

# Agricultural Livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



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# Background of Durban, South Africa



Durban is the second largest city in South Africa, and is home to the busiest port in Africa

It is situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and its population is estimated to be around 3.6 million



Despite the country's progress since the end of Apartheid, many describe South Africa as a 'medium-developed country' because it is home to both a first and third world economy



- Agriculture contributes to almost 4% of its GDP, but accounts for almost 10% of the country's employment

# Background of Durban, South Africa



- Agriculture is deeply embedded in Zulu culture, and many households in the rural areas make their livelihood off some form of farming
- Nevertheless, the agricultural structure in South Africa is skewed: during the Apartheid era, many black communities were forced off fertile lands onto mountainous, and degraded regions of the country
- Consequently, agricultural communities were unable to maintain their production levels, were made to pay taxes, and were forced to serve as cheap farm labourers to white farmers
- To date, South Africa's agricultural industry is heavily based in subsistence agriculture, or what some scholars describe as Traditional African farming
- Most of the rural economy lives with poor infrastructure, service delivery, and prospects for the future

# Internship: Centre for Civil Society – University of KwaZulu-Natal



- The objective of this internship was to research the dynamics of agricultural communities to adapt to environmental challenges in Umzinyathi , and to understand how rural residents may be supported to gain more sustainable livelihoods
- The research was based at the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban
- CCS aims to foster the development of affiliations within civil society in order to share knowledge and inspire reflection and debate



# The Investigation

- The target group analyzed by this study are the low-income, rural, Zulu population in Umzinyathi tied to agricultural livelihoods.
- The rural areas have high unemployment rates, and countless residents rely on their pension or child grants to assume the majority of their household's income.
- Service delivery is insufficient, with poorly built infrastructure that has led to water insufficiencies and problems with sanitation.
- Men oftentimes travel to the urban areas in search of employment. This is especially true of Umzinyathi because it is a peri-urban area.
- However, despite the accelerating urbanization in this area, the majority of households still partake in some sort of agriculture, whether it is small-scale, garden, or subsistence.



# Rural Challenges in Umzinyathi, South Africa



- To balance out the inequalities that exist between the rural and urban areas, South Africa's first democratically elected government sought out to re-invigorate rural development.
- Their rural development strategy honed in on improving agricultural capacity through the improvement of infrastructure and the donation of agricultural tools, such as seeds, fertilizers and land redistribution from whites to black farmers.

# Rural Challenges in Umzinyathi, South Africa

- Nevertheless, the land redistribution policies have largely been criticized for not allocating enough land back to black communities, or delegating the redistribution of land under regulations that black farmers cannot meet.
- Furthermore, climate change impacts that are bolstered by the nearby constructed Inanda dam, as well as the country's water scarcity crisis have dampened agricultural output



# Diversification of Livelihoods



- Given the difficulties of farming due to climate change, land degradation and water scarcity impacts, as well as changing social and cultural factors that are changing rural areas in new ways, many rural households assume various income-generating strategies in order to build sustainable livelihoods.
- In most South African rural areas, people assume jobs in the trades, brick making, thatch work, beading, gardening, babysitting or care giving for the elderly or the sick.
- However, these activities do not generate enough income to support one given household for even a week.

# Future of Rural Centres



- Umzinyathi was previously considered a rural area, however, Durban's rapid urbanization has made it a burgeoning peri-urban district
- Consequently, home construction has increased, plots of land have decreased, and infrastructure is being laid.

# Future of Rural Centres



- This may seem like an improvement, but as most households depend on agriculture, decreased land holdings will negatively impact their livelihoods.

Furthermore, as new infrastructure is constructed in this area, including water meters, rural dwellers will need to start paying for services that they previously received for free.

- New expenses will place a strain on already stretched household income.

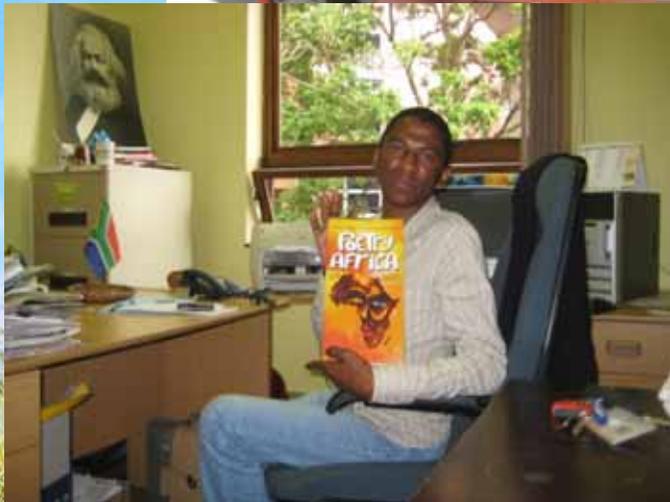
Therefore, it seems appropriate for the government to begin teaching farmers and residents alike to learn how to conserve water, because most people are aware of the change in climate, but not the particular ways it influences their lives every day.

# Challenges and Accomplishments



- By completing my time in the field, I learned more about the relationship between climate change, agrarian reform and rural policy development and strategies in the South African context.
- However, there were numerous challenges during the internship. Some include:
  - South African culture's general malaise regarding deadlines and meetings, which oftentimes presented delays in completing the fieldwork component
  - Durban's poor transportation system, which placed you at the mercy of other people's schedules, and also made it harder to reach the rural areas.

# Reflections on the Highlights during the Internship



- CCS' objective is to advance socio-economic and environmental justice by creating critical knowledge about civil society and providing a means of stimulating dialogue with and for civil society.
- The Centre welcomes scholars from around the world, and each academic is encouraged to share their research and results.
- Therefore, the environment is very collaborative and fosters innovation and forward thinking.

# Reflections on the Highlights during the Internship



- Overall, my time in South Africa was a memorable experience, filled with generous, inspiring, and friendly people.
- I hope to maintain the friendships and other working relationships I have developed with colleagues in South Africa, especially with the research participants, and hope to visit the country again soon.

