



MDUKATSHANI
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Annual Report 2017





Goats in a graveyard stand on tiptoe to browse. They have been ritual animals for 10 000 years, but little is known of their biology.

CONTENTS	
	Page
Tête-à-tête in Tete	4
Hard Statistics	6
The Big Arena	7
Auctions, Sales and the Unseen Trade	8
The Water Carriers	10
A Veterinary Service	11
The Family Chicken	14
A Sagging Bandwagon	15
The Traditional Crafters	16
The Leatherwork Project	17
Conferences, Presentations and Workshops	18
Research	19
Firewood	20
The Schools Project	21
Training Materials...	22
...and Training	23
Obituaries	24

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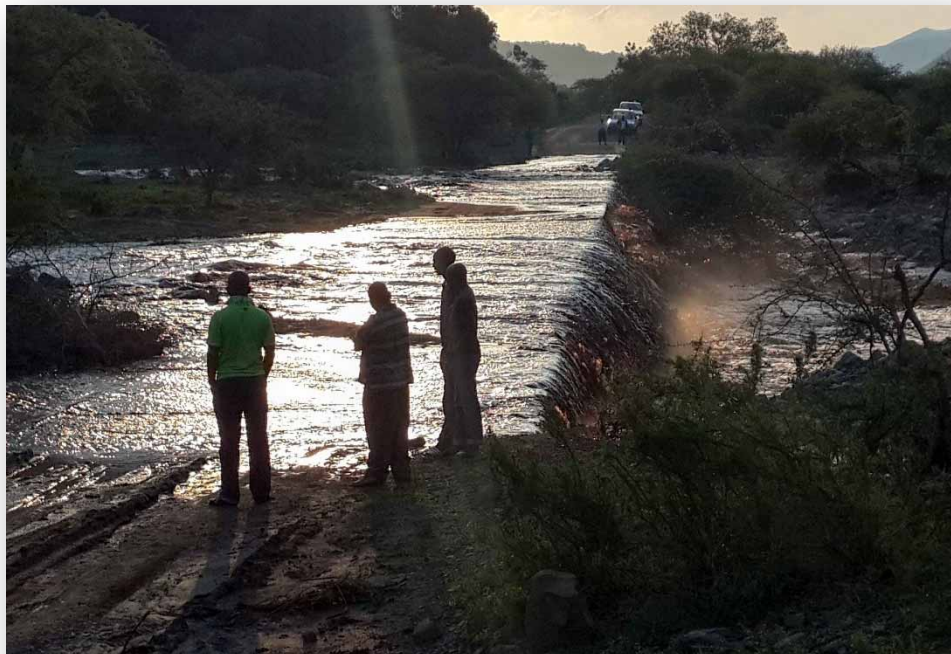
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The Skehlinge River, January 2018



The Skehlinge River, July 2018

The Skehlinge river bisects Mdukatshani but like most thornveld rivers it only runs sporadically after storms. In January the causeway was impassable, but by July it was so dry local women were digging in the river bed for water.

Mdukatshani's Vision

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

Mdukatshani's Projects

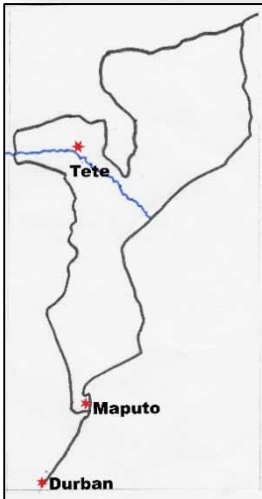
Increasing women and youth involvement in livestock and value-adding activities through prioritizing women-owned livestock and income-generating activities in order to create wealth for the poorest. Improving livestock productivity of farmers in Msinga by intervening in livestock health systems supporting local youth in enhancing value chains leading to commercialisation of local herds. Promoting health and knowledge transfer in Grade 5 and 6 school children through school clubs. A craft project using beads, metal wires and local grass to create jewellery and art for the local and international market.



Dry river beds are used as roads.



A truck loaded with wood outside Tete.



Goats arrived by truck, motorbike and bicycle for the twice weekly livestock fair 80 km from Tete. The animals seemed very calm despite the travel arrangements, three legs tied together, one leg free.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE in TETE

It seemed a good idea at the time. A goat abattoir at Msinga. It was one way to modernise the goat farming sector...wasn't it? Wasn't it? In February 2016 the KZN Premier, Senzo Mchunu, arrived at Msinga to turn the first sod, while ADA, the Agribusiness Development Agency, was told to start building. A year later ADA asked for help. They needed specifications, and there didn't seem to be a goat abattoir anywhere. Could we use our NGO contacts to find one and arrange a visit? There were no goat abattoirs in South Africa ... or Namibia ... or Botswana ... or Lesotho... or Zimbabwe... At last we found one in Mozambique. Great. Right next door. Umm.

Tete lies on the Zambezi River more than 300 km from the sea. For a thousand years it has been a trading post, a small riverine settlement with access to a vast, lightly populated interior. It is still wild country. Flying in on the three-times-a-week flight you look down on a landscape of empty woodland covered in baobabs. There are baobabs everywhere. Along the roads. In the villages. In the town. It's not a big town, but it is a busy one, strategically placed just a two-hour drive away from the giant Cabora Bassa Dam, with dusty roads linking the borders of Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. Once Tete traded slaves, ivory and gold. Today its business is more prosaic. There are coalfields not far away, and there are goats. The goats are a delicacy, and on the menu of every hotel and eating house in the town, boiled, roasted, or served as specialities, like TinTins - goat testicles. Wherever we could on the trip we ordered goat meat, which was very good.





The Samora Machel bridge dominates the town which is both sides of the river.



We found the shoreline of Cabora Bassa empty apart from a rotting metal wreck.



Safe waters for washing and swimming in the Shire River outside the town.



The banks of the Zambezi are deserted because of the crocodile population.

Mozambique is a country with 42 languages, and the Governor of Tete Province, Paulo Auade, welcomed us in Portuguese, before handing us over to Dr. Claudio Gule, the Head of the Provincial Livestock Section. Security was tight. Before we saw the Governor, we were relieved of keys, phones and cameras which were locked in a sealed room. Was this a reminder of the lawlessness still endemic in the “notoriously disturbed Zambezi Valley”? Beyond the town we encountered police roadblocks, and at each place we visited were formally introduced to the chief of police, the District Commissioner, and the heads of the veterinary and agricultural departments.

Our tour started at Canal Foods, a meat processing plant where goat carcasses are frozen to be sold whole, five to a box, or are prepared as cuts which are plastic-wrapped for sale to supermarkets and shops. Most of the meat is sent by road to Maputo, the capital of Mozambique - an incredible 18 hour drive away. The abattoir which supplies Canal Foods lies in a semi-industrial area on the opposite side of the river and handles both cattle and goats. In a complex, highly industrialized process animals are slaughtered halal, and a state vet inspects each carcass before it is given a seal of approval. During festive periods the abattoir can handle 300 goats a day, although generally it takes 100 a week. Offal is sold to traders, and the skins go to a local crocodile farm as feed.

The abattoir buys its goats at a livestock fair about an hour's drive from Cabora Bassa. The fair is an initiative piloted by government, with cattle, goats, sheep, chickens and guinea fowl for sale, as well as dried fish, millet, peanuts, vegetables, and goat meat, fresh or cooked. There is no demand for goats for ritual. Goats are used for meat, and prices are low – R300 for a female that would fetch R1 200 in South Africa. We returned home with much food for thought. And our verdict on the abattoir? We are not ready yet. (The group who visited Tete included Mandlakayisa Hlela, Xolani Qwabe, Sanele Mseko and Khetheyakhe Ngubane, all of the Agribusiness Development Agency, Dumisani Mtshali from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, Marisia Geraci of Heifer Project South Africa, and Rauri Alcock and Gugu Mbatha of Mdukathshani).



Carlos from Canal Foods shows us round the processing plant.



Tintins. Goat testicles.



Tripe stuffed with liver.



Some statistics are easily accessible. These dancers are celebrating a coming-of age, or *memulo*, each wearing a traditional pleated leather skirt made of 13 goat hides. If a skirt is made of cow hide, goat hide must be included, and the ratio is one to three.

HARD STATISTICS

How many goats are there in South Africa? In KwaZulu-Natal?
 How many are sold annually? Bartered? Eaten? Sacrificed?
 How many died in the drought?
 Does anyone know?
 How do you keep count?

The lack of hard statistics worried the scientists who attended the Drought Ecology Workshop at Hoedspruit in November (See page 17). It worries government. It worries everyone. The informal market is a slippery place if you're looking for data that holds fast and won't budge. Take the first question on the list. According to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) there are an estimated 5 478 000 goats in South Africa*. According to STATS SA there are 7 830 644**. Both are government departments. Who is right? In KwaZulu-Natal DAFF estimates there are 727 877 goats, while StatsSA says there are 1 930 175. That's a difference of more than 1 000 000 goats. Does it matter?

Five years ago, we began to census the agricultural households around each diptank where we were working at Msinga, a census which has steadily expanded to cover 21 000 farmers at 65 diptanks in five district municipalities. Not all the farmers own goats, but a sample of "trade" over the December holiday period produced interesting results. A total of 5634 farmers with 95 3487 goats sold, slaughtered or exchanged 19 982 goats with a total value of R23 978 400.

Although the census is kept as simple as possible, there are a lot of ifs and buts. For a start nobody counts their goats. Not exactly. If an animal is missing, the farmer knows at once. He doesn't have to do a count. This means totals are approximate – and never include the kids. If the kids are added in the totals would double. Then there are rituals and exchanges. Goats are used for homecomings and house-warmings, for births and deaths, for tomb unveilings, memorials, thanksgivings, cleansings, weddings, engagements, and comings-of-age. They are used as payment for lobola, for fines, penalties and compensation - invisible transactions in an invisible market that shows no sign of slowing down but is almost impossible to measure.

* Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2017: A profile of the South African Goat Value Chain.

** STATS SA Community Survey – Rural Households 2016.



The annual census covers 21 000 farmers from 65 diptank areas. Here Ntombizodwa Khumalo (right) completes a questionnaire with Bongekile Ndlovu of Ncunjane, Uthukela Municipality.

THE GOAT AGRIBUSINESS PROJECT (GAP)

Mdukatshani's work with goats is part of GAP, a five-year programme run as a partnership between Mdukatshani, Heifer Project South Africa, the national Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, and the KwaZulu Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. GAP targets farmers in five district municipalities in Natal and Zululand and aims at improving food security and rural livelihoods. More detailed reports on GAP appear regularly on our website. www.gapkzn.co.za



THE BIG ARENA

It was a scary place for young country goats who had never been to the city. Some took one look at the arena and tried to bolt for home. Others munched the aloes that were there for decoration, making the most of their moment in the spotlight, before being returned to the holding pens at the back. This was the first Indigenous Veld Goat Auction held at the Royal Show, with 200 breeding stock on offer, 50 from our farmers in the Jozini and Msinga areas. The auction was organised by the KZN Indigenous Veld Goats Club, which admitted that the animals were “not registerable but functionally efficient.” This was another way of saying they might not be aristocrats, but they had all the qualities of a genetic pool adapted to harsh conditions. Look at those long hind legs, for example. Other breeds may claim a better pedigree – but only veld goats can stand on tiptoe to browse.

You didn't have to extol the virtues of the veld goat to the buyers who had come to the Show in search of breeding stock. Bids for one ram went up to R8 500,00, which brought a round of applause from the crowd, while a group of pregnant females from Msinga sold for R1 700 each, another record. Once again, the auction did more than sell goats. After the sale our staff was kept busy exchanging contact details with breeders who wanted to buy direct from goat owners in future.

This year more than 129 000 people visited the Show, and our stand won Gold for a display that included live goats, training materials, mini feeding blocks, and a looped video presentation of the project. Staff worked long hours, answering the many questions of the crowds that queued at our stand, but they were encouraged by the real interest in goats.





Homestead children help in the goat kraal.



Mvezelwa Mchunu

AUCTIONS, SALES and THE UNSEEN TRADE

How does a rural black farmer find customers for his goats? Through advertising? Radio? Pension Days? The bush telegraph? Last year Mvezelwa Mchunu sold 70 goats, twelve at an auction at Weenen. It was his first experience of the formal market and he grins, remembering. Twelve goats! All at the same time! “And high prices,” he says. “Fourteen hundred to fifteen hundred.” He is still marvelling. He had never considered goats as more than an emergency saving scheme for times of hardship. But now...now...

Mchunu grew up with goats, but like all country boys, he saw his future in the city. And he was lucky. He was 22 when he found a secure job with a fibreglass company in Gauteng. He is proud of his training. “If you want a swimming pool, call me!” he says. He had been working ten years when “the company was falling down”, and he returned home without a job. “February 2016.” He won’t forget the date. Back at home he had a wife, two children and a widowed mother. The family goat flock was an investment of sorts, but it was hard to find sales when you lived off the beaten track. His sister found a customer for him. Neighbours bought. Then came the auction that opened his mind to possibilities. The auction was followed by a sale. Another 13 goats sold.

OK Mchunu. Let’s do the sums. If 25 goats were sold at formal outlets - how did you sell the rest? “Last week?” It’s the present he’s involved in, not the past. Last week he sold five to Simon from Durban, and two to that guy from Empangeni who said he would soon be back for more.



Jozini Auction



Msinga Auction



Auction at Debe, the King Cetshwayo Municipality.



A woman harnesses her goats at Nongoma's Stop-the-Nonsense sales yard, named for the strength of the cement enclosure. Portable metal gates have made it possible for Livestock Associations to erect a sales yard anywhere, like the site below of an informal sale outside Nongoma.



That's the problem with the unseen trade. There's no way to make a measure. The goats Mchunu sells through formal outlets are reflected in sales, but not the goats he sells from home. Yet the sales are not unconnected. Durban is three hours' drive away. Empangeni almost five. How did buyers from such distant places find him? Mchunu shrugs. They met our staff at auctions and asked for contact details. That's another benefit of auctions that can't be measured - the growing network of buyers and sellers that operate direct from the rural areas.

When the first big goat auction took place at Msinga in 2013, everyone had a lot to learn. There were more than 2000 goats on offer, and at the end of the day prices were down to R50 a goat. Owners wanted to sell their animals one by one, not in lots, and it was dark before the last goat was led into the ring. There had to be a rethink. There had been too many goats, and too many disappointed people. Yet the auction had served its purpose. It had set prices, so speculators could no longer take advantage of local farmers, it had alerted buyers to the number and quality of goats in the area, and it had alerted tribal and municipal authorities to the potential of farming goats.

Although auctions are a necessary step in commercializing goats, they are expensive to set up and many aspects are still experimental. One change in the past year has been the introduction of sales. A sale is different from an auction. The one needs an auctioneer who charges commission. The other needs a set of 12 metal gates. The gates are portable, can be erected anywhere, and buyers and sellers meet direct, so sales are free of commission. In the past year 10 auctions and 16 sales were held in Msinga, Jozini, Nongoma, Hlabisa and the Debe area of the King Cetshwayo Municipality, raising R8 282 405 from the sale of 6704 goats. But the system is not without challenges. Because buyers feel vulnerable carrying cash to the venues they have asked for alternative systems for paying the farmers, electronically or otherwise, and we are looking for solutions that are innovative and safe.



During the year seven Livestock Associations were presented with gates which they make available for informal sales, which are growing in popularity. Above: A sale under way at Hlabisa. Right: A sangoma with a goat bought at one of the Weenen monthly sales.



Credit Sinenhlanhla Khoza



THE WATER CARRIERS

This year nobody is protesting. They've given up. If you want water, you carry it. Up and down. Morning and afternoon. Children help, loading containers onto wheelbarrows or donkeys, carrying small plastic buckets on their heads. Water for washing, drinking, cooking. Water for the animals. It's a task that takes hours out of the day. Once the municipal water tankers used to deliver a weekly ration. Now the tankers appear erratically, if at all, and there's a charge for the water they deliver – R25 to R30 to fill a 160-litre blue plastic *umphongolo* which doesn't go far in a big family. Nobody seems to know how many rural households are dependent on tanker deliveries. Summer and winter. Wet years and dry. If the municipalities have a figure, they're not sharing, but one thing is clear: They are finding it impossible to cope. There are not enough tankers to go around, pumps break down, taps run dry – and the water carriers go on carrying water.



A VETERINARY SERVICE



**There are 2400 trained veterinarians in South Africa.
Only 215 work for the state – and few in rural areas.
So, what does a small farmer do when an animal sickens?
Watch it die?**

It costs more to train a vet than train a doctor. Government spends R260 000 a year training each new vet, and in an attempt to claim a return on its investment, it has introduced compulsory community service for newly qualified vets. It's a good programme, but it won't help small farmers like Wilson Ndebele, a foreman at Tugela Ferry who was frantic when he caught sight of our driver loading cement at Build-It. How could he get in touch with Gugu? One of his goats had died. Two were sickening. He had done a post mortem on the dead goat, but couldn't raise Gugu on his phone. He pulled out his mobile. Here was the photograph he had been trying to send through. If Gugu could diagnose what was wrong, he might stop the disease from spreading.

Gugu was working out of range, but when she picked up the photograph she recognised the symptoms at once. The goat had died of *Pasteurella*, a lung infection. If Ndebele dosed the two sick goats with an antibiotic, and then used Multivax P to vaccinate his flock, he ought to have no further trouble.





Ms Promise Yengwa was one of the shopkeepers who went to Malelane in September to do a training course in basic animal health. Promise and her husband, Mr. Siphephelo Yengwa, own the Sonomo Agri Producers shop in Nkandla, which is now one of GAP's Agrivet outlets. Here Promise is seen with Nkandla fieldworker Sithembiso Nxumalo.



Some of the Agrivet shops are big, some are small, like the Agrivet shop (above) in Jozini town. The large Esiqiwini Hlabisa Chemist-Agrivet shop (left) is owned by Mr Langa Mthethwa who was another shop owner who graduated with a certificate in basic animal health care from the Malelane MSD Learning Academy.

Gugu is not a trained vet. Nor are our five staff members, nor the 156 paravets who are now qualified to carry vet kits, yet between them they offer the only animal health service available to thousands of small farmers in the five district municipalities where the GAP project is at work: Umzinyathi, Uthukela, King Cetshwayo, Mkhanyakude, and Zululand. This would remain true even if the number of state vets doubled, for their duties are limited to the control of serious diseases like rabies, foot-and-mouth or anthrax. They can't help with Pasteurella, or heartwater, or mange or worms. These are common problems that fall under the heading of basic animal health care, a subject on which Gugu is an expert.

She started her training at the Malelane Academy of Learning in 2008 and six certificates later is a trainer herself, teaching basic animal health to farmers, paravets, government technicians, Livestock Associations, and shop owners. The shop owners are a new initiative and a crucial part of farmer support. It's difficult to find medicines in rural areas, and there's no guarantee that those on the shelves of local shops have been kept refrigerated or have not expired. To meet the need for cheap and effective veterinary supplies in outlying areas the project started looking for existing shops in small centres, like Nqutu and Nkandla. Today there are 11 Agrivet shops across the project area. After signing an agreement, each shop owner is given a fridge, posters, books, training materials, and of course, veterinary supplies. In addition, they are offered training and four shop owners were among the group of 30 staff and fieldworkers who went to Malelane in September.



Staff and fieldworkers from Mdukatshani and Heifer Project South Africa settle down to an intensive course on basic animal health care. They were going to earn praise from their lecturers as the highest scoring group to pass through the Academy.



The course includes farm visits and practical demonstrations like this dissection of a cow.

Malelane is close to the Kruger National Park in Mpumalanga, a long way from KwaZulu-Natal. However, some of our staff already know the place well, for the MSD Malelane Learning Academy is the only place in the country that offers training in basic animal health care.

The course is taught by Dr Willem Kleyn, Dr Tom Strydom and Dr Francois Malan, and lectures are supplemented by a farm visit and practical demonstrations. The course covers the cause of disease and treatment of both cattle and small stock, and at the end of the week there is an exam to test what the students have learnt. The September group were serious about their studies, passing their tests with an average mark of 80% which made them the highest scoring class ever taught at the Academy.



The MSD Academy arranged for the students to attend the dissection of a sick goat closer to home, in Dundee.



The group stayed at a lodge where, to their delight, an elephant appeared every afternoon in search of oranges.



Nesting boxes at a Nongoma home.



Children at Kopi, Msinga, fetch water to vaccinate fowls.

THE FAMILY CHICKEN

The South African commercial poultry industry will remember 2017 for the arrival of bird flu, the highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza. It was first detected in Mpumalanga in June, and by October had spread to five other provinces, including KwaZulu-Natal. Before the outbreak was under control more than 4 000 000 birds had been culled, wiping out more than 15% of the country's layer hens. Although 23 large commercial farms were affected, there were no reports of bird flu in the rural areas where the project operates, and our paravets and field staff continued their work on monthly vaccinations against Newcastle disease, which remains the main threat to the home flock.

When we arrived at Mdukatshani in 1975 it was rare to see a fowl in a homestead yard. Newcastle disease had decimated local chickens, and farmers were in despair of trying again. They had no idea how to prevent the disease, which reappeared regularly over the years whenever home flocks had built up numbers. Today everybody knows about vaccination, and it is one of the most popular services offered by our field staff. Because doses come in quantities of 1000 at a time, it is difficult for a woman who owns 20 fowls to get the medicine to dose her birds herself. Instead the women work in groups, choosing a homestead and a day when all the local chickens can be brought in for their monthly vaccination. Because of the difficulty of estimating costs for different numbers of fowls, the farmers pay a standard fee of five rand which covers the costs of dosing ten chickens or thirty.



According to Statistics South Africa, 310 000 rural households in KwaZulu-Natal own 6 400 000 chickens. Here are four of them, queueing up for vaccination.



Most rural households in KZN own less than 10 goats.

A SAGGING BANDWAGON

Everyone wants to do goats. Taxi owners. Businessmen. Economists. Lawyers. Teachers. Pastors. Politicians. Municipalities. Parastatals. Goats are easy, aren't they? They self-herd, eat anything, and the market is limitless. In the past year the project has felt the pressure of the sudden interest in goats, with almost daily queries on how to set up projects, big, small and impossible. With a shrinking economy and budget cuts, goats have become a staple of business plans, proposals, targets and dreams. Think big, is the message. Change the system. Commercialize. Set up large scale farmers with flocks of 600. Set up medium scale farmers with flocks of 150. Build feed lots...Abattoirs...On paper the calculations look good, but will the projects be viable when real goats are placed on the ground? There has been little research on indigenous goats, and the animals are full of surprises. It is rare to find a flock of 100, for example. Kid mortality is high – between 60% and 80% – and most flocks collapse from worm loads when they reach about 80 animals. These are just some of the constraints which are in need of research and which make goats a hazardous business. According to Stats SA there are 175 222 goat owning households in KZN, and the number keeps growing. However, 69% of these households own between one and ten goats. Where should funding priorities lie when budgets are being slashed? With helping the big guys or growing the small? At the moment the state has no policy on how, when and why to support the increasing number of goat projects coming up at every level of government. Goat farming is still in an experimental phase, and unless this is recognized, there are going to be failures that will adversely affect the real potential of this area of agriculture.



Imported Namibian goats, on sale at Umlazi near Durban, have limited shelf life and have to be sold quickly.



It takes two weeks to tan a cowhide, scraping off the fat and hair to give it a surface like shammy leather. Goat hides are easier, and a three-day soak in a drum of water will help to remove the hair.



THE TRADITIONAL CRAFTERS

The South African hide market is in free fall. Last year the price of cattle hides dropped 50%, while the S.A.Skin, Hide and Leather Council reported that since 2012 “four or five” of the country’s largest tanneries had closed down or gone into liquidation. That’s the formal market. In the informal market prices hold steady. A tanned cowskin still costs R50 a tanned goat hide about R30. Local crafters work the skins into traditional items for both ritual and ceremonial occasions. The demand is high and so are the prices. A pleated leather marriage skirt, or *isidwaba*, sells for R1 600, a shield for R500, and a complete skin outfit for a man costs at least R3 000.



Phambekile Sithole, Sibalweni



Sebenzile Dladla, Mashunka



SeQediwe Majozi, Ngongolo



Qinisile Dlamini, Ncunjane



Leatherworkers train at Hillcrest on industrial machines, a world away from the simple awl used by traditional crafters at home. Right: Students triumphant with their finished products.



THE LEATHERWORK PROJECT

In Tete discarded goatskins are thrown to the crocodiles. In the rural areas of KZN they are worked by crafters or used as floormats. When GAP started its leatherwork project three years ago, it was unaware of the pitfalls that lay ahead. The intention was to add value to the goat chain by processing hides into quality leatherwork for the commercial and tourist market. The first difficulty was the tanning process. To obtain leather of export quality hides have to be treated with dangerous chemicals. After an initial training we decided for safety reasons to train our students on cheap Nguni offcuts and tanned impala hides bought from Afritan Tannery in Dundee. The next problem was industrial machines to stitch leather, and SETA-approved trainers. Gradually the problems are being overcome and today, with the help of Ubucubu Home Industries 40 young men and women have completed their basic training at Hillcrest and returned home with sewing kits. Finding safe storage for industrial machines remains a problem, and although local municipalities agreed to take on the leatherwork as economic development projects, most have been busy with more pressing problems. At present one machine is stored at the Nkandla Municipality offices, another in the Jozini Tribal Authority building, while at Msinga leatherworkers can use the machines at the Mdukathshani office, or the home of a local trainer.





Taking a look at drought. Scientists on a field trip to the Kruger National Park during the Drought Ecology Workshop organised by the National Research Foundation and the South African Environmental Observation Network.

CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS and WORKSHOPS

There was still no sign of summer rain when scientists gathered for a Drought Ecology Workshop at the Wits Rural Facility in Limpopo in late November 2017. And there was little good news from Johan Malherbe, a climatologist at the CSIR, who told the workshop that droughts would be more regular in future, and we should expect drought in five-year cycles, instead of seven to ten as in the past. The workshop was arranged by the National Research Foundation and the South African Environmental Observation Network in an effort to understand the impact of drought on animals, vegetation and farming systems across South Africa.

At home at Msinga reedbeds had been demolished by hungry cattle, no fish had spawned for the third year in a row, and even the jumping beans were affected, so few dropping from the Tamboti trees we could count them. It was more difficult counting stock losses due to the drought, although we tried. Using a census of 2400 families at eight dip tanks we found cattle farmers had lost 43% of their herds in the previous three years, compared to goat owners who only lost 29% of their animals. Extrapolated across the province, our figures showed African farmers had lost R14 billion worth of cattle and R 4 billion worth of goats between 2014 and 2016.

The Drought Workshop was just one of the many events to which our staff contributed over the year. These include a Colloquium on the future of agriculture in KZN organised by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, a summit on Climate Smart Agriculture, organised by the South African Extension and Advisory Services, a Goat Agribusiness conference organised by Goats Unlimited, as well as meetings of Agriparks, the Indigenous Goat Association, and the Meat Goat Working Group in faraway Middelburg in the Cape.

The following rainfall figures show Msinga is not yet free of drought.

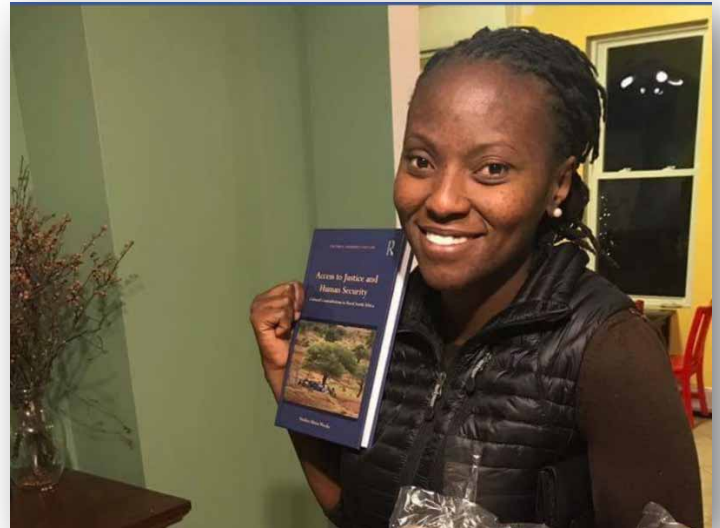
2013 – 673 mm
 2014 – 473 mm
 2015 - 343 mm
 2016 – 574 mm
 2017 – 571 mm



“Climate-smart Agriculture, Innovation and Commercialization of Small Scale Farmers” was the theme of the annual summit of the South African Extension and Advisory Services, held at Mayville, Durban in March 2018.

RESEARCH

When Sindiso Mnisi Weekes first visited Mdukatshani in October 2009, she was investigating the possibility of studying “how traditional courts *actually* work.” At the time she was a senior researcher in the law department at UCT with no intention of writing a book. Over the next few years Sindiso would become a familiar and welcome visitor at Msinga, sitting in on indunas’ courts”, most of them under thorn trees. Sindiso is now an Assistant Professor in Public Policy of Excluded Populations at the University of Massachusetts in the USA, but she remains a regular visitor to South Africa, and was back in May to launch the book that grew out of her Msinga research: *Access to Justice and Human Security – Cultural Contradictions in Rural South Africa*. The book is part of the Routledge series on Cultural Diversity and Law, and although it is an academic work, she made sure a copy was delivered to everyone at Msinga who helped with the research, together with a letter saying thank you.



Credit: Sindiso Mnisi



In September 2016 Julia Müller visited Mdukatshani with a party of 20 young German geography students whose trip to South Africa had been sponsored by our long-time funder, Misereor. In April 2017 Julia was back to do three months fieldwork for her Master’s degree at Cologne University in Germany. Julia’s special interest is small scale agriculture and the role of women, and she set out to answer the question: *Can traditional cultural and societal structures be reconciled with sustaining and safeguarding womens’ livelihoods?* Julia learnt some of the answers at first hand, living with a local family and learning to bath in a basin of water. She made many contributions to the project during her stay, and worked hard on the preparation of a baseline questionnaire on poverty and livelihoods, which she is discussing here with Professor Ben Cousins of the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) at the University of the Western Cape.

Every year our teams of Community Animal Health workers census 21 000 families in 65 dip tank areas, an exercise that generates mountains of paper. The annual livestock census is short and quick. The new baseline questionnaire on which Julia worked is a little longer, covering 15 pages and taking three hours to complete. The CAHWs are paid for each completed sheet and interview, and although over time the questionnaires will provide valuable information on rural households, doing a census is an expensive undertaking. It could also be a waste of time if there is nobody to make sense of the accumulated data, so the project has been glad to welcome Sibusiso Khuzwayo, who joins the Mdukatshani-HPSA team as Monitoring and Evaluation Co-ordinator, in charge of data collection and analysis. Here Sibusiso is seen at a Weenen homestead discussing a trial on kid mortality.





FIREWOOD

Anyone out there interested in doing a study on firewood? Forty years ago, Marc Best, a young Master's student from UCT, spent time at Mdukatshani studying firewood consumption at Mashunka, one of the communities adjoining the farm. The results appeared in his dissertation *The Consumption of Energy for Domestic Use in Three African Villages*. At the time the supply of firewood was considered "one of the most important problems facing mankind today"*. That may have changed for the world at large, but for the people of the Tugela Valley the need for firewood is a daily concern.

Yes, ESKOM was meant to make a difference. But has electricity replaced the need for firewood? Mashunka is a good place to ask. It was one of the first areas at Msinga to get electricity, and when the planners arrived in 2002 they said it would take a year. They hadn't expected the solid rock surface that would have to be drilled for their poles. One year became two, became three.... In 2005 Mashunka lit up. At last there was light in the darkness. But while ESKOM brought light, it didn't bring warmth, and today almost every home on the mountain continues to cook on wood**.

Forty years ago, Marc Best found a Mashunka home used an average of 4824 kgs of wood a year. Local women collected wood three times a week, carrying headloads that weighed an average of 20,6 kgs. Has any of this changed? It should be easy to find out. Many of the women Marc interviewed 40 years ago are still here. Nozi, Hlekelaphi, MaNene, KaMasoka, MaNdimande.... They are no longer pretty *makotis* wearing the ochre headdresses that made balancing a headload so difficult. They are now grandmothers with aching joints. But one thing hasn't changed. They all still cook on wood.

* *Firewood Crops*, U.S. Academy of Sciences, 1980.

** According to Stats SA, 30% of KZN rural households and 47% of Limpopo rural households still cook on wood.





Considering a question together. Nelisiwe Mvelase and her son at an Animal Health Club Parents' Day at Mathintha School. Parents are closely involved with the clubs. Below: Children give a demonstration on how to mix ingredients for feed blocks.



THE SCHOOLS PROJECT

Mdukatsani did not expect the letter of "greatfull thanks" that came from the Ntombiyodumo Primary School after the 2017 school camp. The school thanked us for exposing their learners to "the agricultural stream which is animal farming. This stream is mostly considered as lesser or inferior than other streams. That tendency is never good because we are living out of farming, and nothing can live without farming. As we are teaching them it's not that they will all become doctors, teachers, nurses etc. it is also not that they will all become employed. Some of them will become commercial farmers or subsistence farmers because of the information they gained during your stay at Ntombiyodumo. This has been a great privilege to them because we, Africans are now living in a no-job country, so this exposure may lead them to being self-employed."

When the schools project was first developed in 2010, it involved learners from Grades 5-7 in researching and co-authoring fact-based story books about life in Msinga. The project was piloted as a curriculum-based programme focused on Natural Science, although the level of support from the educational authorities has been less than hoped-for. Deborah Ewing, our child participation specialist, is currently at work revising and rewriting the storybooks and facilitators guides for Grades 5 and 6.



Nkosikhona Mkhize and Gugu Mthethwa join their children for an Animal Health Club Parents' Day at Ntombiyodumo School.



How is knowledge transferred between parent and child? Phikisile Dladla takes part in a review of the question at Mathintha School.



There were 21 contributors to the new Indigenous Goat Production Handbook. Here is one of them, out in the field.



Buhle Ntombela, the Nkandla fieldworker, shows how GAP training materials can be accessed on our website by phone.

TRAINING MATERIALS...

Ten years ago we started working with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) on a project to develop training materials on cattle, goat and chicken production. Much has changed since our first publications appeared, and in the past year a team has been at work rewriting and revising the material, incorporating new knowledge, new ideas, and the working experience of extension and veterinary staff. First to be revised were the training calendars which frame much of the theory of our livestock training. These have been followed by a new edition of the Indigenous Goat Production Handbook which was extensively rewritten and expanded to help farmers commercialize their goats. The indigenous cattle and chicken books are now being revised on the basis of feedback from those who have used the books for training. They include lecturers from the Mangosutho University of Technology who use our materials to train extension and departmental staff. All publications are printed in Zulu and English.

As we have increased the spread and volume of our training materials it has become necessary to register a trademark, *Abafuyi Media*. This does not change the status of our publications, which are available free for project and departmental staff, and are available to farmers on our webs www.gapkzn.co.za. However, the trademark gives GAP the ability to block third parties who try to use the materials for financial gain, or don't give GAP suitable acknowledgement.





Mdukatsani and HPSA staff on a week's retreat in Zululand learning to follow the curriculum of the new training materials. Every year the project trains thousands of small farmers at hundreds of training events in five municipalities in rural KZN.

....AND TRAINING

During the year the Mdukatsani and HPSA staff had three combined retreats to learn how to use the new training manuals which will guide their work out in the field. Some training events take place in halls, others in the shade of a tree, but big or small, most involve women who have had little chance of learning before. Although they lead busy lives, collecting water, collecting wood and running large households, give them a chance to learn, and they are eager students, willing to walk long distances to listen to lectures or attend demonstrations. While they are accustomed to responsibility, it's a new idea, thinking of themselves as farmers, so the training is doing more than transfer information – it is opening up new horizons. In addition to the thousands who attend our training events every year, 2924 women are currently taking part in experiments on goat nutrition and productivity based in their home yards.



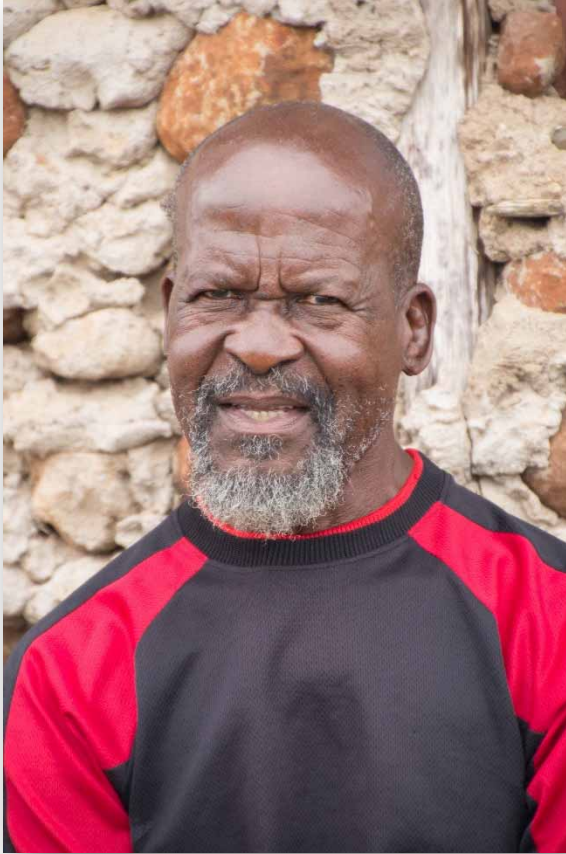
Some trainings are big, some trainings small. Here Sindi Ngubane and Mphephethe Masondo train a group at a dip tank at Kopi, Msinga.



If it rains the training is moved indoors. Women crowd onto mats in the Mdluli home at Hlabisa for a training by Nokuthula Ntimeni.



Women farmers attend a demonstration on goat health by local CAHWs at Jozini.



Ndlawana Mvelase was alone at home at Ngubo, Msinga when he was shot and killed on June 13, 2017. His death sent shockwaves around city hostels where he had recently retired as chief induna, representing the men of many tribes. A short, compact man, Mvelase had a natural authority that won him widespread respect and affection. "It came from inside," said one of the emotional speakers at his funeral. He had gained little in the way of material possessions in his lifetime, but the neat papers on the desk that filled his small thatched room spoke of his competence, and his ongoing involvement in the affairs of the world.



Notshokoda Zwane made a living out of crafting sticks walking the hills looking for branches that were long and straight with a knot for the handle. On October 2, 2017 he went to Pension Day at Tugela Ferry to sell sticks as usual. When he did not return that night his family began searching for him. His body was found the next day. He had apparently been stabbed and thrown over the bridge. Zwane was an advisor to our craft group, and both the women in his life Nomzotho Conco and Hlekelaphi Dladla, are veteran crafters. Widely loved and respected, his death leaves a void in the Mashunka community.



Above: Tired of thieves stripping stolen cars in the bush on our boundary the Nomoya community erected a no-entry barricade using the remains of a stolen car. Right: Gunfire at night – and the next morning a burnt-out car near the Mdukatshani gate.