Livelihoods among the Topnaar of the Lower Kuiseb

A Report prepared for the

Environmental Learning and Action in the Kuiseb (ELAK) Programme

Wolfgang Werner

June 2003
Acknowledgements

The fieldwork for this study would have been immeasurably more difficult without the able assistance and guidance of Salmon Boois of the ELAK programme. Not only did he patiently translate all questions and responses but he was of great help in providing interesting background information as well as useful explanations of certain issues.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 2  
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................. 3  
1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 4  
2 Settlement and social characteristics .......................................................................... 7  
3 Livelihoods ....................................................................................................................... 11  
   3.1 Land .......................................................................................................................... 12  
   3.2 Water ....................................................................................................................... 15  
   3.3 The importance of the !nara plant ........................................................................ 17  
      3.3.1 Property rights to !nara fields ........................................................................ 20  
   3.4 Livestock .................................................................................................................... 21  
      3.4.1 Grazing management ...................................................................................... 22  
      3.4.2 Gardens ............................................................................................................ 23  
   3.5 Other sources of income and expenditure.............................................................. 23  
   3.6 Education ............................................................................................................... 24  
   3.7 Infrastructure: roads, banks, telecom electricity..................................................... 25  
4 Institutional framework ................................................................................................. 26  
   4.1 Traditional leadership ............................................................................................. 26  
   4.2 Regional administration ......................................................................................... 30  
5 Expectations and perceptions ......................................................................................... 31  
6 Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 32  
7 Bibliography ................................................................................................................... 34
1 Introduction

The Kuiseb River drains a catchment of approximately 14,700 km$^2$, rising in the Khomas Hochland and flowing 440 km through the Namib Desert to the Atlantic Ocean at Walvis Bay. As such, the catchment covers areas that are owned under freehold title by commercial farmers, as well as the Namib Naukluft Park and the townlands of Walvis Bay. Rainfall ranges between an annual average of 400mm in the upper catchment to less than 20mm at the coast (Huntley 1985b: 7). Most of the study area receives on average 25mm of rain per year.

The Kuiseb divides the Namib into an area north of the river which consists of gravel plains with scant vegetation and the dunefields south of the river. These dune fields are kept in check by the perennial flow of the river (Dentlinger 1983: 43). The river itself has been divided into several different sections, each defined by specific characteristics$^1$:

- the Khomas Hochland and escarpment zone, rising to the west of Windhoek;
- the Kuiseb Canyon;
- the Upper Riverine Woodlands (Harubes to Gobabeb);
- the Middle Riverine Woodlands (Gobabeb to Swartbank);
- the Lower Riverine Woodland (Swartbank to Rooibank); and
- the Delta.

The woodlands referred to above characterise the Lower Kuiseb River as a linear oasis which crosses the Central Namib from the escarpment to the sea. Over a distance of about 150km (from Harubes in the east to Rooibank) the river supports dens woodlands of *Acacia albida*, *Acacia erioloba*, *Tamarix usneoides* and *Euclea pseudebenus*. These woodlands are not only of great importance to game, but make limited stock farming possible, and as such constitute an important element in the livelihoods of a small community of people, the Topnaar or !Aonin.

As Budack (1983: 1) observed, an ancient duality existed among the !Aonin. Those who came from the interior were referred to as people of the Kuiseb (!khuisenin). Traditionally they were herders of small stock and cattle, having lived in rush-mat or bark houses along the river, and only occasionally came down to the seashore. The Hurunin, on the other hand, were people of the sea. They lived in whale-rib and other

$^1$The following is based on Huntley (1985b) except where otherwise stated.
crude shelters near the shore, and were frequently referred to as *strandlopers*. They were looked upon by Khoi herders as San, i.e. classified as bushmen and people of the sea (*hurinin*). Much of their livelihoods depended on the exploitation of sea resources such as fishing with spears, clubbing of seals, catching seabirds and collecting their eggs. The gradual prohibition of some of these activities as well as increasing commercial fishing has all but destroyed this source of livelihood (Dentlinger 1983: 11-12). Today, most Topnaars depend largely on the proceeds of agriculture and cash incomes.

The **Environmental Learning and Action in the Kuiseb (ELAK)** programme is designed to contribute towards improved understanding of water resources and management in Namibia. It aims to contribute towards the enhancement of livelihoods of Namibians dependent upon natural resources within the Kuiseb Basin. Built on an improved understanding of social, economic and biophysical environments, the programme intends to bring about a common vision for the Kuiseb catchment among all stakeholders and establish and implement mechanisms for interactive and consultative planning at relevant levels. These activities are intended to support the new Water Act, in particular with regard to the establishment of River Basin Management Committees.

The current study seeks to contribute towards a better understanding of the socio-economic environment of the Topnaars living along the Lower Kuiseb. A brief literature survey preceded the fieldwork. Despite the fact that a large body of literature exists on the area, relatively little has been written on the people inhabiting the area.

On the basis of the literature survey a questionnaire was developed. During the brief period of fieldwork (five working days) 16 interviews were conducted in 11 of the 14 settlements along the river (Armstraat; Gaotanab; Dawe-Draais (sic); Ururas 1; Utuseb; Steekgras; Swartbank; Klipneus; Soutrivier; Niatab and Homeb). Open ended interviews were conducted with Chief Kooitjie and one of his Councillors, Mr. R. Dausab. Most of the interviews were conducted in the local language and translated into Afrikaans or English.

Most of the data and information provided here is of a quantitative nature and does not claim to be statistically representative. In the ever changing socio-economic
environment of the Lower Kuiseb, accurate data today may be inaccurate tomorrow. What is not likely to change as rapidly are processes and strategies, the very issues that determine the success or failure of people’s livelihoods. Where data permits this, an attempt has been made to reflect on possible changes over time. A better understanding of processes and strategies rather than accurate figures will enable ELAK to make more appropriate interventions.
2 Settlement and social characteristics

The area claimed and utilised by the Topnaar stretches from the Atlantic Ocean near Walvis Bay to about Hudaob at the foot of the escarpment (Köhler 1969: 102). For analytical purposes it is useful to follow Dentlinger (1983: 41f) in dividing the river into three broad areas: the delta, river area and Walvis Bay. The delta comprises a sandy stretch of about 13 km between Rooibank and the coast. Stock farming is almost impossible here. However, the majority of !nara fields are found in this area. The river area covers the lower, middle and upper woodlands and is suitable for livestock farming. Walvis Bay, as an important economic centre, provides employment, marketing opportunities and suppliers of basic food and other items to the Topnaar community and thus forms an integral part of livelihood strategies. It is home to approximately 500 Topnaar people (Chief Kooitjie, pers. comm.).

At present about 350-380 people are living in 14 settlements along the river (Chief Kooitjie, pers. communication). Twelve of these settlements are what Dentlinger (1983: 41-42) refers to as self-generated settlements. They were 'established out of the immediate interests and needs of Topnaar or those incorporated into the community. The prime reason for their existence is stock-farming.'

In the past two administrative centres, Utuseb and Gobabeb, existed on account of the fact that the then Departments of Water Affairs and Nature Conservation and Tourism respectively, had offices in these two centres. Today the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre no longer performs administrative functions. The importance of Utuseb, however, has increased in that a clinic and school hostel were built there in recent years. In addition, the Topnaar Traditional Authority has its offices in Utuseb. All settlements are situated on the northern banks of the Kuiseb, as it is difficult to live in the southern dune fields for any length of time (Ibid.: 43). In 1978 only two self-generated centres were found in the Delta, namely Mile 4 and Kusanda. According to Dentlinger (1983: 48)

The inhabitants live under very poor conditions with no sanitation and no running water, eating !naras, scraps form the municipal dumping grounds and
whatever else they can find. A few men, particularly at Mile Four, live there but work in Walvis Bay.

During harvesting time people with rights to !nara fields in the Delta used to stay at their respective fields in temporary structures for the duration of the harvest. This practice seems to have declined over the years, amongst other things because of a lack of water in the fields.

Self-generated settlements are generally small. In 1957, they ranged in size from one household at !Ubas to 11 at Uruyas and 10 at Rooibank (Köhler 1969: 117). They also grow and decline at a fairly fast rate. As far as numbers of settlements are concerned, there seems to have been a slight increase over the last 50 years. Homeb, for example, was settled only in 1982, after it was developed as a campsite for tourists (SWA 1982: 4). Natab, similarly, was not settled until 1973 (Ibid.: 6).

The population distribution along the river indicates relatively high fluctuations since the 1950s, suggesting that there was a constant moving in and out of people (Table 1). This still seems to be the case today, with members of extended families leaving their settlements to work in towns and mines, only to come back from time to time. The overall trend however shows a gradual increase from 183 people in 1957 to a high of 424 in 1991. Detailed figures of the 2001 census are not yet available, but according to Chief Kooitjie between 350 and 380 people are living along the river at present.

Households themselves also vary considerably in size. Köhler (1969: 115) found that the average Topnaar family in the 1950s consisted of 3 members. This he explained by the fact that a large number of old and single people were running their own households. Families were small because large families were not able to survive in the Kuiseb. Able bodied men were away to work for wages or looked after livestock, while women between the ages of 20-40 years also were absent for work.

The average size of households interviewed (13 in total) was 6,6 people, ranging in size from 1 person to a maximum of 11. This figure represents people physically living along the Kuiseb and excludes people living and working in Walvis Bay. Six out of the 13 households were headed by females, and six by men. The average age of heads of households was approximately 65 years, female heads having been slightly older.
Table 1: Population Distribution: 1957-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeb</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswater</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natab</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gobabeb</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sourtriver</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breuengu-goab</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klipneus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swartbank</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ituseb</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ururas</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reeds</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Goantanab</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daws-drasis</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstraat</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/Uit-Inianis</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haob</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooibank</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Koehler, 1969: 117; Botelle and Kowalski 1997: 51; Dentlinger 1983: 44

At least one person interviewed has settled along the Kuiseb recently after having retired. The reason for having done so is that it is cheaper to stay in the Kuiseb than in Walvis Bay. With the exception of 2 heads of households, all others had been living along the river for more than 10 years. Most were born along the Kuiseb and spent their lives in various settlements. While it is not possible to say how much time they spent in employment away from the river, they must be regarded as permanently settled there. All respondents stated that they saw themselves farming along the Kuiseb in ten years time.

It is moot point whether the development of permanent water points over the past 20 years has encouraged settlement along the Kuiseb river. What is clear, however, is that large scale water abstraction at Rooibank has negatively impacted on the mobility of livestock farmers along the river and hence contributed to more permanent settlement.

Traditionally, the Topnaar obtained surface drinking water from natural pools and springs arising from the river’s bedrock or hand dug wells in the alluvial deposits. The latter are known as gorras. In the late 1970s and early 1980s almost every settlement had access to gorras. In Klipneus, for example, gorras provided water for approximately 200 goats and 8 people (SWA 1982: 6).
The depth of _gorras_ depended on the water table in a particular season (Dentlinger 1977: 10). Until large scale abstraction of water started, the water table in the Kuiseb ranged between 1m and 3.5m below the surface, making it easy to access water through a well (SWA 1982: 1). Although there was no overall shortage of water derived from _gorras_, these dried up periodically. This in turn forced people to move their livestock to other areas where water could be found.

In 1979 the then Administrator-General offered to provide more permanent water to the Topnaars. Altogether 10 boreholes were drilled and equipped at Oswater, Soutrivier, Klein Klipneus, Klipneus and Swartbank. These were equipped with windmills and either an asbestos cement tank or dam plus trough. The provisions of borehole water contributed towards more permanent settlement of the Kuiseb by the Topnaar, as they no longer had to move away when sand wells ran dry (SWA 1981: 6; SWA 1982: 10).
3 Livelihoods

As a result of the central role of the !nara in the lives of the Topnaar, they have been described as a harvesting people (Budack 1983: 2). This distinguished them in some important respects from hunter gatherers: they were relatively sedentary near their source of staple food, had more solid residential structures and larger numbers of band members. Harvesters were also said to have had different attitudes towards plants than hunter gatherers, in that they were ‘treating their crop more gently, thereby approaching the attitude of agriculturalists’. Harvesting of the fruit was systematic and the seasonal character of the food supply stimulated conservation, which in turn lead to a more settled way of life. In addition, the ‘unimportance of soil fertility to harvesters, the exercise of control over plant resources by experts, and the appearance of special rituals directed toward the preservation of the crop’ distinguished them from hunter-gatherers (Budack 1983: 2).

While the description above helps to conceptualise the livelihoods of the Topnaar, it is questionable to what an extent these criteria still apply to the Topnaar. The importance of the !nara has decreased over the years. Some early written records suggest that the utilisation of the !nara formed only one element of several different but complimentary activities that made up the livelihoods of the Topnaar. Commissioner Palgrave observed in 1891, for example, that they depended on three main activities:

- harvesting of !nara kernels (January to May – selling seeds to traders);
- fishing; and
- occasional paid labour (Köhler quoted in Dentlinger 1977: 16)

While the relative contribution of specific economic activities has changed over time – and is likely to continue to change - livelihoods along the Kuiseb continue to be characterised by multiple income streams. Fishing has all but disappeared as a source of income and subsistence. Instead, the pursuit of various agricultural activities and more specifically livestock farming has become the foundation of rural livelihoods. Incomes from wage labour and pensions have become more important sources of cash income as the Topnaar were integrated into a cash economy. However, Dentlinger’s (1983: 50) observation in the early 1980s that ‘in view of uncertain employment
opportunities the final source of security for many Topnaar men and women is a herd of goats or the more prestigious sheep and cattle’ is as true today as it might have been then.

This chapter will present a short description of livelihoods strategies based on the information obtained during fieldwork. It will become clear that while livelihoods strategies are agriculture based, the success of these strategies is crucially dependent on access to urban markets and income. Livelihoods of the Topnaar along the Kuiseb are fundamentally linked to the urban economy along the coast, primarily Walvis Bay and Swakopmund, not only in terms of the opportunities this offers through access to goods and services, but also with regard to the threats that the urban economy poses to the resource base of the Topnaars.

3.1 Land

The state is the formal owner of all non-freehold or communal. The users of such land cannot own it in the same way as land can be owned under freehold title in commercial farming sector of the country. Despite this, all households interviewed were of the opinion that historically the land and water of the Lower Kuiseb belonged to the Topnaar community. The Chief and his Councillors administer this land in terms of customary laws and practices. However, customary land and resource rights remain unprotected by legislation until the new Communal Land Reform Act, 2002 is implemented. The Act proposes to formalise and provide legal protection for customary rights.

The lack of legal protection of their rights made the Topnaar community vulnerable to land dispossession. Their rights to the river and its resources has been contested by successive colonial administrations. As early as 1904 the German government declared a large tract of land north of the Kuiseb as a game park. It was not until the 1960s, however, that the South African government began to develop this area into ‘Wild Reservat 3’. This game reserve was enlarged on two occasions until it reached its present size of 2,340,150 hectares and was proclaimed as the Namib Naukluft Park (Dentlinger 1983: 68).

Several attempts to remove the Topnaar from the Kuiseb and resettle them elsewhere failed. In the mid 1960s the Odendaal Commission recommended that the Topnaar be resettled in what was to become Namaland. 66,203 hectares of land were reserved for
the Topnaars in the Gibeon area of Namaland for that purpose. However, Chief Esau Kootijie informed the Nama Administration that the Topnaar were not interested in the land and that the land could be given to other Namas (SWA 1981: 5).

The political reforms that followed in the wake of the Turnhalle Conference in the late 1970s brought about some kind of recognition of the rights of the Topnaar by the colonial state. The first Administrator-General, Judge M.T Steyn, promised the Topnaars that they could stay in the Kuiseb, that a school would be built for them and that boreholes would be drilled (SWA 1981: 5).

Despite these assurances, the jurisdiction of the Topnaar Traditional Authority over their land and resources remained severely compromised. As most of the river they utilise falls within a proclaimed park, the regulations of the then Department of Nature Conservation and Tourism placed restrictions on the Topnaar. Amongst other things, hunting in the Park was prohibited. This deprived the Topnaar of an important food source. In addition, conservation regulations placed ‘an indirect constraint on mobility and sizes of herds’ (Dentlinger 1983: 69). During interviews it transpired that many Topnaar still resent the prohibition on hunting in the Park. Respondents stated that this regulation was not only depriving them of food, but also resulted in considerable losses of livestock as a result of predators such as jackals.

Those areas of the Topnaars that do not fall within the Namib Naukluft Park are formally part of the Townlands of Walvis Bay. This includes most of the important !nara fields in the Delta of the river. The implications are that the laws and bye-laws of the Municipality of Walvis Bay apply in these areas. According to the Chief, this did not cause any problems in recent times. But this has not always been the case. Dentlinger (1983: 48) stated that in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Municipality of Walvis Bay repeatedly destroyed some of the settlements in the Delta such as Mile Four and Kusanda as it regarded them as squatter camps.

Several observers have pointed out that tenure rights to land are not of particular relevance to the Topnaar. More important were rights to !nara. Van Eynden et al (1992: 5) argued that ‘...the !nara bushes, not the land on which they grow, are private property...Each family can only harvest from its own !nara bushes.’ These customary rights are gradually eroding, being replaced by what amounts to open access.
!Nara fields only cover a relatively small portion of land utilised by the Topnaar. Large areas of the Lower Kuiseb River are being utilised for other purposes such as farming with small stock and making small gardens. In these areas specific customary tenure rules regulate access and use of land and its resources. At the macro level, settlements are well aware of the boundaries of their grazing areas. However, the customary system allowed for considerable flexibility. Negotiating rights to land and other resources is an important element of customary tenure. The collection of pods in areas falling outside one’s own settlement, for example, has to be negotiated with the community under whose jurisdiction those resources fall. Negotiated access becomes more important when the resources needed are close to areas where people live and keep their livestock. Botelle and Kowalski (1997: 28) noted that livestock owners had to obtain the permission of the Chief before they moved into new grazing areas to prevent conflict.

Customary tenure rules differentiate between people of Topnaar descent and those with no family ties. It is widely accepted that family members of people living along the Kuiseb do not need to obtain permission from the Chief to settle and farm in the area. In case of non-Topnaar people wanting to settle along the Kuiseb, the Chief and his Council need to give permission after the community in which such a person wishes to settle has approved the application. It is not uncommon for non-Topnaar people including whites to be accepted as Topnaars after having lived along the Kuiseb for more than ten years. The Chief explained this by saying that if someone stays too long in the Kuiseb without being a Topnaar and then decides to leave as a result, he/she will take secrets with them. Becoming a Topnaar confers limited rights to land and resources, but excludes rights to !nara fields (Chief Kooitjie, pers.com.).

People settled along the Kuiseb do not need special permission from the Chief and/or his Council to establish small gardens. They are allowed to choose a suitable place for a garden and develop it. No conditions apply and no payments have to be made to the Traditional Authority of the Chief for the use of the land. In those settlements that rely on piped water, people are expected to pay for the water.
3.2 Water

Water, like land, is widely perceived to be the property of the Topnaar. It was mentioned above that hand dug wells or *gorras* provided people along the Kuiseb with water for their livestock and themselves. Even where boreholes had been installed, *gorras* often provided additional water for human consumption and served as important water reserve when engines or windmills broke down and had to be repaired. In the late 1970s and early 1980s almost every settlement had access to *gorras*.

Some *gorras* were owned communally, while others were built by individual families. ‘Large communal *gorras* or “pits” were used for washing and to water stock. Smaller *gorras*, scattered in a linear fashion along the riverbed, were intended to supply secure drinking water to families’ (Botelle and Kowalski 1997: 23).

The state has effectively taken ownership of underground water in the Kuiseb. Large scale water abstraction around Rooibank is taking place in order to supply the coastal towns of Walvis Bay and Swakopmund with water. Respondents expressed resentment about the fact that the water scheme at Rooibank was developed without their participation, and that they are not compensated for the large scale abstraction of water. As the abstraction of water for coastal towns increased, the water table in the Lower Kuiseb gradually lowered. This led to a decline in the use of *gorras* as it became more difficult to site and maintain traditional water sources. (Botelle and Kowalski 1997: 23-25).

Currently all settlements along the Kuiseb are relying either on piped water or boreholes. In terms of government’s policy on rural water supply, users of water have to bear the maintenance costs of their water points at present. By 2007 government will have transferred full ownership of water points to communities. This means that the latter will be responsible not only for the maintenance of existing water points, but also their replacement. As part of the process of transferring ownership, all windmills and diesel engines were replaced by solar installations in 2001 and new tanks installed.

Payment for water along the Kuiseb is uneven. Only part of the community receives pipeline water with the remaining settlements depending on boreholes. From Rooibank to Utuseb people receive their water via pipeline from the state water...
scheme at Rooibank. This pipeline is currently maintained by Namwater, a parastatal supplying bulk water.

Users of this water are supposed to pay by volume consumed. In practice, Namwater sends one account for a particular settlement. The amount is then expected be divided by the number of households in the settlement and contributions paid accordingly. This method of billing does not take into account the size of the household or whether it owns any livestock, and if so how many. Most respondents perceived this system to be unjust, and it has undoubtedly contributed towards non-payment of bills. Although the exact amount could not be established reliably, settlements connected to the pipeline owe considerable amounts of money to Namwater. Plans are in progress to install water meters for each household to avoid disputes and non-payment of accounts.

Namwater currently charges N$ 2.99 per m$^3$ of water. A government subsidy of 20% applies, which brings the effective price for water down to N$ 2.39 per m$^3$. Water consumption per household is generally low. Four households at Ururas1, for example, consumed a total of 680 m$^3$ during the months of March 2002 to November 2002. This includes water for human and livestock consumption. Total payments due for those 9 months amounted to N$ 1584.29. These figures amount to an average water consumption of approximately 19m$^3$ per household and a cost of N$ 44 per month. Extrapolated over 12 months, water consumption and costs per household amounted to 228 m$^3$ and N$ 528 respectively. This is the equivalent of 1.5 ordinary kapaters, which sold for about N$ 350 during 2002 or close to two months pension money.

It is not entirely clear why settlements are not paying for the water they are using. One possible reason has been advanced above. Reinforcing this may be the perception that it is not reasonable to make the Topnaars pay for something that belongs to them. But it is also possible that many farmers are unable to pay due to insufficient cash resources. While the equivalent of 1.5 kapaters does not seem much considering that an ewe produces two lambs per year, it must be borne in mind that many people do not have livestock. For those who depend on pension monies the current system of payment amounts to two months pension.
In settlements east of Utuseb people depend on borehole water. In most cases the local Water Point Committees collect a voluntary contribution of N$ 20 per month from each household. Since all boreholes have been installed with new solar pumps, the delivery of water does not generate high running costs at present. It is a concern however, that once these installations need replacement – batteries, solar panels – the costs may be very high. Whether communities will be willing and/or able to pay for those replacements will have to be seen. It is not certain that Water Point Committees are saving money for such an eventuality.

Water Point Committees exist in the Lower Kuiseb. Their responsibilities at present are limited to collect money from households in order to deposit it in a bank. WPC have not received much training to date.

The impact of payment for water on livelihoods is not clear. Some respondents have expressed the opinion that their households are becoming poorer as a result of having to pay. They argued that they have to sell more goats to make payments which impacts negatively on the sizes of their herds. In addition, they stated that since people have to pay for water it has become too expensive to make gardens. The number of gardens are said to have decreased, and where they still exist, they have become smaller.

Against this, some others have stated that piped water was a positive development. It enabled them to make bigger gardens on account of the fact that they could now water their gardens by hosepipe.

On the face of it, these statements contradict each other. They may, however, reflect the differential impact that the payment for water has on a community that is stratified in terms of assets and income streams. It was not possible during the short time available for fieldwork to subject this information to more critical analysis. Suffice to say, therefore, that it does raise the possibility that the effective privatisation and concomitant payment for water may impoverish parts of the Topnaar community even further.

### 3.3 The importance of the !nara plant

Historical sources quoted by Budack suggest that the utilisation of !nara was of fundamental importance to the survival of the Topnaar of the Kuiseb. In the mid
1800s the fruit was so abundant that occasional fishing only played a minor role in their livelihoods (Budack 1983: 3). !Nara continue to play an important role both as a source of food and a source of cash. However, none of the households listed it as the most important food or income item, for the simple reason that harvesting of the fruit is seasonal.

The largest !nara fields are found in the Kuiseb delta to the west of Rooibank. In the 1980s Budack identified 54 !nara fields in the Lower Kuiseb Budack (1983: 4). Only 4 of these were in the Namib-Naukluft Park (SWA 1982: 1). In recent years !nara fields in the northern arm of the delta have been abandoned by the Topnaar as a result of a weir that was constructed to protect Walvis Bay against possible flash floods. The weir drastically reduced the amount of water that entered this part of the delta so that !nara fields have been gradually dying off (Van den Eynden et al 1992: 16). At present, therefore, !nara are mostly harvested in the southern arm of the delta.

Further upstream, !nara plants grow in the dune area to the south of the river. Here their roots can reach the underground water needed for survival. The eastern most occurrence of !nara en masse is about 20 km downstream from Gobabeb. Soutrivier, 5km downstream from Gobabeb, is situated on the very edge of the !nara area (Dentlinger 1977: 8).

Occasional floods of the Kuiseb river cause considerable damage to !nara plants and hence impact negatively on the livelihoods of the Topnaar, as bushes are being swept away by the water. Köhler is quoted by Budack (1983: 4) as having argued that !nara fields never recovered to their previous state after the floods in 1934, which not only destroyed plants but also transformed the delta. More recently, the floods in 2000 caused considerable damage to !nara fields in the Lower Kuiseb. However, many people expressed the opinion that a lot of new plants have started to grow in the wake of these floods and that !nara will be abundant before long.

Harvesting of !nara takes place from November to May. The fruits are eaten either uncooked or as a porridge after cooking and mixing with mealie meal. Part of the seasonal harvests is preserved to last for several months. This is done in the form of ‘Topnaar chocolate’ or ‘!nara cake’ (goa-garibeb). After the kernels have been removed from the cooked !nara fruit, the remaining soup is poured into the sand or onto some other surface and left to dry. In dried form this can be stored for several
months. The kernels are also dried and either eaten like nuts or sold (Dentlinger 1977: 26-28). In former times raw pips were pounded in order to extract oil for meals, ointment or to lubricate skins (Budack 1983: 3; Dentlinger 1977: 28).

Budack (1983: 3) states that the Topnaar frequently bartered !nara with inland people. Selling of !nara kernels continues to provide households with some cash income. In the mid-1970s as much as 5 tons of kernels were bought by a trader in Walvis Bay. The standard price was 10 cents per kilogram or N$ 100 per ton. Kernels were then sold to an agent in Cape Town who in turn sold them as ‘butter pits’ for N$ 7 per kilogram (Dentlinger 1977:20). 2

Households with access to !nara fields are still selling !nara kernels when they need cash. Kernels are either taken to Walvis Bay or sold to people coming to settlements to buy. In most cases, 50 kg bags are sold for prices ranging between N$ 6 and N$ 8 per kilogram (N$ 300 – N$ 400 per bag). In one instance, !nara kernels were sold to schoolchildren by the cup at a price of N$ 2 per cup. Quantities sold by households vary, reaching 15 and 20 bags of 50 kg per year. One respondent claimed to have sold 200 bags during the last year. Selling 15 bags per year translates into a cash income of at least N$ 4,500.

Dentlinger (1977: 18, 31) suggests that the !nara was regarded by many Topnaar as an emergency food, consumed mostly by those people who ‘did not have enough money to buy “the white man’s” food’. The fruit continues to be important for poorer people who do not have sufficient numbers of livestock or insufficient access to cash income to survive. In recent years residents of Walvis Bay harvested !nara in order to sell dried kernels for some cash. This is threatening the continued existence of !nara fields, as most of those people lack the skills and experience to harvest fruits sustainably. More specifically, many respondents expressed concern that people coming from Walvis Bay harvest unripe fruits and trample bushes in their attempts to reach the fruits. Trampling of bushes causes them to die off and be lost for future harvesting.

2 Pfeifer (1979: 159) stated that during the 1974/75 season approximately 269 bags of !nara pips weighing 24,212 kg. were sold to Walvis Bay traders for R 2,421.20.
3.3.1 Property rights to !nara fields
Access to !nara fields was secured and regulated by customary tenure arrangements. !Nara fields were the property of a specific !hao-!nas or extended family\(^3\). These holdings descended through successive generations according to a generally recognised law of inheritance.

Traditionally, !nara fields were divided into patches belonging to different families. These patches were not defined as an area of land but rather as ‘a conglomeration of fruit bearing bushes’. Property rights were claimed to these bushes and not the land, which had little value as a commodity in itself. Rights to !nara fields remain intact under conditions of temporary non-usage. Patches can never be sold, but acquaintances may obtain the right to work some of the bushes. Simple crosses (/!kha-!lab/) were used to mark the property, but not demarcate it - it was only one pole. Strict lines of demarcation are not easy to maintain, as the Kuiseb delta changes continuously as a result of new dunes forming.

All members of an extended family have equal rights to !nara plants in a family patch. The head of the family is usually the owner, i.e. property rights vest in one person. Most owners are men, but also some women. After death, rights are usually passed on from father to son, normally the youngest son. The youngest son had the responsibility to look after the widow and her daughters.

The Chief of the Topnaar and most respondents expressed concern that customary property rights to !nara fields are rapidly disintegrating. More specifically, residents from Walvis Bay are said to be harvesting !nara with no regard to existing rights to !nara fields. The sale of !nara kernels has become an attractive income opportunity for the unemployed in the harbour town.

Historically, mechanisms were in place to deal with people who disregarded customary property rights to !nara fields. In the 1800s !nara thieves were reported to have been shot. Schapera noted that trespassing Topnaars were reported to the Chief, but trespassing Damara or Bushmen were ‘simply shot down’ (Dentlinger 1977: 29). More recently, Budack (1983: 5) has identified three ways to enforce customary laws and solve disputes: (i) law of the strongest; (ii) tribal gatherings; and (iii) the tribal court.

\(^3\) The following section is based on Budack 1983: 3-6 unless otherwise stated.
These mechanisms are no longer effective to deal effectively with increased pressures on !nara fields. Part of the reason for this has to be sought in the fact that until Chief Kooitjie became Chief, a vacuum existed with regard to traditional authority. Another contributing factor is that most of the !nara fields fall within the area of jurisdiction of the City of Walvis Bay. Requests to protect !nara fields against poaching by fencing them off have so far not been approved by the Town Council of Walvis Bay.

3.4 Livestock
All respondents regarded livestock farming as the most important agricultural activity, followed by keeping a small garden. The riverine woodlands of the Kuiseb River are particularly suited for small stock farming, and more specifically goat rearing. Pods of the ana tree (*acacia albida*) and the camel thorn (*acacia erioloba*) form the most important fodder for livestock in the Kuiseb (van den Eynden *et al* 1992: 44-45). In 2002, 47 livestock owners were registered in the Kuiseb. They owned a total of 156 head of cattle, 2,466 goats, 121 sheep, 234 donkeys and 12 horses. Goats thus constituted 95% of small stock and 73.5% of large stock units (small stock expressed as large stock units).

As Table 2 indicates, cattle numbers have steadily increased since 1979 to reach more than double their 1979 numbers by 2002. However, numbers remain very low compared to small stock. Goat numbers do not show this gradual increase. In 2002 the number of goats was exactly the same as it was in 1981, and during the intervening twenty years has exceeded this number once only by less than 50 heads in 1991. The long term tendency of goat numbers thus seems to be fairly constant, with fluctuations downwards. It is not clear how these fluctuations can be explained. The most tempting explanation – drought – does not hold without closer examination, as the fodder for goats is not as dependent on annual rainfall for the regeneration of biomass as are grasses and shrubs inland.

A partial explanation of these fluctuations in livestock numbers may be found in the health of the urban economy in Walvis Bay. Due to the strong linkages between urban workers and settlements along the river it is possible that an upturn in urban employment and wage levels may result in increased livestock numbers as urban people invest money in livestock. This needs further investigation. That the building of herds is linked directly to the urban economy is clear. At least one farmer stated
that he was living off remittances from his children in town in order not to have to sell any goats to enable him to build up the family herds.

Table 2: Livestock numbers along the Kuiseb: 1979-2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>1577</td>
<td>2450</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>1615</td>
<td>2413</td>
<td>2507</td>
<td>2231</td>
<td>2374</td>
<td>2456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donkeys</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: The 1979 (February) figures were taken from the Department of Veterinary Services. The 1981 (November) figures represent an estimate.

Distribution of livestock is highly uneven. While the average number of goats per household owning livestock was 52 (ewes, lambs and rams included) in 2002, this figure conceals the fact that many households do not own any livestock. It also does not provide an indication of the distribution of livestock among households. During the last census in 2002, herd sizes ranged from a maximum of 308 to a low of 2 heads. Respondents were of the opinion that a herd of 50 goats was sufficient for subsistence. Anything below 50 was considered poor.

Goats are important primarily for generating cash through sales. Eight of the households interviewed sold goats regularly. Some households sold as many as 20 goats per year. Most sales are to people coming from Walvis Bay to buy. Farmers along the Kuiseb hardly ever take their goats to the market in Walvis Bay due to a lack of transport. In general, households spoken to were satisfied with market access and prices paid. The latter ranged between N$ 250 and N$ 600 per animal, depending on age and condition.

3.4.1 Grazing management

Livestock feed primarily in the riverine forests of the Kuiseb. Each settlement has its own loosely defined grazing area. However, livestock occasionally needs to be taken outside the home settlement. Köhler (1969: 118) observed in 1957 that people in !Haoab, the western most village in the Kuiseb, had sent their livestock to !Ubas for grazing. Similarly, farmers at !Uri-Inonis took their livestock upstream during drought years. According to Botelle and Kowalski (1997: 27-28) it was not uncommon in previous years for whole families and herds to resettle in new villages.
Sometimes they returned to their original villages; at other times they stayed with their stock at the new village. When herds of individual owners grew too much, he/she had to look for new pastures. The Chief had to give permission before moving to new pastures to avoid conflict.

Botelle and Kowalski (Ibid) argued that changes in the provision of water brought about changes in herding. At present livestock is moved less frequently due to more limited access to water by means of gorras and greater reliance on boreholes. Park regulations are also blamed for a more sedentary lifestyle by prohibiting movement of livestock.

3.4.2 Gardens
Half of the households spoken to had a small garden. The main produce grown in those gardens included pumpkins, tomatoes, beetroot, carrots, cabbages, water melon and spanspek. Most of the garden produce is for home consumption and many household have vegetables throughout the year. However, some households also sold vegetables. One household claimed to have made N$ 1,200 from the sale of garden produce in 2002.

Farmers have not received any technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development to improve their gardening techniques. Apart from manure, no fertilisers are applied. Mice, birds and termites pose a particular threat to gardening. Farmers are unable to identify other pests and obtain the appropriate pesticide. Ash is commonly used against pests.

Previously all gardens were watered by carrying buckets of water. With piped water or access to boreholes, plastic pipes are frequently used. Many people regard the cost of water as a disincentive to carry on with gardens. They have either stopped gardens altogether or reduced watering, which impacts negatively on their crop. But all people regard gardens as an important source of food.

3.5 Other sources of income and expenditure
While incomes from agriculture are more secure than wage labour, these are not sufficient to support households. Cash derived from pensions and family members working in towns and in particular Walvis Bay constitute an important source of
additional income. Just over half of the households spoken to had at least one pensioner in the household. In some cases households had more than one pensioner. Not all pensioners receive welfare pensions. In some instances people are receiving pensions from former employers.

Eight out of thirteen households received either food or money from relatives in Walvis Bay. Payments in either cash or food ranged between N$ 100 and N$ 300 per month, depending on the number of relatives in employment and the type of employment.

In previous years, the sale of wood and/or charcoal provided an additional source of income. Köhler (1969: 119) stated that charcoal production for the market in Walvis Bay started in 1916. It was used for fuel and ironing. This economic activity was fairly widespread. In Uruas, for example, eight out of ten households sold charcoal in the late 1950s. The number of bags produced per month ranged between 2 and 10 per household and sold for 10sh per bag. The village produced altogether 50 bags per month. Most settlements were involved in this activity.

The sale of wood and charcoal has ceased altogether, or is not admitted to. On the one hand this has to do with the fact that most households in Walvis Bay no longer need charcoal for fuel and ironing. However, even if a market for fire wood existed, the sale of wood products is outlawed by park regulations (Botelle and Kowalski 1997: 29-30).

For most households the main items of expenditure were basic foodstuffs. These consisted of maize meal, flour, sugar, tea and coffee. Once basic needs are covered, money will be spent on things like potatoes, rice, noodles etc. With the exception of vegetables produced in private gardens, all food items have to purchased in Walvis Bay and thus require cash.

3.6 Education

Educational levels among household members continue to be very low. Dentlinger (1983: 61) found in the early 1980s that 45% of her sample of rural Topnaars did not have any education at all, with 29% having obtained Class 4. Of those households spoken to 19% did not have any education. Only 3 out of the 13 heads of households interviewed, i.e. 23%, had education up to Grade 3. Thirty-one per cent of adults in
those households interviewed had either no education or only Grade 3. Most younger people have had an education, albeit at low levels. Only 3.8% passed Grade 12. Table 3 summarises educational levels among households.

Table 3: Levels of education among adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of adults</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of adults</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access to education has improved in recent years. Until 1978 the closest school was in Walvis Bay. In the 1980s a primary school was built at Utuseb. A school hostel was added in the late 1990s. All respondents expressed the view that access to education and the quality thereof have improved lately. Education is regarded as very important.

3.7 Infrastructure: roads, banks, telecom electricity

Settlements along the River are connected by a gravel road with each other and Walvis Bay. The condition of the road within the Namib Naukluft Park is poor and people stated that it has not been graded for a very long time. They expressed the view that the Ministry of Environment and Tourism was deliberately not grading the road to discourage tourists from using it. From Utuseb to Walvis Bay the road is well maintained.

None of the settlements have electricity or telephones, and people depend largely on the few owners of cars – which includes official transport such as the Agricultural Extension Technician – to transport them to Walvis Bay.

Services such as banks, post office and shops are only available in Walvis Bay. All food has to be bought in Walvis Bay, as none of the settlements has a shop.
4 Institutional framework

From the turn of the century the Topnaar were marginalized politically. Unlike other groups they never received their own ‘native reserve’. At the same time, colonial land dispossession did not affect them, as all land alienated from indigenous communities and surveyed for white farmers lay east of their traditional farming areas on the escarpment. However, renewed interest in developing the area into a proclaimed park impacted negatively on the Topnaar (Dentlinger 1983: 67-68).

4.1 Traditional leadership

According to Dentlinger (1983: 72-73) the last kaptein of the Topnaar, Piet Šeibe, died on in October 1910. For the next 70 years no proper traditional authority existed. With the advent of political reforms in 1975, things changed. The Turnhalle Conference in 1975 and subsequent political developments were premised on ethnic representation and government, following the recommendations made by the Odendaal Commission in 1964. Consequently, the first Administrator-General of Namibia appointed a temporary headman for the Topnaar in 1978. In 1981 an election was held for a successor and four councillors.

At present, the Traditional Authority of the Topnaar consists of Chief Seth Kooitjie and five councillors. Elections for new councillors were held last year. All members of the previous Traditional Authority were recognised by government and gazetted accordingly in 1998. Registration of the newly elected councillors is in progress.

The Traditional Authorities Act, 1995 provides the legal framework for Traditional Authorities to play an active role in local level administration and development. Traditional Authorities are expected to assist the police and other law enforcement agencies in the prevention of crime and to assist and co-operate with government institutions at various levels in the execution of policies by keeping members of their communities informed about developmental projects in their respective areas. Article 10(2)(c) stipulates that Traditional Authorities have the duty

To ensure that the members of their traditional communities use the natural resources at their disposal on a sustainable basis and in a manner that
conserves the environment and maintain the ecosystem, for the benefit of all persons in Namibia.

Article 3 in turn permits Traditional Authorities to raise funds and operate a trust fund on behalf of the community and to hear and settle disputes over any customary matter between members of that traditional community, ‘subject to customary or statutory law’.

The primary tasks and responsibilities of the Topnaar Traditional Authority are to administer customary matters. It is in the process of making a systematic compilation of customary laws in a way that is consistent with the Constitution and the *Traditional Authorities Act, 1995*. Developing regulations for the more sustainable utilisation of !nara enjoys a high priority in this regard.

On a more practical level, the Traditional Authority is responsible for the resolution of disputes. However, a lack of resources hampers its capacity to perform some of these functions properly. This is particularly true where disputes require *in loco* inspections, e.g. with regard to infringements of rights to !nara fields in the delta. More specifically, the Chief cited the lack of transport as a major impediment in administering customary matters.

In addition to customary matters, the Traditional Authority tries to facilitate and encourage socio-economic development along the Kuiseb. Amongst other things it claims to have been instrumental in successfully lobbying government for the construction of a school hostel and clinic at Utuseb and the employment of an agricultural extension technician – who happens to come from the Kuiseb – in 2002.

In order to generate and receive financial support from the community, own resources and donors, the Traditional Authority has established and registered a Community Trust Fund in terms of the provisions of the *Traditional Authorities Act, 1995*. The purpose of Trust Funds is to finance projects in communities and meet the administrative costs of the Traditional Authorities. Small amounts of money have been deposited into the Trust Fund of the Topnaar community, mostly donations. In the past members of the Topnaar community had to pay grazing fees. This has stopped, but the Traditional Authority intends to charge small levies on the harvesting of !nara to be paid into the Trust Fund.
A potential source of income was a 10 per cent share holding of the Topnaar community in !Aonin Fishing Company. The company was established in 1993, when the Chief and two members of the community successfully applied for a fishing quota. An important argument in lobbying for a quota was that the Topnaar were deprived of benefiting from the resources of the sea, and that a quota would go some way to redress this situation.

The Topnaar Community Foundation (TCF) was registered in 1996. The community elected a Board of Trustees which was registered by the Master of the High Court in 1999. The purpose of the TCF is to receive dividends and other payments from !Aonin and to use these monies to finance development projects designed to improve the standards of living of the Topnaar community.

Information obtained during interviews suggests that the Topnaar community received very few benefits from !Aonin. Only very few knew about !Aonin and the TCF and were hard pressed to name any concrete benefits the community received, apart from sporadic financial support to community members for funerals and other unforeseen expenses. These were generally appreciated. In addition, many people had heard that a select few pensioners received a cash payment of N$ 1,000 at Utuseb in December 2002, apparently from !Aonin. None of the informants were quite clear where this money came from and how pensioners were selected. One former trustee of the TCF stated that over the last ten years the total support from !Aonin to the community was approximately N$ 46,000.

The perception is widespread among the Topnaar along the Kuiseb that their traditional leadership is divided on some important issues and that this is hampering socio-economic development. While nobody was bold enough to state exactly what the nature of this problem is, it would appear that power struggles exist among the leadership, probably centring around the control of financial resources. On the one hand the Chief and his Council have established the Community Trust Fund in terms of existing legislation while one of his senior councillors was at the helm of the TCF on the other.

A great deal of mistrust among community members and between community members and their leadership exists. This seems to be fuelled by a lack of transparency on the part of those who are controlling funds on behalf of the
community. For example, nobody, including the Chief, was aware or had seen Annual Reports of either !Aonin Fishing Company or the TCF. As a result, the community at large is left in the dark as to what monies the community receives and how these are utilised. Similarly, none of the people spoken to knew how much money the Lauberville tourism camp near Rooibank generated since it was handed over to the Topnaar in 1995/96 and how that money was spent.

Income generated from tourism has the potential to make a significant contribution towards the financial resources available to the community. Since 1996 the Topnaar community was in possession of small tourism camp near Rooibank. This was donated to the community by the Police and consists of a number of bungalows, ablution facilities and a communal kitchen. Oxfam Canada provided initial financial support to renovate the camp while the Namibia Nature Foundation provided N$ 80,000 in support of community based tourism. Due to irreconcilable differences in development aims pursued by NACOBTA and the Traditional Councillor responsible for community development, the co-operation between these two entities came to an end and N$ 54,000 had to be repaid to the Namibia Nature Foundation. All 36 initial community members of the tourism initiative withdrew very soon, as no benefits were forthcoming.

It could not be established during a visit to Lauberville to what an extent the community was still involved in the enterprise. Maintenance of the facilities seems to be done by non-Topnaar men from Walvis Bay. The reason advanced for this was that members of the community illegally appropriated some of the items bought to provide a service to tourists. These defiant actions suggest very strongly that the community did not have sense of ownership of the camp.

Tourism and the Lauberville camp site has not been marketed effectively and accommodates corporate and private tourists on a sporadic basis only. On a question as to why there still was no regular stream of tourists visiting Lauberville, the Traditional Councillor responsible for community development responded that Topnaars in the Kuiseb were not ready for tourism yet. He was fearful that without preparing the community better for such a development strategy, the Topnaar would run the risk of becoming beggars like the people of Kaoko (sic). Secondly, he argued that specific products had to be developed for tourists, such as 4x4 trails, and that this process took time. Finally, he expressed the concern that the Topnaars would lose
5 Expectations and perceptions
The majority of household heads expressed the belief that they and their children would still be farming in the Lower Kuiseb in 10 years time. Only one of 13 household heads regarded himself as having been unsuccessful with regard to farming. Most others described their farming operations as successful. Some explained their response by stating that they were able to make a living from farming. Respondents were also asked to identify areas that could have improved their farming. Training in animal production and husbandry (eight responses) as well animal health (five responses) were by far the most common areas where improvements could have been made. Two people identified training in !nara harvesting for young people as important. Improved financial management and gardening also received 2 responses each.

Perceptions about past trends are so diverse that it is impossible to draw any conclusions. The availability of water is one of the few areas where the overall perception is that it remained constant or even rose slightly. With regard to the availability of grazing the overall tendency has been constant to falling. And for most households food availability has remained constant or even improved.

Table 4: Trends over the past ten years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash income</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>n.a</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household food availability</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>n.a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of gardens</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of gardens</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of livestock</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal diseases</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of water</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of grazing</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Inara</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment opportunities</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: r= rise; f= fallen; c= constant; fl= fluctuated
6 Conclusion

Agricultural activities form the basis of livelihoods in the Lower Kuiseb. On their own, however, they are unable to sustain households. Cash incomes from pensions as well as financial contributions from family members working in Walvis Bay are important additional sources of cash. The rural economy along the Kuiseb therefore is inextricably linked to the formal economy primarily of Walvis Bay but also of other towns. Access to cash incomes from family members who are employed in towns or from the sale of !nara allows farmers to build up their small stock herds. During times of rising unemployment, on the other hand, family members residing in towns can fall back on the agricultural economy along the Kuiseb.

Property rights to natural resources and in particular the !nara are coming under increasing pressure from people who do not have livestock and are unemployed. Indications are that unless the community succeeds in restoring property rights either by strengthening the Traditional Authority or by establishing new management structures the system will gradually turn into an open access regime which is likely to threaten the sustainable utilisation of the plant. Since harvesting of the !nara continues to be an important source of food and cash, this will have a negative impact on the livelihoods of people. Attempts need to be made to diversify economic activities along the River to protect the poorest members of the community in particular against further marginalisation.

On the face of it, the Topnaar community has the potential to improve economic activities in the Lower Kuiseb. In the first place, it is a small community with a reasonably well developed institutional framework. Regrettably, this is not fully utilised as a result of squabbles among the leadership of existing institutions. These are hampering development on the ground at present, but it is possible to resolve these disputes and power struggles for the better of the community.

Secondly, by providing training to farmers, it is possible to optimise livestock farming along the river. Improved husbandry practices and animal health are likely to improve returns from agriculture without necessarily having a negative impact on the fragile environment. It will also be necessary to critically assess the impact that the payment for water is having on livelihoods. It is likely that this policy may marginalize the poorest members of the Topnaar even further. The pros and cons of
pursuing a policy that may make perfect economic sense but is likely to impoverish people in an environment that presents limited alternatives need to be weighed very carefully.

Thirdly, tourism presents the potential to generate cash for development and provide employment for members of the Topnaar community. With appropriate incentives and training and accountable and transparent institutions it is possible to develop tourism in a way that is economically and environmentally sustainable.

Finally, participation in the fishing industry as a shareholder has the potential to infuse capital for development purposes. However, this requires that the leadership works towards a common vision for the future of the Topnaar and puts efforts into resolving existing differences.
7 Bibliography
(Not all the works in this bibliography have been consulted.)

Barndard, L. 1991 Die Topnaars van die benede-Kuisebrivier en Walvisbaai. Bloemfontein


Bruce, G and Dausab, R. 1998 Topnaar community tourism enterprise. Windhoek: The Canada Fund and the Topnaar Community Foundation

Budack, K. 1977 The #Aonin or Topnaar of the lower Kuiseb valley and the sea. Johannesburg: African Studies Institute


Dausab, F. 1993 ‘Die Topnaars van die Kuiseb Rivier’. Walvis Bay


Du Pisani, E. 1983 ‘Past and present land utilisation in Namaland and the lower Kuiseb River valley.’ Khoisis(4)


Hoernle, R. 1923 ‘The expression of the social value of water among the Naman of South-West Africa.’ South African Journal of Science 20 (2) pp. 514-526


34
Jenkins, T. and Brain, C 1967 The peoples of the lower Kuiseb valley, South West Africa. Windhoek: Namib Desert Research Station.  
Slabbert, A 1991 ‘Assessment of expected impacts of the proposed water resource development options, possible mitigation measures, information requirements and recommendations.’ Windhoek: Directorate of Water Affairs and Forestry.  
South West Africa/Namibia 1982 ‘Die Topnaars van die Benede Kuisebrivier’. Windhoek: Buro vir Ontwikkelingskoördinering en Statistiek

South West Africa/Namibia 1981 ‘Bewoning van Namib-Naukluftpark deur die Topnaars’. Windhoek: Department of Agriculture and Nature Conservation

Sydow, W. 1973 ‘Contributions to the history and protohistory of the Topnaar strandloper settlements at the Kuiseb river mouth near Walvis Bay.’ South African Archaeological Bulletin 28 pp.73-77


Vigne, R. 1994 ‘The first the highest...Identifying the Topnaar of Walvis Bay and the lower !Kuiseb.’ Symposium: writing history, identity and society in Namibia. Hanover: University of Hanover

Von Köhnen, E. 1964 ‘Topnaar hottento’s well.’ South West African Annual pp.120-121


Widlock, T. 1996 ‘!Nara harvesting a thing of the past?’ Desert Ecological Research Unit