

# **FIELDWORK REPORT**

**[Excerpts]**

## **MESEBETSI (LABOUR FORCE)** **SURVEY**

**OCTOBER 1999 – FEBRUARY 2000**

COMPILED BY  
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**Fafo note: To protect the confidentiality of Mesebetsi respondents and field staff, appendices to the MarkData fieldwork report were not included for public release in the data CD.**

TRAINING: 11 – 15 October 1999  
 FIELDWORK PERIOD: 18 October 1999 to 25 January 2000  
 PROJECT MANAGER: Tertia van der Walt  
 PROJECT LEADER: Jan Wegelin

## 1. **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

The Mesebetsi Labour Force Survey was a co-operation project of the Department of Labour and the Institute for Applied Social Science (Fafu). Fafu was the implementing agency for the study and contracted MarkData (Pty) Ltd to conduct the fieldwork for the study.

The Mesebetsi Labour Force Survey was a sample survey that was carried out in all parts of South Africa gathering information on employment and unemployment, education and training, working conditions and income in both urban and rural areas. The aim was to complete approximately 10 000 Household questionnaires and 10 000 RSI questionnaires.

The objectives of the survey were broadly:

- To collect statistical information needed for preparing economic and social development plans and for policy making.
- To assess employment, unemployment and self-employment.
- To examine the kind of training that people have had and to take stock of South Africa's skills.
- To investigate working conditions and the effects of new legislation such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.
- To lay the groundwork for statistical studies to be conducted in the future.

The numerous tasks involved in undertaking a study of this magnitude were allocated as follows:

- Questionnaire design and pilot Fafu
- Design of sample and drawing of EA's Fafu
- Training manual Fafu (contributions by MarkData)
- Translation of questionnaires into 6 languages MarkData
- Printing of questionnaires, manuals and other material MarkData
- Re-listing of number of households in the selected EA's MarkData;  
procedures designed by Fafu)
- Recruitment and training of fieldworkers MarkData

▪ Field data collection and 10% check-backs	MarkData
▪ Checking and coding of questionnaires	MarkData
▪ Capturing and editing of data	MarkData and Fafo (editing)
▪ Provision of data in SPSS	Fafo and MarkData
▪ Fieldwork report	MarkData
▪ Analysis and final report writing	Fafo

The duration of the contract was from 8 September 1999 to 20 February 2000 with the understanding that the fieldwork would take place between 20 October and 20 December 1999.

This report will address all the aspects related to this survey to serve as a fieldwork report.

## **2. THE MANUAL**

The interviewer manual was designed by Fafo with input from MarkData to train an interviewer from the very basics of research up to a skilful interviewer.

The five chapters each dealt with a certain part of the project.

- Chapter one gave background and an introduction to the study in terms of its purpose, possible findings and implementation.
- Chapter two gave information on conducting an interview and included presentability, attitude and some classic situations and their appropriate solutions.
- Chapter three explained the handling of different types of questions, pre-coded questions, skip instructions and what to do when you get to an arrow etc.
- Chapter four explained fieldwork procedures and all the processes involved before starting the interview. Questions like who to interview, which household to select and more were dealt with. It also gave instructions on how the sample works and how the sample and map should be handled.
- The last chapter that made out the majority of the manual explained each question with all the definitions and explanations needed to understand every question. This chapter proved to be extremely valuable in the field as a reference.

**(Chapter 5 of the Manual, containing detailed explanations of the questions, is included in the Mesebetsi Data CD.)**

### **3. THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

The questionnaires, which were administered during this survey, involved a household questionnaire as well as a RSI (Randomly Selected Individual) questionnaire, a Cover Page and a Flap Page, which listed all household members.

In order to minimise confusion, all these questionnaires were bound into one document.

The questionnaire was complicated, difficult and long for general public respondents and interviewers.

Although the questionnaires were well structured, they contained a lot of detail and skipping instructions that caused mistakes.

The combination questionnaire took at least one hour and in some instances two hours to complete.

Probably the most important aspect fieldworkers had to deal with were respondent's fatigue. This especially occurred when the main respondent for the household questionnaire was also the RSI.

Respondents fetching water as part of their daily routine were classified as active. This however posed problems when the interview progressed to Sections H and I of the RSI questionnaire. In some areas where communities have tap water, woman still go down to the river to fetch water, this for most of them is not just a necessary activity but also a social event.

At H5 or elsewhere, the standard / regular hourly pay should have been asked which would have provided more accurate information in this section.

The questionnaires were translated into Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, South Sotho, North Sotho and Western Sotho to assist the interviewers in conducting interviews in the language of the respondent's choice.

**(Copies of the questionnaires in English are included in the Mesebetsi Data CD.)**

#### **4. THE SAMPLE**

The representative sample was provided by the Department of Labour and Fafo and was designed to include the South African population of persons 15 years and older for the household section and 18 years and older for the individual RSI section according to:

The nine provinces

- Western Cape
- Northern Cape
- Eastern Cape
- Free State
- KwaZulu-Natal
- Mpumalanga
- Northern Province
- Gauteng
- North West

and

Five strata

1. Urban, small EA's
2. Rural, small EA's
3. Urban, large EA's
4. Rural, large EA's
5. "O population" EA's

A total sample of 11376 was proposed with over-sampling. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the sample for each category and sample size differentials. A sample size of 11 was allocated to small urban, rural and the "O population" EA's

The sample for large, urban EA's was 19, and for large, rural EA's it was 18.

**Table 1****Sample breakdown**

<b>SAMPLE BREAKDOWN</b>					
<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>URBAN/ RURAL</b>	<b>SAMPLE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF EA'S</b>	<b>TOTAL PER CATEGORY</b>	<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>
Commercial farms	Non-urban	11	46		506
Other: non-urban	Non-urban	11	29		319
Tribal authorities	Non-urban	11	341		3751
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>4576</b>
Commercial farms	Non-urban	18	11		198
Other: non-urban	Non-urban	18	2		36
Tribal authorities	Non-urban	18	19		342
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>576</b>
Urban: formal	Urban	11	258		2838
Urban: Informal	Urban	11	110		1210
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>4048</b>
Urban: formal	Urban	19	89		1691
Urban: Informal	Urban	19	7		133
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1824</b>
Category 5	"O population" EA's	11	32		352
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>352</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>944</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>11376</b>

Table 2 gives a more thorough description of the 32 "O population" or Non-specific EA's which calculates to 352 interviews. All of the 32 EA's were eventually included in the sample. Most of the EA's from this sample were lumped with other EA's or had other problems which made it very difficult to locate in the first place and secondly to establish the boundaries without any official descriptions or knowledge from the people in the area.

**Table 2 “O Population” / Non-specific EA’s (32)**

Prov	Cat	U/R	D-code	District	Area	EA	Sample
5	Commercial farms	Non-urban	03	Pinetown	Pinetown NU	9000	11
8	Commercial farms	Non-urban	02	Bethal	Bethal NU	3002	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	46	Mpofu	Balfour	9003	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	54	Flagstaff	Bukuveni	0303	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	57	Libode	Marubeni	9010	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	58	Lusikisiki	Taweni	0318	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	58	Lusikisiki	Nqobošana	0569	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	58	Lusikisiki	Lower Hlabathi	9076	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	61	Mt Fletcher	Mahoabatsana	0234	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	67	Qumbu	Nxotwe	0386	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	68	Cofimvaba	Nomadambe	0037	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	70	Tsolo	Ncambele	0136	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	72	Umtata	Sitebe	0591	11
2	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	76	Sterkspruit	Tugela	0088	11
5	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	03	Pinetown	Izitholo	6047	11
5	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	16	Kranskop	Ekhatha	4001	11
5	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	36	Lower Umfolozi	Mbonambi	9000	11
6	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	18	Ga Rankuwa	Hebron	0678	11
9	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	18	Bolobedu	Maphalle	9002	11
9	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	23	Thabamopo	Thabamopo	9006	11
9	Other: Non-urban	Non-urban	23	Thabamopo	Tjatjaneng	9012	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	01	Pretoria	Laudium	0798	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	08	Boksburg	Cason	0105	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	14	Springs	Kwathema	6146	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	16	Oberholzer	Welverdiend	4004	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	19	Westonaria	Lenasia South	3003	11
7	Urban: formal	Urban	21	Cullinan	Stanza Bopape	3006	11
8	Urban: formal	Urban	11	Hoefeldrif	Evander	0062	11
2	Urban: Informal	Urban	38	Humansdorp	Kwanomzamo	0095	11
4	Urban: Informal	Urban	06	Odendaalsrus	Kutlwanoŋ	6132	11
5	Urban: Informal	Urban	06	Richmond	Richmond	9000	11
8	Urban: informal	Urban	30	Kwamhlanga	Kwamhlanga	0019	11
							<b>352</b>

## 5. **FIELDWORK AREA**

The fieldwork area covered the whole of South Africa and consisted of three major categories, namely farms, tribal or non-urban and urban areas. Table 3 gives a breakdown of the size of the areas within each province.

**Table 3 Breakdown of sample within provinces**

<b>Prov</b>	<b>Cat</b>	<b>U/R</b>	<b>Sample</b>
Western Cape	Commercial farms	Non-urban	120
Western Cape	Urban	Urban	853
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>973</b>
Eastern Cape	Commercial farms	Non-urban	62
Eastern Cape	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	1327
Eastern Cape	Urban	Urban	589
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1978</b>
Northern Cape	Commercial farms	Non-urban	22
Northern Cape	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	29
Northern Cape	Urban	Urban	178
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>229</b>
Free State	Commercial farms	Non-urban	150
Free State	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	110
Free State	Urban	Urban	480
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>740</b>
KwaZulu-Natal	Commercial farms	Non-urban	131
KwaZulu-Natal	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	821
KwaZulu-Natal	Urban	Urban	978
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1930</b>
North West	Commercial farms	Non-urban	84
North West	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	593
North West	Urban	Urban	326
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1003</b>
Gauteng	Commercial farms	Non-urban	22
Gauteng	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	22
Gauteng	Urban	Urban	2104
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>2148</b>
Mpumalanga	Commercial farms	Non-urban	77
Mpumalanga	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	454
Mpumalanga	Urban	Urban	373
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>904</b>
Northern Province	Commercial farms	Non-urban	58
Northern Province	Tribal or Non-urban	Non-urban	1301
Northern Province	Urban	Urban	112
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1471</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>11376</b>

## **6. TRAINING**

A five-day training session between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1999 was held in Pretoria. Fieldworkers from all the provinces except KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape attended this session in Pretoria. Two separate training sessions were held in KwaZulu-Natal (Durban) and Western Cape (Parron) during the following week.

During these five days the manual was studied thoroughly and each potential interviewer was given homework at the end of every day. After the initial three chapters some mock interviews or circumstances were created during the session to familiarise the interviewers with possible scenarios.

After each section or part of a section the group was split into smaller groups of about five to six people. Informal discussion sessions were held regarding the work just discussed after which a feedback session with the whole group took place.

At the start and during Chapter 5 role-play interviews on that particular section were initiated while revolving the interviewers all the time. At the end of day five a test was administered and marked. The results of these tests were used as a margin in making the final selection of interviewers to take part in the survey. All interviewers had to comply with MarkData's prerequisites, namely:

- A Matric educational qualification or equivalent.
- Fully bilingual or multilingual in order to speak the relevant language in a particular fieldwork area.

Before fieldwork officially commenced, each interviewer had completed 5 practice interviews.

Throughout the fieldwork process constant feedback was given to the supervisors on their work and instructions given towards the improvement of certain interviewers' work. MarkData also had to retrain several teams after initial fieldwork.

## **7. RE-LISTING**

Re-listing of each of the selected EA's was required due to changes that had taken place since the 1996 Census.

Because the budget and time available for the study did not allow a separate full re-listing exercise, it was decided to do the re-listing (counting of households) of the EA's just prior to the selection of households to be interviewed in an EA.

With this method of re-listing, which is actually a count of the number of households in an EA, the possibility of mistakes still exist because without interviewing each household to establish the number of households, multiple households can be missed. This was, however extensively discussed during the finalisation of the contract and we undertook to make the best possible count under the circumstances.

The quality of the available maps was very bad and in many instances no maps or descriptive information existed.

After establishing the boundaries of an EA, households within the EA were counted.

In every EA re-listing was done. The process involved driving or walking through the EA and counting all visible households and recording it.

The number of households was divided by the number of interviews to be conducted in the EA, this number would then be the interval. A random number was chosen between 1 and the first interval number and that would be the starting point number. This gave every household within the EA an equal opportunity to be selected.

The logic behind re-listing from a fieldwork perspective is that all empty premises and unoccupied houses are eliminated and cannot be included in the calculation to get the interval number and starting point. This however turned out to be a very difficult task in the following circumstances:

- Densely populated areas such as squatter camps where structures are very close to each other and one can't always see if there are any people in the structures.
- Highly affluent neighbourhoods where one cannot see over the walls or through the gates

whether there is more than one household on the premises.

- Coastal towns and in some formal black areas houses are empty although it looks as if people are living there, in most cases they were holiday houses and houses of people working in the cities and only returning end of the week or month. Interviewers could only rely on the information of neighbours to try and arrange an appointment but still in some instances they could only find the premises empty.
- Deep rural areas and more so mountainous areas where it is not possible to see all the households and it is not possible to get there by car this involved walking many kilometres. Some families will have more than one structure and the individuals sleep in all the structures but would still form one household sharing the budget and preparing and eating food from the same pot.

In some EA's drastic changes have taken place since 1996 if one compares the number of households counted then compared to the number counted now.

## **8. THE FIELDWORK PROCESS**

Each supervisor was allocated a sample for which he or she was responsible. Fieldwork teams as assigned after training were dispatched into these areas under constant supervision of the supervisor and MarkData. After an EA was finished, the completed questionnaires were returned to the supervisor with the relevant interviewer team. Each questionnaire was checked and revisits or corrections were done where necessary.

The supervisor would then return those questionnaires to the main office in Pretoria by mail or freight. Every questionnaire was realised in the appropriate EA and allocated a unique record number. A random selection of the questionnaires was done to do back-checking. This was done telephonically or personally. Overall 15% of the total number of questionnaires were back-checked.

## **9. CODING AND EDITING**

An editing team went through each questionnaire to make sure that the correct sections and the correct skips were maintained throughout the questionnaire pertaining to the respondent's situation. Mistakes were noted and sent back to the supervisor with clear instructions on the mistakes made and where applicable, necessary adjustments were made to the interviewer team. When the corrected questionnaires returned, the editors once again checked the questionnaires.

All correctly completed questionnaires were then submitted for coding. A separate team of 11 people did this. During the coding process the questionnaire was once again checked for correct following of the skip questions and instructions. Throughout this process all mistakes or inconsistencies were communicated to the project leader who in turn notified the supervisors to eliminate further mistakes. A Tracking form was handed in at each delivery of questionnaires, this form assisted with the monitoring of each questionnaire during the survey.

## **10. CAPTURING, VERIFICATION AND DATA EDITING**

After coding, the questionnaires were sent for capturing. The capturing process worked in four stages. Stage one was the capturing of the household section, stage two the verification of the household section, stage three the capturing of the RSI section and stage four verification of the RSI section.

After capturing, the data files were read into SPSS where the editing process started. Editing was done as follows:

- Edit 1: Duplicate record numbers.
- Edit 2: Missing Value labels (codes out of range)
- Edit 3: Missing fields in the cover and flap pages.
- Edit 4: Logical skips throughout the questionnaire.

This process was repeated for the RSI questionnaire except Edit 3. The above mentioned process took ±300 interviewers, 29 supervisors, 12 co-ordinators, 10 editors, 11 coders, 2

realisation clerks, 3 telephone back-checkers, numerous independent personal back-checkers, 1 coding and editing supervisor, 1 project leader and 1 project manager.

## **11. DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY**

After the household had been identified and if there was a person from the household present who was able to give sufficient information regarding the household members all pre-interview details were recorded (Cover and Flap pages). This information was obtained from one or more persons. The household interview was mainly conducted with one person with input from other members at times. If the Randomly Selected Individual (RSI) was present the RSI questionnaire was completed with only that respondent.

Since there were no substitutes allowed and if for any reason the interview could not be conducted one of the codes on the Cover page under Interview Status was used to explain the situation. At least two revisits were made before coding the status.

In the case of a refusal, another interviewer or supervisor was sent to the household to try to convert the refusal. This was obviously not always successful.

The interviews were conducted in the respondent's choice of language.

## **12. FIELDWORK PERIOD**

Fieldwork started the 18<sup>th</sup> of October in all nine provinces save KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape that only started the 20<sup>th</sup> October. Fieldwork continued for two months and stopped 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1999. In January only follow-up interviews were done where there were problems or where areas could not be accessed during the initial fieldwork period. For more detail regarding these areas see 'Problems experienced during fieldwork'.

The 17<sup>th</sup> of December was chosen due to the long holidays when many people had planned to celebrate the new millennium thus causing problems with listing and vacant houses. Fieldwork for the problem cases was completed during January 2000.

### **13. EXPERIENCES DURING FIELDWORK**

*Although this section includes the problems experienced with certain EA's it is very important to note that the following comments are impressions from fieldworkers and these comments are not necessarily reflected in the data or accurate.*

#### **GENERAL**

- Farm areas are extremely difficult to work in now. Farmers do not want people to talk to their workers about labour or employment activities for fear of union trouble. In most cases the farmer would interfere with the selection process insisting that the people has to work and he has no time to let them leave work for an hour, returning later is not an option.
- Very tight security and without prior arrangement it is almost impossible to gain access to farms.
- Some farmers are really struggling financially. In the questionnaire the figures given there will in some cases not make sense. They for instance would cancel policies for their retirement and live from that money or pay off a loan with the money. Income thus is not just from the farm but also from these policies.
- The rural areas still under rule of chiefs took a lot of time since these chiefs had to have meetings with all the relevant people in the areas to discuss the project and whether it would cause any problems in their area. These negotiations could take several days and even weeks.
- People in the area do not want to talk about anything without the chief giving them word that everything is fine.
- Some of the 02 descriptions give indications of red or yellow marked houses in some areas that was used by Escom for their planning purposes, most of the paint have washed away or the people have repainted the houses. In some descriptions the names of people were included to identify households. It was difficult to identify the starting point since almost

none of these people live there anymore.

- Overall bad roads, heavy rains and a sensitive topic made it sometimes difficult to reach and interview respondents.
- MarkData hopes that the outcome of this survey is widely published to kindle faith in people about the relevance and importance of research, especially on such a topic.

**Fafo note: Descriptions of fieldwork experiences in specific EAs have been removed from this public-review document, as they might compromise the confidentiality promised to all those who assisted in the survey.**

#### **14. CONCLUSION**

With any survey of this magnitude, problems are anticipated. Adding to this difficult, long questionnaires, very bad census information and maps and the normal fieldwork problems of car hi-jacking with completed questionnaires, violence in certain areas etc. the study kept our teams very busy. MarkData assisted with missing maps and throughout the total process attempted to make a success of the project.

MarkData would like to thank the client for efficient assistance when it was needed and pleasant co-operation.

We trust that the survey was completed successfully within the planned period of time and give our assurance that every effort was made to ensure that the data was representative of the South African population.