

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE RESULTS FROM THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AGRICULTURAL BASELINE SURVEY DONE IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS OF THE KARAS REGION

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ABSTRACT

During 2000 a very comprehensive survey was done in the communal areas of the Karas Region. This article portrays some of the results from that survey. Results are presented on the socio-economic status of the households, focussing specifically on the household description and household income also including productive resources such as water, firewood, land and livestock as well as on project participation of members of the community and support provided to them by government organisations and NGO's.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension and research approaches have changed radically in recent years. National agricultural development concentrates on the reviving of sustainable economic growth through the creation of employment opportunities, the alleviation of poverty and the reduction of inequalities in income. Following a Farming Systems Research and Extension (FSRE) approach, emphasis is put on food security and income generation in rural areas. In the Karas Region, a new FSRE-team was formed in 1999 to mediate this process. In an attempt to understand the social structure and farming systems of the region, a socio-economic agricultural baseline survey was done during 2000 in the communal areas of the Karas Region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research officer developed the survey form, with the help of the extension personnel. Emphasis was put on specific areas where knowledge gaps were identified such as livestock numbers and marketing structures. Research and Extension personnel were used as enumerators. Each one was familiarised with the form before they set out to do the survey. The survey was done in all four of the communal wards of the Karas Region, namely Tses, Berseba, Bethanie and Bondelswarts. As the number of households in the communal areas of the Karas Region is rather small and because the Extension personnel felt that they want to have information on all the households in the region, the survey included, as far as possible, all households (above 95%).

The completed survey forms were collected by the Researcher and codified. The clerical assistants of the Extension division computerised and entered the data into Excel, after receiving appropriate training from the Researcher. The data was then analysed by the Researcher.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The overall goal of this survey is to contribute towards the improvement of the living standards of the communal farmers in the Karas Region of Namibia with the following objectives in mind:

- To compare results with that of the 1992 survey and identify possible trends.
- To update existing information on farming systems in the communal areas of the southern region.
- To identify needs, constraints and expectations concerning development in the region.
- To build a database for future use by any development agency.
- To draw up a plan of action for the FSRE-team in the Karas Region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An enormous amount of data has been generated and it will be impossible to reflect all of the results in a report such as this. The results presented here will focus mainly on aspects concerning the socio-economic and agricultural structure of the communal areas in the Karas Region. The number of households interviewed in each area was as follows: Bethanie – 161, Tses – 407, Bondelswart – 156 and Berseba – 494, a total of 1218.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

➤ Household Description

- **Household structure**

The survey focused mainly on people who reside permanently in the specific areas since these people are the major participants and depend on making a living from the available resources and are involved in the decision making processes. Table 1 gives the percentage of people interviewed who are permanent residents of that area.

Table 1 Percentage of permanent residents interviewed in each of the areas

Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
97	98	98	83

In the southern communal areas the head of the household usually has the decision making power for that specific household. It was therefore important to acquire the gender of each household head. In some cases where the man is in fact the head of the household, he might be away on either casual labour or other activities and his wife would then take over the decision making responsibilities. It is clear from Table 2 that about a third of all households are headed by a female. It will thus be of extreme importance to always include women in any training or development actions.

Table 2 Gender of the head of the family/household (%)

Bethanie		Tses		Bondelswart		Berseba	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
71	29	65	35	64	36	65	35

The size of the household gives an indication of the number of people dependent on the household income and, depending on the age distribution and health status, also the number of people available to generate income for the household. Households in the Karas Region are rather small, between 3 and 5 people on average per household (Table 3.) It is however important to keep in mind that the households in the southern communal areas usually function as an individual unit, as each household is located rather far from the next household, and is not a closely linked community as such. Each household therefore is dependent on the people within itself to maintain and support it.

Table 3 Number of people in a household

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	3.47	5.28	3.47	5.29
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	11	20	11	25

- **Household composition**

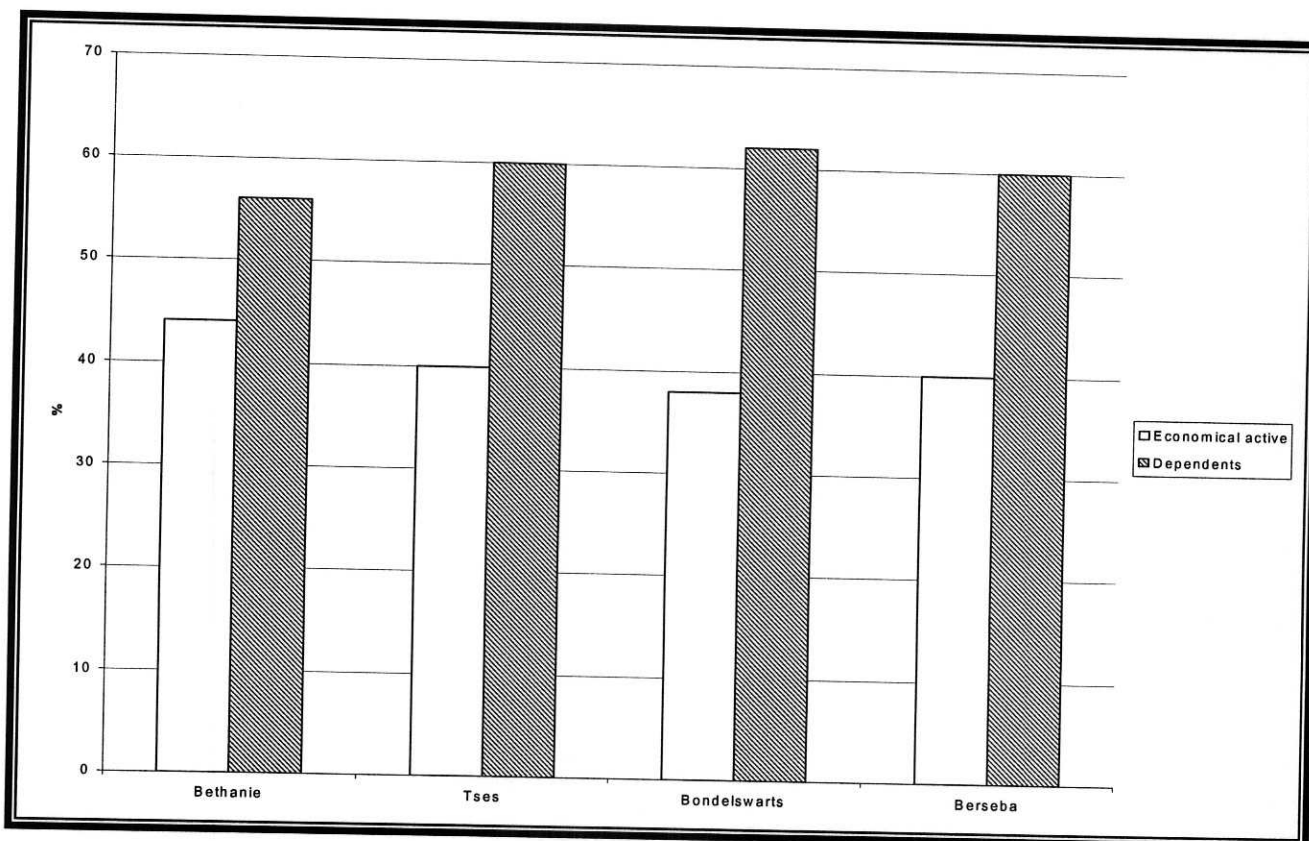
Table 4 shows the age distribution found in the households in the Karas Region. The 20-59 group in any community is usually the most economically active group. Most people retire at the age of 60 and most young people below 20 are still dependent on their parents and/or families for support. In the populations in the Karas Region it was found that pensioners return to communal land when they qualify for the government old age support. In many cases the workforce (people between the ages 19 and 60) leave the communal area to look for casual labour in nearby towns or on commercial farms. Very often this group will send their children to live with the grandparents in the communal area and to attend nearby schools. Some of them will send money to the grandparents to support the children. Figure 1

shows that on average about 60% of the residents in the Karas communal areas are in the dependants group, probably already giving one explanation for the low productivity of these areas.

Table 4 Age distribution (%)

Age in years	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
0-19	36	45	50	47
20-59	44	40	38	40
60 +	20	15	12	13

Figure 1 Percentage of people in the economical active age vs. the dependants



- Household education**

On average about 26% of all the residents interviewed had no schooling. This figure is the lowest in the Bondelswarts area (19%) and the highest in the Tses area (31%). However, Table 5 shows that most people in the Karas communal areas have at least had primary education and could therefore be expected to be able to read and write.

Table 5 Educational attainment (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
None	28	31	19	26
Primary School	58	47	54	49
Secondary School	14	22	27	25

- Household characteristics**

Most households are headed by a male person aged 40 and above. The only exceptions are when the husband or father of the family is absent as a result of death or employment as casual labour elsewhere or in cases where a woman has never been married. When the head of the household is absent, the decision making power usually goes to his wife or a grownup son.

Most dwellings in the Karas communal areas are made of corrugated iron sheets and are sometimes not permanent. Only a small percentage of farmers live in brick houses found on the former Odendaal farms (commercial farms that were added to the communal areas in the sixties).

Only the formal settlements (small towns) within the communal areas have access to electricity. Most people are making use of paraffin lamps or candles for light and about 96% (Table 6) of all the households still use wood fires for cooking and heat. Fire is a part of the Nama tradition and most households will always, day and night, have a fire burning, even if it is not required for cooking or heat.

Table 6 Source of energy utilised for cooking and heat (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Gas	3	7	4	2
Wood	97	93	96	98
Manure	0	0	0	0

- **Household assets**

The majority of households (80%) own a radio and those households that do not, have access to a nearby radio (Table 7). Information dissemination to the rural population could be done through the local radio channels. This method of information dissemination is much effective, more cost effective and will also be the quickest way to reach almost the whole population (although personal visits should not be neglected). The number of households owning (or having access to) a television is negligible.

Table 7 Ownership and access to a radio (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Own	76	86	76	85
Access to	14	9	15	8
None	10	5	9	7

In the southern communal areas, donkey carts are the most important means of transport. Table 8 reflected that 52% of all households surveyed in the Karas communal areas do own a donkey cart (although some of them do not have donkeys or horses). Cars are not so common and only about 13% of the households have cars. People who do have transport often use it to make money. They offer rides to town or to gather wood for a fee. People will have to pay around N\$20.00 to N\$ 50.00 per person for a trip of about 100 km. The lack of availability of transport to the households that do not own a donkey cart or a car is a huge disadvantage to these households. It also hampers them in the marketing of their animals since they cannot transport the animals to nearby auctions to benefit from the higher prices. On average a third of all households in the Karas communal areas do not have any transport. It seems to be a particularly big problem in Bondelswarts where 50% of the households do not have any means of transport. This should also be an important consideration when planning training and development activities in these areas.

Table 8 Availability of transport

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
None	35	29	50	26
Car	11	21	10	9
Donkey Cart	54	50	40	65

Telephones are mainly found on the old Odendaal farms and at small towns and schools.

- **Household income**

- **Main contributor to the household income**

It seems that the main contributor to the household income is not necessarily the head of the family. In many cases it is the family members working off-farm or elderly people receiving government pensions. Table 9 gives an indication of the percentage of family members working off-farm.

Table 9 Family members working off-farm (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Yes	33	48	55	57
No	66	52	45	43

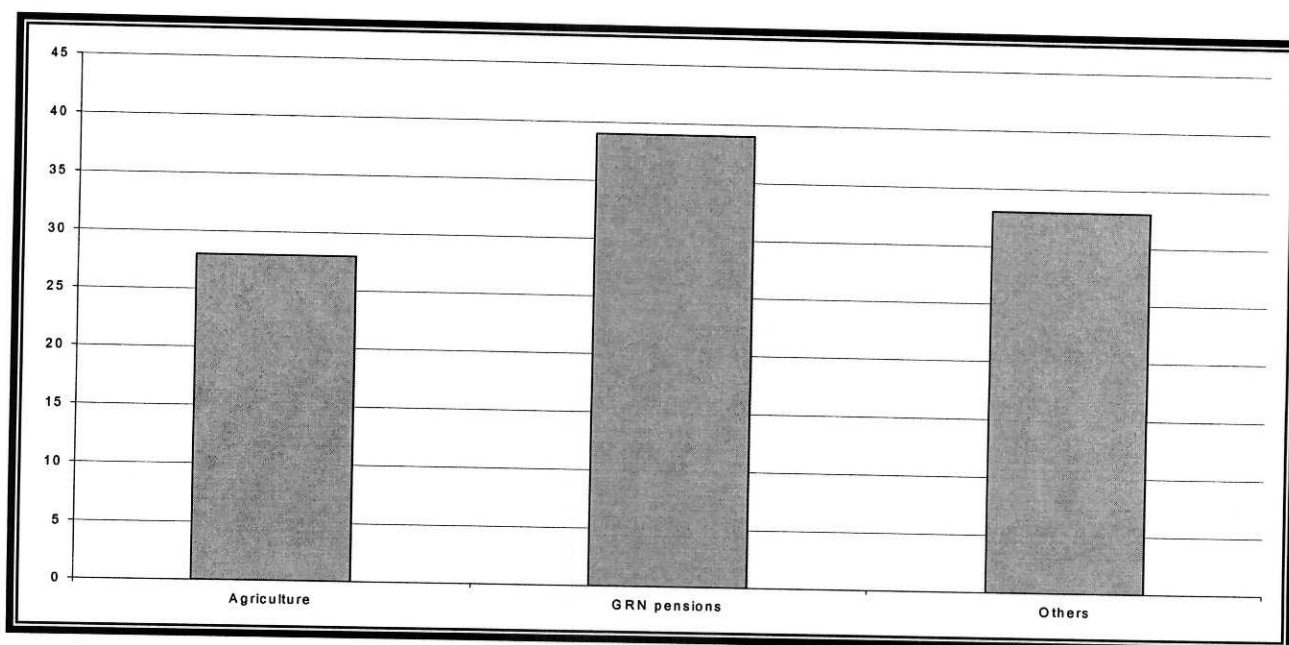
- Source of household income**

The three main sources of income (Figure 2) for the rural people of the Karas Region are Government pensions (39%), others (33%) and Agriculture (28%). Government pensions are in most cases the old age pension (N\$200.00 per person per month in 2000, currently N\$300.00 per person per month) given to people above 60 years of age. "Others" includes off-farm employment, contributions from family members, etc. Income from Agriculture is especially low in the Tses and Bondelswarts areas (Table 10). In Tses most people rely on Government pensions whereas in Bondelswarts people seem to have found other ways of generating income. As can be seen in Table 9, 55% of the households in Bondelswarts have family members working off-farm. In Bethanie and Berseba, people depend more on Agriculture for their livelihood although Government pensions are almost of equal importance.

Table 10 Main source of income (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Agriculture	38	19	13	42
GRN pensions	37	45	37	32
Others	25	36	50	26

Figure 2 Main source of income (%)



- Amount of household income**

The household income per month varies greatly between households (Table 11). Some people claim that they have no income. There are people who benefit from members of the family holding very good jobs in towns. An interesting observation is that the two areas (Tses and Bondelswarts) with the smallest percentage of income derived from agriculture, are also the areas with the highest average income per household. It is possibly a direct result of income from agriculture not being sufficient to support the household thus forcing them to find other means of income.

Table 11 Income per household per month (N\$)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	309	421	511	387
Minimum	0	0	0	0
Maximum	3 126	18 000	4 200	10 000

- **People's perception on the wellbeing of the area**

It is a general misperception that wellbeing is only a measurement of the amount of income per month or the ownership of something with money value. People perceive themselves as poor when they have little money and no ownership of anything of money value. Table 12 shows that almost all the people in the rural areas feel that they, and the rest of the people in the area, are poor. When development actions are formulated, it is important to take account of this perception. People might feel overwhelmed by this fact and feel that they have nothing to utilise or contribute. It is always important to do a thorough wellbeing analysis with the people before starting with any development project, thus motivating them so that they themselves can identify and realise that there are many other resources to be utilised, other than just money.

Table 12 Household perception on the general economic wellbeing of the area (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Poor	89	75	78	77
Average	11	24.9	22	22
Rich	0	0.1	0	1

PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES

➤ Water

- **Water source for human and animals consumption**

Most of the households have settled down close to a water source. This source can vary from a permanent fountain in a nearby river to a constructed dam. The drilling of boreholes facilitated permanent settlements and today the most important water sources are from boreholes equipped with a windmill or a motor pump. Most households in the bigger informal and formal settlements have taps bringing the water to their houses. The rest of the households usually settle near a water source (only a few minutes walk) for their animals and make use of the same water source for the household.

- **Water availability and quality**

As portrayed in Tables 13 and 14, most people do have access to enough water of acceptable quality throughout the year. Water is in most cases only used for household consumption and the watering of livestock. Very few gardens are found. This is mostly as the result of too little water, especially in periods of drought.

Table 13 Enough water available throughout the year (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Yes	91	87	89	87
No	9	13	11	13

Table 14 Quality of water

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Acceptable	80	88	82	86
Poor	20	12	18	14

- **Water development and maintenance**

Rural water supplies are responsible for the development and maintenance of water points in the rural areas. In the last few years they are focussing on training communities to take responsibility for the management and maintenance of their own water points. Each community usually has a water point committee responsible for all water affairs. Members of the community have to pay a water point fee and contribute (labour) towards the maintenance of the water point.

➤ Firewood

- **Firewood availability**

As mentioned before, wood fires are still the most prominent source of heat and energy for cooking in the Karas communal area. It is mostly the women and children who are responsible for collecting wood. A great deal of time per day is spent collecting firewood. The most common way of collecting the firewood is by walking and carrying the firewood back to the homestead. In the survey it was asked whether firewood is still easily available. In most areas, except for Berseba, more than half of the interviewed households felt that it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain firewood and that they have to travel great distances to reach the wood that is still available (Table 15). The problem

seems to be even more prevalent in Bondelswarts were the veld type is predominantly savanna grasslands. Even so, there seems to be little attempt made so far, in any of the areas, to protect trees or plant more trees.

Table 15 Is firewood still easily available? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Yes	45	44	32	52
No	52	50	65	43
Don't know	3	6	3	5

➤ Land

• Land ownership, grazing and grazing patterns

The land is generally communally owned and used. The traditional authorities of a specific area have the power to allocate grazing rights to an individual. The land use structure is very informal. Mostly people decide informally amongst each other where their grazing boundaries are. They are to some extent also nomadic and follow the rain pattern for better grazing. No particular grazing management is practised. The animals are kept in a kraal close to the homestead during the night and are allowed to roam freely during the day. Most families do not practise herding. The animals will graze, depending on the available veld, approximately 3-5 km from the water and return to the homestead in the late afternoon. The veld condition is generally very poor, especially around the water points. There are pockets of good grazing land but those are inaccessible for most of the years because there is no water near by.

➤ Livestock

• Ownership of livestock

From the survey results it was established that people do have ownership of the animals they manage. Only a few households had animals belonging to a trust or animals borrowed from a family member. However, when the question was asked on how they acquired the animals, most people indicated that it was a gift (from other family members). Between 20-29% of the households purchase the animals that they now have (Table 16) and only a very small percentage of animals they now own was as a result of their own breeding programme. This result might indicate that livestock breeding is not very successful in these areas, resulting in too few replacement animals.

Table 16 How was animals obtained? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Breeding	3	17	27	8
Gift	55	42	41	65
Loan	1	2	4	2
Purchase	20	29	25	22
Others	21	10	3	3

• Numbers of livestock

The number of cattle owned by the people in the communal areas of the Karas Regions is very low since it is predominantly a small stock area. Only a few households have cattle (Tables 17 and 22) and usually also only a small number of cattle per household. Berseba has the highest percentage of household owning cattle and the highest number of cattle. (Although one individual rich farmer does own most of the cattle.)

Table 17 Number of cattle

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	7	7	8	10
Minimum	2	1	1	1
Maximum	20	40	18	250

Traditionally the Nama people were sheep farmers. In the early 1970's, prevailing droughts and low prices for the Karakul pelts made them shift towards goat production. Goats are hardier than sheep and can feed on bushes and branches in places where grass is no longer found. Goats also herd together and can still produce under very extensive conditions with minimum management inputs. It is thus no surprise that very few sheep, in comparison with goats, are found in the communal areas of the Karas Region (Tables 18,19 and 22). Again Berseba has the highest number of sheep although the percentage of household owning sheep is higher in the Tses area. The same trend is visible for goats. Tses has more households owning goats but Berseba has the highest number of goats and the highest number of goats per household.

Table 18 Number of sheep

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	58	72	64	83
Minimum	11	4	2	2
Maximum	240	400	200	814

Table 19 Number of goats

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	88	97	13	120
Minimum	4	1	1	1
Maximum	400	1901	201	1005

The number of donkeys and horses (Table 20) are relatively high. It seems as if most households do own donkeys or horses even though some do not have a donkey cart. There also seems to be rather a lot of donkeys and horses for which nobody wants to claim ownership. Especially in the Bondelswarts area this has been in the forefront in the last few years. Initiatives to market these animals, which are not used for transport and have no clear function or ownership, have failed due to difficulties with marketing. Most donkeys and horses are kept without any management and left to breed uncontrolled. It is a concern that a lot of the already scarces natural resources are lost due to the over grazing of horses and donkeys. Better management could result in fewer animals being kept which will probably have a positive effect on natural resources in the long run.

Table 20 Number of donkeys/horses

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	6	6	1	8
Minimum	1	1	2	1
Maximum	19	41	23	157

Most households have chickens, even if it is only 1 or 2. Initiatives from the MAWRD to provide the households with new genetic material and also to encourage better management seem to have paid off. People mostly use the chickens and the eggs as an additional source of protein for the household. Almost none of the interviewed households sell produce from their chickens to other households. Most of them still show interest in increasing the number of chickens they have.

Table 21 Number of chickens

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Average	8	8	4	9
Minimum	1	1	1	1
Maximum	40	82	30	30

Correlating the information in Table 10 with Table 22, it is clear why Bondelswarts has such a low percentage of the household income derived from agriculture. Table 22 indicates that Bondelswarts has the lowest percentage of household owning livestock and the number of livestock per household is also low. In the Bethanie area, people have very little sheep and cattle but 67% of the household own some goats. Berseba seem to have the most of households owning livestock and also the highest number of livestock per household, which is also in correlation with Table 10.

Table 22 Percentage of households owning livestock and average number of livestock per household

	CATTLE		
	Percentage of households owning cattle	Total number of cattle	Average number of cattle per household
Bethanie	9 %	109	7
Tses	21 %	619	7
Bondelswarts	6 %	69	8
Berseba	24 %	1259	10
	SHEEP		
	Percentage of households	Total number of sheep	Average number of sheep per

	owning sheep		household
Bethanie	7 %	701	58
Tses	20 %	5 739	72
Bondelswarts	15 %	1 461	64
Berseba	18 %	7 577	83
GOATS			
	Percentage of households owning goats	Total number of goats	Average number of sheep per household
Bethanie	67 %	9 464	88
Tses	70 %	27 634	97
Bondelswarts	46 %	955	13
Berseba	63 %	37 591	120

- **Marketing of livestock**

Marketing of livestock plays an important role in the production cycle. To market at the right time (when prices are good and when the animals are ready for sale) and to market at the right place (usually organised auctions result in higher prices for the producers) and are of utmost importance.

When the interviewed household was asked how often they sell their animals, on average 70% answered that they sell when they need the money (Table 23). This phenomenon is difficult to change since a lot of other factors contribute towards the need to sell animals even when prices are low or to buyers who pay less money.

Table 23 How often do you sell your animals? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Need Money	68	70	72	72
Once every second month	6	4	0	11
Twice a year	14	6	8	4
Once a years	7	5	8	2
Others	5	15	12	11

A lot has been done, especially through the extension services as well as the co-operations, to hold regular auctions at places within the reach of most communal farmers in the Karas Region. It is reflected in the survey results, which show that, especially in Bondelswarts and Berseba, most farmers sell their animals at auctions (Table 24). In Bethanie just over half of the farmers sell at auctions. This result should be investigated and corrective measures should be employed.

Table 24 Where do you usually sell your animals? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Auction	52	65	87	83
On farm	48	35	13	17

- **Livestock management**

Livestock management overall is very poor in the interviewed areas. Almost none of the farmers keep records, even the simplest records like numbers of animals and lambs are not formally kept. Farmers are also not sure about losses and how many animals they could market during a specific time. Although most farmers complained about animal diseases and wanted more information on animal health care, almost none of the farmers practised even the most elementary health programme. No breeding seasons exist and as a result thereof, no weaning is practised and formal organised marketing at the right time and best price also become difficult. Kraals are cleaned often but the manure is not used for any purpose.

Most of the management problems are well known to the extension services and are addressed through programmes and training although the adoption rate is very slow.

PROJECT PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT

Most of the interviewed households felt that government support towards development and development projects are necessary. Even though a large percentage of the interviewed people have never participated in any development projects or programmes, more than 60% of them felt that government development projects are effective. Most people also indicated that

they would have time to participate in development projects, programmes or actions (Table 25). The percentage was lower at Bethanie with only 58% percent of the interviewed households indicating that they will find time to participate in such actions.

Table 25 Would you have time to participate in development projects or programmes? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Yes	58	68	78	62
No	42	32	22	38

When community development actions are planned and implemented, working with organised groups are preferable. In most communities such groups already exist and have already existing structures that could be utilised. Where organised groups do not exist, new development action groups should be formed. Most people already belong to a water point committee. Table 26 shows the percentage of people belonging to an organised group. In Bondelswarts and Bethanie the percentages are lower than in the other two areas. In Bondelswarts a large percentage of the farmers live rather far apart and forming groups is difficult.

Table 26 Do you belong to an organised group? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Yes	50	66	43	61
No	50	34	57	39

Table 27 gives an indication of the type of development projects that the people of each area are interested in. Almost 50% of all the people want to participate in livestock projects (goat projects). Most of the people were asking for specific goat projects, especially projects to attain livestock or increase their number of livestock, and obtain better quality livestock. It seems as if gardens and poultry projects are really the only other two types of projects that the people are interested in doing. It is possible that not all participants have knowledge about the possibilities of all the different types of projects.

Table 27 Which type of development project would you like to participate in? (%)

	Bethanie	Tses	Bondelswart	Berseba
Livestock	59	49	53	48
Gardens	16	6	1	0
Poultry	7	10	14	6
Grafts	4	2	0	0
Tourism	0	1	0	0
Fodder production	0	1	0	0
Rabbits	0	1	1	0
Others	0	2	0	0
None	14	28	31	46

The people were also asked how they would prefer to organise when participating in development projects. It is an important question since community based projects in the Karas Regions have a history of failure. With most people living far apart, to involve the whole community in a development project is almost impossible also because of the many different needs, constraints such as transport which affects marketing, and other prevailing factors. Figures 3-6 show the results. Most people would prefer to organise in small groups, except for the Bethanie area where people would like to take part as a community. The organisation and structure of a development group will differ from area to area depending on many factors such as distance, interest, activities, etc. It will be important to consider these factors and let the people give an indication of how they want to organise when participating in a development action.

Figure 3 Bethanie preference of project participation

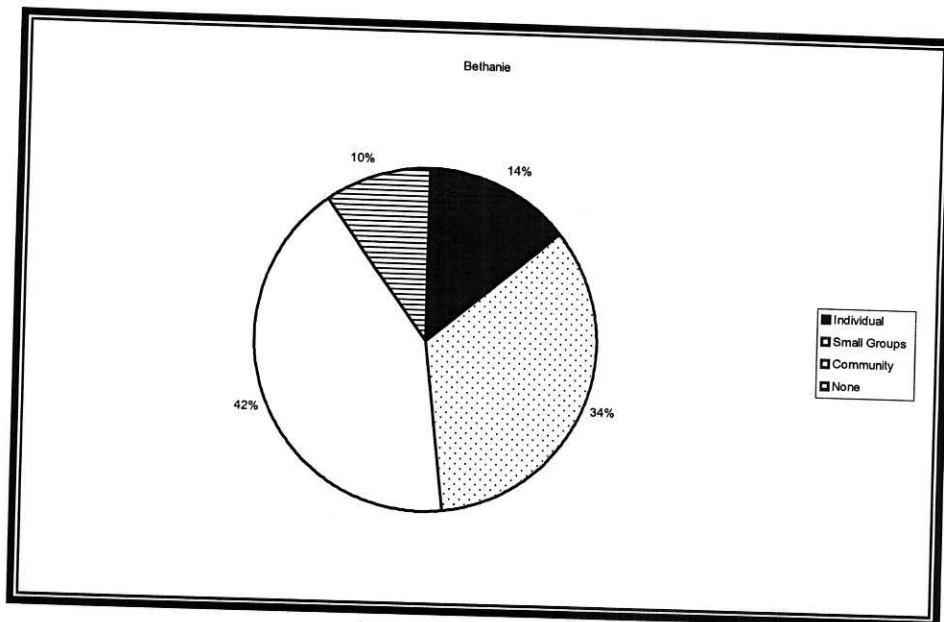


Figure 4 Tses preference of project participation

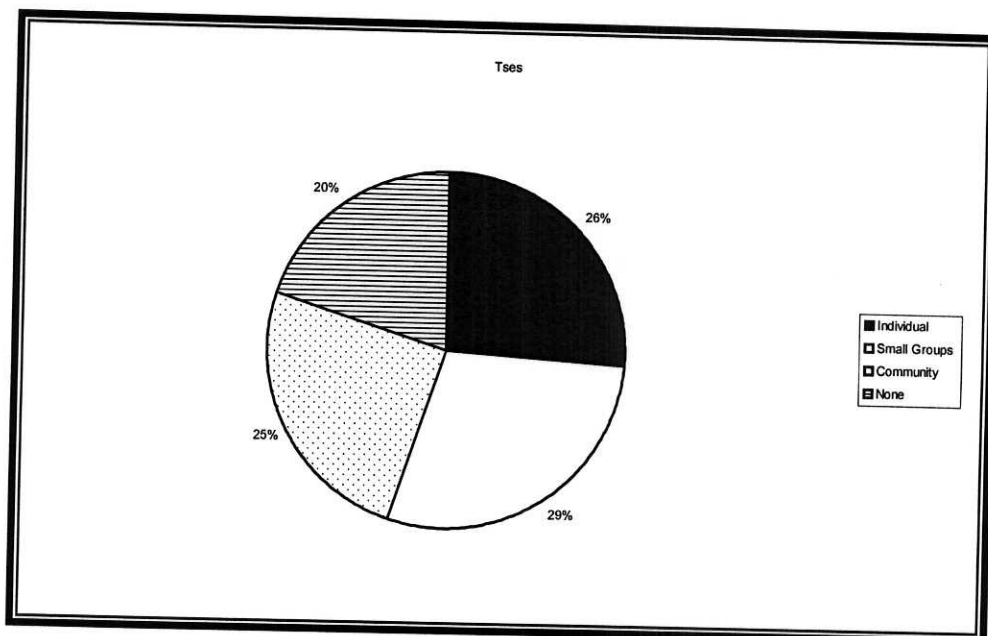


Figure 5 Bondelswarts preference of project participation

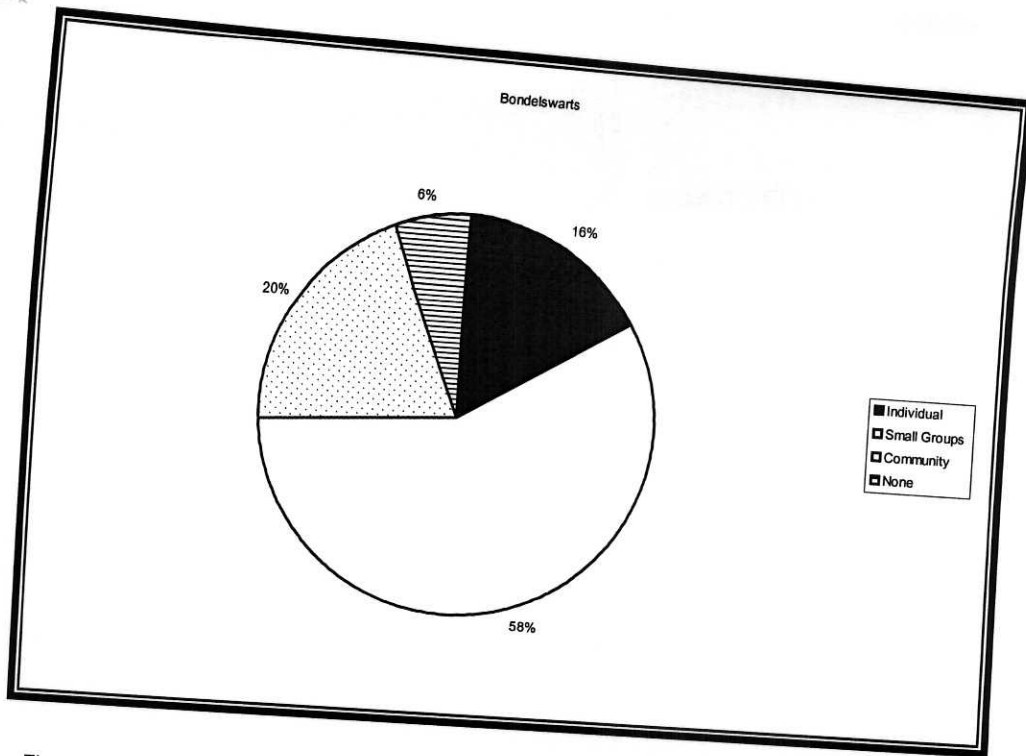
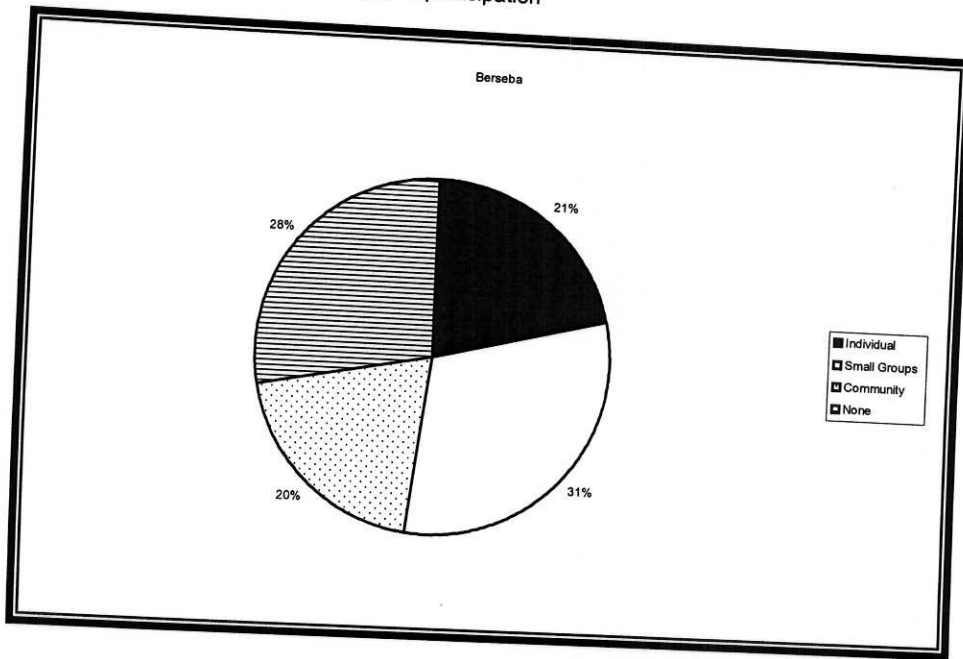


Figure 6 Bethanie preference of project participation



CONCLUSIONS

A workshop was held where the results from this survey was evaluated and compared with a survey done in 2003. The Karas FSRE team has used the results with great effect to plan future development actions and specific activities. The results will still be of use in future planning to deliver tailor-made development programmes to the communal areas of the Karas Region.