

LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AMONGST THE !XUN SAN IN THE OKONGO  
COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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By

IYAMBO ERASMUS

201411901

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SUPERVISOR: PROF. G. TAWODZERA (UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA)

## Abstract

The !Xun San are one of the most marginalised people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Traditionally, their economic system largely centred on hunting and gathering. The arrival of the bantu-speaking people in the San's traditional hunting grounds, however, changed their economic system and livelihoods as the newcomers were primarily agro-pastoralists. For survival, the San were compelled to adopt a new economic system based on farming and trading – economic activities which they were not familiar with. The disruption of the San's economic systems negatively impacted on their livelihoods, driving most of them into poverty and destitution. How the !Xun San have been affected, the challenges they face and their survival strategies have not been adequately researched. Thus, this study sought to assess the livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, Ohangwena region. The study adopted a qualitative approach consisting of face-face in-depth interviews carried out with !Xun San households and other key-informants in the area. The study findings indicated that the majority of the !Xun San in the conservancy were experiencing acute levels of poverty, suffered high levels of unemployment and lived in deplorable housing conditions. Their poverty emanated from the fact that most did not own land and therefore could not productively produce for themselves. In addition, the majority did not possess productive assets to enhance their livelihoods. Those that could access land had no skills nor financial capacity to participate fully in farming or other economic activities such as trading. Being highly marginalised and vulnerable to poverty, the !Xun San in the conservancy were resorting to participating in piecework, being engaged by the Owambo to do various chores in return for money. This was, however, not yielding much returns economically. A few others were engaging in brewing traditional beer to supplement their income. Overall, the majority of the !Xun San were facing multiple material deprivations. The study concluded that the material and socio-economic conditions of the San were, in comparison to other population groups, precarious and require urgent attention. The study recommends that government and non-governmental organizations take a pro-active approach and put in place programmes to address the economic and material challenges faced by the !Xun San.

**Keywords:** !Xun San, Livelihoods, Omauni Forest, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy

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## Abreviation and Acronyms

ACHPR	AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES ' RIGHTS
CBNRM	COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
DFID	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DOF	DIRECTORATE OF FORESTRY
EFSA	EMERGENCY FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT
EIF	ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTMENT FUND
FAO	FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION
ICRA	INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURE
IIED	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
IWGIA	INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
LSP	LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT PROGRAMME
MAWF	MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY
MEFT	MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND TOURISM
MLR	MINISTRY OF LANDS AND RESETTLEMENT
NHIES	NAMIBIA HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SURVEY
NMPI	NAMIBIA MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX
NPHC	NAMIBIA POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS
NRI	NATIONAL RESOURCES INSTITUTE
NRP	NATIONAL RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME
NSA	NAMIBIA STATICS AGENCY
OCFC	OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONVERSANCY
OCFMC	OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
OCRPP	OHANGWENA CENSUS REGIONAL PROFILE
OPM	OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
ORPP	OHANGWENA REGION POVERTY PROFILE
SDP	SAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
SIAPAC	SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND POLICY ANALYSIS COOPERATION
SLF	SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK
TA	TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY
VDC	VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WMN	WOMEN AND MEN NETWORK
WPC	WATER POINT COMMITTEE

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## Dedication

To my mother, Ruusa Kashungu: Thank you for your unwavering devotion, endless support, and the wise words that guide me every day. Your love has shaped me into the person I am today. I am forever grateful for your presence in my life.

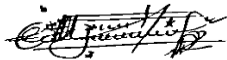
To my father, Simeon Iyambo: Your love and commitment to my education will always hold a special place in my heart. I will forever value your support and encouragement.

### Declaration

I, Iyambo Erasmus, hereby declare that, this submission is my own work towards this degree of Masters in Geography and that it contains no materials previously published or written by another person or material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree by this or other university or institution of high learning, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

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**Signature**

**OCTOBER 2024**

**Date**

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

The San are among the oldest indigenous group in the Southern Africa with a rich history dating back thousands of years (Hitchcock, Robert, Sapignoli, & Maria, 2019). They have inhabited the regions of present-day Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, displaying remarkable adaptability to diverse environment such as Kalahari Desert and surrounding grasslands. The San renowned for their exceptional hunter-gatherer lifestyle, living in a close-knit communities and relying on their deep knowledge of the natural world to sustain themselves. Their traditional practices include tracking animals, collecting wild plants, and employing unique methods of survival that have allowed them to thrive in harmony with nature. However, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the San people have encountered numerous economic and social challenges in the various regions were they are found. Therefore, with the introduction of settled agriculture, land ownership and immigration of Bantu peoples into the southern Africa regions, around 2000 years ago, and colonization, the San, like other minority groups, lost their traditional livelihoods and became a marginalized society (Hitchcock et al., 2019). This has demoted their nomadic lifestyle, leading to limited access to resources and reduced opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Also, resulting in economic disparities and heightened poverty among the San communities, as they struggle to adapt to modern economic structures.

Furthermore, the San people have also experienced marginalization and discrimination, facing issues of cultural assimilation and loss of their ancestral lands. Since their contact with various Bantu groups, and later with the arrival of the European colonial administrations, the majority of the San people have lost a great deal of their traditions, culture and economic lifestyle (Broyhill, Hitchcock, & Biesele, 2014). In additon, a numerous San population have also tragically lots their lives due to war, resulting in decline in their population. According to Hitchcock, Babchuk, & Frost (2021) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Europeans established a full-time presence in Southern Africa, there were some 300,000 San in Southern Africa. During the early phases of European colonization, tens of thousands of San peoples lost their lives as a result of genocide, murder, physical mistreatment, and disease. Today, there is only

about 100 000 San people in the Southern African with over 60% of its population living in Botswana and 1% in Zimbabwe respectively (Hitchcock et al., 2021).

In Namibia, the San population growth rates is estimated at 2% for much of the last half century with the approximate of 27000 San people. (Namibia Population and Housing Census (NPHC) (2011); Hitchcock et al., 2021). However, due to the San people's mobility, dissolution of their culture, identity-switching, as well as loss in their traditional languages have contributed to challenges in accurately estimating their total number (Vicente, Jakobsson, Ebbesen, & Schlebusch, 2019). With this, the size of the San population in Namibia varies across sources thereof (Suzman, 2001). According to the NPHC (2011), there is an estimated total number of 464 389 households in Namibia, with the various San languages being reported in 3 745 households, or 0.81% of the total households in the country. In terms of the total population, the San people are estimated to number about 48 000, or 2% of the 2.4 million people in Namibia (Nghitevelekwa, Nakanyete, & Lendelvo, 2020).

The San people in Namibia are comprised of different groups, which identify themselves with their respective languages, traditions, customs and histories. The groups vary in size, from larger groups such as the Hai||om, Khwe, !Kung, Ju|'hoansi, Naro and =Au//eisi, to smaller groups such as the //Anikwe, !Xoo, l'Auni, and /Nu-//en. These different groups are spread across nine of the fourteen political and administrative regions of Namibia: Kavango East, Kavango West, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Omusati, Oshikoto, Otjozondjupa and Zambezi (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Amongst the various San ethnic groups in the country are the !Xun San, most of whom reside in the Otjozondjupa, Oshikoto and Ohangwena region (Suzman, 2001). The !Xun San (locally known as Ovangongolo) belong to the Jul'hoi language family.

In 2018, the Okongo Constituency Office in Ohangwena Region estimated that there were about 308 San's households and a total population of 942 San people in the constituency (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Sixty –two (62) households speak San Languages making up 2.5% of the total San's households in Okongo constituency. The average household size of 5.3 persons (Ohangwena Census Regional profile (OCR) (2011). The San are generally spread across thirty-four (34) villages, with the majority living in Ekokoka, Eendobe, Onamatadiva and Oshanashiwa villages (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Within the vicinity of Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy the

majority of the !Xun San are found in Omauni, Oshikoha, Owike, Okanyandi, Okatope, and Omwandi villages on communal farms and on communal areas amongst other ethnic groups of ovaWambo people (Dieckmann, Maarit, Erik & Jennifer, 2014). There were approximately 91 !Xun San living in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy (Iyambo, 2022).

Traditionally, the !Xun San were known to have a unique culture and a dynamic economic system based largely on hunting and gathering and no trace of agriculture or animal husbandry is found among them (Robins, Madzudzo, & Brenzinger, 2018). During the period between 200 and 1000 AD, the migration of other indigenous groups such as the ovaWambo people in areas known today as Okongo caused huge disturbances to the way the San people in the area had lived up to that point. These changes, though gradual, were significant in the sense that the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of the San's life were affected (Huffman, 2007). The San's lifestyles have thus been gradually transformed over a long period of time in terms of their social welfare and economic way of lives through their interaction with other indigenous groups (Dieckmann et al., 2014).

Odendaal & Werner (2020, p. 218), for example, indicates that the social and economic status of the !Xun San people in Ohangwena came to be partly diversified with the arrival of ovaWambo, in particular the OvaKwanyama people, who construct histories involving great migrations from Northeast Africa around 17th century, who later settled in the northern Namibia and established omahangu crop fields and were looking for grazing lands for their livestock (Riera, n.d.). The new arrivals occupied much of the Eastern part of Okongo, an area that had hitherto been used by the majority of the !Xun San as their hunting grounds for generations. The occupation of these lands by the ovaWambo was motivated by the presence of abundant water and grazing lands. As a result of these occupations, the !Xun San lost control over and access to their traditional productive land leading to their traditional way of life being disrupted and replaced by other livelihood strategies (Bollig, 2020). The San were therefore forced to embrace a variety of new economic practices (e.g. trading and farming) which they were not very competent in. The general lack of skills and competence in trading and farming made the San's survival difficult (Suzman, 2001). Thus, the San have become

highly dependent on livelihoods such as piece-work, old-age pension fund and charitable donations to secure their livelihoods (Suzman, 2001).

In addition to the challenges brought about by the arrival of other indigenous groups, the arrival of missionaries in Northern Namibia from 1880 and the advent of colonialism from 1884 further contributed in changing the traditional economic lifestyle of the San people. Christianity and the emergence of developments tended to substitute the San's social and economic lifestyle through the forced adoption of foreign religions and ways of life. This significantly diluted the social and cultural strength of the San's way of life (Lee & Hitchcock, 2001).

The current settlement of the San people within the Okongo Constituency is largely a result of the resettlement projects that were founded by the Finnish missionaries who created farming gardens for the San. In the 1960s, the missionaries started placing the San into small reserves north and east of Okongo because they believed that farming would be beneficial for the San's survival (Lee & Hitchcock, 2001). These settlements are now managed and supported by the Government of the Republic of Namibia (GRN) under the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

During the colonial times the San were dispossessed of most of their customary lands by white settlers who transformed their lands into wild-life national parks and commercial farms (Suzman, 2001). As a result, the majority of San people were pushed into dry and marginal lands and lost control of most of their customary lands. Up to this day, the San have limited rights to this land, the environment and its resources, making their survival difficult (Robins et al., 2018). This situation has negatively impacted on their livelihoods, with the majority of the San struggling to adapt to new economic systems. Thus, there are high levels of poverty, high death rates and poor living conditions amongst the San. In addition, their social structures and community institutions have also been weakened (Suzman, 2001). Against this background, this study aims to assess the various livelihood challenges facing the !Xun San in Okongo Forest and Conservancy.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The !Xun San were traditionally hunter-gatherers. Their livelihood system, however, changed as they lost their traditional hunting grounds to agro-pastoralists seeking grazing lands and water for their animals (Hitchcock et al., 2019). The agro-pastoralists introduced sedentary economic systems of farming and trading that were alien to the !Xun San. This resulted in the loss of viable livelihoods for the !Xun San community, which, for decades had experienced a stable lifestyle supported by ample access to abundant forest resources (Broyhill et al., 2014). The advent of colonialism further alienated the !Xun San from their lands and they effectively lost control of their environment (Suzman, 2001). The small pieces of land that most of the !Xun San currently occupy lack adequate resources essential for sustainable livelihoods. The majority have thus moved into townships where their livelihoods have deteriorated further. Recognizing the socio-economic challenges faced by the San community, the government gazetted the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy in 2009. Not much, however, has been done since then to address the livelihood challenges faced by the !Xun San in the area and their situation still remains precarious. This study therefore aims to assess the livelihood challenges faced by the !Xun San in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Understanding these challenges will help to devise ways of improving the livelihoods of this group of people whose traditional lands are no longer available and whose traditional economic system is no longer viable.

## **1.3 The Study Aim**

To assess the livelihoods challenges faced by the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

To achieve the study aim, the study pursued the following specific objectives:

To establish sources of livelihoods amongst the !Xun San people

- To determine the negative changes on the livelihoods of the !Xun San people
- To analyse the livelihood challenges affecting the !Xun San community.
- To assess the coping strategies adopted by the !Xun San to enhance their livelihoods.
- To develop a framework that can help in improving the livelihoods of the !Xun San community

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study holds paramount significance as it sheds light on the multifaceted livelihood challenges confronted by the !Xun San people residing in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. By providing a comprehensive exploration of their specific struggles, the research contributes significantly to the expanding literature on the livelihoods of San communities in Namibia. Such a contribution is of critical importance in understanding the nuanced complexities faced by indigenous populations in the region.

Moreover, the findings of this study carry practical implications for the well-being and empowerment of the !Xun San community in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. By suggesting viable alternative ways of engagement, the research offers a potential pathway to improve the livelihoods of this marginalized group. Identifying and implementing sustainable strategies can aid in addressing their economic and social hardships, fostering greater social inclusion and well-being.

Beyond its direct benefits to the !Xun San community, the study's outcomes bear relevance to broader societal considerations. The evidence-backed insights can serve as a valuable resource for governmental authorities in policy formulation. The knowledge gained from understanding the economic and social challenges faced by the !Xun San is essential in crafting effective poverty reduction strategies tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of the community.

In essence, this study serves as a crucial stepping stone toward not only enhancing the livelihoods of the !Xun San people but also contributing to the broader efforts of

promoting social justice and sustainable development in the region. By illuminating the intricate realities faced by this indigenous community, the research paves the way for culturally sensitive policies and interventions that can foster resilience, empowerment, and equity among the !Xun San population and other marginalized groups in Namibia.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

There are many San groups living in the country today. Due to financial and time constraints, this study focused on the !Xun San community only. This therefore makes it difficult to make comparisons with other groups that are equally deprived in the country. In addition, the results of the study cannot be generalised to other !Xun San communities in the country due to differences in their context. Furthermore, there was also a significant number of the San's households that had migrated to Angola and to other villages outside of the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy at the time of the research. This made it difficult to incorporate all the households into the study. There was also some unwillingness on the part of some participants to fully participate in the interviews. While the researcher had to give some of the participants more time to engage or changed the technique of asking on the questions, it may be that some of the answers provided were not comprehensive enough to shed light on some of the critical questions.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

The study was restricted to a group of the !Xun San in Community Forest and Conservancy in Okongo Constituency only. Therefore, not all the San communities in the region and country participated in the study.

### **1.8 Definition of Concepts**

A **household** is defined as a group of people - related or unrelated - who live in the same dwelling unit and share or have common catering arrangements. (Compendium of Housing Statistics, 2012).

A **proclamation** is an official declaration issued by a person of authority to make certain announcements known.

**Chief** means a person who has been recognised under Traditional Authority Act, 2000 (Act No. 25 of 2000) as the chief of his or her traditional authority.

**Communal land** is a territory in possession of a community, rather than an individual or company (Communal Land Reform Act (5), 2002).

**Kwankala** refers to the people that do not save for tomorrow/ do not take care for tomorrow.

**ovaKwanyama** is a standardized dialect of the Ovambo language, and is mutually intelligible with Oshindonga, the other Ovambo dialect with a standard written form. Folks that speak this dialect are called ovaKwanyama.

**Livelihoods** refers to their "means of securing the basic necessities (food, water, shelter and clothing) of life". Livelihood is defined as a set of activities essential to everyday life that are conducted over one's life span (Aram, 2020).

**Okapana** is derived from the oshiwambo word okapana which loosely means any fried or cooked meat that can be sold as cubes.

**Omapundo** Refer to the San's people housing structures that are made up of simple local materials, tree logs and branches of the trees.

**Ombike** is known as Wambo liquor – a home brewed extracted from different ingenious fruits such as palm fruits, eenyandi, and dried plums through distillation.

**Oshikundu** or **ontaku** is a traditional Namibian drink made from fermented millets (Omahangu).

**Otombo** is a traditional alcoholic beverage brewed in the north-central regions of Namibia and popular among the San people.

**Shebeen** refer to a bar or club where excisable alcoholic beverages are sold legally or sometimes illegal. They are mostly operating in the traditional townships.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

This chapter has presented the background of the study. In addition to the background information, the chapter also provided the rationale of the study and the statement of the problem. Research objectives which guide this study were also provided. Further, the chapter explained the significance of the study as well as the limitation and delimitation of the study. Lastly the chapter provided definitions of key terms and concepts that were used in this study.

Chapter Two is the study's literature review. It traces the history of the San people and their interaction with sedentary groups in the country. The chapter also traces how these interactions impacted on the social, economic as well as cultural systems of the San through different periods from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Chapter Three is the methodology chapter. First, the chapter provides a description of the study area. It then outlines the study's research design, the study population and

the sampling procedures used in the study. An overview on the research instrument used in the data collection process is also given. Finally, the chapter provides the data analysis approach and discusses ethical issues that are relevant to the study.

Chapter Four presents and analyses data collected from the participants in the study. The study sought to assess the livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia. Before presenting the results, however, the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants are given. These characteristics are important to contextualise the experiences of the !Xun San's livelihoods and the various challenges they face.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the study as well as a conclusion and recommendations. Having assessed the livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, this chapter highlights the major findings regarding their survival, the construction of their livelihoods, the challenges they face as well as the coping strategies that they were adopting to improve on their livelihoods. The chapter also makes recommendations regarding how the livelihoods of the !Xun San can be improved.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1.1 Introduction**

This chapter gives a review of the literature related to the San people in Namibia. It focusses on the traditional livelihood systems of the !Xun San people and the changes that have been experienced since the occupation of their traditional lands by the ovaWambo people as well as by European colonizers. The chapter traces how these changes impacted on the social, economic as well as cultural systems of the San through different periods from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Finally, the chapter assesses the status of poverty among the !Xun San and their various livelihood strategies in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, Ohangwena region.

### **2.1.2 A History of the San**

The San were the earliest hunter-gatherers in Southern Africa. They populated Namibia long before the arrival of the Bantu-speaking people (Hitchcock et al., 2019). The San identify themselves mostly based on their language characteristics. The majority belonged to the Khoe or Khoisan language group. The !Xun San – Kx'a language family, are one of the San peoples who live mostly in (northern Namibia and southern Angola) (Vicente et al., 2019). They are made up foragers who rely on traditional methods of hunting and gathering for subsistence up until today. Over 50% of San population live in communal areas in which they constitute small, highly marginalised minorities (Suzman, 2001). A greater majority of !Xun San people live in the villages occupied by the ovaWambo agro-pastoralists. The San are also known as '*Okangongolo*' which means 'a short forest person'. This name was given to them by the ovaKwanyama people.

### **2.1.3 Global Contextualization of the San People's Socioeconomic Challenges**

The San are extremely resilient people, successfully maintaining their culture in the face of the harmful effects of globalization and modern societal pressures. They survived the brutal European colonization of southern Africa and a deadly smallpox outbreak brought by the colonizers. They have survived liberation wars and civil wars (Cortez, 2020). But now they face another hurdle – the socio-economic marginalization which has further exacerbated their vulnerability within their societies.

In Angola, the San people, known as the Khoisan, have encountered similar issues of marginalization and discrimination. According to the 2014 national demographic census, the San account for approximately 0.1% of the Angolan population. Approximately 14,000 San people live in Cunene, Cuando Cubango, Huíla, and Moxico provinces. According to a local civil society organisation, 12,000 San people live in the Cuando Cubango province, distributed across 36 different communities (Cortez, 2020).

Many among the San across southern Angola have poor access to public services, including lack of birth registration, and limited access to education, health care, drinking water and adequate food (Cortez, 2020). Livelihoods among the San people of Angola are currently threatened by the lack of government protection of indigenous rights, a drawn-out ongoing drought, and diversion of traditional land without their free, prior and informed consent by the government for agribusiness farming (Cortez, 2020). According to Amnesty International report of 2019, as indicated in Cortez, land diversion is a common threat to traditional communities throughout southern Angola's provinces. For instances, through the Agroindustrial Horizonte 2020 megaproject, which enabled the expropriation of 76,000 hectares of land, commercial farming ranches fenced off land that was traditionally owned and used by San people in the Cuando Cubango province. In some areas, such as the Cuito Cuanavale district, Mucundi and Mbalachavo communities were forcibly evicted from their land to make space for the implementation of large-scale farming. The government of Angola has been failing to implement public policies to protect indigenous peoples' rights, notably their right to land demarcation and titling, which is essential to ensure the survival of their hunter-gatherer livelihoods and perpetuation of their indigenous knowledge. Despite the acknowledgment of the importance of protecting the rights of Angola's indigenous peoples, including their traditional land, culture, and livelihoods, there remain significant gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by these communities in accessing to essential resource such as health care adequate food, drinking water and land demarcation and tilling. This gap is also applicable to the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest, as they share similar environment with the San in southern Angola and consequently subjected to comparable challenges. Further research is needed to delve into existing disparities and identify barriers that hinder

these indigenous communities from enjoying equitable access to these vital services and rights.

Moreover, in South Africa, the Khoisan, primarily the San and the Nama have also historically faced severe marginalization and discrimination, which has had profound socioeconomic consequences. Land dispossession, forced removals, and cultural assimilation policies have disrupted their traditional way of life and resulted in widespread poverty and unemployment within their communities (The Khoisan in Contemporary South Africa (KCSA), 2019).

Report of the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to South Africa, 28 July to 8 August 2005 reported that:

“The root cause hindering economic development and intergenerational cultural survival, has been the forced dispossession of traditional land that once formed the basis of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist economies and identities. This historic dispossession of land and natural resources has caused indigenous people to plunge from a situation of self-reliance into poverty and a dependency on external re-sources. The most pressing concern of all the Khoi-San communities is securing their land base, and where possible, re-establishing access to natural resources necessary for pastoralism, hunting-gathering or new land-based ventures such as farming.

(ACHPR and IWGIA/African  
2008:51)

In addition, the San and Nama people are some of the poorest population groups in South Africa (KCSA, 2019). Living in rural areas and stigmatized as a rural underclass by dominant sectors of society, the Khoisan also work as menial laborers watching sheep or doing domestic work without tenure rights or job security in poorly paid seasonal work on farms (KCSA, 2019). Similar to this, Dube, Ncube, Moyo, Phiri, and Moyo (2021) claimed that the San in Zimbabwe are easily subjugated by their Kalanga and Ndebele neighbours, who use them as cheap labour, because they lack assets or wealth-derived social power. Furthermore, Khoisan San and Nama children, youth and women amongst other San ethnic groups in South Africa, are vulnerable to

discrimination, violence, drug abuse, high suicide rates, prostitution, alcoholism and other syndromes associated with poverty (KCSA, 2019). In addition, the HIV/AIDS rate is alarmingly high among the Khoisan in South Africa. However, there is a dearth of statistical report pertaining to the prevalence of the HIV/AIDS among these communities (KCSA, 2019).

On the other hand, Broyhill et al. (2014) also urged that during the British colonial rule in Botswana, the colonising powers considered the San to be serfs who did not have traditional leadership and were not well-off; therefore, they were perceived as socially inferior and did not need to be politically represented in public politics as well as neither owning land nor needing any (Broyhill et al., 2014). As a result, the San experienced discrimination and persecution and were frequently made into slaves or laborers. However, many San decided to relocate into the Kalahari Desert and live in underdeveloped communities with limited resources, lower living standards, and less access to wildlife and foraging (Broyhill et al., 2014).

Furthermore, San have also witnessed their customary hunting rights gradually stripped since the 19th century, through establishing protected areas. The idea behind this was to set aside areas for nature conservation by isolating society from the natural world (Siyambango & Enkono, 2022). For instance, in 1900s, the British colonial government in Botswana commenced to put hunting restrictions in place by initially reserving "royal game" and enforcing quotas and hunting seasons, of which later it was completely impeded (Broyhill et al., 2014). Similarly, in Zimbabwe the San relocated from the Hwange National Park, during colonial times when the park was made a wildlife area by the Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1929 – the area that was strategically important for hunting-based livelihoods opportunities (Dube et al., 2021). More so, the Hai//om were expelled from Etosha in Namibia when it was designated a national park in 1953. The majority were taken out of the park area and sent to work on white farms (Suzaman, 2001). In the post-independence era, several countries continued to enact bans on hunting activities. This was due to the establishment of community forests, game reserves, conservancies and other kinds of protected areas. But, even more, was the reforming of land and the establishment of freehold farms, as occurred, for example, in parts of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. This led to the displacements of the San people from their ancestral lands and traditional territories and were forced on to government issued settlements (Broyhill

et al., 2014; Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). In Botswana alone, 90% of the San in the country had been resettled (Broyhill et al., 2014). However, the primary question at hand is whether the implementation of resettlements schemes significantly contributes to the preservation of the San people's livelihoods. Should this be the case, an inquiry arises as to why the living condition of the San in these resettlement areas show limited signs of improvement.

Dube et al. (2021) further urged that the transition from traditional activities based on nomadic hunting and gathering to permanent agro pastoralism livelihoods has had an impact on the San way of life in Zimbabwe, just as other San communities elsewhere. In a rapidly modernizing and globalizing world, such profound livelihoods and cultural transformations pose serious challenges for marginalized communities like the San to adapt to and sustain their livelihood.

#### **2.1.4 The Livelihoods Challenges Among the !Xun San People in Namibia and Economic Interaction With Others**

The Ohangwena Regional Poverty Profile (ORPP) reported that there were less than 15 villages in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, with a total population of approximately 3033 people (MEFT, 2009). The majority of these people are of the ovaWambo ethnic group, numbering about 2941, while the rest are from the San community (Mouton and Dirx, 2014).

In Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, the !Xun San primarily live in six villages: Omauni, Oshikoha, Owike, Okanyandi, Okatope and Omwandi village while, some reside in resettlement projects under the National Resettlement Programme (NRP) implemented by the GRN, or/and, in the resettlement farms planned for San communities by the San Development Programme (SDP) resorting under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) within the vicinity of Okongo (Kiaka, Dieckmann, & Dirx, 2014). The !Xun San normally live in their traditional housing structures made up of the local materials called *omapundo* which they construct themselves (Hitchcock et al., 2019). The San people within Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy have occupation and use rights as registered members of the two community-based institutions (Okongo Community Forest and Okongo Communal Conservancy). This means that they have access to resources such as firewood and veld-food, but also share in general benefits generated and/or provided through the community forest or the conservancy (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

The !Xun San along with other San's ethnic groups, were the first people to inhabit the Okongo. Their cultural and livelihoods system, however, started changing during the precolonial era when OvaWambo, who are mainly pastoralists and agriculturalists migrated in area between 2000 and 1700 years ago (Vicente et al., 2019). The ovaWambo gradually settled and established kingdoms and introduced farming and trading economic systems. The direct interaction between the San and ovaWambo people in the area seem to lead to social and economic impact on San's livelihood (Hitchcock et al., 2021). The traditional economic system of the San which primarily involved high mobility and exclusively relied on hunting wild animals, collecting wild food and seeking water sources for survival seem to have been changed (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020 ; Hitchcock et al., 2019). This has immensely destroyed their traditional livelihoods strategies as most of them have to adopt to the economic system of trading and farming introduced by the ovaWambo.

According to Mouton & Dirks (2014) the types of relationships between the ovaKwanyama (Ohangwena's majority population) and the !Xun San in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are wide-ranging: employer-employee, sexual and 'romantic' partners, spouses, fellow villagers, fellow *otombo* drinkers, fellow committee members, etc. Such socio- economic relationship with the ovaKwanyama, is considered more essential to the !Xun San for survival. Most of the !Xun San work on communal agricultural farmlands and live on communal lands which are largely belong to ovaKwanyama. ovaKwanyama farmers use to provide them with food when they are hungry, and cash is earned by carrying out piecework for ovaKwanyama households. Some ovaKwanyama farmers used to lend out guns to the San who use them for hunting game in Angola (Robins et al., 2018). Through this collaboration, the San people find themselves embracing a gradual shift in their traditional social and economic way of life of hunter-gathers life style to Agro-pastoralism.

Suzman (2001), indicated that despite the comparatively good relations between ovaWambo and the San, it is believed that, right up to Namibia's independence in 1990, the San community were conspicuously worse off than other residents of the Owambo communal areas. This is because the San were made to adjust to a new social and economic system in which they do not possess the necessary skills in (Suzman,

2001). This resulted in many social-economic problems. The most prominent of these are alcohol abuse, high incidents of domestic violence, diseases and involvement in petty crime. This also led to poverty, poor living standards and low economic status within their society.

#### **2.1.5 The Role of The Finnish Missionaries in Changing the San's Livelihoods**

The arrival of the Finnish missionaries in the 1960s changed the lifestyle of the San considerably. The direct influence of missionary activities on San was felt most intensively and enduringly in Owamboland, where the Hai||om and !Xun San in the western part of what is now Ohangwena Region were directly targeted by evangelical Lutheran missionaries over a period of at least 20 years (Dieckmann et al., 2014). According to (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020) the arrival of the Finnish missionaries in the 1960s, started to significantly transform the nomadic lifestyle of the San people. The Finnish missionaries arrived through the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church. The missionaries compelled the San people to be evangelised and converted to Christianity, and resettled them in project camps such as Onamatadiva, Eendobe, Oshanashiwa and Ekoka villages. These centres came to be locally known as the *omapyatumo gaayelele yOkongo*.

In addition to promoting their evangelism, the Finnish missionaries in these projects provided the San with basic healthcare, some degree of education, fees for labour, and food rations (Dieckmann et al., 2014). The San people were also introduced to new cultures, business and farming system with the intention of civilising them (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). The missionaries also attempted to promote agricultural production among the San. Furthermore, the San were also introduced to sedentary agriculture as practised by their neighbouring ovaWambo and Kavango. This was regarded as the only sustainable basis for their livelihoods (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Williams (2020) had similarly reported that the missionaries played a central role in the introduction of permanent settlement and residential concentration for the San people who were allocated farming units at the camps by the missionaries. The Finnish imposed their way of life on the San in a bid to improve the lives of a people they perceived as poor and 'uncivilized' (Mouton & Dirkx, 2011).

In the 1980s, the Finnish missionaries withdrew their interventions as a result of the intensification of the war for the liberation of Namibia (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). They later returned after independence to carry on with their activities, but again left few years later. The government of the newly independent Namibia built on the resettlement projects initiated by the missionaries by continuing to support common farming units for the entire San people for subsistence purposes. These interventions have been criticised and regarded as unsuccessful. The criticism ranges from the interventions being inflexible policy, unrealistic and inappropriate goals, and failure to consider social and political dimension of poverty in respect of the San people's lifestyles. Besides wanting to evangelise the San, the Finish missionaries also wanted to form a Christian San's homeland around Okongo, where they could be baptized and unified into the Kavango-Ovambo culture (Mouton & Dirkx, 2011).

#### **2.1.6 The Impact of Colonial Systems in Changing the San's Traditional Lands and Livelihoods**

The early displacement of the San by Bantu speaking groups in Namibia was accelerated with the arrival of the German colonialists in 1884 under the name of South West Africa and later Namibia. During the pre-colonial era, the San in Okongo area today, typically lived in small, flexible and dispersed groups with diversity of natural resources. They survived mainly from hunting and gathering, and had an excellent knowledge of their natural environment. Before then, the primary way the San would acquire land was through self-allocation, i.e., moving into an area and establishing occupancy and use rights (Dieckmann et al., 2014).

However, with the arrival of the German colonialists and later the South Africa apartheid government in 1960, major changes in land tenure and administration occurred. Land and natural resources became state property as the colonial government could effectively enforce natural resource management regulations, including the anti-hunting laws which could inhibit the San from continuing to participate in their hunting activities. As a result, the San have experienced a significant land loss of their traditional lands which had alter their customary livelihoods system therefore, brought about lot of changes in their livelihood conditions (Suzman, 2001; Robins et al., 2018; Nakuta, 2020). According to Suzman (2001b:83) as cited in Dieckmann & Dirkx (2014: 440) the impacts of land dispossession by colonial government are many and various which has manifested in

number of ways such as: economic dependency, loss of food security, inability to cultivate and withdrawal into marginal zones. Today, landlessness is one of the major challenges for San people in respect of poverty, marginalisation, identity, and cultural persistence (Dieckmann & Dirks, 2014).

In the Northern-central Namibia, the San within Okongo area were not prepared for the new way of life that came with the progressive enforcement of hunting laws. Such laws did not make provision for San as a special group that had previously relied not on agriculture or pastoralism, but on natural resources (Robins et al., 2018). As a result, they started living on handouts and looking for employment on communal farmland belong to other ethnic groups, and some migrated to the neighbouring countries like Angola, as a means to search for the better livelihoods (Gibson, 2019). According to Robins et al. (2018) around 1974 and 1975 a number of the !Xun San have left the country for Southern part of Angola and were they recruited into foreign armies with promises of income and status. Numerous of San from Angola were able to exploit the independence wars in Angola and Namibia to make a living as employees in the armies of the colonial powers and thence provided with food, clothing and wages during the war (Mouton & Dirks 2014).

San experience that most aspects of their cultural, and socio-economic environments were directly influenced by the war in Angola (Robins, 2018). During this epoch, the San people faced numerous challenges. They experienced displacements, loss of livelihoods and the disruption of their traditional way of life. They were forced to flee their homes, including the forested areas were they resided. This displacement often led to the breakdown of their cultural practices, such as their deep connection to the land, hunting and gathering patterns. Furthermore, the war brought about heightened insecurity and violence which restricted the San people's ability to move freely and access to the natural resources (Gibson, 2019).

#### **2.1.7 Post-Independence: The Impact of Land Tenure System on the !Xun San**

After Independence in 1990, the patterns of land and property ownership of colonial and apartheid times remain virtually unchanged (Suzam, 2001). The independent GRN of Namibia has failed to reverse the wholesale loss of land experienced by the various San ethnic groups during the colonial period. Instead, the homelands were turned into communal land, i.e. areas now administered under the Communal Land Reform Act 5

of 2002, by the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement (MLR) and the marginalised status of the majority of the San in those communal areas remain unbearable (Suzam, 2001).

On the other hands, despite the fact that San are among the principal intended beneficiaries of land purchased for resettlement purposes under the Agricultural (Commercial) Land Reform Act, the GRN has done little to ensure that San participate in or benefit from the programme (Suzam, 2001). From the independence, up to date only about 25% of the San in the former “Bushmanland” (now Tsunkwe) where the San people constitute a majority within the communal lands in which they live and have decision-making powers with respect to land administration (Dieckmann and Dirkx, 2014).

In Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, Ohangwena region the majority of the !Xun and Hai||om San who live on communal lands have no recognised traditional authorities of their own, but live under the leadership of the ovaKwanyama’s TAs. This lack of recognised TA has rendered them economically and politically weak, and so they are not included in decision-making on matters affecting them, and especially regarding land administration. Many depended on other traditional communities and authorities for access to land, in particular for land allocation (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020; Dieckmann et al., 2014). As a result, lack of leadership and inadequate access to land and natural assets contribute to major socio-economic problems on their livelihoods (Suzam, 2001). It contributes to partial breakdown of their social structures, inability to access educational institutions and other social services, increasing migration into peripheral zones and urban areas and leads to high mobility and land insecurity.

The extent to which San once depended on hunting and gathering as their principal economic strategy formed the basis of their livelihoods. As early, sparsely distributed inhabitants of Okongo, their cultural lifestyle manifested itself in many forms of which mostly associated with land occupation and the use of the natural resources to be found on that land and they lived a highly mobile lifestyle of hunting wild animals and gathering veld-foods, with no restrictions (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

However, from early colonial and post-colonial times, most !Xun San people in Okongo had been suffered as a direct result of land tenure systems and conservation policies pursued by the Namibian government (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020; Nakuta, 2020). Since the independence, 38% of land is reserved for communal lands and 17% of land is set aside for nature conservation and community forests. By 2018, there were about 40 registered community forests spread across the country including Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Okongo Community Forest area is most closely associated with the San as they recognised to be the original occupants. San people lived in these areas before they were demarcated as, communal and/or state land areas. Most of these demarcations have resulted in their dislocation and/or current marginalization (Dieckmann and Dirx, 2014; Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). Through the establishment of the community forest and communal conservancies has resulted in San to lose access to their major traditional lands and environment as most of their underlying activities in the area also become severely restricted (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020 and Odendaal & Werner, 2020). According to Nghitevelekwa et al. (2020) some San people have complained that the regulations of the OFC were inhibiting them from accessing veld food and other natural resources. Similarly, their hunting lifestyle is also inhibited because hunting is no longer permitted. This means that access to and rights over common-pool resources are limited and conditional.

Furthermore, the !Xun San within Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy have lost access to their major lands through the process of land tenure system especially when the sedentary agriculture system emerged with individualization tenure practice. This involves the individualization of land access, and the fencing-off of land by sedentary agriculturalists due to high demand for grazing lands for the growing numbers of livestock and for land for dwellings and crop cultivation as the population is increasing (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

The Report of the African Commission's Working Groups of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, 26 July – 5 August 2005 reported that:

“Apart from land dispossession by the colonial governments, the San are very concerned about the activities of other ethnic groups on what they consider their

ancestral land. The San are concerned by the massive influx of substance farmers, in most cases cattle farmers, into territories on which the San depend for their meagre livelihood. The pattern of other groups' livestock using San water sources, leaving insufficient amounts for game which consequently leave the area, destroying and diminishing the bushfoods on which San depend, and thereby creating total dependency on the intruders themselves, is all too well known to the San, who find themselves at a loss to prevent it recurring”.

(ACHPR and IWGIA 2008: 113).

As accounted for by Nghitevelekwa et al. (2020), many lands in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are dominated by sedentary agriculturalists today who depend on individualized holdings for homesteads and crop production, and who have fenced-off large tracts of land to include grazing lands. This has consequently resulted in changed natural habitats and a reduction in wildlife resources—formerly San's basic livelihoods in the area as well as, a reduction in the availability of land as a common resource.

Traditionally, the San's land tenure was based on a customary land tenure system which is defined based on the principal of egalitarianism – where land is a common property or a common-pool resource with open access to everyone and no specific rights are assigned to anyone and nor excluded anyone. However, due to the growth of individualised tenure land-uses within the Okongo forest, has transformed the dynamics around access to land, leaving many !Xun San people and other San groups on the margins, with their access to land becoming ever-more precarious and some of them especially those in villages outside the special resettlement projects to settle in the corridors between the fences of individualized landholdings (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

#### **2.1.8 Livelihood Challenges: Poverty Amongst the !Xun San**

According to Mensah (2014) poverty is not an easy concept to define and definitions describing “the poor” vary in accordance with the perspective and objective of those doing the defining. As a result, a range of definitions exist, influenced by different disciplinary approaches and ideologies. Tawodzera (2010: 11) indicated that “the word "poverty" is often used to describe a material or non-material situation of an entity, be it a person, a group, an organization or an entire society (Swiatkowski, 2002)”. It

denotes the absence of elements that are considered critical to the sustenance of human life (Tawodzera, 2010).

The World Bank (2004: 23) define poverty as a lack of the resources required to participate in activities and to enjoy living standard that are customary widely accepted in the society in which poverty is measured. According to the World Bank, it exists when certain sections of people cannot satisfy their basic primary needs in terms of food, clothing and shelter and other essentials of life.

Despite relatively good economic growth since independence, Namibia has one of the worst levels of inequality in the world (Kiaka, 2014). The population continue to be susceptible to poverty, about 43.3% of Namibian population is poor, Namibia Multidimensional poverty index (NMPI, 2021). Poverty and inequalities are still significant between urban and rural areas, and between regions with the score of 57.2% (Vatileni, 2023).

Ohangwena Region is the second poorest region in Namibia after Kavango Region and poverty condition is the clearest index of the status of the San people in Ohangwena region (Mouton & Dirks 2014). The !Xun and Hai||om San people in Ohangwena region, are considered to be the poorest of all of this region's ethnic group (Mouton & Dirks 2014). They are mostly associated with extreme hunger, thirst, homelessness, sickness, illiteracy, ill-health, exclusion and general insecurity. They also lack access to any independent means of subsistence and a sizeable proportion of them have no direct cash income (Suzam, 2001; Mouton & Dirks, 2014).

The Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey of 2009/2010 similarly supported that as per 'capital income', the San people are the lowest amongst all other language groups in Ohangwena region (Suzam, 2001). The Ohangwena poverty profiles indicated that one third of the !Xun San households in the in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy live below US\$1/day and they are regarded to be in absolute poverty line. This means they cannot afford the essential needs of life and they lack decent shelters, education and health care. Most of them do not have any land to cultivate crop fields, no livestock, no any employment, nor access to natural resources and consequently not sufficient food provisions (Mouton & Dirks, 2014).

It is noteworthy that there are also poor and very poor ovaKwanyama in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, but the !Xun San people are the very poorest and the most vulnerable to social and economic shocks (Pohamba-Ndume, 2016). According to Nghitevelekwa et al. (2020) the !Xun's poverty levels in Okongo Forest are directly linked to factors such as, threatened traditional livelihoods. Their traditional way of life is no longer feasible, and has not been replaced by other viable livelihood strategies. This is exacerbated by insecure access to and tenure over land. Mouton & Dirks (2014) stressed that in addition to their weak leadership and weak institutions, limited degrees of political representation at local, regional and national levels, the !Xun San have lost both control over and access to productive lands. Furthermore, their limited degree of access to formal education consequently prevent many !Xun San to engage in formal and informal employment opportunities (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). These combination of factors has repercussions in the form of discrimination against the !Xun San by the main ethnic group of ovaKwanyama, and the consequent subordinate position in their society (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). Only few households ranked in the wealth category – those who's member of the household get old age pension fund, or War Veteran Pension or orphanage and vulnerable children grants. Otherwise very rarely a household ranked in the wealthiest category (Dickmann et al., 2014).

#### **2.1.9 Employment Condition Amongst the !Xun San**

In early times, a hallmark of !Xun San people life in the Okongo forest was their ability to remain partially independent of the traditional economy through being able to subsist autonomously as hunter-gatherers (Suzam, 2001). However, having their traditional way of life disturbed and loss of autonomous access to land and natural resources, they came to be increasingly integrated into and dependent on the growing cash economy (Suzam, 2001). As a result, some of them have been forced to flock to the urban areas while, some get employed the informal sector as casual- day- or seasonal labourers.

Those who have moved to the urban areas are not better off either (Suzam, 2001). Apart from the fact that formal employment opportunities are generally rare in Ohangwena region, there are other additional factors that impact on the ability for many !Xun San to obtain formal employment in urban areas include: limited

education, a lack of formal work experience, low self-esteem, unequal power relations and discrimination (Mouton & Dirks 2014; Nghitevelekwa, et al., 2020). Many San people use to be discriminated in relation to job applications (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). Their chances of being employed when competing for a job against a Kwanyama person with the same skills is said to be low, because the ovaKwanyama tend to be the ones in charge of recruiting others (Mouton & Dirks 2014).

Furthermore, the San continue to provide a pool of cheap labour in communal areas (Suzam, 2001). The majority of the San remain almost entirely dependent on cheap labour where there is little employment available for unskilled workers in rural areas. Most of them relied increasingly on short-term contract work or casual labour to secure an income (Suzam, 2001). The type of employment they obtain in informal sectors ranges from livestock herding, clearing land, fencing, and fetching water, to housekeeping or caring for children (Nghitevelekwa, et al 2020).

Owing to their higher rates of unemployment in formal sector, poverty and hopelessness in the rural areas where the San live create a state of dependency, where laborers trade off their manual work for goods such as food and alcohol. Therefore, the diversity of sources of livelihoods can be explained in terms of the multiple threats undermining the original basis of their livelihoods (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

#### **2.1.10 Dependency and Food Security**

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), food security involves the notion of ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need. An individual, household or community exhibits dependency when it cannot meet its immediate basic needs without external assistance (Barrett, 2021). Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels is achieved when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996).

According to Suzam (2001) the San's dependency has increased since independence as a result of changes in the commercial farming sector, rural population growth and continuing low levels of formal education. Furthermore, Suzam (2001) states that a substantial decline in agricultural employment over the past two decades had also

rendered several thousand San homeless and jobless, and the post-independence land grab in some communal areas has radically reduced economic opportunities for San in those areas. The net result has been that the growing San population has become increasingly reliant on the GRN to help meet their basic needs.

That being so, the economic, social and political dependency and food insecurity become the most common phenomena amongst the !Xun San and other San's ethnic group in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy and other parts of the region (Kiaka et al., 2014). Kiaka et al. (2014) and Suzam (2001) highlighted number of factors that are responsible for the limited food security in many San households, such as: Lack of education and illiteracy; poverty; poor political representation at the local level; and discrimination in the job market limits their employment opportunities. Thus, has rendered many households to be more dependent i.e. welfare programmes, charity donations etc. (Kiaka et al. (2014).

Suzman (2001) further urged that their dependency and food insecurity condition also developed most rapidly where the San lost secure access to land and consequently the capacity to live exclusive of the dominant political economy through hunting and gathering. The removal of this economic strategies forced the San to attach themselves to and work for others.

According to African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in its Report of the African Commission's Working Groups of Experts on Indigenous Populations/Communities: Mission to the Republic of Namibia, 26 July – 5 August 2005, stated that:

“Through land dispossession many San communities have lost their food security; they have become economically dependent on other ethnic groups and government food aid, they have experienced a loss of dignity, disruption of their traditional social and economic structure, and degradation of their environment by intruders with large cattle herds; and, in sum, they remain a marginalized population.”

(ACHPR and IWGIA 2008: 113).

This statement encapsulates the consequence of land dispossession of the San as one of the main factors that leads to their condition of limited food security and the state of being perceived as highly dependent and marginalized people. In this regard, food insecurity and high dependency in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy is mostly common amongst the !Xun San's households.

According to Mouton & Dirks (2014) most of the !Xun San's households in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy do not have sufficient food— neither in quantity nor quality. Mouton & Dirks indicated that many households experience a handful of meals eaten per day which varies from household to household depending on their food security conditions. For example, Households that receive food aid on a monthly/bi-monthly basis and have access to abundance of veld-food are regarded to be better off compared to households that do not have any sources of income nor external support.

Due to high dependency rate and food insecurity condition, many !Xun San households remained trapped in an endless cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Hunger, undernutrition and imbalanced diet remain frequent amongst the !Xun San households as most of them have limited access to different types of food on a daily basis (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). Barrett (2021) demonstrated that as households become more relying on food aid, they are less likely to undertake risky behaviors to escape a poverty trap. It can also be suggested that it is difficult to break out of the cycle of poverty, as poor children are more likely to become poor adults (Mensah, 2014). Therefore, food aid foster dependency and a perceived reluctance on the part of the San to work for themselves (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). The extent to which most !Xun San households in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy depend on other sources for foodstuff indicates that resources (income) secured through casual works—piecework, craft works, etc. are inadequate to support themselves. Furthermore, the GRN, has shown diminutive effort in combating against food insecurity condition amongst this vulnerable group of the society. It's been urged that food aid, which is only delivered sporadically, has been hardly convenient to reaches its destinations and in most cases inadequate (Suzam, 2001).

### **2.1.11 Knowledge Gap and Limitations**

The body of literature pertaining to livelihood challenges among the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy exhibits notable limitations, warranting further investigation to deepen our understanding of their specific circumstances. While several studies have explored the broader socio-economic challenges faced by indigenous communities in the region, there is a marked scarcity of research that delves into the intricate livelihood struggles unique to the !Xun San people within this particular context. Moreover, existing research tends to adopt a generalized approach towards indigenous livelihoods, overlooking the critical cultural and environmental factors that significantly shape the !Xun San people's livelihood strategies. Consequently, the literature lacks in-depth insights into the specific challenges, coping mechanisms, and opportunities that emerge from the interplay of their traditional knowledge, resource use practices, and cultural dynamics. Additionally, the majority of available studies predominantly rely on secondary data sources, which may not sufficiently capture the intricacies of the challenges experienced by the !Xun San community at the local level. As a result, the nuanced and context-specific aspects of their livelihood struggles remain understudied, underscoring the need for primary data collection directly from the community members themselves.

To address these critical knowledge gaps and limitations, this research endeavors to employ an in-depth qualitative research design, comprising extensive interviews within the !Xun San community in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. By adopting a participatory research approach, this study seeks to elevate the voices and perspectives of the !Xun San individuals, enabling a more nuanced understanding of their livelihood challenges and aspirations. Furthermore, this research will embrace a cultural lens, acknowledging the profound influence of indigenous knowledge systems, traditional practices, and communal dynamics on the !Xun San people's livelihood strategies. The integration of primary data collected directly from the community will afford a deeper appreciation of their resource use practices, traditional ecological knowledge, and social systems, ultimately enriching the analysis.

By addressing these knowledge gaps and limitations, this study aspires to contribute significant insights into the livelihood struggles of the !Xun San people and contribute

to a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences. The findings of this research will have valuable implications for policymakers and stakeholders, informing the design of culturally sensitive and context-specific interventions that support the well-being and cultural preservation of the !Xun San community. Additionally, this research holds broader implications for the field of indigenous studies, offering potential avenues for future research and encouraging more comprehensive investigations into the livelihood challenges faced by marginalized communities in similar contexts. In doing so, this study seeks to elevate the discourse on indigenous livelihoods, enhance sustainable development efforts, and promote social equity and cultural resilience within the unique landscape of the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

## **2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK**

### **2.2.1 The Meaning of Livelihoods**

The issue of livelihoods had been discussed in 1985 at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) policy centre in London and led to the establishment, in 1986, of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods programme at the IIED led by Gordon Conway (Tawodzera, 2010: 38). It was not until the publication of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway's Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century (1992) paper, that the livelihoods concept became widely known and accepted (Chambers, 2005; Solebury, 2003). The concept of livelihood is rapidly gaining acceptance as a valuable means of understanding the factors that influence people's lives and well-being (Chambers and Conway, 1992) for this reason, it had become putative as it'd been widely used in many contemporary writings on poverty and rural development etc. (Mensah, 2014). Livelihood it is a way of earning a living (Tawodzera, 2010). It is largely based on generating income (International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA) 2012). Tawodzera (2010: 38) argued that livelihood "it is not necessarily as only having a regular occupation or employment although these activities form part of a livelihood" but, cover many components and it is wide-ranging (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Livelihoods comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

Tawodzera (2010) provided insight on the concept of livelihood as a way of appreciating the multiple undertakings that households engage in to ensure their survival and well-being. While the definition of a livelihood can be applied to different hierarchical levels, Tawodzera (2010) stressed that it is used most commonly at the household level. This is because, it's important to recognize variations in wellbeing at household level, as well as at the broader levels of the extended family, the social group, and the community.

According to Mensah, (2014) an imperative feature of the livelihood definition is to direct attention to the links between assets people possess in practice to pursue alternative activities that can generate the income level needed for survival. Hence, the basic element of the livelihoods approach is sustainability (Tawodzera, 2010). People should be able to meet their current essentials of life without compromising the future (Tawodzera, 2010). Chambers and Conway (1992) demonstrated that a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term. Similarly, Sneddon (2000) indicted that livelihood can be classified as sustainable, when it is resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses, when it is not dependent upon external support, when it is able to maintain the long-term productivity of natural resources and when it does not undermine the livelihood options of others.

### **2.2.2 The Sustainable Livelihood Framework**

Livelihood affairs of the marginalized !Xun San people in the various segments of their societies within Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, Ohangwena region is the major focus in this framework. The study adopted the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) (1992) Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to demonstrate how different livelihood strategies used by the !Xun San people in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are likely to shape their livelihoods. In this case, San are ought to employ a variety of livelihood strategies so that they can gain access to housing, food, money and other services that are necessary for their preservation and survival (Tawodzera, 2010). Livelihood strategies, are the

endeavors that the San can carry out or perform and the choices that they make to achieve their livelihood goals (Tawodzera 2010). The viability and effectiveness of livelihood strategies is dependent upon the availability and accessibility of assets, services and opportunities (Carney 1998).

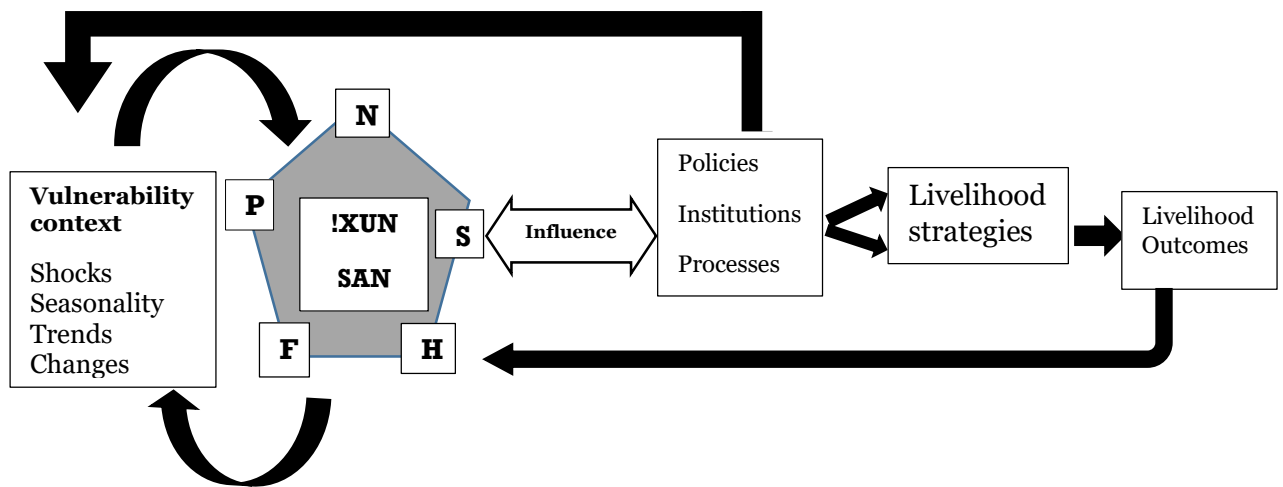
Although, different scholars provided their theoretical contributions on concept of livelihood such as Polanyi of 1964 in his book “*The Livelihood of Man*”, DFID’s sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) is more accepted approach in relation with livelihood and it’s still has merit in improving understanding of how people manage their lives (Tawodzera, 2010). This concept has been used by policy planners and different agencies in the process of planning and implementation of different projects and programs for poor and marginalized people (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Although, Tawodzera (2010) the approach has been criticized i.e. for putting little emphasis on the influence of politics and governance regimes on livelihood activities. However, different researches on rural poverty showed that the concept has been used as successful analytical tool for coming to grasp with rural livelihoods and understanding influences of poverty as well as identifying where interventions could best be made (Tawodzera, 2010).

In the light of this study, this approach therefore, seek to provide an understanding on the fundamental causes of livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San people in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy and how they can use “resources at their disposal to construct their livelihood”(Tawodzera, 2010:39). This SLF focused mainly on this area because, this where many !Xun San people live and where they often build their livelihood from some kind of primary self-managed activities.

Through this framework structure, the SLF presents an analytical structure or a model of reality to facilitate a broad and systematic understanding of the various factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities of the !Xun San, and to show how they relate to each other (DFID, 2001). Chambers and Conway (1992) indicated that, of all the various components of a livelihood, the most critical is the portfolio of assets. “People construct their livelihoods by drawing on a range of assets which are available to them within a broader socio-economic and political context” (Tawodzera, 2010: 39). According to Carney (1998) as cited in Tawodzera, (2010: 39) the context of vulnerability determines the shocks that the ‘!Xun San’ people are exposed to and the

options which are available to them to reconcile negative influences (Tawodzera, 2010). In the end, the ability of a household to construct a livelihood depends on the ‘stock of assets’ that it is able to command, the choices that it makes on the basis of these assets as well as the available opportunities (Tawodzera, 2010). The major assets, policies and strategies that interact to result in different livelihood outcomes are represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Source: DFID, 2001)



Based on Figure 1, this livelihood framework illustrates diversified livelihood strategies that the !Xun San can undertake in sustaining their livelihood and the types of shocks that they are exposed to. The SL Framework is built around five principal categories of livelihood assets, graphically depicted as a pentagon to underline their interconnections and the fact that livelihoods depend on a combination of assets of various kinds and not just from one category. Based on this SL Framework, Human resource or capital (H), Natural resource (N), Financial capital (F), Social capital (S) and Physical resource (P) are critical to the livelihood of the !Xun San. An important part of the analysis is to find out San’s access to different types of assets (physical, human, financial, natural, and social) and their ability to put these to productive use. The framework places San, particularly the !Xun San people at the center of a web of inter-related influences that affect how they create a livelihood for themselves and their households. Closest to the !Xun San at the center of the framework are the resources and livelihood assets that they have access to and use. These can include natural resources, technologies, their skills, knowledge and capacity, their health, access to education, sources of credit or their networks of social support.

These assets are relevant to analyzing San's livelihood in their communities. Identifying these assets among the !Xun San is important because it provides an understanding of how they are able to survive in forest irrespective of the various mediating processes serving as a source of vulnerability to their livelihood strategies. Thus the extent of their access to these assets is strongly influenced by their vulnerability context, which takes account of trends (for example, economic, political, and technological change), shocks (for example, epidemics, natural disasters e.g. droughts) and seasonality (for example, prices, production, and employment opportunities). Access to these assets is also influenced by external influences such as policies, institutional and processes at all levels — from the household to the entry communities.

This affects the ways in which the San combine and use their assets to achieve their goals or livelihood strategies to result in a variety of livelihood outcomes (DFID, 2001). These livelihood outcomes refer to the achievements of their livelihood strategies, such as more income (e.g. cash), increased well-being (e.g. non material goods, like self-esteem, health status, access to services, sense of inclusion), reduced vulnerability (e.g. better resilience through increase in asset status), improved food security (e.g. increase in financial capital in order to buy food) and a more sustainable use of natural resources (e.g. appropriate property rights). Livelihood outcomes gives us an idea of how this San group are likely to respond to new opportunities and which performance indicators should be used to assess support activities (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002).

### **2.2.3 Livelihood Assets or Resources**

Scoones (1998) states that the basic material and social, tangible, and intangible assets that people use for constructing their livelihoods are conceptualized as different types of 'capital' to stress their role as a resource base "from which different productive streams are derived from which livelihoods are constructed" (Scoones, 1998; p.26). Livelihood resources and assets are the inputs to the livelihood system (Niehof and Price, 2001) and resources can be seen as immediate means needed for livelihood generation.

According to the International Centre for development oriented Research in Agriculture (ICRA, 2012), in a legal or accounting sense, “assets” are something that can be balanced against “debts”. In discussion of livelihoods, “assets” are often considered in a way synonymous to “resources” or “capital” in a broad sense; that is something that can be used to provide a livelihood. Soussan (2001) also consider livelihood assets as the means of production available to a given individual, household or group that can be used in their livelihood activities. These assets are the basis on which livelihoods are built and, in general, the greater and more varied the asset base the higher and more durable the level of social security.

Based on the above definitions, livelihood assets, in the context of this study can be described as both the natural and social environmental possessions available to the !Xun San people as an individual or as whole household to be able to make a living. Carney (1998) and ICRA (2012) both suggest that there are five dominant forms of livelihood assets and these are:

#### **2.2.3.1 Natural Capital**

Natural capital is the term used for the natural resource stocks from which resource flows and services useful for livelihoods are derived (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002). These natural resources are made up of land, soils, water, forests, air quality, minerals, plants and animal life that people use (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002). Natural capital can be measured in terms of quantity and quality (for example acreage, diversity and fertility) (Korsi *et al.*, 2001). It is important not only for its environmental benefits, but also because it is the essential basis of many rural economies in providing food, building material, fodder, and so forth (Natural Resources Institute, 2000).

Many of the factors as contribute particularly to poverty condition amongst the !Xun San people within Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy and borders reflect declining access to their usual natural capital mostly land and wildlife as most of them depend and derive their livelihoods from these natural resource based activities. Also factors such as poor water quality represents a basis for poor health, diseases, unhygienic condition etc. amongst many !Xun San which also have a direct effects on other aspects of a livelihood. Furthermore, within the SL framework a particularly close relationship can be seen as it exists between natural capital and the vulnerability context and many of the devastating shocks for the livelihoods are natural processes that destroy natural capital (e.g. fires and droughts).

### **2.2.3.2 Social Capital**

According to DFID (2001) social capital represent the social resources (networks, membership of groups, relationships of trust, access to wider institutions of society) upon which people draw in quest for their livelihood. NRI, (2000) defines social capital as that part of human resources determined by the relationships people have with others. These relationships may be between family members, friends, workers, communities and organisations, and can be defined by their purpose and qualities such as trust, closeness, strength and flexibility. Social capital is important for its intrinsic value, and also because it increases well-being; facilitates the generation of other capital; and services to generate the framework of the society in general, with its cultural, religious, political and other norms of behaviour. Korsi (2001) state that lack of social capital, or social exclusion, can be highlighted as a significant characteristic of poverty.

For San, social networks are important for alleviating the brunt of poverty only to the extent that they address immediate shortages, particularly in household food supply. This type of support finds expression in the practice of sharing that has characterised San culture throughout their history. Sharing – a meal, food aid, harvested food, rations from piecework, etc. – plays an important role in decreasing the effects of hunger among members of extended families, and has historically helped San to survive in times of desperation. However, in the longer term, sharing limits a household's ability to increase its wealth and improve its wellbeing. This is because generally the San are already eking out a living at best, thus their social networks have little to share. Remittance support is virtually absent in San households, and where it does exist, its impact is negligible if the household income is shared by numerous dependants. Of course, very few San are formally employed, and those with formal jobs in cities/towns find the necessities of life there (rent, food, transport, etc.) to be so expensive that they have very little to share in form of a remittance to their families back home. For this reason, remittances were not considered to be a potential route out of poverty.

### **2.2.3.3 Human Capital**

Human capital is a very wide used term with various meanings. However, in the context of the SLF it is defined as follows: "Human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue

different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives" (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002): 6). The skills, knowledge and good health are important to the ability to pursue livelihood strategies (Mensah, 2014). Human capital is therefore that part of human resources determined by people's qualities such as personalities, attitudes, aptitudes, skills, knowledge and physical, mental and spiritual health. Human capital is important, not only for its intrinsic value, but also because all other capital assets cannot be used without it (NRI, 2000).

#### **2.2.3.4 Physical Capital**

Physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy, and communications) and producer goods needed to support livelihoods, such as affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean, affordable energy and access to information are means which enable people to pursue their livelihoods (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002). Physical capital is important not only for meeting people's needs directly, but also for providing access to other capitals e.g. transports to be able to produce further capital. (NRI, 2000).

According to Kiaka et al., 2014) Physical assets are central to coping with environmental or economic shocks (e.g. droughts, floods, loss of employment or a long-term economic downturn), and contribute to reducing household or community vulnerability to adverse circumstances. Therefore, Physical assets characterise members of the wealthier categories (more household assets, brick house, car, etc). However, physical assets are outcomes rather than intrinsic features of wealth, in the sense that the opportunity to engage in formal employment is the chief determinant of whether or not a household can be able to invest in such assets (Kiaka et al., 2014). Thus, in the absence of opportunities for regular employment, most San households were asset-poor: the extremely poor members of communities were described as lacking adequate dwellings, blankets, clothes and shoes, let alone assets.

The Emergency Food Security Assessment in Communal and Resettlement Areas in Namibia (EFSA) established a clear correlation between food security and ownership of physical assets in the applicable communities (OPM 2013: 19-20). For example, if the member of the household is formally employed he/she will be able to secure their livelihoods if lost their jobs such that they can sell off their household assets when in need of cash to secure their livelihoods.

### 2.2.3.5 Financial Capital

These are financial resources which are available to people (whether savings, supplies of credit, or regular remittances or pensions) and which provide them with different livelihood options (NRI, 2000). It is often (by definition) the most limiting asset of poor people, but it is one of the most important, in that it can be used to purchase other types of capital, and also to have influence (good and bad) over other people (NRI, 2000). So therefore, financial capital denotes the financial resources that individual or an entity can have and use to achieve their livelihood objectives. This comprises the availability of finance that enables them to adopt different livelihood strategies.

According to Kollmair and Gamper, (2002) two main sources of financial capital can be identified:

**Available stocks:** comprising cash, bank deposits or liquid assets such as livestock and not having liabilities attached and usually independent on third parties.

**Regular inflows of money:** comprising labour income, pensions, grants, and remittances, which are mostly dependent on others and need to be reliable.

Kollmair and Gamper, (2002) indicted that amongst the five categories of assets financial capital is the most versatile as the San can use it convert it into other types of capital or it can be used for direct achievement of livelihood outcomes (e.g. purchasing of food to reduce food insecurity). However, it tends to be the asset the least available for them (as they regarded to be extremely poor), and that makes other capitals important as substitutes e.g. physical asset or Natural assets.

Table 1 made a clear distinction between tangible and intangible assets available to San households to support their livelihoods production and generation. They are categorized based on both individual and households level. In instances where certain resources may be lacking, a household can resort to utilizing alternative assets to sustain their livelihoods. It's noteworthy that the environment predominantly furnishes natural assets which directly and indirectly serves as sources of benefit for the San households. They can skillfully transform some of these materials assets into man-made products, which play a vital role in ensuring their survival and sustenance. While, Kinship is placed between brackets as natural environmental resource because though kinship has a natural or biological base, it works only through the meanings people attach to it.

**Table 1: Resources and Assets in Livelihood Generation**

	Individual level	Household level	Environmental level	
			Natural	Man-made
Material	Physical Strength Health Talents	Space Income Tools Building	Land Soil Water Living organisms	Man-made materials
Non-material	Skills Education Gender Experience Capabilities	Experience Knowledge Managements Information	(Kinship)	Markets, social and political institution; Support networks

*(Source: Mensah, 2014)*

#### **2.2.4 Livelihood Diversification Strategies for the !Xun San**

Livelihood Strategies comprise the range and combination of activities and choices that people undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (DFID, 2001). They are dynamic process in which people combine activities to meet their various needs at different times and on different geographical or economical levels, whereas they may even differ within a household (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002). Their direct dependence on asset status and transforming structures and processes becomes clear through the position they occupy within the framework. A changing asset status may further or hinder other strategies depending on the policies and institutions at work. When considering livelihood strategies and issues connected to the SLA in general it is important to recognise that people compete (for jobs, markets, natural resources, etc.), which makes it difficult for everyone to achieve simultaneous improvements in their livelihoods (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002).

According to sustainable livelihoods research, diversity is a vital attribute of many rural livelihood strategies (Warren, 2002). The !Xun San people tend to diversify their livelihood strategies as they make a use of wide range of assets to achieve their self-defined goals, as no single capital endowment is sufficient to yield the desired

outcomes on its own. Through livelihood diversification, their livelihoods strategies become extensive. San combine their income generating activities (such as piecework, begging, battering, casual work, pension etc.); the way in which they use their assets; which assets they chose to invest in; and how they manage to preserve existing assets and income.

According to Mensah (2014), Livelihoods are diverse at various levels for example, many individuals or households may live and work in different places engaging in various activities, either temporarily or permanently. They may rely on a range of different income-generating activities at the same time. Barrett (2021) underlined that livelihood diversification is a primary means by which individuals reduce risk to shocks and is widely understood as a form of self-insurance.

In Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy none of !Xun San households engage in agriculture activities (Mouton & Dirks 2014). As a result, many of them generally survive through non- farm alternative source of income activities. This has triggered many households to pursue more than one activities at different times throughout the year (Bryceson, 2002). Various research revealed that very few San are formally employed, especially in the skilled labor market in Namibia (Kiaka et al., 2014) and only 4% of the Khoisan-speaking households depend on subsistence farming as their main source of income in Namibia (Namibia household income and expenditure survey (NHIES) 2009/2010); (Namibia statics agency (NSA) 2012: 57). Majority of the !Xun San households in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy however, become more dependent on number of variety activities and external support for their livelihoods (Kiaka et al., 2014; Mouton & Dirks, 2014).

### **2.2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has assessed the relevant existing literatures on livelihood challenges amongst the

!Xun San. It presents the conceptual framework based on the sustainable livelihood framework. Among the key elements in the conceptual framework that this study focused on include livelihood diversification strategies (or combination of activities and choices) that the !Xun San's households can adopt in order to exploit multiple assets and sources of income. The next chapter therefore examines the research methodology that was adopted for this study including the design, sampling techniques and mode of data collection and so forth.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology followed in conducting this study. First, the chapter provides a description of the study area. It then outlines the study's research design, the study population and the sampling procedures used in the study. An overview on the research instrument used in the data collection process is also given. Finally, the chapter provides the data analysis approach and discusses ethical issues that are relevant to the study.

### **3.2 Profile of the Study Area**

The Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy (known locally as the “Omauni Community Forest”) is located about 70 km east of the Okongo village bordering Angola in the North and Okavango-West Region in the East. It is the only conservation area in Ohangwena Region. Ohangwena is one of the fourteen regions of Namibia and lies in northern Namibia. It shares its eastern border with the Kavango Region, its southern border with Oshana and Oshikoto and its western border with Omusati Region. Almost the whole region (99%) consists of communal areas, the exception being Eenhana and Helao Nafidi which the only towns in the region. In addition, there are three proclaimed settlements: Omungwelume and Ongenga in the western part of the region and the self-governed village of Okongo in the eastern part (Mouton and Dirkx, 2011).

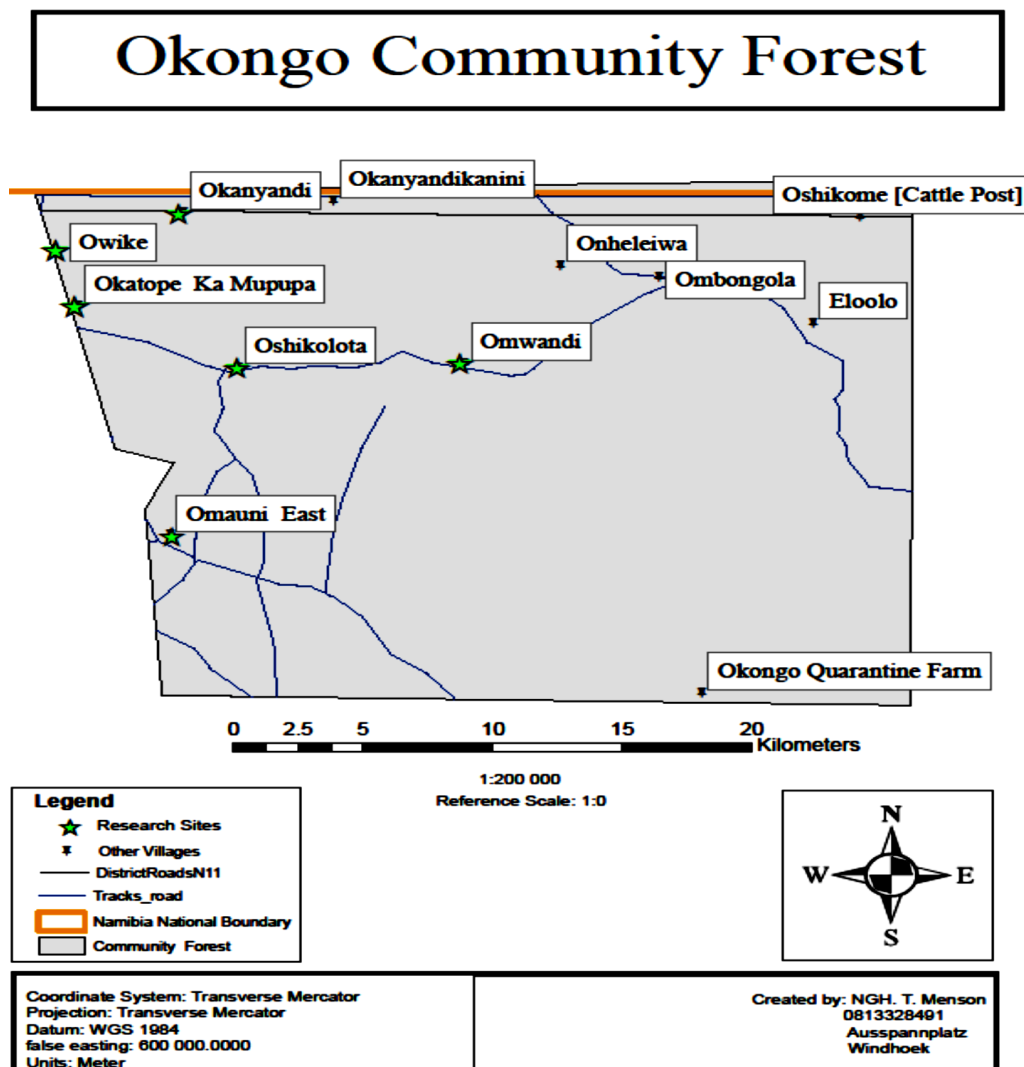
Okongo is known as Nkong in the !Xun language, and was earlier occupied by San who were sparsely distributed until the mid-1900s (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020). The Okongo village is the main settlement and district capital of the Okongo constituency. According to the Namibia Population and Housing Census (NPHC) (2011), the Okongo constituency had approximately 17 999 inhabitants and 3601 households which make up to 8.24% of 2.4% the total number of households in the region.

The Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy was registered in 2006 and gazetted in 2009 as a community forest under Section 15(3) of the Forest Act (No. 12 of 2001) under the Directorate of Forestry of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). The area is characterized by flat topography, woodland and shrub Savannah and most of the forest area has deep Kalahari sand (MEFT, 2009). It covers

the total area of 55,918 hectares (559.18km<sup>2</sup>), excluding the veterinary quarantine farm which constitutes almost 5% of the total land of Ohangwena Region (Shikomba, 2020).

The Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy is inhabited mainly by two ethnic groups: OvaWambo and the San (mostly the !Kung/ !Xun San and few of Hai||om ). The livelihoods in the area are based mainly on livestock, dry land cropping and forestry products. The ovaWambo people are agro-pastoralists who depend on the land for farming both crops and livestock, while the San people are gatherers. It is believed that however, the San have been long dependant on the forest and forest- based resources for their livelihoods in the area (Abel, 2020).

**Figure 2:** Location of Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy and the study area.



(Source: GPS coordinates system 2022 by T. Menson)

### 3.2.1 Wildlife and Forestry Resources

Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy exhibits a remarkable abundance of diverse and valuable tree and plant species, encompassing substantial potential for timber, livestock grazing, medicinal applications and craft production. It also serves as a habitat for wide range of wildlife resources, including Kudus, duikers, steenbok, and sporadically elephants. However, the current state of the area portrays a decline in the population of these species, with only limited number remaining as significant portion of them have been confined to the protection in the Etosha National park. The region also predominantly comprises a modest population of small wildlife animals such as wild hares, ground squirrels, skunks, and several birds species.

According to the MEFT classification, 76 per cent of the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy area is classified as forest and only 5 per cent of the area does not have any woody vegetation. The total live tree volume is 43.2 m<sup>3</sup> /ha<sup>29</sup> and consists of 29 tree species. The most common wild tree species in the region are (*Baikiaea plurijuga*) Zambezi Teak and (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) African Teak. There are also other tree species, which can be found in the Okongo Community Forest including (*Burkea Africana*) Wild Syringa, (*Combretum collinum*) Variable Bush-Willow and (*Terminalia sericea*) Cluster Leaf Plant (Parviainen, 2012). Grass covers 25 per cent of the ground in almost the whole community forest area and a substantial part of the community forest (10 625 ha, 19 per cent) is utilized for grazing (Parviainen, 2012).

In the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy area there are three common types of fruit trees: *Schinziophyton rautanenii* (*Omanghete*), *Strychnose cocculoides* (*Omauni*) and *Strychnos Pungens* (*Omapwaka*) (Table 3). There are also severe edible worms including the (*Gonimbrasia bellina*) mopane worms and *olele* insects and, honey bees (A. Uushona, personal communication, 13 May 2021; Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

These abundant resources have played a vital role in sustaining the !Xun San who have long inhabited the forested area. The Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, as part of the community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) program, has played a role in preserving natural resources in effort to promote the San people's livelihoods. It has sustained them and contributes to their continued presence in the area (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

### **3.3 Philosophy of the Study**

The research philosophy adopted for this study is interpretivism. This choice is justified by several factors. Firstly, interpretivism aligns with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the livelihood challenges faced by the !Xun San people within their unique cultural and environmental context. It recognizes that human experiences and perceptions are subjective and influenced by cultural norms, values, and historical contexts (Smith, Floers & Larkin, 2009). Secondly, adopting an interpretivist perspective demonstrates a commitment to cultural sensitivity and respect for the !Xun San people's indigenous knowledge systems, practices, and ways of life. This approach allows the research to capture the richness and intricacy of their traditional ecological knowledge and resource use practices, providing an authentic portrayal of their livelihood challenges (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, interpretivism favors qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, observations, and participant observation. These methods are well-suited to exploring the meanings and motivations behind the !Xun San people's livelihood choices and experiences. Through open-ended interviews and observations, the study can gather rich, narrative data that unveils the nuances and complexities of their livelihood struggles (Danzin and Licoln, 2011). Furthermore, by embracing an interpretivist research philosophy, the study aims to contextualize the findings within the broader social, cultural, and historical dimensions of the !Xun San community. This approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of their livelihood challenges and the influence of larger socio-economic and political structures on their well-being (Danzin and Licoln, 2011). Lastly, an interpretivist approach promotes a collaborative and participatory research process. By involving the !Xun San community members in the research process, the study seeks to empower them to share their perspectives and contribute to the generation of knowledge. This collaborative approach can also enhance the relevance and applicability of the study's findings, ensuring they resonate with the community's needs and aspirations.

### **3.3 Research Design**

This study adopted a phenomenological research design. The approach aimed to explore perceptions and opinions of individuals amongst the !Xun San people within Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy. This was primarily done in order to gain deeper insights into the livelihood experiences of the !Xun San. Further, the study

utilised a qualitative approach based primarily on narrative information obtained from respondents through semi-structured in-depth interviews. According to Reason and Rowan (2004) the core element of a qualitative research approach is to connect meanings to the experiences of respondents and their lives. Therefore, qualitative approaches help to interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation (Glesne, 2006). The combination of a phenomenological design utilising a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather adequate data to understand, in-depth, the livelihood experiences of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

### **3.4 Research Population**

Creswell (2014b) and Davies and Hughes (2014) define population as group of individuals comprising of the same characteristics in which a study is interested. The total number of the !Xun San in the Okongo Forest and Conservancy was unknown as it was not indicated even in the 2011 Population and Housing Census, Unofficial figures from villagers in the study area, however, indicated that the total number of !Xun San in the area did not exceed 50 and that some of the households periodically migrate between Namibia and Angola, making their number highly variable.

### **3.5 Sample Size**

A sample size refers to the total number of participants or respondents that take part in the study and may be used to represent the whole population. In this study, a total of 10 !Xun San households in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy were surveyed (Table 2). This sample size was not determined before carrying out the study. Rather, the sample size was based on theoretical sampling – determined by the recursive nature of the collected data. Data collection terminated when the researcher reached data saturation. Any additional interviews would not have been advantageous as they would have been repetitive, bringing no new data.

**Table 2:** Numbers of the !Xun San households and the traditional leaders in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

	Traditional leaders (villages)	Number of the households
	1. Okanyandi	1
	2. Okatope	2
	3. Omauni	2
	4. Omwandi	2
	5. Oshikoha	2
	6. Owike	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>

*(Source: Erasmus, 2022)*

In addition to the 10 in-depth interviews, the researcher also conducted six in-depth interviews with key informants who were village headmen of the six villages. These leaders were included in the study as their knowledge of the livelihoods of the !Xun San people was considered critical to the study. Furthermore, as part of the sample, the Omauni project official was interviewed. He has been in Okongo Community Forest for more than 25 years before being appointed to lead the Omauni Hydroponic Project in 2018. Therefore, his extensive experience and tenure in the community make his insights invaluable in understanding the livelihoods of the !Xun San people.

### **3.6 Sampling Methods**

Sampling is the way of selecting number of cases from the larger group of the population (Davies and Hughes, 2014). Sampling in this study involved selecting a subset of cases from the larger population, with the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy chosen as the study area due to its significant !Xun San population concentration. Through information obtained from the conservancy office in 2020, villages with high !Xun San populations were identified, including Omauni, Owike, Oshikoha, Okanyandi, Okatope, and Omwandi. The sampling unit comprised !Xun San households within this area, serving as the fundamental units of analysis. The study used the snowballing sampling technique to select households that would be part of the study. This ‘chain referral’ process was necessary to this study as it enabled the researcher to reach the population of the study that was difficult to locate (Everitt & Skrondal, 2010). First, the researcher randomly selected a traditional leader from one of the six villages. The leader identified a !Xun San households in the village which became the starting point for in-depth interviews. Thereafter, the interviewed

household was asked to identify the next household to be included in the sample. Within selected households, the oldest member of the household was selected as the informant. This is because such a member was expected to have adequate information on the livelihood systems. Additionally, the inclusion of the Omauni project official as a key informant involved seeking permission and identifying him based on his extensive experience in the Okongo Community Forest and his key role in the Omauni Hydroponic Project. A telephone interview was conducted with the official using semi-structured interview guides to gather insights into the livelihoods of the !Xun San community within the study area.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

The study used semi-structured interview guides (Appendix D) to collect data from the household informants and from the traditional leaders (Appendix C) and the Omauni official (Appendix E) who were the study's key informants. Hence, there were three interview guides used in the data collection process: one for households, for traditional leaders and for the Omauni official. The interview guides for the household informants and the traditional leaders had two sections, with the first section gathering household demographic information (age, gender, size and composition of the household, years in leadership) and the second section dealing with information on the livelihood conditions and experiences of the !Xun San. While the interview guide for the Omauni Official contained only information regarding the livelihood experiences and challenges of the !Xun San, All the interview guides consisted of open-ended questions.

Using semi-structured interview guides allowed the researcher to direct the conversation with participants and to probe for clarity. It also allowed participants to tell their story regarding their livelihoods and challenges without being constricted to select approximate answers, but rather elaborate as they wished. As Bailey (1994) argues, semi-structured guides allow the researcher to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts, feelings and beliefs about a particular topic and to probe deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues.

Both interviews with the household informant and the traditional leader were conducted face-to-face and in the Oshiwambo language, as all the household informants and the key informants were fluent in the language. The interview with the

Omauni Official was conducted telephonically. The length of the face-to-face interviews varied according to households as some respondents were brief while others were willing to provide in-depth responses. While the phone interview session with the Omuni Official lasted 47 minutes. Therefore, the average time for the interview sessions ranged from 40-60 minutes. Creswell (2012b, p410) indicated that face to face interviews are useful for asking sensitive questions and enabling interviewers to ask questions or provide comments that go beyond the initial question. Hence, the face to face interview helped the researcher to gather rich information and get the in-depth understanding on the livelihoods experiences of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

### **3.8 Procedure**

#### **3.8.1 Key Informant Interview**

After the consent was issued from the conservancy chairperson, the researcher randomly identified the first village to be part of the study which was Omauni. In the village, the researcher interviewed the headman regarding the various challenges and experiences of the !Xun San in the village. The process was repeated in the other 5 villages of Okanyandi, Okatope, Omwandi, Oshikoha and Owike. In total, therefore, six headmen were interviewed, one from each village.

#### **3.8.2 Households Interview**

After permission to interview !Xun San households was granted by the conservancy chairperson and from headmen, after the headman had identified three !Xun San households, the researcher randomly selected one of the households as the starting point for the household survey. The researcher then asked for permission to carry out the interviews from the selected household. After obtaining permission to conduct the interview from the selected household, the researcher employed a verification method to ensure the legitimacy of the household informant's residence. This involved asking the informant questions to confirm their tenure in the community, their relationship with the household members, and their involvement in community activities. By verifying these details, the researcher ensured that the selected informant was not merely a visitor but a legitimate resident of the household. Typically, the household informant was the oldest member of the household and conducted the interview.

Prior to starting the interview, the researcher explained the aim of the study to the participant. When the participant agreed to part-take in the study the researcher commenced with the interview session. The interview session collected data on

livelihoods, challenges and experiences of the !Xun San people. Responses from these face-to-face interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. Additional information given by the participants after the interview was also recorded as notes supplementary to the interview. The interviews were simultaneously transcribed and translated into English for analysis. After the completion of the interview, the household informant would be asked to locate another household for inclusion into the sample. At the next household, the process would be repeated again until an adequate sample was interviewed and data saturation point was reached.

### **3.8.3 The Omauni Official Interview**

The interview with the Omauni project official was conducted over the telephone, necessitating careful preparation and communication. Prior to the interview, arrangements were made to schedule a suitable time for the call, taking into account the official's availability and convenience. The researcher used the interview guide for the Omauni official to conduct a telephonic interview with the official. During the telephone interview, the researcher ensured clear and respectful communication, allowing the official ample opportunity to provide detailed responses. Despite the distance, the interview maintained a professional tone, fostering an atmosphere conducive to open dialogue and knowledge sharing. Through this telephonic interaction, valuable insights were gathered, enriching the research's understanding of the !Xun San community's livelihoods and the significance of the Omauni hydroponic project within their context.

### **3.9 Pilot Study**

A pilot study was carried out three days before the main research. The researcher conducted the pilot study to test the validity of the interview questions for the traditional leaders and for the households as well as the effectiveness of the recording device. The piloting of the interview guide for traditional leaders was conducted on the two ovaWambo headmen's assistants. One was from Omauni village while the other one was from Oshikoha village. These assistants stood in for the headmen that were not available on the day in question. Having worked with the headmen for a long time, these assistants were able to field the relevant questions and hence enabled the researcher to refine the data collection tool.

Testing the household in-depth guide involved interviewing three !Xun San residents of Omauni village and one from Okatope village. All the participants to the pilot

survey were fluent in the Oshiwambo language. According to Maree (2011) a pilot study tests whether the respondents interpret the question correctly and whether the response categories provided for the question are suitable. The pilot study helped the researcher to determine how well the participant understood the questions. Those questions that were not very clear to the participants were rephrased for clarity. The pilot study also helped the researcher to estimate the time needed to be assigned for each interview session. In addition, it also helped the researcher to check on the efficiency of the voice recorder used for collecting data, determining whether it was able to capture participants' voices clearly to allow for accurate transcription.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

Thorne (1997) defines data analysis as an explicit step in theoretical interpreting of information collected by using specific strategies to transform the raw data into a processed form that has meaning. Data for this study was analysed using a thematic approach. Thematic analysis is a foundational method for qualitative analysis. It is a method for identifying, analysing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In implementing a thematic data analysis approach, a number of steps are necessary to adopt. In this study, the following steps were followed: Firstly, data collected from the participants in all the interviews were transcribed. Second, the researcher read, studied and made notes on the data from the in-depth face-to face interview. This enabled the researcher to grasp the content and get familiarized with the data. Third, codes were generated by identifying similar phrases, words, opinions and ideas that were relevant to the research objectives. Fourth, the researcher developed themes and sub-themes regarding to the livelihood challenges experienced by the !Xun San. This enabled the researcher to cluster relevant findings that were used to address the objectives of the study. Finally, the themes were defined, reviewed and discussed further and enfolded into the analysis.

### **3.11 Research Ethics**

In carrying out this study, standard research ethics protocols were followed. This entailed paying particular attention to aspects such as seeking permission to carry out the research, consent, respect, confidentiality and the right to privacy. The ethic clearance was obtained by the University of Namibia Decentralised Ethic Committee (DEC) on the 25 October 2021.

#### **3.11.1 Permission**

Permission to carry out this research was acquired from the Centre for Postgraduate Studies at the University of Namibia. An ethics clearances certificate was also obtained from the UNAM Ethics Research Committee (Appendix A). Further, the researcher applied for and was granted a permit to by the regional office of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (Appendix E) and from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Forestry in the Ohangwena Region (Appendix F). The researcher also consulted regional councillors and the conservancy Chairperson to inform them of the intention to carry out the study and obtain their cooperation and support (Appendix B). Lastly, the researcher sought and obtained permission from the local authority and relevant communities.

#### **3.11.2 Respect**

Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and full consent was obtained from them prior to conducting interviews. The researcher undertook to respect the community and acknowledged community values as well as making sure that participants were not be harmed in any way.

#### **3.11.3 Confidentiality**

Data collected from participants was treated with confidentiality and stored securely in digital format by means of passwords known only to the researcher. All data was anonymised so that no information could be used to identify individuals or households. In research, participants' confidentiality is of utmost importance. The researcher therefore ensured that the data collected was not divulged or made available to outsiders. The interview recordings were also digitally secured by passwords. These will be permanently deleted after two years as required by the University. All hard copies of the administered questionnaires have been kept in a lockable drawer at the researcher's office and will be destroyed later as required by the University.

#### **3.11.4 Anonymity**

The researcher kept the respondents nameless, and where necessary, used pseudonyms, in order to protect the respondents and making it difficult to link them to their responses. Further, guarantees were given to residents, community leaders and respondents that the collected data would be presented in an anonymous fashion and could not be linked to any names or other form of identification.

#### **3.11.5 Informed Consent**

Residents, community leaders and respondents were asked to voluntarily take part in the study. The researcher, therefore, explained to them the aims and objectives of the research and that they were required to take part voluntarily. They were given the opportunity to ask questions that the researcher responded to and they were free to decide whether to take part or withdraw at any point during the study if they felt like doing so.

#### **3.12 Trustworthiness of Data**

Trustworthiness is one way that a researcher can assure that the research findings are worthy of acceptability and legitimacy (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, trustworthiness was established through the following criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for this study.

##### **3.12.1 Credibility**

Credibility, presents how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study's findings (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Therefore, to ensure credibility of the study the researchers used convergence of information from multiple data sources to develop the comprehensive understanding of the study and enrich the study findings.

##### **3.12.2 Transferability**

To ensure transferability, the researcher generalized the research study's findings to other populations of the similar !Xun San ethnic group living in other different regions. Therefore, the !Xun San people who are living in the rural areas across different parts of the country might share the similar condition of poverty and low living standard.

##### **3.12.3 Dependability**

The researcher ensured dependability by conducting the research in a correct and logical procedure and clearly documented the research process. The research consent was certified and endorsed by the relevant authorities. Therefore, findings evaluations, interpretation and recommendation of the study would all be supported by the data as received from the study.

#### **3.12.4 Confirmability**

The results of this study are not figments of the researcher's imagination or based on any potential bias. They are rather, the products of the independent research methods and based on participants' responses themselves. The fact that the research used multiple data sources also increases confirmability as information collected from one source could be confirmed by other different sources.

#### **3.13 Conclusion**

The chapter discussed the procedural methods that were adopted for the study. These included the research approach and design, sources of data and research instruments as well as how the data that were obtained from the field were analysed. A methodological approach explaining how the sample size was determined and a brief description of the study area has also been outlined in this chapter. The next chapter presents the data obtained from the field and analyses this data in order to understand the various livelihood challenges experienced by the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy.

## **CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses data collected from the participants in the study. The study sought to assess the livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy in the Ohangwena Region of Namibia. Before presenting the results, however, the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants are given. These characteristics are important to contextualise the experiences of the !Xun San's livelihoods and the various challenges they face.

### **4.2 Demographic Profile of the Participants**

#### **4.2.1 Age and sex of household participants**

The study results indicated that only one participant was less than 30 years old. Five of the households were aged between 31 and 40 years, while two were above 60 years. The oldest participants were over 70, and these constituted two of the sample. No participants were aged between 41 and 59. In terms of gender, the sample was dominated by females, with only 2 of the participants being males, while the majority, eight (8), were females. The predominance of female respondents may have been influenced by the fact that the interviews were carried out during the day when most of the males may have been out of the household working, looking for work, or doing some other chores that are carried out by men outside their homesteads.

#### **4.2.2 Age and sex of traditional leaders surveyed**

The demographic characteristics of the traditional leaders that took part in the study indicate that only one traditional leader was below the age of 40. Two traditional leaders were aged between 41 and 50 years, while the other two were between 61 and 70 years. Only one of the traditional leaders that took part in the study was over 70 years of age.

In terms of sex, the majority of the traditional leaders, five (5), were male, with only one of them being female. Four of the traditional leaders indicated that they had been in leadership positions for more than 20 years, while two were in leadership positions for more than 30 years.

### **4.3 Traditional Livelihoods Activities Among the !Xun San**

The San people in the Okongo had been practising various traditional livelihood activities to sustain themselves. They were traditionally nomads who were always migrating depending on the migration pattern of the animals that they were hunting and in search for water and food. While some of their traditional activities have survived up to this day, others have completely ceased to exist. Unlike in the past, where the traditional livelihoods activities of the !Xun San were more extensive and not exclusively defined by one activity, the current livelihood activities are narrower. Findings from the study indicate that the !Xun San are no longer primarily in hunting and gathering, but other sedentary activities borrowed from their neighbours, especially the OvaWambo. The following sections discuss the contemporary livelihood activities that the !Xun San reported being engaged in.

#### **4.3.1 Hunting**

According to the study findings, hunting is one of the least practiced livelihood activity amongst the !Xun San, in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. One OCFC official, revealed that for those still engaging in hunting, they can only hunt small wild animals such as wild hare (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), ground squirrels (*Geosciurus inauris*) and steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*). Hunting bigger animals, especially the big games is now strictly outlawed by the government under then amendment of Act No.5 of 1996 of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Tourism (MEFT) and could render one liable to prosecution and imprisonment. While hunting of these small wild organisms was not essential to support livelihoods for many !Xun San households in the Okongo Forest, it complemented other livelihood activities. This was emphasized by the traditional leaders (T1, T2 and T3) who indicted that restrictions over the wildlife resources by the government and the OCFC authority has created serious problems on the livelihoods of the !Xun San people. It has limited their livelihoods opportunities as this was part of their traditional economy. One household reported that they have been hunting these small animals to supplement their diets. The participant said:

“Sometimes we used to go inside Angola to hunt the wild hares and other animals. In the Okongo Forest they are very rare now. We also live in fear to hunt within the vicinity of the community forest as hunting is too risky to do”

(Participant 6, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi Village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Hunting was indeed important in the past, when hunting of big games was authorized. Now, the government has conserved many wild animals into the Etosha National Park, making hunting almost impossible in the Okongo Forest. Those who have knowledge of hunting now have very few places to hunt. For this reason, meat has become rare to obtain for the !Xun San. Some participants revealed that they could only get meat when the ovaKwanyama slaughter their domesticated animals such as cattle, donkeys, goats or sheep.

#### **4.3.2 Gathering: Fruits, Berries, Tubers and Worms**

According to study the findings, gathering was one of the !Xun San's traditional livelihood activities that many households were still practicing at the time of the research. Some households had a regular pattern on gathering i.e. monthly or weekly while, others gathered on *ad hoc* basis. The gathering of wild fruits could be done depending on the reaping seasons and it was done by all the household members regardless of their gender. This involved wild native berries and wild fruits such as *omapwaka*, *omanghete*, *omauni*, *eeshe*, *eemeke* and *Marura* fruits. Each of these wild fruits and berries were important in the diets of many of !Xun San households. These wild fruits could be eaten raw, made into bi-products or in some cases sold for cash.

Figure 3: The omauni wild fruits



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

Figure 3 illustrate omauni tree (left) and the !Xun San woman pounding omauni fruits (right) to make a bi-product of the traditional brewery called ‘*Epwaka*’. These fruits could be used for various purposes depending on the knowledge that one has on the various uses of the wild fruits. Over years, the fruits have also become a source of food for the ovaWambo people in the Okongo forest. Some households could also gather wild marura fruits and extract the seeds and use them for various purposes. As one participant indicated:

“We use the marura seeds to make oils. We use these oils as our cooking ingredient. The marura juice can also be fermented and we can use it to make traditional alcohol called *omagongo/omoongo*.”

(Participant 7, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

On the other hand, the study findings also revealed that the !Xun San households could not merely rely on the wild fruits and berries for their survival since most of the fruits were only available seasonally. Many households therefore used various methods of preservation after harvesting them. These methods mostly included drying or fermentation. Fermentation was practised through making a popular traditional alcohol whisky called *ombike* from wild berries and *omanghete* nuts. The *ombike* liquor could also be sold or bartered for with food items from the ovaWambo.

Furthermore, gathering could also take the form of extracting and collecting tubers from various indigenous plants. The !Xun San have a rich knowledge on tubers and roots that are edible and have medical value. However, different tubers could be used for different purposes depending on one’s individual knowledge and needs. Table 3 summarises the study findings on the different tubers that the !Xun San households used.

**Table 3:** Plant tubes and their usages in OCFC

Name	Usage
Omambibo	Food and water
Omapwaka	Water
Oombutu	Water and food
!Ximenia	Medicine (flu and wound healing)
Tabacco ( <i>Nicotiana tabacum</i> )	Medicine( pain reliever, toothpaste, snake biting)

(Source: Erasmus, 2022).

It is worthwhile to note that some plant species are protected by law in Namibia under the Forestry Act 12 of 2001 which ordain that, “No protected trees are cut, unless permitted in the harvesting permit in all the classified forests, namely State Forests, Forestry Management Areas and Community Forests as well as non-classified forest areas”. These include mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*), Ovambo Mahogany (*Entandrophragma Spicatum*) Monkey Orange (*Strychnos Cocculoides*), Camel-thorn (*Acacia erioloba*), Knob-thorn (*Acacia nigrescens*), Bushman poison (*Adenium boehmanium*) amongst others (Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), 2001). However, all these plants (Table 3) were freely accessible to the !Xun San people in the OCFC. They could be collected from the local surroundings or foraged from deeper in the forest especially during the rainy season when leaves and roots are available. This was also supported by the traditional leader who said:

“The forest had been long occupied by the San and it had been regarded as their ‘utopia’. Besides depending on it for survival it has also been also important for their traditional medicines.”

(Traditional leader 1, 15 March 2022, Omauni village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Figure 4 shows a member of the !Xun San using a traditional remedy of tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) to work on his health.

Figure 4: The !Xun San practicing his traditional medicine



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

While gathering was still an important livelihood activity for the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, one participant (Participant 3) indicated that many wild fruits were becoming exhausted in the forest. This is due to the increasing number of livestock and people in the forest. The ovaWambo people also depend on the same wild fruits for various purposes, hence creating competition for the fruits. In addition, fencing of individual communal plots has made the gathering of wild resources difficult as most of the wild berries such as *eembe* were fenced in the ovaWambo fields that have become inaccessible to others. According to the participant:

“When you go in their (ovaKwanyama) fence to collect the berries (*eembe*), they will chase you away. Therefore, we always have to ask for permission before we enter their fences. Almost all the available *eembe* trees in our villages are fenced in the ovaKwanyama’s fields or we have to go to other villages where we can access to some out in the forest”

(Participant 9, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

On the other hand, the !Xun San could also gather mopane worms and *olele* insects. This was done seasonally. However, *olele* insects in the Okongo forest could get

exhausted faster due to the larger population and this has been prompting the !Xun San to migrate to Angola during the *olele* seasons. In Angola they could gather them freely as they are more abundant there compared to the Okongo forest. In addition, many !Xun San were more familiar with the forest in Angola than the ones in Namibia. *Olele* and mopane worms was regarded as important food items in many !Xun San households. The San could use mopane worms for food and selling some of the surplus. As indicated by one participant:

“We use to spend most of our times in the forest gathering the *olele*. We go there all of us in order to be able to gather lot of them. When we gather them we return back home. We can sell some of them but mostly we dry them and feed on them for a long time.”

(Participant 10, 17 March 2022, Owike Village, Okongo Community Forest.)

#### **4.3.3 Migration/Nomadic Lifestyle**

The !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy traditionally lived a highly mobile lifestyle. They were always on a move in search for survival. One of the traditional leaders, T5, indicated that the !Xun San in his village could settle anywhere in the forest. According to him:

“Still today the San can roam the forest in search of food resources. When they get some, they settle and stay there for some time. After the resources get depleted, they will migrate to other areas. Even when you go in some of their houses now you will not find anyone. This is because, they have moved elsewhere, it can be within Okanyandi vicinity or to other villages. It is hard to find a San’s household with people every day throughout the year.”

(Traditional leader 6, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

This type of movement was mostly motivated by the availability of food resources from area to area. They hardly live permanently in one place. Similarly, T1 also indicated that there were many !Xun San people in his village who have been allocated a piece of land by the headman. However, most of them had migrated to other villages. At the time of the fieldwork, only two households remained in that specific village.

The study findings revealed that the !Xun San's migration in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy took three forms: seasonal migration, temporal migration and permanent migration. Seasonal migration could take place only during the harvesting seasons of certain wild fruits or insects/worms. In winter they could move into a different village or in the forest when most of the wild fruit were ready for harvesting. In summer they migrate into Angola to harvest mopane worms and *olele* insects. Later on they could also return to their permanent households especially during the rainy season. Temporal migration could take place on a daily basis or only for a few days. This may involve going to other villages and staying there for few days only before returning. Some households also migrate into Angola every day and back. An interview with one participant revealed that the !Xun San did not recognize the concept of the borderline/boundaries between Namibia and Angola and hence move freely between and within the two countries even though this violates modern immigration laws.

“We are close to the border. We therefore often go inside Angola. We often migrate there occasionally to search for any resource available such as fruits, worms and wild animals and return home. This forest on the other side of Angola has a wide variety of resources compared to this one (Okongo forest).”

(Participant 6, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

A visit by the researcher to the borderline area indicated that there was nothing physical marking the border between the two countries and therefore nothing to stop the !Xun San from migrating between the two countries as they wished. The only form of demarcation was a dusty road (Figure 5) which the researcher was told marks the boundary, but facilitates rather than prohibits the movement between the two countries.

Figure 5: The dividing road between Namibia forest and Angola forest.



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

Furthermore, permanent migration usually takes place when the !Xun San move permanently to other areas and never return. According to one traditional leader:

“Permanent migration is the reason why some !Xun San households abandon some villages. About two of them are still abandoned today. No one knows whether they will return or not. Like the (!Xun’s San) households in my fence, I once saw a San man who came to visit but he did not sleep there because, there is no shelter, only a tree. In three years back there was a well-established !Xun San’s household.

(Traditional leader 5, 17 March 2022, Owike village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

During fieldwork, the researcher was able to observe several abandoned San houses known as *amapundo* – A traditional !Xun San’s small dwelling made of sticks and other materials (cloths, plastic, nets etc.) usually built temporarily on a small piece of land. Figure 6 shows one such *epundo*. While this had been a home for a !Xun San household in the village, its owners had long migrated, either to other villages or to Angola in search of better livelihoods and better living standards.

Figure 6: The abandoned 'epundo' for the !Xun San.



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

This search for better livelihoods was also pinpointed by Davison (1977), who argued that the change in the San's traditional livelihood system had led to a lowering of their standards of living and most resorted to surviving on handouts or working in the communal land, being employed by other ethnic groups such as the OvaWambo. Others even migrated to neighbouring villages where possibilities of better wages may exist. The more adventurous ones migrated to neighbouring countries like Angola hoping to improve their livelihoods.

#### **4.3.4 Harvesting the Wild Spinach**

Most of the interviewed San people had knowledge on different wild plants for their leaves and seeds. They reported that they traditionally used these leaves mostly for food and medicine. Some well-known plant's leaves that were critical to the San's livelihoods included wild spinach (*Cleome gynandra*). Although there is speculation that the skill of harvesting wild spinach may have been acquired from the ovaKwanyama, this activity was said to be central to the !Xun San traditional livelihoods in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

Wild spinach leaves could be preserved into ‘*omakaka/omavanda*’ which are small rings of dried wild spinach that would be eaten during the long dry season. The dried *omakaka* have a long life span, enabling the !Xun San to preserve and hold food for the dry season when most foods would be in short supply. Some households could also sell the *omakaka* and earn money for themselves. *Omakaka* could also be used as a substitute for meat or could be eaten solely or with porridge. This was one of the most common staple food items in many households. According to the participant:

“In our house, we can go on for three months without consuming meat. Therefore, having enough *omakaka* enables us to survive and feed our children. We can cook porridge when we get grains from the ovaKwanyama and eat with *omakaka*.

(Participant 7, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.3.5 Harvesting Mopane and *Olele* Worms**

Harvesting *olele* and mopane worms was one of the traditional livelihood activities of the !Xun San households. This was done seasonally especially during the rainy season between January to March. These worms could be locally available in the OCFC, but most frequent in the Angolan forest. They were eaten amongst all the ethnic groups within the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. However, the !Xun San could also sell them to the ovaKwanyama and even trade amongst themselves, in most cases getting modest sums of around N\$10 per 400gm portion. When there was need, the !Xun San households would also barter the worms and *olele* with other items such as maize meal or alcohol. According to a participant:

“Collecting enough mopane worms is a monumental task, but is also rewarding. We usually sell the mopane worms mostly because many people like the worms more than the *olele* insects. We dry them and sell at our community shebeens. The money generated from such sales enables us to buy other foods and *otombo*. However, *olele* insect were traditionally for our own home consumption and not for selling. Nevertheless, there were and still are a few people that prefer selling *olele* as well.”

(Participant 6, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.4 Changes in Livelihoods Among the !Xun San**

The !Xun San's economic system in the OCFC has extensively gone through massive transformation. This is seen across the various aspects of the !Xun San's livelihoods. Such transformation ranges from a linguistic perspective as some of the !Xun San acquired the language of their neighbors – Oshiwambo. They also adopted many other customs and values central to the OvaWambo lifestyle. The ovaWambo introduced new things, new knowledge, new ways of doing things and new lifestyle amongst the San people. The combination of these elements brought about changes in the social and economic lifestyles of the San and therefore recreating a dynamic economic system amongst these former hunter-gatherers. Consequently, the livelihoods of the San were altered. Much of the transformation involved introducing the San to petty trading, farming activities and other livelihood activities such as casual households labor. The following sections will discuss these new livelihood forms in detail.

##### **4.4.1 Selling and Petty –Trading**

The !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy have a variety of traditional livelihood activities in their livelihood portfolio. Regardless of their exposure to these various livelihood activities, it has been observed that the poverty levels amongst the !Xun San are usually disproportionately higher than amongst the ovaKwanyama (Dieckmann et al., 2014).

It emerged from the study that several !Xun San households had started divesting from hunting and gathering to other types of activities that predominate among the other more sedentary groups such as the ovaKwanyama . While trading had not been part of their traditional livelihood system, contemporary San livelihoods now encompass trading as a livelihood activity. In addition to trading, other !Xun San people possessed skills in wood making, weaving and metal forge and could use these skills to support their livelihoods. They could make products such as baskets and wood crafts. These products were sold in the Omauni carpentry projects and the money generated could be used to provide social, humanitarian and livelihood support to the !Xun San in the OCFC. During key informant interviews, the Omauni Projects official had this to say:

“There are many community projects in the Omauni centre. These projects were established to provide various supports to the San people within the Okongo

Community Forest and Conservancy. These projects vary from the carpentry project, the bee keeping project and the hydroponic project.”

(Omauni Official, 16 March 2022, Omauni centre, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

However, it was observed during the time of this research that some of the projects had ceased to operate. The projects that were no longer operational were the Omauni carpentry project, and bee keeping project. They had been closed due to financial constraints – as there was no sufficient money to continue funding for their operations. A few of the projects, however, are still operating and this includes the hydroponic project. This project is supporting the livelihoods of the San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

#### **4.4.1.1 The Omauni Hydroponic Project**

The project was drafted in 2018 and established 2019. It was funded by the Environmental Investment Fund (EIF). It was the only running project in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. While carpentry and bee keeping were introduced earlier, viability challenges had negatively affected them and had to be closed down, leaving the hydroponic project as the only viable and operational one.

The primary aim for the hydroponic project is to promote food security amongst the San and other local people, to create the job opportunities amongst all the people as well as, to support the wellbeing of the San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Upon its establishment, it had also helped boost self –employment in the area as many individuals could buy produce (tomatoes, cabbages, chills and green papers) from the project and sell at the Okongo village council centre which is 60 km away. Furthermore, the Okongo Community Forest people could easily purchase their foods from community and not have to travel far to the centre.

The project had employed a number of San people when it was established. This study findings revealed that about three !Xun San people were employed. Figure 7 shows a member of the !Xun San who was employed at the Omauni Hydroponic project. The employees were hired on a contract basis and paid N\$1000.00 per month. However,

some of the employees lacked commitment and periodically failed to turn up for work. As a result, none of them completed their contracts and stopped going to work.

Figure 7: Member of the !Xun San employed by the hydroponic project



(Source: Ushona, 2020)

Furthermore, in sustaining the livelihoods of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy the project used to offer a ‘low graded’ products such as tomatoes and green pepper to the San for free. However, only few used to turn up to collect the products. Those that got these products sold them at the local shebeens at a very low price and some would buy a glass of *otombo*, a locally-brewed liquor.

While most of the interviewed households claimed that the hydroponic project (Figure 8) did not significantly improve the livelihoods of the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, the study found that the project generated funds to provide social supports and other benefits to the San people, especially the (!Xun San ) who are the most disadvantaged people in the OCFC. This included providing burial service to the San people, procuring food and blankets for the San people, building houses for some of the San People and building a community hall.

Figure 8: The Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy hydroponic project



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

The types of products grown in the Omauni hydroponic project included: tomatoes, cabbages, green pepper, lettuce and chills. Furthermore, some households indicated that they could also practice petty trading on items such as cooked wild spinach or meat (*okapana*) to their community centre. Also other items such as *omakaka*, berries at the old people pension stations. None of the participant owned a formal marketing place.

Traditional leaders T1 and 5 also stressed that the San love selling. Whenever they migrated (permanently), they could sell all their households items and their belongings such as blankets, clothing, pots, corrugated metals, (if available) and thatching grasses. In this case they would than start over with the new life. As attested by T1:

“Whenever they sell these items, it is not even on the valuable price. It can be N\$ 5.00 for small items like pots or grasses or N\$ 10.00 for bigger items such as corugulated metals. I believe money had affected their lives badly and as a results, they always want to sell anything.”

(Traditional leader 4, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.4.2 Farming**

On the other hand, T2 argued that upon the arrival of the ovaKwanyama in the Okongo forest, the San in area could not practice farming. They lived their nomadic lifestyle. After sometimes, their lifestyles shifted more into farming. Today, some of the San households' traditional livelihood activity was mostly based on working in the fields. They had been long depending on it for survival now within the OCFC. However, no information was obtained on the possession of livestock amongst the !Xun San households. According to T2:

“In my village farming amongst the San had just started in recent years. This was mostly influenced by the intermarriages between the San and the ovaKwanyama people. Is when they started to learn this culture of working in the fields. When we come in this village, those people (San) could not even touch a hoe! Sometimes, they do not even attend the community meetings were people given information regarding farming.”

(Traditional leader 2, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

This quote is in contract to Mouton and Dirx (2014) and Pohamba-Ndume (2016) who both argued that the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy could not practice cultivation and therefore did not depend on subsistence agriculture as their primary food source. However, the study findings revealed that there were some !Xun San households that lived depending on cultivating omahangu grains (*Pennisetum typhoides*). This featured two !Xun San households respectively in Oshikoha and Okatope villages within the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. As for this reason, they were the only households that had the fields. These households considered omahangu millets, also other field products such beans as their predominant livelihoods assets as they dearly depended on them for living. As stated by the participant:

“Cultivating in the fields is the only livelihood activity we have been practising and relying on for our survival in our household. We do not hunt, and gathering of the wild fruits is only available seasonally. We can’t depend on it for our survival.”

(Participant 3, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha Village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Omahangu grains was also the staple food stuff for these households. They could also turn the grains into other bi-products such as traditional fermented drink (*oshikundu*). Figure 9 illustrates one the !Xun San’s household in Okatope village with a field surrounding the house on which they used to grow mahangu grains during the rainy season.

Figure 9: A field and a !Xun San’s household.



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

In spite of this, the !Xun San were overall less successful farmers compared the ovaKwanyama counterpart in the area. However, those who practiced agriculture also faced several obstacles and challenges. This included:

#### **4.4.2.1 Lack of Draught Power**

All two !Xun San's households that cultivated lacked of draught power. This meant, they were expected to plough manually on their fields yearly. As the result, they usually produce small yields that could not last for the next harvesting season. This fostered the condition of food shortage in their households.

#### **4.4.2.2 Poor Fencing**

Poor fencing had made it difficult to control the animals. Therefore, their crops were exposed to the danger of being destroyed by animals. One participant revealed that she used to be on lookout always to prevent animals from invading their fields. Else, her crops, which was always in a small quantity could be destroyed by the cattle.

#### **4.4.2.3 Small Fields**

Despite their larger families, their fields were somewhat relatively small compared to the ovaKwanyama's. This subsequently affected the size of the harvest. One participant indicated during the low rainfall seasons, their fields could not be completely cultivated. Despite being small in size, this led to even nominal yield. Therefore, implicated food shortage in their household.

In addressing to these complexities, all the participants indicated that they wanted to be provided with farming implements such as draught power, seeds, and equipment such fencing wire, land clearing tools and an ox drawn plough. This way farming would be drastically easy for them and they could be able to catch up with their well-established ovaKwanyama.

#### **4.4.3 Casual Labor**

The San's involvement in performing casual labor was an indication for the transition in their traditional livelihood. This was not a part of their traditional economic system. The !Xun San households usual take up casual jobs mostly from the ovaKwanyama households. The nature of casual labor services offered was largely depend on the season of the year. Participant 1, 6 and 10 revealed that the common types of works they could perform included preparing the field for the ovaKwanyama, fencing the fields, pounding grains, ploughing, herding cattle and collecting water. During the time of the research, some of the !Xun San were helping with ploughing in the ovaKwanyama fields. Mostly the young male !Xun San. Most of these casual jobs were remunerated in food, money or clothes. The traditional leader of Omauni village stated:

“You can see I have two San boys in my house now. These boys used to help me with field works. I treat them as they are my biological children. After they done I can give them whatever I can afford to. Most of them survive by helping people (ovaKwanyama) with their fields and household duties. This is how they survive.

(Traditional leader 1, 15 March 2022, Omauni, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

In some cases, the San were poorly paid for their services. Due to their severe poverty condition and desperation they had limited bargaining power to negotiate their wages. This was reported by one participant who indicated that they only came to know their wages after the job was completed. The over-reliance on the casual labor for their livelihoods had negative repercussions for the development of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. This had resulted in the San perennially failing to work their own field (Robins et al., 2001). Therefore, subsequently resulted in chronic food shortage in their households.

#### **4.4.4 Changes in the Ways of Life Amongst the !Xun San:**

##### **4.4.4.1 Change in the Economic System**

Study findings revealed that most of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy had altered in their socio-economic system. This was perceived through their weak control and influence over the forest. They were no longer in charge of the critical resources such as land and wildlife in the forest as before and this had severely affected their way of life. As demonstrated by Nghitevelekwa et al. (2020) and Odendaal & Werner (2020) that the establishment of the community forest and communal conservancies has resulted in the San to lose access to their major traditional lands and environment as most of their underlying activities in the area also become severely restricted. Participants 2, and 6 also revealed that the transforming of the Okongo forest into the community forest had halted hunting to take place. The wild life resources belong to the government and that could lead to arrest, jail and fined when caught hunting. This subject to the provision of section (24A and B) of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act that no person shall without the written permission of the Minister to hunt any huntable game, bird or exotic game or any other wild animal on any land, including communal land. In the precolonial era, the San were free to hunt all sorts of wildlife without any fear nor restrictions. However, the San as members of the CBNRM were given the opportunity to access to other

resources in the forest such wood and veld food. But also shared other benefits provided through the community forest and conservancy (Nghitevelekwa et al., 2020).

Shifting from the traditional economic activity meant the !Xun San could be ready to compete with their rivals of ovaKwanyama and other ethnic groups in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Unlike in their traditional economic system which was characterised by a handful livelihoods choices. The adversity of the new economic system is that it's more complex and dynamic.

Several participants also attributed that they had experienced changes with the adaptation of the new economic system. This included: Firstly, the use of sophisticated tools to perform their livelihoods tasks i.e. axes, metal pots, containers, etc. This had make their life easier than before. Secondly, the evolved way of information sharing amongst each other. They were always updated on various issues via the radios. Such information sharing protocol was non-existent in their traditional lifestyles. As attested by the participant:

“Now we can be informed on when the food relief will be. We have the small radio in our house. we also get information on the date of the old age pension. We also get information of the community meetings at the centre (Omauni) etc. We are living far from the main centre where some information could not reach out well. However, we always listen to the radio to get updated.”

(Participant 6, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi Village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Thirdly, there was also changes in their diets. In their traditional economic system, they only relied on the food obtained from the nature (wild game meat, wild fruit, wild plant leaves, worms, tuber and insects). Today there are wide variety of food items to choose from. Therefore, this had diversified their knowledge on the new and different types of food items.

On the other hand, this study findings also revealed many !Xun San were finding it difficult to adopt to the current economic system. This was seen through the general observations on their contemporary lifestyles in the OCFC. Additionally, they were also not competitive enough to embrace it. This could be reckoned through their

competences to produce various assets in their households. Therefore, lack of these livelihood assets diminished their livelihoods. As the result, they became susceptible to starvation and deprivation condition in their households.

Due to the !Xun San's inability to fully integrate in the new economic system however, they were forced to lay back and stick to their traditional livelihood system for survival. Since, their traditional economic system was no longer influential in rival to the new economic system. This had placed them behind the shadow of ovaKwanyama. Based on this findings, the San were victims of their rivals ethnic group of ovaKwanyama who adopted a systematic process of economic subjugation to promote their own interests. Which is why the San were perceived poorer and disadvantaged today. As indicated by the participant:

“That life in the forest had become tough, things are expensive and we don't have money. All left for our existence was by turning back on our traditional way of living. Making money here has been a big problem to us and that is the reason why we are poor.”

(Participant 9, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Hence, their poverty condition was reflective of their inability to conquer in the new economic system. As much as they became too dependent on their traditional livelihood systems this persist their circumstances of poverty and desperation in their households. As a result, they started to deem the ovaKwanyama as wealthier because, they possessed assets (large fields, money and cattle) that they didn't have and overlooked on themselves.

Furthermore, due to change their traditional economic system, today the majority of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy found themselves being recruited under the authority of ovaKwanyama. This was an effort to improve on their livelihood. The traditional leader T6 also indicated that before then, the San could not suffer from the conditions such as jobs whatsoever. They were independent.

#### 4.4.4.2 Change in the Political System

Changing in the traditional leadership structure of the !Xun San meant that they were no longer powerful. The !Xun San in the OCFC did not have a uniformed and established political structure. Therefore, they were not entirely represented at the various levels in their traditional authorities. As the results, they were excluded from enforcing the decisions on issues pertaining to their own well-being. But instead, ovaKwanyama did on their behalf. OvaKwanyama people were many and therefore, established a strong political system that dominated the !Xun San in all the aspects of their lives. In addition, ovaKwanyama had little respect towards the !Xun San therefore, undermined their capacity to rule or represent them in their TA. As a consequence, this had call for their (current) social status and position in their society and economic deprivation thereof. As stated by the participant:

“With this label (derogative word) they use to call us: ‘*kwankala* is just a *kwankala*’ We are regarded as incompetent and low-class people. They don’t like to nominate us at or vote us at the administrative positions apparently because we don’t know how to store. Sometimes we subjected to insults and maltreatment at the shebeen because of who we are.”

(Participant 1, 15 March 2022, Omauni village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Such social ostracisms had resulted for their marginalization and contextualization today in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. As Nghitevelekwa et al., (2020) also indicated that the marginalisation of the San people is manifested in a diversity of ways such as their limited participation in society; relative deprivation as characterised by poor housing conditions, limited employment opportunities, limited chances to access improved income, and high rates of poverty.

This study findings, also revealed that none of the !Xun San had an influential position in any of the six villages within their respective TAs. However, all the villages were under the jurisdiction of the ovaKwanyama TAs. Furthermore, in all other three local management structures exist in OCFC namely the Village Development Committee (VDC), the Okongo Community Forest Management Committee (OCFMC), the Water Point Committee (WPC), Women and Men Network (WMN), the !Xun San, were only represented on the CFMC and WMN and excluded on the other leadership structures.

#### **4.4.4.3 Change in the Cultural System**

This study findings further revealed that the socio-cultural system of the !Xun San in the OCFC was gradually dissolving. This could take various forms, but one most common feature was noticed through their housing systems. While others still lived a mobile lifestyle, some !Xun San had acclimatised and were living in semi-permanent to permanent housing system. This meant that they could now settle on a piece of land and establish a permanent household – usually in Oshiwambo traditional style. This was apparent in the villages such as Oshikoha, Okatope and Omauni.

This was also evident that many !Xun San were slowly ingesting the Oshiwambo cultural system. Nevertheless, not all the households could adapt to this change. Some participants revealed that it was the only option they had since there were only few available spaces in the OCFC. As stated by the participant:

“Everywhere you go in the Okongo forest today there is a household. These households limit the amount of the land we can explore or settle on. Much of the land is occupied now in the Okongo, they become in accessible to us anymore. Most of the plants and trees where cut down therefore increasing the distance to access them. This way had forced us to choose living permanent.”

(Participant 5, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

However, there were those who felt differently. Some participants indicated that living permanently in one area had tied down their movements and limiting their livelihoods thereof. What was needed more was an economic environment that was sufficiently diverse for the San to develop their own sustainable livelihoods strategies.

Division of labour is one of the most recognized aspects of how a household pursues its livelihood strategies (Niehof and Price, 2001). What men versus women do as in part reflective of their culture. In the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, there was also a change in gender-based division of labour amongst the !Xun San. According to this study findings, gender division of labour showed no variation in what men and women had as tasks in all the !Xun San’s households. There was uniformity in sharing of the responsibilities at their households’ level. This is in stark contrast with their traditional gender roles as it was in the past (women gathers; men hunt etc.). Participant 3 and 9 indicated that all the household members could go and

gather the wild fruits in the forest including men, women and children. Cultivate in the fields or harvesting the wild spinach. As hunting was no more longer viable however, men could not hunt anymore. So, both genders could essentially get involved in executing their livelihoods in their households.

There were those participants who were happy with the changing in the division of labour. They believed that, collective effort would help them to generate more livelihoods items. On the other hands, some participants felt that changing in their traditional roles meant loss of their individual pride. Traditionally, it was seen as a great tribulation amongst the !Xun San for a man to know how to hunt. Today most of these skills had lost amongst them as some were also not having their traditional hunting (bows or arrows) tools.

The !Xun San women were also affected by this alteration in their traditional roles. In the past, women could stay at home to perform household's duties or to gather wild fruits, collecting nuts and dig roots. Withdrawing this responsibility sought many !Xun San women to lose their sense of identity. As asserted by the traditional leader T2:

“The !Xun San women can easily get attached (sexually) to the ovaKwanyama cattle herders with the motive to of surviving – a situation that was rationally impractical in the proceeding era . However, most of these ovaKwanyama cattle herders are also poor, so this had worsened their lives every day.”

(Traditional leader 2, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Figure 10 shows an example of the intermarriage practice between the two ethnic groups in Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy. The picture shows the !Xun San woman with her Kwanyama husband. It was believed that that the husband came to stay with his wife after he lost his jobs of cattle herding.

Figure 10: A !Xun San woman with her Kwanyama husband



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

#### **4.5 Livelihood Challenges**

##### **4.5.1 Poor Housing Conditions**

According to study findings, seven of the interviewed households lived in small poor housing structures built with grass and tree logs and sometimes covered with blankets. These households were in a very poor state, generally unhygienic and sometimes overcrowded. At most homesteads, there were only one or two huts to accommodate all the household members. In addition, most of these households were poorly constructed and susceptible to destruction by wind, rain and animals. Indicated classic example of these poor houses in one of the villages is shown in Figure 11. The house was built at an open space and there was no fencing surrounding it, exposing it to destruction by cattle and other animals. As one participant attested:

“We have to repair the house twice or thrice a month. The building materials are poor since we used only wild grasses. Therefore, nothing can stop the animals from destroying it. I do not have money to buy quality materials and sometime grasses could get finished in the forest. In this case, I would be forced to use the local second- hand materials to repair my house.”

(Participant 4, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Figure 11: The !Xun San's traditional household (*epundo*)



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

The fact that most of the household members slept in single huts had put the household members at risk of contagious diseases. One participant indicated that she was aware that it was not conducive for her wellbeing to share a single unit with many other household members. However, there was nothing that she could do, especially without money or resources to construct another hut. This increased the San's susceptibility to various infections and diseases such as TB. As Amnesty (2021) pointed out, the burden of TB among the San is nearly 40%, and this is higher than the national average (Amnesty, 2021).

This research findings indicate that the size of !Xun San households varied considerably, ranging from one to twelve members per household (Table 4). Despite this variability, all households encountered significant challenges in meeting basic needs. Many relied on limited household resources for essentials like food, water, and shelter, leading to increasingly strained living conditions. Notably, a significant number of !Xun San households were densely populated. This prevailing circumstance is predominantly attributable to the cultural norms that prioritize communal living arrangements within the !Xun San community, further accentuating the complexities of their living conditions.

**Table 4:** Size of the !Xun San per household

<b>Number of the Households</b>	<b>Size per Households</b>
1 household	1 person
1 household	2 people
1 household	7 people
1 household	8 people
1 household	9 people
1 household	12 people
2 households	4 people
2 households	3 people
<b>10</b>	<b>46</b>

*(Source: Erasmus, 2022)*

There were also two informal housings that belonged to the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy (one in Omauni and one in Owike village). These households were made up of the corrugated metals (Figure 12). Both houses were constructed with poor quality materials. The household in Omauni was built for the !Xun San through the Okongo Community Forest San Development Program (OCFSDP). However, it had no fencing but stood at an open space. According to the information obtained during the research, this was the only hope to the household owner and he could not expand nor renovated it as he did not have any sources of income. As the participant expressed:

“I really appreciate the Omauni conservancy authority for giving me this shelter. I wouldn’t have afforded to achieve this for myself. This is my place and it is my home.”

(Participant 2, 15 March 2022, Omauni village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Figure 12: The old !Xun San in his corrugated iron shack households



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

The household in Owike, however, was built by the owner through his old age pension money and it was situated within the fence of a Kwanyama neighbour. Information obtained through their headmen revealed that it was home to the two !Xun San members. However, during the research of this study the household members had migrated to Angola to harvest *olele* insects.

On the other hand, the traditional leader T1 also indicated there was one house which belonged to the !Xun San that was made up of a modern bricks. According to T1:

“This household is located within the influence of Omauni community trading centre and other services such as the community clinic, school and the police station. In addition, they also have access to clean water supply and other needs they could get from the community trading centre. This household was built for them by the Omauni forestry authority through the San’s Livelihood Support Programme (LSP) with the attempt to improve on the lives of these people.”

(Traditional leader 1, 15 March 2022, Omauni village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.)

According to the study findings, this was the only modern housing in the Okongo Community Forest that belonged to the !Xun San. It was furnished and built with good quality material and it was also in good condition. Besides owning the houses, their living condition were poor as none of them was employed.

#### **4.5.2 Education and Health Services**

In Okongo constituency 30% of its population never attended school (ORPP, 2011). Result from this study however, unveiled that most of the !Xun San households from the ages of 25 years and above had never attended school . What's more, none of the !Xun San household had children that were attending the school. Most of these children dropped out of the schools while they were young due to the long distances as there was only one primary school located in Omauni village. Hence, children that were in the villages situated far from Omauni village were the one likely to drop out. Another factors included lack of support from their parents in terms of school's needs. Most of the children did not have the school's uniforms and stationaries. While, others used to go empty stomach at school as there were no food in the house. Thus, discouraged them to continue with schooling. However, there were only five !Xun San children that were attending school from the whole community forest and those were the one that lived in the headmen's houses. According to T3:

“You can see those children are living well and they can go to school everyday morning with my children. I use to buy for them school uniform and support them with other school needs. As a parent I always make sure they go to school eaten enough”

(Traditional leader 3, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha village, Okongo Forest)

Further, most of the !Xun San children did not have birth certificates. This had further delayed them from being registered in the schools. Also, none of them were receiving social grants from the government due to lack of the birth certificates and ID documents.

On the health situation, the study revealed that most of the !Xun San households had no access to health facilities. They had only one community clinic which was situated

in Omauni village with the farthest village being 17 km away. However, not everyone could be able to access to it due to the long distances. Some of them were still relying on their traditional medicine to treat some conditions. As indicated by the participant:

“Even when one of our household member is sick we hardly go to the clinic but, we treat him or her with the traditional medicine. Unless it is a critical condition. It is very rare to get transport going this side.”

(Participant 4, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.5.3 Land Shortage Amongst the !Xun San**

This study findings revealed that only three !Xun San households legally owned land in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy – one in Omauni village, one in Oshikoha village and one in Okatope village. Amongst these households, two of them were married to the ovaWambo and the other one had acquired it through hereditary from her grandmother.

Four other households had no customary land right as they were not registered with their respective TAs. Therefore, the land available to them was only the space where their households were located. Most of these ‘single’ huts (a household) were situated in different areas across the forest. They usually set up there without the permission from their traditional leaders. Therefore, most of these households did not have fields. One traditional leader indicated:

“Most of the household that you see in this village were just recently established, there were many other households in the village however, they had migrated away. Some of them were legitimate residents. They just leave the land and disappears. Overall they got nothing do with it because they are not interested in cultivating.”

(Traditional leader 2, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Study findings further uncovered that many !Xun San [be those that were registered by their TAs] did not own the fields because of poverty. They lacked of capital assets to invest on the land, lack of necessary farming skills and agricultural tools necessary

for cultivating the land. Such factors seemed to prevent the San from procuring right to land tenure and thus, had further discouraged farming amongst them. This was also supported by Mouton and Dirks (2014) that due to the prevailing lack of agricultural equipment, San had not requested farmland for crop-farming purposes, but they did have access to other resources, such as firewood and veld-food.

In addition, San lived off land and due to their mobility lifestyles, they could end up vacate the land permanently. In this regard, some traditional leaders believed that it was futile to allocate land to the San. Therefore, they preferred to allocate to those who could afford to utilise it. As indicated by the traditional leader:

“I had allocated the San in my village a land to be farming on it collectively, and I selected one San man to be the representative of others at the committee forestry meeting, however, he sold the land and ran away. The land was returned to the headman.”

(Traditional leader 2, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

There was also an issue of land grabbing amongst the !Xun San. As demonstrated by Suzman (2001) and Robins et al. (2018) most of the lands to which San traditionally occupied were taken away by the ovaWambo agriculturalists and were incorporated into farming areas. The San, were forced to evict these areas they had occupied for generations. Therefore, this study uncovered that the issue of land grabbing was also regular among the !Xun San. Owing to, the ovaKwanyama reckoned the San as illegal occupants of land, they sometimes seize the land from the San. This was done through setting up their fields on the land that was already occupied by the !Xun San. In this case, the San were forced to move away or sometimes stay within the yards of the ovaKwanyama fields (if they refused to move) –this beget for why some !Xun San houses were found within the fencing of the of the Kwanayama fields in the OCFC. As expressed by the participant:

“In some cases you can just see the ovaKwanyama people clearing the land already without asking the permission form. Questioning on them they will tell

you that they were given a permission from the headman. In this case you have nothing to do but sometimes just to leave.”

(Participant 5, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo community forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.5.4 Alcohol Abuse**

The change in the !Xun San’s traditional economic system resulted in many households becoming dependent on alcohol. As most of them could not hunt nor work in the field, they spent most of their times drinking alcohol. According to the traditional leader T3 stated:

“The !Xun San households in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are mostly influenced by alcohol and their lifestyles revolve around the consumption of alcohol. Alcohol had become part of their livelihood. Every day they have to go to the shebeens to drink *otombo*, everyday!”

(Traditional leader 4, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

*Otombo* (A traditional fermented brew made of grain and water) was the most consumed alcohol among the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. The practice of drinking *otombo* is interpreted as one of the San’s strategies for coping with food shortages as it substitutes for eating (Mouton & Dirks, 2014). Findings from this study revealed that the !Xun Sans households relied more on drinking *Otombo* together with their children. This was mostly triggered by inadequate in their households. Therefore, consuming *otombo* was a means to alleviate hunger.

However, high rate of *otombo* consumption imposed serious health and social problems amongst many !Xun San households (Mouton & Dirks 2014). Findings from this study unveiled that many !Xun San households got involved in domestic violence as a result of high consumption in alcohol. One traditional leader indicated:

“In the midst of the night while everyone is sleeping you will hear them (San) arguing and talking louder as they are coming from the shebeens. After sometimes the arguments intensify indicating the state of drunkenness that they will be in.

Tomorrow in the morning when they come to the shebeen one will have bruises on the body. This already conveys that they were fighting last night.”

(Traditional leader 4, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Excessive alcohol consumption amongst the San was mostly influenced by poverty. This created serious conditions of deprivation amongst the !Xun San’s households – leaving many trapped into the vicious circle of poverty. Labour input into livelihoods maintenance was adversely affected as many San people usually spent most of their time drinking at the shebeens instead of engaging in beneficial or productive livelihood activities. In some instances, piecework is usually remunerated with alcohol, which deprive the households of income as well (Mouton & Dirks, 2014).

The San’s susceptibility to alcohol abuse especially, *otombo* also caused high deaths and short life expectancy amongst their population. According to the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy official:

“The number of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy had drastically declined over the past few years. Just five years back, there were more than 300 !Xun San in the OCFC, but today there are only less than 100 of them left. One of the leading factors contributing towards their deaths is their abuse of alcohol and tobaccos. They do not like eating, only drinking alcohol thus they have low life expectancy.”

(OCFC official, 30 March 2022, telephone interview.)

Study findings also revealed that the San were also suffering from ‘inebriation’. This condition surpassed one’s food appetite when they drink *otombo*. As a result, it became recurrent for them to wake up and go to the shebeens every day to drink *otombo*. Excessive alcohol usage had also led to various diseases and illnesses amongst the !Xun San people. This elevated the risk of TB infection and its probable effects on sexual behaviours, hence creating high chance of spreading HIV/AIDS amongst their population. The effect of the HIV/AIDS infectivity amongst the San had been more radical for many years because of their vulnerabilities (Suzman, 2001b and Kiaka, 2014). These factors were the reason for their high death toll today in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy (Ushona, 2020).

#### **4.5.5 Unemployment Condition Amongst the !Xun San**

High unemployment levels was one of the most critical issue amongst the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. In contrast, Mouton and Dirkx (2014) argued that the San in resettlement projects were fairly better-off than in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. In terms of employment with about 80% of them being employed in comparison to just a few in the community forest. This was supported by findings from this study where none of the interviewed !Xun San household members were formally employed.

Most of the !Xun San could not be employed in the decent jobs categories (Dickmann et al., 2014). This is because, in addition to their illiteracy and alcoholism, they also lack necessary skills and qualifications. The majority of the !Xun San ended up doing piecemeal jobs such as being cattle herders, working on the crop fields of the ovaKwanyama or fetching water for the *otombo* shebeen that belonged to the ovaKwanyama. However, these offers were only available occasionally. According to the traditional leader T5:

“Lack of employment amongst the San is a significant threat to their livelihoods. This is one of the causes of their massive migrations in the recent years outside the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy to search for better life in the townships, settlements schemes and other villages outside the Okongo community forest.”

(Traditional leader 3, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

As indicated in literature, old age pension fund was regarded as an important source of income amongst some San’s households. Results from this study revealed that only two !Xun San (old aged) households in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy were receiving old age pension fund. Other households with eligible members reported not receiving the pension due to lack of identification documents. This also made it difficult to identify their ages. This applied also to many other young !Xun San as they were not in possession of birth certifies and IDs documents.

On the other hand, with regard to the assets and material possession, a high number of the !Xun San had few/no tangible assets. This study revealed that there was only one

!Xun San household that owned chickens and one that possessed a radio. However, the !Xun San who resided in the headman houses were relatively wealthier in terms of assets possession compared to others.

Not comparing to the Hai||om San people who shared the environment with, most of these San people owned many assets. This included goats and chickens. Some of these animals like goats were given through the Milalec project. They also have a small fields for cop cultivation. Few of the Hai||om San that are living in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy and are more better off than the !Xun San. They also received extensive support from many other schemes/projects while, the !Xun San merely relied on the government, regional council and the Okongo Community Forest authority and Conversancy. Furthermore, the Hai||om San lived together at one area and that had made it easier to the sponsors to give them supports and trace well their wellbeing. To compare the economic lifestyles of the two San's ethnic groups, Huffman (2007) indicated that that the Hai||om San's new socio-economic structure is more of gathering and mixed farming while, for the !Xun San is dynamic.

#### **4.5.7 The !Xun San's Dependency**

Economic, social and political dependency is a defining feature for the lives of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy. poverty and food insecurity is widespread throughout the region and the majority of the San population were dependent on welfare programmes, the charity of others, piecemeal work, the Forestry Authority, the regional Council and the government for their survival. Because of their high illiteracy rate, distitution, and poor political representation, the majority of them were rendered dependent on and vulnerable to others (Suzman, 2001).

This study discovered that most of the !Xun San lacked several livelihood assets in their households hence, limiting their opportunity to execute well their livelihoods activities. For this reason, most of them did not have productive resources such as land, money and decent shelters. In the instances, where they ran out of food in their households, participants 1,5 and 7 revealed that they could only rely on their headmen for food or sometimes the ovaKwanyama. Food relief programmes could not be

dependent on them were inconsistent. However, buying food was infrequent amongst them.

Many !Xun San households indicated that the headman was very crucial for their subsistence. They dearly depended on them for many other things including clothing, blankets and seeds. They were also their agents through which they could make their voices heard by the top authority. As testified by the participant:

“Our headman used to give us food such as omahangu or beans when the food got finished in our household. Sometimes we used to go to his house and eat lunch or dinner. He gives me clothing or shoes as token of appreciation whenever I do something for him. Sometimes if we need something they can also tell the Omauni authority so that we will be given food or blankets.”

(Participant 7, 17 March 2022, Omwandi village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

On the other hand, the high dependency rate amongst the !Xun San was also a result of their reluctance to work for themselves. In spite of land challenges they faced, most of them were not interested in practicing farming at all and always expected to be given food by the ovaKwanyama. This was also revealed by T3 who stated that during the cultivating seasons, the San were always moving around the forest or visiting the local shebeens drinking ‘*otombo*’ while, the ovaKwanyama were in their fields working.

## **4.6 Relationship with Other Ethnic Groups**

### **4.6.1 The !Xun San Socio- Economic Relationship with the Ovawambo (Ovakwanyama)**

Despite shortage of the physical assets, the study revealed that the majority of the !Xun San household possessed social resources. This was observed through their social relationship they have with other ethnic group in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Studies have shown that people get involved in relations and networks that are important not only for their daily survival strategies, but also for their access to other important services and their ability to mobilize support in times of crisis. Therefore, the San’s social network was important for alleviating poverty. This type

of relationship manifested through the practice of sharing and borrowing and it was considered more essential for the San's survival.

Participant 3 indicated that the relationship they had with the ovaKwanyama people was always strengthened through their social interaction at their community shebeens. From there they build friendships governed by a sense of brotherhood. In addition, participant 7 claimed that sometimes their relationship could go beyond that zone (friendship) as they got to know well with each other. From the study results, eight of the participants showed that their relationship with ovaKwanyama and other ethnic groups in their villages was generally satisfactory; hence there was a good inter-tribal relationship. Other two participants reported that they got along fairly well as they had romantic relationships with the ovaKwanyama men. This denoted that there was a practice of intermarriages between the two ethnic groups within the OCFC.

There was also stable relationship amongst the San and the ovaKwanyama especially those San's households that dwelt inside the ovaKwanyama's field fences. In this case, they were fed and given *omahangu* millets, and water for free. Also they were given second hand materials to construct or renovate their households by the ovaKwanyama. Interview with one Kwanyama in Owike village stated:

“There are two !Xun San households in my field yard. These households had been relying on me almost for everything. Since they were living far from Omauni centre, they are also depending on me for their households needs such as salt, soups, cooking oils, meat and sometimes tobacco. Also, when they migrate to Angola or to other villages I will be on lookout for their households.”

(Interview, 17 March 2022, Owike village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Furthermore, for those ovaKwanyama that stayed alone in their households, the San people were the only source of cheap labour to help them with their field works. Sometimes they could be paid in form of food instead of money or sometimes for free.

Furthermore, finding from this study also revealed that there was a virtuous relationship between the Angolan police and the Namibian !Xun San. Households that

were close to the borders were granted freedom by the Angolan police to go inside Angolan without restrictions.

Also, some Angolan people accommodate the !Xun San in their houses. They associate with them and offer them food such as milk, meat and milk fat. As participant stated:

“We also get food stuffs such as milk, meat, milk-fat and omahangu flour from the people inside Angola. Most of the people inside Angola are ovaWambo pastoralists who settled there for good grazing pasture for their animals.”

(Participant 6, 16 March 2022, Okanyandi, village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.5.8 The Socio-Economic Challenge Amongst the !Xun San**

This study findings revealed that the relationship between the !Xun San and ovaKwanyama in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy was not good all the time. In some cases, the San were ill-treated. This could be said to be a form of labor exploitation where some were not be paid for labour rendered. One participant stated that:

“Some of the ovaKwanyama label us as inferior and lazy. Apparently we are dirty and smelling. I really don’t like being called such. Sometimes when you get drunk you will be beaten up or your money taken. If you report to the headman, you are just wasting your time.”

(Participant 8, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

Furthermore, some !Xun San women reported that they are at risk of being exploited. In this regard they pointed out that some of their relationships with the ovaKwanyama do not end well, but rather they are rejected and their pregnancy denied. The ovaKwanyama men who impregnated the !Xun San woman sometimes deny their paternal responsibility and fail to make any financial contribution toward the support of the child or children. As the result, some !Xun San women give birth kids who have no prospect of being supported. As asserted by the traditional leader T2:

“There are 34 children in my village that were born by ovaKwanyama men and the San women and none of these children have birth certificates. This is because these children do not know their fathers. Only one woman from my village had a child with a San man”

(Traditional leader 2, 15 March 2022, Okatope village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

This was similar to Mouton and Dirkx (2011) who indicated that nearly all cases of sexual encounters between ovaKwanyama men and !Xun or Hai||om women resulting in pregnancy, the child was left with the mother and her family. Children born from such inter-ethnic sexual relationships were referred to as “San children” or “mixed children”, but not as “ovaKwanyama children”

The traditional leader T1 further stressed that that the socio-economic challenge was mostly common amongst the San pensioners. Some of them usually lose their pension money through settling debts in the ovaKwanyama’s shabeens. In some cases, they get lured into buying things they do not need. More so, due to their illiteracy they can also be easily tricked and given wrong change when buying things. In addition, some reported even being charged higher prices, though this could not be independently verified. There were also some San pensioners that reported being robbed or swindled, which increases their poverty as the grant may be their only source of income.

## **4.6 Coping Strategies**

Maxwell and Caldwell (2008: 2) argue that households in distress can adopt a variety of coping strategies, hence they developed a Coping Strategy Index (CSI) as an indicator or measure of household coping in times of crisis. In the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, the study found that the !Xun San were applying different coping strategies as a response to poverty and insufficiency of food in their households. Some of the prominent strategies are discussed in detail below.

### **4.6.1 Coping on the Number of Meals Eaten Per Day**

Many !Xun San households were reported to be living in distress, especially experiencing food shortages in their households. One of the ways in which they were dealing with these challenges was to reduce the number of meals they were eating per

day. This was done in order to avoid completely exhausting available food within a short period of time or before they could have resources and an opportunity to restock. Therefore, this strategy was performed only when the household was running out food. According to T2:

“Many !Xun San households opt to reduce number of meals by taking one or two meals per day rather than the usual three meals. They usually eat once in the morning and once in the evening. In most cases some households prefer skipping eating for the whole day and be drinking *otombo*.”

(Traditional leader 3, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.6.2 Children-Fostering Practice**

When economic conditions are tough, some of the interviewed households indicated that they prefer to hand over their children to be fostered or adopted in ovaKwanyama households. This reduces the size of the household that will be left to be fed and therefore increases their food security. In the absence of children that will have been sent for fostering, the remaining elder members of the household are generally able to stretch the available food to last longer. This is something that is difficult to do in the presence of children who need to eat frequently. The majority of the fostered children were nurtured and raised in environments that were relatively more prosperous and experienced meager poverty presence. Study participants reported that the fostered children were generally better off than those that were left in their parent’s households. They had access to good shelter, adequate meals daily and hence of general good health. Many of them also attend school fulltime, just like the children of the ovaKwanyama. During the time of the survey there were seven !Xun San children fostered in the ovaKwanyama households.

#### **4.6.3 Bartering**

Bartering is a long acquired system used by the San households in the OCFC. This is mainly done in a form of exchanging items between the two parties without the use of money (Huffman, 2007). This exercise could not only be performed amongst the San but also amongst the ovaKwanyama households and between the ovaKwanyama and the San households. The study findings revealed that many !Xun San households bartered with the items they gathered from the forest. This is because, they did not possess other valuable assets to exchange with. According to the participant:

“Sometimes when we collect many wild berries we exchange them as raw or the bi-product with the ovaKwanyama for food items such as sour milk, meat or mahangu millets. This is the best way for us to gain our ration of staple diets since we do not have money to buy our food items.”

(Participant 6, 15 March 2022, Okanyandi, village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.6.4 Egalitarianism**

Results of the study also revealed that the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are still living their customary lifestyle of egalitarianism – a practice of equality amongst the San. Thus sharing of resources was a norm amongst the !Xun San households so that no single household would suffer unnecessarily more than others. In villages such as Owike, Okatope and Oshikoha the !Xun San built their homesteads close together. This made it easier for them to share the resources amongst themselves. Items shared mostly included food, clothing and shelter. In cases where one household becomes food insecure or has shortages, it could always borrow from others.

Furthermore, in the situations when survivals become difficult, various !Xun San households could be able to combine their assets (food, labour etc.) in order to secure their livelihoods and further their sustenance. According to one participant:

“Sometimes we can all staying one of our neighbor’s house. When we migrate to Angola or to the forest to harvest of gather berries, we all go together and move in a clan together with our families.”

(Participant 3, 16 March 2022, Oshikoha village, Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy)

#### **4.6.5 Scavenging or Begging**

Results from the study also indicated that many !Xun San households survived by scavenging or sharing food items with their fellow villagers especially at their community shebeens. In cases, when the San did not have money, they could always wait for those who had money to finish drinking and scavenged the left over.

There were, however, other San households that were borrowing food or begging for money to buy *otombo* or cigarette from the ovaKwanyama. However, borrowing food

is usually a last resort when all food supplies have run out and veld food has become scarce (Kiaka et al., 2014 and Mouton & Dirks, 2014).

#### **4.7 Livelihood Diversification Among the !Xun San**

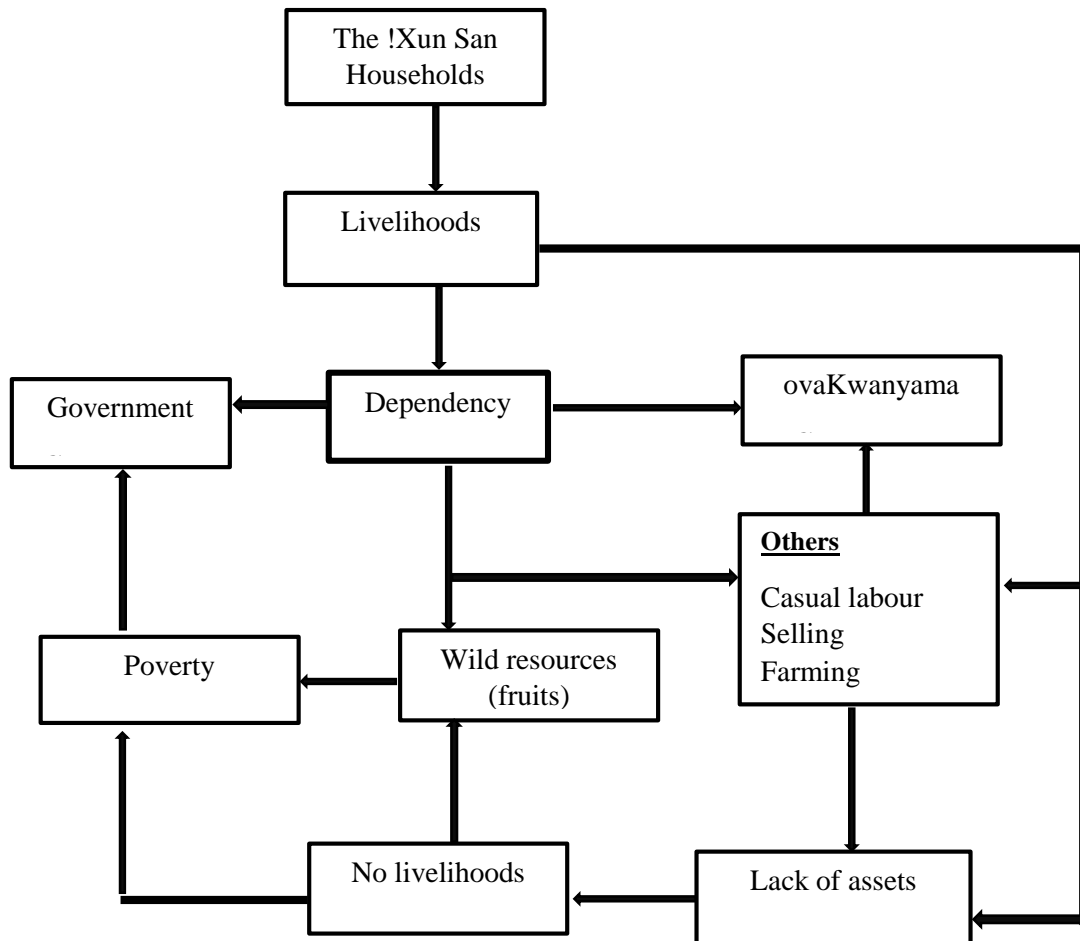
Livelihood diversification is also at the center of the coping strategies of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Almost all the interviewed households indicated that they made their living from more than one livelihood source. The general lack of livelihoods assets among them and high levels of unemployment amongst the !Xun San had forced them to use any potential source to generate their livelihoods.

Diversification offers the people options for coping with crisis. Relying on a single strategy could not be sufficient to comply with the livelihoods demand for the !Xun San households in the OCFC. Therefore, in response to insufficient food conditions, many !Xun San households could execute diverse portfolios or income generating activities to improve their food security and reduce their poverty. This mostly involved selling thatching grasses and working in the ovaKwanyama fields in return for money. These types of strategies applied to most households including those who had fields. They preferred to do this piece-works instead of cultivating their own fields. Mouton and Dirks (2014) argue that this tendency to work for other is spurred by the fact that piecework provides an immediate return on labour investment.

The dynamics of the !Xun San's livelihoods could fit well into the sustainable rural livelihoods framework as advanced by Scoones (1998). The San's livelihoods could develop under particular context, condition or trend. However, a critical issue was the statutory policies and development that expropriated traditional lands belonged to the San while, instantaneously inhibiting hunting which was a key livelihood activity of the San. Another contextual issue interrupting the development of the !Xun San livelihoods was the climate change as indicated in the SLF. These contextual factors had denied the San access to their livelihood resources from the forest, which resources are now in short supply. In reinforcing to the concept of Scoones (1998) that material and social (tangible and intangible) assets that people use for constructing their livelihoods are conceptualized as 'capital' the study identified three main portfolios that formed part of the !Xun San's basic livelihoods security in their households. This comprised of: dependence on the ovaKwanyama, food relief rations and the natural

resources. As indicated in figure 13, most of the !Xun San’s households depended on how much they could secure their livelihoods from the ovaKwanyama. This came in a form of labours (to generate income) or borrowing food (Dickmann et al., 2014).

Figure 13: The Livelihoods interrelation log frame amongst the !Xun San households in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy.



(Source: Erasmus, 2022)

Gathering of the wild resources (fruits, worms and spinach) was also one of the livelihoods asset that all the !Xun San households opted to invest in. This was an independent asset on which the households could rely without an influence of other assets. However, these were only viable seasonally, hence leaving many households with limited choices during some seasons of the year. In spite of this, all the !Xun San households were too dependent on the government food relief and other social benefits. Farming was amongst others strategies that formed the livelihood portfolio

of the San. However, it was only available to some households as the majority did not have land, knowledge or resources to achieve sustainable farming. The few that were engaged in farming were only doing it on a small scale. This substantially increased food shortages in their households. The study revealed that many !Xun San households wanted to acquire skills on farming system and get away the traditional activities. This could help them to secure enough food for themselves, to have healthier bodies and to become self-independent.

Despite, these three domain assets from which all the !Xun San households in the OCFC counted on for their subsistence however, the availability of other assets i.e. petty-trading and the degree to which the households could be able to construct their living from those assets depended on the household's access to those assets/availability of the resources. This was mostly shaped by the economic environment and the spatial location of these households. Some villages such as Okanyandi and Owike due to their economic situations could not access to the Omauni trading centre therefore, their livelihoods diversification strategies were different from those villages that could access to the trading centre i.e. Omuni village. This also meant that the households were frequently hit by severe idiosyncratic shocks from area to area. The extend of vulnerability amongst the !Xun San however, depended on the level of underlying shocks in each area. The shocks to which the !Xun San households exposed within the OCFC were wide ranging: draught, loss of productive assets (land ) and/or lack of opportunities to secure tenders. Also, unreliability of the supplies of food rations to other villages such as OKanyandi and owike was a factor that could easily increase the vulnerability of those who were affected by poverty. Some participants in Okanyandi village had expressed their dissatisfaction on the inconsistency of food relief to their areas. Sometimes it could take over three months without receiving. The !Xun San were vulnerable due to their inability to cope with shock management strategies unlike the ovaWambo. Some shocks have long lasting effect that had intensified poverty and the adverse in the Sans' development.

Having the San's households significantly depending on these elements for their subsistence however, there was a general criticism that even though, they were essential in addressing food shortages amongst the !Xun San they tend to encouraged/created high dependency syndrome amongst them. As the result, the San

could become reluctant to develop their own livelihoods based on variable dimensions. This could always end result in poverty recreating itself among this society. This study findings revealed that most of the !Xun San households in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy were not active in generating their own livelihoods but, always waited for the government food rations. Some could even blame the ovaKwanyama for their fates insisting that they were starving because of them as they were reluctant sometimes to help them with food.

On the other hand, The !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy lacked support from both local and international organisations unlike the Hai||om ethnic group. Hence, this fostered finite sustainable livelihoods and increased challenges in their households.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter presented, analysed and discussed the data collected from the !Xun San participants from the Okongo Community Forest and Conversancy. This included a discussion on the current livelihoods that the !Xun San engaged in, the aspect of poverty amongst the !Xun San, the housing condition as well as health and educations services amongst the !Xun San. The chapter also assessed issues of socio-economic challenges that these people were facing, including unemployment, sources of income, alcohol abuse and its impact on their livelihoods. It also analysed the relationship between the !Xun San and other ethnic group and the issue of the San's dependency on these groups. The following chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the study's major findings regarding the assessment of the livelihood challenges amongst the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. The chapter also gives a conclusion to the study and makes recommendations according to the study findings.

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

#### **5.2.1 Traditional Livelihoods Activities Amongst the !Xun San**

One of the key findings of the study was that the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy were still practicing some of their traditional livelihoods activities. This included firstly, hunting. Although hunting, especially, of the larger game is completely ceased by the government – through the implementation of conservation laws and regulations. However, the !Xun San in the OCFC could still engage in hunting smaller wildlife as a means of sustenance. The availability of these smaller game could provide an alternative food source for the !Xun San and could still meet some of their dietary needs. Further, hunting small wildlife allows the San people to utilize their traditional hunting skills and maintain their cultural practices, albeit on a smaller scale. However, it is important to note that hunting practices should align with local regulations and conservation efforts to ensure the sustainable management of wildlife populations and ecosystems.

Secondly, in addition to hunting, the gathering of wild fruits plays a significant role in the livelihood strategies of the !Xun San. Wild fruit gathering involves the collection of various edible fruits, nuts, and berries from the natural environment. This practice provides a valuable source of nutrition, supplements the diet, and contributes to their food security (Hitchcock et al., 2019).

Wild fruit gathering offers several advantages for the !Xun San: (i) It is a sustainable practice that does not require the depletion of resources or harm to the environment. (ii) It relies on the natural abundance of fruits in the surrounding ecosystems, allowing for the replenishment and regrowth of plants over time. (iii) As evolved from this study, the gathering of wild fruits amongst the !Xun San often took a collective effort from various households who chose to combine their assets. This fostered social cohesion and cooperation within the community and it provides an opportunity for

shared experiences, knowledge transmission, and intergenerational learning as individuals gather and process the fruits together. Moreover, wild fruit gathering is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and identity of the San people. It forms an integral part of their indigenous knowledge and heritage, connecting them to their ancestral lands and ecosystems.

Thirdly, just as in the past, the !Xun San people in the OCFC, traditionally relied on the environment and natural resources for medicinal purposes, utilizing plants and other natural substances to treat various medical conditions. This traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and their applications has been passed down through generations, allowing the San to effectively address health needs within their community (Dan, Mchombu, & Mosimane, 2010). As indicated in (table 3), the !Xun San's deep understanding of the local flora enabled them to identify plants with therapeutic properties and to develop remedies for ailments such as digestive issues, respiratory problems, wounds, and pain management. Different parts of plants, including leaves, roots, bark, and fruits, were often used in medicinal preparations, either through ingestion, topical application, or other methods of administration.

Fourthly, whereas, the San people historically lived a predominantly nomadic lifestyle – followed a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, today, the !Xun San in the OCFC have transitioned to a more semi-permanent or even permanent settlement pattern. Various factors have influenced their transition to more settled living arrangements. These include increased interaction with other communities' area i.e the Hai||om and ovaKwanyama, the impact of land ownership systems (land privatization), changes in resource availability and distribution, and the influence of modernization and economic opportunities. As for this reason, access to traditional hunting and gathering grounds has become limited, leading to a greater reliance on settled or semi-permanent settlements. As shown in this study, the !Xun San could only migrate during the harvesting season of the certain wild resource i.e. fruits or worms, but still had to return back to their households. Conversely, some adopted permanent residence as they own fields, despite retaining customary land right. .

Fifthly Woodworking was another traditional skill that the !Xun San possessed and could practice in the OCFC. This involves the crafting and shaping of wood into various objects, such as tools, utensils, weapons such as bows and sculptures. This skill has been honed and passed down through generations, contributing to the cultural heritage and practical needs of the !Xun San. As indicated in this study, some of the !Xun San who could still practicing this traditional activity, could sell their products through the Omauni Carpentry Project and which provides opportunities for income generation. However, as the project closed, this had discouraged them from continuing with this activity.

### **5.2.2 Changes on the Livelihoods of the !Xun San: The Current Livelihoods Strategies**

#### **(i) Agriculture: Crop cultivation**

Agriculture has become an important means for some !Xun San households in the OCFC to sustain their livelihoods. By engaging in agriculture, these households could be able to cultivate crops mostly grains (e.g., mahangu, and sorghum). The !Xun San often acquired their knowledge of agriculture through interactions and knowledge exchange with the ovaKwanyama agriculturalists who had shared the environment with them. This cross-cultural exchange allowed them to learn about agricultural techniques, crop cultivation, and other aspects of farming.

Agriculture offered several benefits for some !Xun San households in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Firstly, it provides a stable and consistent source of food for their households as they could supplement their diet hence, reducing reliance on hunting and gathering. Secondly, it allows their households to adapt to changing environmental conditions and external pressures. By diversifying their livelihood activities, they could become less vulnerable to fluctuations in natural resources, climatic variations, or restrictions on traditional hunting and gathering practices (Barrett, 2021).

However, it is important to note that the adoption of agriculture among the !Xun San people is not uniform. Whereas, some households could still continue to prioritize their traditional practices of hunting and gathering. The decision to engage in agriculture amongst this society could often be influenced by factors such as access to

arable land (land tenure), availability of resources i.e. seeds, draught power and external support or training.

(ii) Non-farming activities: petty-trading and casual labours

Petty trading and casual labor were additional livelihood strategies that some !Xun San households engaged in to support their economic well-being. Petty trading took form of selling of goods on a small scale. Some !Xun San individuals could participate in local markets where they offer various goods for sale. These goods involved items, such as food *okapana* (cooked meat), food ration items and household goods i.e. building materials. Petty trading could allow the certain households to generate income.

Casual labor refers to temporary or part-time employment in various sectors, such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, or other manual labor (Kiaka et al., 2014). Some !Xun San individuals or households could seek employment opportunities within their communities or neighboring villages, taking on tasks such as farming, construction work, or assisting with household chores for others. Casual labor provides an avenue for income generation and economic support, especially during periods when other livelihood activities may be less productive.

Engaging in petty trading and casual labor offers the households opportunities for income diversification, improving their financial stability, and meeting their basic needs. These activities also enabled them to interact with the ovaKwanyama neighbors fostering social connections and cultural exchange. However, it is important to note that petty trading and casual labor are often influenced by factors such as availability of job opportunities, and access to resources and networks (Maharjan, 2014). These challenges could impact the success and sustainability of these livelihood activities.

(iii) Other activities: Wild spinach and grasses harvesting

Wild spinach and grass harvesting are additional activities practiced by the !Xun San households in the OCFC for both sustenance and potential economic benefits. Gathering wild spinach not only contributes to their dietary needs but also reflects their close connection with the natural environment and their reliance on available

resources. Several !Xun San households indicated that by drying and storing wild spinach could help them meet their dietary need and maintain food security during the time of scarcity or emergencies. Furthermore, the sale of the dried wild spinach can also serve as an income generating activity for some !Xun San households.

Moreover, some households could also engage in the collection and harvesting of wild grasses for various purposes. These grasses could be used for thatching, basket waving or traditional broom. Additionally, woven grass products may be sold or traded, providing a potential source of income for some !Xun San households.

#### (iv) Changes in the socio-economic and political system of the !Xun San

The !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy had experienced significant changes in their social and political systems. These changes have had profound effects on their traditional and economic ways of life and have resulted in the transformation of their social and political structures today.

Historically, the San people lived in small, mobile hunter-gatherer bands, characterized by egalitarian social structures and a high degree of autonomy within their communities. Decision-making processes were often consensus-based, with leadership roles based on knowledge, experience, and personal qualities rather than formal hierarchies (Broyhill et al., 2014). However, with the advent of colonialism and the imposition of external systems of governance, the social and political landscape of the !Xun San today became significantly weak (Hitchcock et al., 2019). In addition, through establishment of the traditional authority and local governance, the !Xun San found themselves under the control and dominance of the ovaKwanyama. They often face barriers to meaningful participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. Subsequently, limited representation in political structures and exclusion from policy discussions could hinder their ability to address their specific needs and interests. Hence, result in their marginalization today. Their land rights, access to resources, and cultural practices were often undermined or disregarded. This substantially threatens their livelihoods as they were no longer in control of the forest.

Furthermore, as societies modernized and urbanization increased, the !Xun San faced further challenges in adapting to new social and political dynamics (Vicente et al., 2019). As a result, many had migrated to urban areas in search of employment and improved living conditions. This had disrupted their traditional structures and kinship ties, as individuals and families became more dispersed geographically. During the research of this study, most of the households had permanently migrated away from the OCFC. It was believed that some households fled in the townships to look for better opportunities and to improve on their living standard.

### **5.2.3 Vulnerability and Livelihoods Challenges Among the !Xun San**

The !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy are contextualized as a marginalized group because of their economic deprivations. Their levels of life expectancy, health, and literacy are lower and their source of livelihoods are mainly dependent on food aid programmes, and their levels of unemployment are higher than the national averages (Tobias, 2007). They also face social stigmatization from the ovaWambo and the Hai||om people who lived among them and were better off than them.

Majority of the !Xun San households did not possess land rights and hence, lived on marginal lands. They mainly survive on gathering veld-food such as roots and wild berries. Although veld-foods form an integral part of many household's livelihoods however, there were several threats to their existence which may also potentially limit their accessibility in the future. This includes, the occasional wildfires, uncontrolled grazing by the ovaKwanyama lead to the diminishing of these resources, confinements of the wild fruits by ovaKwanyama through fencing, uncontrolled harvest of wild fruits as well as cutting of trees for poles and firewood. Consequently, this had led to the gradual reduction in their availability hence, increasing distances to access them. As emerged from this study, several households could be able to travel to the far places such as other villages or in Angola to access to some resources which were no longer available in the Okongo forest.

However, according to the study findings, there were some !Xun San households who felt that life is good in the community forest, as they have access to many natural resources in the area, although there are some restrictive laws which prohibits them

from hunting. Nevertheless, all the !Xun San's households remained absolutely poor. They lacked decent shelters and adequate food provisions, as their livelihood strategies relied heavily on the government food rations. A few were also involved in economic activities such as, petty trading and a slight number engaged in crop cultivations.

Unable to rely on hunting and gathering nor agricultural activities, most of the households had resorted to casual work and piecework as a principal means of earning a living, supplemented by the food aid, Old-age pension grants pensions provided by government. Furthermore, their lack of education, circumscribed capacity to assert their human rights. The prevailing stereotyping of San, internalised discrimination and their lack of a strong political voice are other crucial factors contributing to their current situation. Threats to food security as a result of irregular delivery of government food aid; a lack of cash to purchase food; exposed to underlying shocks such as drought, which reduces crops harvests as well as the growth and the productivity of veld-food; enclosure of major lands in the forest by individuals ovaKwanyama farmers make the !Xun San people's lives precarious.

#### **5.2.4 Optimizing Assets for Enhanced Livelihoods Outcomes Among the !Xun San: The Concept of SLF**

In addressing to the livelihood challenges faced by the !Xun San, requires a comprehensive approach that considers their unique cultural context and aspirations. Therefore, by using the SLF would help to provides a useful framework for understanding and improving the livelihoods outcomes of the !Xun San people in a sustainable manner.

The SLF emphasizes the importance of holistic and multi-dimensional approaches that consider the various assets and capabilities of individuals and communities (DFID, 2001). Hence, the initial approach to tackling this entails, conducting a pragmatic and comprehensive assessment of the various livelihood assets and resources of the !Xun San households. This includes understanding their natural, human, financial, physical, and social capital.

The study shown that, there is a limited supply and access to the basic services and facilities such as health and education among the !Xun San especially, those who

residing far from the community center. Therefore, to enhance human capital, this can be addressed by focusing on promoting access to quality education through establishment and distribution of literacy programs and skills trainings tailored to their needs within their respective communities. This is also crucial for empowering the San and expanding their livelihood opportunities beyond traditional practices. Improve healthcare services that address their specific needs and cultural context as well as support initiatives that empower !Xun San' women and youth within their communities – ensuring their active participation and inclusion.

As it has shown in the study that most of the !Xun San households rely on natural capital. This asset plays a vital role in fostering sustainable livelihoods within these households. Therefore, promoting sustainable management of natural resources is vital for the long-term livelihood sustainability of these households. This can be achieved by securing land and tenure rights for the !Xun San in ensuring their access and control over their traditional ground. Also, through promotion of sustainable agriculture techniques by mitigating uncontrolled grazing and fencings by the ovaKwanyama agriculturalists, while considering their inherent dependence on and close association with nature for their survival.

By nurturing physical capital is another imperative undertaking in tackling the livelihoods challenges faced by the !Xun San. Therefore, advancement of infrastructures and services will not only improve their living condition but also bolster their economic activities. As shown in the study that all the !Xun San households are heavily dependent on food ration from the government. However, several households encountered significant difficulties in accessing food rations, particularly those situated at considerable distance from the community center. Developing transport networks will help to increase accessibility and ensuring a steady provision of essential food resources to these areas as well as enhance connectivity to markets and various economic opportunities.

Furthermore, access to clean water supply is one of the critical issue facing many !Xun San households in the OCFC. The study reveals that several households could go for days without water and therefore implicated on their health issues. Therefore, increase access to water supply can help to improve on health and sanitation conditions as well

as reducing the incident of illness among this community members. Furthermore, by promoting the distribution of energy supply will help the many !Xun San households to diversify their livelihood and improve on their wellbeing. This can foster community development by attracting investors into the region thereby increase employment opportunities among the !Xun San society.

Financial capital, plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic condition of the !Xun San. Therefore, the !Xun San population in the OCFC exhibit widespread poverty than other ethnic groups. One of the key factors impeding the !Xun San from achieving financial stability is the limited availability of employment opportunities in the area. Therefore, as indicated in the study that in effort to address on their economic situations, the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy authority implemented a series of targeted projects such as Omauni Hydroponic project. These projects aim at creating employments and help to improve on the economic condition of this minority group. However, this initiative proved unsuccessful in effectively addressing their dire socioeconomic circumstances. Noteworthy, effectively addressing this asset especially, among the !Xun San may present challenges; however, incorporating some mechanisms can significantly contribute to its improvements. Therefore, by supporting entrepreneurship and income-generating activities such as small-scale agriculture, handicraft production, or natural resource-based enterprises that are culturally relevant and align with the traditional livelihood practices of the San can significantly help to contribute to their livelihoods. Additionally, facilitate access to financial services and resources for the !Xun San in order to support their economic activities and improve their financial resilience. This can involve providing microfinance opportunities, creating savings and credit facilities and foster financial literacy training to enhance their financial management skills.

Ultimately, the issue of social capital dynamics among the !Xun San, can be aptly addressed through an amalgamation of the two contemporary theories: Social Role theory and Social Capital theory. Eagly (1987) denote that the social roles are developed through the lens of socialization. Basically, egalitarianism and interdependence can best describe the social status of !Xun San in their respective societies. Therefore, in light to this, it become evident that their perceived societal role is best deemed for their ability to share, help, selflessness and dependent. This can be

achieved by building strong social networks and connections within the community which provide access to various forms of support, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. By fostering social capital, the !Xun San can benefit from collective resources, such as cooperative efforts, mutual assistance, and community initiatives. Therefore, the !Xun San relation and social networks is important in all the six villages. Their neighbours and friends play an important role in the !Xun San daily lives i.e. Most of the !Xun San's households have their family members in the ovaWambo households. Also, the close neighbours assist each other in many ways such as they borrow from each other and help each other in connection with fields and gathering.

#### **5.2.5 Policy Frameworks and Institutional Approaches for Sustainable Livelihoods Among the !Xun San**

The policies and institutions in place significantly influence the livelihoods of the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest. The recognition and protection of land and resources rights through policy frameworks have a direct impact on the ability of the !Xun San people to sustain their traditional livelihood practices . Through the provision of the essential policy on Land Reform 2003, this policy address land redistributions and reinstatement in Namibia. It recognises the land right for the marginalised communities, including the San. It aims to secure their ancestral lands and ensure access to natural resources i.e. hunting, gathering, and other cultural activities essential for their subsistence. These policies create a sense of ownership and empower them to maintain their unique way of life.

In addition, the policy framework for CBNRM is found in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). This policy grant the !Xun San communities the right and responsibilities over the natural resources in the OCFC by promoting their participation in ecotourism and natural resources based enterprises and providing them with incentives to support and comply with natural resource management principles and practices (Siyambango, Enkono, 2022). According to GHITEVELEKWA et al. (2020) the CBNRM policy provides a possible window of opportunity through which the San people's land tenure can be maintained. The !Xun San people, have occupation and use rights as registered members of the two community-based institutions (Okongo

Community Forest and Okongo Communal Conservancy), just as members from other ethnic groups do. They have access to resources such firewood and veldfood, but also share in general benefits generated and/or provided through the community forest or the conservancy.

Moreover, inclusive governance mechanisms and institutions play a crucial role in shaping the livelihoods of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Participatory decision-making processes that involve this San community allow for their voices to be heard and their perspectives to be considered in policy formulation. This is to ensure that policies are aligned with their needs, values, and aspirations. In accordance with Ghitevelele et al. (2020) the Participatory Integrated Okongo Community Forest Management Plan is very clear on the integration of the San people. The plan emphasises that “the San community shall continue to be represented in the forest management committee and other forums, where their aspiration shall be discussed”. The management plan further provides for the integration of the San community and fully recognises their traditional lifestyle. However, while the management plan is clear on this, findings from the study reveal that this representation is not altogether effective, as the San members tend not to attend meetings. Nonetheless, as indicated in this study, the !Xun San were represented on a few of the local leadership structures i.e. WMN, CFMC.

Furthermore, in terms of economic opportunities, policies that support entrepreneurship and market access can greatly benefit the !Xun San. By creating an enabling environment for small-scale enterprises, such as craft production, eco-tourism, and sustainable resource-based activities, these policies open doors for income generation and economic empowerment. As provided in the study, one ongoing project, the Omauni camping site project, makes a noteworthy contribution to the social welfare of the !Xun San, as revenue generated can be allocated towards the provision of their burial services. In addition, the establishment of Hydroponic project, established in terms of the Environmental Investment Fund (EIF) Act, Act 13 of 2001 and being implemented by the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy is aimed at increasing resilience of the vulnerable communities, such as the !Xun San of the community forest to adapt to climate change threat by building and establishing climate resilient livelihoods as well as sustainable

economic activities that are less susceptible to the diverse effects of climate change.

However, effectiveness of these policies and institutions relies on their implementation and monitoring (De Silva, Egger & Markandya, 2019). And so, regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms ensure that the policies remain responsive to the evolving needs of the !Xun San community. Collaboration and partnership between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the !Xun San themselves are vital to foster a collective effort in implementing and adapting policies to address the specific challenges faced by these San people in the Okongo Community Forest (De Silva et al., 2019). By aligning policies and institutions with the needs and aspirations of the !Xun San, it is possible to enhance their livelihoods, preserve their cultural heritage, and ensure sustainable development in the Okongo Community Forest.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the livelihood system of the !Xun San people in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy has completely changed from their traditional hunter-gathering system. They now live a different lifestyle, both socially and economically. However, most of them were struggling to adopt to the new economic system. This led to their destitution and vulnerability to social and economic shocks. Resources in the Okongo forest are now generally exhausted and that makes it almost impossible for the San to depend on them for their survival. Some of the interviewed San indicated that they would want to move out of poverty and become self-independent as well as be like other in the community and in the country. But the challenge was the lack of resources to transform their livelihoods.

The reason for their food insecurity was mostly due to lack of farming implements, land and capital assets. The households that had fields resort to tilling their land by hand –a slow process that reduces the amount of land that could be brought under cultivation. As a result, the food they harvest could not last until the next season (Robins et al., 2018). This meant that crop cultivation did not make a substantial impact on the livelihoods of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy.

Further, the food shortage condition was mostly obvious during the cultivation season. During this time most of them preferred to work in the ovaKwanyama fields for money and food. This meant, those who had fields could leave them behind without being cultivated. As a result, they could not utilise their fields to yield their own crops. This had kept them trapped in poverty condition and food insecurity that keep recreating itself every year. Most of the participants felt that the government and the local authority should support them in farming by provide them with seeds, tools and training. This could be the only way to escape from the poverty cycle and become self-reliance in terms of food production.

In the past, hunting was possible San have never been accumulators (money). For this reason, no need to search of work as they could sustain themselves without leaving their homes. Now hunting is banned, and going to seek work in townships and households has become costlier and difficult. New decent jobs available in the nearby townships such as Okongo village council and Omauni community centre are covertly allocated along ethnic lines. San could not get chances to occupy the influential positions.

The San were also exposed to the external shocks that beyond their control such as the country's economic crises, natural disasters i.e. draught and global pandemics. Some participants reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had further limited their livelihood opportunities. Shebeens where closed, movements were restricted and food donor agencies also ceased to supply food ration to the Okongo forest. In response to this many households become even more dependent on the ovaKwanyama for their existence. Therefore, in addition to their poverty condition, the Covid-19 pandemic further worsened their economic condition.

However, San are not passive recipients of whatever conditions they find themselves in. Some participants reported that some San migrate to work in other villages where they think they will get better wages or payment. The San spend most their time ensuring that they have enough to eat. A legacy of their forced adoption of a prevailed lifestyle is that they were never prepared for a life based on agriculture and trading.

In addition, addressing the livelihood challenges among the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy holds profound implications for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, as well as aligning with Namibia's Vision 2030. The United Nations' SDGs, adopted by all member states in 2015, encompass a comprehensive framework for sustainable development, with an overarching goal to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030 (Mgaiwa & Ishengoma, 2023 ; United Nation, 2015). By focusing on the specific challenges faced by marginalized indigenous communities like the !Xun San, this research contributes directly to SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

The livelihood challenges experienced by the !Xun San people are deeply intertwined with access to basic necessities such as food, water, and land, which are fundamental components of human well-being and development. Through a deeper understanding of the !Xun San people's resource use practices and traditional ecological knowledge, this study offers valuable insights that can inform sustainable development strategies and policies, contributing to the achievement of SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). Moreover, embracing an interpretivist research approach, which values cultural sensitivity and collaboration, resonates with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), promoting the empowerment and inclusion of indigenous communities in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods.

Furthermore, this research aligns with Namibia's Vision 2030, the country's blueprint for long-term development, aiming to transform Namibia into an industrialized and prosperous nation. By addressing the livelihood challenges of the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy, the study directly supports Vision 2030's focus on sustainable economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. The preservation and recognition of the !Xun San people's cultural heritage and traditional knowledge also align with Namibia's vision of a diverse and culturally rich society, fostering social cohesion and national unity.

Through a collaborative and participatory research approach, this study also contributes to the promotion of human rights and social justice, principles that are integral to both the SDGs and Namibia's Vision 2030. By amplifying the voices of the

!Xun San community members and empowering them to actively participate in the research process, this study upholds the values of inclusivity and respect for indigenous peoples' rights.

In conclusion, the research on the livelihood challenges among the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy offers significant potential to contribute to sustainable development efforts, aligning with the ambitious global agenda of the SDGs and supporting Namibia's Vision 2030. By shedding light on the struggles and strengths of the !Xun San people, this research paves the way for targeted interventions and policies that can promote their well-being, preserve their cultural heritage, and ensure their active participation in shaping a more equitable and sustainable future. Ultimately, the findings of this study have the potential to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the !Xun San community members and contribute to the collective efforts towards a more inclusive and prosperous world by 2030.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

The San are a disadvantaged group. Their livelihood activities are limited, and the majority continue to live in poverty. The recommendations made below are specifically based on the major challenges or issues raised in this study on how traditional livelihoods could be improved in order to enhance sustainable livelihoods among the Xun San people. Therefore, to improve the livelihood outcomes of the !Xun San households, this study recommends the following:

##### **(i) Diversification of Livelihood Strategies**

- Encouraging the !Xun San community to diversify their livelihood strategies beyond traditional practices like hunting and gathering is essential for reducing vulnerability to external shocks. This diversification can be facilitated by promoting income-generating activities such as small-scale agriculture, eco-tourism ventures, and craft production to create alternative sources of income. For instance, the !Xun San could engage in joint ventures to collect wild fruits like Omauni fruits and insects, subsequently selling them in markets to generate income independently of government support. By embracing these diversified livelihood strategies, the !Xun San can enhance their resilience to economic fluctuations and environmental changes, while also fostering economic self-

sufficiency and sustainable development within their community. This approach not only provides economic opportunities but also preserves their cultural heritage and strengthens community cohesion.

**(ii) Enhancement of Skills and Capacity Building**

- The !Xun San households should prioritize engagement in agriculture activities, particularly cultivating mahangu and animal husbandry, to enhance food security and reduce dependency on government assistance. Mahangu cultivation, being a staple crop well-adapted to the local environment, offers a reliable source of sustenance and income generation. Additionally, animal husbandry provides an opportunity for diversified income streams through the production of meat, milk, and other animal products. By actively participating in agricultural practices, the !Xun San can secure their food supply, mitigate the risk of food insecurity, and decrease reliance on external aid. Moreover, agricultural activities contribute to the development of self-sufficiency and resilience within the community, empowering households to withstand economic shocks and environmental challenges more effectively. Through strategic investment in agricultural development and capacity-building initiatives, the !Xun San can achieve greater autonomy and sustainability in meeting their nutritional needs and livelihood aspirations.

**(iii) Support for Community-Based Enterprises**

- The !Xun San community should prioritize the establishment of community-based enterprises and cooperatives that influence their unique cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and natural resources. This approach entails developing initiatives such as craft-making products that not only preserve their cultural identity but also serve as sources of income. By capitalizing on their traditional craftsmanship and indigenous knowledge, the !Xun San can create sustainable livelihood opportunities while maintaining their cultural heritage. Community-based enterprises and cooperatives offer a platform for collective decision-making, resource pooling, and mutual support, fostering socio-economic empowerment and resilience within the community (Musavengane and Kloppers, 2020). Furthermore, these initiatives promote local ownership and sustainable utilization of natural resources, contributing to environmental conservation and

economic sustainability. Through strategic investment in capacity-building, market access, and supportive policies, the !Xun San can harness the full potential of community-based enterprises to improve their livelihoods and promote cultural preservation and economic development simultaneously.

- Instead of engaging in low-wage labour for others, the !Xun San should prioritise creating employment opportunities for themselves through entrepreneurial ventures. By venturing into business ownership, they can harness their skills, resources, and creativity to generate sustainable income streams while retaining autonomy and control over their work. Entrepreneurship offers a pathway to economic self-reliance and empowerment (Rakotoarisoa, Sulistyandari, Ravoaja, Randrianantenaina & Ramalina 2022). This allows the !Xun San to break free from dependency on external employment opportunities and take charge of their economic destiny. Additionally, by establishing their own businesses, they contribute to job creation within their community, fostering local economic development and resilience. Through access to training, mentorship, and financial support, the !Xun San can unlock their entrepreneurial potential and build thriving enterprises that not only generate wealth but also contribute to the socio-economic vitality of their community.

(iv) **Strengthening of Social Networks and Community Institutions**

- The !Xun San should prioritize strengthening social networks and community institutions within their community to enhance social capital and collective action. Active participation in decision-making processes and community meetings is key to empowering them and fostering ownership of their development priorities. By engaging in dialogue and collaboration within their community, the !Xun San can build trust and solidarity which is essential components of social capital. Moreover, participation in community decision-making enables the !Xun San to voice their concerns, advocate for their needs, and contribute to shaping policies and initiatives that directly affect their well-being.

(v) **Natural Resource Management and Conservation**

- Land ownership plays an important role in promoting economic autonomy among the Xun San community. Studies conducted by the World Bank, as well

as academic research on indigenous land rights and land tenure, show that secure land tenure lays the basis for sustainable living, self-reliance, and economic power. By owning land, the Xun San gain control over precious natural resources, allowing them to pursue various economic activities, including agriculture, livestock husbandry, and resource exploitation. This control gives them autonomy and agency. It also reduces reliance on external actors, improving the community's ability to earn income and support itself. Secured land tenure also encourages long-term investments in land development and infrastructure, as demonstrated in case studies of indigenous communities around the world. Furthermore, land ownership rights provide the Xun San with collateral for access to credit and finance, which facilitates entrepreneurship and business growth within the community. In conclusion, land ownership rights help the Xun San break the cycle of poverty, assert their economic autonomy, and promote sustainable development within the community.

**(vi) Access to Basic Services and Infrastructure**

- Improving access to basic services such as healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation within !Xun San communities is essential to enhance overall well-being and quality of life. Targeted support initiatives from the government, regional councilors, and forest authorities are imperative to address the specific needs of the !Xun San population. By prioritizing access to healthcare facilities and services, investing in education infrastructure, ensuring clean water supply and proper sanitation facilities, and addressing housing needs with decent shelters, the community can experience improved living conditions and reduced vulnerability to health risks and environmental hazards. Moreover, by focusing on reducing dependency and alcohol abuse through economic empowerment and tailored interventions, the !Xun San can achieve greater self-sufficiency and social stability. Given their comparative poverty and historical marginalization, urgent attention to their needs is warranted to promote equitable development and enhance their socio-economic resilience.
- Investing in infrastructure development projects aimed at addressing critical infrastructure gaps and improving connectivity to markets is essential to facilitate the efficient sale of products by the !Xun San people. The limited access to the

transport network in the Okongo Community Forest presents a significant challenge for this community, severely restricting their mobility, particularly concerning access to markets. By prioritizing infrastructure development initiatives such as road construction, transportation hubs, and market access points, the barriers hindering the !Xun San people's ability to transport and sell their goods can be overcome. Improved connectivity not only facilitates easier access to markets but also enhances economic opportunities, fosters trade, and strengthens socio-economic ties with neighboring communities. Therefore, targeted investments in infrastructure development are crucial to empowering the !Xun San community and promoting economic growth and development in the region.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: UNAM Ethical Clearance Certificate



#### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number:** SOS-0009    **Date:** 25 October 2021

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Ethics Committee (REC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the ethics committee.

**Title of Project:** ASSESSING LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AMONGST THE DUN SAN IN THE OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY

**Student:** ERASMUS IYAMBO

**Student Number:** 201411901

**Supervisor(s):** PROF. GODFREY TAWODZERA (UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA)

#### Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
  - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zivayi Chiguvare', is written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Zivayi Chiguvare (Chairperson Ethics Committee)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Davis Mumbengegwi', is written over a horizontal line.

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)

**APPENDIX B: Ohangwena Regional council approval letter**

	
<b>REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA</b>	
<b>OHANGWENA REGIONAL COUNCIL</b>	
TEL: 065 264300	Private Bag 88011
FAX: 065 263033	Eenhana
Enquiries: G. K. Hatutale	
Our Ref: 8/1/1/1	18 November 2021
 Mr Erasmus Iyambo Master Student: UNAM P.O Box 15281 Oluno, <b>ONDANGWA</b>	
 Dear Mr. Iyambo,	
 <b>SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO RESEARCH IN OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY - IN OHANGWENA REGION</b>	
 Your letter dated November 16, 2021 on the subject matter has a reference, and is hereby acknowledged.	
 <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ohangwena Regional Council (ORC) do not have objection on your intended research in Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy as study area/ study population.</li><li>2. Furthermore, the Council is advising you to approach the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Tourism for permission to access the Community Forest and Conservancy.</li></ol>	
 We wish you well in your study.	
 Yours Sincerely,	
	
<b>Mr Phillipus H. Shilongo</b> Chief Regional Officer	
 All official correspondences must be addressed to the Chief Regional Officer	

## Appendix C: Key Informant Interview guides for the Traditional Authority

### ANNEX: TRADITIONAL LEADERS INTERVIEW GUIDE



#### Dear Participant

1. My name is Iyambo Ersamus , student number 201411901. I am studying towards a Master’s Degree in Geography in the Department of Geography, History and Environmental Studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM), and I am conducting a research about ASSESSING LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AMONGST THE !XUN SAN IN THE OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY.
2. Your village has been selected for inclusion into the study, because there are !Xun San people in your village who I am interested to learn about their livelihoods. I would therefore like to invite you to take part in this interview.
3. The research I am conducting has been approved by the UNAM Research Ethics Committee. I would appreciate it very much if you would take part in this interview, and I would like to assure you of the following:
  - a. You do not have to participate in this interview if you do not want to.
  - b. You can stop participating or withdraw at any time if you want to, and there will be no negative consequences for you.
  - c. Your participation is completely anonymous. This means that, even if I ask information that might identify you or if I know you, I am not allowed to make your identity known to anyone. When I report on my interview data and results, I will not mention any personal information about participants that might identify them.
  - d. All data collected from this interview will be stored safe by means of digital passcode, and only me or authorised University officials, my supervisor and I will have access to it. After five years, all the data will be destroyed in an environmentally friendly way.
1. If you have any questions related to the interview, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to explain it to you.
2. If you want to know more about the research I am doing, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to tell you more.
3. It should take about [45-60 minutes ] for this interview session.
4. You can reach me on my cell phone at 0814748858, or send an e-mail to [comantracs@gmail.com].
5. If you want to contact the UNAM Centre for Research Services for more information or because you have a comment or complaint about this research or about me, please call (+ 264 61) 206 4673, or write an e-mail to [research@unam.na](mailto:research@unam.na). Please provide specific information.
4. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research!If you want to contact the UNAM Centre for Research Services for more information or because you have a comment or complaint about this research or about me, please call (+ 264 61) 206 4673, or write an e-mail to [research@unam.na](mailto:research@unam.na). Please provide specific information.
5. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research!

<b>District code</b>	:	.....
<b>Leader's identification code</b>	:	.....
<b>Age of the participant</b>	:	.....
<b>Gender of the participant</b>	:	.....
<b>Number of years as a leader</b>	:	.....
<b>Date</b>	:	.....
<b>Time</b>	:	.....
<b>Interviewer</b>	:	.....

**(a) Section A: Traditional livelihood practices**

1. How many San households are in your village?
2. Can you please elaborate on any type of traditional economic activities that are being practiced by the San people in this village.
3. For what reason are these traditional economic activities being practiced? How often are these traditional economic activities being practiced?
4. How important are these traditional economic practices to the livelihoods of the San people?
5. Besides the traditional livelihood activities, what other livelihood practices do the San people engage in for their survival? How successful are they in engaging in these livelihoods?

**(b) Section B: Livelihoods changes**

6. During your tenure as a leader, are there any livelihood changes that have occurred among the San people in your community?
7. Please elaborate on any socio-economic challenges facing the San people in your community? What is the probable cause of these challenges?
8. Based on your observations as a leader, do you think the San people in your community are finding it difficult to adopt with the change in their traditional economic system? If yes, in what ways?
9. Can you please comment on the socio-economic situation of the San at their household's level?

**(c) Section C: Livelihood challenges among the San community.**

10. Please explain the economic challenges (if any) that the San people living in your village are facing?
11. What are the major causes of these challenges?
12. How does the socio-economic situation of the San people compare to that of other ethnic groups in your village?
13. If there are major differences, what are the causes of these differences?
14. How do you think the situation of the San may be improved? – is there any strategies for development to support the livelihood of the San. Have these strategies (if they are there) been used before, if so what outcome it'd brought?

This is the end of this interview session. Thank you very much for your time to participate in  
this interview

## Appendix D: Key Informant Interview Schedule for household key-informants

### ANNEX: HOUSEHOLD INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE



#### Dear Participant

6. My name is Iyambo Ersamus , student number 201411901. I am studying towards a Master’s Degree in Geography in the Department of Geography, History and Environmental Studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM), and I am conducting a research about ASSESSING LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AMONGST THE !XUN SAN IN THE OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY.
7. I have selected your household to be part of my study, because you belong to the group of people I want to include for my research. I would therefore like to invite you to be part of this interview.
6. The research I am conducting has been approved by the UNAM Research Ethics Committee. I would appreciate it very much if you would take part in this interview, and I would like to assure you of the following:
  - a. You do not have to participate in this interview if you do not want to.
  - b. You can stop participating or withdraw at any time if you want to, and there will be no negative consequences for you.
  - c. Your participation is completely anonymous. This means that, even if I ask information that might identify you or if I know you, I am not allowed to make your identity known to anyone. When I report on my interview data and results, I will not mention any personal information about participants that might identify them.
  - d. All data collected from this interview will be stored safe by means of digital passcode, and only authorised University officials, my supervisor and I will have access to it. After five years, all the data will be destroyed in an environmentally friendly way.
7. If you have any questions related to the interview, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to explain it to you.
8. If you want to know more about the research I am doing, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to tell you more.
9. It should take about [45-60 minutes ] for this interview session.
10. You can reach me on my cell phone at 0814748858, or send an e-mail to [comantracs@gmail.com].
11. If you want to contact the UNAM Centre for Research Services for more information or because you have a comment or complaint about this research or about me, please call (+ 264 61) 206 4673, or write an e-mail to [research@unam.na](mailto:research@unam.na). Please provide specific information.
12. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research!

Household code	:	.....
Gender of the participant	:	.....
Age of the participant	:	.....
Size of household	:	.....
Date	∴	.....
Time	∴	.....
interviewer	∴	.....

**(d) Section A: Traditional livelihood practices**

1. Please explain what you understand by the term traditional livelihood system?
2. Explain any of your traditional economic activities that you used to engage in the past, but are no longer practicing? What did contribute to the cessation of these activities? How much and in what way has this affected your livelihood?
3. Please explain the extent to which the remaining traditional economic activities are contributing towards supporting your livelihoods? Are these activities adequate for your sustenance?
4. Are there traditional economic activities that you would want to pass on to the next generation? For what reasons do you find it valuable to keep these traditional economic activities alive and to pass on to the next generation?
5. Please describe the traditional economic activities that you are you currently engaging in for a living?

**(e) Section B: Livelihoods changes and impact on the !Xun San**

6. How have changes in your traditional and economic activities impacted on your current livelihoods?
7. Can you please identify any major social challenges that your household and community are experiencing? To what do you attribute these challenges?
8. Do you still practice any of your traditional economic activities e.g. hunting and gathering? If no, in what way does this impact on your welfare?
9. Do you own any land in your area now? Did you own any land in your area in the past? If you previously owned land, please indicate the reasons for the loss of your customary land and resources. How has this loss impacted on your livelihood?
10. Namibia faces various challenges as a result of the new economic system (e.g. control over natural resources) as well as those resulting from the politics (e.g. land

seizures). Please elaborate on whether and to what extent these kind of challenges have impacted on your livelihoods and welfare.

**(f) Section C: Current livelihood challenges**

11. What livelihood challenges (if any) are you encountering in your household?
12. Are there any members of your household who are formally employed or are engaged in any type of business? If yes, what is the nature of their employment or business? To what extent does this employment or business help in alleviating the challenges that your household faces?
13. Are there any challenges (if any) that your household faces in terms of accessing and using natural resources in your environment? What challenges are these and what are the reasons for the challenges? How are these challenges affecting your livelihood?
14. Besides challenges related to access to land and natural resources, what other challenges has your household been confronted with in the past 5 years (e.g. drought, Covid-19 pandemic, economic recession)? How has your household responded to these challenges? Would your responses have been similar or different if the household still practiced your traditional livelihoods.

This is the end of this interview session. Thank you very much for your time to participate in this interview.

## Appendix E: Key Informant Interview guides for the Omauni Official

### ANNEX: OMAUNI OFFICIAL INTERVIEW GUIDE



#### Dear Participant

8. My name is Iyambo Ersamus , student number 201411901. I am studying towards a Master's Degree in Geography in the Department of Geography, History and Environmental Studies at the University of Namibia (UNAM), and I am conducting a research about ASSESSING LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AMONGST THE !XUN SAN IN THE OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST AND CONSERVANCY.
9. I have selected your household to be part of my study, because you belong to the group of people I want to include for my research. I would therefore like to invite you to be part of this interview.
13. The research I am conducting has been approved by the UNAM Research Ethics Committee. I would appreciate it very much if you would take part in this interview, and I would like to assure you of the following:
  - a. You do not have to participate in this interview if you do not want to.
  - b. You can stop participating or withdraw at any time if you want to, and there will be no negative consequences for you.
  - c. Your participation is completely anonymous. This means that, even if I ask information that might identify you or if I know you, I am not allowed to make your identity known to anyone. When I report on my interview data and results, I will not mention any personal information about participants that might identify them.
  - d. All data collected from this interview will be stored safe by means of digital passcode, and only authorised University officials, my supervisor and I will have access to it. After five years, all the data will be destroyed in an environmentally friendly way.
14. If you have any questions related to the interview, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to explain it to you.
15. If you want to know more about the research I am doing, please feel free to ask me, and I will be happy to tell you more.
16. It should take about [45-60 minutes ] for this interview session.
17. You can reach me on my cell phone at 0814748858, or send an e-mail to [comantracs@gmail.com].
18. If you want to contact the UNAM Centre for Research Services for more information or because you have a comment or complaint about this research or about me, please call (+ 264 61) 206 4673, or write an e-mail to [research@unam.na](mailto:research@unam.na). Please provide specific information.
19. Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this research!

**Introduction:**

Good morning Mr Abel Uushona. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is Iyambo Erasmus, and I'm conducting research on the livelihoods of the !Xun San community within the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy. Your insights are invaluable to our understanding of this topic.

**2. Background and Experience:**

(a) Could you share with me your experience and involvement in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy?"

(b) Have you had any previous interactions or experiences with the !Xun San community? If so, could you elaborate on those experiences?"

(c) How has your role in the Omauni Hydroponic project intersected with the livelihoods of the !Xun San community?"

**3. Livelihood Strategies:**

(a) What are some traditional livelihood strategies employed by the !Xun San community within the Okongo Community Forest?"

(b) Have there been any notable changes or adaptations in the livelihood practices of the !Xun San community over time? If yes, what factors have influenced these changes?"

(c) In your opinion, what are the primary factors influencing the livelihood choices of the !Xun San community? Are there any environmental or socio-economic factors at play?"

**4. Challenges and Opportunities:**

(a) What are the main challenges faced by the !Xun San community in sustaining their livelihoods within the Okongo Community Forest?"

(b) From your perspective, what opportunities exist for enhancing the livelihoods of the !Xun San community? How can these opportunities be leveraged effectively?"

(c) How does the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy support or hinder the livelihood activities of the !Xun San community?"

**5. Community Perspectives:**

(a) Are there any community-led initiatives or projects aimed at improving the livelihoods of the !Xun San community that you're aware of?"

(b) Based on your observations, what are the aspirations of the !Xun San community in terms of their livelihoods within the Okongo Community Forest?

**6. Conclusion:**

(a) Is there anything else you would like to share or any additional insights you believe are important for our research?

Thank you once again for your time and valuable input. Your contribution to our research is greatly appreciated."

Appendix F: Ministry of environment, forest and tourism



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

Tel: (0026461)284 2111  
Fax: (0026461)228936

Enquiries: L.N Ndeiweda  
Tel: 264-65-230805  
E-Mail: [Loveness.Ndeiweda@mef.gov.na](mailto:Loveness.Ndeiweda@mef.gov.na)  
[lndeiweda@gmail.com](mailto:lndeiweda@gmail.com)

Ongwediva MEFT  
RDC Complex  
Private Bag 5582  
Oshakati

Gen Robert Magabe B  
or Kenneth Kaunda Street  
Private Bag 11266  
Windhoek  
Namibia

13 December 2021

To: Mr. Iyambo Erasmus  
PO Box 15281  
Ofuno

Dear Mr. Erasmus

**SUBJECT: Permission for Research Study in Okongo Conservancy**

Your request letter dated December 12, 2021, is hereby referred:

Acquiescence is hereby granted; kindly liaise with the conservancy's chair person (Ms. Martha – 0814377541) and the villages' headman/s within your study area, prior to the commencement of your research study.

Yours Sincerely,

L.N Ndeiweda  
Control Warden  
North-central Regions



**"Stop the poaching of our rhinos"**

All official correspondence must be addressed to the Permanent Secretary

**Appendix G: Department of Environmental Affairs and Forestry Directorate**



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTRY AND TOURISM

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY  
DIRECTORATE OF FORESTRY  
SUBDIVISION FORESTRY OHANGWENA AND OSHIKOTO REGIONS  
EENHANA REGIONAL FORESTRY OFFICE

Cell / Tel: 0818669425 // 065 - 263040  
Fax, No. 065 - 263238  
E-mail: [akiam1214@gmail.com](mailto:akiam1214@gmail.com)  
Enquiries: M.Moses

110 Church Street  
P. O Box 13088,  
Eenhana  
09 December 2021

Mr. Erasmus Iyambo  
Student: MSc in Environmental Sciences  
University of Namibia  
Windhoek, Namibia

Dear Mr. Iyambo,

**PERMISSION / CONSENT TO CONDUCT YOUR MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE IN OKONGO COMMUNITY FOREST (OCF)**

We highly appreciate that you chose OCF as your study area for your MSc research topic: 'Livelihoods challenges amongst the !Xun San in the Okongo Community Forest and Conservancy in Ohangwena region'. Your study's research focus stands to generate knowledge relevant in enhancing conservation efforts in that area. Consent is thus hereby granted for you to carry on your research in OCF on conditions that you conduct yoursself lawfully and ethically. You are advised to obtain a separate consent for Okongo Conservancy. Contact Mr. R. Erickie: 0812104384.

We wish you all the best.  
Yours Sincerely,

Moses Moses  
CHIEF FORESTER: FORESTRY OHANGWENA AND OSHIKOTO REGIONS

