

### 3.4.5 Population Characteristics

An analysis of the population characteristics relevant to the study area is limited by the rather artificial boundaries of the EMF. The socio-cultural attributes relevant to the study area were identified from existing information sources. The following table provides a snapshot idea of the population characteristics in the broader area.

**Table 9: Population characteristics**

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS	
<b>Distribution</b>	38% of the municipality's population is located in the formal urban area, 27% in rural nodes and 35% in the remaining rural areas of the municipality. The highest population densities are observed in rural settlement areas such as Nseleni and Esikhaweni (the latter falls within the study area). The lowest population densities are found in the non-tribal rural areas of the municipality. Although population growth has been decreasing in the District Municipal Area, the opposite seems to be true for the uMhlathuze Area.
<b>Age structure</b>	The age structure for each spatial entity is provided in the literature. The impact of high prevalence of HIV/Aids can be observed in the age breakdown. The city has a relatively young population (74% of the population was younger than 35 years of age in 2001). It signifies the economically active age group in the municipality.
<b>Education</b>	A decrease in overall education levels are reported while demand for skills has increased. A slight increase in the higher education levels of the age group older than 20 years has been attributed to an increase in in-migration of skilled workers into the area. There is low labour force participation (30% earn R1 500 or less per month) but strategies are being developed to address skills development within the local labour force to meet the challenges posed by local economic development
<b>Employment</b>	The unemployment level in the area is high at 36.28% whilst that of the province lies at 47.4%. Manufacturing is the dominant economic sector in the area. Most industries are capital intensive with low employment opportunities. There are a large number of contract workers in urban areas. Labour intensive sectors are needed to address employment needs.

The public participation process adopted a sustainable livelihoods approach to create a better understanding of the socio-cultural attributes in the EMF Study Area.

#### Poverty:

From a sustainability point of view the high levels of poverty is an indicator of the resilience of the socio-economic-ecological system in the broader study area. It essentially means that those who are poor or marginalized may be unable to cope if a system change takes place. Planning must ensure that these people are not excluded from the opportunity to adjust should changes takes place.

#### Growth trends:

The high local population growth trends create an understanding of the driving forces that are relevant to environmental change in the study area. Rural-urban migration is expected to continue in KwaZulu-Natal. The prospects being created by the port and industrial development, and the associated city growth in the study area, is already a major pull factor and will mostly likely play a significant role in the future urbanization rate of the area. From a sustainability point of view the urbanization trends should ideally be used as policy instruments for alleviating poverty and inequality through economic development, providing that provincial and local government expenditure support spatial concentration and as long as **the desired use of space is supported by principles of ecological carrying capacity.**



**ISSUES:**

- The total population of Richards Bay has increased at higher rates than the total provincial population over the same period of time. The migration of people into the area in the hope of obtaining work is continuing.
- A growing population, high population densities in rural areas, prevalence of HIV/Aids, and high un-employment levels.
- Housing shortages affect all income groups.
- Open spaces and recreational areas may be under threat of development. The public is concerned that access will be restricted and the 'sense of place' will not be maintained.
- Upmarket developments adjacent to water bodies reduce public access.
- There are various factors such as high levels of poverty, poor service levels and high pollution pressures that increase human vulnerability amongst communities in the study area. The poor are most at risk.
- Communities are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Sustained and sustainable access to natural resources for sustainable livelihoods is a concern.
- Poor air quality affects health and odours such as those emitted by some industries create discomfort in terms of smell (and sleep patterns). There are significant health concerns for all sectors of the population due to the state of the air.