Social Relations of Poverty: A Case-Study from Owambo, Namibia

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1. Introduction

This study has been conducted under the Agreement of Cooperation between the Social Sciences Division at the University of Namibia (SSD/UNAM), the Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) and the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen, Norway. The Agreement was established in 1996, and is currently in its second phase (1998-1999). The main objectives of the Agreement are:

- To promote the development of professional competence at NEPRU, SSD/UNAM and CMI in the fields of development and economic policy research.

- To improve the quality of library services and skills at the three institutions.

- To generate and disseminate reputable research in both published and consultancy reports on topics of national and regional significance.

As partial fulfillment of these objectives, three joint research projects have been carried out. Topics for research were selected through a process where research needs identified by government, NGOs and donors, as well as the interests and qualifications of the research institutions themselves, were taken into consideration.[1]

The topics singled out were poverty and migration. *Project 1* ("National Migration Study") is a national survey of the causes, effects and trends of migration, and *Project 2* ("Macro-Economic Policies and Poverty in Namibia") is a study of the relation between trade policies and poverty. The current *Project 3* ("Social Relations of Poverty") analyzes the role of social relations and networks in the survival strategies of the poor through a case-study from Owambo in Namibia. The study gives special attention to urban poverty and the role of urban-rural links.

While there is a relatively limited number of studies on migration in Namibia (Melber 1996; Pendleton and Frayne 1998; Tvedten and Pomuti 1998), there has been a large number of studies on various aspects of poverty to which we will return below. The studies reveal that poverty is pervasive in the country, and that income discrepancies are considerable. They tend to concentrate on issues of distribution and characteristics of poverty, using quantitative data on income and consumption and households and individuals as units of analysis.

[1] The selection was made in a seminar held in Windhoek in February 1997, with participation from government, NGOs and donors. As point of departure for discussions at the seminar, five jointly written papers on topics of common interest were presented and subsequently published (NEPRU 1998).

The current study discusses and analyzes qualitative aspects of poverty and urban-rural links. Our hypothesis is that social capital in the form of social relations and networks generally plays an important role in the survival strategies of the poor, but that the poorest and most vulnerable in urban and rural areas are characterized by limited sets of such networks both in time and space. This further exacerbates their political, economic and socio-cultural marginalization in Namibian society.

The characteristics of social relations and networks among the poor have important implications for our understanding of urban as well as rural poverty, and hence for policies of poverty alleviation. On the one hand support to the development of social capital (in the form of networks or associations) is important to alleviate the most extreme expressions of poverty in Namibia by "helping the poor to help themselves". On the other hand, the marginalization of the very poorest highlights the limitations of privately negotiated informal transfers (horizontal transfers) and underlines the need for publicly funded formal transfer programs (vertical transfers) to do something substantial about poverty in the country.

The study was carried out in the four largest shanty-areas areas in the town of Oshakati in Owambo, with a special focus on the richest and poorest areas respectively in terms of income. For comparative purposes, and to ascertain the perceptions of rural-urban relations from the rural point of view, fieldwork was also carried out in one village close to Oshakati (Ompundja in the Oshana region) and one village further away from urban areas (Oniihende in the Ohangwena region).

The study has been carried out through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. A baseline survey from the four informal settlement areas from 1994 has been used as a point of departure for the urban part of the study (Tvedten and Pomuti 1994). A more limited survey was carried out in the two rural villages, using the relevant questions from the urban survey. Qualitative methodologies such as structured interviews, group discussions, case-studies and participant observation were used both in the urban and rural areas of study.

In the following we will first briefly present relevant data on poverty and migration in Namibia as these appear in existing studies, and give an outline of our own theoretical point of departure (Section 2). We will then move on to analyze poverty, vulnerability and the role of relations and networks in the urban setting (Section 3) and the rural settings (Section 4) respectively. In the concluding section (Section 5), the potential and limitations of support to the development of social capital as a means to alleviate poverty will be discussed.

We would like to thank Akiser Pomuti from SSD for his invaluable contribution during the fieldwork in Oshakati, and Martha Naanda, Frieda Iigonda and Gabriel Daniel from SSD for their contributions during the fieldwork in the rural areas. We would also like to thank Dr. Stephen Devereux from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) for valuable

comments to a draft version of this report.[2] Finally, our thanks go to thank the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) for their financial support to the Agreement of Cooperation, and Mr. Knut Myklebust and Dr. Gustav Klem from the Norwegian Embassy/ NORAD Representation in Windhoek for their consistent support and encouragement.

[2] This report and the two other reports mentioned above were presented at the seminar "Poverty and Migration in Namibia" in Bergen, Norway 19-20 August 1999.

2. Poverty in Namibia

There is a large number of studies on poverty in Namibia, and evidence of the distribution and characteristics of poverty is persuasive. The evidence points in the direction of a relatively high GDP per capita, concealing severe income differentials along lines of geographical location, occupation, age and gender. The general political context of the following analysis is thus one of a country with deep and widespread poverty, but also with a great deal of wealth concentrated on relatively few hands. The combination of poverty and inequality presents an almost unique opportunity in the African context for redistribution to alleviate poverty. As the following outline of poverty in Namibia will show, however, real redistribution has so far been limited.

There are three main types of definitions of poverty used in studies from Namibia. *Absolute poverty* defines a cut-off point for poverty (based on income, consumption, expenditure or some other proxy) below which people are considered to be poor. The justification is that income is highly correlated with other causes of poverty and is a predictor of future problems of deprivation. *Relative poverty* describes an individual's or group's level of wealth in relation to other individual or groups in society. Relative poverty is closely related to levels of inequality, and hence highly relevant in the case of Namibia. Finally, definitions based on *social indicators* include non-income determinants of welfare, such as domestic production, potable water, adequate housing and basic social services including health care, sanitation, primary education and public services.[3]

The most comprehensive study on poverty in Namibia is Devereux et al. 1996 (*Namibia Poverty Profile. A Report for Sida*. Windhoek: SSD/University of Namibia). The study is based on secondary sources and includes discussions of i) conceptual issues, ii) the incidence of poverty in Namibia, iii) origins and causes of poverty in Namibia, and iii) anti-poverty measures in Namibia since independence. In addition to the definitions outlined above, it also relates to the issue of vulnerability, arguing that although poverty is typically discussed in terms of static levels of living, variability of income is as serious for the poor as a low level of income.

The most comprehensive source of primary data is *The National Household and Expenditure Survey* (CSO 1996) which builds on the 1991 Census (CSO 1994). Households are classified into three groups according to their level of economic resources, which is estimated from weighted data on reported total household consumption giving a Standardized Consumption Level (SCL) of

[3] Composite poverty indices combine several weighted indicators, such as per capita GDP, life expectancy at birth, and literacy rates (Human Development Index), public spending on social services, immunization and fertility rates (Social Indicators of Development Index) and life expectancy at one year, adult literacy and infant mortality (Physical Quality of Life Index).

N$ 7,200. According to the Survey, 53 percent or 129,758 of all Namibian households are classified as poor by having a CSL of less than that amount.

The CSO study also measures poverty according to "food consumption ratio" or food consumption as proportion of total household consumption. According to this definition, a household that spends 60-79 percent of its total consumption on food is "poor", and a household that spends 80-100 percent of its total consumption on food is "very poor". As seen from Table 1, 10 percent of the households in Namibia are classified as very poor, 30 percent as poor and 60 percent as not poor on the basis of this definition. [4]

Table 1. *Poverty by food consumption ratio (Percentages, 1995)*

Food consumption to Total consumption	Classification	Proportion of households
0 – 59	Not poor	60
60 – 79	Poor	30
80 – 100	Very poor	10

Source: Devereux et al. 1996

Regarding relative poverty and income distribution, available data show that Namibia is one of the most unequal societies in the world (CSO 1996; UNDP 1998). This is illustrated by a Genie Coefficient of 0.70, measuring the inequality of income distribution among the Namibian population. The richest 10 percent of the society receive 65 percent of income, and the remaining 90 percent share among themselves only 35 percent of the national income. Put in other words, half of Namibia's population survives on approximately 10 percent of the average income, while approximately 5 percent enjoys incomes that are five times the average.

The extreme income inequalities imply considerable differences in human development as measured by UNDP's Human Development Index (combining income with life expectancy at birth and level of education). Table 2 shows the Namibian HDI for the last four years, together with Namibia's global ranking by income and by development. Whereas Namibia is defined as a middle-income country in terms of GDP per capita, there is a considerable discrepancy between average income and HDI index.[5] Key human development indicators for Namibia are given in Table 3.

[5] The improvement in HDI ranking in 1998 is solely attributable to updating on information of literacy (adjusted from 40% to 76%). There is no improvement in average income, and estimated life expectancy at birth has been reduced from 58.8 years in 1995 to 55.8 years in 1998 due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (UNDP 1998).

Table 2. *Comparison of GDP and HDI for Namibia (1995-1998)*

Ranking	1995	1996	1997	1998
Global HDI	0.611	0.573	0.570	0.644
GDP per capita ranking	77	79	83	85
HDI ranking	108	116	118	107
GDP rank minus HDI rank	-31	-37	-35	-22

Source: UNDP 1998.

Table 3. *Human Development Indicators, Namibia (1998)*

Indicator	Value
Life expectancy at birth (years)	61.0
Adult literacy (%)	81
School enrolment (%)	85
Income (N$)	3.608

Source: UNDP 1998.

UNDP has also developed a Human Poverty Index (HPI) for Namibia (UNDP 1998). The HPI is a measure of deprivation, excluding income and combining dimensions of :

- Longevity (the proportion of the population which is expected to die before reaching the age of 40 years);
- Knowledge (the proportion of the population above 15 years of age unable to read or write in any language);
- Standard of living (percentage of population without access to safe water and health services, and the percentage of malnourished children);
- Proportion of households which uses more than 80 percent of their income on food (i.e. the definition used in the 1991 Census).

The HPI should be interpreted intuitively as the proportion of the population suffering from poverty and deprivation.

Figures on average income and poverty in Namibia show significant differences between regions, urban and rural areas, gender and language groups, which imply a clustering of poverty in the country. There is a strong correlation between average income and the poverty as measured by the HPI, even though there are exceptions. Tables 4-7 below sum up these differences.

The figures reveal a strong geographical concentration of low income and poverty in the northern regions (Ohangwena, Okavango, Omusati, Oshikoto, Caprivi, Oshana), with the central regions (Omaheke, Kunene, Erongo, Khomas and Otjozondjupa) and the southern regions (Hardap and Karas) generally being better off both in terms of average income and poverty.

Table 4. *Average Income and Poverty by Region (1998)*

Region	Income (N$)	HPI (%)	Region	Income (N$)	HPI (%)
Ohangwena	1.070	31,8	Oshana	1.922	22,0
Omaheke	3.944	30,5	Otjozondjupa	3.659	21,0
Okavango	1.763	27,2	Hardap	5.945	19,1
Omusati	1.452	26,6	Karas	6.655	16,0
Kunene	2.203	24,8	Erongo	5.423	11,2
Oshikoto	1.6 80	24,9	Khomas	11.359	9,6
Caprivi	1.598	25,0			

Source: UNDP 1998

Table 5. *Average income and poverty by language-group*

Region	Income (N$)	HPI (%)	Region	Income (N$)	HPI (%)
Afrikaans	13.995	9,3	Oshiwambo	1.707	29,4
Caprivi/Lozi	1.692	23,1	Otjiherero	3.077	24.6
English	21.708	7.0	Rukavango	1.652	31,4
German	30.459	9,2	San	1.315	58,1
Nama/Damara	2.404	23.7	Tswana	5.326	17,2

Source: UNDP 1998

The same clustering is evident when focusing on ethno-linguistic groups. Groups from the north (Caprivi/Lozi, Rukavango and Oshiwambo) generally have lower average income and are poorer than groups from the central and southern parts of the country. Having said this, the San stand out as having by far the highest incidence of poverty and the lowest average income. At the other end of the scale all three groups of European descent (Afrikaans, English and German) have high average income and low incidents of poverty, but there are also differences between them particularly in terms of average income.

Another distinction in income and poverty is that between rural and urban areas. As shown in Table 6, average income is considerably higher, and the incidence of poverty lower, in urban than in rural areas. As seen from Table 7, differences in income and consumption between rural and urban areas were also captured in the National Census (CSO 1994). The differences in both income and consumption revealed by the data is a preliminary indication of the complexity of urban poverty. Moreover, urban areas reveal considerably higher income and consumption differentials than rural areas.

Table 6. *Average Income and Poverty by Urban and Rural Areas*

Rural/urban	Average income (N$)	Human Poverty Index (%) [6]
Rural	1.875	24.7
Urban	7.651	16.7

Source: UNDP 1998

Table 7: *Income and Consumption in Rural and Urban Areas (N$).*

Income and consumption	Rural	Urban
Average household income	9.450	32.300
Average per capita income	1.550	6.650
Average household consumption	7.600	23.000
Average per capita consumption	1.250	4.700

Source: Tvedten and Pomuti 1998

A number of studies also reveal that there are differences in income and incidence of poverty between social categories based on gender and age. Women and female headed households generally have lower income and are poorer than male-headed households (GON 1993; Girvan 1994; Næraa and Solomon 1994). As shown in Table 8, figures from UNDP show that the average income for women is less than half of the income for men, and women have a higher incidence of poverty. Also here, of course, aggregated data at this level conceal differences in income and consumption within each category.

Table 8. *Average income and poverty by gender*

Female/male	Average income (N$)	Human Poverty Index (%)
Female	2.188	25.4
Male	4.454	22.6

Source: UNDP 1998

Studies also show that the young and the elderly are particularly susceptible to poverty (CSO 1996; Devereux, Fuller et al. 1996): The former are vulnerable because of the problems related to health and education in poor families, and the latter because of the considerable pressure from other family members on the resources they possess (including land, cattle and pensions).

[6] The poverty index on rural-urban areas is incomplete due to insufficient data on underweight children. However, according to UNDP (1998:21) "a complete HDI is likely to portray an even more dramatic rural/urban divide".

There is little doubt that quantitative definitions of poverty like the ones referred to above are useful to policy-makers. They provide a uniform scale against which comparisons can be made of the incidence of poverty in different sub-sections of the population, or of the same population over time. Comparative data are essential in order to target resources to the poorest groups, and measure the implications of anti-poverty interventions on different social categories.

Having said this, the current study attempts to go beyond the quantitative measures of poverty and vulnerability by focussing on survival strategies of the poor themselves through a focus on relations and networks that poor people relate to in their daily lives and mobilize in times of crises.[7] We will argue that these factors determine individual and household well-being as strongly as levels of income and ownership of tangible assets, and hence that a combination of qualitative and quantitative data is necessary in order to get a realistic picture of poverty in Namibia.

As emphasized in the introduction to this report, however, although horizontal transfers play an important role in spreading risks and reducing vulnerability transfers between poor households almost by definition draw on a smaller pool of "surplus" income than vertical transfers. Therefore, any serious attempt to reduce poverty in Namibia requires an active public policy commitment to redistribute not only income and consumption goods (such as pensions and food aid), but also productive assets (such as land, agricultural inputs, and skills) from Namibia's wealthy elite to its poor majority.

[7] A focus on survival strategies, relations and networks has a long tradition in social anthropology, but has recently been "reinvented" through the concept of "social capital" currently advocated by the World Bank (Portes 1998).

3. Urban Relations of Poverty

3.1 Urban Poverty

We indicated above that one of the main problems with poverty data based on income, consumption or other quantitative measures is to capture the differences between rural and urban areas. This is becoming increasingly important as the developing world is becoming rapidly urbanized. On the African continent, Southern Africa stands out as the most urbanized sub-region with urbanization rates ranging from 50.8 percent in South Africa to 24.4 per cent in Tanzania. 66.4 percent of the population in Southern Africa are expected to live in urban areas by year 2010 (Tannerfeldt 1995; UN 1998).

An estimated 50 percent of the poorest sections of the population in Southern Africa will live in sprawling urban shantytowns[8] within the same period of time until 2010 (Wratten 1995; UNCHS/HABITAT 1996). Having said this, statistics on income and consumption still show that there generally is a higher incidence of poverty in rural than in urban areas. There are, however, a number of problems related to comparing standard measurements of rural and urban poverty respectively.

Very often a single income level or "poverty line" is set for both rural and urban households. This assumes that the costs for basic necessities are the same for the two types of areas, which is normally not the case. A number of essential commodities (such as housing, food, transportation, health-services and education) are more expensive in cities and towns than in rural villages. In most urban areas there are also fewer opportunities for reducing costs through subsistence production (e.g. growing food) or through access to free resources (such as wood for building and fuel).

Where poverty lines are based on a "minimum consumption basket", moreover, the costs of food items usually take up the bulk of the basket. In real life, the urban poor have to spend a considerable proportion of their income on necessary non-food items such as housing, water, fuel, transportation, education and health-services. The costs of these "other items" is of course the very reason why such a high proportion of the urban

[8] Poor urban neighborhoods in Southern Africa are known under different names with different connotations. A "location" normally implies a poor African township formally established by the South African apartheid regime; a "squatter area" implies a poor and illegally established urban settlement; and a "shantytown" implies a poor urban area with a mixture of illegal and legal settlements. "Slum" is normally not used in the literature due to the word's strong derogatory connotation, but is close to local terms often used for such areas. In this report, "shantytown" and the equivalent "informal settlement area" will be used interchangeably.

population in developing countries live in poor quality, overcrowded and insecure accommodation with inadequate provision of basic services.

Despite the difficulty of measuring urban poverty, there is a growing realization that urban areas reveal special characteristics that make the population in cities and towns particularly vulnerable. The renewed interest in urban poverty was first prompted by the wave of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s. The programs were intended to remove some of the "urban bias" (Lipton 1980) by removing anti-agricultural price-distortions, with the result that the urban poor suffered from price increases, contraction of industrial and public sector employment and reductions in public expenditure. More recently, the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996 drew further attention to urbanization and urban poverty (UNCHS/HABITAT 1996).

The most important determinant of urban poverty (as opposed to rural poverty) is the *labor market*. People with formal stable jobs, even if salaries are low, are much less likely to be poor than the unemployed or people with unstable casual jobs. Earnings in the urban informal sector have generally become increasingly low and irregular, as an increasing number of the urban poor have come to rely on this option.

Urban areas are also characterized by a *greater degree of commercialization* than rural areas. Urban households require money in order to pay for housing, pay rent and buy basic necessities such as food, water and fuel. A number of interpersonal social services, such as domestic work and child care, are also increasingly commercialized. People without savings or salable capital assets are extremely vulnerable to changes in the demand for labor and the prices for basic goods.

Social diversity and fragmentation is typically also seen as a special aspect of urban poverty. Urban areas attract people with different ethnic, cultural and linguistic origins. Social diversity is likely to create new tensions and survival strategies. Lifestyles, kinship and neighborhood support networks are seen as different from those in rural areas, and crime and social insecurity is another aspect of urban poverty that is given increasing attention.

Finally the urban poor are particularly susceptible to health risks, resulting from the closeness of industrial and residential functions, competition for land, high population densities and overcrowded housing, and the inadequate pace at which clean water supply, sanitation and solid waste services are expanded. In addition, though health services often are easier accessible in urban than in rural areas they are also often more expensive.

It should be underlined that the issue at hand is not whether poverty is more serious in urban than in rural areas. Many argue against making such a distinction at all and for treating the urban-rural divide as a continuum rather

than a rigid dichotomy (de Haan 1997) [9]. Given the considerable income differentials in urban areas one may argue that it is more relevant to talk about a "trichotomy" with shanty-areas and small semi-urbanized communities constituting an intermediate category between the rural and the urban. In any case, however, it is necessary for policies as well as for theories to gain more insight into the determinants of urban poverty.

3.2 Social Relations of Poverty

With the growing awareness of the different conditions under which the rural and urban poor live, increasing attention has been given to the importance of alternative ways to measure and understand poverty. Two concepts have become particularly important.

The concept of *vulnerability* is not synonymous with poverty, but means defenselessness, insecurity and exposure to risk, shocks and stress (Chambers 1989). It is linked to tangible assets such as wages, savings, housing and domestic equipment, but also to intangible assets such as claims on other households, patrons, the government and the international community for resources. The related concept of *entitlement* refers to the complex ways in which individuals or households ommand resources (Baulch 1996). These vary between people and over time, in response to shocks and long-term trends. They may include wage labor, sale of assets, own production and public provision of goods and services.

Less attention has been given to the importance of *social relations and networks* between the poor, and between the poor and the less poor, more specifically. The role of social relations and networks have been a central issue in social anthropology for years (Mitchell 1969), but has only recently been given more widespread attention through the notion of "social capital" advocated by the World Bank.

Social capital is defined as "the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures" (Portes 1998). Studies show that people are involved in relations and networks that are important not only for their daily survival strategies, but also for their access to employment, housing and social services, and their ability to mobilize support in times of crisis. The nature of relations and networks tend to differ with income, gender, age and other social variables (Moser 1996; Macharia 1997).

[9] First, it is argued, concentrating on whether urban poverty is more extensive than rural poverty diverts attention away from structural determinants which affect the life-chances of the poor in both areas. These include distribution of land, constraints to opportunity based on class, gender, race and age, government social and macro-oriented policies and external relationships which shape exchange rates, terms of trade etc. And secondly, there are linkages between the functions of urban and rural areas which implies that poverty in one area cannot be treated in isolation from the other. Interdependence between towns and countryside exists in areas such as rural-urban migration, casual labor, markets for food, industrial goods and services, water supply and demand, and flows of remittances.

Networks are often given structure through the creation of voluntary associations. Such associations is the main focus of the World Bank's notion of "social capital" .[10] Many of them are formed in direct response to the State's inability to provide a modicum of social and public services, and to alleviate poverty (Tostensen, Tvedten and Vaa forthcoming 1999).

Analyses of relations and networks often draw distinctions between commodity exchange (impersonalized exchange between independent individuals); rational models of reciprocity (emphasizing material motivations for exchange); and cultural principles for social interaction that create enduring bonds between mutually dependent persons often influenced by Mauss' notion of gift practices in archaic societies (Mauss 1967).

Generally the expansion of the market economy and urbanization have been seen as a threat to the reproduction of value systems based on solidarity and what has been called a "moral economy" (Scott 1976). Instead, it is argued, urban relations are based on individual strategies and self-interested agents acting to maximize their returns. In the process, reciprocal relations tend to give way to asymmetrical (patron-client) relations based on variations in access to economic resources. One implication of this is seen to be that people differ in their ability to forward claims towards other households, patrons, informal associations, the government and other institutions. Tangible and intangible assets are created by households during periods of economic surplus, and the ability to activate community support is thus related to the capacity to generate such a surplus.

Urban-rural links represent special types of social relation and networks. Existing evidence suggests that relations between rural and urban dwellers involve exchange of food and material assets, as well as services ranging from identification of job opportunities to child care. The extent and material content of such relations in Namibia have been relatively well documented (Pendleton and Frayne 1998; Tvedten and Pomuti 1998), but less is known about the extent to which they involve the poorest sections of rural and urban populations.

3.3 Marginalization and Social Exclusion

Until recently towns and cities have largely been seen as expressions of global political and economic processes of modernization, with less focus on the effects these processes have had for the marginalization of urban groups (UNDP 1991; WB 1991). Large urban population groups are, as we have argued, susceptible to poverty and deprivation through changes in income and expenditure patterns, changes in social organization and traditional support networks, and health hazards through congested settlements, sub-standard

[10] If one takes abroad view of "other social structures", then social capital is a relevant concept also at the macro level. There is, according the World Bank, overwhelming evidence that such macro-level social capital has a measurable impact on national economic performance (World Bank 1999).

housing, high crime rates and inadequate infrastructure and services (de Haan 1997) .

Recent advances in the analysis of poverty have implied options for bridging the gap between macro-orientated quantitative analyses and micro-orientated analyses of qualitative processes in the study of urban poverty and marginalization (de Haan and Maxwell 1998). The concept of 'social exclusion' is currently high on the agenda, and has been defined as "the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live" (de Haan and Maxwell 1998). Social exclusion takes the form of income markedly lower than average in the society at large, failure or inability to participate in social or political activities, or otherwise a life in the margins.

The concepts of "marginalization" and "social exclusion" have other implications than the alternative concepts of "exploitation" and "unequal development". Being largely de-linked from political and economic processes in society means that general economic development will not affect the relevant social groups, neither directly nor indirectly through "trickling down" effects as argued by liberal economists. Re-integration and socio-economic development among marginalized groups must either come from direct targeted interventions, or from initiatives by the socially excluded groups themselves through development of their social capital.

The issue of marginalization and social exclusion raises another central issue in social anthropology, viz. the notion of a "culture of poverty" contributing to the maintenance of a poor section of urban populations. The notion of culture in anthropology has moved away from a premise of cultural sharing, to a distributive model where culture as systems of interests, values, beliefs and knowledge is seen as differently read and construed by different individuals and social groups (Brumann 1999). The focus is on the work done by people in the cultural construction of their realities, and on the connections and interdependencies that generate a degree of order and shape (Keesing 1990; Barth 1994). People in urban shantytowns will, in other words, experience and relate to slum life through different perspectives and in different ways from where they are in the social structure (Hannerz 1992).

The critique against the concept of a "culture of poverty" has been based on the argument that it implied that poverty was somehow the poors' own fault, with the counter-argument that poverty is generated and reproduced by political and economic factors outside the control of the poor themselves (Melhuus 1997). However, as Hannerz (1992:76) argues, "a much more realistic view, in light of evidence, would have been to regard a culture of poverty as resting [] on the level where collective understandings are tied to a general type of context. Shared poverty generates cultures of poverty, rather than vice versa" (Bourgois 1995).[11]

[11] A thorough analysis of the relation between socio-economic conditions and cultural perceptions for the survival strategies pursued by the poorest sections of urban

4. Poverty in Oshakati

In the following section, we will look at the issues raised above concerning poverty and social relations with the town of Oshakati as our point of departure. We will start with a brief summary of the historical and structural processes behind the socio-economic differentiation existing. We will then proceed with an outline of the socio-economic differentiation in the informal settlements, based on data from the socio-economic baseline study conducted in the areas in 1994 (Tvedten and Pomuti 1994) [12]. The main part of this section will be a qualitative analysis of survival strategies in four informal settlements, with a particular focus on social relations and networks.

Case studies like the present inevitably raise the issue of representativeness. Our point of departure will be that former Owambo (i.e. the regions of Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati and part of Oshikoto) share a number of characteristics with the other regions in the northern part of Namibia. Hence, the main points made in the analysis are also relevant for the regions of Kunene, Kavango and Caprivi. The similarities are born out in statistics on income, consumption and incidence of poverty presented in Section 2.

Each region also has one principal urban center (i.e. Opuwo, Rundu and Katima Mulilo for Kunene, Kavango and Caprivi respectively), which shares many similarities with Oshakati (Devereux, Melaku-Tjirongo et al. 1993; Graefe, Oherien et al. 1994). Finally each town has clearly separated formal and informal settlement areas, that represent important economic, political and social divisions. Table 9 shows the size of the informal settlements in relation to the total population of each of the four towns.

Table 9. *Informal Settlements as Proportion of Town Population*

Town	Total Population *	Informal settlements (%)
Opuwo	5,000	70
Oshakati	25.800	60
Rundu	23,000	75
Katima Mulilo	16,000	75

Source: Tvedten and Moputola 1995 * Estimates are from 1995

populations is beyond the scope of this report, but will be pursued in forthcoming publications.

[12] The survey is based on a sample of 7% of the total shanty population, which is large enough to draw generalized conclusions. The sample is stratified proportionally by settlement area and not based on an overall random sample, in order to secure an equal representation of the smaller settlement areas.

4.1 Historical and Structural Causes of Poverty

The current socio-economic landscape in former Owambo and in Oshakati is the outcome of political, ecological, demographic and economic factors that individually and collectively shape patterns of socioeconomic welfare found in the area today.

In brief and general terms, pre-colonial Owambo was characterized by a low level of material production and consumption, often negatively affected by multi-year droughts, epidemic stock disease or other causes related to the dry and arid natural environment in the region (Devereux, Fuller et al. 1996). At the same time, Owambo society had strong kinship mechanisms of wealth redistribution and social security. Structural impoverishment perpetuated over lifetimes or generations was thus mainly restricted to small numbers of war-captives and slaves and to dependent ethnic minorities attached to more powerful clan families.

The arrival of European travelers, traders and missionaries in the 19th century began to destabilize the political and social integration of the Owambo communities. German colonization of south and central Namibia (1884-1904) introduced wage labor and forced migration, and missionaries had a considerable impact on social relations and family organization (Siiskonen 1990). However, it was the onset of South African rule from 1920 that had the most dramatic impact on the socio-economic conditions in Owambo. They soon established effective control over Owambo largely by utilizing the traditional political structure of kings, chiefs and headmen, and through the "homeland policy". Their direct influence was particularly related to the system of contract labor migration, and what came to be known as "Bantu education" (Banghart 1969; Hishongwa 1992).

Until the mid-1960s, changes in political and economic conditions and socio-cultural adaptation took place within a rural setting based on small extended villages, agro-pastoral production, and a matrilineal system of kinship. There were no urban areas in Owambo, and the urban experience was reserved for labor migrants returning to their home region for short periods of once every two years and, later, once a year.

Oshakati was established in 1966, partly as a base for South Africa's economic interventions in the northern “homelands” and partly as a base to fight the SWAPO liberation movement that had been established in 1959 and enjoyed increasing support among Owambos (Hangula 1993). The town grew rapidly throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Large military structures, a hospital, schools, an organized open market, a meat processing plant and several smaller factories were established. Most of these investments were made by the para-statal Bantu Investment Corporation. A few local businessmen were also given loans to enable them to establish their own business units.

The development of Oshakati first and foremost implied employment opportunities for those migrating to the town. Many became employed with the South African Defense Force (SADF), but there were also formal

employment opportunities in construction work, in factories, in trade, as maids and watchmen etc. In addition, the informal sector grew rapidly. The increasing number of Owambos in wage work opened opportunities for informal tradesmen and women selling goods ranging from traditional foodstuffs to second hand clothing, and for lodging places, tailors, barbers, hairdressers, and prostitutes.

Most of these establishments were located in the expanding informal settlement areas on each side of the formal town. The formal town was divided into a white town (Oshakati East) and a black township (Oshakati West), with the white section being separated from the rest by an intricate system of roads, fences and barbed wire. Due to the apartheid policy and war situation there was a strict separation between urban Oshakati and its rural Owambo hinterland, and Oshakati for all practical purposes became a fortified town. By 1985 Oshakati had a population of 15.000 people, and at independence in 1990 the population stood at 25.000.

The withdrawal of South Africa at independence had immediate consequences for employment, income and social conditions. People associated with the South African Defense Force left or lost their jobs, and thousands of unemployed SWAPO freedom fighters moved in from the regions or from exile. In the informal settlement areas, the transitional period was characterized by poverty and social instability. People had no jobs, and the informal sector had no customers.

Despite its importance in the north, Oshakati in many ways remained an "urban backyard " in relation to urban centers in the south until around 1995 (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995). Both public and private investments were slow to appear, and a large number of Owambos bypassed Oshakati to become urbanized in towns like Windhoek, Walvis Bay and Grootfontein where the lights of urban life were considered to be brighter.

At the same time new legislation vested increasing responsibility for social services with towns and municipalities, and poor towns with a weak tax-base such as Oshakati had problems delivering services to its population (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995; Frayne and Pomuti 1997). Democratic participation and accountability was limited, with low turnouts for elections and voters casting their ballots for political parties and party lists rather than individual ward-based candidates that would have brought politics closer to the shanty-towns.[13]

Though still severely affected by a number of structural economic and political problems, in the past five years Oshakati has slowly regained its role as the main urban center in the north. The basis for this expansion is primarily related to enhanced economic investments from South African capital (establishing shopping centers as well as manufacturing industries), and from Angolan economic interests (involved in both formal and informal trade with

[13] A change towards individual ward-based candidates was anticipated for the 1998 election, but has been postponed until 2003.

goods ranging from canned fish to diamonds). The increasing commercial importance of Oshakati also seems to have led to stronger government involvement in the town.

The political and economic context within which the shanty-dwellers find themselves is thus currently characterized by improved economic opportunities, but also by a considerable increase in the population and hence more competition for employment, housing and services. Moreover, the status of the informal settlement areas is still unresolved. While the Oshakati Town Council accepts them as a ""fact of life", they still describe the population in the areas as "squatters" and are reluctant to plan and develop physical structures and urban services.

4.2 Incidence and Characteristics of Poverty

Of the total population in Oshakati of 50.000, approximately 60 percent live in informal shantytowns and 40 percent live in formal settlement. The two formal areas are Oshakati East (the former white area) and Oshakati West (the former black township). There are altogether seven shantytowns, of which Uupindi, Oneshila, Evululuko and Oshoopala are the largest (see Map 1).

As in other urban areas in Namibia, levels of income, housing and access to social services differ significantly between the two main types of settlement areas.[14] The differences are immediately evident by the type of houses, shape of roads and proximity to commercial centers and key public institutions like schools and hospitals. Moreover, public services like water, electricity and waste disposal imply that the formal settlements are cleaner, greener, quieter and brighter. The majority of people living there are government employees with fixed monthly salaries, but private houses revealing considerable wealth have also recently been built.

The contrasts between the formal and informal town are not only evident in the form of physical characteristics and differences in income and consumption, but are also born out in terms of people's perceptions about differences in standards of living, levels of education, ways of dressing, behavior, safety and trustworthiness. Many people in Oshakati who live outside the shantytowns still regard them with great suspicion, and there are people who argue that they will never enter some of the areas with the historically most negative reputation. The perception about these areas among the shanty-dwellers themselves naturally differ, but also people there tend to perceive the shanty-areas as inferior to other areas. [15]

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[14] The picture has been complicated by the recent increase in population, with a number of people living in overcrowded formal houses with relatives, friends or as tenants.

[15] The differences in perceptions are also evident from the names used to denote the formal and informal towns respectively. While the neutral term *odoropa* is used for Oshakati East and *olukanda* for Oshakati West, the diminutive *okalukanda* or the derogative *uupereki* are normally used for the informal settlement areas. Recently the term *uumbashu* (derived from an Oshiwambo expression for a "blow-out of diarrhea") has also come into usage, by people from both types of settlements.

The four major informal settlement areas are located in different parts of Oshakati, and vary in size of the location as well as population (Table 11).

Table 11. *Estimated population in informal settlements (1999)*

Settlement	Population estimate
Uupindi	9373
Evululuko	4644
Oshoopala	2877
Oneshila	4302

Source: Re-calculated from Frayne and Pomuti 1997.

The differences in the size of the population is related to historical developments of migration and settlement, as well as current structural conditions. Uupindi has the strongest roots in traditional Owambo society, as the settlement was established within the traditional boundaries of the Uukwambi ethnic group. Oneshila became the main informal commercial center early on, at least partly due to its proximity to the main road passing through Oshakati. Evululuko and Oshoopala were originally established as areas for SADF and Koefoet personnel, and have had a reputation for being more tense and violent than the two other areas. [16]

The current growth of the shanty areas is influenced by urban land policies, establishment of public and commercial enterprises, and the annual inundation (*oshana*) of large areas surrounding Oshakati.

With the proclamation of Oshakati as a town in 1995, land formally belongs to the government through the Oshakati Town Council (OTC). Urban headmen have lost their right to allocate land within the town boundaries (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995; Frayne and Pomuti 1997). Though the system of freehold land is not fully implemented, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain plots in the shanty-areas.

One reason for the Town Council's reluctance to allocate land are plans to develop large commercial complexes in the vicinity of the informal settlement areas (Hamata, Hangula et al. 1996). Two shopping complexes ("Yetu" and "Game") have already been opened. Additional roads, buildings and other physical infrastructure are also likely to come into conflict with the informal settlement areas.

Finally, the *oshana* surrounds all four informal settlement areas, and at times of high floods they enter roads, gardens and houses and represent a

[16] The stigma has led both settlements to change names after independence, from Omashaka (derived from the verb *okushakena* [converge] and denoting the convergence of different languages and ethnic groups in Koefoet and SADF to Evululuko ("a place where you can rest"), and from Amunkambya (derived from the term for bitter fruits from the *omwandi* tree) to Oshoopala ("a place that looks nice") respectively.

considerable health risk. Uupindi and Oshoopala are particularly affected (Marsh and Seely 1992). The cheapest and most vulnerable dwellings tend to be built by the poorest in the lowest and most vulnerable areas of the shanty-towns.

4.2.2 The Population

The population in the informal settlement areas have a variety of backgrounds, but some general traits can be discerned. First of all there is a clustering of people from the same geographical areas and ethno-linguistic groups, which implies that people tend to settle with others with similar background (Table 12). However, we have also shown that the majority of the households (59 percent) do not have members of their own extended family living in the informal settlement areas. Moreover, with the increasing overcrowding of the shanty-areas the choice of where to stay has become much more limited in the past four-five years.

Table 12. *Ethno-linguistic Affiliation (Percentages)*

Income	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
Oshikwanyama	26	45	73	46	43
Oshindonga	17	16	3	9	13
Oshikwambi	32	27	10	24	26
Oshimbadja	6	0	3	2	3
Oshimbalantu	3	2	0	2	2
Oshikolonkhadi	3	7	3	0	3
Oshikwaludi	4	0	3	7	4
Others	10	2	3	11	7

With regard to distribution in terms of gender and age, slightly more women than men live in the shanty-areas (Table 13). This, together with the high proportion of *de facto* female headed households, reflects socioeconomic and cultural changes related to family structures, unstable household units, the difficult situation for women in rural areas and (conversely) their economic opportunities in towns. The slightly higher proportion of men in Oshoopala and Evululuko has to do with the history of these areas as locations for soldiers.

Table 13. *Sex Structure (Percentages)*

Sex	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
Male	46	49	52	48	48
Female	54	51	48	52	52

With regard to age structure, the population in the informal settlement areas is young (Table 14). 77 percent are 34 years or younger, and only 5 percent are

50 years or older. The age structure is only marginally gender differentiated, except for a higher proportion of women in the prime working age group between 20-29 years. Here women account for 53 percent of the population. A distinct feature of the informal settlement areas is the relatively low number of youngsters between 5-19 years (22 percent of total). These, as we shall explain later, are typically staying in rural areas because "the shanty is no place for a child to grow up".

Table 14. *Age Structure (Percentages)*

Age Structure	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
0-4	12	15	19	14	14
5-9	8	11	9	8	8
10-14	7	5	7	5	6
15-19	8	6	11	7	8
20-24	16	12	14	17	15
25-29	14	18	15	20	16
30-34	10	11	9	12	10
35-39	10	11	6	5	8
40-49	10	7	7	7	8
50-59	3	1	4	3	3
60+	3	3	1	2	2

The educational level in the informal settlement areas is generally low (Table 15). 14 percent of the population over school age have no education at all and 47 percent have grade 4 or less, implying a functional illiteracy rate of more than 60 percent. 36 percent have obtained grade five to 10, while only three percent have Grade 11 or higher. The level of education is higher among women than men (with a lower proportion having no education and a higher proportion having grade five or more).

Table 15. *Level of Education (Percentages)*

Income	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
No education	10	14	28	20	16
Grade 1 – 4	25	21	29	22	24
Grade 5 – 7	28	34	26	16	26
Grade 8 – 10	27	27	13	27	25
Grade 11 – 12	9	4	4	11	7
Other	1	1	0	4	2

Finally the majority of the population in the shanty-areas are first generation urbanites. 58 percent of the household heads moved to Oshakati after 1980. At the same time, 90 percent of the households believe that they will continue to live in the informal settlement area at least for the next ten years (Table 16).

Table 16. *Expected Place of Residence in Ten years (Percentages)*

Place of Residence	Uupindi	Evulu-luko	Oshoo-pala	Oneshila	Total
Present shanty area	100	70	93	88	90
Other areas in Oshakati	0	8	0	0	2
Rural areas	0	19	7	10	7
Another urban area	0	3	0	0	1
Other	0	0	0	2	1

4.2.3 Socio-economic Characteristics

Looking at the socio-economic characteristics of the shantytowns, practically all households settling in these areas are relatively poor in terms of income and other assets compared to people settling in the formal town. Nevertheless, they show variation with respect to a number of important traits including employment and income, housing, ownership of other assets, and patterns of expenditure. Table 17 reveals that the general income in the areas is low, but also that there are considerable differences both between and within the four areas.

Table 17. *Income Distribution (Percentages)*

Monthly Income (N$)	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
< 50	6	5	7	2	5
51 – 100	4	5	7	0	4
101 – 250	25	24	50	19	28
251 – 500	26	24	17	21	23
501 – 1000	18	30	20	21	21
1001 – 3000	18	11	0	33	17
> 3000	3	0	0	5	2

The majority of households have a monthly income of less than N$ 500 per month. The Standardized Consumption Level (CSL) of N$ 7,200 per year discussed above implies a monthly income of N$ 600, meaning that approximately 60 per cent of the shanty population is defined as poor. The differences in income between the shanty-areas is also significant, with Oshoopala being the poorest and Oneshila the richest. There are also significant differences between female headed and male headed households: Among the female headed households 69 percent earn N$ 500 per month or less, while 56 per cent of the male headed households have a similarly low income.

The differences in levels of income is to a large extent reflected in main source of income for the households. As seen from Table 18, 44 percent of the households have formal employment as their main source of income, and 40 percent depend on informal employment. The proportion of formally employed is smallest in Oshoopala. The majority of those having pensions as

their main source of income rely on older relatives often living in the rural areas. The category "other" primarily consists of people depending on handouts or other forms of redistribution. The proportion of female headed households with formal employment (20 percent) is considerably lower than for male-headed households (53 percent).

Table 18. *Main Source of Household Income (Percentages)*

Source of Income	Uupindi	Evulu-luko	Oshoo-pala	Oneshila	Total
Formal employment	39	62	27	49	44
Informal employment	41	30	60	35	40
Agricultural income	0	0	0	2	1
Pensions	12	5	3	9	8
Other	9	3	10	5	7

Income and standard of living is also reflected in the type of dwelling a household possesses. Table 19 shows that 64 percent of the shanty population live in iron-shacks, 34 percent in brick houses and only 2 percent in traditional dwellings.[17] Living in brick houses is considered superior because it fulfills urban cultural expectations and increases security of tenure.[18] In addition, a brick house represents better options for informal businesses such as food production (*okapana*), tailoring or production and sale of alcoholic beverages. As many as 61 percent of the dwellings in the informal settlement areas are used for other than domestic purposes. Also in this respect female headed households are poorer than their male counterparts, with 69 percent living in iron shacks and 29 percent in brick houses, as against 62 percent and 36 percent respectively for male headed households.

Data on physical infrastructure is another indication of the standard of living in the shanty areas, closely linked to health conditions. Supply of urban services is the responsibility of the local government (Oshakati Town Council), and there are here no significant differences between the areas. 74 percent of the shanty population depend on water from communal taps, 65 percent do not have access to proper toilet facilities, 88 percent depend on wood for cooking, and 83 percent depend on candles for lighting. There are no significant differences between male headed and female headed households as regards access to such facilities

[17] Traditional dwellings (*egumbo lyo miti*, lit. "stick house") are relatively cheap, healthy and easy to build. The limited number of such dwellings is an indication of the strength of an urban culture emphasizing that traditional dwellings belong to the rural and not the urban settings.

[18] E*gumbo* (i.e. the term used for traditional homesteads in the rural areas) is only used for brick houses.

Table 19. *Type of Main Urban Dwelling (Percentages)*

Dwelling type	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
Brick house	32	38	10	51	34
Iron shack	68	59	80	49	64
Traditional	0	3	7	0	2
Other	0	0	3	0	1

The 1993/1994 Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (CSO 1996) revealed that urban households spend 32 percent of their income on housing, 23 percent on food, and 24 percent on consumption in kind. Rural households, on the other hand, spend 47 percent on food, 15 percent on housing, and 38 percent on consumption in kind. The expenditure pattern is largely confirmed by our data from Oshakati. First of all people spend considerable amounts of money for their dwelling, as indicated by Table 20 on the market value of the main dwelling possessed. The value of dwellings in Oneshila is higher than in Oshoopala, which reflects both the different types of dwellings and the higher market value of Oneshila as a place of residence.

Table 20 *Estimated Market Value of Main Dwellings (Percentages)*

Market value (N$)	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
< 250	1	3	3	0	2
250 – 1000	10	14	30	2	12
1001 – 2500	17	16	20	26	20
2501 – 5000	36	38	33	30	35
> 5000	35	30	13	42	32

Table 21 reveals an expenditure pattern where food only represents about 1/3 of total consumption. There are no significant differences in the importance of food as part of total expenditure between the four shanty areas. According to the standard measurements of poverty discussed in Section 2, limited expenditure on food implies that people are “not poor”. However, as we have already argued non-food expenditures like housing (see Table 20), fuel (22 percent) and transport (20 percent) represent an additional and necessary burden for the poor in urban areas making a direct comparison difficult.

Table 21. *Daily Expenditure Pattern (Percentages)**

Item	Uupindi	Evululuko	Oshoopala	Oneshila	Total
Food	32	32	33	33	33
Clothing	18	19	17	17	18
Transport	17	18	16	20	18
Fuel	25	22	25	22	23
Other	8	8	9	8	8

* Informants were asked to rank their expenditures in order of importance. A point system has been used, giving the expenditure drawing most from the household budget the highest value. The category "Other" includes alcohol, and is most likely under-represented.

4.2.4 Health and Nutrition

In addition to income, consumption and access to basic social services, the socio-economic conditions in the informal settlement areas are revealed by data on health and nutrition.

Available information from surveys and information supplied by the community (UNICEF 1990) (Tvedten and Pomuti 1994) indicate that there are serious health problems in the shanty areas particularly among children (see Table 22). Malaria, diarrhea and various respiratory diseases are the most common. At the same time immunity rates have improved since independence for illnesses like polio, measles and tuberculoses.

Aids is becoming a serious problem and a great concern for the population. Evidence suggests that more than 20 percent of the population is HIV-affected (UNDP 1998), and death from aids is becoming an every-day affair. The epidemic will, of course, have significant implications for economic adaptation as well as social organization in the shanty areas.

Table 22 Health indicators

Health indicator	Value
Infant mortality rate	70/1000
Child mortality rate	100/1000
Life expectancy at birth	60 yrs
Maternal mortality rate	552/100,000
Sick children	68 percent*
Women under 20 yrs with children	39 %
Use of contraceptives among women	13 %

* Percentage of children being sick (cough, measles, diarrhea) within the past 14 days of the interview.

Also under-nutrition is a serious problem, and the number of meals and type of food eaten is closely linked to the socio-economic conditions of the households. Undernourished children are most commonly found in poorer households, in households where both parents are absent during large parts of the day, and in households where the adults frequently substitute alcohol for food. Table 23 indicates the degree of malnutrition in the informal settlement areas.

Table 23 Nutritional indicators

Nutritional indicators	
Under-nutrition 1) Wasting 2) Stunting 3)	35 % 9 % 32 %

1) Under-nutrition among children 6-60 months, measured in weight for age (Wt/A). A low eight for age reflects both recent and long term malnutrition.
2) Wasting among children 6-60 months, measured in weight-for-height (Wt/Ht). A low weight –for-heights indicate recent illness or inadequate food-intake.
3) Stunting among children 6-60 months, measured in height-for-age (Ht/A). A low height-for-age is a reflection of long-term or chronic malnutrition.

4.3 Social Relations of Poverty

The quantitative data presented above point in the direction of a shanty population characterized by problems of employment, low income, high expenditures on food as well as non-food items, limited access to basic services and poor housing conditions. The existing situation has resulted in poor health conditions, and nutritional problems particularly for children.

At the same time, the data reveal that there are significant differences in the socio-economic situation of individuals and households both between and within the informal settlements. We will argue in the following that access to employment and income is the key determinant, with implications for type of dwelling, access to land and urban services, savings and expenditure patterns. In contrast to conventional perceptions in social anthropology (Keesing and Strathern 1998), we will also argue that employment and income have significant implications for the size and organization of households as well as the type and nature of social relations and networks in which households are involved.

The poorest sections of the population experience difficulties in making ends meet both in their daily lives, and in times of special need. They are normally not in a position to buy sufficient food, clothing, fuel, schoolbooks and other basic necessities, or pay for expenses related to medical care, indemnities and important socio-cultural events such as births, weddings and funerals. In fact, comparing income, number of household members and prices for goods and

services, many people in the shanty-areas in Oshakati should not be in a position to survive as a social unit at all.[19]

The central topic in this part of the study is how people actually cope with the difficult situation described, and whether there are differences in the survival strategies of the poorest sections of the shanty population (*omuthigona/ ohepele)* and those who are less poor (*omunamake/omuyamba*). As argued in the introduction, survival strategies in poor urban areas in Namibia are to a significant extent a question of social relations and networks. No households can survive in a social vacuum, and relations are important not only for access to material resources but also for social security and fulfillment of socio-cultural obligations.[20] At the same time social networks are not only about "moral economy" altruism and community support systems. They also involve obligations and social pressures, and may break down under stress precisely when they are needed the most.

The importance of social relations is immediately evident in the informal settlements. In the morning many people leave the shanty area to meet people at work-places, in the informal market of *Omatala,* in hospitals, in schools, or in the Oshakati Town Council. Others leave the areas simply to seek occasional work and see if other "good things" may happen from incidental encounters. Among those who remain men sit in groups in front of shacks talking and drinking *tombo*. Women cook food together for own consumption or *okapana,* and watch each others children. Poor old men walk from dwelling to dwelling asking for food or other items. And people from other places, revealed by their behavior, clothing or way of speaking, indicate relations not only with rural areas but also with regions and countries further away.

All these relations carry material prestations, as well as cultural meaning. The following case-studies indicate the importance and complexity of these social relations of poverty.

[19] A number of quantitative studies on poverty based on housheolds as isolated units of analysis leave the same question unanswered: How do people survive when recorded income is insufficient to feed all household members and pay for other basic necessities?

[20] The latter is exemplified by the strong emphasis on ultimately being buried in one's rural area of origin. Being buried in town is considered a disgrace, and proof of extreme poverty, vulnerability and isolation.

BOX 1
Old man from a foreign country. Came to Oshakati to work in the construction of the Oshakati Hospital. Later work for SADF. Married a Namibian. Three adult children. Has largely been unemployed since independence. Divorced ("She found a man with more money than me"). Lives alone in a brick house, and manages with small savings and income from a small garden. Has little contact with his own children, and no contact with his former extended family. He does not have close neighbors ("Most of them are women who stick to themselves"), and spends most of the day in other parts of the shanty trying to get meals and drinks. Has tried to become involved in the Angolan community by going to services in the Tocoist Church, but laments that they only include their own. He complains about the deterioration of conditions since independence, and argues that things were better when the whites ruled. His main preoccupation is that he will not be able to go back to his home-country before he dies.

BOX 2
Married man in the mid-thirties. Employed as a security guard for nearly ten years. His wife by traditional marriage stays in his village in Ohangwena with their three children. Stays in Oshakati with another woman, with whom he has two children. The woman has two other children staying with her mother in her village. The two women know about each other ("They accept that they are two"). He manages to save money from his low-paid job, because people in the security-firm "help each other out" and his girlfriend makes some money. Has invested in cattle, taken care of by a younger brother in the village. Argues that the most important is to have a permanent job, so you "know that you will have a paycheck every month". He also prefers Oshakati to towns in the south, because it is easier to get to now people and you will always find somebody who can help you.

BOX 3
Young single mother with three children from 1 to 10 years. Lives in a recently built shack. Makes and sells *okapana* in cooperation with another woman in the neighborhood. Things were very difficult when her cohabitant died in 1997. She did not get any real help from his extended family, and her own family in the rural had little to support her with. They now take care of one of the children. She received most of the help from neighbors in the neighborhood. Argues that many men want to stay with her, but she does not want them. "Men are nice sometimes, but you don't have to live with them". She is relatively successful in the informal economy, because "I have a good place at O*matala*, and neighbors who take care of my children when I am there".

Our data indicate that survival strategies differ between three main categories of households, based on type of income and sex of household head. These are i) employed men and their household units, ii) unemployed men and their household units, and iii) formally or informally employed single or cohabiting women and their household units.[21] [22] It is important to note that identifying

[21] We are aware of the methodological problems with the postulated correlation between the quantitative data on different levels of poverty presented above, and the three categories of households defined for our qualitative analysis. We are in the process of generating statistical data for the three categories to verify the correlation, but this has not been possible within the timeframe of this study.

three main social categories implies that the survival strategies of people within one category have common traits, and not that people in the same category always follow the same strategy.[23] As we shall return to, social mobility (from poor to less poor, or the other way around) is accomplished exactly by pursuing alternative survival strategies and establishing alternative relations and networks.

Analyzing the survival strategies of the three main categories identified, we will take four main types of social networks (in the sense of patterns of connection between social linkages) as our point of departure. For people in the shanty-areas the primary social networks are found in the household and the extended family, among neighbors and friends, and in the urban and modern setting outside the shanty areas. Formalized networks (associations) are also part of socio-economic life in urban settlements like Oshakati and will be treated separately.

4.3.1 The Household

The most immediate social entity for people in the shanty-areas is the household (*egumbo*). The "classical" definition of a household is a social and economic unit whose members are related by marriage or blood, living under the same roof, pooling economic resources and "eating from the same pot". However, very few households in the shanty-areas in Oshakati adhere to this definition, and they differ significantly both in size, composition and social stability.

The average household size is 5,1, varying from 1 to sixteen members. Moreover, households typically consist of a small nuclear core, with extended family members, more distant relatives and non-relatives on the average making up as many as 43 percent of a household group. Many of these stay in the household for limited periods of time, and distant- and non-relatives are normally expected to contribute to the household economy or eat elsewhere.

The instability of the households is indicated by the fact that 58 percent of the adults in the shanty-areas are single (*ovo aveke*), 23 percent are cohabitants (*oveli pamwe*) without any legal status, and only 14 percent are married traditionally, in church or at the magistrate (*ova hokana hombola)*. 27 percent of the households are *de jure* female headed, with the actual rate being higher if counting households where men are away for long periods of time as *de facto* female headed. Households thus differ considerably as regards the extent to which they function as a coherent social and economic unit.

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[22] Female headed households have been grouped into one category as very few of them (20 percent) are formally employed, and the difference in income between formally and informally employed women is negligible.

[23] Each category does of course also include people in different socio-economic opportunity situations. While deeming the defined categories the most useful for our analytical purposes, non-typical cases are important for understanding the role of social relations and networks and will be discussed in the analysis.

Comparing the three social categories, employed men tend to have relatively large dwellings and large household units. Formal employment implies higher and steady income, and is found both in government and in the private sector. The size of the household is not solely a result of having a stable nuclear family and many children. There is also a considerable pressure on such households to take in relatives as well as non-relatives who need a place to stay. At the same time better off male household heads often increase their household by taking in a cohabitant in addition to the wife as an "urban form of polygamy" (*oohngoma*). The wives in such households can expect to be supported with basic necessities such as food, clothing, school uniforms and medical expenses. Cohabitants or second wives will also normally get support, but only for themselves and joint children. Such women will often have children with other men who they have to support themselves.[24]

Unemployed men will normally be in a very different situation. Without a fixed income to build larger dwellings and support a family, their household units tend to be smaller and more unstable. There are fewer members outside the core nuclear unit, both due to limited means and space and because unemployed men are less likely to have additional cohabitants. The main income-earning option available for unemployed men is occasional and poorly paid work such as cleaning yards for people in the formal town, unloading trucks from South Africa and loading trucks going to Angola, getting hold of and resell cheap imported items such as watches and perfumes, or do poorly paid agricultural work for farmers in the vicinity of Oshakati. Most of the key activities in the informal economy, such as making and selling *tombo* and *okapana*, is reserved for women. The ensuing economic importance of women in such households has wide-ranging consequences for the position and role of men as household heads. They often depend on their wives or cohabitants, and are in a vulnerable position due to their limited contribution to the household economy.[25]

Female headed households generally have lower family income than male headed households, and tend to live in small dwellings (shacks) and have smaller household units. They also have fewer relatives or non-relatives living with them than male-headed households do. At the same time, however, the urban setting and the informal economy represent opportunities that women do not have in the rural areas. Women in urban areas can (and often do) own their own dwellings and plots, which (despite the general insecurity of tenure in urban shanty-towns) distinguishes them significantly from rural women. Furthermore, participation in the informal economy implies an income that may be small, but nevertheless puts women in a relatively independent position. Women are most commonly involved in the production and sale of

[24] The possibility for getting formally married decreases with children out of wedlock. People argue that with one child it is still possible, with two children it is difficult, and with three children it is impossible. As shown in Section 4.2.4, approximately 40 per cent of women under 20 years in the informal settlement areas have children.

[25] One implication of this is that the problem of domestic violence seems less prevalent among the poorest male headed households than among those better off. Beside their economic situation implying limited access to alcohol, the poorest men know they can easily be thrown out of the house they live in by their wives or cohabitants.

local brew (*tombo or epwaka*) or "fast food" (*okapana*) from fish and meat, either in the shanty town itself or markets in the formal town. Some are also involved in trade with second hand clothing, baskets, traditional medicine, fresh fish, wild nuts and berries or agricultural products. Being married is still considered important, but there are also many women who argue that men are primarily a burden and that "liking them does not mean you have to live with them". Whereas some women move in with better-off men as cohabitants as part of their survival strategy, many men seek to move in with urban women leaving their wives in the rural area. However, there is evidence that economically independent women increasingly avoid longer-term co-habitantship with men. ("Our fathers were real men [*oshikopo ndora*]. The men here are not real but artificial [*kopi kopi lera*]").

BOX 4
The size of poor households is not only kept down by economic circumstances and the limited number of non-core members, but also by smaller nuclear units due to excessive death rates resulting from inadequate food and health conditions. (There is no evidence that HIV/AIDS is more prevalent among the poorest. In fact, the popular notion is that the disease is most common among better-off people with a wider social network and possibility to travel to areas where it is believed the illness is endemic, such as Angola and urban centers in the south). The size of the core household unit among the poor is also kept down by the tradition of poor household units "giving away" children to extended family members or others in a better position to take care of them on a permanent basis (*okutekulifa*).

In sum, the household remains an important social unit, but is under considerable pressure. It tends to be smallest and most unstable among the poorest sections of the shanty population. However, while poor male-headed households tend to break up and leave men single for periods before they enter new co-habitantships, poor female headed households maintain a core unit of mother and children. For the richer and larger household units, the main problem is to relate to the pressure for sharing resources with relatives and non-relatives moving into the dwelling unit.

4.3.2 The Extended Family

Few if any households are, as already emphasized, self-contained as social and economic units. People depend on relations and networks not only for food and material goods, but also for socio-cultural reasons. Traditionally the most important social entity in addition to the household both for economic and social security is the extended family *(aakwanezimo*).

The Owambos are matrilineal, meaning that ego's family is traced through the mother's kin and with the mother's brother being the most important social person. There are traditional cultural rules for rights and responsibilities related to the *aakwanezimo*, but these are undergoing continuous changes and are subject to negotiations in each individual case. Authority and guidance, responsibility for indemnities as well as inheritance are still mainly vested in

matrilineal kin. Egos father's extended family has rights and responsibilities in cases where the extended family member is married, but rarely in the (more common) situation where the biological father is not formally married with the mother of his child. In general terms, the role of the matrilineal kin is being reduced to primarily include direct descendents (i.e. consanguines), and the role of the patrilineage has become more important with the changes in residence pattern from uxorilocal to neolocal urban residence.[26]

In addition, there are changes towards an increasing "commercialization" of extended family relations in the sense that transactions increasingly involve money. Urban households are in a special situation as their extended family normally does not live in the same area as they do, implying that relations have to be maintained with people living in villages that may be difficult and expensive to reach. While rural family members visiting town are expected to bring traditional foodstuffs such as millet (*mahangu*), spinach (*evanda/ekaka*), meat (*onyama*) and traditional brew (*omakadu/omalovu*), urban family members visiting villages are expected to bring money or capital items such as clothing, canned food, cooking oil, beverages, and detergents. In addition, participation in agricultural tasks such as plowing, sowing, weeding, harvesting and herding is often done by paying a laborer or relative to fulfill responsibilities. And finally, important socio-cultural events such as birth, weddings and funerals demand money as well as physical presence.

Urban male-headed households with employment and income are in the outset in the best position to maintain relations with their extended family and rural areas of origin, but they are also most susceptible to claims from the extended family.[27] With the large expenses related to both traditional and modern marriage, employed men are most likely to be formally married which unites extended families and defines rights and obligations.[28] Maintaining relations is partly a question of visiting and being present on important social occasions, and partly of contributing with money or goods. With the commercialization of agricultural production, male headed households with employment and income are also most likely to have cattle and own land in their village of origin which further strengthens relations both culturally and by employing people to take care of their assets.

Unemployed men with limited and fluctuating income are at a double disadvantage. On the one hand, their options of maintaining relationships are limited as they will have problems visiting the rural areas and maintain the relationship with money and other assets. Often they will also lack cattle and land, which are important parts of extended family relations in their own right. At the same time, being unemployed and poor is a violation of the very

[26] Women tend to argue or fight against this developing, having vested interests (for themselves and their children) in a system where they will inherit both from matrilineal brothers/uncles and from husbands/fathers.

[27] It is, in fact, nearly impossible for better off households to cut ties with the rural areas even if they want to without getting into serious socio-cultural problems with the extended family.

[28] Traditional marriage transfers of cattle or other commodities have in the urban context been substituted by lavish marriage celebrations that only the better-off can afford.

rationale for becoming urban and leaving ones cultural roots in the first place. Extended family members are less likely to visit a relative who is poor with inferior housing, not only because there is limited space and less to gain but also because having children or other relatives in town who have not made it is considered a disgrace. In the same vein, many poor urban men do not return to their villages of origin even though socio-economic conditions would be better there, because they cannot face their extended family members as "failures".[29]

Women and female headed households are again in a special situation. Their ties with the extended family is to a large extent based on children as extended family property. Children are often sent to the rural areas to be taken care of by the mother's matrilineal family, which is also expected to support the urban based women with *mahangu* or other agricultural products. Women do traditionally not own cattle and agricultural land in rural areas themselves, even though the increasing commercialization of land has opened up options for land ownership. There also seems to be lower expectations for money and other contributions from women in town, based on the traditional perception of men as principle breadwinners. However, there are increasing concerns in the rural areas about the economic burden of having a large number of children from urban-based relationships. Urban women acknowledge the strain on relations with the rural areas this represents: "We put them there, and if we do not contribute what can they do?"

Traditionally the clan (*ezimo/epata*) also had responsibilities to support people finding themselves in difficult situations. The clan defined totemic categories within one and the same ethno-linguistic group, tracing a common root through the animal or plant which provided the clan name. The clans include *ovakwanangobe* ("ox"), *ovakwanime* "lion", and *ovakwanekamba* ("hyena"). Each individual belongs to two clans, of which the mother's clan was considered most important. Clan responsibilities were particularly important when people traveled away from their own area into other territories, where fellow clan members were expected to treat the visitor as a brother (or sister). The importance of the clan was gradually reduced in rural areas with the impact of Christianity, apartheid policies, increasing commercialization and changing residence patters. Having said this, there are indications that the clan is becoming an important part of people's survival strategies in poor urban areas. Well-off households try to suppress the notion of *ezimo*-responsibilities in order to avoid further burdens, whereas poor households try to evoke them in order to be able to put claims on a larger number of people for support.

Extended family relations are increasingly important for social and economic security as the urban household units become less stable. They are particularly important for maintaining involvement in the rural economy, for fulfilling key

[29] Preliminary data indicate that people migrating to town normally come from the better-off households (Pendleton and Frayne 1998), which will make the problem of failure even more serious. It is quite common among the poorest household to complain that the only people who will help them are their brothers and sisters. ("If you do not have brothers and sisters from the same mother, you are in real trouble").

socio-cultural obligations, and for solving problems involving indemnities or other larger one-time payments. It is also increasingly important for obtaining further education, which is seen as an extended family responsibility. Again the poorest households find themselves in the most disadvantaged position for maintaining extended family relations, primarily because the relations have to be filled with material content to be sustainable. Having said this, it is easier for poor female-headed than poor male-headed households to maintain such relations because of the importance of children in the extended family.

BOX 5

The changing perceptions of the role and responsibilities of the matrilineal and patrilineal extended family respectively is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in cases of inheritance. Traditionally the principal heirs were members of the matrilineage (uterine brother or oldest son of the oldest sister in cases of men, and oldest son or uterine brother in cases of women with property). In both cases the principal heir had an obligation to distribute part of the property to all the nearest matrilineal relatives. There has been a gradual change towards favoring the direct descendants of the male household head and the patrilineage, at the expense of wives and the matrilineage (partly but not solely as a result of changing residence patterns). Complicating this has been recent government laws enacted to secure rights of inheritance for wives and women. Cases of inheritance are increasingly taken to modern (as opposed to traditional) courts, which is beyond reach of the poorest sections of the population.

4.3.3 Neighbors and Friends

In the daily life of households in the urban shanty-towns, neighborhoods and friends are most important for survival strategies. Each shanty area is clearly demarcated and under the traditional jurisdiction of a headman (*mwene wolukanda*). Each shanty is again demarcated into three to seven sub-areas, consisting of approximately 150-200 households under the jurisdiction of a sub-headman appointed by the principal *mwene*. A neighborhood (*uushiinda*) is a more flexible term, defined on the basis of relations and networks. A neighborhood will normally center around a street or a square, and include 15-20 household units. Most people in a neighborhood will relate to each other in some way or another during a day, but a smaller number of households (three to six) will consider themselves to be close neighbors (*omushiinda shiinda*, literally “neck-neck-neighbors”).

Previously migrants moved in and established their own dwelling in a neighborhood where they had some type of relationship with people already living there. These could be relatives, people from their own village, or people with whom one shared a common experience such as labor migration to the South, life in exile or employment with SADF. With the current overcrowding, however, many settle in areas where they do not have pre-established relations. People emphasize that establishing neighbor-like relations is becoming more difficult, and that they do not know everybody outside the immediate neighborhood even by face.

For male-headed households with employment and income, neighbors tend to be considered a threat to their own position. The household head is away at work large parts of the day, and when returning after working-hours there is a strong pressure for sharing resources with poorer neighbors. Relations easily become non-reciprocal, and the immediate need for establishing lasting bonds or patron-client like relations with poor urban neighbors is limited. In fact, when special needs arise, people in this category tend to enter relations with people outside the shanty-town such as colleagues or friends to avoid situations of outstanding claims. Exceptions are small-scale businessmen based in the shanty area who need customers, and local traditional or party-based politicians who need followers.

As opposed to employed male-headed households, unemployed and poor men tend to depend heavily on immediate neighbors and friends. We have shown that they normally cannot rely on their extended family, and they are also physically present in the shanty areas during large parts of the day. Exchange relations involve money for food and beverages, medical expenses, cloths, fuel, transportation etc. for the household. Depending on limited and fluctuating income from casual work, people in this category will have access to money at different times and are generally only able to establish reciprocal relations with others in similar situations. It is also common for poor men to circulate around the shanty area in search for food and local brew, through a practice called *okunyanganyanga*. As practically all food and drinks are consumed outside (the shacks are small and extremely hot during the day), the people doing this simply sit down in the group expecting or hoping to be served as food and drinks are passed around. In doing this they try to evoke traditional cultural obligations of sharing with people in need. The practice is frowned upon by an increasing number of shanty-dwellers, who argue that people doing this "have no culture" (i.e. do not behave in accordance with the dominant urban cultural rules).

Women and female headed households are at the outset depending on neighbors and friends both socially (to "watch the gate", take care of children, etc.) and economically for loans or cooperation related to informal economic activities. Women rarely go to *cuca-shops* or bars, and the neighborhood streets, yards, waterposts or shading trees function as key meeting places. The importance and closeness of neighborhood relation between women is evident by the fact that the notion of *omushiinda-shiinda* is primarily used by and about women. Good "neck-neck-neighbors" will always help you, can be trusted ("a close neighbor can breastfeed your child"), and will not gossip. At the same time, women tend to depend heavily on their most immediate neighbors and are less likely to establish contacts outside their *uushinda*. Some argue that the practice of *okunyanganyanga* is not possible for women ("If we do it, who are going to cook the food to eat?"), and others argue that it is dangerous to leave the neighborhood particularly at night. High incidents of violence in the shanty-areas indicate that this fear is well-founded.

Neighbors and friends represent important social capital for the urban poor. However, the ability and utility of entering relations of this type differ with

employment, income and gender. The poorest are largely confined to relations with people in similar situations and with a limited "surplus" to redistribute. Moreover, while poor men and male-headed households tend to depend on the unpredictable practice of *yangayanga*, poor women and female-headed households tend to enter more stable relations with other women in the immediate neighborhood. Better off men and male-headed households avoid entering relations of this type as asymmetrical relations may yield limited or negative returns.

BOX 6
The difference in the role and importance of the shanty-area for the two categories of male headed households is exemplified by their relationship to drinking places. These function as perhaps the most important meeting-places or arenas for men. *Cuca-shops (shebeens)* are small shacks located in the shanty-areas and selling traditional brew (*tombo* or *epwaka*). People sit in groups and drink, and the brew is paid for and consumed under the principle of "I pay today and you can pay tomorrow" (*tombo ontaku*). C*uca-shops* are primarily used by poorer men in the shanty-population. Bars are normally located in larger brick-buildings in the formal town or in the outskirts of shanty-areas. Here beer in cans and wine in bottles are bought individually, and tables and chairs make the setting more formal. Bars tend to be used by employed, better-off men who can afford the beer and wine and who do not want to be involved in the system of outstanding claims typical for the *cuca-shops.*

4.3.4 Urban Relations

As opposed to the situation in many rural villages, people in urban shantytowns meet a large number of people who they in the outset do not know. On the one hand many people enter the shanty-town during the day or at night. These may be relatives or friends of other residents, people passing through and needing a cheap place to stay, aid workers, representatives from the Oshakati Town Council, local SWAPO or DTA[30] politicians, youngsters in search of quick and non-committing sexual relationships, and refugees from Angola who need to find a place to hide. On the other hand, the shanty-dwellers also enter into relations with a number of people outside the shanty area. These include officials from local government or the police, people from banks or informal lending institutions, women selling goods at markets, employees in shopping centers or bars, Chinese traders, teachers of ones children, taxi drivers, etc.

All these people represent potential relationships for the shanty population. They differ from the other types of relations and networks in that the people in the outset are unfamiliar with each other, and they link the shanty-dwellers to the modern and urban part of Oshakati. As parts of survival strategies relationships to persons in the modern and urban sector represent important potential assets. However, relating to them constructively also demands

[30] SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) was the most important Namibian independence movement until 1990, and has since then been the main political party in the country. DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance) was established during South African rule and has been the main opposition party since independence.

resources and the command of cultural codes and knowledge that is unequally distributed among the shanty population. Among the most important of these are education and the ability to read and write.

BOX 7
Owambos first modern shopping complex opened in 1996, with the fast-food restaurant "Kentucky Fried Chicken" soon developing into the "hot-spot" for the Oshakati middle class. Very few of the Oshakati shanty population have ever been there. This is not only a question of affordability. Entering the premises also requires knowledge about cultural codes that are different from what people are used to: Buying fast food (*okapana*) on the street implies that you can select and pay for the piece you want, that you can eat the same way you do at home, that you can complain if there is something you do not like, and perhaps even that you can pay at a later stage. At KFC you have to be able to read and understand the menu, it is a "take-it-or-leave-it" situation, and you are normally in for a lonely meal.

The type of external relationships discussed here are particularly important as potential sources of employment. Both the formal and the informal labor market largely recruits people by way of relationsships and networks, except in the case of qualified occupations demanding special skills (teachers, nurses, policemen etc.). Having indirect or direct access to potential employers such as local government officials, shop-owners, patrons of informal markets, farmers and cattle-owners in the vicinity of Oshakati, Angolan traders or people involved in theft or smuggling increases the options for employment and income. Conversely, not establishing external relations reduces the options for finding employment substantially.

Again employed men with regular incomes are in the best position to relate constructively to incidental encounters of this type. They will be in contact with the largest number of people during a day, and have the means to engage in reciprocal relations ranging from obtaining formal loans to easing the reaction of the traffic police. Employed men are also most likely to be active in political parties, business-associations, labor-unions or other interest groups where people with different backgrounds and resources meet. Ability to read and write, which we have seen is unevenly distributed among the shanty-population, also opens up a number of job-opportunities out of reach for the illiterate.

Poorer unemployed men have, as we have already shown, at the outset a more encapsulated social network primarily confined to the shanty-area. Their limited command of urban cultural codes (including speech and dress) and qualifications (including language skills and literacy) also inhibits them from utilizing the urban modern context of Oshakati constructively. In addition, coming from informal settlement areas carries with it a negative stigma and practical problems related to the lack of an official address, inadequate personal documents etc. At the same time, poor unemployed men have most to gain by trying to exploit a wider set of relations. Finding patrons (in business, in politics or in other spheres of life) can be vital for access to employment, money and other assets. When established, however, relations

tend to be asymmetrical with low returns in terms of payment or other prestations. Many unemployed men also become involved in illicit activities through patrons, ranging from petty-crime to large-scale smuggling.
Women and female headed households also have a restricted external network at the outset, mainly related to informal economic activities. They are less inclined to seek occasional work or other alternative sources of income, as many types of occasional labor are not accessible to women. Women from the shanty-areas also have a more restricted access to other urban arenas such as government institutions, supermarkets, pubs and discotheques, hospitals and schools, both because they are women and because poor women have difficulties fulfilling the criteria (dress-code, language, education etc.) for crossing male dominated cultural boundaries. Establishing more permanent relations with people in the modern urban context is also difficult due to the stigmas associated with living in shanty-towns. Relations easily become exploitative: Though the traditionally liberal view of sexual relations outside marriage in Owambo society makes the concept of prostitution ambiguous, poor women from the shanty-towns easily find themselves in relations where sexual services are given in return for food or other necessities.

BOX 8
As with all the general survival strategies described, there are exceptions to the rule. Two single women in the informal settlements came to Oshakati ten years ago, and soon became involved in selling *okapana* and other traditional female modes of subsistence. They slowly expanded their business by establishing contacts with basket producers in the rural areas, informal money lenders in Oshakati, truck-drivers from South Africa and a woman from their village who has made it through secondary school and studies in Cape Town. On the basis of these relations they have developed a flourishing business selling Owambo baskets in Cape Town, and importing second hand cloths for sale in Owambo. They have built a good brick house, but still live in the shanty area. "This is where we belong, and have our friends and neighbors".

For the poor in urban shanty-towns, relations and networks in the formal town are particularly important as potential sources of employment and income. Again the poorest find themselves in a disadvantaged position due to lack of resources and inadequate command of cultural codes and knowledge. Poor men have no natural arenas or points of contact in the formal town. Poor women are generally even more restricted in terms of accessible arenas, with the important exception of informal markets.

4.3.5 Associations

Relations and networks in urban informal settlement areas are often given structure through the creation of voluntary associations. These may be related to politics (such as political parties, ethnic groups, or professions), urban service provision (including water, electricity, garbage collection), alleviation of poverty (churches, local branches of the Red Cross etc.) or other types of interest groups (such as women's organizations and associations of traditional healers). As opposed to urban settings in e.g. South Africa, however, associations do not seem to be prominent in the informal settlement areas in

Oshakati. The few existing are either based on traditional rural institutions, or established through external initiatives.[31]

The most visible associations in the shanty-areas are Community Development Committees (CDCs). They were established on the initiative of a Danish development organization in early 1993, with the immediate task of taking part in the planning and implementation of an urban upgrading project and the longer term objective of being a self-sustainable community based development organization (CBDO). The CDC in each shanty area was democratically elected, and selected its own officers. The CDCs functioned well as long as the project was present with finance and advice, but largely collapsed when the project withdrew in 1995.

The immediate reason for the collapse were irregularities related to funds, but the more profound reasons were lack of political legitimacy both in the shanty-areas and in relation to external political structures. The Oshakati Town Council came to see the CDCs as a threat to its own position as a local authority. Internally the committees suffered from the lack of participation by the most resourceful households (who have their main identity outside the shanty-areas) and the least resourceful households (who were primarily concerned with immediate returns in the form of employment and not with the idea of community development) (Frayne and Pomuti 1997).

Other externally initiated associations include women's groups (mainly related to SWAPO), housing associations (linked to the Namibia Housing Action Group) and various credit societies (such as the Namibian Development Trust, the Rural Institute for Community Empowerment etc.).[32] Common for all of these is that they are considered external entities, and relate to a limited number of people. The people involved tend to be the ones with resources in terms of money as well as education and knowledge. The poorer sections of the population tend not to be involved, partly due to lack of necessary resources but also because they do not think that formal associations will do anything for them. ("All they do is talk. They never help us").

The two institutions with the strongest impact on the shanty population are political parties (mainly SWAPO and DTA, but also the recently established Congress of Democrats, CoD) and urban based traditional authorities. They are not primarily important as organized structures delivering goods and services, but as symbols of political processes and contradictions in the shanty areas.

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[31] More research is needed to understand the reasons for the apparent lack of associations or interest groups in Oshakati. Relevant factors may be to the lack of tradition for democratic associational life in traditional Owambo society, the policies of the apartheid state, and the recency of the urban crisis in Namibia.

[32] As opposed to rural Owambo, the church does not have a strong position in the shanty-areas with the exception of the charismatic Kimbangistas (Simão Toco Church) which solely recruits Angolans.

Only a small number of people in the shanty areas are active members of political parties, and participation in national and local elections has been very low. SWAPO is the dominant political force in Owambo as a whole with more than 90 percent of the votes in national and local elections since independence. However, DTA (and CoD) has a relatively strong position in the urban shanty areas, primarily as a symbol of opposition to the current national and local government. This is partly due to the large number of former soldiers with South African sympathies in the areas, but increasingly also a sign of frustration with SWAPO due to what many perceive as exclusion from socio-economic developments in the country.

All four shanty-areas have a headman (*mwene wolukanda*), and sub-headmen. The headmen are formally linked to wider traditional authority structures, but their status and role differ. [33] The most important tasks of the headmen have traditionally been related to land allocation and adjudication of criminal cases in their area of jurisdiction. Both tasks are now formally the responsibility of state bodies (i.e. the Oshakati Town Council, the police and the court system respectively), but due to the unresolved legal status and marginal position of the shanty areas the headmen still deal with both types of issues albeit under new conditions. They are not allowed to charge for allocating land, and serious offenses within the areas of traditional jurisdiction (rape, murder etc.) are treated both in traditional and formal courts.

BOX 9

"People in [my community] come to me the whole time, both in connection with land and criminal cases. At the same time the councilors are afraid of us. They know we have power, and can get them out of office if we organize our people. But it is also difficult to be a headman in a town. We have a terrible problem with AIDS, and many people here show no respect for each other. They also quarrel and fight about a lot of things they would not fight about in the village. I recently had a case where one man wanted to take his neighbor to court because the neighbor's cock was making too much noise in the morning. Imagine!"

Two additional institutions, albeit more in the anthropological sense of the word and without formal organization, are in the process of becoming increasingly important in the shanty areas. Football clubs and shanty-based gangs (*botsotsos*) primarily involve young unemployed men, who we have seen represent the most vulnerable and frustrated social group in the shanties.

Oshakati-based football-clubs (including the "Almighty Stars") are perhaps the only modern urban institution where socio-economic background and shanty-residency does not determine accessibility. Skills are decisive, and players from poor backgrounds are supported either by people in the neighborhood or local businesses. Games at the Oshakati Stadium is one of the few arenas where people from the shanty-areas and the formal town meet as equals (provided the former can pay for the ticket, of course), and the

[33] Two of the headmen in the four shanty-areas are historically part of traditional structures, while two were appointed by the South African administration. The status and role of the headmen is further complicated by their affiliation to different political parties.

recent introduction of TV in public places showing Namibian who have made it in professional football has made football a career objective for many shanty-dwellers.

Botsotsos tend to be organized in informal gangs with a patron inside or outside the shanty-area. They normally carry out petty crime, but are also involved in more serious offenses (robbery, rape and even murder). Most of these activities take place outside the shanty-area where they belong, but may also be carried out in the shanty itself. The population there know who the *botstsotsos* are, but cannot do much due to their internal codes of conduct and the limited capacity and efficiency of the traditional and modern court system.[34] The *botsotsos* tend to defend their activities with reference to the difficult situation they are in, and often blame the new government for their fate (" [President] Sam [Nujoma] brought us hunger", "*Sema okwa eta ondjala*"). With deteriorating socio-economic conditions in the shanty-areas, *botsotsos* are likely to have a considerable impact on the shanty-areas in the future.

The limited number of organized associations in the Oshakati shanty areas seems to be related to the differences in interests and resources between the better off households (with their primary identity outside the shanty areas) and the poorest households (whose strategies are determined by more immediate concerns for survival). As such, it further substantiates the differences already described related to individually based relations and networks of the poor and less poor respectively. Traditional and modern political institutions seem to represent the strongest potential for community organization and initiatives. They have clear structures of authority (i.e. in line with traditional Owambo culture), and are less demanding on the poor themselves. Also here, however, people actively involved tend to come from the most resourceful households.

4.3.6 Marginalization and Social Exclusion

We have argued above that it is possible to discern general traits regarding the survival strategies of the three main social categories in the shantytowns in Oshakati. Employment and gender have been singled out as the most important determinant for household organization, as well as for the types of social relations and networks entered.

Our arguments are summed up in Figure 2. Employed male headed households generally have access to all the main types of social networks identified, and are in a position to fill them with necessary material content to be sustainable. Poor male-headed households are much more restricted in their relations and networks. They do not have the necessary resources to establish or maintain them, and hence have limited access to the type of social

[34] As poor young men *Botsotsos* often have weak ties with their extended family which makes a traditional punishment less effective, or they are let out on bail by the police or public court system due to lack of capacity to pursue cases of this type.

capital needed to alleviate poverty. Poor female-headed households are also restricted in the types and extent of relations they can enter, but have closer and more sustainable networks built on gender and on children as extended family property. Even though they are equally poor as their male counterparts in terms of household income, they are thus in a better position to secure benefits through social networks.

Figure 2. *Types of relations and Networks*

HOUSEHOLD CATEGORIES	TYPES OF RELATIONS / NETWORKS				
	The Household	Extended Family	Neighbors Friends	Urban Relations	Voluntary Associations
Employed Male-headed Households	*Large & Stable*	*Extensive & Intensive*	*Limited*	*Extensive & Intensive*	*Extensive & Intensive*
Unemployed Male-headed Households	*Small & Unstable*	*Limited*	*Extensive*	*Limited*	*Limited*
Female-headed Households	*Small & Stable Core*	*Intensive*	*Intensive*	*Intensive*	*Limited*

Returning to our theoretical outline of social relations of poverty, the relations entered by people in the shanty-areas include both exchange relations based on more or less shared cultural values, reciprocal relations emphasizing material motivations, and impersonal commercial exchange relations. The basis for these relations undergo continuous changes, but there has been a general development towards an increasing commercialization and ensuing marginalization of the poorest sections of the shanty population.

Commercial relations of exchange are in the process of changing from small localized urban markets with options for bartering, price negotiations and credit, to market-places with higher prices, impersonal relations and higher socio-cultural thresholds. People without employment and income find it increasingly difficult to be involved in normal commercial exchange relations. Money is also entering reciprocal relations between people familiar with each other in the urban context. Obtaining money as well as food, clothing or other items increasingly requires payments of an equal amount either in cash or kind. This is not only a result of “modern” and “urban” perceptions about what exchange relations should be like, but equally much that most people cannot afford to have outstanding claims for longer periods of time.

For the poorest, the main urban option that remains is to convert traditional rural values of support to an urban context. However, a “moral economy” where relatives, neighbors and friends are responsible for the well being of people in the neighborhood is increasingly difficult to allude to. Culture in the sense of interests, values, beliefs and knowledge is not shared in an urban environment like Oshakati to the same extent as in a village setting, and

cultural perceptions will depend on where people find themselves in the socio-economic structure.

What remains as the most relevant survival strategy for the urban poor is to maintain relations with their rural area of origin. However, also in this case the increasing commercialization has changed the nature of relations. Maintaining relations through visits and exchange of goods demand access to money, as does participation in socio-cultural events related to birth, marriage and death. The poorest in the shanty-towns do not only have to overcome these obstacles, but they also have to relate to the marginal status ensuing from being poor and not having made it in an urban context.

The poorest sections of the population in the shanty-areas are thus increasingly marginalized both in relation to their own immediate social environment, and dominant urban political and economic processes. The marginalization and social exclusion is exacerbated by an emerging "culture of poverty", giving itself expressions ranging from apathy (as with unemployed men), via redefinitions of dominant socio-cultural principles (as with women disregarding relationships with men and emphasizing relationships with each other), to anger and destructive behavior (as with the *botsotsos*). The "culture of poverty" is strengthened by the increasing discrepancy between the actual living conditions of the poorest sections of the population and the cultural "implosion" through mass media, education etc. emphasizing what a successful modern and urban life should be all about.

While the majority of the shanty-population seem trapped in poverty and deprivation, social mobility both from being poor to less poor and from being less poor to poor does take place. This is normally not, as we have argued, the result of "trickle down" effects of the general economic development taking place in Oshakati, Owambo and Namibia for that matter. New employment opportunities, enhanced access to capital goods, improved social services etc. largely bypass the poorest sections of the shanty population.

Social mobility is, rather, often the outcome of initiatives of individuals and groups to establish new relations either with the traditional and rural or with the modern and urban. Preliminary case-studies indicate that upward social mobility among poor women and female headed households often is based on close cooperation between women, pooling labor and resources related to infomal economic activities. Among poor men and male-headed households, it seems more common to enter patron-client like relations with people in the urban and modern setting that eventually lead to improved access to employment and income. Social capital in the World Bank sense of voluntary associations seems less relevant as a basis for mobility, because associations are normally not accessible to the poorest sections of the shanty population.

Having said this, the vulnerability of the entire shanty-population is demonstrated by preliminary case-studies on downward mobility. The less-poor often depend on a single source of income in the form of employment. Losing employment has immediate implications for income, which again has

implications for the ability to maintain other relations and networks. Households with the best options for improving their situation and eventually move out of the shanty-areas seem to be those who manage to diversify their sources of income and relations by relating constructively both to the urban and modern and the traditional and rural.

5. Poverty in Rural Owambo[35]

Urbanization in Owambo is a relatively recent phenomenon, and the nature of social relations and networks in towns is both directly and indirectly influenced by similar relations in rural areas. The majority of the population in Oshakati are first generation urbanites and maintain relations with rural areas, and traditional rural culture (values, beliefs, knowledge) is one of several cultural flows that influence the survival strategies of the urban poor. A proper understanding of urban relations of poverty thus necessitates an analysis of rural areas and their links with urban populations.

We argued in the introduction to this report that Owambo traditionally had strong kinship mechanisms of wealth redistribution and social security. Structural impoverishment perpetuated over lifetimes or generations was mainly restricted to small numbers of war-captives and slaves, and to dependent ethnic minorities attached to more powerful clan families. However, the arrival of European travelers, traders and missionaries in the 19th century and the onset of South African rule from 1920, began to destabilize the political and social integration of Owambo communities.

As in urban areas, community support structures have continued to be under pressure. The traditional redistribution at the community level carried out by chiefs and headmen largely seems to have disappeared, even though people in some communities continue to give parts of their yield to the traditional authority. Moreover, traditional systems of redistribution through productive activities in arable agriculture (*ondjambi*) and cattle production (*oufita*) still exist, but take place on a much more limited scale (Hakulinen 1992; Girvan 1994; Næraa and Solomon 1994).

In general terms redistribution of economic resources have become individualized at the level of households, extended families and neighborhoods. Households and extended families still tend to be more stable and function as more coherent social units than in urban areas, but non-family relations (neighbors, friends, workmates etc.) have increased in importance as economic life has become more diversified. Having said this, little is still known regarding the extent to which these general trends affect the poor and the less poor households respectively.

In the following, we will take a closer look at the villages of Ompundja and Oniihende in order to obtain a better understanding of the basis for relations of poverty in Owambo. The two villages were selected in order to have one rural setting close to Oshakati and urban influences, and one further away from urban centers. Our assumption has been that social relations and

[35] Selma Nangulah has been responsible for planning, implementing and writing the rural part of this study, and functioned as team leader for Martha Naanda, Frieda Iigonda and Gabriel Daniel from SSD.

networks will differ within the two villages, as well as between each village and urban areas.

The rural part of this study is based on a combination of literature reviews, structured interviews, group discussions and a small survey. The survey covers 10 percent of the 200 households in Ompundja, and 30 percent of the 51 households in Oniihende.

5.1 The Villages of Ompundja and Oniihende

Ompundja is situated in Oshana region, only 20 km from Oshakati. Most people from this village speak Oshikwambi. Ompundja is a large village with approximately 200 households, and is divided into seven sections of which six are led by sub-headmen. The seventh section is regarded as the main section and led by Ompundja headman. The village has six schools, a church, two clinics and a few small shops. The headmen are responsible for traditional matters, while the councilors for the constituency are responsible for government activities. A gravel road between Oshakati and Ompundja makes it easy for people to go to Oshakati on a daily basis. Although there are facilities in the village, people tend to go to Oshakati for shopping, milling of *omahangu*, medical treatment, and leisure.

Oniihende is located between the Oshikoto and Ohangwena regions, with a combination of Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama speaking people. The latter are the majority, although the village falls under the jurisdiction of the Ndongas. This village is very remote, situated about 30 km from the nearest shopping center and about 105 km from Oshakati. Oniihende is a small village compared to Ompundja with only 51 households, and is led by a headman. Due to the poor roads and lack of transport facilities, people from this village hardly visit urban centers. People walk over long distances in order to get clean water, and the same applies for shops, schools, clinics etc. The headman claims he is not familiar with the councilor of the constituency, and only relates to the Ndonga Kingdom as a traditional authority.

People in both villages normally live with their nuclear family and close relatives, and not with non-relatives as is the case in towns. Households normally consist of older household heads staying with their young children and grandchildren. 43 percent of the households are female-headed, and 57 percent are male-headed. The household members who are absent are mostly older children of the household head, belonging to the economically active group between the age of 24 - 49 (27 percent). Many of these go to urban areas to look for employment in order to support their families. Those present in the village are mostly pensioners, unemployed, students and youngsters.

The average number of dwellings in each homestead in Ompundja and Oniihende does not differ significantly (12 and 11 respectively). What makes the difference are the types of dwellings. The homesteads of Oniihende are predominantly traditional. The homesteads of Ompundja have a combination of traditional dwellings and brick houses and/or shacks. Homesteads normally have a large number of dwelling units with specific functions. Assessing the

condition of the homesteads of the two villages, rural poverty is particularly visible in the case of Oniihende.

Household members in Ompundja have reached higher educational levels, with 57 percent having completed Grade 5 or more (and thereby being functionally literate). Some people from this village have also completed Grade 12 and obtained diplomas and teaching certificates. Oniihende shows a very high percentage (22 percent) of adults who do not have any education at all, and 30 percent of those who have gone to school have only completed Grade 4 or less. Nobody in Oniihende has education above Grade 10. One reason for this is the inaccessibility of schools. Another is that Oniihende is a remote village and less influenced by modern life. Many argue that there is no need for a young boy to go to school, as he will look after cattle. Ompundja is situated next to Oshakati, and because of the urban influence education is considered very important.

40 percent of the people in Oniihende and Ompundja also have access to dwellings in other areas. These are mostly located in towns like Oshakati, Windhoek, Ruacana and Walvis Bay (78 percent), although some (23 percent) are located in other villages. Most of these dwellings (57 percent) are owned by other family members. The survey shows that households from Ompundja have access to dwellings in all the towns mentioned, while those from Oniihende only have access to dwellings in Windhoek and Walvis Bay and not urban areas in Owambo. This indicates weaker links with northern towns like Oshakati.

Unemployment is a smaller problem in Ompundja than in Oniihende. More people (15 percent) are formally employed in the former than in the latter (6 percent). Income from informal employment is not very important in the two villages. Ompundja also has more pensioners than Oniihende (10 as opposed to 6 percent). The larger proportion of formally employed people in Ompundja is related to higher levels of education, as well as the proximity to town. Pension and formal employment are the most important sources of household income in both villages, although agricultural produce (16 percent) is also important (Table 23).

Table 23: *Most Important Sources of Household Income (Percentages)*

Sources of Income	Ompundja	Oniihende
Formal employment	30	21
Informal employment	5	7
Agricultural products	15	14
Pensions	50	57

The majority of the households in the two villages fall well below the poverty-line (Table 24). There is also here a strong correlation between formal

employment and income, even though some households have considerable savings in the form of cattle (see below).

Table 24: *Distribution of Income (Percentages)*

Monthly Income (N$)	Ompundja	Oniihende
< 50	0	21
51 – 100	10	22
101 – 250	35	57
251 – 500	15	0
501 – 1000	20	0
1001 – 3000	5	0
> 3000	15	0

The two rural communities belong to the communal area, which is governed by state. Land is allocated to the villagers by the headmen. The size of plots differs for the two villages, ranging from 2.1 - 5.1 hectare in Ompundja and 1.1 - 4.0 hectare in Oniihende. Although there are differences in the size of land, most people from the two villages did harvest last season. Households in Ompundja harvested far more *oratas* of *omahangu* (mean:140) than Oniihende (mean:34). The differences seem to be the outcome of various factors. People from Ompundja harvest more because they own more land, and make use of tractors and apply fertilizers because they are close to town. Oniihende is a poor village and the household members cannot afford to make use of these facilities. Poverty also leads to physical weakness, and people are not able to work in the fields for longer hours.

Livestock and small stock are very important for households in the rural villages. As many as 85 percent of the households in Ompundja own cattle and 90 percent own goats, while 47 percent of the households in Oniihende own cattle and 73 percent own goats. None of the households in Oniihende own more than 30 heads of cattle. Ownership of livestock is, as already mentioned, an important measurement of rural poverty.

Finally, and further substantiating the differences between the villages, is the fact that Ompundja households possess more capital items than households in Oniihende. Oniihende households tend to posses farm equipment and radios, while Ompundja households also possess modern items like stoves, cars, refrigerators and even TVs. The scores of households expenditures indicate that households from both villages spend most of the income on education (Table 25). The second item for Ompundja households is transport. Households from Oniihende spend more on food than on medicines and transport. Fuel and alcohol are not very important items of expenditure in either of the villages.

Table 25: *Household Expenditiure(Percentages)* *

Monthly Income (N$)	Ompundja	Oniihende
Education	21	22
Transportation	17	15
Clothing	14	16
Food	14	16
Medicines	14	14
Fuel	11	10
Alcohol	5	6
Other	3	1

* Informants were asked to rank their expenditures in order of importance. A point system has been used, giving the expenditure drawing most from the household budget the highest value.

5.2 Relations and Networks

The two villages of Ompundja and Oniihende are typical Owambo villages, with the former representing villages with a strong influence from urban areas and the latter being representative of more remote rural settings. It is difficult on the basis of our data to determine the extent to which the proximity to urban areas explains the differences in levels of poverty, but it is likely that there is a strong correlation primarily because of easier access to formal employment and markets. Below we will take a closer look at the implications of differences in levels of poverty and proximity to urban areas for the type of social relations and networks existing.

5.2.1 Rural-Urban Relations

Today most households (67 percent) have household members living in urban areas. Those who are living in urban areas leave the villages primarily in order to seek employment, so that they can support their families. The household members who are living in urban areas are mainly household heads or older children of household heads. 35 percent of all absent household members from Ompundja are formally employed and 44 percent are students, while 56 percent of the absent household members from Oniihende are unemployed and 29 percent are students.

In Ompundja 50 percent of household members visit urban areas very often (i.e. at least once a week), with very few members visiting urban areas seldom (once a year or less). About 27 percent of the household members of Oniihende visit urban areas sometimes (i.e. less than once a month but at least once a year), and as many as 53 percent visit seldom. A relatively large number of household members (20 percent) in Oniihende have never visited urban areas. In both villages the most common reason for going to urban areas is to visit relatives and friends (37 percent), and to do shopping (33 percent).

BOX 11
"I have family members who live in Oshakati, but we cannot afford transport fees to visit them. Sometimes they came to visit us, and bring things like sugar which is not available here. In towns one has the advantage of being closer to markets, unlike in rural areas. People in towns normally do not pay for transport when they want to go shopping. There are many advantages in towns because everything is there. One has access to most of the things (infrastructure). In rural areas one has an advantage of having own fields to cultivate, while in towns one does not have access to this. Friendship in rural areas is better than in towns. There a person cannot eat with a neighbour if he is hungry. Here neighbours who have ploughs can plough your field for free, in town nothing is done without any charge. Friends who help each other in rural areas do not expect any kind of refund."

During the process of visiting, various items are exchanged which strengthens the social relations between the rural and urban household units. When members of the household visit the urban areas they take with them agricultural products (82 percent). Agricultural products include *omahangu*, *omahangu* flour, sorghum flour, beans, peanuts, and *ekaka* (traditional dried spinach). In Ompundja, household members often bring back with them food (68 percent), but also money, clothing, artifacts and cosmetics. Household members from Oniihende normally bring back money (46 percent) and food (36 percent).

About 73 percent of the present household heads from Ompundja have lived in towns, and very few have never lived in urban areas. In Oniihende, on the other hand, most household heads (53 percent) have never lived in urban areas. The household heads from Ompundja have also stayed in urban areas longer (mean:13 years) than those of Oniihende (mean:8 years). Most of the household heads from Ompundja left the town because of pension/retirement (46 percent), or completion of studies (18 percent). In Oniihende, 50 percent left the urban area because of inability to find jobs or retrenchment from jobs they had.

BOX 12
We do not give support to those who have no contact with us and we do not feel we have any responsibility towards them. The only time we have it (i.e. responsibility) is when they die. We have to bury them. I can only advice some one to go to Oshakati because it is near and one can visit relatives there. Transport is not a big issue there, but if one is in Windhoek it will be. We do not have any relatives in the village, but our friends are the most important people in our daily lives. In towns neighbours are not so friendly, while in rural areas friendship is highly valued. But even in rural areas some traditional patterns are changing. Like in the past neighbours used to cook and call up other neighbours to eat and celebrate, but now it is becoming rare. Now the rich do not like to associate with the poor, and the poor envy the rich. People nowadays are even jealous of each other, especially if you have someone supporting you from urban centres.

The perceptions of urban areas in the two rural villages are similar. According to most respondents, it is a good idea for people to go to urban areas in order to look for employment. The three advantages of living in a town that people found to be the most important are: i) there are more job opportunities in towns, ii) there is good infrastructure in towns, and iii) there is no hard work in towns the way it is in rural areas. Other advantages of living in towns include availability of market places, closeness to hospitals, better educational facilities, well-built houses, and options for meeting many different people.

There are also advantages living in rural areas. The households from Ompundja emphasize the options of getting food from the field, having access to own fields for cultivation, and not needing money all the time. The advantages emphasized by people in Oniihende are similar to those mentioned in Ompundja. In rural areas there is enough space, and people are not as concentrated as in towns. They also live closer to their extended family members, which makes it easier to borrow from each other. Households regard the villages as very safe areas with low crime rates, and a suitable place to bring up children.

Respondents feel that people can move to places of preference, but that it is better for them to go to Oshakati than Windhoek. Oshakati is near and people in the villages will at least be aware of the situation of their family members. There is also easier access to employment in Oshakati than in Windhoek, at the same time as going to Oshakati prevents one from spending too much money.

5.2.2 Rural-Rural Relations

Turning to relations and networks in the two villages themselves, the extended family as well as neighbors and friends play an important role in people's daily life in both Oniihende and Ompundja. Most people still have many family members in their village, despite large out-migration. The neighborhood in the villages is big, and in most cases consists of more than 10 households. In any neighborhood (*amushiinda*) a households has selected a few households as close neighbors (*amushiinda shiinda)*. The close neighbors assist each other in many ways, meaning that they borrow from each other with ease, help each other in connection with fields and livestock, etc.

Respondents from both Ompundja and Oniihende indicate that urban and rural neighborhoods differ. The neighborhood in the rural areas is very strong, and people are very eager to assist each other. In the past there was shortage of fire/matches, and children were sent from house to house to borrow fire/matches. Due to this neighbors started to build strong relations with each other. In urban areas neighbors do not help each other as much as in rural areas. Communication is limited between neighbors in town, and there is no trust because money is such a big problem there.

BOX 13

"People from urban areas expect us who live in rural areas to accept them, but when we visit them they don't accept us. They think that we are intruders intruding in their family lives and they expect us to pay our expenses when we go there, while they do not pay anything when they come here. In 1990 I went to visit my brother who has a house in Windhoek. I went there to get some financial assistance from him. I used to work at Aus and Ondjoini, but by the time I went there I was unemployed. My brother told me that he cannot assist me, because he is paying for his house, electricity, water and food for his family and thus did not have any money. He bought my mother a second-hand dress and he bought me a pair of trousers. He paid for my ticket to come back and never gave a cent. I came back and gave the dress to my mother. I think it is better to live in rural areas than in towns."

BOX 14

"My neighbourhood consists of four households, but only one of them is my close neighbor. She is the only one who I get along well with and she helps in many of my difficulties. She sends her children to pound my *mahangu* for me and even to fetch water, you know I am pregnant and at the time I cannot do much. People do not help one another in town. The attitude is not good and cost of living in urban areas is very high. My partner seeks help for money, while I am responsible to seek help for water or fire wood when they are not there. I don't think my neighbour is helping me because she is a woman. I think she is just a nice person and she would do it even if I was a man. I also think that it has a lot to do with personality rather than with her gender. Some women are very bad people because they gossip a lot, and if you attempt to seek help from them you will be the talk of the village. I consider the woman who helps me as my relative, she is the most important person to me in this village."

In rural villages, seeking assistance is the responsibility of both men and women. The difference appears when help pertains to the *elugo* (the place where food is prepared), in which case the women do it. The men take responsibility for things which are field and/or livestock related. Men in the rural areas do not visit the *elugo*, and will not know how serious the food problem is.

People have different perception of poverty, leading to different descriptions of poor and rich households. The respondents from the two villages describe poor households as those who do not have enough food to eat. This can be seen by looking at the size and number of the *omashisha*. Poor households have none or only a few *omashisha* and they are usually very small in size. Rich households in the villages are associated with large livestock herds, large pieces of land, big homesteads with brick houses, and many *omashisha*.

BOX 15

"Now you are siting in a poor household, as you can see my house is not like the others there is no chairs, nothing. I only have one *eshisha*, at least I am supposed to have one *eshisha* for beans and another sorghum. I do not have enough food, nobody else is taking care of me. My sticks (building materials) are falling apart and I do not know who will help me to replace them. I do have relatives in urban areas, but it is so difficult to get in contact with them so that they can help me. They do not visit me at all."

BOX 16
A rich household to me is one with enough *mahangu*, a large herd of cattle and big buildings. Lifestyles, clothing and intelligence all play major roles in rich families. Poor people can be recognised because they are shameful. They are less intelligent, because they are afraid to explore things. Rich people socialise easily because they are free. The poor are hungry most of the time. I think it is God's will to have poor and rich, because it is only then that the poor can work for the rich. It is just like the fingers on our hands, some are shorter some are longer. The poor are there to serve the riches and riches to help the poor.

BOX 17
I think some people are poor and some are rich because there is a mismanagement and misuse of our economy in this country. Money is improperly distributed among different groups of society and as a result some people suffer and become poorer and poorer. The Namibian government needs to set up policies so that the allocation of the economic policy targets both the rich and the poor. It should invest heavily in projects that create jobs to all the unemployed. The poor need to have an employed person for them to afford basic needs and the rich may play a role by employing them. The big question is who will protect them from being exploited.".

There are no institutions that assist old and poor people in the villages any more, apart from the family and neighbors. The headmen of the two villages do not assist poor households, because they are also poor people. Rather, they give advice or try to link up with local business people so that these can help the poor. The church does normally not help poor people any more, and if they do it is mainly people belonging to the congregation. The only means through which the poorest are helped is the drought relief program of the government, but people in Oniihende complain that this does not reach them.

A large number of households have experienced economic difficulties. Respondents in Ompundja indicate that the main reason for their problems is related to payments for education (40 percent). Others mention pregnancy, drought, cattle that get lost, death of family members and fire eruptions. In Oniihende, most respondents experienced economic difficulties because of poor harvests (43 percent), while others experienced difficulties because of death, diseases and accidents.

Among those who had economic difficulties in Ompundja most turned for help to the family in towns (40 percent). A smaller proportion (20 percent) turned to family in the villages (Table 26). In the case of Oniihende most households seek help from friends in the village (86 percent), with a smaller proportion (14 percent) going to family members in the village for help. This is most likely the outcome of poverty being clustered around certain extended family groups. No one from Oniihende approached persons in urban areas.

The most common type of help received is money (40 percent) in Ompundja, and food (43 percent) in Oniihende (Table 27). Those who received money in

Oniihende were normally expected to pay back, even if the help came from family members. Other households received help in the form of labor.

Table 26: *Main Sources of Support in Times of Economic Difficulties (Percentages)*

Source of support	Ompundja	Oniihende
Family in village	20	14
Family in town	40	0
Friends in village	10	86
Traditional leader	10	0
Other	20	0

Table 27: *Main Types of Support Received (Percentages)*

Type of support	Ompundja	Oniihende
Money (given as gift)	40	0
Loan (to be paid back)	20	29
Food	0	43
Labor	20	14
Other	20	14

In sum, there is a considerable difference in the extent and nature of rural-urban relations between Ompundja and Oniihende. Rural-urban relations are more frequent and intense in Ompundja, which is located closest to an urban center. However, village and household wealth is an equally important factor. Better-off households are in a position to maintain relationships with urban relatives and friends, which is necessary for their sustainability. Very few households in Oniihende have close relations with urban areas.

Regarding internal relations and networks, there does not seem to be any significant differences between the two villages. Traditional systems of redistribution (through traditional authorities and agricultural production) have largely deteriorated, and relations and networks of support have become individualized to the level of extended families and neighborhoods. The very poorest have the largest problems entering and maintaining relations of support, partly because they have little to contribute and partly because of the widespread perception that poverty is the poors' own fault.

6. Conclusions

This report has emphasized the differences between urban and rural poverty, both as regards structural constraints and survival strategies of the poor themselves. At the same time it has shown that there are close links and interdependencies between people in the two types of settings.

The poor in urban areas live under difficult socio-economic conditions created by historical and structural processes, and their alternative survival strategies are limited by different types of relations and networks. The poorest primarily depend on relations with people in the same social category as themselves, and options for maintaining and establishing relations with people in the traditional and rural and modern and urban sector is limited.

The poor in rural areas live under equally difficult socio-economic conditions, and primarily rely on relations with relatives, neighbors and friends in their own village. At the same time traditional forms of redistribution have largely disappeared, and structural constraints (access to land, access to employment) severely limit the options for breaking out of poverty in the rural setting.

Urban-rural relations remain an important source of socio-economic security both in urban and rural areas, but we have shown that these relations are least relevant for the poorest. Lack of resources makes it difficult to fill the relations with material content, and poverty in an increasingly commercialized context is becoming an individual rather than collective concern.

Employment and income is a key variable for understanding urban and rural poverty, with implications for access to economic resources as well as the social relations and networks in which people are involved.

The key conclusions related to our main topic of the role of social relations of poverty in urban areas are:

- The poorest sections of the population in urban areas are systematically marginalized and excluded from political, economic and social processes.

- Horizontal transfers and social capital play an important role in spreading risks and reducing vulnerability, but more so for the less poor than the poor.

- Transfers between households and individuals through horizontal relations by definition draw on a smaller pool of surplus than vertical relations.

- Any serious attempt to reduce urban poverty in Namibia requires vertical transfers through an active public policy commitment to redistribute not only income and consumption goods, but also productive assets.

Following from this is the need for targeted interventions in order to reach the poorest sections of the urban population. This has implications for the type as well as for the nature of development initiatives. A detailed outline of alternative interventions is beyond the scope of this report, and the following suggestions should be further elaborated in other contexts:

Alternative interventions related to structural causes of urban poverty:

- Enhance the status and role of towns like Oshakati as regional growth centers, by allocating more financial and human resources to local government and other public institutions.

- Improve the basis for the establishment of private enterprises and employment by developing proper town plans for physical and human infrastructure.

- Enhance the status and role of informal shanty areas by formalizing their existence and including them in policy schemes for urban development.

Alternative interventions targeting the social capital and empowerment of the urban poor themselves:

- Support the establishment of representative shanty-based institutions with a particular objective to relate to local government.

- Support to the establishment of housing schemes, in order to enhance security of tenure and improve options for alternative income-earning options.

- Support the establishment of shanty-based urban services (water, electricity, road maintenance, garbage collection), in order to improve physical conditions and create jobs.

- Support to the establishment of women groups with a particular objective to further develop productive activities in the informal sector.

- Support to the establishment of social activities (movie-theater, sports clubs, dancing halls etc.), in order to create employment and improve the social milieu particularly among the young and unemployed.

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[1] The selection was made in a seminar held in Windhoek in February 1997, with participation from government, NGOs and donors. As point of departure for discussions at the seminar, five jointly written papers on topics of common interest were presented and subsequently published (NEPRU 1998).

[1] This report and the two other reports mentioned above were presented at the seminar "Poverty and Migration in Namibia" in Bergen, Norway 19-20 August 1999.

[1] Composite poverty indices combine several weighted indicators, such as per capita GDP, life expectancy at birth, and literacy rates (Human Development Index), public spending on social services, immunization and fertility rates (Social Indicators of Development Index) and life expectancy at one year, adult literacy and infant mortality (Physical Quality of Life Index).

[1] The improvement in HDI ranking in 1998 is solely attributable to updating on information of literacy (adjusted from 40% to 76%). There is no improvement in average income, and estimated life expectancy at birth has been reduced from 58.8 years in 1995 to 55.8 years in 1998 due to the prevalence of HIV/AIDS (UNDP 1998).

[1] The poverty index on rural-urban areas is incomplete due to insufficient data on underweight children. However, according to UNDP (1998:21) "a complete HDI is likely to portray an even more dramatic rural/urban divide".

[1] A focus on survival strategies, relations and networks has a long tradition in social anthropology, but has recently been "reinvented" through the concept of "social capital" currently advocated by the World Bank (Portes 1998).

[1] Poor urban neighborhoods in Southern Africa are known under different names with different connotations. A "location" normally implies a poor African township formally established by the South African apartheid regime; a "squatter area" implies a poor and

illegally established urban settlement; and a "shantytown" implies a poor urban area with a mixture of illegal and legal settlements. "Slum" is normally not used in the literature due to the word's strong derogatory connotation, but is close to local terms often used for such areas. In this report, "shantytown" and the equivalent "informal settlement area" will be used interchangeably.

[1] First, it is argued, concentrating on whether urban poverty is more extensive than rural poverty diverts attention away from structural determinants which affect the life-chances of the poor in both areas. These include distribution of land, constraints to opportunity based on class, gender, race and age, government social and macro-oriented policies and external relationships which shape exchange rates, terms of trade etc. And secondly, there are linkages between the functions of urban and rural areas which implies that poverty in one area cannot be treated in isolation from the other. Interdependence between towns and countryside exists in areas such as rural-urban migration, casual labor, markets for food, industrial goods and services, water supply and demand, and flows of remittances.

[1] If one takes abroad view of "other social structures", then social capital is a relevant concept also at the macro level. There is, according the World Bank, overwhelming evidence that such macro-level social capital has a measurable impact on national economic performance (World Bank 1999).

[1] A thorough analysis of the relation between socio-economic conditions and cultural perceptions for the survival strategies pursued by the poorest sections of urban populations is beyond the scope of this report, but will be pursued in forthcoming publications.

[1] The survey is based on a sample of 7% of the total shanty population, which is large enough to draw generalized conclusions. The sample is stratified proportionally by settlement area and not based on an overall random sample, in order to secure an equal representation of the smaller settlement areas.

[1] A change towards individual ward-based candidates was anticipated for the 1998 election, but has been postponed until 2003.

[1] The picture has been complicated by the recent increase in population, with a number of people living in overcrowded formal houses with relatives, friends or as tenants.

[1] The differences in perceptions are also evident from the names used to denote the formal and informal towns respectively. While the neutral term *odoropa* is used for Oshakati East and *olukanda* for Oshakati West, the diminutive *okalukanda* or the derogative *uupereki* are normally used for the informal settlement areas. Recently the term *uumbashu* (derived from an Oshiwambo expression for a "blow-out of diarrhea") has also come into usage, by people from both types of settlements.

[1] The stigma has led both settlements to change names after independence, from Omashaka (derived from the verb *okushakena* [converge] and denoting the convergence of different languages and ethnic groups in Koefoet and SADF to Evululuko ("a place where you can rest"), and from Amunkambya (derived from the term for bitter fruits from the *omwandi* tree) to Oshoopala ("a place that looks nice") respectively.

[1] Traditional dwellings (*egumbo lyo miti*, lit. "stick house") are relatively cheap, healthy and easy to build. The limited number of such dwellings is an indication of the strength of an urban culture emphasizing that traditional dwellings belong to the rural and not the urban settings.

[1] E*gumbo* (i.e. the term used for traditional homesteads in the rural areas) is only used for brick houses.

[1] A number of quantitative studies on poverty based on housheolds as isolated units of analysis leave the same question unanswered: How do people survive when recorded income is insufficient to feed all household members and pay for other basic necessities?

[1] The latter is exemplified by the strong emphasis on ultimately being buried in one's rural area of origin. Being buried in town is considered a disgrace, and proof of extreme poverty, vulnerability and isolation.

[1] We are aware of the methodological problems with the postulated correlation between the quantitative data on different levels of poverty presented above, and the three categories of households defined for our qualitative analysis. We are in the process of generating statistical data for the three categories to verify the correlation, but this has not been possible within the timeframe of this study.

[1] Female headed households have been grouped into one category as very few of them (20 percent) are formally employed, and the difference in income between formally and informally employed women is negligible.

[1] Each category does of course also include people in different socio-economic opportunity situations. While deeming the defined categories the most useful for our analytical purposes, non-typical cases are important for understanding the role of social relations and networks and will be discussed in the analysis.

[1] The possibility for getting formally married decreases with children out of wedlock. People argue that with one child it is still possible, with two children it is difficult, and with three children it is impossible. As shown in Section 4.2.4, approximately 40 per cent of women under 20 years in the informal settlement areas have children.

[1] One implication of this is that the problem of domestic violence seems less prevalent among the poorest male headed households than among those better off. Beside their economic situation implying limited access to alcohol, the poorest men know they can easily be thrown out of the house they live in by their wives or cohabitants.

[1] Women tend to argue or fight against this developing, having vested interests (for themselves and their children) in a system where they will inherit both from matrilineal brothers/uncles and from husbands/fathers.

[1] It is, in fact, nearly impossible for better off households to cut ties with the rural areas even if they want to without getting into serious socio-cultural problems with the extended family.

[1] Traditional marriage transfers of cattle or other commodities have in the urban context been substituted by lavish marriage celebrations that only the better-off can afford.

[1] Preliminary data indicate that people migrating to town normally come from the better-off households , which will make the problem of failure even more serious. It is quite common among the poorest household to complain that the only people who will help them are their brothers and sisters. ("If you do not have brothers and sisters from the same mother, you are in real trouble").

[1] SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) was the most important Namibian independence movement until 1990, and has since then been the main political party in the country. DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance) was established during South African rule and has been the main opposition party since independence.

[1] More research is needed to understand the reasons for the apparent lack of associations or interest groups in Oshakati. Relevant factors may be to the lack of tradition for democratic associational life in traditional Owambo society, the policies of the apartheid state, and the recency of the urban crisis in Namibia.

[1] As opposed to rural Owambo, the church does not have a strong position in the shanty-areas with the exception of the charismatic Kimbangistas (Simão Toco Church) which solely recruits Angolans.

[1] Two of the headmen in the four shanty-areas are historically part of traditional structures, while two were appointed by the South African administration. The status and role of the headmen is further complicated by their affiliation to different political parties.

[1] As poor young men *Botsotsos* often have weak ties with their extended family which makes a traditional punishment less effective, or they are let out on bail by the police or public court system due to lack of capacity to pursue cases of this type.

[1] Selma Nangulah has been responsible for planning, implementing and writing the rural part of this study, and functioned as team leader for Martha Naanda, Frieda Iigonda and Gabriel Daniel from SSD.

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Summary

Evidence from a number of quantitative studies on poverty in Namibia suggests that poverty is widespread, albeit unevenly distributed. The relatively high GDP per capita conceals wide income differentials by geographical location, occupation, age and gender. This study addresses urban poverty and the importance of social relations and networks ('social capital') in the coping strategies of the poor — a phenomenon which has received little attention in poverty research. On the basis of case studies of four shantytowns in Oshakati and two rural villages with extensive links to urban areas, it is argued that the poorest sections of the urban shantytowns are systematically marginalised and excluded from political, economic and social processes. Horizontal transfers and social capital play a role in spreading risk and reducing vulnerability — though more so for the somewhat better off than for the poorest in a setting where social relations increasingly have to be filled with material content to be sustainable. People apparently trapped in poverty and vulnerability are those for whom the shantytown encapsulates their universe both in socio-economic and cultural terms. While interventions with a view to developing social capital in the form of networks, associations, etc. are helpful, any serious attempt to reduce urban poverty in Namibia requires vertical transfers through an active public policy commitment by the government.

The study has been conducted under the Agreement of Co-operation between the Social Sciences Division of the University of Namibia (SSD/UNAM), the Namibia Economic Policy Research Unit (NEPRU) and the Chr. Michelsen Institute.

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