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# Local tourism awareness: Community views in Katutura and King Nehale Conservancy, Namibia

### Jarkko Saarinen

In Namibia the tourism industry is increasingly used for socioeconomic development. Recent government policies have highlighted the role of community-based tourism in particular, a policy tool that aims to ensure that local communities can participate actively in tourism and have a fairly high degree of control over tourism development and practices, so as to recognise and receive the benefits of tourism. For this to happen, local people need to know about tourism, tourists and the impacts of tourism in their daily environment. This paper discusses community views and local tourism awareness in two case study communities in Namibia: Katutura, in Windhoek, and King Nehale Conservancy. It concludes that making local communities aware of tourism could help them become agents in tourism development, rather than objects as is still often the case in peripheral and marginalised rural and urban communities in southern Africa.

Keywords: tourism impacts; community-based tourism; local tourism awareness; Namibia

#### 1. Introduction

In many southern African countries, tourism provides new development opportunities, jobs and economic benefits for local people (Rogerson, 2007; Saarinen et al., 2009). As a result, tourism has become an important policy tool for community and regional development (Rogerson & Visser, 2004). At a policy level, tourism is perceived as a vital part of the national economy and recently the rationale for tourism related development has evolved towards a relatively new kind of idea of tourism as an instrument for social development and empowerment (Binns & Nel, 2002; Scheyvens, 2002). What this means is that tourism development and activities are used especially to help the marginal and disadvantaged communities which are mainly situated in rural areas. However, there are also urban communities that can be characterised as marginal and poor.

Currently, numerous development programmes internationally and in southern Africa are highlighting the role of tourism in both regional development and local empowerment (Goudie et al., 1999; Ashley & Roe, 2002). The background to these new policy needs is not only the acknowledged importance of the role of tourism but also growing concerns about the local benefits of the global industry. It is believed that tourism should benefit the local residents of the places that tourists visit and are attracted to. In addition to regional policy contexts in southern Africa, tourism's role has also changed on the global scale; for example, it is linked to the goals and targets of the United Nations Millennium Project (Telfer & Sharpley, 2007). In this context tourism could, and should, be used more as a tool for reducing poverty, ensuring environmental sustainability, developing a global partnership for development and empowering

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previously neglected communities and social groups. Community-based tourism (CBT) has therefore been given a central role (Scheyvens, 2002).

In Namibia, the role of CBT has been highlighted in the national development policies and the tourism industry has been used as a medium for achieving economic and social goals at various levels (Republic of Namibia, 1994; Weaver & Elliot, 1996; Ministry of Environment and Tourism [MET], 2008). In the regional development policies this is currently seen as a valuable strategy for attracting international visitors and capital to the country by using not only wildlife and natural landscape based products but also local cultures and people in tourism-related development (MET, 2005a; Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations [NACSO], 2007). The involvement of local communities is expected to ensure that the benefits of tourism trickle down to the local level where tourist activities actually take place (Ashley, 2000).

As a policy tool, CBT aims to ensure that members of the local communities hold a high degree of control over tourism activities and thus receive a significant portion of the benefits. There should also be participation channels for local communities to be actively and equally involved in tourism-related development (Tosun, 2000; Okazaki, 2008; Jamal & Stronza, 2009). The emphasis in the growing community-based (and recently pro-poor tourism) literature suggests that supporting local people and cultures in tourism is seen as highly beneficial for empowerment and poverty reduction processes (Ashley & Roe, 2002; Scheyvens, 2002). However, the connection between policy principles and tourism practices is complex, and the planned and expected outcomes are not always delivered in practice (Hall, 2000, 2007; Scheyvens, 2009). To capitalise on the promises of CBT, local people need to be sufficiently aware of and knowledgeable about tourism (Tosun, 2000; Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007). However, the issue of local tourism awareness has not been studied widely in the CBT context, including in southern Africa.

This paper aims to contribute to that discussion by analysing the community views of tourists and tourism, with special focus on the perceived impacts of tourism at the local level. The paper is exploratory, and its purpose is to review not the actual impacts of tourism but rather local perceptions of tourism and especially of tourism impacts. This perception of impacts is interpreted here as demonstrating the local awareness of tourism, which can be seen as a crucial element in the process of empowering local people in CBT. In a broader sense, the term 'local tourism awareness' refers to the level of local knowledge on tourists, tourism and its impacts. The paper takes an empirical approach to tourism awareness, using two case studies of communities in Katutura, Windhoek, and King Nehale Conservancy (KNC), Namibia.

#### 2. Tourism and local communities

#### 2.1 Impacts in the tourism-community nexus

Tourists and tourism development always come with impacts, and these impacts can be both positive and negative for destination areas and local communities. The impacts are generally categorised as environmental, economic and sociocultural (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). From a community perspective, they can have multidimensional outcomes in practice. The economic impacts, for example, may be crucial income and employment opportunities for local people but because of the social and cultural differences between the 'hosts' and the 'guests' there may also be considerable negatively perceived sociocultural impacts. According to Mathieson & Wall (1982), these differences involve

deep social and cultural patterns such as value and religious systems, worldviews, traditions, customs, norms and lifestyles, and there may be behavioural differences as well, such as dress code preferences and work patterns.

According to De Kadt (1979), host-guest encounters in the tourism-community nexus take place in three general contexts: places and situations where tourists purchase goods or services from the host, places and situations they use or occupy at the same time, and places and situations where they meet and share knowledge, views and ideas. As Ratz (2000) indicates, the last context is far less common than the first two, and host-guest relations in tourism literature are often characterised as unequal situations dictated mainly by the tourists' and industry's needs rather than the needs, perceptions and values of the hosting communities (Britton, 1991). Although tourism can also benefit the host communities socially and culturally, the power relations often favour the guests and the industry in the tourism-community nexus (Milne & Ateljevic, 2001). Thus, from a community perspective, tourism development can lead to unacceptable changes in value structures, traditions, customs and behavioural patterns. These negative impacts have created the need for alternative and more host-friendly practices in tourism development, planning, management and policies (Hall, 2000). These are generally labelled 'sustainable tourism', where practices and codes of conduct are highly beneficial for local communities, their well-being and local development (Butler, 1999; Saarinen, 2006). From a community perspective, sustainable tourism means respecting the sociocultural authenticity of local communities, conserving their cultural and natural heritage and traditional values by ensuring viable, long-term economic processes, and providing socioeconomic benefits that are fairly distributed to all stakeholders (Holden, 2007). Thus, the sustainable form of tourism strongly emphasises the needs of local people, their environment and world views in natural resource management processes and policies (Jones & Murphree, 2004), which have recently been labelled 'community based tourism' (Telfer & Sharpley, 2007).

#### 2.2 Community-based tourism

In general, CBT aims to ensure that members of the local communities have ownership of, or at least a high degree of control over, the tourism activities, practices and socio-cultural and natural resources that are used in tourism development (Scheyvens, 2002). According to Telfer & Sharpley (2007), CBT has two major goals. First, it should respect local cultures, identities, traditions and heritage. This refers directly to the production and supply side of tourism, but indirectly also to consumption and demand issues via market segmentation and any possible code of conduct set by the tourism operator. Second, it should be socially sustainable, which means shared socioe-conomic benefits, participation in tourism operations and the local control of development. This control can be based on participatory planning, collaborative management and communication systems, land and other resource leasing systems, (joint) ownership, or their combinations (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).

Altogether, control is the key idea; the control over decision-making and/or ownership often leads to (and is based on) active participation. The desired outcome is that local people should receive a significant share of the economic benefits of tourism in the form of direct revenue and employment, and upgraded public infrastructure, services and environment (Stronza, 2007). However, control is a matter not only of material issues, resource usage and direct benefits but also of how local people are used in

tourism and what role they play as 'tourist attractions' (Dann, 1996; Saarinen & Niskala, 2009). Participation is a condition for community-based control and ownership. Tosun (2000) identifies three major challenges in achieving community participation in tourism: operational, structural and cultural. Operational limits to participation are problems in communication and information sharing and lack of coordination between different policy levels and the actors involved, structural limits are power issues and differences and organisational barriers, and cultural limits are culture and knowledge differences between tourism development actors and local people. Thus, as Connell (1997) says, participation is not only about more equitable distribution of material benefits but also about sharing knowledge and learning. A lack of education and training, for example, may make it difficult for local people to participate and thus limit their benefits from tourism. Similarly, Reid (2003) strongly emphasises the need to raise community awareness in collaborative tourism development.

On the basis of the general premises of CBT, the Namibian MET (2005b) has initiated the CBT policy, which aims to explore ways that local communities can benefit from the tourism industry (NACSO, 2008). The policy has strong links to the Namibian community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) programme and communal conservancy system (Long, 2004). The Namibian Government also works with the Namibia Community Based Tourism Assistance (NACOBTA) trust, which was initiated in 1995 by local communities. As a non-profit organisation, it aims to improve the living standards of people by developing sustainable CBT and especially joint ventures integrating private sector investors with local communities (Massyn, 2007). Recently NACOBTA has gone through organisational changes and its present financial challenges affect the level of activities and its capacity to support community based organisations.

The key issues in the Namibian CBT policy are related to the previously raised questions of participation and empowerment (MET, 2005b): how to integrate local communities in tourism planning and how to ensure a sufficient level of power and control in decision-making processes concerning the use of natural and cultural resources in tourism. On the other hand, the need to create local awareness on tourism is not highlighted in the policy. This is somewhat surprising since CBNRM and related programmes should involve a training dimension. This is also the case with the Namibian CBNRM programme, which offers an institutional framework for communities to manage wildlife and tourism resources in conservancy areas (Long, 2004). The programme is based on Wildlife Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas Policy of 1995 and the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1995 (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2010) and is coordinated by the NACSO.

The basic conceptualisations of CBT tend to stress the importance of control, participation and benefits. However, to achieve such goals the local communities as stakeholders need to have a sufficient overall level of understanding of tourism. This local tourism awareness is often taken for granted in development discussions. However, as Tosun (2000) points out, knowledge differences between the industry actors and the local people may impose cultural limits on participation. Novelli & Gebhardt (2007:449) also point out that local communities need to achieve 'similar levels of understanding and knowledge' with other stakeholders in order to participate fully in tourism development processes (see also Reed, 1997; Reid, 2003; Blackstock, 2005). Recently the issue of local tourism awareness has also been highlighted in tourism policy documents in southern Africa. The new proposed tourism policy for Botswana, for example, recognises 'the lack of awareness and knowledge of tourism' as being one

major challenge in tourism development (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2008:7, 27). The next section empirically analyses the tourism awareness of local communities in two case study sites in Namibia.

#### 3. Community views on tourism in Katutura and King Nehale Conservancy

#### 3.1 Case study sites, methods and data

The community views and understanding of tourism, tourists and tourism impacts were elicited using semi-structured thematic interviews in Katutura in Windhoek in June 2007 and King Nehale Communal Conservancy in northern Namibia in July 2008. Katutura is a township created during the apartheid era at the turn of the 1960s when South West Africa, now the Republic of Namibia, was governed by South Africa. Estimates of the population of Katutura, which is partly informal settlements, vary from 60 000 to 100 000 (Pendleton, 1994). Numerous international and domestic tour companies are offering visits to Katutura, which offers craft markets and workshops and small-scale accommodation

KNC is adjacent to the Etosha National Park, one of Namibia's major tourist attractions. Although it is on the northern side of the Park and most visitors use the southern and eastern gates, its location next to this attraction does make it accessible to some tourists and allows for minor tourism activities such as craft production and sales – the main commercial tourism product in the area. The conservancy, registered in 2005, covers 508 square kilometres and has about 20 000 inhabitants, mainly in villages alongside the main road (B1) between Tsumeb and Ondagwa (NASCO, 2007). It has a 30-member management committee (20 women and 10 men), including an executive committee of six women and five men, and employs five people (NASCO, 2008:81).

As a registered communal conservancy, KNC is a product of the Namibian CBNRM programme, which focuses on empowering rural communities and supporting nature conservation (Hulme & Murphree, 2001; Long, 2004). In contrast, Katutura is an urban area and is not involved in conservation or the co-management of natural resources. However, as a township it is a previously marginalised community with relevant issues in the CBT context. It is difficult to estimate the number of visitors to Katutura and KNC. Katutura is easily accessible by both individual tourists and group tours. In KNC the main B1 highway cuts across the area and there is no conservancy camp site which would make it easier to estimate the numbers. However, it is clear that Katutura is annually visited by thousands, while far fewer tourists actually stop in KNC.

The Katutura interviews were conducted in the Soweto Market and the Single Quarters Market, two locations which are heavily used, central and accessible for local people. The former is next to a bus rank and offers tourist services such as craft sales, and the latter offers food and other goods and services for local people but is also on some tourist operators' itineraries. Because of the nature of the site and the high flow of people, in Katutura the interviews were conducted with systematic sampling targeting every third visitor passing by the interview points. These were focused semi-structured interviews and each took about 15 minutes. It was not possible to use this method in KNC, so here the interviews were based on a household approach, each taking 25 to 45 minutes. They were done in the Onashikuvu and Omaida villages, which are located next to the B1 highway and near the junction of an access gravel road to the Etosha National Park. Since they lived near the main road and the National Park, it was assumed that local people would have some experience with tourists and tourism.

The differences in places and interview systems meant that much more data (171 interviews) was collected from Katutura than from the small roadside villages in KNC, where 19 interviews were conducted, targeting the head of the household or the most senior family member present at the time of the interview. To show the differences between the two sites Tables 1 and 2 use percentages, but the KNC results should of course be interpreted cautiously given the small quantity of data. Although the two sets of data focus on similar issues, the aim of the study was not to provide direct comparisons between the two sites or to claim that the findings can be generalised to the whole populations from which the respondents were selected, but to see whether there were patterns of awareness of tourism that were common to all, or most, of the interviewed people in the two sites. Katutura has a somewhat longer history and more tourism activities than KNC but on the other hand the KNC households could be members of the conservancy and thus receive information about tourism related activities. However, only one KNC person interviewed mentioned the household's connection to the conservancy activities.

Table 1 shows the differences between the basic profiles of the interviewees at the two sites. The Katutura interviewees were mainly men and younger than the KNC interviewees, who were mainly women and older. The Katutura interviewees were also rather more educated those in KNC. These basic differences probably reflect not only the dissimilar social conditions at the two sites but also the different sampling procedures.

#### 3.2 Community views on tourists and tourist motivations

Most of the KNC interviewees (68 per cent) said they knew about specific tourism activities nearby, such as craft selling, while only a few of the 19 in Katutura (about 25 per cent) knew about any such activities in Katutura. However, a majority of the respondents in Katutura (85 per cent) and KNC (about 75 per cent) said they had encountered a tourist or tourists in their daily environment.

Table 1: Interviewees at two study sites in Namibia

	Katutura, Windhoek (n = 117)		Onashikuvu/Omaida, King Nehale Conservancy $(n = 19)$	
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Gender				
Female	32	55	68	13
Male	68	116	32	6
Age group				
16 to 30 years	68	115	21	4
31 to 45 years	25	42	37	7
46 to 60 years	6	11	10	2
<60 years	1	2	32	6
Education				
Primary	5	8	42	8
Secondary	53	87	36	7
Tertiary	39	65	11	2
None	3	5	11	2

	Tourism has impacts on local community (%)		
	Yes	No	Total
Personal income from tourism			
Yes	71	29	100%
No	30	70	(n=24)
Total	(n=59)	(n=103)	(n=138)
Household income from tourism			
Yes	73	27	100%
No	30	70	(n=22)
Total	(n=58)	(n=103)	(n=139)

But how does one recognise a person as a tourist? Katutura and KNC had fairly similar perceptions of the basic characteristics of a tourist, based mainly on differences in (1) behaviour, (2) appearance and language and (3) mode of transport. Most interviewees who had encountered a tourist or tourists mentioned 'taking photographs' as the characterising element of tourist behaviour, but map reading was also mentioned at both sites. In Katutura they perceived a tourist as being part of a larger group and 'always having a tour guide'. The difference in appearance and language referred mainly to skin colour – tourists are 'white people who speak another language' - but many Katutura respondents raised the issue of clothing, seeing tourists as wearing 'a full khaki' despite the urban setting (they meant that the safari clothing looked out of place in the city). Only one respondent in KNC thought tourists could be Namibians (i.e. people who visit their friends and relatives in the rural north). When it came to mode of transport, in KNC tourists were seen as driving 'their car full packed with goods', while Katutura interviewees placed more emphasis on people travelling in groups in tour and safari type vehicles. Some interviewees made sarcastic remarks about these 'urban safaris', and two respondents were more openly critical of these big safe high-sprung safari vehicles driving through the township as though on a wilderness safari spotting dangerous animals in the bush. As a young male respondent (in the age group 16 to 30 years) remarked, 'they just come to see us as we are animals'. This indicates that they experience the power relation between hosts and guests as unequal.

Besides these main characteristics, interviewees also mentioned tourists' interests in local products and culture. They thought that seeing how local people live, observing their standard of living, experiencing local culture and purchasing local crafts were the main reasons why tourists visit Katutura and KNC in the first place. Surprisingly, only two respondents from KNC mentioned the natural environment and animals as elements that attracted tourists. Instead almost half of them (nine respondents) stressed the role of local crafts, huts and lifestyle related issues. Interestingly, in Katutura, where there are more craft producers and shops (such as Penduka and the Soweto Market), a clear minority mentioned crafts while the majority stressed the local lifestyle related features, saying that tourists come 'to see how people live together in small houses' or that the visitors like 'to see marginalised people' while visiting the township.

#### 3.3 Community views on tourism impacts

Even though most of the interviewees in Katutura and KNC had seen tourists and had a variety of opinions about what tourists are and why they visit their everyday environment, most of them did not consider that tourism actually has any impacts (positive and/or negative) on the community. In Katutura 64 per cent and in KNC about 60 per cent perceived no impacts at all, and in both study sites people wanted to see more tourists in their communities.

Katutura interviewees were asked two additional follow-up questions about impacts: 'Does tourism have any impact on your everyday life?' and 'If tourists stopped coming to Katutura would that cause any changes in the community?' In answer to both questions most interviewees said tourism did not play a role in their own or the community's everyday lives: 78 per cent said it did not have an effect on their own life and 63 per cent did not expect any changes if tourists stopped coming. Obviously these figures are related to the general perception of 'no impacts of tourism' (64 per cent) in Katutura.

Those who considered that tourism did have impacts referred to the economic benefits and employment opportunities it provides. Negative impacts were not emphasised, although in Katutura the previously mentioned unequal relationship between hosts and guests, with local people being seen by tourists as 'the other' and as marginalised people, was referred to in the context of another question. The community level benefits of tourism were mentioned by a few respondents (e.g. general 'development' and 'sponsoring kindergartens'), but the main emphasis was on individuals' direct or household income and employment benefits. On the basis of this observation the perceived existence of tourism impacts (yes—no) was cross-tabularised against background variables. Since there were so few data from KNC, the cross-tabularisations (and related Fischer's exact tests) were only done on the Katutura data. However, the general division between perceptions and background variables in cross-tabularisations was similar in KNC.

In Katutura, unsurprisingly, those who said they had personally received tourism related income during the past 12 months were more likely (p < 0.001) to say that tourism had impacts on Katutura than those who had not received tourism-related income (Table 2). The impacts, mainly employment and income, were perceived as positive. In addition, the interviewees whose household members had received tourism-related income during the past 12 months were also more likely (p < 0.001) to say that tourism had an impact on Katutura. In this case the impacts were also perceived positively.

In contrast to the personal and household income variables, the relation between age group, level of education, gender or whether a person had seen a tourist did not influence the perceived existence of tourism impacts. In addition, the knowledge of existing tourism activities did not have a (statistically significant) relation to the perceived tourism impacts. The main issues influencing the perceived existence of tourism impacts in Katutura were therefore related to personal and/or household income and employment benefits from tourism.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The current tourism policy shifts in Namibia, and southern Africa in general, towards CBT and local cultures can create net benefits for communities. Many rural and also urban or semi-urban communities may aim to focus on tourism related activities in the future. By using communities, local cultures and traditions in tourism it is possible to

build mutually beneficial partnerships between the industry and local communities (Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007), which could also provide locally based employment outside the traditional tourism sector, for example in agriculture and in the production of art, culture and crafts.

Tourism has already become an important economy, and a policy tool for community and regional development in Namibia. However, as indicated in many previous studies in the region and elsewhere, the community level benefits do not automatically follow the increasing numbers of tourists to local communities (Mbaiwa, 2005; Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007). Nonetheless, the idea of CBT has become an incentive for local communities and the government to support local development. However, collaborative management processes bring many challenges, such as ineffective benefit and power sharing and insufficient employment and empowerment, which can create conflicts between the hosts and guests (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). In addition, communities may have their internal issues and knowledge gaps, which can have an effect on benefit sharing and use of community resources and capital. These challenges may turn into, and be based on, negative local perceptions and attitudes towards tourism and tourism impacts. In general the 'management' of local perceptions and attitudes in tourism are seen as crucial in successful development (Pearce et al., 1996). This is the case especially in the context of CBT (Okazaki, 2008), as negative local attitudes may result in hostile behaviour towards visitors.

Strong local control in tourism development, however, does not necessarily lead to fully participatory decision-making and harmonious relations between the hosts and guests (Murphy, 1985; Reed, 1997; Blackstock, 2005). Since communities are not homogeneous but made up of different groups who may react differently to tourism, tourism impacts and other stakeholders, the internal power structures in communities may create conflicts and challenges. The author's two case studies in Namibia indicated that there is a division between people who have and people have not received benefits from tourism. This situation has a relatively clear effect on the way they perceive tourism impacts.

The majority of interviewees had positive expectations. Well over 80 per cent of those interviewed in Katutura and KNC would like to see more tourists in their communities in future. The case study communities were not fully aware of the impacts of tourism, but those who were aware regarded them as positive since they were based on personal or household (economic) benefits received from tourism. The explanation for the high level of future expectations yet low level of perceived impacts may be the short history of tourism and still relatively low level of tourist activities at the sites. Katutura and KNC are probably still in the involvement stage of tourism development, a phase generally characterised by a low level of tourism impacts, few tourism-specific services and very positive local views of tourism (Butler, 1980).

It seems that if local people are to perceive the positive impacts of tourism (and in this case tourism impacts in general), concrete personal or household level benefits need to be delivered in tourism development. Although the small amount of data in this study does not support wider conclusions, it is generally interesting that perceptions of tourism impacts were not related to knowing about tourism activities or encountering tourists in the respondents' home areas or their personal background characteristics. This finding underlines the need to provide direct benefits for local people based on tourism development. It also indicates that a general emphasis on local development by improving infrastructure, roads, communication systems and services based on

tourism development may often be too far removed from local community members to benefit them directly.

On the other hand, the local tourism awareness should also have an independent side that is not guided solely by the benefits received from tourism. This is crucial especially in the context of sustainable tourism and where the negative impacts of tourism are concerned. In addition, if there is an insufficient level of knowledge about tourism and its impacts, it is fairly difficult to create control mechanisms and a sense of ownership of tourism activities and resources, or to generate an optimal level of community benefits that are balanced with the potential costs of tourism development. Thus, on the basis of evidence from these two case studies, questions which could be addressed in the near future in tourism and community research and policy-making in Namibia, and also more widely in southern Africa, are related to the nature and level of tourism awareness in local communities. It seems that the basic interdependent elements of CBT – local participation, control and benefits - have direct and indirect links to the local tourism awareness. By increasing the benefits of tourism the level of knowledge can be improved but, as already indicated, only concerning the positive outcomes of tourism development. In order to create wider views and a more locally beneficial relation with the tourism industry, with deeper understanding beyond (positive) economic impacts of tourism, the elements of local control and participation are needed.

The local tourism awareness is most probably not only an outcome but also a catalyst. It can bind the benefits, control and participation together in CBT development by empowering the local people. It can also indicate how well the communication channels within the community and between different stakeholders operate. Thus, to create more direct benefits but also critical understanding of tourism and its impacts, specific tourism awareness campaigns and training could be implemented in the regions that are already heavily involved or are aiming to become tourism-dependent in their development. Creating and developing local tourism awareness could help local communities and people to become real agents (e.g. active partners) in tourism development instead of objects, as is still often the case in the tourism–community nexus in peripheries and previously marginalised rural and urban communities in southern Africa.

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