

SOCIOLOGY: HUMAN COMPONENT

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Sources of information

- Universities: particularly Venda, The North, Pretoria and Basel, Switzerland which at the moment is commissioned by the Swiss government to investigate apartheid reparation studies.
- HSRC and NRF
- Several NGO's
- The Development Bank
- GAIGHER, M. J. 1992. *Care groups in Venda: primary health care as a strategy for community development*. Unpublished. DPhil thesis: UOFS. Bloemfontein
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- GAIGHER, M. J. 1998. *A socio-economic survey of the Kutama community*. Department Nature Conservation.
- GAIGHER, M. J. 1999. *A social survey of the tourism potential of Dididi village*. Committee for community development.
- GAIGHER, M. J. 2000. *Availability of resources for tourism activities in the Baleni community*. Department of Tourism
- GAIGHER, M. J. 2001. A Socio-economic survey of the inhabitants of the Mutshindudi river catchment. Report for the Water Research Commission: Pretoria
- KHOROMBI, C. 2000. *The role of Venda culture in Nature Conservation*. Unpublished MTech. thesis. PE Technicon.
- MASHAU, E. 2001. *The needs and problems of the existing water reticulation network in the Mutshindudi River catchment*. Report for the Water Research Commission: Pretoria.

Summary statistics

The data collected for the above studies portray the following socio-economic profile of the communities bordering the mountain:

Negative elements

- Rural, and for a large part, traditional in appearance, culture and habits, lacking in community development projects
- Poverty (chronic poverty in most cases)
- Low level of education

- A high unemployment rate with a desperate need for job creation.
- Under- and undeveloped infra-structure (roads, communication, electricity, water and housing)
- Lack of educational facilities — particularly pre-school and adult education. Without people who can read and write, environmental education for the sustainable development of natural resources is impossible.
- Lack of and poorly equipped health care facilities
- Single parented households with fathers away on migrant jobs.
- A high incidence of HIV/Aids
- Agriculture is mainly subsistence
- Over-utilisation of medicinal plants/animals

Positive elements

- High human potential with people who are willing and available to apply themselves
- Rural, cultural and traditional lifestyle can be implemented for cultural tourism.
- Skilled but unemployed people can be used (tour guides, cooks, carpenters, translators, builders, thatchers, gardeners, waiters etc.).
- high potential in terms of arts and crafts which at the moment are still under utilized (beadwork, pottery, weaving, live performances etc.).
- A variety of opportunities for community development and income-generating projects -it can start from within tourism but has to benefit the whole community in terms of spin-offs.
- Available indigenous knowledge and techniques can be utilised in the creation of eco-villages. The folk-art industry should be revived and refined to produce products which can become 'collectors items'.
- The renewed interest in alternative healing can be exploited through the sustainable use of medicinal plants.

Recommendations for priority studies required to fill any gaps identified

Environmental, political, social and economic issues cannot be separated or be studied in isolation. For any developmental and conservation action to be successful, local communities must be involved at all levels. It is people that conserve or destroy environments and any project for the conservation of the Soutpansberg, should keep that in mind. What is consequently needed is interdisciplinary research to promote the sustainable use of ecosystems.

Aspects that need to be investigated through participatory rural appraisal, are amongst others:

- Land-use planning and redistribution
- Water use and conservation
- Women and fertility/health
- HIV/AIDS
- Medicinal plants and the ‘muti-trade’
- Environmental education
- Attitudes and behaviour in terms of nature conservation

- Energy use - deforestation
- Community development including job creation, skills training etc.

“Hot spots” of particular importance

Research on all the communities bordering the mountain, with differentiation between the northern mountain with people in an even more desperate state than on the southern side.



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