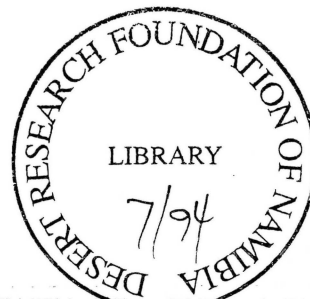


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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE LOWER KUISEB VALLEY

1. INTRODUCTION

The target area of the survey was the section of the Kuiseb River from Homeb to the Kuiseb delta, which corresponds to the area of settlement by the Topnaar people. A large part of this area is within the Namib-Naukluft Park. The aim of the survey was to produce management proposals for this region which integrates the needs and aspirations of the Topnaar people with the needs and objectives of conservation within the Namib-Naukluft Park.

The survey took place from 09.03.92. to 15.03.92. and the survey team was based at Gobabeb in the Namib-Naukluft Park.

The team consisted of personnel from the Ministry's Planning, Management and Research sections, a member of Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, a representative from the Desert Ecological Research Unit of Namibia, a representative from Water Affairs and a five-person delegation from the Topnaar community led by the Topnaar Chief, Mr Seth Kooitjie. A representative of the Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research was present for the last two days of the survey. Members of the Cape Provincial Administration Chief Directorate of Nature and Environmental Conservation were present as observers.

Proceedings began with a briefing session on the first day of the survey in which participants were given an overview of important issues.

A report back and assessment meeting was held on the morning of Thursday, 12.03.92. in order to review progress and identify key issues emerging from the community meetings. The last community meeting was held on the afternoon of 14.03.92. and the final planning workshop was held the following day.

More than 180 adults attended community meetings held by the survey team at 10 settlements along the river. The total number of adults estimated to live in the area is between 400 and 500. The issues raised by people at these meetings, and their proposals for solutions as well as ideas generated by discussion with the survey team formed the basis for the planning workshop.

2. The Lower Kuiseb Valley

The survey area consisted of the Kuiseb Valley from Homob in the East to the Kuiseb delta in the West.

Most of the survey area falls within the Namib-Naukluft Park, while the remaining portion falls within the Walvis Bay Nature Reserve, currently administered by the Chief Directorate of Nature and Environmental Conservation of the Cape Provincial Administration.

About 1000 Topnaar people live in scattered settlements within the valley from Homob to Roodbank. They depend largely on livestock for making a living and their goats and cattle are almost entirely dependent on the riverine vegetation for food. The people also extensively use the Inara melon fields of the Kuiseb delta as a source of food and income.

A large proportion of the Topnaars living in the Lower Kuiseb Valley live within the Namib-Naukluft Park. In the past, the former Directorate of Nature Conservation and Recreational Resorts viewed the people as a major problem for the park and made several attempts to encourage people to leave. Park legislation and regulations ignored the presence of the people and this situation has provided problems for the people and the conservation authority alike.

It is the policy of the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism to recognise that the people have lived in the Lower Kuiseb Valley before the park was proclaimed and to recognise their right to continue living there. The Ministry also recognises the right of the Topnaar people living within the Namib-Naukluft Park to develop according to their wishes and in the National Interest. A land-use plan for the area should be developed to ensure that development is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

The recommendations of this report provide a development framework which recognises the rights of the Topnaar people and aims at the sustainable utilisation of the resources in the area for the people's optimum development.

3. KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE SURVEY

During the survey, a number of key issues were identified as being most important for the Topnaar people and another set of issues were identified as being important for conservation. Central Namib region. There was a degree of overlap as some issues were identified as being important both for the people and for conservation.

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3.1. Issues important for the Topnaars:

a) Land rights ;

The most important issue for the Topnaar people is the need for government recognition of their rights to the land they occupy. There is a general feeling of insecurity and uncertainty about what forms of development are allowed within park regulations. People say their forefathers lived in the area before it was proclaimed as a park and they therefore want to stay on their land with the same rights as other Namibians.

b) Wildlife should be conserved

There was a consensus among the Topnaars that wildlife should not be eliminated from the area. Their forefathers had always lived side by side with wildlife, and they wanted future generations to be able to do the same.

c) Consultation

People clearly wanted to be included in a planning and consultation process concerning issues which affect their livelihood and activities.

d) Problem animals

Predators such as jackals and hyenas were cited as a major problem at every settlement. There were requests for control on problem animals to be exercised by the Ministry or for people to be given the right to exercise control themselves. People emphasised that they did not want to eradicate all jackals or hyenas.

e) Benefits from the park

Requests were made that people should be able to benefit from the park. Benefits requested included the annual provision of meat for pensioners and/or school children, a percentage of the fees paid by tourists to enter and stay in the park, and income from tourism activities.

f) Land-use plan

People requested that some form of land use plan be worked out which would give the people a secure place to live at the same time as providing wildlife a secure place to live.

g) Water

Water was a key issue which surfaced at every meeting and in nearly all discussions with local people.

The two areas of concern were the extraction of water from the river bed which seemed to be contributing to the death of trees and other vegetation, and the lack of an adequate water supply for the Topnaar settlements within the river bed.

People asked why water could be extracted for use by coastal towns and industries, yet the Topnaars themselves who lived in the area from which the water was being extracted were not supplied with any.

h) Tourism

People felt they would be able to benefit from the tourists who visit the park in a variety of ways, such as by providing guides, donkey cart rides, information and visits to the narra fields. However, at present the Ururas-Soutrivier road is closed to tourists and they do not come into contact with local people. There is no means at present of attracting tourists to the Inara fields when people are harvesting the melons and processing them.

i) DERUN and environmental education

There were several questions at meetings regarding the role of DERUN and about the work being carried out there. People wanted to share in the knowledge being gained by researchers and requested visits to Gobabeb for school children and adults.

j) General Development

Development needs identified included a shop, extensions to the school, game farming, an improvement of the clinic service, and upgrading of the road to Rooibank.

k) Lack of control over mining and other activities.

People said there were often activities such as prospecting, water exploration etc. being carried out where they live without them being informed. They felt they had no control over what was happening on their land.

1) Cross border problems

The existence of the border and separate administrative systems for Walvis Bay and the rest of Namibia create various problems for local people.

Their community stretches across the border, yet some residents have to look as far away as Swakopmund and even Khorixas for certain services while others receive services from the South African Administration in Walvis Bay.

Some residents have taken out South African passports simply because they say it takes one day to have one issued in Walvis Bay compared to several months to have a Namibian passport issued in Windhoek.

m) Local management structure

The need was expressed at several meetings for some form of liaison structure to be set up with the Ministry so that problems could be discussed and people could be consulted over decisions which affected their future.

n) Loss of control over Inara fields

The Inara fields were being threatened by developments such as bulldozing by the South African Department of Water Affairs, and similar activities by other instances. A flood barrier across the river appeared to have cut off the water supply to an important Inara field and the plants were dying or were unable to bear fruit. The Inara melon plays an important part in the Topnaar diet, but is also extremely important culturally. Yet there seems to be no recognition of this by the relevant authorities.

o) Veterinary services

Although a stock inspector visited the area occasionally, people said he did little more than count livestock. His only advice to people with sick or diseased animals was that they should buy medicine in Walvis Bay.

p) Alienation from wildlife/nature

People said the park and its laws had alienated them from wildlife and nature because they no longer had control over their own destiny and the resources they used in the park.

The following are the key conservation issues identified for the Lower Kuisieb Valley during the survey:

a) Health of the Central Namib System

It is necessary to look at the Central Namib system holistically as the various components - the linear oasis of the river valley, the gravel plains and granite inselbergs to the north and the dune sea to the south - are interdependent. Large mammals such as oryx for instance, use the riverine area for shelter, food and water during the dry season as well as for calving. Without the riverine strip, the system as a whole would be considerably impoverished. It is thus important that a suitable stretch of river below the Kuisieb canyon remain free of disturbance.

b) Water

The dry period of the last ten years has resulted in few big floods of the Kuisieb and a relatively small recharge of the underground reserves of water. This, added to water extraction of up to two times the average recharge has led to a considerable drop in the water table. There is evidence of a die-off of vegetation in the lower reaches of the river bed and game animals are no longer able to dig for water. Despite the drastic drop in the water table, extraction seems to be occurring at the same rate as in the past and no restrictions have been placed on water consumption at the coast.

c) Better co-ordination and communication

There is a lack of communication and cooperation between the Ministry and the local community as well as the Ministry and other organisations such as DEKUN and other government departments. Water Affairs carry out development such as roads, storage dams and power lines without any consultation with this Ministry.

d) Off-road driving

This is still a problem within the park. Although attempts have been made to upgrade some roads to prevent people leaving the road because of poor condition, this tends to open up new areas to those who prefer to drive off-road. There are often no designated roads to settlements and tracks are left over a wide area close to villages.

e) Littering

There appears to be a large amount of dumping of litter by inhabitants in the Lower Kuiseb Valley and by tourists and travellers. No rubbish removal service exists for inhabitants and alternatives need to be investigated.

f) Introduction of alien plants and animals

The presence of people within the park has led to the introduction of alien animals in the form of livestock. Alien plants are present as well.

g) Over utilisation of vegetation by livestock

This would appear to be a problem in certain areas and some recent research by a visiting botanist has shown that regeneration is low to non-existent in these localities. More research on this is needed as most statements alleging over utilisation are from observation rather than from empirical research. The presence of a large number of goats need not automatically mean over utilisation in the long term. Factors such as lack of water may also be having an effect on vegetation and regeneration.

h) Problem animals

Where wildlife is driven away from the riverine area by human and livestock disturbance, predators turn to the livestock as a source of food. This appears to be happening within the park and local people are setting traps and taking other measures against problem jackals and hyenas. This is illegal under present park regulations and represents an area of actual and potential conflict between inhabitants and park managers.

i) Damage to tourism structures

This was stated to be a particular problem at Homeb, where there is a Topnaar settlement close to the tourist camp. Local people deny causing damage.

j) Open access to the park

It was made clear however, that people were not prepared to give up their rights to land. They would be prepared to refrain from certain activities such as stock keeping in some areas, if the land could be productive in other ways such as through the generation of income through tourism.

There appears to be a readiness among the community to consider a land use plan which will provide for various forms of land use ranging from a development focus through to a multiple use area which would include conservation measures, to a pure wilderness area.

There is a large amount of common ground between the local community and the Ministry which is being obscured by the fact that the park regulations ignore the presence of people and that in the past the Ministry policy was to view the people as a nuisance. Measures were taken in the past such as introducing rhino to the Lower Kuisieb Valley in an attempt to drive the people out.

Although there was an underlying hostility towards the Ministry whose laws and actions were perceived as alienating people from natural resources, the Tswana people of the Lower Kuisieb Valley are fully committed to the broad concept of conservation. They are keen to continue living with wildlife as long as their rights to occupy the land and to develop it appropriately are recognised and there can be suitable control over problem predators.

4. Conclusions

The local people could gain much by having access to environmental education and extension and this would have a long term effect on the health of the system.

1) The potential of Environmental Education

Other government departments such as Water Affairs go ahead with various types of development without any coordination or communication with this Ministry.

k) Uncoordinated development

The lack of control points at the entrances to the park and the presence of public through-routes mean that unauthorised entry is difficult to control.

The community meetings with local people appeared to be the first such contact between Topnaars and Ministry officials and it was emphasised at each meeting by Topnaars that such contact had helped to bring about a change in perceptions.

However, it was also made clear that many government officials had come to speak to people, promising to write thick reports and they had disappeared with nothing heard of them or their report since.

It is important therefore that some action be taken in the near future to prove the Ministry's sincerity in its new approach. Other actions that are necessary require more time to be approved at the relevant level of government.

5. Recommendations

Approval in principle is sought for the following recommendations so that work on implementing the recommendations can begin immediately before the final, more comprehensive, report is completed:

5.1. Land rights

~~That the Proclamation and/or park regulations for the Namib-Naukluft Park be amended in order to recognise the land rights of the Topnaar people living within the Park boundaries. The legislation/regulations should be amended to enable people to carry out their daily activities necessary for making a living. (e.g. to construct permanent structures, to own livestock, to exit and enter the park without a permit etc.)~~

~~The Topnaar community should be consulted as part of the process to amend the legislation and local Ministry personnel working in the park should also have the opportunity to provide input. Perhaps the best means of achieving this would be to request the management committee proposed in 5.3. below to make recommendations on amendments. The rights of the people should be clearly spelt out and endorsed by Cabinet in terms of Government policy on Land Reform.~~

Access by new inhabitants to the area within the park in which people live should be controlled according to the following criteria:

a) The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia which allows all citizens access to land anywhere in the country.

b)The wishes of the existing inhabitants of the region, who should be left to define for themselves who is a member of their community and who should be allocated land to live on.

c)The sustainable utilisation of the region's resources.

5.2.Land-use plan

A land-use plan should be drafted for the Lower Kuiseb Valley (from the bottom end of the Kuiseb Canyon in the east to the present Walvis Bay border in the west). The land-use plan must take into account the needs and aspirations of the Topnaar people as well as the general ecological health of the Central Namib system. It should investigate the best ways of using the land to meet the needs of both.

A land-use plan zoning the region into three zones was discussed: a general development zone (Walvis Bay border to Swartbank); a multiple use zone combining aspects of development and conservation (Swartbank to somewhere east of Gobabeb); and a wilderness zone (somewhere east of Gobabeb eastwards);

This plan would involve the removal of domestic stock from the Homeb area, with the understanding that the inhabitants would gain the right to run the campsite there and gain an income from it. The principle should be that the Topnaars still have rights to the land, but the agreed best use of the land would be as an area for wildlife and tourism. The people would not farm it, but would have the right to benefit from tourism income.

This was accepted in principle by Chief Kooitjie and his council members, but they said they could not take a decision themselves as the land was held communally. They would therefore have to refer this back to the people.

It is therefore recommended that the proposal discussed during the survey be provided in written form to chief Kooitjie and his council who will then discuss the proposal with their people. The community should consider the proposals and help plan the details.

The response will be relayed through the management committee provided for in 5.3. below.

DERUN should be included as part of the "community" and their activities should be part of the land use plan. The key principle is that the management of the Lower Kuiseb Valley should be a joint venture between the Ministry, the Topnaars and DERUN.

Decisions on development such as the building of new schools, shops and the construction of permanent structures would be taken according to the provisions of the land use plan.

5.3. Joint management structure

A joint management structure should be set up for the Lower Kuiseb Valley which should include representatives of the Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism, representatives from the Topnaar council, DERUN and conservation officials from the Walvis Bay enclave.

The MWCT should have three representatives, the Topnaar Council three representatives, DERUN one, and the Walvis Bay conservation authority one.

Conservation representatives from the Walvis Bay enclave have been included because of the need to look at the conservation of the whole river system and the fact that the nature reserve proclaimed in the enclave will later fall under this Ministry. Their involvement will have to be cleared through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The management committee should begin its work once this preliminary report has been approved. It should be not only be a forum for consultation and the exchange of information, but should also be a pro-active decision-making body.

Each participating organisation will report to its parent body and the committee will derive its authority from the government.

The committee should also liaise with other government departments or with private organisations where appropriate, both requesting information about activities in the area as well as furnishing information on its own activities.

5.4. SWAWEK power for Gobabeb and local people

The feasibility of using alternative forms of energy both for general electricity requirements as well as for water provision, should be investigated jointly by MWCT and DERUN.

They should then make a joint proposal for donor funding and the necessary approval by the Department of Works.

5.5. Water

a) Kuiseb inhabitants, including DERUN, should launch an awareness campaign regarding the extraction of water from the river bed. This should include a contribution to the conference on the Central Area Water Plan being held in April 1992. The concern at the excessive extraction of water should be made clear to funding agencies, the media and major users at the coast. A delegation from the Community, the MWCT and DERUN should approach the Department of Water Affairs directly to discuss the water problems of the area and clearly voice their concerns.

b) Regular contact should be established with the Department of Water Affairs through the local management committee, so that the MWCT and the inhabitants can be informed on Water Affairs activities and proposed projects.

c) The Topnaar Council and DERUN should investigate which government department is responsible for the provision of water to the inhabitants of the Kuiseb above Swartbank. The responsible authority should be asked to provide the necessary water installations and maintain them.

d) Dr Hu Berry should report to the Planning Committee of the MWCT regarding the provision of water for the Soutrivier community, which lives close to Gobabeb. At present they are almost entirely dependent on water supplied from Gobabeb.

5.6. Problem animals

a) Problem animal control should be one of the issues addressed in the land-use planning process and in changes to park legislation. New park regulations should include provisions allowing residents to control problem animals according to the zoning of specific areas.

b) Until these changes can be brought about, approval needs to be given for an interim policy allowing control measures to be taken as and when necessary. Mr L van Rooyen and Mr B Jones of the MWCT should draft a policy for the Planning Committee to consider.

c) Dr Hu Berry should coordinate a problem animal survey among the local people to collect information about stock losses, numbers and species of problem animals, etc.

This should be carried out with the approval of the Topnaar Council and in co-operation with the local community. Members of

the community, as well as Park Rangers should assist in the survey. Dr Berry should also investigate appropriate control measures as well as the ecological consequences of predator control. A similar survey should be carried out in the Walvis Bay enclave.

5.7. Benefits from the park

a) Park and financial legislation and regulations should be changed to allow local inhabitants to receive a percentage of park fees.

The permit system should also be changed to accommodate the need to identify from which part of the park tourism revenue is being generated. The Topnaar community should receive a percentage of the fees from the central section of the park and not areas such as Naukluft and Sesriem.

b) Park legislation and regulations should be changed to allow local people to engage in tourism operations themselves and to derive an income from these activities, which should include the provision of guides to tourists, the running of small bush camps, donkey cart rides, and the provision of water and meat and Inara products to tourists.

c) The establishment of a "Inara trail" based on the harvesting and processing of Inara fruit should be investigated by the MWCT, the local community and the conservation authorities in Walvis Bay.

d) The Topnaar community should investigate how it would like to see income generated from park fees and tourism activities used or distributed within the community.

e) In order to stimulate tourism and provide adequate access for tourists to one of the most scenic parts of the region, as well as to allow access to Topnaar settlements who wish to receive tourists, the Ururas-Soutrivier road should be upgraded by the appropriate Namibian authority and the Walvis Bay authorities.

f) The Ministry should appoint local people to vacant posts within the park wherever possible.

g) DERUN, the MWCT and the community should investigate how proposed developments and expansion at Gobabeb should provide new work opportunities for local people as well as opportunities for them to develop their own tourism activities.

5.10. Loss of control by local people over the Inara fields.

- a) The MWCT should initiate contact with other Government Departments and parastatal organisations such as SWAMEK in order to establish the nature and scope of present and planned activities. This information should be fed to the local community via the management committee.
- b) The MWCT should exercise as much control as possible over road maintenance teams which leave unnecessary tracks and other disturbance.

5.9. Lack of control over activities within the park

- d) The management committee should investigate ways of making Gobabed accessible to local people e.g. investigate the use of the private campsite for school groups, apply to the Minister for tree accommodation to be granted for selected groups, or obtain sponsorship for accommodation from organisations such as the Namib Centre of the Wildlife Society.

c) The current permit system for DERUN should be changed to allow easy access by local people.

- b) An open day at Gobabed for the local community should be held annually and Gobabed should also be made more accessible to the local school. A visit by teachers and pupils should take place as soon as possible.

a) The role of DERUN in providing information and education for local people should be discussed by the management committee as well as during the forthcoming workshop between DERUN and the MWCT to discuss the proposed new functions of DERUN (see separate motivation.)

5.8. DERUN and environmental education for local people

- h) The development of game farming activities by local people should be investigated as part of the land-use planning process and by the local management committee.
- i) The provision of game meat from the park to the aged and/or the school should take place on an ad hoc basis. This will depend on game numbers being able to sustain the off-take. The details of meat provision should be worked out by the management committee.

a)The management committee should approach the relevant authorities in Walvis Bay explaining the importance of the Inara fields to the local community and the need to avoid activities which interfere with the fields. The construction of sluices in the present barrier depriving one field of water should be encouraged.

b)The Walvis Bay conservation authorities should appoint Honorary Nature Conservators among the local people who use the Inara fields as a means of providing extra protection and involving the community formally in the conservation of the fields.

(Liaison with Walvis Bay should be formalised within the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5.11.Veterinary Services

The management committee should contact the Department of Veterinary Services requesting improved liaison and better services for the community.

5.12.Research priorities

a)Problem animal research [see 6.6. c) above]

b)The effects of water extraction and other factors on the vegetation in the Lower Kuiseb Valley.

c)Monitor key indicators of the system, e.g. as established during the "Kuiseb Project" of the CSIR.

d)Economic analysis of potential for natural resource utilisation and eco tourism.

e)The management committee should identify further research priorities and submit these to the MWCT and DERUN for consideration.

f)DERUN should consider facilitating applied research relevant to the needs of the local community.

5.13.Open access to the park

a)The management committee should make proposals on improving control over access to the park.