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Late Quaternary palaeoenvironments from the Mphunga and Bovu colluvia, Mkhondvo River, Swaziland

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In this study we consider two colluvial sites that occur in proximity to the Mkondvo River in the Middelveld region of Swaziland (mean annual rainfall is about 800 mm). Mashila (26°42'30"S; 31°25'50"E, altitude 350 m) a major donga (500 m long, 100 m wide and some 8 m deep) and sediment sections were described and sampled . It is composed of a grey colluvium (Mphunga), that is rich in archaeological artefacts, and is thought to span the Holocene and Late Pleistocene. The second site is called Mkondvo Valley and occurs at 26°45'0"S and 31°23'10"E at an altitude of 400 m. The donga is over 300 m in length, up to 50 m wide and in places reaches a depth of 6.5m. It exposes two main colluvial layers: an upper grey (Mphunga) colluvium, and a lower reddish, indurated colluvium called Bovu. Artefacts on the surface of the Bovu are of early Middle Stone Age type and include an Acheulian handaxe. The purpose of this study is undertake palaeoenvironmental analyses using phytoliths, carbon isotopes, environmental magnetics and to date the deposits by employing optical dating techniques.