The Snake and the Survey: Field Practicum in South Africa
Alexandra Sprague | Master’s of Development Practice

What is the MDP Field Practicum?
Master’s of Development Practice (MDP) students spend 10-12 weeks working with communities and host organizations to address challenges in conservation and development.

Why is it Important?
Gives students the opportunity to:
• Demonstrate skills learned in the program
• Build relationships with diverse host organizations all over the world
• Contribute to empowering communities and individuals

My Placement
Host (H): Southern African Wildlife College  
Field site (F): Makuleke  
Project: Assisting communities to improve equitable distribution of economic benefits from Kruger National Park

“Omens in Makuleke”

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 2014</td>
<td>Arrived at the Southern African Wildlife College</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>Finalized livelihood survey and ODK tool</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 3</td>
<td>Moved to Makuleke: SNAIL!</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 10</td>
<td>Finalized survey for context of Makuleke</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 6</td>
<td>Completed data collection</td>
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<td>July 14</td>
<td>Present on community research and ODK at the Wildlife College</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 22</td>
<td>Returned to the University of Florida</td>
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Key Activities

1. **Livelihood Survey**
   - Purpose: to establish a baseline for household income, nutrition, natural resource use and economic benefits from Kruger National Park
   - We trained 5 local research assistants, conducted 171 surveys, and returned results to each village
   - Main findings:

2. **Open Data Kit (ODK)**
   - Q. What is ODK?
     - A. Android app for electronic data collection
     - We programmed the livelihood survey for use with Samsung tablet computers, collected all data electronically and trained 10 researchers in ODK
   - Available for free at: https://opendatakit.org

3. **Program Development**
   - I designed tools for students and host organizations to evaluate each other and a system to improve student–host communication.

Personal Reflections

- We realized we had to manage our participants’ expectations because many people assumed we were there to develop a community project.
- Training our local research assistants to present the results directly in their local language was more effective than having them translate for us.
- By using ODK we saved time and improved accuracy by combining the data collection and entry into one step.
- Participants were not troubled by us recording their responses electronically.
- We had a miscommunication with our host organization about the purpose of the field practicum. Agreeing on a Terms of Reference may help clarify both student and host expectations.

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