

The life of South Africa's rural womanhood: Agency of two decades and lessons for future research

Thenjiwe Meyiwa

Durban University of Technology

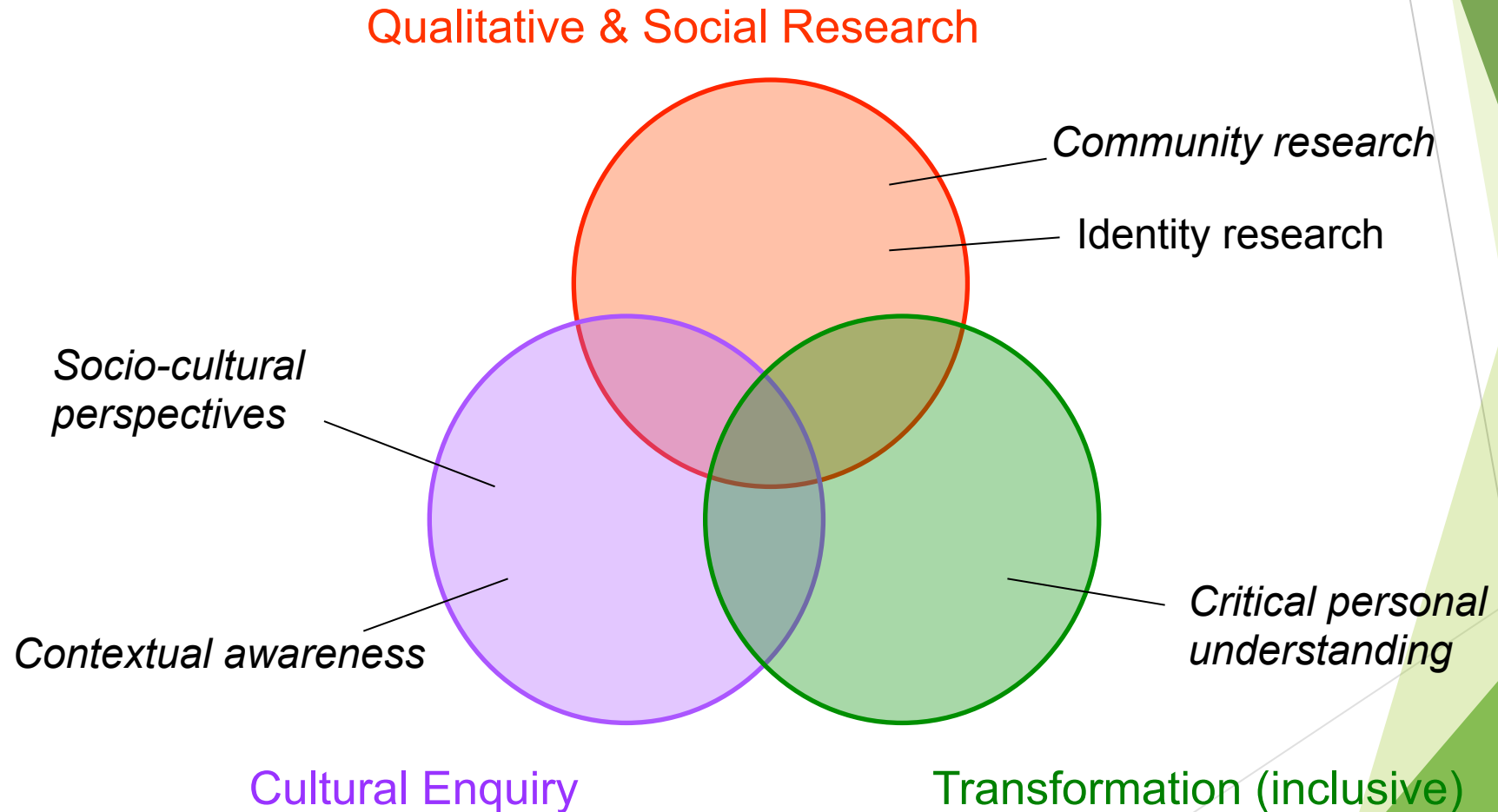
Outline

- ▶ Background and Objectives
- ▶ Data sources and Philosophical Bases
- ▶ Research Sites
- ▶ Participants voices
- ▶ Areas of Concern
- ▶ Concluding Remarks & Recommendations

Background and Objectives

- ▶ Derives from various research projects and life/ practices
- ▶ Based on life/ daily practices and women's concerns
- ▶ Lessons and theoretical underpinnings discerned from empirical research & voices of research participants
- ▶ Influenced by Indigenous Knowledges, Reflexive Ubuntu and Feminist principles
- ▶ Present voices from below (perceptions & perspectives)
- ▶ Focus on strengths (individual & group agency)
- ▶ Table recommendations/ thoughts to ponder

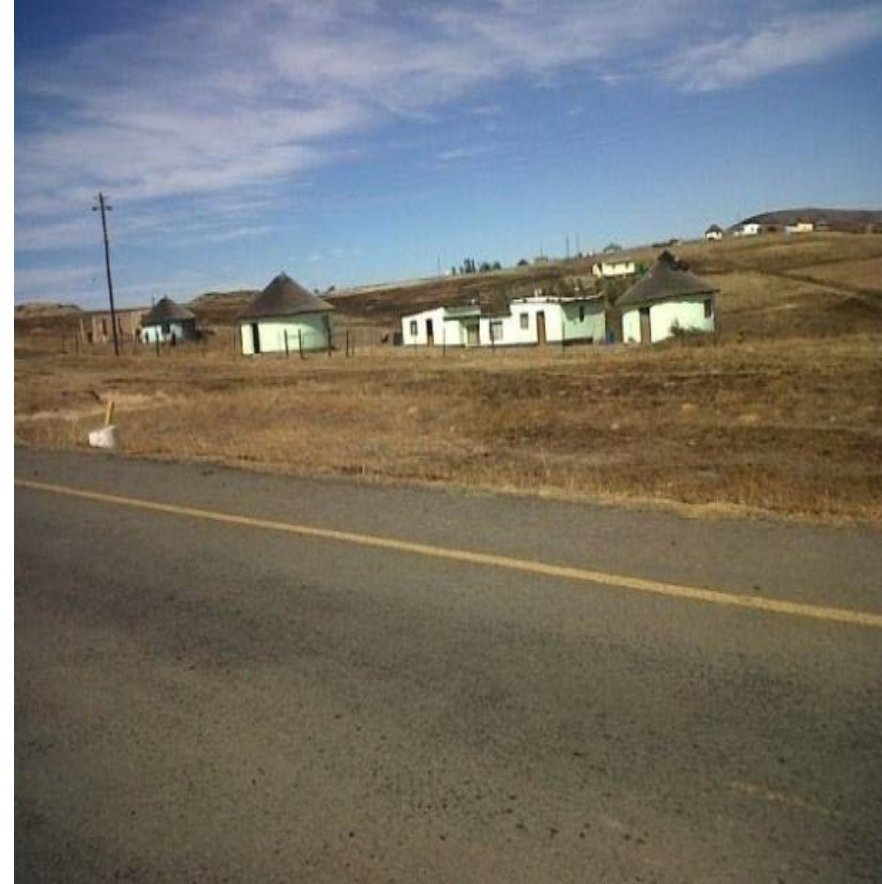
Research Design and Approach



Literature & Philosophical Bases

- ▶ Marginalisation of IK & local knowledge weakens efforts
 - ▶ Nkrumah 1965; Conolly 2010; Ntobane-Matsotso 2012
- ▶ Social reality principles
 - ▶ Searle (2008)
- ▶ Auto-ethnographic transformative research
 - ▶ Peter Charles Taylor (2008)
- ▶ Reflexive ubuntu & Standpoint theory
- ▶ Feminist research practice and ideology
 - ▶ Gloria Bowles Renate Klein (2003); Ellis (2004 & 2006)
- ▶ South African surveys and studies

Research Sites



Research Sites



Participants



Mama Zondi brought to tears by a situation



MaZondi Ngubane reflects on history/ life



Lived Experiences/ Voices

- ▶ Exposed to violence
 - ▶ Long walking distances
 - ▶ Forced marriages/ polygamy
 - ▶ Vulnerable to HIV
 - ▶ Rural women labour defined as economically inactive
- ▶ Supplements money (received from husband/ other) by
 - ▶ Thatching roofs for other members of the community
 - ▶ Selling cabbages, mealies, etc.
 - ▶ Domestic work & related (sewing, baking clubs, chicken farming)
- ▶ Main caregiver/ daily provider/ head of household

Lived Experiences/ Voices

- ▶ We used to do bead work, bake and sell produce but most end abruptly, all these projects and programmes come and get us excited only to end shortly.
- ▶ The greatest challenge here is that we don't even have access to information about these programmes.
- ▶ I know a few people who had information about training for something but were told they have to go to East London for that, and not everyone knows how to get there, it is far and expensive.
- ▶ "*Ingcwaba lentombi lisemzini*" - the grave of a girl child is at her inlaws" = the completeness of a woman is with her husband; marriage is taken as a sense of security .

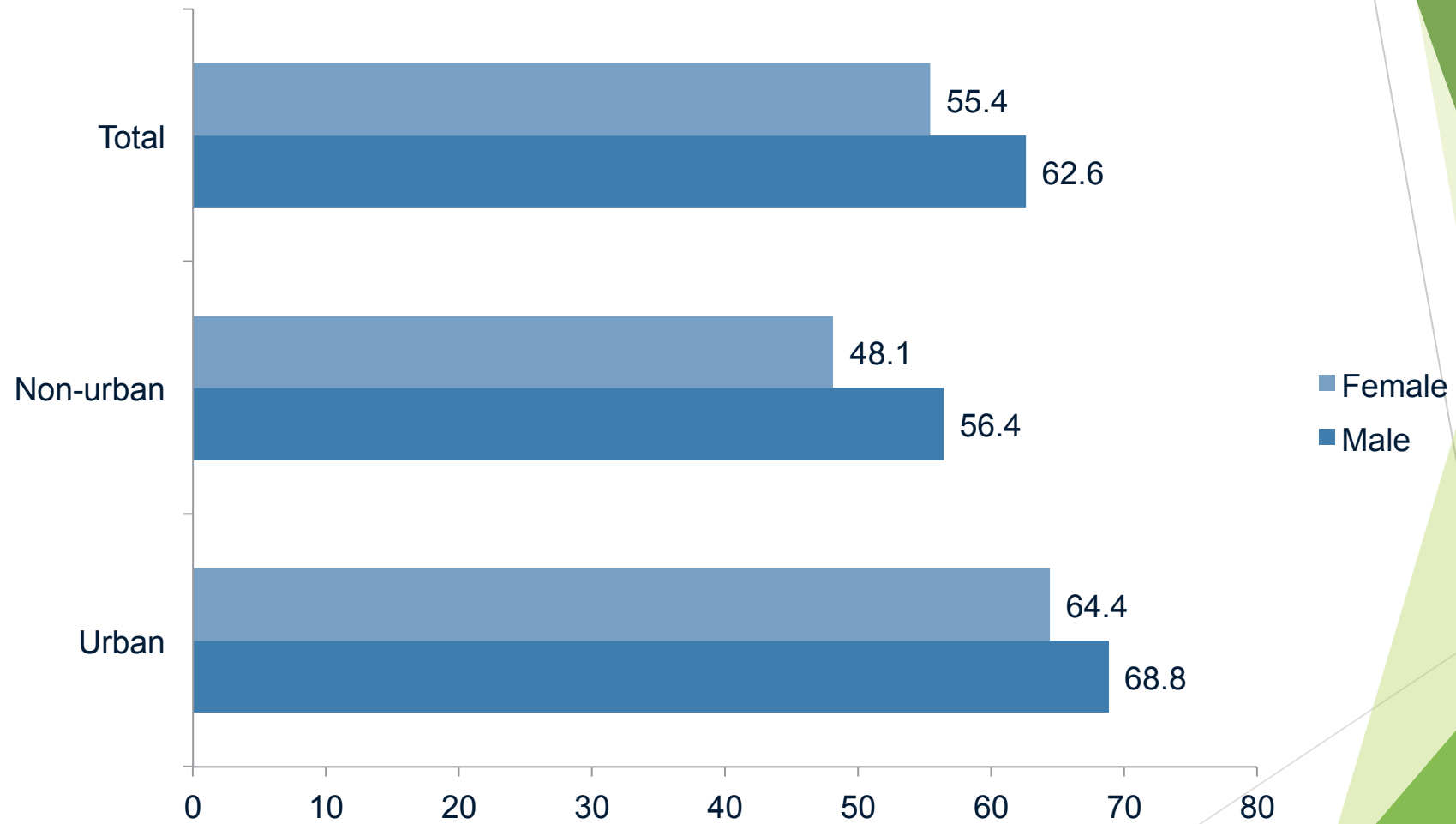
Female Success



Gendered Statistics

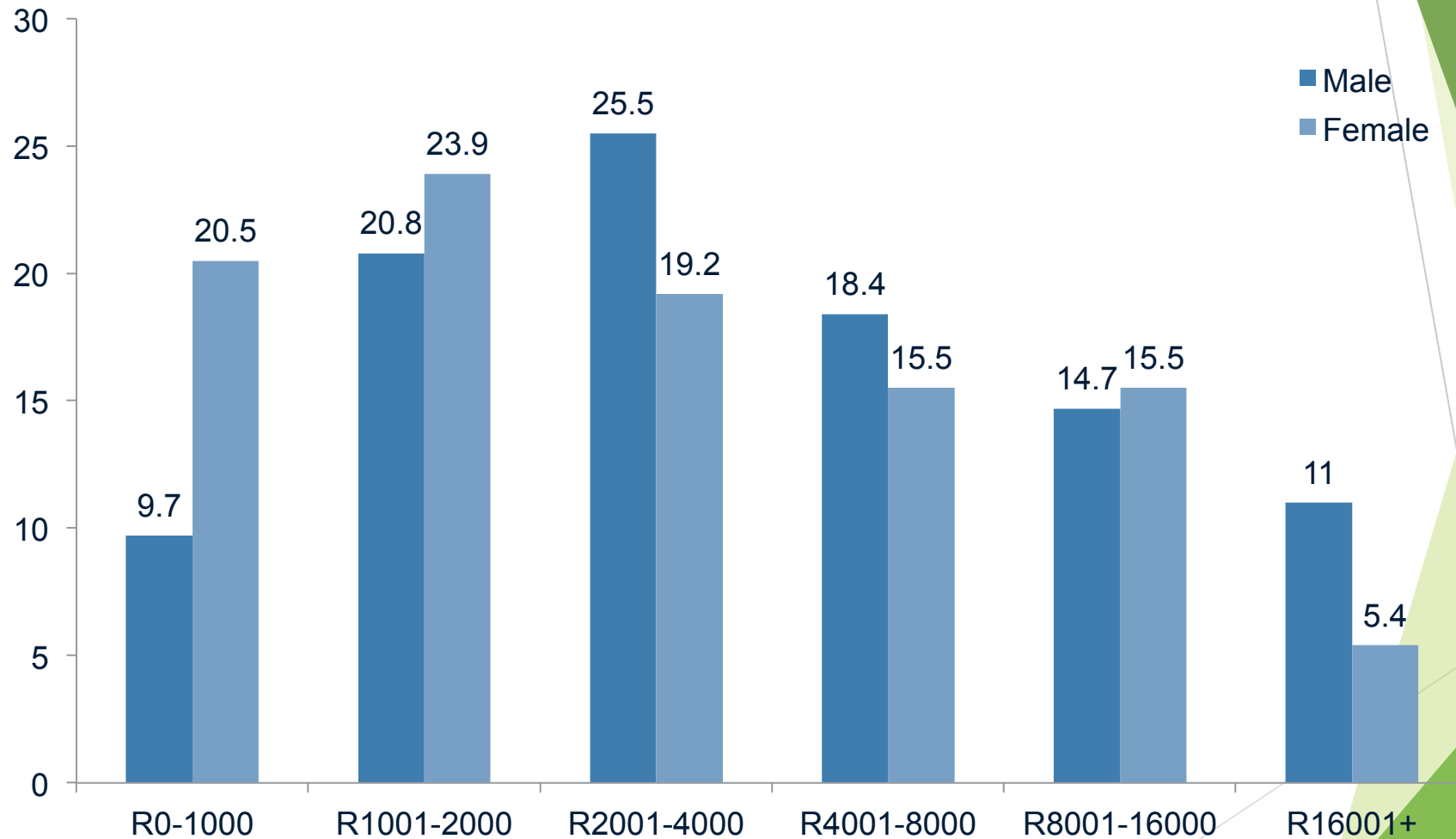
- ▶ South Africa, poverty % is at 53.8
- ▶ Females are more impoverished than males, with poverty headcount of 58,6% as compared to 54,9% for males
 - ▶ EC, 70.6% (2nd poorest region)
 - ▶ KZN, 65% (4th poorest region)
 - ▶ Highest is LP (78.9%); lowest is GP (33%)
- ▶ MDGs report that
 - ▶ Systemically enforced divisions and institutionalised unequal development in inequality in all facets of South African life in sphere such as
 - ❑ education
 - ❑ health
 - ❑ employment
 - ❑ welfare
 - ❑ human settlement
 - ❑ access to infrastructure

Literacy rates by sex and locality (age 25+), Census 2011



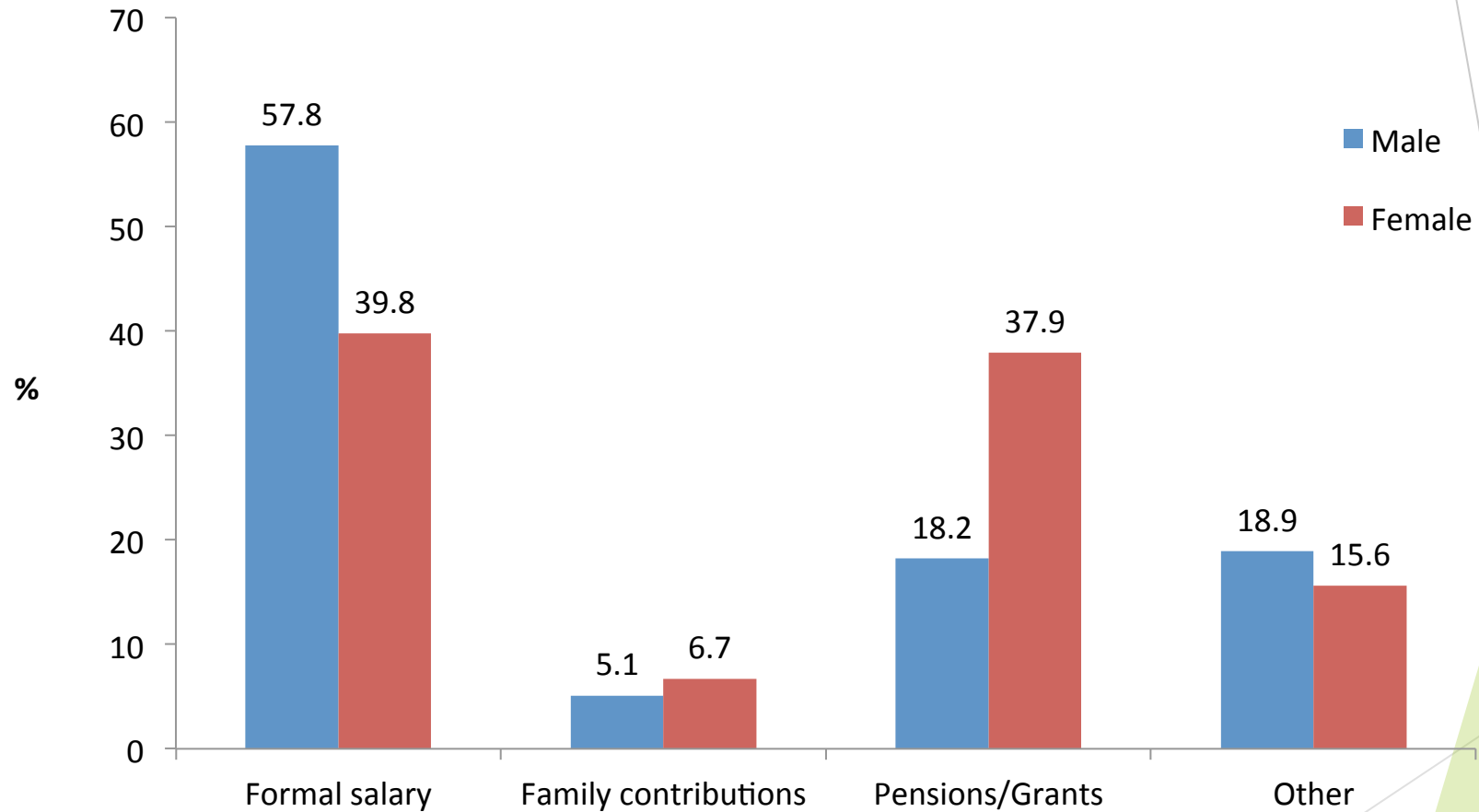
Source: StatsSA, 2013

Monthly income by sex (15-64 years), QLFS 2011

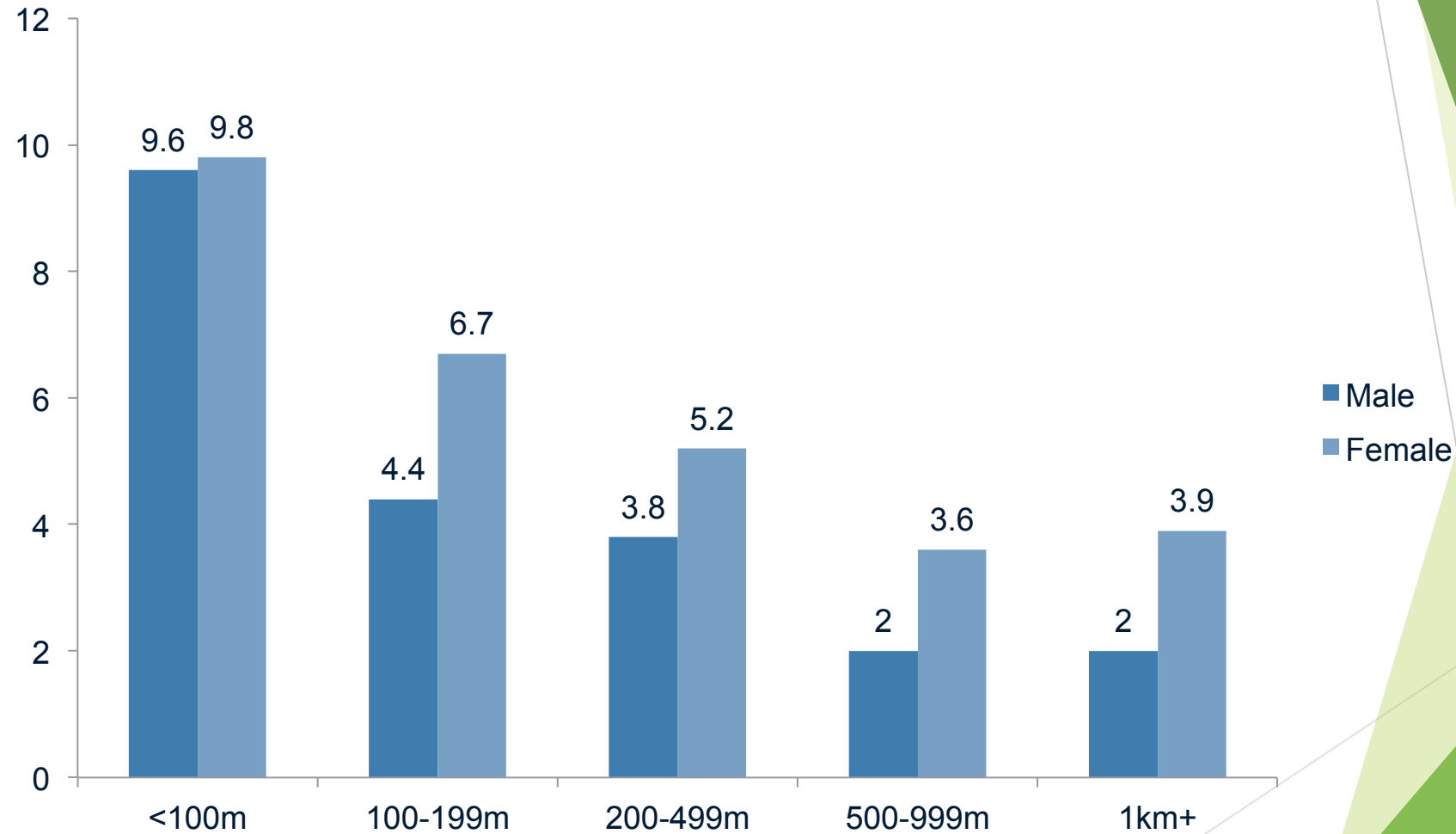


Source: StatsSA, 2013

Primary source of income by sex, SABSSM 2012

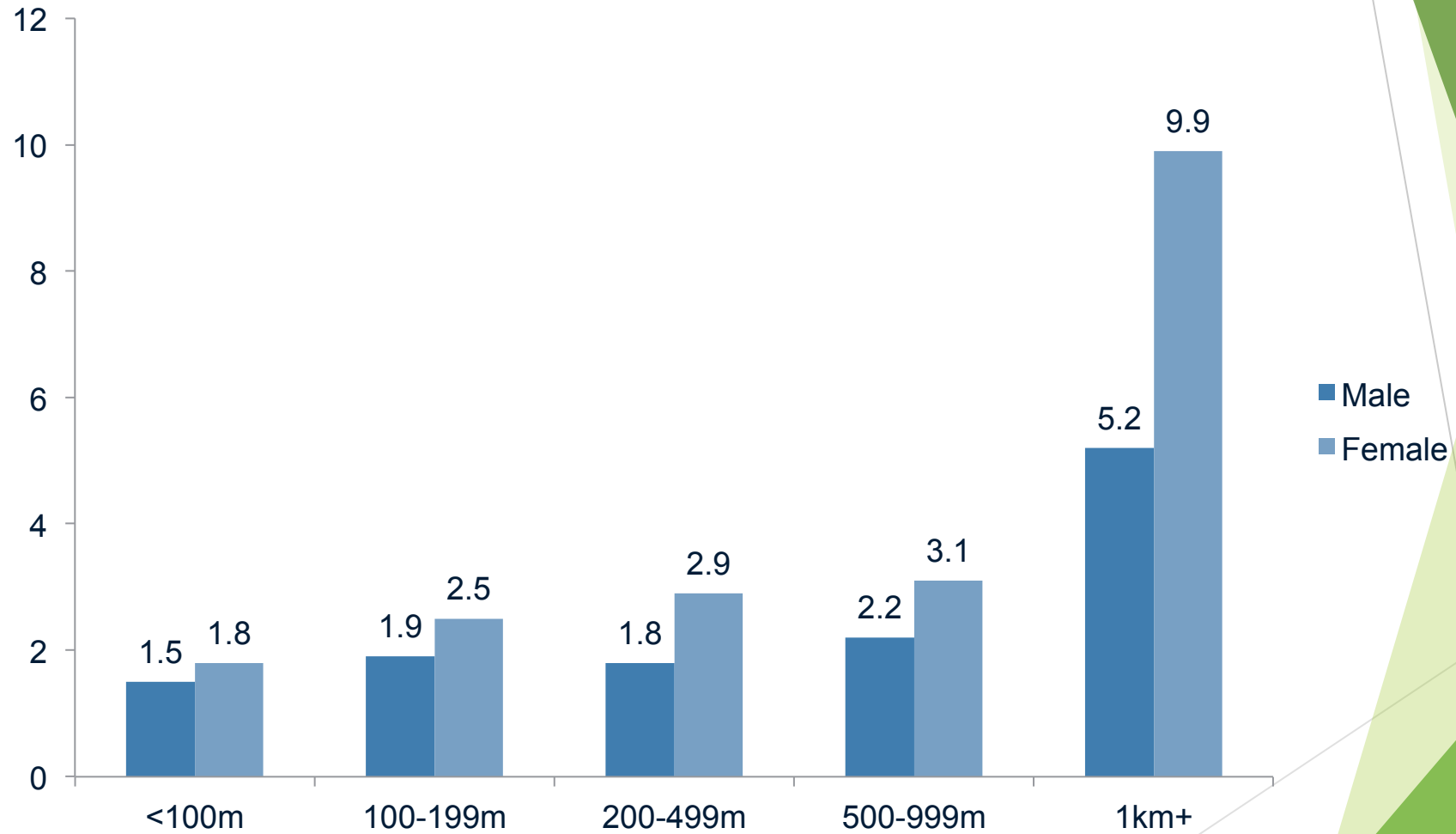


Water collection by sex (10 years and older), TUS 2010



Source: StatsSA, 2013

Wood or dung collection, TUS 2010



Source: StatsSA, 2013

Areas of Concern

- ▶ Identity is crucial (nurture, reclaim & appreciate)
- ▶ Subjected to distortion, trivialization, violence & neglect
- ▶ Accorded low status
- ▶ Struggle for recognition
- ▶ Various forces of oppression
- ▶ Need to transform lived experiences
- ▶ Political transformation (systems & structures)
- ▶ Participation in the construction of new possibilities

Areas of Agency

- ▶ Participation in the construction of new possibilities
- ▶ Empowerment is crucial due to myriad of historical marginalisation
- ▶ Empowerment: internal and external
- ▶ Community-based and community-biased projects
- ▶ Community is a source of strength
- ▶ Equally individual and her/his identity is crucial

Concluding Remarks/ Recommendations

- ▶ Actively consulting & involving the community in and getting local support is very crucial - for ownership
- ▶ Basic education training/ second-chance programmes for adults who dropped out or never went to school
- ▶ Training in product design and marketing, and linkages to new markets (Entrepreneurial training)
- ▶ Linkages and exposure to new markets
- ▶ Provide post-training services such as access to credit or savings programmes, business development services
- ▶ Human rights awareness training (GBV, laws, rights)
- ▶ Training in basic health/ first aid



ENKOSI

SIYABONGA

DANKIE

THANK YOU