proportionate to the number of people in a sub-village. In some sub-villages traders who were well known in that particular sub-village and were also targeted to be interviewed by the researcher died before the interviews were conducted. In the end, a total of 52 households' members were interviewed using the questionnaire. Of the 52 respondents interviewed through the questionnaire, 34 were also involved in semi-structured interviews and other forms of qualitative research techniques (e.g. participant observation, focus groups). In all there were five focus group interviews, with numbers ranging between five and ten.

As Table 1 indicates, Sicambeni sub-village had the largest number of respondents (15 or 29%). Kwa-Zitha and Nayintsentse sub-villages both had the second largest number of respondents (9 or 17%), followed by Mgwedlweni (6 respondents or 11%) and Mdumazulu (5 respondents or 10%). Sub-villages with the least number of respondents were Ngwenyeni and Njanda (4 respondents or 8%).



**Table 1: Number of respondents by sub-village**

| <b>Sub- village</b> | <b>Number of villagers</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Mdumazulu           | 5                          | 10                |
| Sicambeni           | 15                         | 29                |
| Nayintsentse        | 9                          | 17                |
| Ngwenyeni           | 4                          | 8                 |
| Mgwedlweni          | 6                          | 11                |
| Kwa-Zitha           | 9                          | 17                |
| Njanda              | 4                          | 8                 |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>52</b>                  | <b>100.0</b>      |

People involved in mats and baskets trading in Khanyayo are sub-divided into two main activities, namely producers and traders. Producers are people who harvest raw materials and weave products primarily for home use or to offer them as gifts. Traders on the other hand are generally people who harvest and weave, aiming to trade with the products. However, some of the producers and traders do not necessarily harvest the raw materials themselves but use other means to get hold of the material, and this will be discussed in the next section. About 65% of the respondents were traders while 35% were producers (See Table 2).

**Table 2: Percentage of respondents by main activity in mats and baskets trade**

| <b>Respondents</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Producers          | 35% (18)          |
| Traders            | 65% (34)          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>100% (52)</b>  |

The respondents were almost exclusively women, with 96 % of them being females, and only 4% being male. In other words, out of the 52 people involved in the weaving business who were interviewed, only two were male. Even the involvement of those two men was surprising, given that weaving has historically been an exclusively female job in Khanyayo (Kepe 2002). Most respondents indicated that this slowly growing involvement of men in weaving is due to increasing unemployment. This was further argued in the group interview session held during the fieldwork (See Box 1). However, there is still a level of shyness and denial among men when it comes to their involvement in this industry (See Box 2). The example provided in Box 2 also serves to show that there may be many men in Khanyayo who are involved in aspects of the trade, but are too shy to admit it to a stranger (the researcher).

**Table 3: Gender of respondents by sub-village**

| Sub-village  | Gender          |               |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|
|              | Female          | Male          |
| Kwa-zitha    | 17% (9)         | 0%            |
| Mdumazulu    | 10% (5)         | 0%            |
| Mgwedlweni   | 11% (6)         | 0%            |
| Nayintsentse | 17% (9)         | 0%            |
| Ngwenyeni    | 8% (4)          | 0%            |
| Njanda       | 8% (5)          | 0%            |
| Sicambeni    | 25% (13)        | 4% (2)        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>96% (50)</b> | <b>4% (2)</b> |

### **Box 1: Group interviews on the role of males in weaving**

From a group interview conducted in Nayintsentse<sup>10</sup>, consisting of five women, it was argued that most men still see the process of making baskets as an activity that is meant to be done by women when they are resting or sitting around the fire towards the end of the day. However, some women in the group argued that they admire husbands or men who help in the process, either by harvesting *Imizi*, weaving or anything they can assist with, as this shows that they care about the well-being of the household members, especially if the household is living in poverty. “We envy households with such male household members”, they said. Another group interview, conducted in Kwa-Zitha<sup>11</sup>, consisted of five women and one man. Women argued that most unemployed men just do not care about the welfare of household members, they do not care if household members go hungry or if children go to school, instead they shift the responsibility to the woman of the household to provide for the household; and as most mothers do not want to see their children going to bed hungry, they do anything as to see that their children eat, including weaving for trade. According to these women, there is a growing number of men who help in any stage of the trading stages and some are reluctant to admit it but these women said they do not see anything wrong with that and they do not make fun of them. In fact they claim that they respect them even more. The man in the group responded by saying that the weaving and trading of mats and baskets are still seen as a woman’s activity, and he does not see himself being involved in such activities. According to him, men are meant and prefer to be involved in activities that require male power, like building houses and some men feel stupid helping the women. He does, however admire those men who have the courage to help the women.

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<sup>10</sup> On 11 May 2004

<sup>11</sup> On 10 May 2004

### **Box 2: Life history of James Kati**

James Kati<sup>12</sup> is a man of 52 years who was born and raised in Khanyayo. His parents died while he was still young and as the first-born from his parents, it was his duty to look after his younger brothers and sisters. When James got married, most of his siblings were already married. After the birth of his first child, he decided to look for a job in Johannesburg and he was fortunate to get one. After several years of work, he was involved in an accident at work, leaving him with one arm, which led to his retirement. His wife tried to look for a job with no success. It was again up to him to see that his family was well taken care of and that they did not go to bed hungry. James knew that there was only so much he could do with one hand but through dedication and perseverance he managed to start cultivating crops and fruits in his fields for consumption and for sale. He uses four fields; three are his own while one is a borrowed field. One of his cousins who work in Durban also loaned him his cattle to look after them. The agreement was that every fifth animal reproduced would be his to own and by the time the interview was conducted, he owned two cattle. Those cattle also helped him with the cultivation of his fields. James is a well-known villager in Khanyayo, not only because of his disability and courage, but also because he is one of the mat weavers. In most sub-villages, when one asks about well-known producers of mats in the village, his name was always on the list. However when he was asked if he could weave, he denied that he could weave; neither did he confess to being involved in the trade. He claimed that his wife was the one who was involved in the trade. There were many possible reasons why he denied his involvement: one might be that because he receives a disability grant every month, he might have thought that the information given to the researcher could jeopardise his grant. It is also possible that he was just shy to admit his involvement in the trade.

The average age of the respondents was  $55.9 \pm 2.1$  years. About 81% of the respondents were over the age of 40 years; only one respondent was older than 80 years, while only 7.3% of respondents were younger than 40 years of age (See Table 4). It can be concluded that middle-aged women and older women dominate the production and trading of mats and baskets in Khanyayo. Most group participants from the group interview conducted in Mgwedlweni<sup>13</sup>, argued that the reason why the production of mats and baskets is dominated by middle and old aged women, is due to the fact that most younger women do not have the time to sit down and weave. One participant argued that they are either too busy taking care of their husbands and children, or themselves in order to look beautiful for their husbands or to flirt with

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<sup>12</sup> Interview conducted on 4 May 2004

other people's husbands<sup>14</sup>. And those who are not yet married are still busily occupied with social activities with their lovers and have no time to weave.

**Table 4: Age range of people involved in the trade by sub-village**

| Sub-Village  | Age Range      |                 |                  |                  |                | Total           |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
|              | 0- 19yrs       | 20-39yrs        | 40-60yrs         | 61-80yrs         | 80yrs+         |                 |
| Mdumazulu    | 0 (0%)         | 3.8% (2)        | 1.9%(1)          | 3.8% (2)         | 0 (0%)         | 9.6% (5)        |
| Sicambeni    | 1.9%(1)        | 1.9%(1)         | 11.5% (6)        | 13.5% (7)        | 0 (0%)         | 28.8%(15)       |
| Nayintsentse | 0 (0%)         | 3.8% (2)        | 7.7% (4)         | 3.8% (2)         | 1.9%(1)        | 9 (17.3%)       |
| Ngwenyeni    | 0 (0%)         | 0 (0%)          | 1.9%(1)          | 5.8% (3)         | 0 (0%)         | 7.7% (4)        |
| Mgwedlweni   | 0 (0%)         | 1.9%(1)         | 5.8% (3)         | 3.8% (2)         | 0 (0%)         | 6 (11.5%)       |
| Kwa-Zitha    | 0 (0%)         | 1.9%(1)         | 9.6% (5)         | 5.8% (3)         | 0 (0%)         | 17.3% (9)       |
| Njanda       | 0 (0%)         | 1.9%(1)         | 1.9%(1)          | 3.8% (2)         | 0 (0%)         | 4 (7.7%)        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1.9%(1)</b> | <b>5.4% (8)</b> | <b>40.4%(21)</b> | <b>40.4%(21)</b> | <b>1.9%(1)</b> | <b>100%(52)</b> |

As shown in Table 5, the majority of the respondents (28 or 54%) were widowed. According to the respondents, this was because their husbands were dying from the unknown deadly diseases (including HIV/AIDS), leaving them to provide for their households. Thus they have to be more enterprising to be able to cover the financial gap left behind by the husbands. A total of 17 (or 33%) of the respondents were married, 4 (or 8%) were never married and 2 (or 4%) were separated.

<sup>13</sup> On 13 May 2004

<sup>14</sup> Those who are either not married or widowed

**Table 5: Marital status of respondents by sub-village**

| Sub-village  | Marital status  |               |              |                 |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|              | Married         | Never married | Separated    | Widowed         | Cohabiting      |
| Kwa-zitha    | 5.8% (3)        | 1.9% (1)      | 0%           | 9.6% (5)        | 0%              |
| Mdumazulu    | 3.8% (2)        | 3.8% (2)      | 0%           | 1.9% (1)        | 0%              |
| Mgwedlweni   | 1.9% (1)        | 0%            | 0%           | 9.6% (5)        | 0%              |
| Nayintsentse | 3.8% (2)        | 0%            | 1.9% (1)     | 9.6% (5)        | 1.9% (1)        |
| Ngwenyeni    | 0%              | 0%            | 0%           | 7.7% (4)        | 0%              |
| Njanda       | 3.8% (2)        | 0%            | 0%           | 3.8% (2)        | 0%              |
| Sicambeni    | 13.5% (7)       | 1.9% (1)      | 1.9% (1)     | 11.5% (6)       |                 |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>33% (17)</b> | <b>8% (4)</b> | <b>4 (2)</b> | <b>54% (28)</b> | <b>1.9% (1)</b> |

Table 6 indicates that most of the respondents never went to school, as 35 (67%) of the respondents had no formal educational qualification. A total of 16 (31%) respondents had primary education and only one respondent (1.9%) had secondary education. The fact that most of the respondents were illiterate was not surprising considering that the average age of respondents was  $55.9 \pm 2.1$  years. Mantsazana Maduna<sup>15</sup>, a woman of 74 years old, laughed when she was asked about her level of education. She said, “You should not even have bothered yourself by asking me such a question, because you can see that I am old. In the olden days girls never went to school, we were supposed to help with the household chores. My dad used to say school makes girls go mad, or think they are cleverer than their parents”.

<sup>15</sup> Interview conducted on 26 April 2004

**Table 6: Level of education of respondents by sub-village**

| Sub-village  | Level of education    |                 |                  |                  |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
|              | Never attended school | Primary school  | Secondary school | Total            |
| Kwa-zitha    | 11.5% (6)             | 5.8% (3)        | 0%               | 17.3% (9)        |
| Mdumazulu    | 5.8% (3)              | 3.8% (2)        | 0%               | 9.6% (5)         |
| Mgwedlweni   | 7.7% (4)              | 3.8% (2)        | 0%               | 11.5% (6)        |
| Nayintsentse | 5.8% (3)              | 9.6% (5)        | 1.9% (1)         | 17.3% (9)        |
| Ngwenyeni    | 7.7% (4)              | 0%              | 0%               | 7.7% (4)         |
| Njanda       | 5.8% (3)              | 1.9% (1)        | 0%               | 7.7% (4)         |
| Sicambeni    | 23.1% (12)            | 5.8% (3)        | 0%               | 28.8% (15)       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>67 (35)</b>        | <b>31% (16)</b> | <b>1.9% (1)</b>  | <b>52 (100%)</b> |

Table 7 shows that the majority of the respondents were household heads (31 or 60%). This was because, as shown in Table 5 above, the majority of respondents were widows who in most cases were the only adults in their households. A total of 10 (19%) of respondents were spouses of the household heads; others were parents, children, grandchildren or relatives of the household head.

**Table 7: Position of respondents in their households**

| Position in the household            | Respondents      |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Household head                       | 60% (31)         |
| Spouse of the household head         | 19% (10)         |
| Child of the household head          | 6% (3)           |
| Grandchild of the household head     | 1.9% (1)         |
| Parent of the household head         | 6% (3)           |
| Other relative of the household head | 8% (4)           |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>100% (52)</b> |

The majority of households (30 or 58%) had more than 6 household members (See Table 8). Of these, 48% were adults and 52% were children. At least 22 (42%) of the households had between one and six household members. Of these, 53% were adults and 47% were children. Overall, the mean household size of the respondent's household was  $8.01 \pm 0.6$  people.

**Table 8: Number of people in a household**

| Household category | Total              | Adults                      | Children                      |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 0-6 People         | 42% (22)           | 24% (53% of 42% are adults) | 21% (47% of 42% are children) |
| More than 6 people | 58% (30)           | 76% (48% of 58% are adults) | 79% (52% of 58% are children) |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>100% (N=52)</b> | <b>100%</b>                 | <b>100%</b>                   |

In terms of employment, the majority of households (54%) had no household member with a formal job compared to 46% of household who had members with jobs. Of the households with members who had formal jobs, 27% had at least one member with a job, 11% had two members with jobs, 6% had three members with jobs and only 2% had four members with a job (See Table 9).

**Table 9: Number of employed household members**

| Number of employed household members | Percentage  |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0                                    | 54%         |
| 1                                    | 27%         |
| 2                                    | 11%         |
| 3                                    | 6%          |
| 4                                    | 2%          |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>100%</b> |



As discussed earlier (Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2.6) government grants such as pensions are important sources of cash income locally. In fact, about 64% of the household respondents considered old-aged pensions as the most important source of household income (See Table 10). As shown in Table 10, in addition to the 10% of the respondents who considered selling crafts as the most important source of income, about 8% of the households considered selling crafts and engaging in other livelihoods activities to boost household income as important. Additionally, there were several households who also qualified for child grants, but did not know about it. Princess' case serves as a good example (See Box 3).

**Table 10: Primary source of income in households**

| Primary source of income in households      | Percentage  |
|---|-------------|
| Old-Age Pensions                            | 64%         |
| Remittances                                 | 2%          |
| Selling crafts                              | 10%         |
| Grants and selling crafts                   | 4%          |
| Sale of natural resources other than crafts | 2%          |
| Sale of crafts and other natural resources  | 2%          |
| Other                                       | 17%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>100%</b> |

**Box 3: Princess Matshazi Ngaliwe**

Matshazi Princess Ngaliwe<sup>16</sup> is a married woman of 46 years old. Her household members include her husband Edeman, her sister-in-law and her four children. They have also informally adopted two other children from other villagers. One is an orphan, while the other one still has one parent (mother) who is not working. Both these children were still under the age of 10 and therefore qualified for government grants. The only grant coming into her household was the old-age pension received by Princess' sister-in-law.

<sup>16</sup> Interview conducted on 28 April 2004

Table 11 shows that the total monthly income of respondent households ranged from R20.00 to R6 740.00 per month, with a mean of R926.90 ± 146.9. A total of 17 (or 33%) of respondents' households had monthly incomes of between R601 and R900. An overwhelming 14 (or 27%) earned less than R300 per month, while only 5 (or 10%) earned R1801 or more. (See Table 11). Almost all respondents (97%) considered their households to be living in poverty. However, using official poverty measures (May, 2001), only 73.0% of households could be thus categorised, as their total household income was less than R1000 per month. The table following that (Table 12) shows the % of total income contribution by mats and baskets trade to the households' monthly income.

**Table 11: Household monthly income**

| Sub-village  | Income Categories |               |                |                 |               |              |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
|              | <300              | 301-600       | 601-900        | 901-1800        | 1801-3000     | >3000        |
| Kwa-zitha    | 9.6%(5)           | 0%            | 5.8% (3)       | 1.9% (1)        | 0%            | 0%           |
| Mdumazulu    | 1.9% (1)          | 3.8%(2)       | 0%             | 3.8%(2)         | 0%            | 0%           |
| Mgwedlweni   | 0%                | 0%            | 7.7%(4)        | 0%              | 3.8%(2)       | 0%           |
| Nayintsentse | 5.8% (3)          | 0%            | 3.8%(2)        | 5.8%(3)         | 0%            | 1.9% (1)     |
| Ngwenyeni    | 3.8%(2)           | 0%            | 3.8%(2)        | 0%              | 0%            | 0%           |
| Njanda       | 3.8%(2)           | 0%            | 1.9% (1)       | 1.9% (1)        | 0%            | 0%           |
| Sicambeni    | 1.9% (1)          | 4(7.7%)       | 9.6% (5)       | 5.8%(3)         | 1.9% (1)      | 1.9% (1)     |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>27% (14)</b>   | <b>12%(6)</b> | <b>33%(17)</b> | <b>19% (10)</b> | <b>6% (3)</b> | <b>4%(2)</b> |

**Table 12: Percentage of monthly income from trading with crafts**

| <b>Household Number</b> | <b>Total Monthly Income</b> | <b>Household income from handicrafts</b> | <b>% of total contributed by mats and baskets trade</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1.                      | R 1 650-00                  | R 100-00                                 | 6.1%  |
| 2.                      | R 360-00                    | R 60-00                                  | 16.7%   |
| 3.                      | R 550-00                    | R 190-00                                 | 34.5%   |
| 4.                      | R 940-00                    | R 100-00                                 | 10.6%   |
| 5.                      | R 380-00                    | R 40-00                                  | 10.5%   |
| 6.                      | R 1 180-00                  | R 300-00                                 | 25.4%   |
| 7.                      | R 1 180-00                  | R 62-00                                  | 5.3%  |
| 8.                      | R 880-00                    | R 180-00                                 | 20.4%   |
| 9.                      | R 100-00                    | R 30-00                                  | 13%   |
| 10.                     | R 80-00                     | R 50-00                                  | 62.5%   |
| 11.                     | R 790-00                    | R 50-00                                  | 6.3%  |
| 12.                     | R 120-00                    | R 38-00                                  | 31.7%   |
| 13.                     | R 280-00                    | R 70-00                                  | 25%   |
| 14.                     | R 180-00                    | R 20-00                                  | 13%   |
| 15.                     | R 370-00                    | R 95-00                                  | 25.6%   |
| 16.                     | R 1 120-00                  | R 80-00                                  | 7.1%  |
| 17.                     | R 840-00                    | R 100-00                                 | 11.9%   |
| 18.                     | R 840-00                    | R 100-00                                 | 11.9%   |
| 19.                     | R 740-00                    | R 15-00                                  | 2%  |
| 20.                     | R 740-00                    | R 15-00                                  | 2%  |
| 21.                     | R 790-00                    | R 50-00                                  | 6%  |
| 22.                     | R 740-00                    | R 70-00                                  | 9%  |
| 23.                     | R 220-00                    | R 50-00                                  | 22.7%   |
| 24.                     | R 270-00                    | R 50-00                                  | 18.5%   |
| 25.                     | R 1 330-00                  | R 225-00                                 | 19%   |
| 26.                     | R 280-00                    | R 200-00                                 | 71%   |
| 27.                     | R 2 270-00                  | R 30-00                                  | 1%  |
| 28.                     | R 820-00                    | R 80-00                                  | 9.1%  |
| 29.                     | R 740-00                    | R 41-00                                  | 5.5%  |
| 30.                     | R 790-00                    | R 50-00                                  | 6%  |
| 31.                     | R 3 480-00                  | R 286-00                                 | 8%  |
| 32.                     | R 20-00                     | R 20-00                                  | 100%  |
| 33.                     | R 200-00                    | R 60-00                                  | 30%   |
| 34.                     | R 1 040-00                  | R 40-00                                  | 3.8%  |

Kepe (2002) noted that in Khanyayo wealth is not only determined by the amount of money one has; livestock owned also determines how wealthy the household is. About 38% (20) of the households owned cattle. The household with the highest number of cattle had 30 and the household with the lowest number of cattle had 2 cattle. Additionally, 17 households (33%) owned pigs, 27% (14), owned goats, while 8% (4) owned sheep. The overwhelming majority of households (47 or 90%) owned chickens. Most respondents argued that owning livestock was advantageous because

livestock could be used for many things, such as payment of debts, festive ceremonies and home consumption (See Table 13).

**Table 13: Livestock ownership by household**

|                             | <b>Cattle</b> | <b>Pigs</b> | <b>Goats</b> | <b>Sheep</b> | <b>Chickens</b> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>Number of households</b> | 20            | 17          | 14           | 4            | 47              |
| <b>Percentage</b>           | 38%           | 33%         | 27%          | 8%           | 90%             |

As already mentioned above, the trading chain in Khanyayo is divided into two main activities, producers and craft traders. The table below serves to indicate and to analyse the differences and similarities between producers and traders (See Table 14). The majority of traders were widowed household heads, which in most cases was one of the reasons<sup>17</sup> for their involvement in the trade. The level of education of traders was high compared to that of producers. One could argue that traders were slightly better educated than producers.




Although in both categories most social actors were household heads, 66% of traders were household heads compared to 50% of producers who had the same position in their households. Again this may serve as an indication that traders were involved in trade as they were mostly household heads and either needed to supplement their household income or used it as their primary source of income. Both categories had a large proportion of households with more than six household members. In both categories, the level of unemployed household members was high. However, producers' households had more household members with jobs as compared to traders' households. That was not surprising because if in a household there was no one who has a job, it is only logical for household members to look for ways of generating income for the household. Old-age pensions were considered the most important source of income in both categories and both had the majority of households falling below the scientific poverty line.

**Table 14: Producers and traders: Household characteristics**

| <b>Variables</b>          |                                  | <b>Producers</b> | <b>Mean ± SE</b> | <b>Traders</b> | <b>Mean ± SE</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Gender                    | Female                           | 88.9%            |                  | 100%           |                  |
|                           | Male                             | 11.1%            |                  | 0%             |                  |
| Age                       | 0-19yrs-                         | 5.6%             | 54.2 ± 4.2       | -              | 56.8 ± 2.4       |
|                           | 20-39yrs-                        | 16.7%            |                  | 14.7%          |                  |
|                           | 40-60yrs-                        | 38.9%            |                  | 41.2%          |                  |
|                           | 61-80yrs-                        | 38.9%            |                  | 41.2%          |                  |
|                           | 80yrs+                           | -                |                  | 2.9%           |                  |
| Marital Status            | Married                          | 55.6%            |                  | 20.6%          |                  |
|                           | Never married                    | 11.1%            |                  | 5.9%           |                  |
|                           | Separated                        | -                |                  | 5.9%           |                  |
|                           | Widowed                          | 33.3%            |                  | 64.7%          |                  |
|                           | Cohabiting                       | -                |                  | 2.9%           |                  |
| Level of Education        | Never attended school            | 72.2 %           |                  | 64.7%          |                  |
|                           | Primary school                   | 27.8%            |                  | 32.4%          |                  |
|                           | Secondary school                 | -                |                  | 2.9%           |                  |
| Position in the household | Household head                   | 50.0 %           |                  | 64.7%          |                  |
|                           | Spouse of household head         | 27.8%            |                  | 14.7%          |                  |
|                           | Child of household head          |                  |                  |                |                  |
|                           | Grandchild of household head     | 5.6%             |                  | 5.9%           |                  |
|                           | Parent of household head         | 5.6%             |                  | 0%             |                  |
|                           | Other relative of household head | 5.6%             |                  | 5.9%           |                  |
|                           |                                  | 5.6%             |                  | 8.8%           |                  |

<sup>17</sup> When their husbands pass away, most of them become the sole providers of the household

|  |  |       |  |        |               |
|--|--|-------|--|--------|---------------|
| Total household size                                 | 0-6 People                               | 33.3% | 9.0 ± 1.19   | 47.1 % | 7.4 ± 0.6     |
|  | More than 6 people                       | 66.7% |  | 52.9 % |               |
| Occupation of household head                         | Unemployed                               | 38.9% |  | 32.4%  |               |
|  | Employed                                 | 5.6%  |  | 5.9%   |               |
|  | Pensioner                                | 38.9% |  | 52.9%  |               |
|  | Self employed                            | 0%    |  | 5.9%   |               |
|  | Other                                    | 16.7% |  | 2.9%   |               |
| Number of employed household members                 | No one                                   | 38.9% | 1.17 ± 0.28  | 61.8%  | 0.5 ± 0.1     |
|  | 1 member                                 | 22.2% |  | 29.4%  |               |
|  | 2 members                                | 27.8% |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | 3 members                                | 5.6%  |  | 5.9%   |               |
|  | 4 members                                | 5.6%  |  | 0%     |               |
| Number of pensions/ grants coming into the household | 0  | 27.8% | 1.2 ± 0.26   | 32.4%  | 0.9 ± 0.15    |
|  | 1  | 38.9% |  | 52.9%  |               |
|  | 2  | 22.2% |  | 8.8%   |               |
|  | 3  | 5.6%  |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | 4  | 5.6%  |  | 2.9%   |               |
| Primary source of household income                   | Pension/Grant                            | 61.1% |  | 64.7%  |               |
|  | -Remittances                             |       |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | -Selling crafts                          |       |  | 14.7%  |               |
|  | -Grants and Selling crafts               | 5.6%  |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | -Other                                   | 33.3% |  | 8.8%   |               |
|  | -Sell other natural resources            |       |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | -Sell crafts and other natural resources |       |  | 2.9%   |               |
| Total household income                               | <300                                     | 22.2% | 1217.7 ± 359.2   | 29.4%  | 772.9 ± 117.3 |
|  | 301- 600                                 | 11.1% |  | 11.8%  |               |
|  | 601 -900                                 | 27.8% |  | 35.3%  |               |
|  | 901 - 1800                               | 22.2% |  | 17.6%  |               |
|  | 1801 - 3000                              | 11.1% |  | 2.9%   |               |
|  | >3000                                    | 5.6%  |  | 2.9%   |               |

### **4.3 THE MAKING OF MATS AND BASKETS: RESOURCES AND THE PROCESS**

A completed mat or basket involves several resources and processes. Hence this section's focuses on the dynamics of access to and control over some of the materials used, as well as the crafting processes involved. Both plant-based and synthetic resources are crucial, but the plant material used in making mats and baskets was regarded as being more important for purposes of this study. In Khanyayo the raw material that is widely and popularly used in local craftwork is *Cyperus textilis*, locally known as *imizi* (*imizi*-plural and singular- *uluzi*).

#### **4.3.1 Characteristics, location and ownership of imizi**

Kepe (2002) observes that *imizi* need a lot of water to survive. For this reason, they thrive in areas that are always moist, and these include streams and gardens that are watered on a regular basis. Their length, which can range from one to two metres, often determines what each harvested batch is used for. For example, *imizi* for making sleeping and sitting mats have to be quite long, whereas shorter lengths are adequate for making food baskets and sitting mats. There are several streams from which *imizi* are harvested. The most popular streams, in order of popularity, are Malola, Mtentu, Mbandani, Dlamula, Ludaleni, Mpisini, Mangciza, Nciba, Isizweni, Makhulu, Mngoncweni and Mzimkhulu. About 75% of respondents harvested from Malola and Mtentu.

The majority of respondents (27 or 55%) owned their own *imizi* gardens. Almost all of them own one garden (25 or 93%) and only 2 respondents owned two gardens (7%). Most of the gardens owned by these respondents were located along the streams (common lands) (25 or 93%). This was followed by those that were located at home (14 or 52%). However, some respondents owned gardens both at home and along the streams (3 or 11%). Most of the *imizi* gardens that were found along the

streams had clear boundaries. The size of the gardens ranged from about 10 to 65 square metres. Most of the gardens found along the streams (common lands) tended to be of equal size and with neat divisions. This may be a result of gardens in the commons being divided equally among the owners.

About 76% (37) of respondents who harvest, said they harvest *imizi* from the gardens that are located along the streams. That was followed by 14% (7) of respondents who harvest *imizi* from their home gardens and 10% (5) harvest *imizi* both at home and along the streams. (See Table 15).

**Table 15: Harvesting sites by numbers of respondents**

| Location                   | Property regime      | Number of respondents collecting <i>imizi</i> (N=49) |
|----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Along the steams           | Communal             | 76% (37)   |
| Home                       | Private              | 14% (7)  |
| Along the streams and home | Communal and Private | 10% (5)  |

As indicated earlier, there were also those who did not own *imizi* gardens (22 or 45% of respondents). Those people would get hold of *imizi*, either through asking, on a sharing basis, by stealing or harvesting from the few gardens found along the streams that were not owned by anyone. At least 34 (71%) of the respondents knew of *imizi* gardens that were not privately owned, and could be accessed by anyone. These were generally located in or near the Mtentu River. One reason given by respondents for the existence of these gardens without owners is that there were suspected ghosts in the Mtentu area, making it unattractive to many would-be owners. The other category of gardens that is not owned is that of abandoned gardens. When a garden has not been claimed for a number of years, any person who takes care of it could legitimately claim it as theirs. However, as Kepe (2003b) points out, this often



results in numerous conflicts when the original owner or their kin reappear to re-claim the garden.

In cases where producers have gardens both at home and on common land along the streams and rivers, the garden located at home tends to get preference. By the same token, the one located on common land, further away from the homestead, tends to be comparatively neglected. Princess is an example of a producer who has gardens both at home and on common land (Malola). She planted her home garden in September 1998 and by April 2000 the garden was a success. To achieve this success she invested in the garden through careful weeding and regular watering. However, ever since she started harvesting *imizi* from her home garden in 2000, she has gone to her Malola garden only once, which was in 2002. She claims that besides the distance to the Malola garden, theft by other villagers was another discouraging factor.

However, the interviews also revealed that while there were several reasons why it was advantageous to have a home garden, such as being closer to the owner, easy to protect from animals and theft by other villagers, there are also disadvantages associated with home gardens. The two prominent disadvantages are that an *imizi* garden tends to attract snakes, and that regular watering is needed compared to the gardens near streams.

Irrespective of the location of the *imizi* garden, there are several other challenges associated with collecting *imizi*. Firstly, the *imizi* tend to have sharp edges that could result in painful cuts on both legs and hands during harvest. Almost all the respondents (98%) wore 'construction or gum boots' to protect their feet, but only a few (2%) wore hand gloves for protecting their hands. Secondly, most of the respondents (21 or 42%) said they often suffered back problems from bending during harvesting. Thirdly, 65% (32) of the respondents claim to have encountered snakes during harvesting. As mentioned earlier, some people also mentioned being scared of ghosts when they harvest in gardens located far from their homesteads.

At least 21 (43%) of the respondents harvest alone, while the rest get assistance. Of those who are assisted, the majority gets assistance from family members (22 or 45%) followed by those who are assisted by a group of friends or work-parties (2 or 4%).

The majority of the harvesters (35 or 71%), harvested *imizi* for the purpose of making woven products, while some harvest *imizi* both for craft making and for sale (*imizi*) (7 or 14%). Those who harvest for sale said they only sell when someone approaches them to buy, which does not happen often. Only one respondent – Marhadebe Ncibi – sold *imizi* at the “pension market” and said that she did not take *imizi* to market every month. Marhadebe<sup>18</sup> goes to the local “pension market” every month to sell mats and sometimes she takes *imizi* along, to sell. However, she sells *imizi* mainly through a pre-order system. She said that previously she used to just carry *imizi* to the “pension market” every month and most of the time no one would buy. That was one of the reasons why she then adopted the system of pre-ordering, where one would order and get the goods on the next pension date. Some customers are willing to collect the material from her house. Almost all the customers who buy *imizi* are local villagers.

#### **4.3.2 Access to raw material used**

There are several ways in which households or weavers gain access to *imizi* in Khanyayo. About 27 respondents (55%) own their own *imizi* gardens and 92% (23) of garden owners own at least one *imizi* garden, with 8% (2) owning two gardens. The majority of garden owners inherited them. Those who own their *imizi* gardens<sup>19</sup>, have access to their *imizi* whenever they need them. However, several respondents

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<sup>18</sup> Interview took place on 29 April 2004

<sup>19</sup> Be it at home or along the local streams

(12 or 23%) claimed that it is not unusual to find *imizi* being stolen<sup>20</sup> from their gardens. Such incidents occur mostly in gardens located along the streams.

The 22 (45%) of respondents who did not own their own gardens accessed them by buying, exchanging their labour by harvesting for the garden owner and themselves, simply asking for charity and harvesting from gardens that do not have owners. A bunch of *imizi* that is enough for making a sitting or sleeping mat costs between R20 and R30. Some weavers gain access to *imizi* by agreeing to weave in exchange for the agreed amount of *imizi* between them and the owner. This agreement is mostly entered into by garden owners who cannot weave or who are too lazy or too old to weave.

Another arrangement for accessing *imizi* is by mutual aid, involving people with homesteads located closer to streams being asked to look after the *imizi* gardens by owners who live further away. In return, those who look after the *imizi* are allowed to harvest as much as they can, but need to first consult the owner, or they get a 50:50 share after harvest. Majali's case serves to illustrate this point. Majali<sup>21</sup> weaves baskets and mats but does not own her own garden. Because her household is situated  $\pm$  50 meters from Malola, garden owners often ask her to look after their gardens. She often asks those owners to harvest whenever she is in need of *imizi*. They often allow her to harvest and keep everything to herself but sometimes she shares with the garden owners. While this arrangement often goes smoothly, these custodians are at times accused of harvesting without permission.

#### **4.3.3 The process of weaving**

The making of mats and baskets from *imizi* requires intricate skills. The majority of weavers (31% or 16 respondents) had acquired weaving skills from their mothers

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<sup>20</sup> Harvested without the owner's consent

<sup>21</sup> She was interviewed on 30 April 2004

followed by those who were taught by other relatives (13 or 25% of respondents), see Table 16. Before weaving, the weaver would take *imizi* and either wraps them in moist material<sup>22</sup> or carefully spreads them outside if it is raining. This is done to moisturise them, making it possible to pull the twine without breaking. *Imizi* are, however, not used alone when weaving. There are other materials used, such as twine for holding the mat and basket together and for decoration. Examples of such materials are thin ropes, cords from cabbage or orange bags, plastic shopping bags and wool. A bundle of such twine that is needed for weaving about 20 mats costs about R30. Villagers argue that in the past they used twine made from tree bark or branches (*iminxeba*). It takes anything between 1-5 days to finish a basket, depending on how fast the weaver works and also taking into account other household chores that need to be done by the weaver. A total of 21 (48%) respondents wove baskets, which are reputedly difficult to make. Food mats also take anything from 1-5 days to make depending on the time spent per day on weaving. Sitting and sleeping mats take between five and fifteen days. For all the products, the intricacy of the decoration applied makes a difference in the time taken to complete the product. Therefore, for many mats and baskets that are intended for home use, there are often minimal decorations applied.

Sitting mats and sleeping mats are woven differently from food mats and baskets. When weaving these mats, a large quantity of *imizi* is needed as compared to the previous two items. A weaving frame is often used. The frames are normally designed to be heavy enough to carry the weight of both sitting and sleeping mats with height varying from 0.7-1.2m and 1.5-2.5m width. These stands have specially-designed legs that are strong enough to hold it down and to sustain it. The frame has cuts on top that are used in the weaving process. Torch batteries or stones are used to wrap the twine or string around and then it gets thrown back and forth for weaving a particular pattern. The respondents argue that the weaving stand has made the process much easier than in the past.

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<sup>22</sup> Maize meal bags are widely used

**Table 16: Source of weaving skills acquired**

| Source of skills          | N=43     |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Taught by mother          | 37% (16) |
| Taught by other relatives | 30% (13) |
| Taught by grandmother     | 12% (5)  |
| Taught by friend          | 9% (4)   |
| Taught by neighbour       | 5% (2)   |
| Taught by spouse          | 2% (1)   |
| Learning by observation   | 5% (2)   |

#### **4.4 TRADING OF MATS AND BASKETS**

Many of the producers had been weaving the products for most of their lives, but not for purposes of trading. As one producer, Mamboniswa<sup>23</sup> Phahlani, put it, “When my grandmother taught me how to weave mats and baskets, I used to weave for home use and to give as gifts during traditional ceremonies. I have been weaving since my teen years and that is a long time, since I am in my 60s, but I only started selling three years ago.”

Among those who said they did not trade are other producers who use some of their products as a token of appreciation or apology to others. For example, when Mamphindelwa’s<sup>24</sup> son was sick, her neighbour’s daughter Nophindile used to come and help her with household chores, as she spent most of her day taking care of her son who could not do anything for himself. Nophindile was not getting paid nor was she expecting anything from Mamphindelwa for helping her. She was doing so out of the goodness of her heart. After the death of her son Mamphindelwa wove mats

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<sup>23</sup> On 27 April 2004

<sup>24</sup> She was interviewed on 4 May 2004

and gave them to Nophindile to show her how much she appreciated what she had done for her.

Another example is that of Mamlalisweni<sup>25</sup> who owns a lot of livestock and only weaves for home use and to give as gifts. However, on one occasion she found herself weaving for a different purpose. One day her cows ate another villager's crops, but the owner of the crops did not report the matter to the chief as he had a close relationship with Mamlalisweni. This gesture made Mamlalisweni feel indebted to him. She then decided to weave baskets and offered them to him as a peace gesture, apologising and also appreciating that he did not report the matter to the chief.

Even though the above examples serve to show that not all producers in Khanyayo produce to sell, it does not detract from the fact that there are many others who produce for sale. The majority of the respondents (30 or 70%) produced for sale (See Table 17). Of these, 6 (or 17%) have been in the business selling mats and baskets for 20 years or more. Some had been selling for at least 10 years (4 or 10%) while at least nine respondents (or 26%) had been in the business for about five years (See Table 18). However, the majority of respondents had been in business for less than 5 years (16 or 46%). All the respondents made the products they sold themselves.

**Table 17: Purpose of weaving handicrafts**

| <b>Purpose of weaving</b>                         | <b>N=43</b>      |
|---|------------------|
| Give them as gifts, use at home and sell for cash | 70% (30)         |
| Give them as gifts and for home use               | 23% (10)         |
| Sell them and give as gifts                       | 7% (2)           |
| <b>Total</b>                                      | <b>100% (35)</b> |

<sup>25</sup> She was interviewed on 3 May 2003

**Table 18: Period of involvement in the crafting trade**

| <b>Period of involvement</b> | <b>N=35</b>      |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Less than 5 years            | 46% (16)         |
| More than 5 years            | 26% (9)          |
| More than 10 years           | 11% (4)          |
| More than 20 years           | 17% (6)          |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>100% (35)</b> |

Producers had different reasons for entering the industry. The majority of respondents (17 or 48%) needed to supplement other household income already in existence, while some simply needed something to depend on for income (9 or 26%); another 26% argued that they were driven by poverty (See Table 19). From those who entered the industry for the purpose of supplementing their household income, most of them were women who lost their husbands and were involved in other livelihood activities. Box 4 serves to illustrate this scenario. Before entering the trade, the majority of respondents (14 or 40%) were unemployed, followed by those who were selling other products, while others (13 or 37%) were trading with other products for cash (See Table 20).

**Table 19: Reasons for entering the trade**

| <b>Reason</b>                                | <b>N=35</b>      |
|--|------------------|
| To supplement other household income         | 48% (17)         |
| Needed another source of income to depend on | 26% (9),         |
| Poverty                                      | 26% (9),         |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>100% (35)</b> |

**Table 20: Previous occupation of traders**

| <b>Occupation</b>   | <b>N=35</b>      |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Unemployed          | 40% (14)         |
| Trading other items | 37% (13)         |
| Employed            | 6% (2)           |
| Attending school    | 3% (1)           |
| Other               | 14% (5)          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>100% (35)</b> |

**Box 4. Magwilika Zimba’s life history**

Magwilika<sup>26</sup> was born in the Mgwedlweni sub-village in Khanyayo, 73 years ago. She was from a well-off family even though she never attended school. Her father worked in Durban and her mother was a housewife. They had cows, goats, horses, pigs, chickens and three fields that they cultivated every single year for home consumption. She met and fell in love with Masdioni Zimba in Khanyayo. After getting married, they moved to Sicambeni village, her husband’s birth sub-village. Her husband worked in Johannesburg and they had one daughter. They never owned livestock and depended on remittances from her husband and the crops she cultivated each year. After the death of her husband<sup>27</sup>, she had to find other means to earning a living. She then decided to ask her neighbours to loan her their livestock; which they did, and she ended up with loaned goats and a cow. The agreement was that when they reproduce; she will have her own share<sup>28</sup>. However that was not enough to keep her household running. She then started cultivating crops for sale and that’s when she found herself planting *imizi* and weaving for sale.

The majority of traders mainly sell their products from home (74% or 26). The system they use is to weave and to store the goods for customers to come and buy. Other customers place orders and state the date of collection. There are two pension stations in Khanyayo, and other traders go to the ‘‘pension market’s’ to sell (8 or 23%

<sup>26</sup>Interview took place on 27 April 2004

<sup>27</sup> Her husband died when she was still in her 30s.



of respondents, See Table 21). All those who sell from the “pension market” also sell from home. There was only one respondent – Majali – who sells from home, at the “pension market” and at the town market in Flagstaff. Majali was born in Flagstaff and she said she was used to the way of life in town. The rest of the respondents expressed a fear of going to town, arguing that life in town is too fast and it was expensive for them to travel to and from town. They therefore preferred selling from home and did not wish or dream to sell in town ever in their lives.

**Table 21: Marketing bases**

| <b>Marketing base</b>                  | <b>N=35</b>      |
|--|------------------|
| Home                                   | 74% (26).        |
| Home and “pension market”              | 23% (8).         |
| Home, “pension market” and town market | 3% (1)           |
| <b>Total</b>                           | <b>100% (35)</b> |

When respondents who sell from home and “pension market’s” were asked if they would consider expanding their businesses and go and sell in town or at “pension market’s”, the majority of respondents (25 or 74%) said they would not, while the minority (9 or 27%) said they would consider it if time and money would allow them. Most of those who said they would consider expanding their trade stated their reason for not going to the “pension market” in the future, stated that currently they did not have enough time for going to sell in the markets and still manage to complete other household chores; some said that they were too old. Others felt that it was not easy to carry the products to and from the market and that there were not enough customers in the market for the number of traders who go there, so why should they bother by adding to the number of traders going to “pension market’s”? (See Table 22).

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<sup>28</sup> Every fifth produce from one goat is hers.

**Table 22: Expansion of trading activities**

| <b>Would you consider expanding the business?</b> | <b>N=34</b> |
|---|-------------|
| Yes   | 27% (9)     |
| No  | 74% (25)    |

Of those who go to the ‘pension market’, only two respondents went once every month; two went every second month, followed by one who went every third month and the rest (3) only went when they had woven enough products, which could be after two or six months. Customers who buy from the ‘pension market’ were mostly local villagers and other villagers from neighbouring villages like Mkamela, who receive their grants from the Khanyayo ‘pension markets’. It is only on certain occasions that visitors from other parts of the country, who came to visit their relatives in Khanyayo, would also go to ‘pension markets’ and sometimes end-up buying mats. Producers argue that most visitors buy in bulk and they are more interested in buying mats than baskets.

In most cases there were no transport costs for those who sell from ‘pension markets’ as they either walk to the station or arrange for a lift. However, most respondents argued that ‘hitch-hiking’ a lift from the owners of cars would cost them the equivalent of a bus fare. Majali who also goes to the town market sheds some light on the trading costs involved.

### **Box 5: Majali**

Majali<sup>29</sup> was born in Flagstaff- Gabajana village, 55 years ago. She became involved in this industry after her husband passed away. She sells mats and baskets from home, 'pension market' and in Flagstaff. She sometimes takes her products along when she goes to Durban to sell medicinal plants. When she is in town she stays with her relatives to reduce her costs. When she cannot sell all her products in four to five days, she leaves them with a friend who sells vegetables in town, to continue selling for her. When everything has been sold, she normally shares her profit with her friend. She argues that transport costs are not that much as she goes to town once or twice a month. When she goes to town, she always makes sure that she does everything she needs to do while there, such as visiting relatives, collecting money from those who owe her, buying groceries and so forth.

The trading of mats and baskets takes place throughout the year, and according to respondents, business runs smoothly when there are traditional ceremonies such as the girls' initiation ceremony, known locally as "*Umgubho*" or women being taken out of widowhood. These ceremonies usually take place in June and December as most of the household members who work away from home come back during those periods. However, nowadays with the increase in the mortality rate in the village, villagers are forced to have those functions throughout the year, which means more business throughout the year.

#### **4.4.1 Prices of mats and baskets**

All the prices of the products depend on the size of the products and where the product is sold. In 2004 the prices of baskets varied from R5-R25 when they were sold at home, and R10-R30 when sold from the 'pension market'. Food mats were priced from R5-R30 at home and R5-R35 from the 'pension market'. Prices of sitting and sleeping mats were relatively higher than those of baskets and food mats. Sitting mats were R8-R40 when sold at home and R20-R70 from the market. Sleeping mats were priced from R35-R75 when sold at home and R35-R70 from the market. The higher prices for products sold at the market included transport costs.

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<sup>29</sup> Majali was interviewed on 30 April 2004

However respondents who went to sell in ‘pension markets’ pointed out that some customers would negotiate on the prices up to a point where they would be the same or lower than the ones used when selling from home. The consumers of the products were relatively satisfied with the products.

#### **4.4.2 Income received from the trade in mats and baskets**

The estimation of mats and baskets sold monthly, as well as income received by producers from mats was tricky. This was because the number of mats made per month was not regular for all traders each month. The number of mats and baskets made per month was entirely dependent on the amount of time the producer was able to put into the process of weaving. The majority of producers were women who had other household chores to perform and most of them only managed to sit down and weave after they had completed other chores, or during the night. One respondent pointed out that it was not a good idea to weave during the night as the lighting was inadequate, especially given that the majority of them use either paraffin lamps, candles or fire for light. On the other hand, the number of products sold was also dependent on the amount of money the customer was willing to pay, the effort that went into marketing the products and the quality of the products.

The amount of money made per month by mats and baskets traders ranged from R30-R360, with the mean monthly income being  $57.5 \pm 14.28$ . The income earned from mats and basket sales was not much as compared to other sources of household incomes and not a lot of respondents considered it the most important source of income as it was pointed out earlier (See Table 10). The income earned by producers varied according to the level of their involvement in the trade. Traders who traded at home and at the ‘pension market’ mostly earned more income than those who only traded from home. The average income earned by traders who go to the ‘pension market’ was relatively higher than those who only sell from home. Most traders who

sell from home and the ‘pension market’ received the income that falls under the R251-R300 income class per month (See Table 23).

**Table 23: Household income from handicrafts per month**

| <b>Household income from handicrafts</b> | <b>Percentage</b> | <b>Mean 57.5 ±14.28</b> |
|--|-------------------|-------------------------|
| R0-R50                                   | 47% (n=16)        |                         |
| R51-R100                                 | 35 (n=12)         |                         |
| R151-R200                                | 10% (n=3)         |                         |
| R251-R300                                | 9% (n=3)          |                         |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>100%</b>       |                         |

#### 4.4.3 The contribution of the trade to household livelihoods

The contribution of this trade depends on how many products are sold and for how long the products last before the customers need to buy again. The majority of producers use the money they earn from selling mats and baskets to buy mainly food (16 or 43% of respondents). The next category of respondents (15 or 41%) use the money to buy mainly food, clothes and to pay school fees. There were also a few respondents (5 or 14%) who used some of the money to buy other goods for sale. These were respondents who either had a tuck-shop at home or who go to Durban markets now and again to sell medicinal plants (See Table 24).

**Table 24: Use of money from handicrafts**

| <b>Use of cash</b>                    | <b>N= 36</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Buy food                              | 43% (16)     |
| Buy food, clothes and pay school fees | 41% (15)     |
| Buy food and other goods for sale     | 14% (5)      |

There was one respondent who said that part of the money she gets from selling the mats and baskets contributes to transport or accommodation costs when she goes to and from Durban markets to sell medicinal plants. Another respondent revealed that she always saved some of the money she received because her son was looking for a job and sometimes his documents had to be taken to the chief for a stamp, and it cost R5 for one document to be stamped.

Even though the importance of this income was emphasized, it was however, argued by both questionnaire respondents and all group discussion participants that, this income mostly serves as supplementary income in most of the households. This is not to say that there were no households who claimed that it was their main source of income. The most interesting or contradictory issue was that those few households had other income sources that brought in more monthly cash than from the sale of mats and baskets. The sources included mainly government grants, the sale of firewood, cultivated crops, vegetables and seasonal fruits. The contribution of the income from these craft-related earnings was significant to the livelihoods of the households and it was significantly visible.

#### **4.5 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE INVOLVEMENT IN CRAFTING-RELATED LIVELIHOODS**

Almost all producers said there are several constraints in the trading of mats and baskets. The first complaint was that there are few customers and that it usually takes them a long time before a customer comes to buy again. Secondly, it is now popular for customers to buy on credit and most of them take too long to pay. According to Marhadebe, “Customers who buy on credit are a problem, some take too long to pay, while others pay in instalments.” The instalment-basis can be a problem as other customers may even pay R30 in six instalments, leading to the trader not using the money as planned as it would come in small amounts. One trader observed, “As a trader I have a lot of enemies because when I go to collect the money at the end of the month (especially with pension receivers), some customers say I am inconsiderate

because I can see that they are living in poverty. We end up fighting as I would also tell them that I need money as I am also poor.” Other common problems that were mentioned, include: (i) low prices, (ii) competition from other traders, (iii) labour problems (iv) access to raw materials, and (v) costs of raw materials.

Another problem among traders was that of traders badmouthing each other. There was a common practice among traders of criticising and telling lies about other traders’ products. Mastokisini<sup>30</sup> expressed such a problem: “Most of traders in the village are jealous of my products because they are beautiful and I am one of the well-known traders in the village. Because of this, some traders spread rumours in the village saying that my products do not last long and they are too expensive. However I still have loyal customers who know that my products are reliable, even though I only sell on a cash basis.” Even though there are other livelihood strategies available to rural livelihoods of Khanyayo, they are not enough and most of them do not generate enough income to be reliable. That may lead to villagers diversifying and putting more pressure on one livelihood strategy.

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter showed that among other livelihood strategies available to Khanyayo villagers, local-level trading of mats and baskets also features strongly as an important component. It explored the dynamics of local-level trade in mats and baskets in Khanyayo village. That was done by assessing the different routes, pathways and processes of this local-level commercialisation and its contribution to the livelihoods of the people who are directly and indirectly involved in the processes. Finally, different challenges and opportunities arising from the trade were explored.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this thesis was to explore the dynamics of local-level trade in plant-based mats and baskets in Khanyayo village, Eastern Cape. These dynamics included social aspects of harvesting, resource tenure and trade. Additionally, and perhaps of major importance, the study attempted to explore the contribution of the trading in mats and baskets, to the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people. To achieve these objectives, a strategy comprising two elements was used. Firstly, a review of the literature was done, to discuss both the challenge faced by post-apartheid South Africa with regard to poverty and different strategies of dealing with it. The literature review covered the importance of natural resources to rural livelihoods (See Chapter Two). Empirical research in the form of a case study of the crafting of and local-level trade in mats and baskets was undertaken in Khanyayo village (See Chapters Three and Four).

This concluding chapter seeks to summarise the major findings that have emerged from the literature review, and from the analysis of the case study. The second section presents several issues that have emerged as crucial components of this study. These are discussed in several sub-sections and include further exploration of the poverty debate, the dynamics and contribution of local-level trade of plant-based mats and baskets to rural livelihoods, as well as government's response to challenges faced by crafters.

### **5.2 POVERTY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

#### **5.2.1 Dealing with poverty**

This study confirms findings by other researchers showing that poverty is one of the key challenges that face post-apartheid South Africa today. In South Africa the majority of the poor are Africans who live under conditions of extreme hardship and

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<sup>30</sup> She was interviewed on 6 May 2004



livelihood insecurity (NFAP, 1997). The main contribution to this gloomy picture has been noted to be apartheid practices, which ensured that the wealth of the country remained in the hands of the minority whites (Shepherd, 2000). Given that this study is primarily concerned with rural livelihoods, the living conditions and poverty status of rural people are of importance. It is therefore important to emphasize here that the majority of the country's poorest people reside in rural areas, and that the majority of all rural people are poor (May and Roberts, 2000, cited in Kepe and Cousins, 2002). Furthermore, those most vulnerable to poverty are households headed by women, the elderly and people affected by HIV/ Aids (Kepe and Cousins 2002). This study concentrated on some of these most vulnerable groups, particularly women.

The study has acknowledged government's concern with and attempt to alleviate poverty, particularly in rural areas. These are clearly laid out in Section 2.2 (Chapter Two). But, as it was also noted in that section, not all government attempts and strategies are successful or utilised properly. Examples of these are: (i) Pension funds that are open to irregularities; such as in cases where people who do not qualify for a grant receive it through fraudulent means or where people who legitimately qualify do not get it through not being aware of it or are not having proper documents. Such situations exist in Khanyayo. (ii) Similarly, the food parcels being distributed by the government, through the Department of Social Development are not managed properly. In most areas and cases, such as in Khanyayo, these food parcels are not received by the poor, but by the elites in those areas. (iii) As pointed out by Kepe (2001), the Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs) are also one of the government programmes that are not meeting its objectives due to, among other things, being inconsiderate of the real needs of rural people. (iv) There is also a common practice of abuse of power in the name of alleviating rural poverty by local politicians. As hinted by Kepe (2001), politics have clearly played a role in the attempts to develop Khanyayo and the surrounding areas.

### 5.2.2 Poverty and NTFPs

As this study noted, and as discussed in section 5.2.1 above, not all government-initiated poverty alleviation strategies reach those in need, but rural people continue to survive despite poverty. The thesis has argued that this is because rural people have multiple livelihood strategies in place, that complement and supplement those initiated and promoted by government. In rural areas, livelihood diversification is an important element of survival strategies. Research has also acknowledged that the livelihood base of rural households in many African households is multiple and diverse (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Shackleton et al, 2001; Kepe, 2002); and this diversity includes the land-based strategies of arable farming, livestock husbandry (See Section 2.3 Chapter Two), the consumption and trade of natural resources (See Section 2.3 and 2.3.1 Chapter Two) and off-farm sources of income such as migrancy, government grants and employment. Furthermore, the contribution of plant-based rural crafting and its importance to rural livelihoods globally and in South African was highlighted (See Section 2.3 and 2.4, Chapter Two).

The importance of NTFPs to rural livelihoods has been highlighted and observed throughout the discussion of the Khanyayo case study. Villagers in this rural area make use of a variety of these products ranging from firewood, medicinal plants, wild fruits to wild edible leave, as Kepe (2002) also pointed out. This importance was observed and emphasized by conducting a study on the commercialisation of mats and baskets made from NTFPs- *imizi*- in this village. This study showed that in Khanyayo village, craftwork from grass and sedge, particularly from *imizi*, is a significant component of the people's livelihoods be it for home use or commercialisation (trade) or for the maintenance of the Mpondo way of life.

This trade is dominated by middle-aged and old-aged poor women (See Section 4.2 Chapter Four) and most of these women are widowed household heads who have no formal jobs and no formal educational qualification. It was clear throughout the course of research that people who are involved in this sector are poor. For this trade

to benefit the livelihoods of the poor Khanyayo villagers, access to *imizi* is crucial. *Imizi* is mostly obtained in common lands, along the streams, with other producers having planted it at home. *Imizi* gardens found in common lands in most cases have owners and the gardens have clearly marked boundaries (See section 4.2 Chapter Four). However it was found that tenure conflicts arise around this material. Even though most weavers have access to *imizi*, many do not have secure tenure rights to protect them by virtue of not having secure land tenure rights. Having said that, it is important to point out that these traders need secure tenure rights that are recognisable to the government for the contribution to be long-term. The new tenure law, Land Rights Act 11 of 2004, is supposed to resolve such problems (See Section 2.5.1, Chapter Two), but it is too early to tell whether this will be the case.

The extent of the contribution of crafting to rural livelihoods is dependent on the extent to which the trader is involved in this industry. This study has shown that many of the households involved in crafting do not feel their investment in this activity can cover their livelihood requirements completely (See Section 4.4.3, Chapter Four). It is therefore important to mention that even though the use and commercialisation of these baskets and mats are important in local livelihoods, they do not replace other sources of income or rural livelihoods strategies. This is something that should be acknowledged by policy makers, practitioners and researchers concerned with rural livelihoods in South Africa. Additionally, traders involved in mats and basket trade face numerous challenges, which include local people taking products on credit, oversupply of the products at the market and poor access to the markets where business might be better. While these are challenges, they also present opportunities for the state and other agencies to make a positive intervention for the good of the rural poor.

### **5.2.3 Government's strategies to assist with the challenges faced by crafters**

As already mentioned above, research is playing its role in showing that non-timber plant-based rural handcrafting is increasing significantly in South Africa and is widely recognised as an important element of addressing poverty. In most parts of rural South Africa, there is little doubt that these products play a significant and often critical role in providing subsistence and cash income for rural people (Heinsohn and Cunningham, 1991; Cunningham, 1997; Cawe, 1999; Kepe, 2002; Cocks and Dold, 2002; Kepe, 2003b; Cocks and Wiersum, 2003). This role is important as it creates awareness of such issues to the world of research, government and the public as a whole.

As an example of the increasing acknowledgement of crafting as a key livelihood source, the Eastern Cape Government is planning to provide artisans and craft makers in the province with a structured network, but this plan is also looking to take off on a national level (Daily Dispatch, 2004). The government plans to reopen defunct factories in the province as creative hubs, as a build-up to their being incorporated in a Cultural Industries Development Agency that is to be established on a national level. The business plan for the initiative has not yet been finalised, as discussions on the costs of renovating the factories, most of which were badly vandalised, are still underway. However, the department is currently working on the plans regarding market branding, setting up of export standards and identifying and registering of quality standards. The success of this initiative is, however, still to be seen, particularly whether it will contribute to the livelihoods of crafters.

Closer to home, the government has started taking action in the form of the formation of craft markets in some localities. One of those crafts markets is the O. R. Tambo craft market located in Port St Johns<sup>31</sup>. It was formed as a municipal initiative to improve the livelihoods of crafters who fall under the O.R.Tambo District

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<sup>31</sup> This information is from fieldnotes from Port St Johns – October, 2003.

Municipality. Crafters are selected from the municipal area, given skills and management training. However, there have been complaints among the crafters, some saying that they used to make a lot of money before joining the project, but some crafters are happy. I argue that projects like these have many disadvantages. Firstly, there can be a lot of mismanagement of funds and secondly or perhaps the most important one to be pointed out, is that they do not necessarily reach areas where the poorest of the poor live. For example this project is based in Port St Johns town and most of the crafters who benefit are from around Port St Johns villages or nearby villages. Villages that are far from Port St Johns, like Khanyayo, even though they fall under the same municipal district they do not benefit.

In a case like Khanyayo what needs to be done is to first identify all livelihoods strategies that the villagers are involved in and then ensure that all the strategies receive the same level of attention and support. In that way, commercialisation of NTFPs would also receive proper attention and be developed in consideration of people's involvement in other livelihood strategies.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has attempted to capture the key arguments that emerged in the thesis in relation to the dynamics of local-level trade in mats and baskets. The central argument of this thesis is that even though this trade is dynamic, it makes a significant contribution to the livelihoods of the Khanyayo people and therefore should be recognised and acknowledged by outsiders seeking to alleviate poverty in the area. My final comment is that a sustainable livelihood approach suggests that building on the land-based livelihoods that rural people currently practice, and seeking ways to enhance their economic value, might be more appropriate than attempting to replace them (Shackleton *et al* 2001).

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