



**MDUKATSHANI**  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

# Annual Report 2015





**In July the Board of Trustees met on a kopje close to the Mdukatshani -Mchunu tribal boundary. Residents and neighbours joined the meeting, which was followed by an in situ tour of the area which will soon be handed over to the tribe.**

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## **MDUKATSHANI**

Mdukatshani is an NGO which has been based in the Msinga- Weenen area of KwaZulu Natal since 1975. During its long history it has worked on a variety of interventions, including land reform, legal aid and support, action research, organic farming, communal gardens and livestock support programmes. Currently, it is involved in a home food security programme targeting 5 000 women headed households, providing support for chicken, goat and Nguni cattle projects. A Community Animal Health

Worker programme has trained 130 young volunteers to work as paravets, while collaborative research projects with academics and government try to answer the questions that confront local farmers. More than 200 Grade 5 children at three schools are members of our youth project, while a craft project provides an income for stay-at-home mothers who work with grass, beads and metal wire to create products which are sold nationally and internationally.



**Gugu Mbatha, Mdukatshani Project Manager, addressing a packed meeting on drought at the Mthembu Tribal Hall. Sitting next to her were, from the left, Cyril Xaba, MEC for Agriculture, Dr. F.J. Sikhakhane, the Mayor of Msinga, Mr. B Thusi, Chairman of the Msinga Livestock Association, and Mr. B Thabethe, Provincial Director of Rural Development.**

### **Mdukatshani's Vision**

To find and promote options for farmers in Msinga, KwaZulu- Natal, to improve their lives and their livelihoods, while using locally available resources for long term sustainability.

### **Mdukatshani's Mission**

To create wealth for the poorest by prioritising the involvement of women and youth in livestock and value-adding activities, improving livestock productivity and enhancing value chains leading to the commercialisation of local flocks and herds.



**Women-headed households:** These are the women who look after the livestock in Msinga, listening intently to the speeches at the November drought meeting at Tugela Ferry. Most of the women were drawn from Mdukatshani's goat programme.

## DROUGHT



Ncunjana dam in October 2015

Two successive years of drought have been devastating to farmers across South Africa. At Msinga, thousands of cattle died as dams dried up, and dust storms blotted out the sky. Stock losses varied from 40 percent at Mashunka, the Mthembu ward on Mdukatshani's boundary, to 60 percent at Ncunjane, the Mchunu ward on our top farm. And the worst is not yet over. After another dry summer the hills are bare of grass, and there are few fodder reserves to carry the surviving animals through another hard winter. Even if it rains tomorrow, it will take farmers at least five years to rebuild their herds with long term effects on social contracts such as engagements, marriages and deaths. In an area where most local families survive on welfare grants, the death of a cow means a loss of R8000,00 - equivalent to eight months of income from social grants.



Many cattle died caught in the mud of the shrinking dams



Thorn trees were leafless in midsummer



Dead animals rotted quickly in the sun



Schoolchildren caught in a dust storm



In November the Mdukatsani team did an onstage demonstration of the speed and ease of making homemade goat feeding blocks. The blocks look like bricks, but smell delicious, and one will last five goats for a week.



### THE TRAVELLING ROADSHOW

The recipe is simple. Start with a two litre plastic jug. Take six jugfuls of maize meal, two jugfuls of coarse salt, 16 jugfuls of HPC 36%, seven jugfuls of molasses.... Anyone can do it, and the result is cheap. It costs R 7,50 to make a mineral feeding block, and one block should last five goats for a week.

Few homesteads can afford supplementary feeding for goats, although the high mortality of goat kids in winter is one factor preventing small farmers realising the potential income from their flocks. When Mdukatsani and Heifer began working with experts on a design for feeding blocks, the final cost was as important as the ingredients, and it was the cost factor as much as the process that had farmers rapt when the Mdukatsani team travelled the drought stricken areas of KZN to show just how easy it was to make goat mineral blocks at home. While the ingredients can be mixed on the ground, a brickmaker has been adapted to compress and cut the blocks, and at this stage the block machines are being signed off to tribal authorities or local livestock associations, who will ultimately be managing the young paravets who hope to make feeding blocks for sale - a microbusiness based on a sale price of R 10,00 a block, and still within the means of the poorest goat owner.



Jozini



Nongoma



Matengwenya-Kosi Bay



In January, Zulu King Zwelithini officially launched the Goat Agribusiness Project at Msinga and bought 24 goats to add to his own flock. Here he is seen with the MEC of Agriculture, Cyril Xaba, discussing some of the goats on display at the expo.

### **THE GOAT AGRIBUSINESS PROJECT**

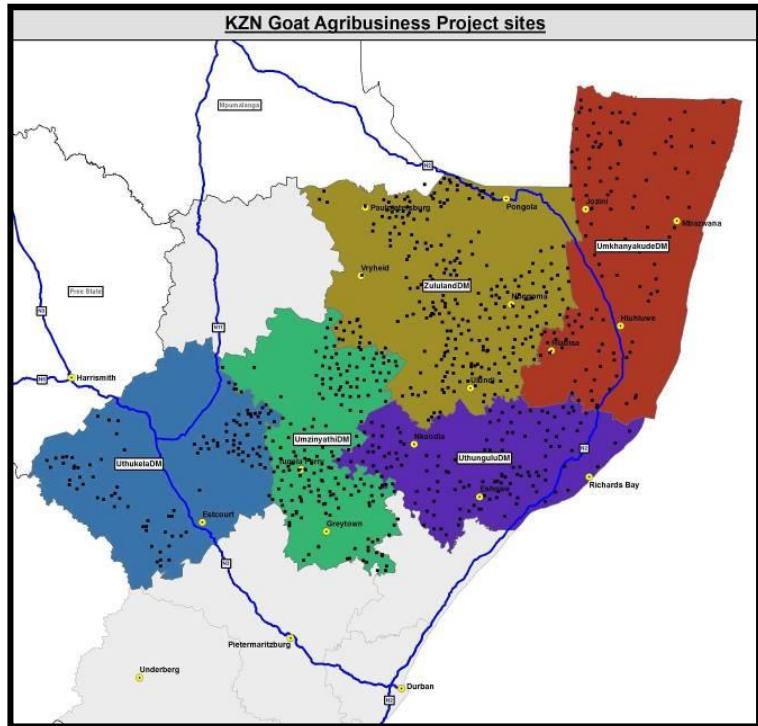
It took three years of negotiations and meetings and talks and talks and talks... but when Mdukatshani and Heifer finally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with government in August it meant the Goat Master Plan for KZN could finally go ahead. The MOU creates a five year programme that will be run as a partnership between the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Heifer International South Africa, and Mdukatshani, with each partner bringing budget into the project.

The Goat Master Plan has been used as the basis for what is now known as the Goat Agribusiness Project, or GAP, which was officially launched by the Zulu King Zwelithini at a Goat Expo Day at Msinga in January. It was a relaxed, informal occasion, with the King showing real interest in the different ideas on display. Mdukatshani and Heifer shared a stand that showed samples of goat feeding blocks, stover mills, Nguni handcrafted bags, and our increasing number of Zulu training manuals, while our field staff answered the King's questions on the value of indigenous goats. With plans for a goat sales yard and abattoir at Msinga, there was an emphasis on the potential of goat meat. Local caterers took part in a competition to produce The Best Goat Dish, while staff from Durban's International Convention Centre were there to demonstrate an array of specially created goat products - including stirfry, roasts, salamis, polonies and sausages.

After the speeches, a crowd of more than 500 people sat down to a meal of goat cuisine – and the day ended when the King bought 24 goats to add to his flock in Zululand, a testimonial to the future of the goat agribusiness.



Food fit for a king. After teams of local caterers had competed to produce The Best Goat Dish, King Zwelithini and other VIPs sat down to a delicious meal of goat cuisine. While it wasn't the first time guests had eaten goat, a talking point was the array of goat cold meats prepared by the chef of the International Convention Centre in Durban.



**The Goat Agribusiness Project** targets farmers in five District Municipalities- uThukela, Mzinyathi, Uthungulu, Zululand and uMkhanyakude. Aimed at improving home food security and rural livelihoods its objectives include:

- Creating small businesses among local youth through a Communal Animal Health Worker (CAHW) program
- Commercialising the local goat herds
- Improving production in local homestead herds to support food security and commercialisation
- Creating and strengthening value chains around goats
- Supporting and targeting academic research on issues experienced by farmers
- Expanding the CAHW work into chickens, cattle, and other livestock
- Recording and writing up these pilot interventions so as to roll these lessons out through the country

Young people were involved in one of the first aspects of the new project – conducting a census of every home in selected dip tank areas to provide a snapshot of livestock ownership patterns and investment. This data will be revisited to measure change as the project progresses. Two local youth per dip tank were trained in census-taking and paid a stipend to collect information. These young people were subsequently involved in further training through the Community Animal Health Worker programme, which saw 78 young people taking part in four week-long training sessions at Msinga, Nkandla and Jozini. This was just the start of the 2016 training programme.

In February Mdukatshani's trainers travelled to Mpumalanga to update their expertise through yet another course at the Malelane Veterinary Research station, which has provided invaluable training in the past. It's a tough course with a written exam – and a certificate for those who pass.



Gugu asks a question during training at the Malelane Veterinary Research Station. Mpumalanga

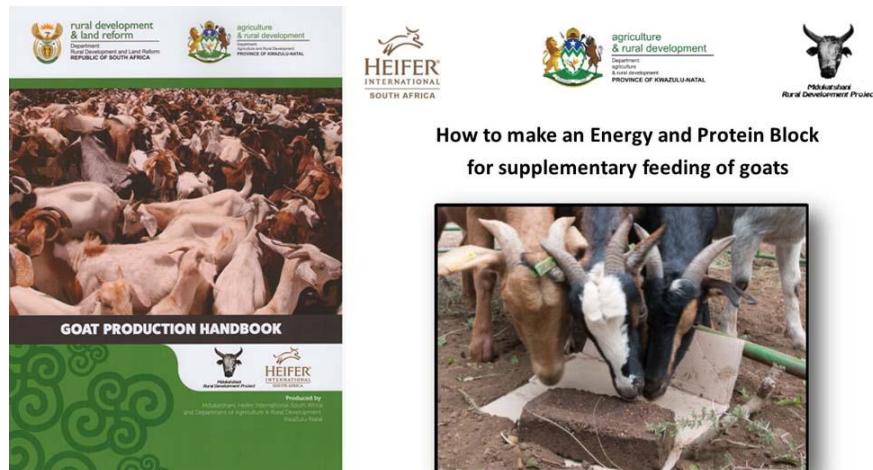


Relief! Dr Fappa Malan and Dr Willem Klein present Gugu with her fourth animal health certificate.

## TRAINING MATERIALS

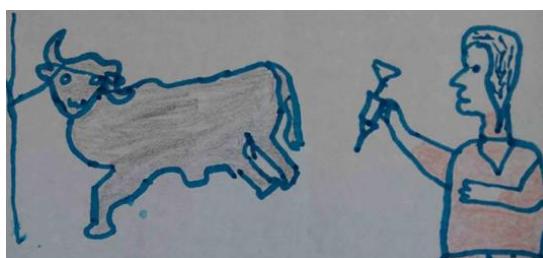


As part of our collaboration with the Goat Agribusiness Project, a Goat Production Handbook has been finalised, translated into Zulu and printed by the KZN Department of Agriculture. A set of training posters in a calendar package has also been developed and printed, as well as a simple easy-to-read brochure on how to make goat feeding blocks. All training materials are used by Mdukatshani and Heifer staff, as well as government officials and local farmers. They are available as free downloads on the Mdukatshani website [www.mdukatshani.com](http://www.mdukatshani.com).



## SCHOOLS

The Schools Programme has worked well this year, with a focus on youth clubs that meet after school. Using an illustrated story book developed by Deborah Ewing, the children learn about their own health and animal health, while practical demonstrations teach them the basics of animal health and disease identification to enable them to help with the livestock at home. An annual camp is part of the programme, and children from three schools are looking forward to a weekend in the Weenen Game Reserve in May.



A child's drawing of inoculation

## African ecosystems undergoing fundamental change

Climate change favours SA trees over grasslands

**A** group of South African scientists presented radical new research findings at a conference that threatens the future of the country's environment.

Unlike in the northern hemisphere, where climate change is causing a gradual shift in the timing of when plants flower and the start date of the seasonal cycle, the impact is not global warming that is causing the atmosphere increasing CO<sub>2</sub>, the concentration of which has increased by 40% since the Industrial Revolution. Instead, trees and grasses in South Africa are responding to the increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> by growing faster.

"Because trees were born under low atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, they are more efficient than grasses at using CO<sub>2</sub>," says Professor David Tilman, from the University of Minnesota, US, who spoke at the meeting.

Indeed simulation models developed by Tilman and his team predict that savannas will be replaced by tropical forests in South Africa by the end of the century. Land users have been warned that the "end of the world as we know it" is here.

"These banks on one side of the Tugela River are now dead because a familiar indicator of the environment is changing, threatening our ecosystems," says Mdukatshani.



Professor Paul Cheshire, Director of the Department of Environmental Sciences, Stellenbosch University, giving a presentation at the launch of the book "South Africa's response to global environmental change". Photo: Supplied

In addition to a global increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, the production of industrialisation, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, has led to a rise in temperatures that threaten the future of the environment.

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**Can goats assist in the country's growing problem of bush encroachment? Mdukatshani goat project was featured in the debate on climate change at South Africa's Science Forum in December**



**Degobane Mchunu  
Induna of Ncunjana Tribe**

**A long time ago you used to find grass in the fields.**

**The Ncunjana Nduna, Mfanunjani Mchunu was filmed talking about the impact of bush encroachment on the African livestock farmers who live in the Msinga Wenen area in the Tugela Valley**

## RESEARCH and INNOVATION

In December, Mdukatshani's work with goats featured in a session on climate change at South Africa's first international Science Forum held at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria. The two-day conference drew 1500 participants from 45 countries who came to exchange ideas on the interface between science, technology and innovation in building a better society. Science and Technology Minister, Naledi Pandor, said the conference was inspired by "open science" conferences in Europe, America and Japan, and her belief that to lead in innovation countries had to form partnerships. She hoped to make the forum a regular feature of the science calendar.

In February, staff travelled to the Grootfontein College of Agriculture, at Middelburg in the Karoo for discussions on a National Goat Policy. Grootfontein is one of the oldest and largest research stations in the country, and specialises in research on small stock. Without a National Policy on Goats, there are difficulties in obtaining funding for goat research and projects. Once a policy is finalised, however, both government and the Red Meat Producers (a parastatal) will put money into research and support for the goat industry.

Meanwhile Mdukatshani and Heifer are at work on plans for a Goat Innovation Platform that should be launched in April. This will bring stakeholders together along the goat value chain with the purpose of emerging relevant research topics to smallholder goat farmers.

## MDUKATSHANI - THE LAND TRANSFER

Mdukatshani lies on three farms with a total area of 2543 hectares – a property which was always sold as one because of the lack of permanent running water. The three farms were empty when the project arrived in 1975 – cleared seven years before under government forced removal policies. Because the farm had always been seen as tribal land, it had a number of controversial invisible boundaries, both inter-tribal and inter-ward, some of them still being contested today. A further complicating factor has been the claims of former residents, removed in 1969 – and the 'newcomers' who live on the land today.

The farm was bought for the project by the Chairman's Fund of the Anglo American Corporation, and from the start was run as a resource centre for the Mchunu and Mthembu people who lived on the boundary, with a management committee drawn largely from both tribes. Apartheid legislation set limits on everything from the number of residents allowed on the farm, to the number of Africans allowed on the Board of Trustees, but when democracy arrived the project not only initiated the District Land Reform Programme, but moved to have Mdukatshani returned to the ownership of the tribes. Now, 21 years later, the Department of Land Affairs has finally ironed out the formalities, and soon the Mchunu section of Mdukatshani will be handed over to the tribe's own landholding trust, the Bambanani Community Trust.

A formal handing-over ceremony is being planned, with a reflection on the 41 years of co-operation and joint management which have made Mdukatshani unique.



Songezo showing how a mini vice is used to hold wires while you work



The Masterpiece Exhibition  
Gcinani Duma



The Masterpiece Exhibition  
Mgongo Ngubane

### CRAFTS

It was a slow year for crafts as global recession had an impact on local and overseas orders. While we tried to share out the little work we had so that everybody earned something, our top wire weavers found themselves busy on commissions for exhibitions. In July five beaded bowls were exhibited at a "Masterpiece" Exhibition at Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA organised by American collector, David Arment, each large piece the result of two months of slow and painstaking threading.

In May Julia Meintjes and Candie Cruse spent two days on the farm in an informal workshop with the weavers discussing the financial realities of craft sales, ideas for future training and collaboration, and also plans for another Threads of Africa exhibition. In November, they were back, this time with Chris de Beer and Songezo Baleni of the Jewellery Department at DUT, the Durban University of Technology. Songezo is a master's student who is working on the use of traditional weaves in contemporary jewellery, and he wanted to sit with some of our veteran crafters who have been using traditional weaves in grass bangles for more than 40 years. The two-day workshop marked the start of a process of sharing ideas and training possibilities. From his side, Songezo showed the crafters methods and tools that could simplify their work, while the crafters showed him some traditional weaves he hadn't seen before.



## **PATHWAYS TO JUSTICE**

On February 13, 2016, Mayizekanye Mvelase, the Mbabane induna, was gunned down in broad daylight sitting with a group of men at a tuckshop near his home. He was the third Mthembu induna to be killed in six months, a tally that makes it difficult to find a replacement for the job.

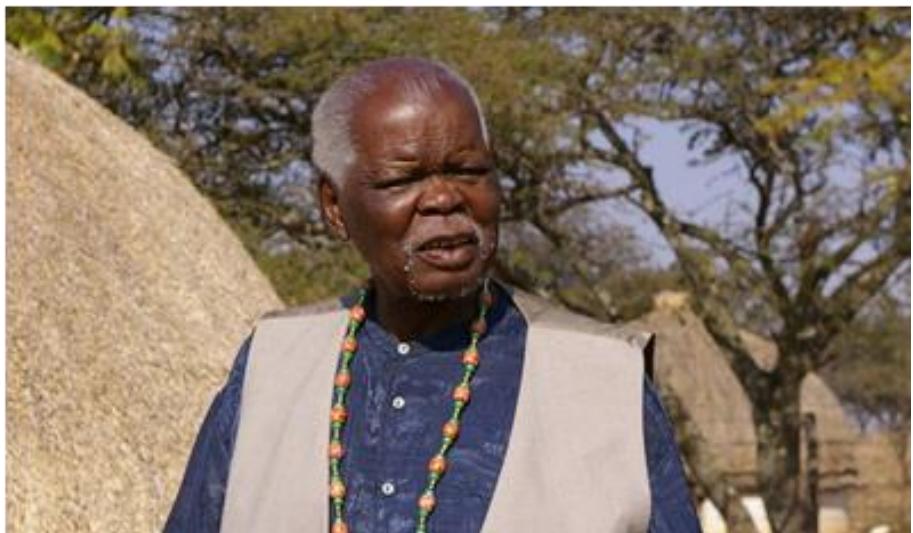
Mbabane is an Mthembu ward with a troubled history and its sporadic clan, family and taxi conflicts have often made headline news. Mvelase (69) knew the difficulties when he took on the job 15 years ago. He was born at Mbabane, as were his father and his grandfather. He knew the district well and he trusted his own strength, but when the attack came it was so unexpected that he tried to defend himself with an umbrella. When The Amabutho who attended his funeral they were making a statement of tribute and support, but why he was targeted remains unknown.

Mvelase was a regular contributor to Mdukatshani's work around land issues and traditional authorities, and only months before his death had attended a workshop on Pathways to Justice, a collaborative project between Mdukatshani and the Centre for Law and Society at the Faculty of Law, University of Cape Town.

Pathways is a research project that aims to enhance understanding of the relationship between the formal and traditional justice systems, and the real difficulties of accessing justice in a rural area, a subject close to the hearts of the Mchunu and Mthembu Traditional Councils. There have been two separate studies. During 2011-2012, Dr Sindiso Mnisi Weeks looked at the cases handled by a sample of six Msinga indunas, three Mchunu and three Mthembu, one of them Mayizekanye Mvelase. The other study involved docket research at four local police stations, Tugela Ferry, Muden, Weenen and Greytown, covering finalised cases for the period 2008 to 2009.

In October 2013, the results of the docket research were presented to 60 men and women from the Mchunu and Mthembu Traditional Councils when they met for a workshop at the Blue Waters Hotel in Durban. Despite their common interests, it was the first time the councils had met together, and conversations went on late into the night. The results of the docket research were no surprise. Of 1064 dockets examined, only 144 cases actually reached court, and although 111 accused were found guilty, only 33 were actually sentenced.

Following the comments and discussions at the workshop, Professor Diedre Smythe arranged follow-up interviews with magistrates and prosecutors, but although the Police Commissioner initially agreed to interviews with the police, this permission was subsequently withdrawn. Mvelase was among the indunas and councillors who attended the final Pathways workshop in May 2015, and although police were absent, magistrates and members of the Department of Justice sat in on the debates. The results of both studies are currently being prepared for publication.



### **NKOSI SIMAKADE MCHUNU**

More than one tribe went into mourning when Simakade Mchunu, the Mchunu Nkosi, died on August 22, 2015, aged 92. He had led his people for 71 years, turbulent years of conflict and change which he had faced with a steadiness that gave courage to his nation. Although he had been increasingly frail, everyone wanted him to live forever. He was a great man, known as a voice for caution and reason, and loved for his faith, his humour and his humility. An estimated 10 000 people attended his memorial service, with five hours of speeches marked by the laughter and warmth of the anecdotes, and a pervading sense of loss. ‘He was also ours’ said women from neighbouring tribes. ‘He was Nkosi for everyone.’

Many felt his death marked the passing of an era. He had lived through the challenges of many changing governments, seeing the Union of South Africa become the apartheid Republic, with its impacts on his people. When democracy arrived in 1994 he had already been Nkosi for 50 years. ‘Voting is liking courting – you follow your heart’ he told his people. ‘If you want to vote IFP vote IFP, and you want to vote ANC vote ANC but don’t bring your quarrels to the tribe.’

Simakade was a strong supporter of Mdukatshani, clearing many obstacles out of the way, and always ready to lend an ear to our problems. A devout man, with no interest in power, one of the many gifts he gave his people was a peaceful succession to the leadership. Ten years ago he formally handed over his administration of the tribe to his son, Ngangendhlovu, who had been educated for the purpose, and who experienced leader when he is officially inaugurated as the new Nkosi later this year.



**For days Mchunu women arrived at the royal kraal carrying tributes of wood for the funeral**