FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO UNICEF

HERERO AND OWAMBO COLLECTIVE DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS REALIZATION IN NAMIBIA

October 2000

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UNICEF
Table of contents

List of abbreviations ......................................................................................................................................... iii

Executive Summary ............................................................................................................................................ iv

1. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background and objective of the study ...................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Methodology and approach ...................................................................................................................... 1

1.3 Study areas ............................................................................................................................................... 2

2. NORTH-CENTRAL COMMUNAL AREAS ............................................................................................... 4

2.1 Owambo communities and collective decision-making: background .................................................. 4

2.2 Duty bearers of children’s rights .............................................................................................................. 6

2.2.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 6

2.2.2 Children’s survival ............................................................................................................................... 6

2.2.3 Children’s development ...................................................................................................................... 7

2.2.4 Children’s protection and participation ............................................................................................ 8

2.2.5 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................................... 9

2.3 Collective decision making mechanisms ............................................................................................... 10

2.3.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 10

2.3.2 Family system .................................................................................................................................... 11

2.3.3 Traditional leadership ....................................................................................................................... 11

2.3.4 Neighbors and friends ...................................................................................................................... 14

2.3.5 Private consultation .......................................................................................................................... 15

2.3.6 Traditional collective works ............................................................................................................ 15

2.3.7 Influential people ............................................................................................................................. 16

2.3.8 Church organizations ....................................................................................................................... 16

2.3.9 Primary schools .................................................................................................................................. 18

2.3.10 Early Childhood Development Centres .......................................................................................... 18

2.3.11 Emergency relief distribution ........................................................................................................ 19

2.3.12 Community-based management and development committees .................................................. 19

2.3.13 Scouting .......................................................................................................................................... 20

2.3.14 Regional councilors ....................................................................................................................... 22

2.3.15 Modern insurance ......................................................................................................................... 23

2.3.16 Conclusions ..................................................................................................................................... 23

3. EASTERN COMMUNAL AREAS .............................................................................................................. 26

3.1 Herero communities and collective decision-making: background .................................................. 26

3.2 Duty bearers of children’s rights .............................................................................................................. 28

3.2.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................................... 28

3.2.2 Children’s survival ............................................................................................................................. 28

3.2.3 Children’s development .................................................................................................................... 31

3.2.4 Children’s protection and participation ........................................................................................... 33

3.2.5 Conclusions ..................................................................................................................................... 34
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Center for Applied Social Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBNRM</td>
<td>Community Based Natural Resources Management</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Division within MLRG&amp;H</td>
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<td>CDM</td>
<td>Company for Diamond Mining</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRWS</td>
<td>Directorate of Rural Water Supply</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTA</td>
<td>Demokratische Turnhalle Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECDC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELCIN</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRN</td>
<td>Government of the Republic of Namibia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zusammenarbeit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAWRD</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLRG&amp;H</td>
<td>Ministry of Local and Regional Government, and Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOHSS</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<td>NHE</td>
<td>National Housing Enterprise</td>
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<td>RC Church</td>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>REMU</td>
<td>Regional Emergency Management Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>SARDEP</td>
<td>Sustainable Animal and Range Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAPO</td>
<td>South West African People’s Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEMU</td>
<td>Village Emergency Management Unit</td>
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Executive Summary

1. This report is the outcome of a by UNICEF-Namibia funded study on the existing and potential decision making mechanisms at community level, which may facilitate reaching those in charge of children, and those who have particular duty in fulfilling their rights. This is considered of particular relevance in relation to the national emergency of HIV/AIDS that has resulted in thousands of children having lost one or both parents.

2. The objectives of the study were:
   a. To identify and assess existing forms of social organization or other mechanisms at community level, and issues that are tackled by such community mechanisms as well as by individuals with authority, with a focus on their potential for influencing collective decision-making in favor for children; and
   b. To recommend which mechanisms could be strengthened and how; or which new mechanisms could be created to ensure the respect, protection, facilitation and fulfillment of “Children’s Rights”.

3. The following functions were considered as particular relevant and were utilized as parameters:
   - care of foster children and orphans, and sick people,
   - identification of children at risk,
   - assessment and prioritization of most urgent problems and needs of these children, their parents or caretakers,
   - monitoring of problems and needs of these households,
   - obtaining and channeling the necessary social and/or material assistance to these households, create support networks and monitor their effectiveness, and
   - dealing with inheritance rights and disputes.

4. UNICEF’s newly introduced human rights methodology for programming functioned as a theoretical framework (UNICEF 1999). Moreover, considering the exploratory and experimental nature of the study, the following approach was chosen: a. loose definitions for concepts such as community-based, collective, organizations and institutions, b. focus on in-depth rather than quantifiable information, d. case studies, e. interviews with a broad spectrum of resource people, and f. utilization of data from both secondary resources (references) and primary resources (own data collection) in a complementary manner.

5. The study has covered two larger ethnic groups in Namibia, Owambo and Herero. They form respectively 51% and 8% of the total population (UNDP 1998). To get an understanding of both the rural and urban situation and the linkages in between the following areas were selected for data collection: a) North-central communal areas. Ohangwena, Omuusati, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions or the Owambo regions (former Owamboland); b) Eastern communal areas in Omaheke and Otjozondjupa Regions (former Hereroland East and West); and c) Katutura – Windhoek

6. Owambo people practice mixed-farming (pearl millet as staple crop combined with livestock keeping), while the Herero are pastoralists (only livestock). Both groups derive essential complementary income through remittances from relatives in urban areas and various pensions. The poorest sections in both groups are those households who do not own little or no livestock, who largely depend on an old-age pension and who receive little or no remittances. (Iken et al 1994; Quan et al 1994).
7. Statistics show that Otjiherero speakers are on average better off than Oshiwambo speakers. Omaheke and Otjizondupa Regions are among the regions with the highest inequality rates (Gini coefficient), mainly caused by the low living standards of the San and Damara population. (UNDP 1998; Suzman 1997). Both societies are strongly stratified according to age, gender, class and ethnic group. This provides considerable constraints for broad-based collective decision-making.

9. Otjizondupa and Omaheke are among the regions with the lowest HIV/AIDS infection rates, while the Owambo regions have the highest rates (UNDP 1998; Webb and Simon 1995). This difference was very evident during the study. The pandemic is affecting all aspects of life in the Owambo regions and is becoming a major threat for the realization of Children’s Rights.

10. Parents and the extended family are generally considered to be primary and secondary duty bearers. In the Herero and Oshiwambo languages no distinction is made between paternal aunts and uncles and own parents. This is also the case with maternal aunts in Oshiwambo. All are called mothers and fathers. Although the nuclear family is promoted as the national model (and favored by legislation), reality is very different among all sections. For both Owambo and Herero children, the grandparents have become the main category of duty bearers. The parents and/or other relatives who live in urban areas are culturally expected to play a supportive role, in particular in terms of finances. Further analysis shows important differences between the Herero and Owambo situation, especially when looking at accountability aspects.

11. In the Herero situation, grandmothers taking care of 4 to 8 young grandchildren can be seen as a nursing institution, that is socially accepted in all layers of society and has an economic justification as well. Grandmothers derive additional social status from taking care of grandchildren. The arrangement is temporary until the children go to boarding school at the age of 6/7. Grandmothers generally accept the responsibility, have full authority from the parents and under normal circumstances have enough resources to fulfill their duty (time; money; support from relatives etc.). Identified weaknesses focus on grandmothers being uneducated; poor communication due to double generation gap; older women not participating in public meetings and having least access to information; children not being treated in an equal manner; the expected role of the parents is mainly a financial one. Most vulnerable are probably those children living with grandparents, who do not get sufficient support from the parent(s), own few animals, are too young for an old-age pension and/or depend only on such pension. As yet, few Herero children are orphans.

12. Owambo grandmothers taking care of grandchildren were found to be generally in a more difficult position. The responsibility is less often accepted out of free will. Many children are orphans. Less support is available from parents and other relatives. No additional social status is derived. Food must be produced through hard physical work. Unlike Herero women, they cannot demand assistance from relatives. Children stay longer, since schools are nearby. Children in their care might be older thus resulting in more authority problems. In other words, they can often not be held fully accountable as duty bearers. The Owambo extended family system is reaching its limits.

13. Strategies to strengthen the position of the caregivers in order to become duty bearers that can be held more accountable should include:
   - Increasing and enhancing the options of resource poorest caregivers’ to produce food, to generate income etc. (e.g. through group approach);
   - Creating awareness and changing attitudes and behavior of parents (fathers and mothers) so they assume more responsibility towards their children;
• Creating and strengthening supporting institutions and activities: Early Childhood Development Centers; adult literacy courses; nutritional information; health facilities; safe water & sanitation; assistance for victims of domestic violence and so on.
• Improving access to information on legal and social rights, including channels for Government assistance.
• Strengthening community capacities in the parameter functions as mentioned under 3.

14. There are important cultural constraints for expanding duty-bearing to more collective levels and for influencing collective decision making in favor of children. In the first place, Owambo and Herero societies are not only diverse, but also “pluralistic”. This implies that different categories of people have different, sometimes conflicting, interests, values and perspectives. Conflicts arising from such situation cannot always be solved but it might be possible to better accommodate the interests of different categories and better manage the conflicts. It might not be possible to reduce the views to a common perspective by the reference to an absolute standard of what “Children’s Rights” are or should be. In the second place, there is a high sensitivity or even resistance towards children, youth and women getting a stronger position. The defined parameter functions are predominantly needs or wellbeing oriented and therefore socially more acceptable as they do not challenge the status quo. It will be easier to establish dialogue and reach a certain consensus on the survival (basic-needs) aspects of Children’s Rights than on the more empowering aspects.

15. In the Owambo regions, many people were concerned about the increasing number of vulnerable children and caregivers, usually defined in terms of poor food security, lack of money for school fees and clothes. People were also aware of the increasing numbers of sick people and people in poor health. It can be expected that in selected communities, poverty-related problems are or will be so severe that they can trigger community-level action when proper assistance is offered in terms of mobilization, facilitation, capacity building and assistance in realization of by the community identified solutions.

16. Several existing mechanisms that have already linkages with the parameter functions have potential to be utilized as an entry point:
• Water, emergency relief and health committees (identification of needy people and channeling of assistance; connecting traditional domestic and public domains),
• Traditional leaders (peace and welfare is their mandate; have always been involved in food relief),
• ECDC’s (identification of children at risk; channeling information),
• “Influential people” (promoting discussion; initiating of identification of children at risk; improving access to information; networking and establishing channels etc.)
• Scouting organisation (community service).
According to circumstances and preferences, communities should be given the option of forming a new committee, but preferably they new functions and tasks are taken up and incorporated by existing mechanisms or motivated individuals. Capacity development in new roles and tasks will be needed. Selected traditional authorities and community legal activators should be further trained in conflict management and inheritance issues.

17. In the Eastern Communal areas, children of San and Damara people are most at risk. Among Herero, those children whose grandparents live on a pension only, have no or little livestock and can not tap on the resources of other relatives are most vulnerable. The above identified mechanisms (committees; traditional leaders; ECDC’s and ‘influential people”) could also be
The incentives for collective action, however will be generally less strong since poverty is less widespread and acute than in the Owambo regions.

18. The realization of children’s rights in Herero society is to a large extent a function of a) the strength of the Namibian economy (e.g. meat prices) and b) the sustainability and integrity of the Herero extended family as a production and reproduction system. Establishing platforms for discussion could positively influence social cohesion within Herero society in general and within individual families in particular. Useful linkages were found with the existing roles of headmen and youth organizations, and potentially also farmers associations.

19. In Katutura, the level of community organization is generally weak and mainly focussed on getting services and infrastructure to the area, and improving the security situation. Nevertheless, many residents were concerned about the increasing number of children at risk (holding a ‘needs’ perspective rather than a ‘rights’ perspective), crime, alcoholism, domestic violence etc. The new system of elected community leaders (blockheads; section leaders and section committees) offers most perspectives for identifying, assessing, analyzing, prioritizing and addressing social problems, possibly integrating some of the parameter functions. Not only much capacity development is needed, but also additional incentives as these leaders are functioning on a voluntary basis and motivation and morale are already rather low.

20. It is also recommended for Katutura, to further strengthen Early Childhood Development Centers, in particular in the areas of quality control and supervision in order to enhance their contribution as duty bearing institution or in any of the parameter functions. Also the feasibility of newly establishing kind of “social committees” in selected sections of Katutura should be further explored. Such committees would ideally consist of active block leaders, motivated people from schools, ECDC’s, NGO’s, churches, line agencies etc. The committee members should receive relevant training and possibly some other incentives as well.

21. Additional recommendations are:

- To closely follow the implementation process of the cost recovery policy by the Directorate of Rural Water Supply, in particular with respect to their approach towards “marginalized groups” and cost sharing;
- To closely follow the ongoing process of “decentralization”, in particular concerning the opportunities created by the establishment of Village Development Committees. These VDC’s might be able to pull off a more integrated/ holistic approach towards addressing community problems. VDC’s could play an important role in formulating action plans, coordination and monitoring. The planned service centers (larger settlements) in each Constituency might provide new opportunities for channeling information on social services, counseling and assistance to victims of abuse and violence etc.
- To further study the possibility of introducing a professional counseling function at primary and secondary schools;
- To follow and support discussion and development of policies and strategies concerning various pensions and emergency relief;
- To undertake a studies on  a) the conditions of children living at cattle posts; b) the process of “marginalization” of men in Namibian society, and c) the actual and potential contribution of modern insurance policies to social security and the performance of insurance companies in order to assess the need for “financial literacy” training or other measures to increase the accountability and transparency of these institutions.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and objective of the study

This study was undertaken with the aim to support the elaboration of the 2002-2005 GRN-UNICEF country programme, in particular on how to further develop community capacity for the realization of Children’s Rights. The identified knowledge gap concerns the existing and potential decision making mechanisms at community level, which may facilitate reaching those in charge of children, and those who have particular duty in fulfilling their rights. This is considered of particular relevance in the context of the national emergency of HIV/AIDS, where thousands of children have lost one or both parents.

The objectives of the study were twofold:

A. Identifying and assessing existing forms of social organization or other mechanisms at community level, and issues that are tackled by such community mechanisms as well as by individuals with authority, with a focus on their potential for influencing collective decision-making in favor for children; and

B. Recommending which existing mechanisms could be strengthened and in which manner; or which new mechanisms could be established in order to ensure the respect, protection, facilitation and fulfillment of “Children’s Rights”

Research was undertaken among two of the largest ethnic groups in Namibia, Ovaambo and Herero. According to the 1991 Population and Housing Census, the total population was 1,409,920, including 713,919 Oshiwambo (51%) and 112,916 Otjiherero speakers (8%) (UNDP 1998). It is foreseen that other ethnic groups will be covered at a later stage.

1.2 Methodology and approach

This study had to certain extent an exploratory and experimental character. The goal was not only to identify and assess existing mechanisms and discover possible new entry points for intervention, but also to apply UNICEF’s newly introduced human rights methodology for programming (UNICEF 1999). The following approach was therefore chosen:

- Utilization of loose definitions of concepts such as “community-based”, “collective”, “mechanisms”, “institutions” etc.
- A fairly elaborate literature study (see list of references)
- Application of a variety of data collection techniques particularly suitable for obtaining in-depth information rather than quantifiable data (e.g. no questionnaires).
- Collection of data in a small number of case study villages and settlements
- Interviews with a broad spectrum of resource people (see Annex A., list of resource people interviewed)
- Interviews and focus group discussions with male and female community members
- Utilization of data from both secondary resources (references) and primary resources (own data collection) in a complementary manner.
Following the Terms of References, in the initial identification and further assessment of collective decision-making mechanisms particular attention was paid to the following existing or potential functions as parameters:

a. care of foster children and orphans, and sick people,
b. identification of children at risk,
c. assessment and prioritization of most urgent problems and needs of these children, their parents or caretakers,
d. monitoring of problems and needs of these households,
e. obtaining and channeling the necessary social and/or material assistance to these households, create support networks and monitor their effectiveness, and
f. dealing with inheritance rights and disputes.

Most information presented in this report is of qualitative rather than quantitative nature and the representativity can not always been guaranteed. It is the outcome of stimulating teamwork with four research assistants of different academic background: Ingo Etuhole, Temprance Karimata, Toivo Shilumbu and Philip Shilongo. I am grateful for their commitment, patience and nice company. Fieldwork took place in the period from June to August 2000.

1.3 Study areas

In order to be able to include urban-rural linkages the following rural and urban areas were selected:
1. North-central Communal areas or former Owamboland: Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions (Owambo regions);
2. Eastern Communal areas or former Hereroland East and West: parts of Omaheke and Otjipondupa Regions; and
3. Katutura-Windhoek: formal and informal settlements with a high proportion of Oshiwambo or Otjiherero speakers.

North-central Communal areas

With approximately 600,000 people (1991 census), Namibia’s population consist for about 50% of Oshiwambo speakers. There are seven Oshiwambo speaking groups with autonomous, hereditary leadership structures, customary laws and traditional courts. In order of number of people, these groups are Ukwanyama in Ohangwena Region; Ondonga in Oshikoto Region; Ukwambi, Ongandjera, Ombalantu, Ukwaluudhi and Onkolonkadhi in Omusati Region. Oshana Region, which has a proportion of people living (peri-) urban areas, has a mixed composition. At this moment five groups are headed by a King, while two groups are lead by a senior-headman.

Data were collected in all four Owambo Regions, but the main focus has been on Ohangwena Region. In Oshana Region a low-income urban area was included.

Although the seven Oshiwambo speaking groups have important differences related to their particular history, the similarities are even greater. It can be expected that the groups will become even more uniform in the future due to unifying forces such as further incorporation into the market economy; modern education; rural-urban linkages; HIV/AIDS epidemic; GRN and donor interventions; ongoing process of harmonization of customary laws of the different groups etc. During the course of the study it became evident that reporting on each group separately would
only generate additional details that might confuse the larger picture. Therefore it was decided to present the information in an integrated manner for all Owambo regions.

**Eastern Communal areas**

The Eastern Communal areas are more thinly populated and ethnically heterogeneous. NBC for example is broadcasting in seven different languages, compared to two in the Owambo regions. The total population in 1991 was roughly 55,000, with the Herero being the largest - and politically and economically most dominant - group. Tswana, Nama/Damara and Khoisan speakers are forming minorities in all aspects of the word (Malan 1995). The majority of San people or Bushmen who are the original inhabitants of the area are currently landless and exploited as cheap laborers by Herero farmers. The majority of Otjiherero speakers were forced to settle in the area during the early twenties following the formation of the Herero “native reserves” by the colonial powers. In the 1960s these reserves were somewhat enlarged in the framework of the Odendaal Plan. The Herero are divided between those who label themselves “Mbanderu” and those who label themselves “Herero”. At present the groups are still arguing the issue who is the paramount chief, a conflict that has become articulated in party-political terms (Suzman 1995).

Contrary to the North-central Communal areas not mixed farming but livestock raising is the main economic activity. Similar is the strong dependency on pensions and remittances. According to the Human Development and Human Poverty Index Otjiherero are on average better off than the Oshiwambo speaking people. The relative large number of San people who are by far the poorest group in the country pulls down the average figures for Omaheke Region. Omaheke has a Gini coefficient that demonstrates this high level of inequality (UNDP 1998). Another major difference is that the Eastern Communal Areas have been less affected by the spread of HIV/AIDS for a variety of historical and geographical reasons. The Owambo regions are above and the Eastern Communal areas below the national average (UNDP 1998; Webb and Simon 1995). In Omaheke Region Aminuis, Gobabis and Otjinene Constituencies were visited, in Otjizondupa Region Okakarara and Okondjatu Constituencies.

**Katutura - Windhoek**

Since Independence, the largest flow of migration has been from the Owambo regions to the capital Windhoek. This cannot be explained by economic push factors alone, as there is less migration from more disadvantaged areas such as Kavango and Caprivi Regions. The explanation can most likely be found in differences in social relations and networks, which are particularly relevant for housing and employment, and for long-term survival strategies. The Owambo and Herero (and Nama and Damara) have a longer history of migration than the other mentioned groups. (Compare Pomuti and Tvedten 1998). Data were collected in several formal and informal settlement areas:
- Babylon (one of the newest and vastest growing informal settlements; Owambo are by far largest group);
- Ombili (older informal settlement area with Owambo speaking majority);
- Soweto (formal settlement area with mixed population);
- Herero location (oldest formal Herero settlement area), and
- Freedom Square (newer formal settlement area with majority of Herero speakers).
2. NORTH-CENTRAL COMMUNAL AREAS

2.1 Owambo communities and collective decision-making: background

The Owambo rural areas are characterized by a mixed-farming system. People live in villages, but the settlement pattern is dispersed. Distances between homesteads vary depending on population density. Traditionally, homesteads are inhabited by large family-units consisting of two or three generations. Dominant economic activities are subsistence crop cultivation (mahangu or pearl millet) and livestock raising. Livestock is occasionally sold to obtain money, but primarily serves as a basis for economic security. During the colonial period forced contract labor was introduced, resulting in men being absent most of the time and responsible for earning a cash income, and women responsible for crop cultivation. This pattern has continued to some extent after Independence in the form of labor migration to the urban areas. The average household has nowadays a diversified economic basis, consisting of subsistence crop cultivation, livestock rearing, pensions (old age and/or ex-combattant) and remittances from relatives in urban areas.

In pre-colonial times, decisions were taken at different levels: homestead (residential group), extended family and village level. Community affairs were considered a man’s domain. Security and spiritual guidance were provided through a system of feudal leaders. The chiefs (Kings) and headmen also were responsible for basic rules for natural resource utilization and management. The Owambo had seven sub-groups (confusingly called “traditional communities”) which were ruled under a matrilineal monarchy system, and people were served by a number of councilors of the King and headmen at village level. Elders functioned as advisors. Their influence extended to virtually all spheres of economic, social, political and spiritual life. Their powers were not always unopposed, however. The last Ombulantu King, for example, was hated by his subjects for his cruelty and was deposed and killed.

Village- and group-level activities (e.g. collective work; social and religious events etc.) certainly existed but are not well documented. Apparently, during the colonial period, community-level activities (collective work; initiation rites and other cultural events etc.) weakened or even disappeared due to the system of contract labor whereby men were absent during most of the year, and under the influence of missionary churches (Lutheran in particular). The influence of the traditional leaders was largely maintained during the colonial period, but weakened during the war years. This was the combined outcome of social and economic change and the fact that many traditional leaders implicitly or explicitly collaborated with the colonial administration and therefore lost respect among their people. The development of new types of community institutions was actively discouraged as they were seen as ways to mobilize resistance. This and other factors contributed to the development of a relationship of dependency with the Government. (Compare Hishongwa 1992 and van der Laan 1993). After Independence, the existing low level of community organization (including effective mechanisms for decision making) and the tendency to focus more on mobilizing external rather than internal resources have hampered ongoing development interventions. (Compare Adkisen and Devereux 1996; Bruhns and Hinz 1997; Frayne 1998),

Nowadays, there are two different systems governing rural communities: traditional authorities and local and regional government (elected councilors). Although the legal framework is largely in place to define the roles and responsibilities of the different actors, effective collaboration still has to be achieved in most cases. The role of most councilors is to promote infra-structural development rather than social development. Today, most villages lack a collective decision
making mechanism (like a Village Development Committee) that addresses issues in an integrated and holistic manner. This has proven to be a particular handicap for the promotion of sustainable management of natural resources, and is also likely to have implications for the promotion of “Children’s Rights”. Nevertheless, most Owambo villages have currently a drought relief committee (Village Emergency Management Unit) and one or more sectoral committees that are usually initiated from the outside.

The use of the concept “community” in the Owambo context is complicated. Although living dispersed, all people “belong to” a specific (sub)headman of a particular (sub)village, and as such share a certain territory. The headman allocates the land for establishing new homesteads and crop fields. Being the founder of the village, the headman also traditionally provides the linkages with the ancestors. Today, the headman is still responsible for keeping “peace and welfare” in the community and people are obliged to obey the existing customary rules. (Traditional Authorities Act: GRN 1998b). Although farmers have individual usufruct rights to cropland, they share the rest of the village territory for grazing and utilization of wood and non-wood products. The borders of the village territory are usually not clearly defined and land and tree tenure is basically open access. Village members generally do not have the legal or social power to exclude “outsiders”. This is one of the constraints for rural communities for more sustainable and profitable management and utilization of natural resources.

In addition, the level of “social cohesion” and “sense of belonging to a community” varies significantly from one village to another depending on factors such as size; traditional leadership qualities; socio-economic stratification; level of market incorporation; settlement history; political orientation (war history) etc. When looking at people’s beliefs and value systems, within the same village there are often categories of people who have different world-views, perspectives and interests. Owambo communities are essentially “pluriform”. This clearly affects project interventions that aim at strengthening community-level collective decision making processes and action, e.g. in the realm of sustainable management of natural resources. The establishment of community-based natural resource management conservancies (CBNRM) and “community forest reserves” has proven to be a true challenge from the institutional point of view in particular. (compare Anderson 1999; Jones 1999)

Gender relations are another important factor in collective decision making. Traditionally in Owambo society, men take most decisions, in particularly decisions concerning livestock and community matters. Men are considered head of household even if they are absent most of the time (de facto female headed households). Although this is still the cultural norm (accepted by not only men but also most women), the reality has become gradually different. During the colonial era women became the main actors (and decision-makers) in food production, while men were responsible for earning cash income in town and overall livestock management. Since Independence, however, the economic role of men has become increasingly marginal. Their financial contribution is often minimal and women are running households increasingly on their own. The number of de jure and de facto female headed households is growing rapidly. Currently at community meetings organized by line agencies and NGO’s, the majority of participants are female. On committees women are usually still a minority, but this seems to be changing as well. (Compare Hishongwa 1992; Girvan 1995; Van der Laan 1993).
2.2 Duty bearers of children’s rights

2.2.1 Introduction

According to the “Global Guidelines for Human Rights Planning”, rights have correlative duties or obligations for realization. A right as a claim or an interest signifies that the duty bearers against whom the claim can be made must not only be identified, but also made accountable for the realization of that right. For a person to be held accountable three conditions must be satisfied:

1. He or she must accept the responsibility (expected role) to carry out the duty,
2. He or she must have the authority (power) to carry out the duty, and
3. He or she must have access to and control of sufficient resources (human, economic and organizational) to meet the obligation. (compare UNICEF 1999)

2.2.2 Children’s survival

In Owambo society, children are clearly considered a private domain and the responsibility of the parents and relatives (extended family). Traditionally, there are precise rules defining who the duty bearers within the extended family are and they can also be held accountable (social sanctions). Discrepancies between the ideal and real situation are becoming increasingly common, however. A concern of many people interviewed was that those people who used to be the duty bearers (1. biological mother and father; 2. paternal relatives) can no longer be held accountable because they are either not willing to accept the responsibility (issue of attitude) or are not able to due to lack of resources (unemployment/poverty). The only individuals that will always assume responsibility (and are expected to do so) are the maternal grandmother (MOMO and MOMOMO) and to lesser extent the aunts (MOSI) and uncles (MOBR). Their resources, however, are often limited and their own health not very good (compare MHSS/UNICEF 1998).

Being an orphan used to be (almost) a non-issue. The Oshiwambo language does not make a distinction between somebody’s biological parents and his or her paternal uncles and aunts. They are simply called “fathers” and “mothers”. Similarly there is no distinction between siblings and cousins. They are all called “brothers” and “sisters”. Reciprocal fostering of children used to be (and still is) very common and foster children often did not even know who their biological parents were. The contract labor system in a way strengthened the importance of the extended family as a security system (Hishongwa 1992).

Since Independence, several economic, social and political factors have contributed to the partial break down of the extended family structure as a support network. Nuclear and single parent households are increasingly common, in particular in the (peri)-urban context. Another trend is the growing number of children without biological parents (de jure orphan). The Owambo region is among the most severely affected by the spread of HIV/AIDS (UNDP 1998). In addition, the number of children who do not live with their biological parents (de facto orphan) is increasingly rapidly. The responsibility over these children, however, is to lesser degree than in the past shared by different relatives in the extended family. The maternal grandmothers have become the key figures and the ones carrying the main burden. Not only do they take orphaned grandchildren in, but also the ones that are “dropped off “ by daughters (and sometimes sons) living in urban areas. The character of the arrangement varies from the daughters (sometimes their partners) continuing to provide financial support and remaining involved in important decisions to fully withdrawal (“mother can nowhere be found”) and leaving the grandmother with the complete
responsibility. As reasons for not providing support were given both lack of resources (unemployment) and a lack of willingness (attitude) on the part the biological mothers.

Another trend observed by people interviewed was that caregivers do sometimes not provide sufficient quality of care and/or resources and as such do not live up the expectations. The most common example given was that of stepchildren and orphaned children who receive inferior care than the caregivers’ own children. Men were said to be sometimes willing to support the children from previous relationships, but their new wives would often not be prepared to share the available resources.

Factors behind seem to be a changing perception of the function of children and the increasing number of orphaned children: children are increasingly seen as a burden (liability) rather than an asset. While children used to be important in terms of providing labor and providing security to the elderly, they are now seen in terms of costs (school fees etc.) and risk. This can probably be seen as an indication of saturation of the absorption capacity of nuclear households and the process of individualization. To illustrate this, it was explained that when orphaned children are divided among relatives and/or neighbors, future caregivers tend to select an individual child according to her or his expected value in terms of help with the work, future earning potential and associated risk. In particular older boys who have dropped out of school were said to have a hard time finding a home, because they are expected to only cause trouble.

During colonial times Owambo people have learned to see “the Government” (GRN) as an important duty bearer, although their expectations are usually not totally met. Since Independence the GRN has been contributing to social security through systems of pensions (> 60 years and ex-combatants); disability, and drought relief. There is also a scheme for orphaned children, which is widely underused (MHSS/UNICEF 1998) and was not known in any of the communities visited. The GRN has also taken responsibility for delivery of services such as free permanent water supply. With its new community-based management and cost-recovery policy GRN is now trying to reduce its own responsibility and increase the duties of the water consumers (DWA 1993). This has proven to be a difficult process (MAWRD 1997).

Every community has a Village Emergency Management Unit (VEMU), whose responsibility it is to select the most needy and apply on their behalf for food rations or food for work. The fact that the procedure is complex (e.g. four levels of decision making) not very transparent, and the amount received is always smaller than requested, contributes to much dissatisfaction. The VEMU as can be hardly held accountable though, because the conditions of “authority” and “resources” are usually not met. Asking assistance from neighbors and “influential people” has become a normal feature in all communities visited. Although there are individual exceptions, as a general category neighbors and influential people are not true “duty bearers”, as they cannot be held accountable by any individual or structure (not even the church). It is not a right to receive their help but a favor. According to all people spoken to, in the past you could rely on your neighbors (the community as a whole) based on the principle of mutuality: this year you give help but next year you may ask help. In general, personal problems are not dealt with in the open but are kept as much as possible private. Consultation of particular individuals (okuya povakulunhu) is common. These men or women are considered wise (advice) and/or often have healing powers.

### 2.2.3 Children’s development

While informal education by older people has lost much of its past importance, formal education has been gaining importance. People interviewed believed that only parents/ caregivers are responsible for sending children to school and paying the school fees (uniform etc.). Therefore if
a child is not going to school no body is expected to take any initiative. In none of the communities visited the headman, the primary school or Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) kept records or otherwise identified such children not attending school.

When a child has already been “in the system”, there is a chance that the teacher visits the parents (caregivers), when he or she notices that the child stopped going to school. This depends on the individual teachers and is seldom the school policy. If the problem is lack of means to pay the school-fees, most schools are quite strict and after some warning do not allow the child to come back. A principle justified this by saying that they need the income from school fees to be pay for the maintenance of the school buildings. Cross-subsidization is not a common practice, but is being promoted by the Unicef sponsored School Board Training Program. In none of the communities visited, parents were benefiting from a subsidy for school-fees. Most teachers do not perceive it as their duty to obtain and provide information to parents about the possibilities.

Remarkable was further that schoolteachers did not consider it their duty to help children with a handicap to get assistance. In one school in Omusati Region, for example, there were several children with mental problems and one albino child that needed glasses badly. The teacher explained that she is afraid to confront the parents with their child not being “normal”. She also did not have a clue what kind of professional help is available in the area. The school management in this case did not provide any guidance to the teachers in this respect. A student from the Teachers’ College in Ongwediva explained that the current curriculum includes identification of disabilities and problems, and provides tools to discuss these issues in a group of parents to avoid embarrassment. They still do no receive information, however, where to take the children for assistance.

It is not uncommon for primary school teachers to exert authority beyond their mandate and to make up their own rules. In several communities visited, the primary school demanded attendance to an EDC during at least one year. In those communities private ECD’s were mushrooming, asking different prices and probable providing different quality of services.

The fact that most parents now send their children to school has resulted in a shortage of labor for cattle herding. Complaints of cattle roaming around and causing damage to crops are common. Another spin-off is that San and Angolan children are recruited to work at the cattle posts. Also when talking about taking care of orphans, several people mentioned the option of sending them to the cattle post. Of course, the opportunity of living at a cattle post provides a boy a relatively safe environment in which he can grow his own food and perhaps earn some money. More research is needed on the conditions of children living at cattle posts.

In summary, parents/caregivers are very much on their own as duty bearers for provision of access to education, and nobody shares this responsibility with them. Most teachers feel only responsible for providing education and the management of the school as an institution.

2.2.4 Children’s protection and participation

Generally, only cases of extreme violence will reach the headman or the police. They will then handle the case according to customary or statutory law. When sexually harassed or otherwise mistreated, children have no place to go within the community unless there is a person with authority they can trust. In one community visited a young and dynamic ELCIN pastor was a clear duty bearer in this respect. His limited authority and resources, however, seemed to reduce his affectivity.
A serious constraint is the prevailing norms and values among the potential duty bearers such as teachers, traditional authorities and clergy. Many of them believe that children these days already have too many rights and need more discipline. They feel that the legal abolishment of physical punishment and the introduction of “modern” values cause many problems with youngsters.

More than in the past children are taking decisions for themselves. Many examples were given of teenagers, who do not accept to go and stay with certain relatives. Some people also used this as an argument for not taking in orphaned children: “You invest in them and then they go and stay somewhere else and you get never anything back from them”.

On inheritance the following information is available. The Owambo customary marriage does not imply community of property. Contrary to Herero women, Owambo women do generally not own any cattle, but only some small livestock. In addition, land is allocated to the male head of a family and returns to the headman after his death. Unless written in a will, Owambo women do not inherit significant property.

Traditionally, a person inherits from his maternal relatives, in particular his mother’s brother (MOBR). In other words, when somebody looses his father, the children of his aunt (father’s sister) are entitled to take the inheritance. Thus, when a husband dies without leaving a will, his nephews can take all property, leaving his widow and children with little or nothing. In addition, the land the household has been utilizing returns to the headman. To keep the cropland the widow and her children has to pay the headman another fee.

From interviews can be concluded that the above is still practiced in some cases but that important changes are gradually taking place. Increasingly, statutory rather than customary law is applied resulting in the diseased children’s and wife’s interests being better taken care of. At this stage, much seems to depend on the legal awareness of the individuals involved and the existence of a will. A problem remains that some traditional leaders are well informed about the fact that statutory law is expected to prevail in the case of inheritance. They act differently, because they do not support the associated value-system (women and children’s emancipation) and also have a certain financial interest in applying customary law.

There are various programs that aim at raising awareness among the general public of their rights. There is also a Human Rights Development Centre in Ongwediva that can provide assistance. What still seems to be lacking is accessible information and advice. Hopefully, the in the framework of the Decentralization Policy planned service centers (“settlements”) in every Constituency will be able to provide a contribution in this respect.

2.2.5 Conclusions

In the Owambo context, identifying children’s duty bearers and the extent of their accountability is not an easy task. There is a strong general belief that children are in the first place the responsibility of the parents (mother and father) and in the second place of the extended family as a whole. The actual situation is different for a growing category of children, both orphans and non-orphans. Many of the most vulnerable children are living with their maternal grandmother who might not have sufficient resources (time; food; money etc.) to fulfill all their physical and emotional needs. In addition, outside the family no important duty bearers were identified. There are signs of an emerging shortage of duty-bearers that can be held responsible.

A symptom of the breaking down of the traditional child care system, is that children are increasingly “dumped” by the parent(s) at a relatives’ home, usually the grandmother without a
consensus and/or without the necessary financial support. This implies that a person gets the responsibility and authority over a child without having had the option to refuse. The most vulnerable among them are those that do not have sufficient resources of their own and do not get sufficient help from the parent(s) or in case of orphans from other relatives. People taking decisions over children often have different perspectives, interests and value systems. Not everybody lives up to the expectations anymore due to either economic factors or attitude.

Although traditionally an important economic asset the social status of children has always been rather low. In addition, social problems tend to be dealt with in confidentiality rather than in the open. In such a cultural and socio-economic context, it can be expected that children’s needs and rights (in whatever way defined) are not an important explicit object of collective decision making.

2.3 Collective decision making mechanisms

2.3.1 Introduction

All communities visited have a number of mechanisms and key actors that intentionally or unintentionally influence children’s lives and living conditions. These are the majority - if not all - social mechanisms that exist. The explanation is that virtually all community members are stakeholders in the sense that they either affect or are affected by issues related to children. As will be explained in the following paragraphs, the Owambo production and reproduction systems are closely linked. Although each community visited had its particularities there were sufficient similarities to be able to describe the following mechanisms and institutions in more or less general terms:

- Family system (2.3.2)
- Traditional leadership (2.3.3)
- Neighbors and friends (2.3.4)
- Private consultation (2.3.5)
- Collective work (2.3.6)
- Influential people (2.3.7)
- Church organizations (2.3.8)
- Primary school and schoolboard (2.3.9)
- Early Childhood Development Centers (2.3.10)
- Drought relief committees (VEMU) (2.3.11)
- Various development committees (2.3.12)

In some communities, boy and girl scouting existed as a local division of the Namibian Boy Scouting Organization (2.3.13). Moreover, several external mechanisms were identified:

- regional councilors and Constituency Development Committees (2.3.14)
- insurance (2.3.15)

In the following paragraphs each defined collective decision-making mechanism is as much as possible presented in the following manner:

1. A description of its role and mandate;
2. An assessment of their capacity in terms of motivation (feeling of responsibility/ level of commitment/ perspective), authority (respect/ power) and resources (skills; financial; information etc.).
3. Their actual and potential contribution in the following areas, called “parameters”:
- care of foster children and orphans, and sick people
- identification of children at risk
- assessment and prioritization of most urgent problems and needs of these children, their parents or caretakers
- monitoring of problems and needs of these households
- obtaining and channeling the necessary social and/or material assistance to these households, create support networks and monitor their effectiveness
- dealing with inheritance rights and disputes

4. If information is available, an “AAA” analysis of the decision making process. How is a problem Assessed, the causes Analyzed and Action taken to address the problem? Is there a learning cycle? Particular attention will be given to issues such as consultation, communication, discussion etc. skills, orientation and motivation.

2.3.2 Family system

Describing the typical traditional Owambo extended family as a kind of decision-making mechanism is not easy but in principle possible. The current family situation is more difficult to grasp. While the traditional extended family system is gradually breaking down, it is not yet clear what will replace it. There are now a variety of systems that are not yet well documented. There are new household types such as the missing generation households (grandparents and grandchildren); single parent households (mothers with children); neo-local nuclear households (not established in the husband’s parents village). These individual households are usually still a component of a larger extended family system that can be functioning in a variety of ways.

In Annex B, an analysis is given of the traditional Ukwanyama kinship system and the changes that are taking place and the trends. Owambo people generally consider the Ukwanyama as the more “traditional” group among themselves.

Nowadays, the actual function of the extended family as a security net differs highly from one case to the other. There is an overall trend that the family network that children can rely on is becoming smaller, less reliable and less elastic. Moreover, some of the post-Independence customary laws might to contribute to further undermining the institution of the extended family as they focus exclusively on the nuclear family as a model. (Compare UNICEF 1995). Yet, presently many children are born outside wedlock, they might be orphaned and live with one parent, a grandmother or a non-relative.

Children at risk have caretakers who lack the resources (labor; cash; information; remittances) to take decisions in their best interest. The most vulnerable households usually suffer from a shortage of (healthy) labor to produce sufficient staple crops, collect veld products etc. and do not receive remittances from relatives. The impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in certain families has been devastating, resulting in decision-making and coping strategies primarily being driven by a need to survive. Urban-rural linkages within probably the majority of families are still strong. Unemployment however is reducing the ability of the poorer categories to properly maintain the relationship (their duties) with the home village. They stop visiting and supporting their child(ren) and therefore are risking to loose certain security rights. Nevertheless, it is still common for AIDS patients to return to their family whatever the relationship has been.

2.3.3 Traditional leadership

The official tasks of the traditional authorities are:
- upholding of the customary laws
- settling conflicts
- upholding culture (norms and values)
- protecting the environment
- allocation of cropland
- traditional leaders
- promoting affirmative action (mainly concerning women)
- advising the Council of Traditional Leaders
- assisting the Government
- assisting the police (compare GRN 1992; Bruhns and Hinz 1997; Felton 2000)

The various headmen interviewed considered as their two main responsibilities:

a. Making and enforcing of custumary laws (rules) and dispute resolution. He has traditional court at his house (*olupale*), and

b. Land allocation (compare Hinz: community-based guardians of communal land, while Gov. is the overall guardian (:269)

Each Tribal Authority has the authority to make and update its customary rules and laws, but in practice there is much similarity between them and they are to large extent standardized. The Ukwanyama in Ohangwena Region for example have at the moment the following laws and rules:

- Announcement of marula season including rules for opening and closing times of cuca shops
- Agricultural season: announcement of beginning of planting season
- Amount to be asked for land allocation (e.g. currently new plot costs N$ 400)
- Impregnation of girls (about same price as *lobola*; currently be discussed and not yet agreed upon, was about one Ox or about N$ 800, but may go up to N$ 1.200). In pre-colonial times girls were punished heavily (burned or left for the wild animals), but Church abolished this pagan custom. Some believe this has increased number of teenage pregnancies. (compare Tonjes 1996; van der Laan 1993))
- Fines for murder and theft

Some of the aspects of decision making by traditional authorities are the following. In the first place old-style headmen tend to be autocratic and often make decisions without consulting others. They do not fear to be replaced if they do not function properly. Although the Traditional Authorities Act allows replacement, in practice it rarely happens. It is not uncommon, however, that an old or sick headman delegates some of his tasks to an assistant-headman. According to H. Beckers study, the institution of traditional authorities is appreciated as it provides a mechanism for the solution of disputes and other problems. Many people interviewed, however, showed their dissatisfaction with the undemocratic manner that decisions were often arrived at. This is often directly or indirectly related to an existing gender imbalance (Becker 1998). According to another study by CASS, people interviewed felt positive about the institution of traditional leaders and accept it as legitimate platform of governance (more so than the institution of regional councilors!). About a third of the people, nevertheless believed that decisions taken by the traditional leaders are biased in favor of relatives and the rich, not gender neutral and old fashioned. (Katjaerua *et al* 1998)

In the second place, the institution of headmen has weakened since Independence (issue of disempowerment). According to the Traditional Authorities’ Act, it is their duty to “promote peace and welfare” within the community. They are allowed to make and apply customary laws as long as they are not conflicting with statutory laws and the Constitution. They have the duty to
assist the Government wherever possible etc. etc. When talking about their (felt) responsibilities concerning vulnerable people, the answer was always that that is the Government’s responsibility. Few headmen seem to have a “vision” for the future. They have often little education (not valued in their families); have not been in exile (little exposure), although some have been working for CDM (mines). Headmen are not always respected by the people, because they seem to be living in the past, are little educated and often collaborated with the South Africans.

In the third place, very few headmen receive remuneration from the Government. Most of them depend for their income on fines and money paid for land allocation. They therefore have an interest in keeping cases under customary law (even murders). Their resistance to “modern law” (conservative attitude) seems to some extent pragmatic and not necessarily based on a deeply rooted value system. An example is the following. When a husband dies, the land used to go back to the headman for reallocation. If the wife wanted to stay, she had to pay the headman a fee. The same applied when she died and the children wanted to take the farm over. As one of the headmen explained: “I apply any modern law as long as I get paid for it”.

In the fourth place, there is a problem of conflicting values with regard to the customary laws and their application. For example, traditionally girls who became pregnant were heavily punished (even killed). This rule was abolished under influence of the Lutheran church, and replaced by a fining system whereby a father pays the girls’ parents. The fine has increased over the years and is kept at similar level as the *lobola* (brides-price). The idea is that a man pays either fine or a *lobola* but not both. Considering the large number of teenage pregnancies this rule is not very effective. The fact that this rule is constantly updated, however, shows its symbolic importance.

In case of minor crimes, headmen and community members often prefer to use customary law rather than going to the police. Headmen like the income, while victims like the concrete payments involved (rather than prison sentence) and possibly the higher efficiency the procedure.

Several female heads of households in Ohangwena Region, complained that the headman demanded them to work on his fields without or for little compensation. They were not able to refuse because they depend on him (e.g. for the allocation of drought relief) and did not have a man at home to defend them. While the headman is taking advantage of an old feudal custom and his power, he also risks losing respect. Nowadays labor tends to have a monetary value for both men and women living in rural communities.

Headmen are by law obliged to be the “guardians of values”, but whose values? The Act calls for affirmative action for women (e.g. access to leadership positions). This implies that the values to be guarded are not necessarily traditional values and that the values can be changed. Human Rights Documentation Centre of the Faculty of Law/UNAM is currently involved developing capacities of traditional authorities. The focus is on improving skills how to use the existing National legal framework for achieving development objectives (Hinz 1998; Felton 2000).

In relation to the contribution of traditional authorities to the defined parameters (see 2.3.1) the following was found. Record keeping by headmen was usually rudimentary. If anything, they had a list of names of heads of households, which include men more or less permanently residing elsewhere. Female heads of households are either widow or single, but never married. (Compare Iken 1999). Those interviewed did not know the exact number of residents, households or orphans. Some of the older headmen were illiterate. Most headmen were not active in identifying problems on their own initiative, neither were they expected to. Traditionally, “problems” are brought to the headman.
Apparently in the past, most headmen managed a system for food assistance and some of them are currently members of their village drought relief committees. It is not clear how they precisely influence decision making, but headmen were often blamed for certain nepotism, while discarding the needy. Most headmen spoken to showed no inclination to become involved in “social matters” unless it was related to their traditional role of solving disputes and application of customary law.

Speaking to development practitioners on the other hand, it became evident that there are examples of dynamic headmen who play an important role in mobilizing communities and have a positive effect on community-based decision making processes. There is also an upcoming new generation of better educated headmen. Ongoing capacity building activities targeting the traditional authorities might also improve their functioning and therewith their contribution to the parameter functions. They are a centralized institution; they are entitled to work at the interface of customary and statutory law; when solving disputes (manage conflicts) they deal with changing values, rights and responsibilities.

2.3.4 Neighbors and friends

There was a clear consensus among people interviewed that in the past one could rely more on his or her neighbors than nowadays. This relationship was part of the social security system and helped people to cope with insecurities. The system was based on mutuality and temporality: this year you help somebody, but next year you may be the one going to that same person for help. In principle, however, everybody was self-sufficient and more or less equally poor/rich. If not, they received assistance through the headman’s food relief system (see 4.5). Nowadays, socio-economic differences are much larger, leaving some households with almost permanent food and money shortages. Some people also believed that people are less willing to share these days and have become more selfish. An indication that neighbor help is still functioning to some extent might be the fact that children headed households are apparently still extremely uncommon or even non-existing according to most people interviewed. In the communities visited, neighbors were taking in orphaned children. This was considered as the worst solution or last resort, when nobody from the family would assume responsibility.

Several studies have been undertaken in relation to the introduction of cost-recovery in community water supply. (Mustanoja 1999; Presland et al 1997; SIAPAC 1997). One of the conclusions is that community members have more objections against the idea of cross-subsidization, if they believe that certain households need assistance on a permanent rather than a temporary basis. This probably has to do with the mutuality principle mentioned earlier. Not only the water sector but also primary education is working with the concept of cross-subsidization in order to accommodate the most vulnerable groups in payment of water and school fees.

Funerals are culturally very important events. The fact that the number of funerals has been going up due to the spread of HIV/AIDS does not seem to have affected the funeral practices much. No examples were found of initiatives of people organizing themselves to cope with the increasing costs of funerals. Among the Ukwanyama for example, a funeral takes 2 to 6 days according to the age of the person. In case of a suicide (very common) it may take 8 days to get everything organized (doctor and police involved). During these days there must be food and drinks for all mourners. Relatives and mourners according to ability carry the costs. There is now a tendency to shorten funeral days to a maximum of 3 or 4 days. Mourners are expected to provide a contribution to the funeral, either in kind or money. In urban areas, it is very common to hold a collection among relatives; neighbors; friends; colleagues. If there are close relatives in urban
areas, they are expected to finance the funeral. Strategies to cover family costs: a) invest in cattle that you can sell when need arises and/or b) buy a funeral insurance policy on the death of your relatives (see 2.3.15).

In a village in Oshikoto Region, neighbors played an active role in identifying needy people. People asking help from others were reported to the drought committee. This is interesting for different reasons. Misuse is not likely, since it is culturally not acceptable to ask for food unless you have to (so objective criteria). In addition, neighbors are motivated to take initiative since they are a victim of “begging”. The same village also had a record of replacing drought committee members that did not function properly.

2.3.5 Private consultation

In Owambo society, privacy has a high value. There is a mechanism of private consultation called okuya povakulunha. People that need advise or treatment approach a man or woman they feel they can trust (confidentiality is important). Each village has a small number of ova kulunhu (wise people) and eendudu (oonganga) (traditional healers) that fall into this category. They are usually older than 50, respected and have good ideas. Some of them have healing powers. They may be Christians or not. Formal education is not relevant.

It is possible that this mechanism contributes to preventing or delaying certain issues to become issues of collective concern (and thus object of collective decision making). Incorporating these advisors (who are relatively easy to identify) might be an effective mobilization strategy.

2.3.6 Traditional collective works

Two forms of traditional collective work were found: well users groups and collective agricultural labor groups. Both forms still exist, but are in decline. Well user groups are usually organized around the initiator or owner of the well. In order to use the well the users have to provide necessary labor for the upkeep of the well. Usually the owner of the well can use the well for all purposes, while the other users are restricted to domestic use. There is a certain hierarchy between the owner and the users, but it is not clear if this continues in other domains. In Omusati Region it was found that this form of organization was copied to the so-called “public” wells that received lining and a hand pump (Kamminga 1999).

These well user groups based on free labor were said to be disappearing due to:
- other water sources becoming available, in particular piped water supply
- people becoming reluctant to provide labor for free due to changing values

The second form of self-help was described as more or less spontaneous gatherings to assist a neighbor or relative with threshing (okakungungu/okakulula) (compare Hishongwa 1992). This person would then provide food and local beers (e.g. omalovu or omalodu) to the workers. In the past it also was common to send your child or grand child to go and help somebody that needed assistance.

All voluntary labor was said to be slowly disappearing. People would not be inclined to do much work for free anymore (Compare also Yates 1999). Incentives for people on development committees have in some cases also become a problematic issue (see 2.3.12.). These attitude changes are relevant when looking for entry points for people to take up responsibilities (e.g. the parameter functions) for which they most likely will not be compensated financially.
2.3.7 Influential people

Communities have so-called “influential people” that can be identified by the community members themselves. They might belong to the old elite (headmen and his lineage), to the new elite, based on differences in economic status, education etc., or to both. Influential people have usually one or more of the following characteristics:

- Access to transport (owning a car or having money to hire one)
- English speaking (not necessarily well educated)
- Having traveled (implying familiar with other value systems)
- Steady external sources of income (many retired CDM’ers)
- Owning a business
- Professional background (teachers; nurses; retired civil servants)
- Large herd of cattle
- Headman, sub-headman, related to the headman
- Leaders in church
- Active in politics

These people are considered powerful and with more resources than most people (human, economic and/or organizational). They are often selected as members on the development committees (drought, water etc.) as they are expected to function as an effective interface between the community and the external world. They can assist the community (and themselves) in obtaining “development”. Some of them might have regular contact with the Councilor of the constituency. Although the majority of influential people seem to be men, there are also some women who fall in to this category. These women are often also active in the church and/or are better educated than average.

Because these influential people have a certain authority and resources, they can be very instrumental in reaching set goals. The problem, however, is that they do not always have the motivation and right attitude to adequately represent the community as a whole and in particular the poor and vulnerable categories. This is subject came up in many interviews with community members and development practitioners. (See further on Committees in 2.3.10 and 2.3.11). In addition, when influential and regular people gather together, the last ones usually do not express themselves freely. Relationships of dependency and even patronage are not uncommon. You may need help in the future (transport; loan; food relief etc.), so it is better not to take any risk by contradicting an influential person. Inequality between people can be a constraint for broad-based and democratic decision making.

Nevertheless, when these “influential people” have the right attitude, are motivated, reliable and accountable, they form a real asset for a community. Perhaps some of them could become an entry point for promoting discussion on shared problems related to children, on initiating of more systematic identification of children at risk, on improving access to information etc. Identifying influential people with the right attitude and targeting them for capacity development could be an effective strategy. In addition, some of them are already helping needy people within their community, what creates an element of self-interest.

2.3.8 Church organizations

Assessing the role of the existing church congregations, ELCIN, Roman Catholic and Anglican Church, as decision making bodies in relation to the fulfillment of children’s rights has not been easy. In the past, the churches used to play an important role in improving health conditions,
introducing formal education and in abolishing traditional practices that violated children’s rights. An example is the practice of heavy punishment (even killing) of girls who became pregnant out of wedlock. The Church has also contributed to reducing polygamy and promotes the nuclear family as a pillar of society. Some of the churches have played an important role in the liberation struggle and were promoters of human rights in the past (Hellberg 1997).

For most Owambo women, “church” is by far the most important community activity. A survey in 1993 showed that 99% of the Kwanyama women (Ohangwena Region), almost 90% of the Ombalantu women (Omusati Region) and 53% of the Uukwaluudhi women in the sample were going to either the Lutheran (ELCIN) or Catholic Church. (Namibia Development Trust 1993). More recent figures could not be found. In general, more women than men go to church. The records of an ELCIN congregation visited in Omusati Region, showed a systematic proportion of 2:1 for female and male participants in all church activities. Young men would be increasingly absent in church as “they prefer to go to the soccer field on Sundays”.

From the interviews it became clear that “real life” problems or issues seldom receive attention during mass or in the various church groups. Much seems to depend on the initiative of individual pastors and priests outside church. They are, however, confined by the official policy of their church. While the Okatana Roman Catholic Mission has taken the lead in making HIV/AIDS discussible, this does not seem to have trickled down yet to the priests working in remote areas.

All congregations have volunteers visiting sick people, often deacons. One of them spoke highly about a recent training organized by ELCIN where she learned about treatment of AIDS patients. She believed this information was extremely useful in diminishing the risks for caregivers and reducing the taboos around the disease. Apparently, it is often elderly women who take care of sick people. This was explained by the fact that they have fewer prejudices since they tend to blame any disease on evil spirits rather than on personal behavior and own responsibility.

One ELCIN pastor had taken a voluntary course in counseling and is helping a lot of young men and women. It is often during confession (asking of forgiveness) people speak about their problems as with children; HIV status; suicide etc. Church leaders are probably rather well informed about ongoing the problems, but it depends on their norms and values what they do with the information. Some are willing to solve problems of individuals, but may have limited resources (example of Human Rights Centre that would not assist in sexual harassment case).

Not only in terms of AIDS but also in relation to children born out of wedlock ELCIN and the Anglican Church have a conservative approach. In order to go to school for example, a child needs an official birth certificate or a document from the church showing that it has been baptized. In order to be baptized, the child’s mother must be “forgiven”. She must attend classes organized by the church. It is not clear to which extent these church “rehabilitation” programs still exist today (Compare Namibia Development Trust 1993).

In summary, churches as an institution do not seem an obvious entry point for the promotion of children’s rights, mainly because of their value system, centralized decision making processes and top-down approach. Nevertheless, selected individuals from the church could play an important role. They would then fall into the category of “influential people” with a positive attitude.
2.3.9 Primary schools

Most teachers and principles spoken to showed little solidarity with children living under difficult circumstances. Teachers have the authority to refuse a child access to school when school fees are outstanding. Many of them seemed not motivated to find solutions for those children whose school fees are not paid for, who have disabilities, who are mistreated at home etc. They generally did not see it as their duty to help children to get access to specialized institutions or subsidies (e.g. MoHSS). There was also a low level of knowledge among teachers of the options available in this respect.

Teachers interviewed did not know much about the personal background of their students. As obvious reason was given that the children are living too far from school to visit. With the exception of the more active teachers that participate in various community-based committees, the majority seemed to be interested in teaching only. Positive was that the new generation of teachers that recently left the Teachers’ College seemed better equipped in this respect. It is also these younger teachers that take initiative in organizing after-school activities that are important for developing civil rights skills, HIV/AIDS awareness etc. The School board training programme is paying attention to issues such as cross-subsidization of school fees within a community. It is not clear how the board members and teachers receive this.

2.3.10 Early Childhood Development Centres

The Owambo regions have a relative high density of ECDC’s (UNICEF 1998b). The Lutheran and Roman Catholic Church have played an important role in introducing Kindergartens. Recently, the Community Development Division has given a boost to ECDC development with funding from various donor agencies. At the moment, the vast majority of communities, even in remote areas, have at least one ECDC and sometimes several. The accommodation varies from well-equipped classrooms to sitting on the ground under a tree. The quality of the education and care provided, and the school fees to be paid differ from one center to the other as well. Presently, ECDC’s are mushrooming all over the Owambo regions. This seems a result of the message having been spread around that it is an official requirement for a child to have spent at least 12 month at a pre-school before being accepted at a primary school. There are no established criteria, however, for the establishment of a new ECDC and becoming a teacher. Apparently, some schools are indeed refusing children access if they have not been to an ECDC. There is however no legal justification for such measure and parents are essentially misled.

In all communities visited there were several ECDC’s. Some of them have a parent committee, while others do not. The orientation of the teachers seemed to vary from purely business-oriented to child-oriented with great commitment and preparedness to work almost for free. Most teachers interviewed said not to be very strict when children’s school-fees were not paid for. In some cases, they were assured of payment since the principle of the primary school would insist the money be paid for before admitting the child into school. This is misuse of power since there is no legal justification. An inspection system of some sort is needed to avoid such manipulation.

Most teachers interviewed did not have much insight in personal circumstances of children. They were often also not concerned about certain children not going to kindergarten or would approach this issue from the money side.
Depending on the attitudes and orientation of the individual teacher, there might be important opportunities in relation to the parameter functions, when training and supervision is provided. Since ECDC’s are so widespread in the rural areas, they are very useful entry points for communication with parents/caregivers.

2.3.11 Emergency relief distribution

Several “drought committees” were interviewed. These committees have the mandate to identify people that have not enough food, apply for food relief through the Regional and Local Government channels and distribute the food that is received. Many people criticized the functioning of these committees and also committee members themselves expressed their frustration. Some of the problems are the following. Although these committees have the official (outside) mandate to make decisions, the individual members find it often difficult to be in a position to make decisions that affect other community members. Moreover, their internal authority (legitimacy) is often weak by the lack of influence over the outcome of the application process. They can only request assistance for a certain number of people, but the amount of food relief actually received tends to be a fraction of the amount requested. There is no formal procedure to appeal against Government decision-making.

Committee members also complained that the criteria they are supposed to apply to select people are inappropriate and that this is a reason not to apply them systematically and consequently. The absence of appropriate criteria tends to result into a decision making process that lacks transparency and accountability, and thus creates problems of legitimacy and lack of community support.

An interesting situation was found in a village in Oshikoto Region, whereby neighbors played an active role in identifying needy people. People asking help with food were reported to the drought committee. This is interesting for different reasons. Misuse is not likely, since it is culturally not acceptable to ask for food unless you have to (so objective criteria). In addition, neighbors might be motivated to take such initiative as they have a direct interest in solving the problem. The same village also had a track record of replacing drought committee members that did not function properly and were accused of having used the system in their own advantage. In such a case when there is a certain level of trust, transparency and community control, it might be possible to further strengthen this institution and add certain functions related to identification of children at risk, monitoring etc. on a pilot basis.

2.3.12 Community-based management and development committees

Unless very remote and not covered by the piped water system, probably all communities in the Owanbo regions have at least one “committee”, e.g. for water, health, emergency relief (drought), ECDC etc. A common procedure followed in the formation of development committees by line agencies and NGO’s is as follows. A community meeting with good turnout is organized by extension workers. Information is provided on the need for the establishment of a committee (not seldom presented as a condition for further assistance). Then there is either an immediate nomination and election of candidates (often “influential people” that are not even present at meeting and may not be interested or have time), or the headman is asked to produce a list of nominees, sometimes followed by an election meeting

The issue is that members are often not even asked if they want to be on the committee and have the time. They are also often defending more their own interests and not those of the poor people. Their selection may be more based on their assets than on their personal qualities. There are
plenty of examples of water point committee members, who have a private connection and have no interest in public taps.

Many ongoing projects experience the weakness of committees as a major constraint for achieving effective community-based decision making and action. Committees would usually not be representative, members not sufficiently motivated (request incentives) and their roles and responsibilities not clear to themselves or the rest of the community. In addition, there would often be a lack of experience with or low values put on broad-based decision making, consultation and promotion of two-way communication. The following constraints were identified in the functioning of many existing committees as collective decision making mechanisms:

- The quality of extension is often not sufficient. The function of a committee is usually not well understood before members are selected;
- During colonial times extension services were only targeting the better off farmers;
- Due to time constraints, committees are often formed pre-maturely or as a pre-condition for further assistance;
- There is a general lack of skills and appreciation (values) in democratic decision making; consultation and two-way communication;
- Social inequality is rooted in society (e.g. access to information is not seen as a right);
- Due to increasing differentiation within communities (e.g. the educated and the non-educated; have and have-nots; commercial versus subsistence; absentee farmers and parents) it is difficult to achieve full representation in a committee and to come to consensus;
- Committee-members are seldom replaced even if they do not function well;
- Committees are often not sufficiently empowered (authority) to decide and to implement decisions. Not seldom their decisions are not accepted (or turned around) by influential stakeholders (e.g. headman; rich and influential people; Regional Councilor).
- Incentives for committee members have become a problematic issue for development organizations working in the Owambo context.

Clearly, much can be improved in the functioning of individual committees by improved extension and capacity building. In terms of the defined parameters the following. In the near future, all water committees will be to some extent involved in identifying differences in wealth among households and individuals. With the new cost-recovery policy, communities are expected to decide for themselves how they want to share the water costs and if they want to introduce a system for cross-subsidy (DWA 1993). According to DRWS people interviewed, some communities have already decided to apply a flat rate per household, while others intend to divide the costs according to the number of livestock. There is, however, resistance from absentee cattle-owners. There are no examples of cross-subsidy yet. Money collection has only recently started and no systematic information is yet available. (Compare Kamminga et al 1998).

It is foreseen that under the Decentralization Policy that communities establish Village Development Committees. These VDC’s will have a coordinating function, while sub-committees can be formed for specialized areas. Here might be scope for the parameter functions to be adopted and incorporated.

2.3.13 Scouting

Although boy and girl scouting existed in several of the communities visited, it was never spontaneously mentioned as a form of organization or self-help. In a village in Omusati Region, a women leader was asked what the members of a women group with a collective vegetable garden
(sponsored by CD Division) had in common. Her answer was that they had all been girl scouts. From then on in each community the issue of scouting was explicitly brought up.

Women that are active at community level (member of committee; educated; church leaders; women’s groups and self-help project participants) have often have been a girl scout. Some of them were still active as the leader of a group.

Scouting in Namibia started somewhere in the 60s. Although most groups were white, a few groups were also formed in the Ovamboland Region. During the struggle Scouting became a forbidden organization. In 1991, several ELCIN leaders restarted the organization and currently the country has about 50 groups:

- 32 groups in the Ovamboland Region with an average of 60 members per group
- 6 groups in Windhoek (one in Katatura)
- one group each in most major cities

A group usually has two divisions: 7-11 (cups) and 11-18 (scouts) and groups consist of both girls and boys. The overall objective is “to serve the community”. The activities of a group in Ongwediva town, for example, included: learning about traffic signs, first aid, flag folding and leadership, doing sports; helping people; planting trees. The activities of group pathfinders in a village in Omusati Region (mainly girls) were more focussed on helping elderly and sick people. The helping of people is not a planned, systematic or supervised/monitored activity, but depends on individual initiative (good deed principle). Membership is N$ 45,00 per year. This money is sent to the central office in Windhoek. A group is allowed to develop some income generation activities of its own.

In terms of the prevailing value system the following. The linkages with the ELCIN church are currently very strong and many people believe wrongly that scouting is a church-based organization. So far, the issue of HIV/AIDS has not yet been on the agenda, neither in the framework of caring for the sick nor in relation to own sexual behavior.

A national representative of Scouting in Namibia, who is very much involved at the grassroots level, mentioned the following opportunities and constraints for the activities in the Ovamboland Region. The interest in becoming a scout is high among young people. They see it as a chance to be together and to learn something. Group leadership, however, is a problem. It is difficult to find volunteers that are prepared to give their free time. Many leaders are grade 12 leavers and are unemployed. There is a high turn over and their capacities are poorly developed. Only 25% of the leaders would really have internalized the concept of scouting and some leaders have not the right attitude. They like the status, the traveling etc. but not the grassroots work.

Another problem would be that the community spirit is generally poorly developed. Leaders are having a hard time to mobilize the scouts for the implementation of community activities. New projects are not identified. Leaders and scouts like other community members tend to wait for handouts and are not very interested in self-help or in helping the community. Community-based activities so far included cleaning up; tree planting and assisting elderly and sick people.

There is also a cultural constraint. Children in Ovamboland society have a low status and it is difficult for them to communicate with people that are older on an equal footing, even if age difference is very small (e.g. the leaders).
The size of the scouting groups is usually large and this would form a constraint for promoting participatory decision making. Many groups have at least 60 members.

Financial sustainability and lack of resources is another problem. Currently, only 20% of membership fees are being paid. The communication between the central and regional levels and groups needs to be improved. The National board has some powerful people, that focus on getting outside assistance. They are not interested in enhancing broad-based decision making processes and community-based activities of scouts. Few women participate because seen as male domain.

In several African and Asian countries Scouts have been successfully involved in a wide range of community-based activities: identifying and assisting children at risk; integration of the handicapped; family life education; rights of children, food production; environmental conservation and education; clean water and sanitation; youth unemployment; job skills training etc. In the Namibian context, a youth organization with a community service mandate could be a useful entry point for developing communities’ capacities in addressing social problems at a more collective level. Scouting seems a community-based organization that has some potential in the following areas:

- Creation of a platform for discussion
- Care for sick people
- Identification of children at risk
- Assessment and prioritization of most urgent problems and needs of these children, their parents or caretakers
- Monitoring of problems and needs of these households
- Obtaining and channeling the necessary social and/or material assistance to these households, create support networks and monitor their effectiveness

2.3.14 Regional councilors

The role of the elected regional councilors is primarily to promote infrastructural development (e.g. piped water supply; roads; electricity; construction of schools) rather than “social” development. People will generally elect a person whom they believe will bring most “development” to their area.

Regional councilors have a large number of villages in their area for which they are considered ‘responsible’. For example Endola Constituency in Ohangwena Region consist of more than 80 villages. This can to some extent explain why many community members complained about weak relationships with their Councilor. (Compare Katjaerua et al 1998). In addition, their formal responsibilities and activities were not transparent to many of the community members spoken to. The communication between communities and their councilor is hampered by the lack of a representative decision making body such as a Village Development Committee. Now much of the communication takes place via ‘influential’ individuals who do not necessarily well represent the poorest sections of the community, do not (sufficiently) consult “ordinary” people and do often not provide proper feedback of information. Regional Councilors in general were considered powerful and they were said to sometimes influence community-based decision making in their own advantage or of that of their friends.

No immediate entry points were found for further engaging councilors in community-level decision making. At the constituency and regional level, however, their support could be important, both in political terms and in terms of improving access to assistance and accountability of procedures.
2.3.15 Modern insurance

Buying of insurance and saving schemes is rapidly becoming popular among those people who have are formally employed, e.g. teachers and other civil servants. All large insurance companies have now offices in the Owambo regions. The most popular saving schemes are study plans with the aim to secure the financing of ones children, and additional pension to top off other entitlement to pension.

The most popular insurance policies seemed to be a) funeral insurance and b) life-cover insurance. People take a funeral insurance to insure those people whom they are can be held responsible for. The standard family package includes the spouse, children, parents, parents in law and one other relative. It is not uncommon that the same person is covered under policies of different relatives. When that person dies, different relatives will cash in their money. The average amount is about N$ 10.000. An HIV test is not necessary. For life-cover insurance, however an HIV test is conditional. This would have reduced the interest in this kind of insurance. When a breadwinner takes life-cover insurance with the aim to provide support for his or her young children, it may happen that the caretakers of the orphaned children use the money in their own interest rather than the interest of the children. If the payment takes place in the form of a lumpsum they may buy a car. The caretakers are seen as the guardians of the children and the insurance companies usually pay them the money. In some cases, the companies do not pay at all on basis of the fact that the children are underage. The rights of under-aged beneficiaries are not always well taken care off in these cases.

Although these saving schemes and insurance policies can contribute positively to the fulfillment of children’s rights, the real benefits are often limited and restricted to a small group of people who have formal jobs. This is probably often due to a lack of understanding of the principles of modern insurance and saving schemes in general and the particular policy in specific. Some of the insurance companies also seem to take advantage of people’s unfamiliarity with these matters. Aggressive selling of insurance policies is a very common activity in both urban and rural areas in the Owambo regions. Apparently, these matters are not part of the current primary school curriculum, nor are they probably covered in legal education programs.

2.3.16 Conclusions

With the exception of the family, ECDC’s and schools none of the in 2.3 presented mechanisms and organizations particularly focus on children’s needs and rights. This was to be expected, as children are regarded private (family) domain and therefore will not be object of collective decision-making (see 2.2). Nevertheless several mechanisms have linkages or an interface with Children’s Rights in general and the parameter functions in specific and could therefore be of strategic importance:

1. Traditional leaders. Their main mandate is solving disputes and applying customary rules within the framework of the National Constitution. When sufficiently trained and prepared, selected “dynamic” leaders could contribute to creating platforms for discussion and negotiation, and conflict management.

2. Water, drought and possibly health committees. These committees are already involved in identifying resource-poor households and individuals, and in decisions concerning distribution of costs and benefits that are socially acceptable. Important is that procedures of establishment, transparency and accountability are in improved.
3. “Influential” individuals, who are able to function as brokers between different worlds, are socially motivated and might have a self-interest. They can be business-people, ECDC teachers, primary school teachers, nurses, retired people, church leaders etc.

4. Individual clerical people. Church leaders who are dynamic and motivated can play an important role as counselor, advisor and possibly mediator. As a decision-making institution the churches did not seem very relevant, mainly due to the prevailing value system. This is unfortunate, because they would be the most effective way to reach women, including the most vulnerable caregivers of children. After-mass meetings offer opportunities, however.

5. Village Development Committees. These planned committees will hopefully be able to address identified social problems and child related issues in an integrated manner, possibly delegating specific tasks and activities to selected individuals, existing or newly formed bodies.

6. Scouting organization. The goal is to assist the community in general and needy people in specific.

7. Regional Councilors. When motivated and respected individual councilors are able to mobilize human and financial resources, and might be able to influence public opinion in favor of children.

Further strengthening and/or expansion of community functions towards children’s rights realization will depend on the selection, mobilization and training of motivated (the Human Rights “heart”) and dynamic individuals from the mentioned institutions. Depending on the problems that a community chooses to tackle, certain mechanisms will be more appropriate than others. The first step in community decision-making and collective action is the realization that there is a problem. The conclusion from this study is that many women and men are aware or concerned that an increasing proportion of caretakers of children can no longer provide the basic survival and development needs, and that more and more children do not get the proper protection and care they deserve. No concrete examples were found, however, of a pulling together of forces or any initiatives to address these problems (collective action). Some of the shared views were:

- An increasing number of grandmothers (usually female heads of households) are forced to take care of children for whom they do not receive no or not enough support (“dumping of children”). They have to rely on their pension and are for different reasons are not able to produce enough food. These children might still have parents or not (de facto or de jure orphans).

- Teenage pregnancies and single motherhood are widespread and not decreasing. Fathers are not known or do not assume enough responsibility.

- The number of people that need permanent assistance is increasing and the differences between poor and rich are growing. The better-off people feel pressurized to share resources.

People differed, however in their analysis of the causes of these problems, depending on their own norms and values, experience and personal circumstances. “Poverty” was widely seen as the root cause of most problems, more specifically resulting from a lack of employment in both rural and urban areas and low agricultural productivity. HIV/AIDS was also considered a very serious problem that virtually affects everybody. In addition some people believed that people were
becoming more selfish and money oriented, thereby sharing less of their own resources with others.

The following categories of children were identified as particularly at risk:

a. young children living with their grandmother, who lack biological parents or other relatives that provide support;
b. children living with a stepmother who has children of her own;
c. child laborers: Angolan and San boys working at cattleposts,
d. boys that have dropped out of school and are unemployed. Often they move to towns where they have difficulties to survive, start criminal activities etc.
e. girl school-leavers who lack job-opportunities.

There is a serious lack of information on legal matters, social services, options for children with disabilities etc. that hampers effective decision-making in all identified mechanisms. This study also showed that especially those who need it most are under-utilizing existing options for assistance. This is similar to the findings of another study (MHSS/UNICEF 1998). It is important that basic information is provided directly to selected community members (see above list) and that more detailed information is made accessible. In the framework of the Decentralization Policy, each Region has selected a few larger villages (settlements) to become service centers. Some of the line agencies will be established in these centers. These centers might be a useful entry point for enhancing community access to information and advice.
3. EASTERN COMMUNAL AREAS

3.1 Herero communities and collective decision-making: background

While Owambo people are essentially mixed farmers, Herero people are pastoralists. Being a pastoral society has important implications for social and economic organization, settlement patterns and also social stratification. Although slowly changing, Herero society is still strongly stratified according to age, sex, wealth, kinship (clan-system) and ethnicity. These factors produce power relationships that have an important impact on any form of collective decision making.

There is a long history of struggle both external (with subsequent colonial powers; with the Nama people etc.) and internal (concerning leadership). The Himba, who also belong to the Otjherero language group, split off during the previous century and live in Kunene Region. The Otjiherero speakers in the Eastern Communal areas belong either to the Herero or to the Banderu group. These two groups, who culturally differ little and can be both defined as “Herero”, were formed during pre-colonial times and were two antagonistic and exogamous moieties (phratries) (Luttig 1933). The groups have evolved over time and during the seventies they became affiliated with particular political parties. Traditional leadership and party politics have been mixed ever since. After Independence, the Namibian Government selected particular Herero/Banderu leaders to represent their people and to receive financial compensation, while other leaders were not officially recognized. Some of the unrecognized leaders have a great deal of public support, but they are not allowed to represent their people in Local Government bodies such as Development Committees at Constituency and Regional level, or the upcoming Land Boards. In this report “Herero” is utilized as an umbrella term for Herero and Banderu unless otherwise specified.

Herero “communities” (settlements or (sub-) villages) have on average fewer inhabitants than Owambo villages. A traditional settlement consists of just one large extended family (plus workers) and is constructed according to a definite plan (holy fire, tree and kraal in the middle etc.) The head of the family, usually the oldest man, is in charge of the holy fire and responsible for the communication with the ancestors. There are separate households, but everybody belongs to the same patrilineal clan (oruzo). After marriage and payment of the lobola, a woman joins the patri-clan of her husband (virilocality). Due to the dual descent system, people belong also to a matrilineal group. This group however is geographically dispersed.

No systematic information was found on the proportion of people living in such extended family-based communities compared to settlements in which people belong to different patri-clans. These communities tend to be somewhat larger and have a larger number of holy fires as indicator. People interviewed from NGO and line agencies believed that the family-based settlements are generally “better organized” and arrive more easily at collective decisions. In these cases community and family structure are the same, and roles and responsibilities are relatively well defined. This is in contrast with those communities where collective decision making is hampered by internal differences in particular due to adherence to different clans, thus Chiefs, thus political parties.

It is common for Herero people to be a resident of a rural village and an urban community at the same time. Household surveyors noticed that people who live in town most of the time continue to be considered household member (Iken et al 1994). There seemed to be a difference in this
respect with the situation of Owambo most urban migrants. This can probably be partially explained by the factor distance and thus frequency of visits. Weekend farming is popular among the economically successful Herero. Many migrants have significant influence on collective decisions being taken in their home village, for example concerning water supply.

In an economy that is essentially livestock-based collective (supra-household) decisions taken usually concern the management of water and grazing resources, and protection against livestock theft. Indeed from interviews can be concluded that the use and management of boreholes (and thus the pastures around them) is the most common reason for holding a community-level meeting and taking of collective action (e.g. collect money for repair of pump when DRWS is not coming forward quick enough). Other examples are 1) a self-help security force (Epango) formed to combat livestock theft and 2) some villages forming committees for “defensive fencing” to protect themselves against outsiders putting up their fences first (see 3.3.7).

In addition to these more indigenous forms of organization, several so-called community-based organizations were identified: farmers associations; youth associations; and various self-help income generation and saving groups. Community-based organizations can be defined as local groups with grassroots membership supporting local interests and attempting to secure expanded services from GRN and NGO’s (UNICEF 1995). The focus of these organizations is mainly on increasing individual incomes, but there are also elements of training; awareness raising and public education.

Most people interviewed felt that the Namibian Government provides less services and takes less responsibility than the previous South African administration. Although a certain dependency syndrome could also be observed in the north and is considered a constraint for collective decisionmaking and community action, in the eastern communal areas many people feel - rightly or wrongly - that their area is receiving even less support because of the strong presence of the opposition party (DTA). Omaheke Region is one of the two regions in the country with a DTA governor. Compared to the Owambo, the Herero are more multi-party oriented.

No indication was found that Khoisan speaking people who live within Herero communities were either participant in or even object of community-level decision making. This illustrates the marginality of their position and the interest of their employers to keep it that way (compare Suzman 2000).

Women’s influence on collective decision making has always been at the most “indirect” since women were not expected to attend public meetings and speak in public (Compare Becker 1998). Recently the possibilities for participation in activities and decisions outside the domestic sphere seem to have somewhat increased, especially for the younger and more educated women. This is probably the combined result of both larger processes of education, modernization and legal change, as well as development-oriented interventions. Although it is an improvement that women are now members on committees and can become traditional councilors, they still often keep somewhat on the background.
3.2 Duty bearers of children’s rights

3.2.1 Introduction

Similar to what was found in the Owambo regions, Herero people consider in the first place the parents and in the second place the “extended family” responsible for children. More educated people often also pointed out the importance of the clan system. Although the clan system clearly has an important meaning in terms of defining an individual’s identity and establishing a feeling of unity and solidarity, it has been difficult to pinpoint what it means in terms of duty bearing (see 3.2.2.).

Identifying duty bearers and assessing their accountability was somewhat less complicated than in the Owambo context. There are several reasons:

- The extended family system seems more intact and under less pressure. The impact of the National HIV/AIDS epidemic is relatively small when measured in terms of numbers of orphaned children and reduced production capacity;
- Grandparents taking care of grandchildren is a traditional institution that is culturally, socially, economically and politically legitimized; and
- Children are sent to boarding school at age 6 or 7.

It was interesting that all men and women spoken to about the subject came to the same conclusion that the grandparents, in particular the grandmother are the most important category of duty bearers. Their judgement about this fact, however, differed. While most people, did not see any problem, some people thought the situation might be too demanding on the part of the grandmothers. Only a few community development professionals expressed the opinion that both grandmothers and grandchildren are actually victims of the fact that the real parents avoid functioning as duty bearers.

Statistics show that Otjiherero speakers are on average better off than Oshiwambo speakers (UNDP 1998). Omaheke and Otjizondupa Regions have one of the highest inequality rates (Gini coefficient) (Oxfam 2000; Suzman 1997). Among the Herero the poorest are those people who do not own little or no livestock (roughly 25%), who largely depend on an old-age pension and who receive little or no remittances. (Iken et al 1994; Suzman 1997; Oxfam 2000). Although less extreme than in the Owambo regions, community members indicated that life was becoming more difficult, in particular as a result of lack of gainful employment in urban areas. This was particularly felt in terms of reduced financial support (both regular and irregular remittances) from children and other relatives.

3.2.2 Children’s survival

All sources of information lead to the same conclusion that the vast majority of Herero children live with their maternal (or paternal) grandparents in the village until age 6/7, while the parent(s)
live in urban areas. Households in the communities visited generally consisted of grandparent(s) in the age between 45 and 70, 4 - 8 grandchildren and often one married or unmarried daughter. The parents of the children were living in different urban areas, the so-called “missing generation”.

It is an old custom that women to deliver (at least their first child) at their mother’s home even when living in Windhoek. The father of the child is traditionally not allowed to be around at the early stages of a child’s life. An ethnographer observed: “Ein Kind, welches nicht in dem Schoss seiner Grossmutter geboren war, galt wenig” (Luttig 1933). The difference these days is that mothers leave their babies behind when they return to town, often when the baby is only a few weeks old and thereby reducing the breast-feeding period. Also children that happen to be born outside the village are taken to the grandparents’ village at a very early age. Traditionally, children first live with their mother and maternal relatives and then move to the village of the father to become a member of his lineage or oruzo through a name-giving ceremony. After that ceremony the child has not only a maternal extended family (eeanda) but also a paternal extended family (oruzo). If born outside wedlock, children become part of their maternal grandfather’ oruzo.

Surprisingly few of the children in the care of grandmothers were orphans, and all resource people spoken to confirmed this observation. Otjizondupa, Omaheke and Kunene Regions have the lowest HIV/AIDS infection rates in the country (UNDP1998). Explanation must probably be sought in recent history and migration patterns. In addition, the Herero and Himba are the only ethnic groups in Namibia practicing male circumcision. Some scholars believe that this might have positive effect on HIV transmission rates.

Important is further, that all layers of Herero society (also the affluent) follow this pattern of leaving children at the grandparents’ home. The following were the most common reasons given:

a. Maintenance of a child in the village is cheaper than in town,
b. Grandmother is doing the babysitting for free while it costs money in town (working women),
c. Growing up in the village is safer, often illustrated with recent cases of child-rape, and
d. Grandmother likes to have grandchildren around.

Although parents usually justified absent parenting primarily in financial terms, they also often used cultural arguments. Terms like “tradition” and “our culture” were used to justify personal choices. Many young Herero live essentially in two worlds. Childcare is an interesting example of how these two worlds are combined in an efficient but perhaps opportunistic manner.

Similar to what was observed in the Ovambo regions, there are different kinds of arrangements between parent(s) and grandparent(s). It is expected of parent(s) to take (a certain) responsibility for the financial side of matters, and thus function as secondary duty bearer. It seemed that this is also happening in most (?) cases. Like Ovambo grandmothers, Herero grandmothers are fully authorized by the parents to take decisions concerning the grandchildren in their care. Although difficult to compare, Herero grandmothers might generally have a somewhat stronger position:

- They are culturally empowered to demand financial contributions from the parents or their siblings; they are also allowed to sell an animal owned by the parent if needed.

- The children in their care are young since they are leaving at age 6/7 to go to school and live in a hostel; the older ones only come home during the holidays.
- They have more assets of their own (e.g. own livestock) and can decide how to use them.
- They derive a certain social status from taking care of many children.
- Food is not produced through hard physical work, but is bought in the shop or taken from animals.
- In Omaheke, the use of San servants is quite common.

The poorest sections among the Herero are those households without animals (about 25% of all households according to Iken et al 1994) and solely depending on pension and drought relief. Written sources and interviews lead to the conclusion that even the poorest Herero people always have relatively easy access to food (in particular milk and meat products) as it is culturally expected that they receive such assistance from neighbors or relatives. (Suzman 1995). Kin-based settlements often have a kind of system whereby food is shared with those who do not have enough. Contrary to what was found in the Owambo regions, asking assistance from other community members was said to be highly unusual if not non-existent among Herero people. Asking for food, however, is a more or less common survival strategy for the most disadvantaged categories: San and Nama/Damara speaking people.

In Gobabis in 1997 volunteers formed a group, “Save the Children”, to help vulnerable children in town. Because these children were not going to school, they were not in the system and nobody knew their names and background or even their number. The group identified about 60 children, almost all Damara with alcoholic parents. Very few were orphans and none of the identified vulnerable children was San or Herero. As a result of this initiative, most of these children were placed in a nearby school and now receive some guidance. Local business people to whom the children were a nuisance were providing financial support.

According to Community Development personnel, the nutritional status of Herero children has always been relatively good due to a healthy diet of milk, meat and veldkos (bush products). Malnutrition mainly occurs among the Damara and San people and is often related to alcoholism among parents. There is a growing concern, however, that diet are worsening due to reduced availability of highly nutritious veldkos as a result of environmental degradation. The impact of vegetable gardening projects in this respect has been limited as the main aim is usually income generation rather than home consumption and the projects have not been very successful for a variety of reasons. Usually the poorest households are most affected by reduced access to bush products and not the ones participating in income generation projects. (Compare Kowalski 1996 and Oxfam 2000).

The quality of care that some Herero children receive was a concern of several resource people interviewed. The following arguments were recorded:

a. Grandmothers are among the least educated and most often illiterate. They might be very good providers of informal education (story telling etc.), however. An Adult Education Officer said that they are among the keenest participants in the literacy classes. One of the main reasons for women to participate is that they want to get more involved in livestock marketing or informal trade;

b. There is a double generation gap between grandparents and grandchildren, which makes communication difficult, especially when children get older;
c. Women - especially older women - seldom participate in public meetings and therefore have less access to information; illiteracy often causes additional reluctance. In several communities questions were asked where to get help for disabilities. In general, access to information seemed to be rather poor. Grandmothers seemed to receive most information through daughters who were (temporarily) staying with them;

d. Inequality in resource allocation. There is often a certain hierarchy in homesteads, whereby children are not treated equal and own offspring is protected (e.g. quality of food and clothes; money sent does not get to specific child; loving care etc.). There was a strong consensus among both female and male participants of the Aminus PRA that there is a hierarchy based on biological status. Caregivers would tend to favor children whose biological parents are present or who are biologically closest (blood relationship). Stepchildren would often be treated worse than own children (Kandirikiririra 1998).

Most of the above issues relate to the subject of the accountability of the duty bearers, in particularly their constraints in terms of their authority and resources (skills and knowledge; competition for scarce resources etc.). Concerning the position of orphaned children, several resource people and community members were convinced that orphans are usually treated well because the caretakers do not have expectations on part of the parents and basically treat the children as if they were their own.

3.2.3 Children’s development

Herero people generally put a high value on formal education. As was mentioned before, the valuation is particularly based on economic criteria, in particular the future income earning potential of the child. School attendance is very high and dropout rates are low. This is in strong contrast to the situation of children of the San minority (Brits et al 1996). Some people interviewed contributed this high school attendance also to the subsidies provided through the hostel system and in Omaheke Region, the cheap labor provided by the San minority: it is cheaper to send a child to school than to keep it idle at home.

The development of informal or formal kindergartens and pre-schools on the other hand is far behind. The numbers of Early Childhood Development Centres per 1000 inhabitants is more than three times lower than in the Owambo regions (Unicef 1998b). Reasons might be:

a. The churches (ELCIN and RC) have been less active in introducing kindergartens. Kindergartens were a rather unknown concept in most communities visited, especially among the older people. The younger people were familiar with the concept through their experience in urban areas (See also 3.3.5).

b. Communities are relatively small and therefore have difficulties maintaining a teacher and thus becoming financially sustainable. A NEPRU study in Omaheke Region concluded that there is an effective demand for Kindergartens and that a village with at least 30 to 40 homesteads should be able to accommodate an ECDC (Brits et al 1996). Although there are geographical differences, the majority of communities are probably smaller.

c. The promotion of ECDC’s by the Community Development Division of MLG&H has not taken place at similar scale as in the Owambo regions. In Omaheke progress is being made, but community mobilization or any other outreach has been limited so far. Little or nothing has been done in Hereroland West so far and an inventory of the existing kindergartens is still
under preparation. The allocation of public and donor funding can most likely explain these patterns.

Community members interviewed generally expressed an interest in getting an ECDC established. They seemed more prepared to wait for outside assistance than to mobilize their own resources. Their interest was not based on the argument “to secure access to primary school” as was found in the Owambo regions where CD personnel and teachers have been using this self-made rule as “stick” to generate community participation. Among most caregivers - particularly older grandmothers - there was little understanding of the importance of sending a child to a kindergarten, although they did seem to have any objections either.

In Omaheke Region, where the promotion of ECDC’s had progressed further, the CD Division was putting elaborate effort in convincing communities to provide free access to San children. In a community visited in Aminuis, about 5 San children were indeed going for free and the teacher explained that she collects them every day personally to make sure that they were coming. She also said that she had never explained to the parents what the school was for, but that the Herero families were supportive of the San children going. Other researchers observed that San children, when little (under 9-10) are treated well and are allowed to be playmates. When they get older suddenly dividing lines are put up and payment of primary school-fees by Herero employers is not common. There is a structural interest in keeping the San illiterate and “stupid” (dom). Education is considered as negative because it leads to empowerment. (Suzman 2000; Kandirikirira 1998).

A small category of better-off Herero families in cities would leave their children with the grandparents until they reach kindergarten age (4-5). Then they would take the children in themselves until they could be send to boarding school (6-7).

Since primary education was introduced, Herero children have been going to public or church related boarding schools in urban centres. Distances in most cases do not leave any other option. When such an option exist, however, children might still be sent away from home to come back only during to the holidays. There might be different reasons: a) the believe inherited from colonial times that boarding is good for a child and b) cost saving whereby the parents/caregivers choose to take advantage of the available subsidy and reduce their own expenditures on the child.

ACORD’s study in the Aminuis area in 1998 revealed in a shocking manner how substandard or even horrific the conditions in 3 government run hostels were (Kandirikirira 1998). According to insiders, conditions in many other hostels in Otjizondupa and Omaheke are probably similar.

Several caregivers spoken to about this subject seemed to a certain extent aware of the poor conditions. One grandmother said that she always noticed that children came home for holiday looking thin and that their shoes, clothes and blankets were often missing. She said she had never personally visited the hostel or talked to the children about their experiences. When asked about the role of the parent committee in this matter, she said that they only address discipline matters and that the school board is only concerned about finances. Parents/caregivers do generally not ask the children questions nor do they visit the school and hostel. Their strategy seems avoidance of responsibility. They cannot be held accountable for a situation that they do not controle. They do neither have the authority nor the resources to change the situation. When asked they said that the school (teachers and matrones) was responsible. The teachers and matrones on their turn do not assume responsibility either since they also feel that they do not have enough authority (beating is not allowed) and resources (money to buy good and sufficient food, blankets etc.). They believe the Namibian Government is responsible. Thus, nobody is assuming responsibility.
or ownership of the problem and nobody can be held accountable (“blamed”). And the children continue to be the victims. Following the PRA, ACORD’s “Total Child Project” has tried to brake this vicious circle through a series of capacity development workshops with parents, teachers and matrons.

3.2.4 Children’s protection and participation

Traditionally in Herero society, children are seen as important asset for the whole lineage (clan) and are therefore “protected” by all members. The institution of cross-cousin marriage (preferred marriage between children of brothers and sisters) is also meant to strengthen the family bond. Similar to the Owambo matrilinear descent system, a child’s maternal uncle (MOSI) is very important and functions as particular “protector”. A person not only inherits from him (see 3.2.5), but might also physically be safeguarded, for example against abuse from his own father (Luttig 1933). It is not clear to which extent the maternal uncle still functions as a physical protector of a child in crisis. Cross-cousin marriages are still encouraged, but are increasingly common.

In general terms, Herero parents/caregivers expect respect and obedience from children of all age. This is normally accompanied with a child image, whereby children are considered inferior, uncivilized and stupid. This child image is by the way applied not only to Herero children, but also to San adults. (Compare Suzman 2000 and Kandirikirira 1998).

Similar to what was observed in the Owambo regions, the concept of “children’s rights” is known but mainly understood in terms of limitations to disciplining of children through corporal punishment. Parents, teachers nor children seemed to well understand that “rights” should be accompanied with “duties”. This can be seen as a flaw in Children Rights campaigns. Since no alternative instruments were provided, parents blame GRN for taking their authority away. They feel that now they have no means to control anymore, they can no longer be held accountable for the behavior of their children. The responsibility has in their opinion shifted to the GRN, what for many implies a government that does not represent anyway. This feeling of disempowerment among parents and teachers also surfaced very strongly in the mentioned Aminuis study by ACORD. It has apparently contributed to great deal of violence, neglect and abuse taking place and knowingly being ignored. (Kandirikiririra 1998). In other words, when it comes to rights related to children’s protection and participation the duty bearers are hard to find.

Many resource people pointed out that there is a huge gap between the Herero youth and the older generation, and that they almost live in two different worlds. This gap is also considered as one of the constraints to come to democratic collective decision making at community level. Some of the Herero youth organizations have identified as their main objectives not only increased participation in community decision making but also the closure of this gap. (See 3.3.12).

In Okakara Constituency (Hereroland West) a group of women had come together to protest against domestic violence. The Town Clerk was willing to assist them but the only strategy he knew was to formalize the status of the group (form an association etc.) and that was exactly what the women feared to do. No counseling functions or women and child abuse centers seemed to exist in the Eastern Communal areas.

Traditionally, inheritance of property (mainly livestock) takes place through the matrilineal descent system (eeanda), similar to what happens in the Owambo region. This implies that a Herero child inherits from his mother’s brother (maternal uncle), but not (much) from his or her own father. If a man dies, his property will go to the children of his sister, who usually live in other locations. Conflicts use to arise when his brothers (or other paternal relatives: oruzo

33
members) would refuse to collaborate and do not let the property leave. One of the functions if a cross-cousin marriage is also to keep the property together in the *eeanda*. (compare Luttig 1933 and Malan 1995). Contrary to most Owambo women, Herero women do have property of their own. Their heirs are usually their elder sister if children are still minor (as matron) or directly their children if grown-up.

Traditionally, when a man dies his wife and children are “inherited” by his brother (brother-in-law marriage or levirate). This inheritance can be interpreted in terms of assets being passed or security being provided. Nowadays, levirate is becoming rare and only happens with approval of the woman involved. A widow might return with her children to her parents place or stay depending on circumstances and personal choices.

Most people interviewed on this topic said that problems related to inheritance are still common, but less so than in the past. Various reasons were given. It is becoming more popular to make a will. In addition, the application of modern laws is gradually resulting in the interests of wife and children being better taken care of. And finally, there certain procedures are followed to arrive at consensus decision-making among stakeholders. Because attending funerals is culturally obligatory, basically all *eeanda* and *oruzo* relatives of the deceased come together in the village. Then meetings are held with the headman in a mediating role (see 3.3.3). More than in the Owambo regions, inheritance mediation seems to be an explicit task for the traditional authorities. If there is a will their task is easy, if not, the relatives negotiate amongst themselves in order to come to a consensus. It has not been possible to assess the decision making process in these situations and how the interests of minors (in disadvantaged categories) are being taken care of.

A “dynamic” grandmother in Okumo village in Aminuis area gave an example of what she thought was a fair division of 100 head of cattle: 30 heads for the wife; 40 for the children (each of the four children gets 10) and 30 for male and female relatives from the *eeanda*. She said that she was thinking about making a will for the cattle she owns herself. She would probably favor the grandchildren born out of wedlock. If one of her grandchildren would become an orphan she would favor him or her also.

A recently by the Legal Assistance Centre trained paralegal or community legal activator (?) from Corridor in Hereroland East, believed that inheritance problems would not feature strongly in his work as paralegal. He said that he expected to inherit only 10 of his father’s 800 heads of cattle, but he seemed to have accepted that.

Similar to what was said in 2.2.4 about the Owambo situation, there is an emergence of a new trend of children of the deceased being awarded a number of cattle and small stock from their father’s estate. This is an indication that the matrilineal descent system (*eeanda*) is loosing importance and the patrilineal (*oruzo*) descent system gaining importance. (Compare Malan 1995). It also implies a shift towards a more nuclear family oriented system which is supported by the modern legal system (Compare UNICEF 1995). This might not be in the interest of certain categories of children, in particular those without legally recognized fathers. On the other hand, the institution of the maternal uncle might be strong because it accommodates the biological factor. Several people explained that men like to make their nephews heirs because being their sisters’ children they are at least for 50% their blood relatives.

### 3.2.5 Conclusions

In the Herero context, the duty bearers for young children (under 6/7) are relatively easy to define. They are the grandparents (particularly the grandmother) in combination with the
biological parent(s) and sometimes their siblings are responsible for providing financial support according to ability. At this age the grandparents can probably also exercise full authority as they are used to. Depending on the standards applied the quality of the care can be rated. Contrary to the Owambo regions, extreme poverty does not (yet) seem to be so widespread.

When a child starts going to school a lot changes. While at school and living in a hostel, usually none of the relatives is taking any responsibility. They do not even come to visit. They transfer full responsibility and authority to the teachers and matrons while expecting the GRN to provide all the necessary support. The teachers/matrons, however, feel they cannot be held accountable because they do not have all the necessary resources to properly feed the children etc. and also to exercise authority (no beating allowed). Ultimately the GRN is responsible and no body can control them, especially not when you belong to the opposition. When returning home for holidays, grandparents have gradually more difficulties exercising control over the children when they get older and a gap starts to manifest itself. The parents are not around to mediate or form a bridge.

Beyond the grandparents (and other relatives), the GRN is considered the main duty bearer for children. There is a strong GRN dependency syndrome, although the expectations are often different than what was observed in the SWAPO dominated North-central Communal areas.

The current situation of duty bearing can be further explained as follows:

- Traditionally, Herero children grow up with different members of the extended family and do not necessarily live (all the time) with their biological parents (Luttig 1933). The expected role of the biological parents is therefore not the same as in a society based on a nuclear family structure. Children were and still are considered an important economic asset. Formal education is considered very important. Other aspects of child development and care seem to be less understood and/or valued.

- Urban-rural linkages are strong and considered important. The grandmother-grandchild relationship strengthens this relationship and is therefore in every body’s interest. Even when Herero people are in town and live in a (sort of) nuclear or single parent unit, they continue to have rights and duties as member of their extended family system. Urban migrants are still considered to be a member of the household of their parents. Their remittances and investments are often driving forces behind the family economy. In emergency situations, the head of the family (male or female) can order family members in town to contribute according to their ability.

- Traditionally, grandmothers play an important role in childcare and (especially the wife of the head of an extended family) have a strong position in Herero society. Child-rearing task of MOMO increased due to a) more children born out of wedlock (do not have paternal relatives) and b) more women migrating to the city. Herero grandmothers beyond child-bearing age derive a certain social status from taking care of small children.

- When the South African administration established native reserves, the idea was that women and children would reside there permanently and be largely self-sufficient, while the men would go and work in the mines or on white owned farms. Married women obtained a stronger role in household decision making, at least during the absence of the husband.
• In the absence of adult men Herero families in Omaheke Region began to utilize the original inhabitants of the area, the San people, as cheap labor. This pattern continues until the day of today. The San - and to smaller extent Owambo and Nama/Damara - farm workers replace the large number of male and female youngsters residing in urban areas.

• The urban areas continue to have a strong attraction among the youth, and therefore the demand for childcare in the village is high. The current high unemployment rates in urban areas have not yet resulted in people return to the rural areas or fewer young people leaving. The farming profession, unless as a weekend farmer or later after retirement, is not so popular anymore among the youth. (Compare Brits et al 1996). As long as the rural economy continues to be livestock-based and economically not diversified, employment opportunities for the youth will remain limited.

• A large proportion of children is born out of wedlock. The rate of teenage pregnancies is very high. Single motherhood has been increasing as a result of being brought up to go after rich man and entering bad relationships and/or as a result of the trend among better educated women to become more independent (Kandirikirira 1998). Grandparents tend to consider their own children as “children” until they are married (Becker 1998). They therefore are easily prepared to take responsibility over children born out of wedlock.

• In general, men are becoming more and more marginalized, both as husbands/fathers and breadwinners (unemployment). They have no parenting role and are only “buying shoes for their children” (Compare Kandirikirira 1998). Like the Owambo, Herero also have a matrilineal descent system, whereby the maternal uncle (MOBR) is traditionally more important for a child than the biological father. Modern statutory law is not recognizing this important relationship. (Compare Unicef 1995).

In other terms, the Herero productive and reproductive system is largely based on the multiple roles of the grandparents. In addition for Hereroland East the exploitation of cheap labor of the San farm workers forms a contributing factor. What the long-term-sustainability of this system is needs to be seen and is largely a political question. Considering the structural strength of the institution as described above “the empowerment of grandmothers” will have to go along way before anything will fundamentally change. A more important issue here is what will happen in the future, when the mothers that drop of their children in the village will become grandmothers themselves. Will they be willing and able to do the same? The urban-rural linkages still seem very strong in the sense that people return for funerals, weddings, the holy fire, invest in livestock, build homes and plan their retirement in the village etc. A crucial factor is probably the national economy in general (old age pensions; employment; services provided to rural areas etc.) and the livestock economy in particular.

3.3 Collective decision-making mechanisms

3.3.1 Introduction

Also in the Eastern Communal Areas a number of collective decision making mechanisms were identified:

- family system (3.3.2)
- traditional leaders (3.3.3)
- Epango, self-help security system (3.3.4)
- Churches and healers (3.3.5)
- water supply committees (3.3.6)
- other resource management initiatives (3.3.7)
- Early Childhood Development Centers (3.3.8)
- Self-help groups (3.3.9)
- schools (3.3.10)
- Farmers associations (3.3.11)
- Youth organizations (3.3.12)
- Local and regional government (3.3.13)
- Age mate system (3.3.14)

3.3.2 Family system

The Herero extended family (lineage) can be classified as a kind of collective decision-making mechanism. In general terms, the Herero extended family system seemed to be under less pressure and more in tact than the Owambo system. The limited impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic so far and a better overall economic situation (less poverty) can probably to a large extent explain this important difference.

Several of the urbanized and better-educated Herero expressed the feeling of living in two worlds. They lead a certain lifestyle in town, associated with certain values, and lead another lifestyle “at home in the village”, associated with other values. Nowadays, internal differences (rural versus urban; older versus younger generation; communal-cultural versus commercial oriented livestock-keeping etc.) within Herero society are tremendous (Suzman 1995; Brits et al 1998). They can form a real threat for the cohesion within individual extended families and thus negatively affect their decision-making potential as a whole.

As was mentioned before in 3.2.2, people living in urban areas are still considered to be a member of the larger household of their father or grandfather. Regularly returning to the holy fire still has a spiritual meaning and helps to hold the patrilineage (oruzo) together. There are usually important productive and reproductive relationships between relatives as was explained in the previous paragraphs. Although decision-making in each family will be the outcome of the particular dynamics of interaction between individuals there are at least two common aspects:

1) Traditionally, decision making within the Herero extended family is based on the acceptance of a hierarchy between people. The male head of the patrilineage is very much respected. His wife also has a strong position in decision making particularly in issues concerning children. Roles and power are traditionally defined according to position in the family, age (order of birth), wealth, gender etc. Conflicts between members of the older generation and the younger generation are common. They often arise from a difference in value-system and orientation. For example regarding the management of the herd, older people tend to aim at maximizing numbers (provides status), while the young are interested in maximizing weight (produces cash).

2) Important decisions that affect children are made during funerals, when all relatives gather. During these periods meetings are held and negotiations take place in order to come to decisions how the estate of the deceased is divided, who will take care of minor children and who is responsible for financially supporting them etc. The headman might function as mediator (see 3.3.3). No details are available on who participate in these meetings, how the decision-making process works and to which extend ‘children’s rights’ are considered.
Important is that - as people interviewed saw it - a “consensus” is arrived at and that everybody is informed about it. It can be assumed that the relatives present contribute their respective skills and knowledge to the discussion.

The functioning and sustainability of a modern Herero extended family as a collective decision-making mechanism depends on its capacity to effectively accommodate different interests and views, and also to mobilize resources for common purposes. Apparently, during funeral-periods often some sort of platform for discussion is created with the headman as an outside mediator.

### 3.3.3 Traditional leadership

Under the South African administration Herero similar to the Owambo traditional authorities had extensive power, but after Independence their roles and responsibilities were stripped in favor of a centralized government authority. During the Independence struggle the Herero leadership already started to loose some of its strength due to an internal political division into opponents and supporters, largely overlapping with the earlier mentioned old symbolic Herero-Mbanderu clan-based divide. There is still no paramount Chief whom is accepted by both groups. The youth is not interested in this issue and considers it a conflict between their fathers. The problem is, however, that the older people allow their conflict to enter any development issue and create a barrier for community-based discussion and decision-making. (Compare Suzman 1995).

Hereroland East and West both have two parallel systems of Herero and Mbanderu Chiefs, headmen, councilors and messengers. In addition, some of these leaders are officially recognized while others are not. The unrecognized ones are not supposed to represent their people. This would be the major reason why for example Otjinene has no Constituency Development Committee yet. Some people interviewed also believed that this is one of the reasons of the holding up of the Drafted Communal Land’s Bill: the Land Boards do not allow non-recognized leaders to be a member. People were not aware of any formal criteria being applied by the GRN to decide which elected leader to recognize. Many people spoken to blamed the GRN of choosing “weaker” personalities and those supporting SWAPO.

The 1995 Traditional Authorities Act emphasizes the importance of the institution being a-political. The mixing of traditional leadership and party-politics is considered negative when it results in individual leaders not representing all community members (Bruhns and Hinz 1997; Felton 2000). This is unfortunately exactly what is happening in the Eastern Communal Areas.

Although all villages have a leadership structure, there are different forms. Smaller communities probably have more often a system purely based on kinship (community might be one family), while larger communities might have different leaders. There is also a system of villages and sub-villages, whereby villages have a ‘hoofman” (headman) and sub-villages an “opperman” (literally upper man). In addition there are councilors (‘raden’) and messengers (“voormannen”).

Other studies and own interviews lead to the conclusion that traditional authorities have and always had predominantly roles and responsibilities in dispute resolution. Most frequent cases concern theft and marital problems. In marital conflicts the headman will try to reconcile the parties and if this fails he may pronounce a divorce in terms of customary. For theft and other crimes a traditional court is held with more or less standardized Herero customary. Although “public” women were until recently not allowed to be present, unless as accused, victim or witness. (Compare Becker 1998; Luttig 1933).
A relatively new function is their involvement in inheritance matters. According to Heiki Becker, headmen in the Rietfontein area (Hereroland East) oversee the distribution of the estate of a deceased husband in order to avoid grabbing of property by the husband’s relatives during the period of mourning and leaving the widow and children destitute (Becker 1998). As was mentioned in 3.2.4 and 3.3.2, headmen play increasingly a role in such cases, thereby combining customary rules and statutory law (or traditional and modern value systems). The role of the headman in these cases is possibly both as mediator and decision-maker. Details of such decision-making processes (AAA) and the specific contribution of the headman could not be obtained due to time limitations.

Since Independence the position of the traditional leaders has weakened, both in terms of their authority and their resources. From literature and interviews the following can be concluded:

- Leaders that are not officially recognized are not allowed to hold court or represent their people. In addition, the fact that they do not receive remuneration anymore might in some cases as a disincentive, resulting in a lack of motivation.
- Elected Regional Councilors and line agencies have taken over much of their previous responsibilities.
- Leaders believe that the children and women’s rights movement and supporting legislation have reduced their powers. Young people and women show not enough respect. They believe that foreigners and SWAPO wrote the Constitution. Corporal punishment was taken away but no alternative instruments were provided. (Compare Kandiririririkira 1998)
- Leaders believe that the South African police was more effective and applied heavier punishments than GRN police.
- Leaders have no legal or other power against ongoing illegal fencing.
- Livestock theft has become more difficult to deal with due to increased mobility (vehicles). In certain cases, the traditional leaders are now receiving support from a newly formed self-help organisation, Epango, that tries to address the livestock theft problem in particular. (See also 3.3.4).
- Leadership is suffering from internal differences within communities and among communities.

Similar to what was found in the Owambo regions, traditional leaders wait for problems to be brought to them and are not pro-active. Although generally affiliated with the older generation and probably rather conservative in outlook, it is in their mandate to manage conflicts and to apply customary law within the framework of the Constitution (Act). They therefore have an important role to play in bringing different parties together in order to maintain certain stability and continuity in social mechanisms such as the extended family, household, marriage etc. This is particularly important considering the pluriformity of modern Herero society and the internal conflicts that might create. Moreover, the older generation of headmen will gradually be replaced by a younger generation. Hopefully they will be able to overcome the paramountacy and political party issue that now forms such a disuniting factor. Already now, some of the headmen and Chiefs have secretaries and messengers that fall into this last category. Several secretaries have participated in the recent course on human rights provided by the Centre for Applied Science (Felton 2000).

3.3.4 Epango - self-help security

*Epango* is a form of self-help police that was created in 1992 as a response to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the services provided by the Namibian police. The main activity is dealing with livestock theft, but domestic violence and other crimes also are dealt with occasionally. It is
a network of people that can be called up on to assist as on a voluntary basis (with some financial compensation for costs), but it is not clear how they are actually organized and how communication works. There is a set of rules for asking of assistance (costs N$150) and standard fines to be paid to both the organization and the victims. Serious cases are referred to the police.

Members are mostly men but there are also female members. The Herero members belong both to the Banderu and Herero factions, and are of all ages. The majority would have been in the South African army. The relationship with the GRN and the police was said not to be smooth, but not problematic (e.g. secretive) either. One area of conflict mentioned was the use of corporal punishment by Epango members. There is close collaboration with the traditional authorities, which are also invited to the trials held.

The organization covers all of the Eastern Communal areas and also some of the commercial farm areas. Increasingly, white commercial farmers are customers and members. Epango organizations have also been established in Kunene Region (Opuwo) and Grootfontein area.

What is important about Epango is that an apparently efficient and financially sustainable organization was created to solve a common problem: lack of security. Moreover, collaboration was established between sections of society that would seldom collaborate. Organizations like the Farmer Associations and some of the organizations for the youth tend to operate along ethnic and political lines.

In terms of its relevance for children’s rights promotion the following. No indication was found that Epango provides a contribution in any other parameter function than resolution of conflicts. The value-system, however, favors respect and discipline, and the use of corporal punishment is considered acceptable. Nevertheless, Epango, has a proven capacity in effectively communicating information and managing financial resources (?). Individual members are geographically distributed and they “know” certain categories of children with problems. They also have contacts with traditional leaders and victims. Their mandate is enhancing security. The organization has both male and female members. In other words, Epango seems interesting enough to look further into.

3.3.5 Church organizations

Although Herero people generally consider themselves Christian, the ancestral “holy fire” still has significance as a religious and social institution. Assessing the full meaning of this institution would have been a study in itself. It is clear however, that important decisions are often taken in the proximity of the holy fire and that the person responsible for tending the fire (and thus for communication with the ancestors) is playing a central rule. This is usually the head of the patrilineage (oruza). Some Herero people living in Windhoek said that returning to their family’s holy fire was energizing them and had a spiritual healing function as well.

Unlike in Owamboland where the Lutheran and to lesser extent the Roman Catholic Church has had such enormous impact on almost all aspects of life, church does not seem to have been that influential in the Eastern Communal Areas. Low population density is a serious constraint for running a centralist church organization. ELCIN is quite popular among Herero living in larger towns. In the Herero rural areas visited the Protestant Unity (Oruwan) was said to be most widespread. The Oruwan church has incorporated the holy fire, but would not engage itself in faith healing. The Aminuis congregation in, for example has 1200 members, mostly women. The pastor explained that they have a youth group for fundraising, a women group to look after the sick and orphans and a general church group for the management. His preaches usually do not
deal with real life or current issues. Interesting was his vision on the issue of grandmothers being burdened with childcare. In his opinion solutions should be sought with the Government: increase in old-aged pensions; financial support to parents to take care of their own children; income generation projects in the village to allow mothers to stay in the village. As so many people he analyzed the issue in financial terms and he made the Government responsible for finding solutions.

Faith healing churches similar to those found in Katutura are increasingly popular. Some people believed that they function as a cover for people wanting to go to a traditional healer. Another strategy is to go to a traditional healer elsewhere.

In general, the formal church institutions were not found to have much potential for further realization of children’s rights. Religion is for many people a family affair and lacks formal institutions.

3.3.6 Water supply management

In the arid Eastern Communal areas, Government-run boreholes are the only permanent water sources. These boreholes are of crucial importance for human beings and animals, and therefore object of collective decision making. Most communities visited had one or two boreholes that had been drilled under the South African administration. Until recently all diesel was provided for free. As a result of the introduction of the cost recovery and community-management policy, many communities in Omaheke and Otjozondupa are now contributing 40-50% of the total diesel costs and are in the process of taking over the ownership of the water supply. Regional rural water supply officers interviewed in Gobabis and Okakara had the opinion that the whole process of communities taking over the management was relatively easy compared to what happened in the North-central Communal areas, where piped water supply prevails:

- Most communities have already experience in taking care of themselves, because Government services were far from perfect. The lack of service forced them regularly to collect money for buying diesel or for repairing the pump;
- The learning-by-doing cycle is straightforward in the case of borehole technology: no money - no diesel - no water.

In terms of ongoing collective decision making it is interesting to look at the debate concerning the sharing of the costs. While in the past a simple flat rate system was applied (every household contributed every now and then a small amount when necessary), the increased costs require another fee collection system. The “communities” can decide for themselves, but the general trend would be towards collecting money according to number of animals owned by each household. Communities would have difficulties in reaching a consensus about the contribution of the San (and possibly other vulnerable households) and the use of water for gardening activities (mainly by women). The San would feel that their employers (Herero families) are responsible, since they always treated the boreholes as if they owned them and make the decisions by themselves. The Herero in such cases tend to have the opinion that the Government is responsible for subsidizing the San and other marginalized people. The end of this discussion still seems far away considering the fact that the Directorate of Rural Water Supply does not have come to any policy conclusions themselves concerning (cross)-subsidization of marginal groups.

Who are the actual decision-makers? According to one Community Liaison Officer people generally elect “rich people even if no brain” on their committees. Other people interviewed described them more in terms of “influential people” or “brokers types” what is similar to what
was observed in the Owambo regions (compare 2.3.7). DRWS is encouraging the election of women with apparent success. The women committee members, however, would usually have little influence on decision making. San people seldom are members on committees, but they might be selected as caretaker because “they are good mechanics and cheap”. The real decisions would be taken by the weekend-farmers on the committee: men living in urban areas, who come and visit may be once a month. As a result local DRSW personnel complained about problems in terms of number of people showing up for meetings, delays in decision making etc.

Important here is that a significant proportion of the more powerful stakeholders (often larger livestock owners) is not living in the rural areas on a permanent basis. Other stakeholders such as Herero women and San people do, but they traditionally do not (directly) participate in community-based decision making. Herero women were reported to increasingly attend meetings and also become members on committees. In order to arrive at effective community decision making and everybody to assume ownership and responsibility, it is essential that all interest groups, both in the village and the urban areas, are involved in decision making and have access to information. DRWS will have no other option than to adapt their working schedules.

Interesting is further that it will be the task of the water committees to keep transparent records on households and livestock ownership. People interviewed did not think that it would be too difficult to establish the number of heads, since livestock is kept at a kraal in the village overnight. Considering the fact that livestock ownership is also considered the most important indicator for poverty and vulnerability such records – if transparent and regularly updated – could be of multi-purpose value. They could for example also be used for the allocation of emergency relief and possibly as an entry point for identifying categories of caregivers that might need certain assistance.

Finally, it was interesting to notice that certain Water Committees also assume other functions, for example the starting of an Early Child Development Centre (see 3.3.8). The fact that many communities are very small can perhaps partially explain this. On the other hand it is interesting from the point of integration, holistic approaches and ongoing attempts to encourage the formation of Village Development Committees in the framework of the Decentralization Policy.

3.3.7 Other resource management initiatives

In Hereroland West (Otjozondjupa Region), some communities have spontaneously organized themselves to defend their grazing resources against illegal fencing. According to the senior Agricultural Extension Officer, in those cases committees were elected mainly to collect money to construct a fence around the remaining community territory. In some cases several communities even collaborate. This phenomenon is known under the euphemism “defensive fencing”. An additional purpose of the fence is protection of animals against livestock theft. This has become a serious problem since children have stopped herding because they are going to school. Contrary to Hereroland East, the use of San workers is not widespread. Interesting is that in these cases usual differences within and among communities are overcome. The problem is urgent and commonly shared, and the solution is relatively simple. Interesting is that these organizations have an ad hoc character and are usually dissolved after the job is done (building of a fence). This is an example of effective collective decision-making.

The Sustainable Animal and Range Development Program (SARDEP) has been implemented in the Eastern Communal areas since shortly after Independence with funding from GTZ. Some of their experiences with community-based decision making are interesting as well.
Several communities in Otjinene and Okakara constituencies were visited where the program had been implemented and resource people were interviewed. The conclusion is that achievements in the promotion of more sustainable use and management of grazing resources for which collective decision making and action is required have been limited so far. More progress has been made at the individual farmer level (training; exposure visits etc.). The reasons mentioned by people interviewed are both internal and external to the communities. A major constraint has been that pilot communities were internally divided and could not come to collective decisions:

- Community members belong to different Chiefs associated with different political parties;
- Community members have different economic orientations: “communal” versus “commercial” livestock keeping, largely parallel with a division in older and younger generation;
- There are large differences in livestock ownership (poor, medium and rich farmers).

Although each pilot community formed a management committee, collective decisions were generally arrived at in public meetings held in the presence of a program facilitator. In addition, the decisions taken were mainly relevant for the individual farmer.

A major external constraint has been the lack of an appropriate legal framework for community-based resource management: lack of power (authority) to exclude outsiders and halting of illegal fencing. In addition, SARDEP-MAWRD and communities might not have had the same objectives and “paradigm”. They might have had different definitions of what the problem is, what the causes are and therefore what the solution is. In simple terms, the program’s view is that there is environmental degradation and that overgrazing and overstocking are among the main causes. Communities are not interested in destocking and tend to focus on external factors such as the lack of water supply and thus access to remote grazing resources, and the lack of land due to an unfair distribution (land reform issue). (Compare Weaver 1992; SARDEP 1995).

Another factor is that the traditional resource use system has always been extremely decentralized with minimal interference of any outside authority (Compare Behnke 1999). Ownership of the household herd tends to be spread amongst members of the household residing both in the village and in urban areas. While the household unit takes care of the herd, each individual owner has the right to determine what happens to his or her cattle (Suzman 1995). Similar to the water supply situation, the stakeholders are geographically spread out.

Membership on some of the SARDEP committees was said to have evolved from village elders to youth to women. Currently, the committee in one of the pilot communities was said to consist of a male chairperson (owning a car) and several women. Apparently, this “committee” had become also a kind of self-help group with a focus on income generation (e.g. selling of veterinary vaccines). This phenomenon was also observed in the Ovambo regions (see 2.3.12). The level of “collective” decision making is in those situations being reduced from community-level to group-level, what is probably in many heterogeneous communities more efficient and realistic. In addition, the issue of incentives for committee-members is dealt with when the members themselves become direct beneficiaries. From another perspective such an approach can be seen as a phase in implementation and in community development. May be at a later stage, when capacities are strengthened and confidence has been built, such communities can expand the scope and increase the scale of their activities.
3.3.8 Income generation and saving groups

Since Independence, the Community Development Division of the MLRG&H and various NGOs have supported the development of self-help groups focussed on income generation. The aim is usually to promote economic diversification and increase wellbeing of particularly the resource poorest, including women and ethnic minorities. Income generation is seen as an important route to empowerment. (Compare Becker 1998; OXFAM 1997 and 2000). In addition, creation of (self) employment is considered as a main strategy to reduce migration of young people to urban areas (Brits et al 1996).

Some of the experiences in Omaheke Region are:
- People are not used to work together as a group. Often the group is formed to get access to assistance but the economic activities (e.g. gardening, sowing, poultry raising, petty trade) are taking place at an individual basis;
- Participants are usually not the resource poorest, but the slightly better off, often living in larger villages;
- Gardening groups have not been successful because of a variety of reasons: lack of water; lack of skills; poor soils; lack of marketing possibilities etc. The Community Development Division in Omaheke Region has stopped supporting such groups.

In Otjizondjupa Region, the Cooperative Development Division (MAWRD) runs a saving program for small groups of 3 - 5 members. Funding is received from various sources: SARDEP/GTZ; African Development Fund; DED; American Embassy. There are no less than 240 registered groups with a total of 560 members in Okakara Constituency (Hereroland West). The aim of the members is to start a business or expand one. Examples of businesses are streetfoods (kapana), gardening and sometimes a kindergarten. According to the coordinator of the program, the group size was originally larger (about 10 members) but there were problems with internal quarrels, low turn-out at meetings, lack of commitment due to people not having clear tasks and responsibilities etc. Groups now consist of only a chairperson, secretary and treasurer and internal cohesion is stronger. The groups function as collateral, while the loans are provided to the individual members. The majority of members are women. They get used to saving and take more economic decisions on their own. Women would begin to feel stronger and address more issues at home. A parallel program has been started by the Namibian NGO, Women Action for Development.

What all these groups have in common is that they have primarily an economic objective. Generally, women groups seem to suffer relatively less from “politization”(Kozonguizi 1995). In Otjozondjupa, SARDEP has used the saving groups them as an entry point for other activities, especially gender awareness raising. No other examples were encountered of these groups being used as entry point for other activities.

3.3.9 Early Childhood Development Centres

As was described in 3.2.2, the development of ECDC’s has not progressed as far as in the North-central Communal Areas. It was not easy to get an insight how decisions are arrived at to begin a kindergarten. Many seem to be initiated after the message has been received that funding might be forthcoming. In one community in Aminuis, the information was contradicting if a kindergarten existed or not. The men said there was none and the women said that there was one.
The teacher, a grandmother taking care of several grandchildren herself, was receiving the children in her home. Apparently a kindergarten can be defined as a building or as an institution. The teacher handed over a very professional project-funding proposal.

The density of kindergartens seemed highest in Otjinene Constituency (Hereroland East). According to the Community Development Activator there are 18 registered ECDC’s in communities of size varying between 26 and 100 households. The recently established Epukiro Early Childhood Development Committee, which was established as an independent association to be able to attract funding, has no doubt contributed to this progress.

Communities in the Aminuis area are generally smaller than 26 households, what is considered a major constraint for the starting of an ECDC as they will have difficulties paying the teacher’s salary and thus to become financially sustainable.

It seemed that kindergartens only have a parent committee if encouraged from the outside. In Epukiro area, promotion by the Community Development Activator had stimulated several communities to give their existing water committees an additional function. The Community Development Division of Omaheke Region is (planning on?) using the ECDC’s as a channel for providing nutritional information to the caregivers.

3.3.10 Schools

Children are sent away to boarding school at young age (6/7) and parents/caregivers do generally not visit or return to school until it is time to collect their child for the holiday. People in communities interviewed were generally aware of the existence of a parent committee and school board. When asked what they deal with usually the parents committee was associated with discipline issues and the school board with financial management. This is similar to what was found by ACORD’s study in Aminuis:

“Teachers complain that parents do not attend meetings, but parents and guardians complain that the only reasons they are invited to school is for fund raising or paying for damage caused by their child, or because a child is in trouble. The schools use the level of financial contribution of parents to indicate their interest in the education of their children rather than their interest in the work and processes of education and youth empowerment”. (Kandiririkira 1998).

No immediate entry points were found in the current school situation, partially due to the geographical remoteness of the schools from the rural communities.

3.3.11 Farmers associations

While no precise figures could be made available, people interviewed believed that probably the “majority of cattle owners” are a member of one of the Farmers Associations. There are many different associations of different size. Otjinene Constituency has several political party associated ones. In Aminuis there is one large Farmers Association of 500 members, while the Omiramba Farmers Association in Okakara has only 17 members (2 women and 15 men). Although still male dominated, increasingly also young women are becoming members. The Aminuis Farmers Association has two female executive committee members. The larger associations sometimes receive funding from donor agencies. Some of the Farmers Associations are closely linked to the National Farmers Union and also have a division in Windhoek.
The activities of these associations are focussed on individual livestock production and selling. In Okamapati Constituency in Hereroland West for example, the farmers association organizes auctions, farmers days and establishing access to improved breeding stock. Groups are also formed, for example to make a contract with buyers. No details are available on decision-making processes of these associations. No indication was found that these associations get involved in other areas than commercially oriented farming.

According to a survey held in 1994, almost one fourth (24%) of the households in the Eastern Communal Areas did not own any cattle. No distinction, however, was made according to ethnic background. (Iken et al 1994). It can be assumed, however, that the resource poorest Herero households generally do not belong to a farmers association.

Nevertheless, farmers associations might be of relevance for the following reason. A large number of Herero men, and increasingly young women, go on a more or less regular basis to their farmers’ association meetings, either in Windhoek or the rural areas. While of different age and having different perspectives and orientations, they all have certain personal interests related to children rights: they are “children”, (future) parents or grandparents. These gatherings therefore might have a potential for developing platform for discussion and dialogue when facilitated by an outside organization.

3.3.12 Youth organisations

Young Herero people have initiated several youth organizations. This is contrary to the Owambo situation where only the SWAPO Party Youth League was identified. Most recent (1999) is the Herero Youth League, a national organization with a strong base among the urban educated youth. Meetings in Windhoek have attracted 800-1.000 people, most of who have become a member! There are sub-divisions in Omaheke and Otjozondjupa Region and in some other areas of the country. It was estimated that the number of members in the rural areas is at least 5.000. The overall objective is to make a bridge between the older and younger generation. Many youngsters would struggle with their Herero identity and have the feeling that they live in two separate worlds. More specific goals are in the words of one of the national leaders:

- Teach young Herero people all over the country about their traditions. For example, sowing clubs are formed to learn to make traditional dresses;
- Encourage young people to become educated;
- Combat killer diseases such as HIV/AIDS through awareness raising;
- Teach young people about the cultural importance of livestock raising and its economic potential when modern methods are applied;

Strategies are not yet well formulated and funding channels are being explored. The organization claims to be for all Herero groups.

In Otjozondjupa Region, no concrete youth organizations were discovered. In Omaheke Region, however, two locally initiated organizations were found: the Aminuis Youth and Sports Club Association, and the Epukiro, Rietfontein and Otjinene (ERO) Youth League. Both organizations are probably several years old. Although several members from both organizations were interviewed, it has not been possible to get a good insight. Both organizations were initiated by local youth and can be called community-based organizations (CBO’s). They each have 100-130 members, “mostly” (maybe only) young men. Girls would not participate because they are not interested in community activities, expected to stay home and lack mobility to attend the
meetings that are normally held in Aminuis, Epukiro etc. Both organizations had been involved in HIV/AIDS education programmes. There are two main aims:

1. At community-level: to strengthen the role of the youth, and
2. At personal level: to create employment opportunities. The organization is utilized as an instrument to get access to training, loans, self-help projects etc.

Interesting were the activities mentioned (to be?) undertaken for the community level:
- awareness raising among the youth that they do not only have rights, but also responsibilities;
- help elderly people write letters (e.g. wills);
- increase youth membership on development committees;
- bridge the gap with the older people by participating in traditional events such as weddings and Herero day;
- try to make the elder men stop quarreling among themselves (Herero/Bandero issue).

All these activities are focussed on strengthening social cohesion, and directly or indirectly deal with children’s rights issues. One of the youth leaders was a trained Community Legal Activator.

In summary, these youth organizations seem interesting to look further into. The Aminuis organization has certain links with the ACORD’s Total Child Project.

3.3.13 Local and regional government

The decentralization process seemed to have made less progress than in the North-central Communal Areas. Factors of influence are probably that the majority of people belong to the opposition and also that the Herero society is internally so divided. Both Regions have nevertheless a Regional Development Committee and several Constituency Development Committees were established. These committees play an important role in the allocation of government funding. In Otjinene Constituency in Omaheke Region, the formation has been hampered by political problems related to the Mbanderu- Herero split and the fact that the electorate of the Regional Councilor come under a Chief that is not recognized by the GRN. This Chief is officially not allowed to become a member of the CDC.

Emergency relief is channeled through the regional government, the Regional Emergency Management Unit. Contrary to what was found in the Owambo regions, most communities do not have a drought relief committee, but only on or two people that are appointed by the headmen or elected by the community. They are responsible for making a list of people that need assistance. In Ompanda village in Aminuis for example the criteria were said to be:

a) ethnicity: San people
b) age: elderly who are poor.

Until recently everybody used to get fodder for livestock during drought years. Unlike the commercial farmers who had to reduce their stock by 40% to receive drought fodder, communal farmers were subsidized regardless stock reduction measures (Suzman 1995). People interviewed that livestock relief has been discontinued, because too much of that fodder was seen being sold in the market. Currently, affected communities might be able to benefit from the temporary allocation of state-owned areas for “emergency grazing” purposes. These are farms that were purchased by the Government and are designated for resettlement. Resource competition is particularly strong during drought periods. Community members said those with few animals were blaming rich people for having too many animals and thus putting too much pressure on the communal resources. The large livestock owners spoken to seemed to avoid the debate by
blaming the Government for not providing them with more land and delaying the process of land reform.

Apparently, the establishment of Village Development Committees is only planned for the larger population centers ("settlements"), one in each Constituency. People interviewed generally saw the advantage of smaller communities having a VDC as well, but there was no indication that their formation was being promoted in any way.

The VDC in Okandjati town in Otvizondjupa Region is an example of the potential of a VDC in relation to some of the parameter functions. Okandjati is a town of about 2000 inhabitants in Hereroland West with a dynamic community activator. The Village Development Committee identified as urgent problems: a. school drop out, and b. living conditions in the school hostel. Subsequently, the VDC appointed two members (the community activator is one of them) to be responsible for follow up and feed back of results to the VDC. The two members identify children that are not going to school either themselves or other people point them out to them. They then try to find out what the problem is and try to find a solution. In some cases they help the caregivers to get access to Social services. This is an example of effective decision making by a VDC positively influenced by the capacity building efforts of a community activator.

3.3.14 Age mate system

All Herero men are circumcised at a very young age and belong to the age-mate group of the year of their circumcision (otjowondo). Although traditionally, there were many separate groups for each clan or even patrilineage (oruza), the modern version has one system for all Herero. Circumcision is now taking place a clinic. Access is n principle equal for all boys, poor and rich, born inside or outside wedlock, rural or urban.

The age-mate system seems to create above all certain solidarity among the members. This might develop into a certain security in particular areas. Very widespread is the contribution to an age-mates funeral. It is often the age-mates of the deceased that buy the coffin, bring cattle to be slaughtered to the funeral etc. They are also culturally expected to make a collection among themselves to assist to the widow and her children.

The age-mate institution does not have a formal organization and as such lacks a mandate and leadership structure. It seems, however, that some age-mates meet on a more or less regular basis in the urban areas and they might have more concrete functions and structures. In general it seems that the belonging to an age-mate network gives a person non-defined rights and responsibilities, that can be further defined by context and moment. Membership per se does in most cases not provide clear entitlement, nor can anybody make the members accountable (e.g. a widow). No immediate entry points were found in relation to children’s rights promotion.

3.3.15 Conclusions

In comparison to what was found in the Owambo regions, Herero communities are generally smaller, more remote, often consisting of one or a few large extended families and less struck by poverty and HIV/AIDS problems. Although slowly changing, women’s participation in public meetings is probably more limited. Most extended families have members residing in urban areas. Decisions that affect children most directly are taken by the extended family. The success of a modern Herero extended family as a collective decision-making mechanism depends on its capacity to effectively accommodate different interests and views and also to mobilize sufficient human and financial resources to support the children. Internal cohesion is under pressure by a
gap between the generations, accompanied with different political, economic, social and cultural perspectives. A platform for discussion and negotiation is often created during funerals when all relatives come together. The headman thereby functions as facilitator and mediator.

The following mechanisms were identified as most relevant for the realization of children’s rights:

1. Traditional leaders. Their main task is dispute resolution and they often already play a role as mediator during for example funeral gatherings.

2. Water committees. Safe and reliable water supply is crucial for the survival of both human beings and animals. The committees also have a strategic function because they link the traditional domestic (female) domain and the livestock (male) domain. The committees have started making decisions on a “fair” distribution of water fees and collect information on livestock ownership. This is a socially accepted indicator for poverty (wealth). Some water committees are also adopting additional functions, for example the management of the new ECD. This might be related to the limited size of many communities.

3. Village Development Committees. These are foreseen in selected larger settlements only. They address child-related issues in integrated manner and if necessary delegate aspects to other mechanisms (e.g. water committee; ECDC; church etc.).

4. Early Childhood Development Centers. Although not widespread, and not likely to be established in the smaller communities without permanent financial support, the existing centers can be used to reach the caregivers of small children, the grandmothers.

5. *Epango*- self-help police. They have an effective network effective for communication and deal with matters related to protection rights.

6. Farmers Associations. Although the resource-poorest are usually not a member and the focus is on livestock only, these associations have great popularity and hold meetings in both rural and urban areas. Young women are increasingly participating. They could become a platform for discussion on issues such as inheritance, gender roles etc.

7. Herero Youth Organizations. Bridging the existing generation gap and strengthening the Herero cultural identity are among the main objectives. Promotion of HIV/AIDS awareness is another field of activity. Although predominantly male membership in the rural areas, these organizations could be used as entry point for reaching “marginalized” young.

The tasks of identifying the most disadvantaged Herero children and their caretakers (one of the parameter functions) and allocation of assistance will not be easy to fulfill within the Herero context. In the first place, inequality is an accepted phenomenon in this stratified society (see 3.1). The San are always the most needy category but the Herero have an interest in maintaining the status quo. In the second place, you can count somebody’s animals but you do not know how much that person gets in terms of remittances. Being an orphan is generally considered a useless criterion. In the third place, community members will avoid to be responsible for such decision. People from line agencies believed that generally an outsider would be needed to properly identify the most vulnerable among the Herero people.
4. KATUTURA

4.1 Community-based decision-making in an urban context

Katutura has an estimated population of 120,000 inhabitants with about 25% of the people living in sub-standard shanty conditions. The annual growth rate is approximately 6.0%, which is more than double the national figure. Although average income is low compared to other parts of larger Windhoek, income levels vary highly between and also within the different settlement areas. (Tvedten and Mupotola 1995 and LeBeau 1999).

The sections (locations) created during the South African regime were originally ethnically homogeneous (e.g. Owambo and Herero Location) and organizational structures were similar to those in the rural areas. The headmen (“owners”) who were usually the first settlers and responsible for the contacts with the Municipality, and for law and order within their location. Urban residents continued to be sub-ordinates of their own King or Chief (e.g. Ukwanyama, Ukwambi). By and large the same customary laws were applied as in the rural areas.

Currently, all sections of Katutura have an ethnically mixed composition, although the proportion of the different groups varies. The newest squatter areas have a large majority of Oshiwambo speakers as the majority of urban migrants originated from the North-Central Communal areas since Independence.

In 1998 the Ministry of Housing and Local Government started to introduce a new structure of elected community leaders to replace the traditional leaders. As a result each sector (lokasie) was divided in blocks of 20-60 households and each block was expected to democratically elect a blockhead, secretary and treasurer. The community leaders from each sector formed together a sector committee. Katutura has now 36 section committees that are supported by their respective Regional Councilor.

The new structure allows tighter administrative control (e.g. payment of for services). It also intends to enhance community participation by creating two-way communication channels and elected leaders that are can be replaced and thus held accountable. An officer at the Municipality summarized the new situation as follows: “the Municipality should be seen as the new King”, implying that urban communities should brake loose from their traditions.

This ongoing institutional transition and the sensitivities attached to it made it hard to get a good insight in collective decision making processes in the areas visited: older and newer formal and informal settlement areas: Babylon, Freedom Square, Herero location, Ombili and Soweto. Some locations still had an old-style headman, others not. The old headman of the Mbanderu people in Freedom Square passed away, but he will be replaced in traditional manner. Other areas had a mixed situation. In Ombili, for example, it was found that the headman functioned as the chairman on the section committee. The system of blockheads also does not automatically imply that customary laws are no longer adhered to. In Babylon, a fast growing informal settlement, both Owambo customary laws and newly made by-laws were applied to solve security problems (see for more in 4.3.4).

The role of ethnicity is another complex and sensitive subject that has been little documented. As long as people tend to associate ethnic groups with political parties, ethnicity will effect collective decision-making processes. This factor was found to be a constraint for the acceptance of the new
leadership structure. Many people interviewed believed that the SWAPO Party drives the whole idea. Apparently the organizational structure is similar to the previous SWAPO set up.

Although Katutura has an ethnically mixed population, intermarriage is still not very common. There would also be a taboo (danger of contamination) that contributes to people of different groups keeping socially distance from each other (DeBeau 1999).

It is also important to notice that most Oshiwambo and Otjiherero speakers consider themselves temporary residents of Windhoek. This is likely to affect their overall orientation, their needs and priorities, their social relationships, in other words their sense of being an urban community-member. Not only do people move around a lot after first arrival, but most people also (try to) maintain strong linkages with their home area and their family forms an important security mechanism. In-migration is not one-directional from rural areas to Katutura but is cyclical in nature with migrants sending money home to their rural families and visiting them during the holidays. In turn, rural families come to stay in Katutura with their relatives when there is a need to use Windhoek’s amenities such as medical services and schools (LeBeau 1999). Most people try to go home regularly and return permanently after retirement (or when means allow). Not only the recent migrants (most people arrived during the last 5 years....) like to maintain these links with the rural area, but also many Herero and Oshiwambo speakers who arrived in the 70s-80s hold this ideal. There is an economic dimension (you must be successful to be able to return), but also a spiritual dimension (notion of return to the land of the ancestors/ holy fire). It is considered a shame to be buried in Katutura and some people take an insurance policy to be ensured of a funeral in the home area. People who are sick also tend to return home to die etc.

The resource poorest people might even have the option to return home and thus benefit from the rural safety net, because they are not able to pay for the bus fare or that they do not want to face the family having “failed”. Increasingly also, relationships were said to be cut off due to an existing conflict with the relatives in the home village, often caused by differences in values and lifestyle. This could also be one of the reasons for the increasing number of single mothers in Katutura. These women often do not have the option to send their children back to grandmother’s place and their children are therefore particularly at risk.

Some Herero and Owambo urban dwellers have become permanent residents and form a different category. People in this category are more likely to be well educated and somewhat better off. They are called “ombwiti” in Oshiwambo, what is a derogatory term for “town people”, implying that such a person has non-traditional norms and values.

The by UNICEF proposed working definition for “communities” is:

A community is an organized group of people who share a sense of belonging, beliefs, norms and leadership and interact within a defined geographical area. Some communities share common goals and common interests, are mutually supportive and are distinguishable by what they do” (UNICEF 1999).

Most administrative areas (sections) in Katutura cannot be considered “communities” in the above sense, as they are culturally, economically, ethnically and politically heterogeneous and pluriform. Nevertheless, people might get organized around shared problems. The most recent squatter areas with the lowest service level, for example, were generally regarded as “better organized” than the older settlement areas where all services are already provided (see 4.3.4).
4.2 Duty bearers of children’s rights

In terms of duty bearing similar patterns were found among Owambo and Herero urban residents. Children are considered the private responsibility of their parents (or caretakers). Under ideal circumstances, there is a safety network of relatives spread out over the urban and rural area that provides help when needed. It is normal practice among both groups that small children are taken back to the village (often to the grandmother) when the parent(s) are not able or not willing to take care of them for a variety of reasons. Life in the village is considered cheaper and safer (see 3.2.2). On the other hand urban relatives often take in older children, often children of sisters or brothers, from their home village to provide them access to education.

By becoming a caretaker of somebody’s child a person might become a duty bearer, but not necessarily. This depends on the specific conditions of the arrangement differ. From interviews can be concluded that most the respected or ideal situation is when the biological parents a) continue to provide financial support for the child to their ability, b) participate in important decisions taken concerning the child (e.g. choice of school) and c) visit regularly (maintain social relationship). This kind of an arrangement is seen as having essentially a temporary character. The parents remain the true duty bearers, but they delegate some of their responsibilities to others. Fundamental in this kind of arrangement is that a consensus has been reached between the different actors (parents and caretakers) on the conditions of the arrangement. The roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and accepted by the adult partners. The level of participation of children in these kind of decisions is traditionally low, but was said to be increasing. Sometimes children would refuse to go and stay with a certain relative.

Culturally not respected, but increasingly common is the situation whereby a child is “dumped” at a relative’s home, often the grandmother or maternal aunt in the village. No financial support is provided and the parent takes no or little other responsibility. In those cases it is not always known where the parent even can be reached in case of an emergency. The relative is forced to take full responsibility whether she (sometimes he) has the ability (resources; good health) or not (see further 2.2.2 and 3.2.2). No consensus exists in those cases.

The impact of the spread of HIV/AIDS is omnipresent in Katutura. Relatives in the Owambo and Herero rural areas normally take orphaned children in. People interviewed in Katutura said that child-headed households do exist but that they are still very rare. Decisions concerning orphaned children are usually taken during funeral gatherings when everybody returns to the village. It is for both Herero and Owambo people culturally very important to be buried in the home village. During these funeral reunions, different arrangements are arrived at following a negotiation process. Some relatives might agree to financially sponsor a child, while others provide may choose to provide it with a home. If a man dies and his wife is not able to support the children financially on her own, it is expected that relatives of the child help out. From the child’s perspective these are increasingly his maternal aunts (e.g. sisters of the mother) rather than the traditionally important uncle (MOBR) or the paternal relatives. Participants in this bargaining process, however, are often not equally powerful in terms of resources and verbal skills, and they might not share the same values. Owambo grandmothers particularly often seem to end up with a raw deal, particularly those who are growing their own crops and do not own any livestock. As was explained in chapters 2. and 3., economic pressure and symptoms of poverty were more manifest in the North-central Communal than in the Eastern Communal Areas.

A concern of many people interviewed was that children of the poorer households in Katutura (orphans and others) increasingly grow up in a private atmosphere that is not favorable for them.
They might have a “home”, but their diet is poor; the room they sleep in overcrowded and noisy; they do not receive the support and guidance they need, there is often abuse and violence etc. Many of these households are single parent and female headed with no or little financial support from the father(s) of the children. They usually lack information how to get assistance. Why do these women not return to their home village or send their children there? Why does the family safety network not provide support in these cases? People interviewed gave the following reasons:

- Some women decide to stay with their own children whatever happens. They do not want to be separated from their children;
- The family has decided not to provide help. The relatives do not agree with the lifestyle of the woman who needs help; the woman might have left the home without approval;
- Some women (girls) do not want to go back and ask for help, because they left against the will of their parents. E.g. girls leaving because they do not want to be a farmer. When you fail it is difficult to go back; and
- Some women decide to stay in town because they keep hoping that the father of the child(ren) will provide assistance.

In Katutura, caregivers of children are basically on their own. As a last resort, neighbors might provide some food but no money or supervision for the children. A Governmental food-relief system does not exist. Sporadically churches, embassies and NGO’s provide some assistance. Remarkable was that few community leaders and teachers spoken to were providing help in terms of linking people to available social services. Line agency personnel were accused of staying too much in their offices without providing any outreach to people.

Similar to the rural areas, ECDC’s and schools visited, have generally no policy for cross subsidization of school-fees. The majority of teachers feels responsible for teaching only. ECDC’s are mushrooming. Teachers do not always have the right attitude nor means to be held accountable as duty bearers.

In conclusion and strongly generalizing, Owambo and Herero children living in Katutura often belong either to the category of relatively well off households, or to the poorest of the poor who are not able to exploit the linkages with the home area. Moreover, a large proportion of the adult Oshiwambo and Otjiherero speakers are distant parents of children living in rural areas. They are not only assuming their responsibility as a parent to varying degree in a different ways. As duty bearers, their varies a great deal.

Slight differences between Owambo and Herero urban residents were observed. On average, Herero women seemed better informed and knowing their constitutional right better than Owambo women. This does, however, not necessarily result in Herero accessing social services more or pursuing their rights more intensively.

4.3. Collective decision making mechanisms

4.3.1 Introduction

The following community-based mechanisms were identified:
- family network (both urban and rural) (4.3.2)
- neighbors and friends (4.3.3)
- headmen, community leaders and section committees (3.3.4)
- churches and healers (4.3.5)
- early childhood development centers (4.3.6)
- school(school board; committee of parents) (4.3.7)
- self-help housing and saving groups (4.3.8)
- community centers (4.3.9)

4.3.2 Family network

For Otjiherero and Oshivambo speakers living in Katutura, the extended family is an extremely important resource and safety network. The potential functions of relatives in both urban and rural areas are multifold and vary during a person’s lifespan. Other research has shown that upon arrival, 56 per cent of migrants live with close family members and 18 per cent with friends and people from the rural area of origin. Of the remaining, 10 per cent stay in their work place and only 2 per cent came to Windhoek without any type of relations. Upon arrival, for example, migrants usually move into larger residential units (e.g. several units occupying common dwelling), often in old Katutura. These larger units consist of nuclear households or single parent households; extended family members; other family or friends for the rural area of origin, and tenants. (Pomuti and Tvedten 1998).

The multiple functions of the larger residential units are sharing of food and urban services (water; electricity etc.) and providing a point of departure for building up network for seeking employment. Costs of clothes, transport, education and health are the responsibility of each individual family unit. Thus, the larger residential unit has a basic survival function and assist people in saving money, while domains of clothing, education and health remain the responsibility of the individual.

After having established their own residential unit, migrants usually strengthen their ties with their area of origin. Indicators for strong rural-urban ties are: More than 80 % of the migrants have dependants in rural areas (84%) and return at least once a year (89%). In terms of household composition the following was found:

- only 25 % of the households are complete nuclear units
- 10% live without their partner
- 33% are de facto female-headed households.
- 48% live without or with only their smallest children (Pomuti and Tvedten 1998).

This means among other things that most children grow up without a father and most fathers without their children. The process of marginalization of men is a neglected field of study in Namibia. It also means that the relationship with the rural area is crucial in terms of childcare.

Urban-rural linkages involve exchange of labor; agricultural produce; other goods and services such as taken care of the sick people and orphans. Those households that do not maintain strong relations with the rural area are usually the most disadvantaged, poor. They do not have the money to return or do not want to face fact of failure (reason of migration is employment. On the other hand well-off families would often like to reduce the ties with their home area, because the relations become socially and economically burdensome. However, with the existing socio-cultural framework, discontinuing relations is very difficult. A large proportion of the female-
headed households does not maintain strong relations with rural areas. This can probably be explained by: low income; lack of rights to land and other resources in the rural area; difficulties in leaving children and other dependants behind in the city. (Pomuti and Tvedten 1998).

Although still strong, there are indications that the urban-rural linkages are changing and will become less strong for the generation of children that now grows up in the city. Among the many functions of the rural safety network are the taking care of the sick, and absorption of orphans and children whose parents can not take care of them. It is important to look at these functions in both social and economic terms, and to assess what the replacement costs will be. Both the South African administration and the GRN have taken for granted that Owambo women are largely responsible for the production of staple crops. It is also taken for granted that Owambo and Herero women in rural areas take the additional task of caring for the sick and the young without proper resources (finances; information etc.).

4.3.3 Neighbors and friends

The role of neighbors and friends in Katutura as a support network for the resource poor should not be overestimated, and does not seem to be a factor one can count on for any longer duration. Neighbors might give a hungry child some food, but they will usually not get involved when they observe that a child does not go to school etc. One resident said, “this might even bring him in trouble with the caretakers of the child”. The high mobility of people in the squatter areas does not encourage the formation of relationships built on mutuality like in the rural areas. In the formal residential areas on the other hand people are said to have even a more individualistic attitude that keeps them from helping their neighbors unless these neighbors have become friends. Mutuality is a characteristic of friendship.

4.3.4 Headmen, community leaders and section committees

Similar to the majority of traditional leaders in rural areas, these urban leaders do not receive any remuneration from the Government, and thus are essentially volunteers. The traditional urban headmen and the new blockheads have very similar duties:

a. security; making and application of customary and statutory laws and by-laws,
b. allocation of plots to build houses; and
c. develop and maintain linkages with Municipality in order to obtain and maintain maximum service levels.

Contrary to what one might expect, older and formal settlements in Katutura are considered “less organized” than the newer and informal settlements. Most people interviewed explained this by the difference in need for services. Once an area has obtained most important infrastructures and services there is no need to join forces anymore. In other words a main task (expected role) of the leaders is to get services and infrastructure to their area. People are getting together in an attempt to mobilize external resources.

Lack of security (crime) has become such a serious problem that it has catalyzed self-help initiatives. Babylon for example lacks a police station and the community leaders are working together with a group of volunteers called “group d’artillery”, mostly ex-combattants, in an attempt to combat crime. This area of security overlaps with the main function of the old institution of headman. As was mentioned before, customary laws and local by-laws are widely applied in Katutura. Some areas visited had for example own by-laws for closing times of cuca shops and radio/television after certain hours.
From interviews with community leaders and regular residents can be concluded that many community leaders assist needy individuals living in their area on a personal and ad hoc basis. This is also culturally expected. In none of the areas visited (Babylon, Ombili, Soweto, Freedom Square, Herero Location) local leaders had taken the initiative of addressing social matters such as children at risk; orphans; food security; school drop out; HIV/AIDS; alcoholism etc. in a more systematic manner. Social problems are dealt with at the individual rather than collective level, what is similar to the situation observed in rural areas.

Furthermore, most leaders seemed not well informed about the existing channels for assistance and none of them see it as their task to provide information to the public. Although all leaders spoken to were to varying degree aware of “social problems”, they did not see how they could contribute to their solution. In their analysis, unemployment was seen as the root –problem and that is clearly beyond their power. It was generally felt that the Government should come with solutions for poverty related matters.

Information on gender aspects is insufficient to come to conclusions. Apparently, the majority of blockheads were men, but that the secretaries and treasurers were often female. This can be partially explained by the fact that security is a major aspect of the duties of a blockhead. Two female community leaders spoken to (a blockhead and a secretary) in Babylon and Freedom Square were Herero seemed to play an active role in assisting women and children, often in relation to domestic violence. These women leaders were also well informed about available services and channels, and sometimes assist people in establishing contact. One of them runs a ECDC and provides group counseling to sexually abused children. Both women complained about the lack of outreach and commitment of social workers from MoHSS. Female community leaders seem a group worthwhile looking further into!

In areas with public water taps and latrines (newest informal settlements) the community leaders are also responsible for collection of fees and management. Each house has a water number and flat rates are applied. Several people interviewed felt that the system of flat rates was unfair since some households are much larger than others and some people also use water for income generation (e.g. _tombo_-beer). The Municipality takes decisions on water fees, not the urban communities and/or their leaders.

Community leaders expressed feelings of frustration (disempowerment) concerning their lack of influence on higher-level decision-makers, in particular the Municipality and line ministries). They believed that this was bad for their prestige. The result was that they did they not get any social incentives (appreciation and respect from people in their area). This made them feel even more dissatisfied with the fact that they are volunteers and receive no compensation for the time they invest. They believed that they are not taken serious. They also did not have a budget to pay for any costs encountered (exception: some get some money through water fee collection). The fact that the Municipality’s Community Development Officers and the Regional Councilors receive a salary created much dissatisfaction and raised high expectations on their performance.

When discussing the potential of the community leader structure taking up additional functions (parameters functions) the reactions were rather positive. Community leaders are aware of the magnitude of “social” problems. Section committees could be expanded with interested and motivated people to address those problems. The following constraints were mentioned:

- The management style of some of the block leaders is poor. Some of them act like traditional headmen. They do not want to be replaced and take decisions on their own without consulting anybody;
- Not all leaders are able and willing to objectively take decisions on fellow community members;
- Individual cases are usually complex and difficult to assess as an outsider.

There was a consensus among people interviewed that there is much need and room for capacity development among urban community leaders and committees. The fact that they do not receive any formal compensation for the time they invest in community activities will be a constraint for expanding their role.

4.3.5 Churches and healers

People in Katutura have a variety of religious beliefs and practices. Some are conventional (Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Anglican etc.), others unconventional (indigenous and faith healing churches and traditional healers). Fear for witchcraft and disruption of social relations apparently are among the factors that might influence decision-making of particularly the poorer sections of both Herero and Owambo.

Similar to what was found in the Owambo regions, women are more going to church than men. The largest church among the Oshiwambo speakers, ELCIN, encourages visiting of sick people and has groups for the more active members. Welfare oriented assistance (food, blankets) is incidentally offered at an *ad hoc* basis. No indications were found of concrete activities or plans related to the parameter functions (e.g. identifying individuals at risk etc.). Real and assumed differences in value systems between church leaders and the general public seem to form a barrier for churches to become engaged in certain aspects of women’s and children’s rights promotion. Areas covered so far are improvement of the care of the sick; reduction of violence against women and children. The approach tends to be victim (needs) oriented rather than rights (empowerment) oriented.

The popular Herero *Oruuano* Church is a Christian church that has incorporated the ancestral “holy fire”. Faith healing is not practiced in the *Oruuano* church. Both Herero and Owambo have traditional healers who offer a variety of services such as divination, ancestral ceremonies, ghost exorcism, herbal remedies, faith healing and many combinations. The number of Otjiherero faith healers and faith healing churches is particularly high due to the large number of people that went into exile in Botswana and were exposed to such indigenous churches. The following explanation is given for the popularity of “witchcraft” in Katutura by LeBeau:

- Urban dwellers are likely to be in competition with each other for scarce resources and are therefore likely to experience jealousy that can lead to witchcraft accusations. Competition at the workplace, for financial resources, and for sexual partners are the main motives behind witchcraft attacks.
- Ancestors are dissatisfied because urban dwellers do not uphold traditions, ceremonies and respect for ancestors or elders. Urban dwellers are likely to break taboos (especially sexual taboos) while living away from their families.
- Witchcraft helps people to realize that they are not at fault for seemingly unfair successes and failures in his or her unpredictable social environment. (LeBeau 1999).

People interviewed believed that the attractiveness of the faith healing churches lies in the fact that they are more personal and real life oriented. A young man explained how important it was for him to get some hope and find solidarity with others having similar problems. He had also taken an insurance policy with his church for the costs of being buried in his home village. In
case his relatives would pay for the transport of his corps and the funeral, the money could be used to buy him a tombstone.

Although these churches can have an important social function, as an institution they are hierarchical, centered around a charismatic leader, closed and often with commercial motives. Assuming new functions and roles related to the parameters might not be in their immediate interest or scope.

Catholic Aid Action is an international NGO operating in Katutura. Funding is only partially received through church channels and the organization seems to operate with more or less independent values. This NGO provides with limited means drop-in services to HIV/AIDS victims and other people that desperately need help. The organization runs a soup kitchen and initiated small-scale income generation activities. The NGO would like to become more out-reach oriented and pro-active, but concrete strategies have not yet been elaborated nor are the resources ready available.

4.3.6 Early childhood development centers

A range of ECDC’s exists from large, professional, externally subsidized institutions to one-person rather obscure businesses. They exploit the niche of children needing a paper of attendance to be admitted to primary school and need of parents to have a place to leave their children while they go to work. Female domestic workers for example might drop their children off at 6 a.m. and collect them at 6.30 p.m.

People interviewed had the following complaints:
- Some teachers do not have the right motivation and are money oriented rather than service oriented. The groups are very large to make a lot of money. Some teachers do not follow strict hours and close the school whenever it suits them, leaving the children in the street on their own. They do not notice when a child is sick.
- Many ECDC’s lack a parent committee. Babylon for example would have at least 5 ECDC’S without a parent committee. The main reason is that teachers find it too troublesome to have one and prefer to take decisions by themselves.
- Donated money is not always properly utilized.
- There is a lack of quality control on the provided services. The need for an institution (committees) to monitor ECDC’s performance was expressed by many people interviewed.
- Some children are attending that are older (8-10) because they did not have the opportunity to go before and the primary school is refusing them entry. These older children are wasting their time.
- Some teachers are not qualified but there is currently no cheap training of ECDC trainers available.
- Cross subsidization of school-fees is not common and might not be socially acceptable.

Among the most recent migrants are a large number of people from Okavango Region. These children seem to be particularly at risk. Many of them would also not go to a kindergarten, because their parents do not understand its importance or do not have the means. There is also the language-barrier.

There seems to be scope for much improvement in the functioning and management of the ECDC’s in the visited areas. This could contribute to improved access for children from the poorest sections and better quality of care for all. There is also potential for assuming some of the
parameter functions, especially in terms of identification of children at risk, and channeling of social and/or material assistance to them.

4.3.7 Schools

There is a large distance between the school and “the community”, both physically (informal settlements do often not have schools so children have to walk long distances) and socially (many teachers do not live in Katutura; no insight in personal circumstances of children in classroom). Parents and caretakers generally provide little personal support to the schooling of their children. Nevertheless drop out rates were said to be quite low.

Schools in Katutura have individual approaches towards school fee payment and cross subsidization depending on school policies (attitudes of school management!). The welfare system seems to function poorly. Poorest lack information on the system (e.g. grannies taking care of load of children) and do not benefit sufficiently. Others take advantage by making up stories. Lack of proper control and problem of complexity of assessing ability to pay for school-fees. Relatives may contribute financially. Many of the older children come from rural areas and stay temporarily with relatives in town in order to receive further education.

According to teachers interviewed it is rare that community members (e.g. neighbors) identify problems of other people’s children and bring them to the attention of the school. “Every body in Katutura is on his own and there is no community spirit”, according to a principal. Most Oshivambo and Otjiherero speakers spend only time in Windhoek for schooling and work and then intend to return to their home village. A - growing - minority is totally urbanized.

This principal also believed that there is a strong need for a counseling function within schools. All “white” schools would already have councilors (remedial teachers etc.), but “black” schools not. Teachers should refer children with apparent problems to counselor. Access to the counselor should be made as easy as possible and contacts should be confidential.

The need to form special committees on social issues the section-level was also suggested by several people. Such a committee should preferably consist of block-leaders, the principal of the school, the Regional Councillor, medical personal, NGO’s and have a mandate to discuss both individual cases and strategies.

4.3.8 Community centers

In recent years the Municipality of Windhoek has donated several so called community centers to Katutura with the aim to support community activities. These centers are expected to become financially self-reliant by generating their revenues. The current function of the Babylon Community Centre for example is:

- To provide meeting space (for example for church meetings; political gatherings; sewing classes etc.),
- To proved an office room to an Early Childhood Development Centre,
- To provide an office to the Municipality for the collection of water fees
- To accommodate the fire brigade and ambulance vehicle.

Each center has an elected management committee to run the facility. The information is too limited to draw any conclusions about the actual and potential role of these community center
committees as collective decision-making mechanism. Their current mandate is probably limited to the sustainable management of the facility.

4.3.9 Saving groups

There are many spontaneous small groups whereby friends or colleagues safe money following a revolving fund or merry-go-round principle. In addition there are several saving mechanisms supported by outside organizations:

a. The Shack Dwellers Federation: support to groups of about 30 members to save for improved housing and to start individual businesses (similar to the Ongwediva group visited);

b. National Housing Enterprise (NHE): assistance to groups of low-income people to save for a plot of land as a group, because the members cannot get a formal loan for as an individual. These people are usually self-employed

c. Windhoek Municipality (Community Development Division): initiated saving groups similar to the NHE formula. Since 1999 10-20 groups have been registered at the Housing Division. Four of them managed to finish the procedures and bought a plot collectively. The program might start a second phase for people to save for the construction of their house.

The groups often have an ethnically mixed composition with women forming the majority of members. From interviews can be concluded that the main reason for getting together is to obtain access to a plot in order to be able to build a house or to get a business loan. No examples were found of groups engaging in other activities of common interest. These groups might be too heterogeneous and temporary in character to serve as an entry point.

4.3.10 Conclusions

Seemingly fewer mechanisms were identified in Katutura than in the Herero and Ovambo rural areas. Some of the mechanisms discussed in chapters 2. And 3., however, are also relevant for the urban context. These were for the Ovambo regions: private consultation (2.3.5), “influential’ people (2.3.7) and modern insurance (2.3.15), and for Hereroland: Farmers Associations (3.3.10), Youth Organizations (3.3.11) and Age-mate system (3.3.13).

Similar to what was found in the Herero and Ovambo rural areas, children are considered above all a private responsibility (see 4.2). The extended family (grandmother!) in the home village used to function as the main safety network (or dumping place) for children whose parent(s) are not able or not willing to take care of them. This is probably still largely the case for most Herero children, but for many Ovambo children this option is becoming less realistic it seems.

Both older and newer residential areas in Katutura lack a strong sense of “community”, social cohesion and solidarity. Collective decisions and action that are taken are generally focussed on a) getting services and infrastructure to the area and b) security. Although no examples were found of people organizing themselves to tackle “social problems”, people interviewed were very aware of and concerned about the increasing number of children at risk (holding a ‘needs’ perspective rather than a ‘rights’ perspective), crime, alcoholism, domestic violence etc. There was consensus that the root causes are lack of gainful employment and disease (HIV/AIDS).

Identified solutions were usually outside the perceived reach of the community in the hands of the Government (and donors). Nevertheless, a few entry points were found among the existing mechanisms and organizations in Katutura:
1. Community leaders: blockheads, section leaders and section committees. Their mandate resembles the traditional village headman (dispute resolution) and the elected Regional Councilor (ensuring access to services and infrastructure; emergency assistance etc.). There is much scope for capacity development. Women among them seem to have particular potential in terms of the parameter functions. The fact that the community leaders do not receive any formal compensation for the time they invest in community activities will be an important constraint for expanding their role.

2. Early Childhood Development Centers. Improvement of the functioning and management of the ECDC’s could contribute to improved access for the poorest children and better quality of care. Teachers and parent committees could assume a role in identifying children at risk, and channeling of social and/or material assistance to them.

3. Primary and secondary Schools. Adding a counseling function to the schools could provide children at risk private access to assistance. This is particularly important in cases of domestic abuse and violence.

4. Catholic Aid Action. On the short-term, this NGO could undertake several of the parameter functions. The perspectives for long-term sustainability, however, are not be very good.

In addition, as several people suggested it might be a good idea to look into the possibility of supporting the establishment of a sort of “social committee” in sections that show an interest. Such a committee could consist of interested and motivated people from schools, ECDC’s, NGO’s and block leaders. The block leaders are in principle able to be in a face-to-face position with all people in their area (20-60 households). The committee should receive relevant training and possibly some other incentives as well. The committee should decide on priority issues to be tackled.

Two organizations, the Herero Youth League and Farmers Associations, were already discussed in 3.3.11 and 3.3.12. They have members in Katutura as well as other parts of Windhoek. Their potential contribution to the realization of Children’s rights lies in their ability to form platforms for discussion and negotiation between different sections (interest-groups or stakeholders) within Herero society. As such they could contribute to changing values and attitudes, and ultimately behavior in favor of children. This can be seen as a strategy for strengthening rural-urban linkages in favor of children.
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Duty bearing

In the Herero and Owambo context, duty bearers of children’s rights are basically individual parents/caregivers of children who operate more or less autonomously in the private sphere of their own household with the extended family forming the main support network. Urban-rural linkages are part and parcel of most duty bearing relationships. The most vulnerable categories of children often lack clearly defined duty bearers or have several duty bearers who cannot be held fully accountable. One common reason is that the caregivers have not voluntarily taken the responsibility or have not fully agreed to it. Another common reason is that the caregiver does not have sufficient access to or control over resources to meet the obligation (in terms of food security; housing facilities; information on channels for assistance; time to spend; money for school fees, clothes etc.).

- Strategies to strengthen the position of the caregivers in order to become duty bearers that can be held more accountable should include:
  1. Increasing and enhancing the options of resource poorest caregivers’ to produce food, to generate income etc. (e.g. through group approach);
  2. Creating awareness and changing attitudes and behavior of parents (fathers and mothers) so they assume more responsibility towards their children;
  3. Creating and strengthening supporting institutions and activities: Early Childhood Development Centers; adult literacy courses; nutritional information; health facilities; safe water & sanitation; assistance for victims of domestic violence and so on.
  4. Improving access to information on legal and social rights and available services and institutions, including on how to obtain GRN assistance.
  5. Strengthening community capacities in the parameter functions: care of foster children and orphans, and sick people; identification of children at risk; assessment and prioritization of most urgent problems and needs of these children, their parents or caretakers; monitoring of problems and needs of these households, and obtaining and channeling the necessary social and/or material assistance to these households, create support networks and monitor their effectiveness etc. (see 5.2)

5.2 Collective decision-making

When developing strategies for expanding duty-bearing functions to more collective levels and for influencing collective decision making in favor of children the following should be taken into consideration:

- Owambo and Herero societies are not only diverse, but also “pluralistic”. This implies that different categories of people have different, sometimes conflicting, interests, values and perspectives. Conflicts arising from such situation cannot always be solved but it might be possible to better accommodate the interests of different categories and better manage the conflicts. It might not be possible to reduce the views to a common perspective by the reference to an absolute standard of what “Children’s Rights” are or should be. (See 2.1).
• There is a high sensitivity or even resistance towards children, youth and women getting a stronger position. The defined parameter functions are predominantly needs or wellbeing oriented and therefore socially more acceptable as they do not challenge the status quo. It will be easier to establish dialogue and reach a certain consensus on the survival (basic-needs) aspects of Children’s Rights than on the more empowering aspects. (See 2.2.4; 2.2.5 and 3.2.4).

• Generally, community-based institutions for decision making and administration are poorly developed. Recent examples of self-mobilization concentrate on natural resources management (water supply; grazing) and improving security. Traditionally, issues related to “welfare” were the responsibility of the Chief (King) and the colonial administration. There is now a strong inclination to make the Namibian Government responsible for such issues (dependency syndrome). Strategies that focus on groups of people with similar problems and interests rather than on the community as a whole might be more effective in many cases. (See 2.2.2 and 3.1).

5.3 North-central communal areas

In the Ovambo regions, many people were concerned about the increasing number of vulnerable children and caregivers, usually defined in terms of poor food security, lack of money for school fees and clothes. People were also aware of the increasing numbers of sick people and people in poor health. The perceived reasons were to some extent interrelated: reduced agricultural productivity, urban unemployment, reduced remittances sent by relatives, increasing number of orphans, HIV/AIDS. Pressures on better-off households to permanently support the poorest, e.g. through cross-subsidization of water supply, food donations and housing orphans are increasing. They are not likely to result in a long-term solution, since there is a trend of individualization and the gap between poor and rich is only increasing. (See 2.2.2 and 2.2.5).

It can be expected that in selected communities, poverty-related problems are or will be so severe that they can trigger community-level action when proper assistance is offered in terms of mobilization, facilitation, capacity building and assistance in realization of by the community identified solutions. (See 2.3.16).

• Several existing mechanisms that have already linkages with the parameter functions have potential to be utilized as a strategic entry point:
  - Water, emergency relief and health committees (identification of needy people and channeling of assistance)
  - Traditional leaders (peace and welfare is their mandate; have always been involved in food relief)
  - ECDC’s (identification of children at risk; channeling information)
  - “Influential people” (promoting discussion; initiating of identification of children at risk; improving access to information; networking and establishing channels etc.
  - Scouting organisation (community service)

According to circumstances and preferences, communities should be given the option of forming a new committee, but preferably they new functions and tasks are taken up and incorporated by existing mechanisms or motivated individuals. Capacity development in new roles and tasks will be needed.
• Selected dynamic traditional authorities and community legal activators should be further strengthened in dispute resolution in general and inheritance issues in particular. Recent training by CASS was already focused on Human Rights and administration skills. Selected dynamic leaders could be further trained in facilitation skills and conflict management. (See 2.2.4 and 2.3.3).

5.4 Eastern communal areas

Generally, San and Damara children have a higher chance of being at risk than Herero children. Most vulnerable among the Herero are those children whose grandparents live on a pension only, have no or little livestock and can not tap on the resources of other relatives. The incentive to generate collective action is probably in most communities not strong enough as poverty is less widespread and acute than for example in the Owambo regions (see 3.2.5 and 3.2.2). This might, however, change in the near future.

• The in 5.3 mentioned strategic entry points (committees; traditional leaders; ECDC’s and ‘influential people”) seem also most appropriate the Herero context.

• The realization of children’s rights in Herero society depends highly on a) the strength of the Namibian economy (e.g. meat prices) and b) the sustainability and integrity of the Herero extended family as a production and reproduction system. Establishing platforms for discussion could positively influence social cohesion within Herero society in general and within individual families in particular. The following mechanisms could provide a contribution in this respect: headmen, youth organizations and farmers associations. Capacity building could improve the functioning of these institutions and individuals. (See 3.3.2-4; 3.3.11-2 and 4.3.10).

• Early Childhood Development Centers are not yet widespread and probably will never be feasible in the many smaller communities without some sort of subsidy. Support is particularly justified as these centers provide a good opportunity for reaching grandmothers who are taking care of their grandchildren. (See 3.2.3 and 3.3.8).

5.5 Katutura

In Katutura, both older and newer residential areas in Katutura lack a strong sense of “community”, social cohesion and solidarity. Community-based decision making and action are largely limited to getting services and infrastructure to the area, and improving the security situation. Many residents were concerned about the increasing number of children at risk (holding a ‘needs’ perspective rather than a ‘rights’ perspective), crime, alcoholism, domestic violence etc. (See 4.1 and 4.3.10).

• The new system of elected community leaders (blockheads; section leaders and section committees) offers most perspectives for identifying, assessing, analyzing, prioritizing and addressing social problems. If decided, the parameter functions could be incorporated. Much capacity development will be required. These leaders are functioning on a voluntary basis and motivation and morale are already a problem. Allocation of additional tasks might be difficult without providing additional incentives. (See 4.1 and 4.3.10).
• Early Childhood Development Centers should be further strengthened and brought under more supervision and control in order to enhance their contribution as duty bearing institution or in any of the parameter functions. (See 4.1 and 4.3.4).

• The feasibility of newly establishing kind of “social committees” in selected sections of Katutura should be further explored. Such committees would ideally consist of active block leaders, motivated people from schools, ECDC’s, NGO’s, churches, line agencies etc. The committee members should receive relevant training and possibly some other incentives as well. (See 4.3.4 and 4.3.10).

5.6 Additional recommendations

It is further recommended:

• To closely follow the implementation process of the cost recovery policy by the Directorate of Rural Water Supply, in particular with respect to the approach towards “marginalized groups” and cost sharing. (See 2.3.12 and 3.3.6).

• To closely follow the ongoing process of “decentralization” and further identify opportunities. When established, the Village Development Committees might be able to pull off a more integrated/ holistic approach towards addressing community problems. VDC’s could play an important role in formulating action plans, coordination and monitoring. The various parameter functions could be divided over existing mechanisms or individuals, and the VDC could further have a monitoring role. The planned community service centers in each Constituency could play a role in terms of making information on social and legal rights and services more accessible; provision of counseling and assistance to victims of abuse and violence etc. (See 2.3.12; 2.3.16; 3.3.6 and 3.3.13).

• To further study the possibility of introducing a professional counseling function at primary and secondary schools. Rural and urban primary and secondary schools generally have not a strong record as duty bearers of Children’s Rights nor do they contribute to any of the identified parameter functions. There are individual teachers, however, who form a positive exception. Some of them could benefit from training in counseling skills. It would be an improvement if in each school one or two teachers would be allowed to use part of their time on socially oriented tasks. Some schools have a variety of learners committees that can be used for developing skills in civil rights’, leadership etc. (See 4.3.7).

• To follow and support discussion and development of policies and strategies concerning various pensions and emergency relief, and strategies for dissemination of information.

• To undertake studies in the following areas:
  a) the conditions of children living at cattle posts (see 2.2.3);
  b) the process of “marginalization” of men in Namibian society (see 3.2.4 and 4.3.2), and
  c) the actual and potential contribution of modern insurance policies to social security and the performance of insurance companies in order to assess the need for “financial literacy” training or other measures to increase the accountability and transparency of these institutions. (See 2.3.15).
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### Annex A. List of resource people interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Affiliation</th>
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<td>Alwendo, Miriam</td>
<td>Manager, Katutura Women’s Center, Windhoek</td>
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<td>Andimba, Taati</td>
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<td>Aupindi, Helvi</td>
<td>Senior Chief Control Officer, Omusati Regional Council, Outapi</td>
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<td>Chothia, Lorenzo “B”</td>
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<td>Engelbrecht, Selenia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etuhole, Ingo</td>
<td>Rural Water Supply Extension Officer for Omusati Region, DRWS, Oshakati</td>
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<td>Felton, Selke</td>
<td>Educational Consultant, UNICEF, Windhoek</td>
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<tr>
<td>!Goagoses, Adeline</td>
<td>Assistant Community Worker, Omaheke San Trust, Gobabis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulubana, Mr.</td>
<td>Leader, Saint Philips Faith Healing Church of Namibia, Katutura</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hendjula, Erasmus</td>
<td>Regional Councilor for Hakahana Constituency, Katutura</td>
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<td>Heimerikx, Gerard</td>
<td>Priest, Okatana Roman Catholic Mission, Oshakati</td>
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<td>Hijamutiti, Hilda</td>
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<td>Himeezembi, Katjivena</td>
<td>Murukuti Cooperative Union, Division of Cooperative Development, MAWRD, Okakara</td>
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<td>Iipumbu, Herman</td>
<td>Ukwambi Chief (King), Omusati Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iita, Sylvia</td>
<td>Chairperson, Nathaniel Maxnilili Community Center, Katutura</td>
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<td>Iiyambo, Junius</td>
<td>Leader, Onaanda Parish (ELCIN), Elim Constituency, Omusati Region</td>
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<td>Jason, Mbodo</td>
<td>Manager, Schoolboard Training Program, Ongwediva Teachers’ Resource Center, Ongwediva</td>
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<td>Jezurura, Naftalina</td>
<td>Municipal Councilor for Katutura-Central</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juriga, Majazu</td>
<td>Secretary of Chief Kambawezi, Okakarara, Otjizondupa Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kaakuha, Doc</td>
<td>Animator, Total Child Project for ACORD, Aminuis, Omaheke Region</td>
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<td>Kaanguindae, Tekla</td>
<td>Rural Water Supply Extension Officer, Okakarara</td>
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Kaaronda, Mr. Chief Executive Officer Town Council Okakara (Town Clerk)
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Annex B. Ukwanyama kinship system from the child perspective

The role of matrilineal relatives

Past situation
Maternal uncles (MOBR) used to play (and to varying extent still do) a very important role in everybody’s life. Although all your maternal uncles are important, usually a child (boy or girl) builds up a special relationship with one of them. Your special MOBR is considered more important than your own father: “XO KESHI OMUKWENI”

Your special uncle is expected to provide:
- inheritance of cattle,
- resources in emergency situations (e.g. payment of fines),
- advise (e.g. choice of further education), and
- protection (e.g. against bad treatment by parents or other individuals; that you are going to school).

Maternal uncle(s) in urban areas are also expected to help their nephews and nieces when they first arrive. All this counts for both girls and boy, but more for boys because livestock is the crux of the system. Boys often live with their uncles when growing up. A boy can be selected by his uncle to take care of his cattle. This is considered an honor. Later this boy will inherit (although some sharing with own children of uncle). Generally, a man will mark some of his cattle in order to let his own sons and daughters inherit specific animals. For the animals that are not marked, some sort of collective decision making is expected. If any of the heiress need some money, a meeting will have to be held with the other siblings and the nephew who takes care of the cattle. In principle the herd stays together and provides a security fund for those who inherit. Traditional authorities are also traditionally succeeded by their nephews (their sisters son).

Current situation and trends
It is still common practice that traditional leaders are succeeded by a nephew (sisters’ son) rather than their own son. In general, however, the institution of maternal uncles is eroding:

- Customary matrilineal inheritance rules are no longer respected. There are examples of children of deceased taking number of unmarked animals away and sell them without consultation of the others involved. These may be people who live in urban areas and want to use the money for other purposes. (Economic diversification/ livestock less important).
- Children are now going to school, so it becomes more rare that boys are taken in by their uncles to take care of the herd (Education).
- Wives of MOBR’s increasingly defend the interests of their own children (and themselves) (Emancipation).
- Modern law does not respect the institution of maternal uncles, but promotes the nuclear family (rights of wife and children)

These days, a child’s maternal uncle might still play a role in the following areas:
- Payment of fines under customary law
- Giving advise and protection
- It is still considered to bring luck if you build your herd around an animal that you received from your uncle. You may have to pay him for it, however.
Role of paternal relatives

Past situation
Traditionally, after marriage (including payment of small lobola to her family) a woman moves in with her husband’s relatives (patrilocality). After some time the couple make their own homestead nearby. The wife, her children and the house (belongings) are considered as property of the husband’s family (patrilineage).

When a father of young children dies, his children are usually distributed among his brothers and sisters. Each uncle (FABR) and aunt (FASI) select a specific child by putting a black piece of cloth around a child’s neck. His wife moves either back to her family or stays with her parents-in-law. Preference marriage with brother in-laws – like among the Herero - is not practiced. A reason may be that the blame for the death is often put on the widow: evil spirits.

An uncle or aunt is only expected to take a nephew or niece in if he or she has a house and can support the child. The nephew/ niece is generally selected on basis of its expected contribution (seen as asset) and proper behavior. After the child is taken in by the uncle, there is no difference made between own children and children of siblings. Children call their paternal aunts and uncles “mother” and “father” anyway.

When a mother dies, her sister (MOSI) is expected (has responsibility and authority) to take the daughters and very small boys. The larger boys will stay with the father and paternal relatives.

Current situation and trends
Payment of lobola (two heads of cattle or equivalent value) is still practiced in cases that the girl is not yet a mother. If she has already a child and/or the father has paid the fine for impregnating her, no lobola is paid. These days the role of the paternal relatives is becoming less and less important. Paternal aunts and uncles do not automatically take in orphaned children anymore. Contributing factors are:

- People’s valuation of children is changing from asset to burden: costs of education/ loss of labor contribution
- poverty/ lack of resources to maintain additional children
- children are making more choices of their own at an earlier age (they may not want to leave their mother)
- paternal relatives may be reluctant to “invest” in a child and then risk that at certain age the child will return to the mother and “forget about them”
- women do not allow children being taken away by in-laws; women more often will stay in the husband’s house after his death rather than move back to her own relatives or move in with the in-laws (emancipation issue)
- women do not want to live with in-laws anymore (sharing of food etc.); they are afraid that in-laws will take everything away
- neo-local residence is on the increase (either in other village or further away from parents-in-law homestead).

It is important to notice that, many children these days do not have any paternal relatives. “Their father is not to be found”, is a common expression for saying that the biological father is either not known or does not take responsibility (financial or other) for the child. The number of single mothers is increasing. When young, most of them live with their parents.

---

1 Children that are going to school and are doing well have most chance to be taken.
The role of grandmothers (and grand fathers) is becoming more important. Increasingly, children (de facto or de jure orphans) end up living with the grandmothers. Grandmothers will never refuse taking in children of their own daughters.

Many women live in urban areas in poverty. One of their survival strategies is to link themselves to man with a job. The result is that they end up with children from different men who are not providing any financial support. The women drop the children at their mother’s place, often without sending any money. It is estimated that 80% of the households in Ohalushu village consists of grandmothers (some with grandfathers) with grandchildren. The daughters may be alive or not, but are contributing nothing or little. In almost every interview the issue of women “dropping off” their children was mentioned in a negative manner. The issue of what will happen with the children if grandmother becomes ill or dies is only dealt with in an ad hoc manner. In such a case the remaining relatives and/or neighbors usually take responsibility.