Our Vision

“The people of KwaZulu-Natal live in a safe and secure environment.”

Our Mission

“Be the lead agency in driving the integration of community safety initiatives, towards a crime-free KwaZulu-Natal.”
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Community Safety & Liaison

“Build a United Front Against Crime”

Rural Safety in KwaZulu-Natal
Message by the KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison

Rural areas are a priority for government. In order to develop rural areas, safety is critical since very little development can occur in conditions of insecurity and violence. KZN’s provincial government has resolved to focus on agriculture as the platform from which to launch a campaign to fight poverty and build our economy. In this endeavour, rural dwellers are central as we expand the ‘One Home One Garden’ campaign to become ‘One Home One Garden One Tree’ and ultimately, ‘One Product One Village.’

The farming community are a special priority. We cannot expect food security when farm workers and farmers are not secure. Moreover, the safety of these two important constituencies of the rural landscape is indivisible. The protection of livestock is another important task that faces us as a province and stock theft is being dealt with at the highest level in our Province. One of the biggest obstacles for law enforcement agencies in dealing with stock theft is the problem of identifying stock. It is vital therefore that stock is properly marked.

We are aware that many people in rural areas find it difficult to access Police Stations and Courts. An important recommendation being made in this report is the expansion of one-stop centres for victims of crime, particularly for women and children.

I am convinced that the solutions to rural safety problems lie with rural communities themselves. As rural schools are made safer, rural children will receive the quality of education that will propel them towards brighter futures. As rural homes become safer, women will play their rightful roles in the socio-economic upliftment of their communities. Importantly, much work needs to be done on improving community relations in rural areas and increasing the number of projects in which all members of the rural community can participate. In the absence of sound community-police relations, it will be very difficult to deal with the problems highlighted in this research report. In general, communities are a critical part of making rural areas safe. The responsibilities imposed on parents to care for (and not abuse) their children, also extends to the community at large. In relation to stock theft, communities have an important role to play in ensuring that fences are in place and in a good state, that stock is properly marked and that cases are reported timeously.
The rural areas of South Africa have historically not received the same level of development as urban areas. In many respects, the debate around making rural areas safer for all rural inhabitants is only just beginning and there is much to learn. As in all facets of crime prevention, there are few, if any, quick solutions to the safety challenges facing rural areas.

How can the vast rural landscape of KwaZulu-Natal be made safe? How does the limited reach of the arm of the law contend with the remote spaces and challenging terrain of the rural environment? These are some of the central questions that this research seeks to shed light on. This is also part of the Department’s ongoing practice of profiling good practices for replication in different contexts.

Ultimately, I am certain that through the synergies of all role-players (both State and civil society), effective preventative and responsive strategies can be developed for rural areas regarding crucial challenges such as crimes against children, gendered crime, violence on farms and stock theft. The recommendations of this report will inform our programmes of action and it is my belief that they will be supported and promoted by all our stakeholders.

Ms Y.E. Bacus
Head of KZN Department of Community Safety and Liaison

Clearly, longer-term social investments that improve the quality of life of rural dwellers will remain critical to improving the safety of rural areas. This is a principle that we incorporate into all our programmes to ensure that rural areas remain a priority in all that we do.
Acknowledgements

The Department would like to express its sincere appreciation to the respondents who participated in this research exercise. We recognise and appreciate their dedicated service to our Province.

Special thanks to Nomfundo Mthalane who assisted with all aspects of this project during her period of Internship with the Department of Community Safety and Liaison.
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Executive Summary

This research report sets out to look at the ways in which safety and security interface with rural life and rural development in KwaZulu-Natal. It is believed that there is a two-way relationship between safety and rural development: on the one hand, where there is insecurity and crime, development is hampered and on the other, where there is under-development, insecurity and crime set in.

Life in South Africa’s rural areas after decades of apartheid is characterised by harsh poverty and exclusion. Schooling is hampered by a lack of resources and violence between learners. Female students are targets of sexual assaults by teachers and fellow learners. Crime and policing takes on a bare form with rural dwellers struggling to access police stations and courts, low levels of crime reporting and a police service challenged on many fronts.

In the face of these challenges, enormous crime and safety challenges confront rural dwellers: child safety, crimes against women, interpersonal violence, substance abuse, youth disenchantedment, stock theft and problems affecting farm dwellers. These are exacerbated by numerous factors peculiar to rural areas, not least of which is the migrant labour system which continues to erode rural family life.

The State has attempted – albeit narrowly, according to many - to respond to rural crime by focussing on farm attacks with the introduction of the Rural Protection Plan and Rural Safety Summits, but many have felt that the needs of commercial farmers have been attended to at the expense of ordinary rural people.

The study then goes on to document some important initiatives to make rural areas safe, including One-Stop-Centres to Combat Gender Based Violence, the establishment of Gun Free Zones and developments around the KZN Protocol on Child Protection.

A set of recommendations conclude the report drawing attention to the important steps that need to be taken by both government and civil society in order to ensure that rural dwellers are able to live fulfilled and productive lives, and are able to access the fruits of democracy.
1. Introduction

Rural areas in South Africa are a continual and recurring priority for development and social upliftment. This is not surprising since it is acknowledged that much of South Africa’s population live in extremely difficult socio-economic conditions in rural areas. There is a two-way relationship between safety and rural development: on the one hand, where there is insecurity and crime, development is hampered and on the other, where there is under-development, insecurity and crime set in.

In the face of the prevalent socio-economic and developmental challenges in rural areas, what can be done to make these areas safe? Of course it goes without saying that an overall reduction of rural poverty and inequality will, as a matter of course, result in a quality of life that will reduce numerous safety challenges which rural dwellers face at the moment. For example, if girls and women in rural areas had running water in their homes, they would not be vulnerable to the victimisations which they experience while travelling to and from rivers and communal water sources. However, rural development is a grand scheme and by nature, such macro, structural changes are long-term projects. The challenge facing rural communities is safety in the present environment.

Our government has long prioritised rural development by launching initiatives such as the Integrated Rural Development Strategy which co-ordinates the efforts of various departments in improving rural areas. Currently, rural development remains a priority for government with emphasis being placed on land and agrarian reform, food security and the targeted renewal of rural towns through grants such as the recently announced Neighbourhood Development Grant programme.

More recently, rural development has continued to take centre-stage as a pre-requisite for national growth and poverty alleviation. The safety of rural areas is of key concern for the envisaged national socio-economic development and growth.¹ This research looks at the ways in which safety and security interface with rural life and rural development in KwaZulu-Natal.

2. General Background on Rural Areas

Defining “Rural”

Rural areas are generally denoted by their geographic location. However, they are also characteristically different in terms of their social, demographic and economic configurations. Peculiar features and individual challenges also differ from one rural area to another. A commonly
used definition of a rural area, offered by the Integrated Rural Development Framework (1997)\textsuperscript{2}, is the following:

“Rural areas are sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas. In addition, they include large settlements in the former homelands, created by apartheid removals, which depend for their survival on migratory labour and remittances.”

Many people, especially the older generation among Africans, prefer to remain in rural areas because costs of accommodation (usually communal land) are lower and they are able to keep livestock. They also find living in the natural environment more pleasant than life in cities. Being more sparsely populated, rural areas have a greater sense of community. People tend to know one another and generally relate to each other in a more cordial manner.

Rural life may also be described based on the economic, social, psychological and cultural life of an area:\textsuperscript{3}

- **Economic**: An area may be defined as rural based on a single dominant economic activity, usually farming;

- **Social**: Scientists also delineate an area as rural by combining instruments that measure value, behaviours, beliefs and feelings of individuals living within a particular community;

- **Culture**: Rural culture often refers to the perceived contrasting lifestyles of people in rural areas. Whereas city dwellers are perceived to be fast-paced, heterogeneous and easily adjustable to change, rural residents are perceived to be slow paced, homogenous, and reluctant to give up tradition;

- **Psychology**: Individuals’ self-identify as being members of a rural community, with decisions based upon attitudes of interactions with other community members also set rural areas apart as unique.

**Life in Rural Areas**

The rural areas proclaimed in terms of the Rural Areas Act of 1987 were spread over most of South Africa. These areas have their own diverse history and character.\textsuperscript{4} Historically in South Africa, most of the development funding went to cities and the townships, resulting in developmental backlogs in rural areas which left inhabitants exposed to economic stagnation and poor social progress in terms of education, skills development and entrepreneurship. Consequently, there are high levels of unemployment and illiteracy in South Africa’s rural areas.
The Church played a significant role in the formation and development of most rural areas. This led to a feeling of belonging and a strong community focus. Due to the prominent role of the Church, and also prominent core-families, over extended periods of time a community identity developed that instilled pride and led to a rather conservative view of the protection of the areas.\(^5\) Hence, for a long time, development in rural areas was to a large extent dictated by local historically developed perceptions that “change will probably bring about a worsening situation” or that “the wider community wants to steal their land.”\(^6\)

People living in rural areas experience enormous challenges. There are generally lower levels of social development, lack of access to clean water, electricity and sanitation. Police stations and clinics are not easily reached. People experience crimes such as robbery, murder or rape in ways which are distinctively related to the nature of the vast rural landscape and rural lifestyles: e.g. rapes occur when women and girls go to rivers to fetch water and wash clothing.

**Demography of Rural Areas**

The demographics of these areas to an extent reflect the colonial and apartheid years as well as the cultural and community ethos of these areas. Broadly, the social, economic and political environment plays a large role in these areas. Rural areas are seen as a place of safety for those with historical links to the areas. The elderly and the unemployed in particular see these areas as a safe haven due to their specific community bonds. People from rural areas who work elsewhere still maintain strong bonds with rural areas, due to the social security they provide and for retirement purposes.\(^7\)

Order in the rural areas is maintained by Traditional Leaders (Amakhosi and Izinduna) and Traditional Councils have the authority to sanction inhabitants. In earlier periods, in some mission stations, inhabitants could even be told to leave the area after public consultation. The new functions of Local and District Municipalities and the introduction of Councillors have brought change to the community dynamics within rural areas.

Although rural households are still more likely than urban households to include both parents, rural families have experienced changes such as:\(^8\)

- **The rise of female-headed households**: The composition of many rural households has changed with the absence of more fathers from the home. In the early 1960s, upwards of 90% of rural children lived with both parents. By 1987, 30% of rural residents lived in
female-headed households. Increasing numbers of rural children are growing up without adequate male role-models.

- **The increase of women in the workforce**: Family life has also been affected dramatically by changing economic conditions in many rural communities and small towns. Even in two-parent families, rural women have increasingly had to join the work force to help support the family.

- **The rise of births to unmarried and teen mothers**: The proportion of births to unmarried mothers is higher in urban areas but is increasing faster in rural areas. Because of poverty, unwed mothers cannot afford to adequately ensure optimum childhood development for their children.

**Poverty and Exclusion in Rural Areas**

Poverty in rural areas is a major problem. There are high levels of unemployment and most females depend on their male breadwinners who, as a result of South Africa’s deeply entrenched patterns of internal migrancy, invariably work in urban centres. The youth depend on their parents and other caregivers. Rural areas are also characterised by the so-called ‘young pensioners’ – young people whose only source of sustenance are the old age pensions of their relatives, and more recently, the disability and child support grants received from the State.

Poverty limits access to education, health and shelter. With population increases, these forms of social exclusion are predicted to grow. Access to municipal services such as water, sewerage systems, roads, public safety and transport are made more difficult for people living in far-flung rural locations. The impact on HIV/AIDS on the rural community also continues to erode developmental prospects.

**Schooling Trends in Rural areas**

Although education is an important mechanism for social change, rural schools experience a greater lack of resources and facilities than urban schools. In addiction, frequent fights between learners (some of whom carry weapons to school), violence towards teachers, sexual harassment and sexual abuse of female students all contribute to stresses at rural schools and ultimately diminish the outcome of rural schooling. Rural schools could play a far more important role in being cultural centres of the community. In this role, they should help to transmit the positive values and norms of the rural community. Instead, undesirable practices and behaviour at these schools threaten and supersede the good qualities of rural life.
Government’s Developmental Agenda for Rural areas

The Integrated and Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) represented a new stage of concerted effort to improve opportunities and well-being for the rural poor. The stated vision of the ISRDS for rural areas is to attain socially cohesive and stable communities with viable institutions, sustainable economies and universal access to social amenities, able to attract and retain skilled and knowledgeable people, who are equipped to contribute to growth and development. Currently, rural development remains a priority for government with emphasis being placed on land and agrarian reform, food security and the targeted renewal of rural towns through grants such as the recently announced Neighbourhood Development Grant programme.


Safety, Security and Legal Issues

- A safe and secure environment is a critical precondition for rural development. Generally poor rural people have great difficulty exercising their recourse to the legal system. They remain vulnerable to being exploited by employers and landowners. The poor are also more readily exposed to inter-communal conflict due to their limited resources to seek alternatives to negative communal conditions. There have been appeals to extend legal services to remote areas but this remains a financial and logistical challenge. Organisations such as the Legal Resources Centre are providing essential legal and para-legal support to some rural communities with limited resources. An assessment of these rural legal advisory offices is needed to determine how to increase their reach and efficiency.

- Rural Crime

High levels of crime pose a serious threat to rural communities. Apart from tragic loss of life, crimes such as robbery, theft and hijacking deprive rural dwellers of their meagre possessions. At a more macro level, rural crime impacts on food security creating a risk for the overall developmental prospects of the country.

- Changes occurring within rural communities affect entire families. Often they result in a lack of guidance and communication between family members, and crime becomes a likely outcome. Children, especially boys, need positive adult role-models. Many children live with grandparents who find it difficult to exercise authority and administer discipline.

- Rural areas lack entertainment and job opportunities leading to young people engaging in crime as a result of boredom and peer pressure. One former inmate interviewed in this study told of
how his parents’ marital difficulties led to the neglect of him and his siblings who were left to their own devices. It was only a matter of time before the company he began to keep influenced him to commit a hijacking and murder for which he received a prison sentence. Respondents in Port Shepstone also gave similar accounts of how little entertainment there was for residents of the KZN South Coast. As a result, most people seek entertainment at the beaches (Saint Michael’s, Margate, Port Edward) which results in overcrowding and various petty offences being committed by those consuming alcohol in public places.

Crime and violence in rural areas demands a special approach. The seriousness of the problem is evident from the failure of rural areas to benefit in the same degree as urban areas. While the specific causes and consequences of crime for any individual community are likely to be unique, when looking at rural crime internationally, certain characteristics appear to be widespread:

- Rural violent crime victims are less likely to be victimized by a stranger than urban or suburban victims;
- The most common location for rural victims of violent crime was their homes (18%);
- The percentage of rural violent crime offenders perceived to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs is high;
- Rural violent offenders are less likely than suburban or urban violent offenders to use a firearm.

There has been much debate in South Africa about what protecting rural areas means in practice. Historically, Commandos have been operational in the country’s rural areas, but have been used to protect the rural middle class, i.e., White farming interests. The Commandos have therefore largely been seen as wholly inadequate in providing safety for the majority of rural people. As Steinberg puts it, rural South Africa is “… historically deeply divided, by race, by inequality, and by a great deal of history. Asking a security agency to bridge these divides is asking too much.”
The table below depicts crime data for selected rural police stations in KZN drawn from the SAPS overall crime statistics for the period April 2007 to March 2008.

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This table provides an overview of the nature of crime challenges facing rural areas.

**Crime Reporting in Rural Areas**

In rural areas, there are a variety of reasons for people not reporting their cases and their victimisation to the police. One study\(^{17}\) cites the following reasons:

- They have difficulty in accessing the police station;
- They lack confidence in the ability of police to deal with the issue;
- They report the matter to traditional authorities;
- Personal reasons such as a fear of retribution and feelings of personal blameworthiness. For example, in some incidents of rape involving a perpetrator who is a member of the family or a lover, some victims experience difficulty in divulging the matter.

**Challenges of Policing Rural Areas**

The main difficulty in policing the rural areas of South Africa relates to the geographic isolation of rural communities. Conversely, communities experience difficulty in accessing police stations and courts due to cost and travel distances. Respondents in this study said that police rarely respond on time to matters such as *Housebreaking* and *Domestic Violence*, and are also slow to respond to very serious and sensitive cases such as the rape of children.\(^{18}\)

The response of the police is that the lack of resources and capacity constrains the level of service...
they are able to offer rural dwellers. Historically in South Africa, most police stations were situated in former white suburban areas and business districts. There is still today a relatively lower police presence in rural areas. This, combined with police infrastructure shortages, means that most rural people only interact with the police at police stations when people are forced to travel there to seek urgent police assistance. As a result, rural policing is almost wholly reactive. Linked to this is the reality that communication and feedback to crime victims is an enormous challenge for the police in rural areas. Given that the police are scarcely able to make a trip to update a crime victim on the status of their reported case, they are much less able to report back to someone that their matter was closed without a positive result.

Studies have shown that KwaZulu-Natal police stations are understaffed in general and the lack of personnel is worse in rural areas. If stations are understaffed, police response times to crime scenes are slower and attention to criminal cases and to the victims who report them also cannot be optimal.

**Police Responses**

Police continuously bemoan the fact that they have difficulty policing rural areas because of the poor road conditions and rough terrain. Other reasons for the non-attendance of police to rural crime reports include:

- The nature and seriousness of the incident – i.e. whether or not the incident warrants investigation and follow-up at the actual scene of the crime;
- The successful resolution or mediation of the issue at the police station which would not require follow-up.

Usually in practice, only the most serious cases are responded to and less serious cases are either dealt with when time and resources allow or they are dispensed with without much attention.

**Community Policing Forums (CPF) in Rural Areas**

Like in other types of communities, well represented Community Policing Forums (CPF) should provide a vital link between rural police stations and the communities they serve. The Department of Community Safety and Liaison has capacity to intervene where there are breakdowns in relationships between communities and the police. For example, the Department intervened at Utrecht in April 2009 when there were severe tensions between certain sections of the community and the police.
Child Safety in Rural Areas

The problem of crimes against children in rural areas is under-researched and very little information is therefore available to inform appropriate rural child protection programmes. Much work needs to be done to determine whether there are factors present in rural communities that may contribute to the increased vulnerability of rural children to being victimised. What is known however is that crimes committed against children in rural areas is hidden and does not come to the attention of outsiders. The main reasons are:

- The absence of resources – both State and civil society – to enable children to report crimes and receive assistance;
- The social and structural factors that make it difficult for children to report crimes committed by adults whom they know.

Apart from awareness work, very little direct preventative work can be done with children because a vast proportion of crimes against children occur in the private domestic sphere and in their peer-group interactions. The lack of parental supervision, poverty, early motherhood and cycles of violence generated through domestic violence are believed to lead to insecurity among children.

Child sexual-abuse of rural children occurs as a consequence of the particular powerlessness and poverty of rural children within the context of the socio-economic challenges facing rural areas. It is believed that the sexual abuse of rural girls is accentuated by the structure of the rural family, with young men in particular not receiving adequate guidance as they mature, particularly in relation to gender relations and their own sexuality.23 The school is unfortunately also a site of much of the sexual violence against girls with many girls being raped, sexually abused, assaulted and harassed by teachers and their fellow classmates.

The impacts of sexual crimes on children include isolation from their peers, often leading to depression, and lower quality of their own parenting later in life. Rural child victims are much more likely to succumb to these impacts given the lack of therapeutic services available to rural victims and they are more prone to secondary victimisation during investigations and trials since police stations and courts in rural areas often lack the infrastructure to protect children.24

Most rural children still walk long distances to school and networks to respond to child abuse, neglect and exploitation need to be strengthened in rural areas. Many children are often unaware that acts committed against them are, in fact, crimes. Factors that restrict children's access to justice include instances where the perpetrator is the family breadwinner or authority figure, and
where there simply are no resources to access service providers. There are reports of illegal child labour occurring where many children work both in formal and informal agriculture as a form of bonded labour for the ‘privilege’ of staying on a farm. The Constitution provides that children under 18 have a right to be protected from work that is exploitative, hazardous or otherwise inappropriate for their age, detrimental to their schooling, or detrimental to their social, physical, mental, spiritual or moral development. According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, it is a criminal offence to employ a child under the age of 15, except if you have a permit from the Department of Labour to employ children in the performing arts. Further, children aged 15 to 18 may not be employed to do work inappropriate for their age or work that places them at risk.

**Crimes Against Rural Women**

It is difficult to provide an overview of crimes against rural women due the high level of under-reporting. Much of these crimes occur in the home. Gender inequalities contribute significantly towards violence against women. In rural areas, marital status, economic dependence on husbands or live-in partners, illiteracy, acceptance of violence as a form of discipline, limited job opportunities, absence of safe houses and non-availability of transport to a police station all place women in a vulnerable position. It is believed that in the long term, the resolution of the crime problems faced by women requires both economic development to end women’s vulnerability and dependence, as well as the development of democracy and the spread of egalitarian values into all spheres of daily life.

**Interpersonal Violence**

In January 2009, a prominent Traditional Leader, Inkosi Mbongeleni Zondi from eNgome, outside Greytown, was brutally murdered. Approximately six months later, the man charged with his murder, Makhosabo Mkhize, was killed at his home in Kwa Mashu allegedly by a group of men who attacked him while he was sleeping.

As a result of the structure and economic circumstances of rural communities and families, many victims are unable to escape from their cycles of violence due to their financial dependence on the persons who victimise them.

**Substance abuse**

Many rural youth are increasingly using illicit drugs, mainly mandrax and dagga, but more recently, ecstasy and cocaine. There is also an increase in alcohol consumption among rural youth. In Paddock (Ezinqoleni Municipality, Ugu District), youth frequenting taverns are known to become violent both at the taverns as well as when they return home. Rural youth start consuming alcohol from a young age and some have been found to be drunk while at school.
**Youth disenchantment**

There is a high level of disenchantment among many rural youth about their inability to raise themselves from their poverty-stricken conditions. Youth unemployment and school drop-out rates are still at high levels. Rural young people require much more information on career choices and ongoing career guidance input. In the absence of proper guidance on their career options, many young people grab anything available and end up in career dead-ends.

Youth directorates at Local Government level are a welcome initiative because it will prioritise youth development in rural areas.

**Stock Theft**

South Africa’s rural areas are vast and remote making the tracking of stolen stock difficult and the movement of stock problematic to detect. Most KwaZulu Natal rural areas experience the stealing of livestock. Stock thieves operating in South Africa operate in organized networks that invariably involve local criminals. The DCSL has published research which offers guidelines for community actions to prevent stock theft.

Communities have an important role to play in ensuring that fences are in place and in a good state, that stock is properly marked and that cases are reported timeously. They should also inform investigators if stock is recovered. The lack of impounding facilities makes it difficult to confiscate stock from suspected stock thieves.

**Problems affecting farm dwellers**

Farm dwellers are a vulnerable group for a number of reasons. Firstly, since farms are private property, the plight of farm dwellers is usually hidden from the public eye. Access to farm workers in order to ascertain their concerns still remains a challenge. Secondly, they are at the mercy of the farm owner and power relations are unequal. Recent government initiatives to enhance the realisation of rights for farm dwellers have inadvertently exacerbated tensions on farms, particularly tensions around land tenure, resulting in insecurity and uncertainty for farm dwellers. Thirdly, there is a high illiteracy rate among farm dwellers. Fourthly, their poor socio-economic conditions afford them very little leeway to access services in the mainstream of society – such as legal advice, civic education and opportunities for participation in community fora. Even access to police services is a mammoth challenge for farm dwellers due to the remote nature of their living areas and their onerous working arrangements. Hence, farm dwellers remain a marginalised sector of the population facing many barriers to advancement.
A respondent in this study cited Howick, Newcastle and Vryheid as hotspot areas where farm dwellers are still physically abused.\(^3^2\) In instances where farm dwellers are forced to leave farms, they become exposed to unsafe conditions. Farm dwellers also suffer losses when their cattle are impounded, sometimes without due process. While some police officers have a good grasp of the complexity of farm owner and farm dweller dynamics, there are other police members who side with farmers as a result of personal ties with the farming community.

Disputes over rural land, stock theft and violations of human rights have also erupted into fully blown community conflicts such as occurred in Charlestown and Utrecht. In both these cases, the KZN Department of Community Safety and Liaison assisted in mediation efforts to resolve the disputes.

The advocacy of human rights has generally been urban biased mainly because human rights organisations and state organs are usually located in urban areas. The work of the *South African Human Rights Commission* has highlighted the vulnerability of rural communities, and their work has revealed that the capacity of both law enforcement agencies and civil society needs improvement to adequately support farm workers.\(^3^3\)

### 5. Factors Impacting on Safety in Rural Areas

Below are some of the underlying causal factors giving rise to safety challenges in rural areas. Rural development must seek to deal with and prevent these in order to make rural areas safer.

- **POVERTY:** Poverty creates conditions that lead to a number of insecurities for rural dwellers. The poor live in overcrowded conditions leading to stress and tension. Children often lack parental supervision and have to assume responsibility for other children.\(^3^4\) Rural poverty therefore directly contributes to conditions for an increase in crime.

- **TRANSPORT ROUTES:** The layout and nature of roads and railway lines provide certain opportunities for crime and hinders crime prevention efforts.\(^3^5\) Shortages and unavailability of transport are also safety challenges because they result in people having to walk long distances to and from work. Children who travel long distances while commuting to and from school are also exposed to dangers especially during early morning or late evening periods.

- **ENERGY SHORTAGES:** These result in poor rural dwellers lacking access to safe and efficient sources of energy. As a result, in rural communities, the poor (particularly women) walk long distances to gather firewood and they are vulnerable to physical attack, sexual assault and other dangers. For example, it has been
reported that four women in the areas of Zululand died in a closed coal mine where they went to gather coal to make fire. Others travel at night where no lights are available and are mugged, robbed and murdered.

- **POLICING DISTANCES**: Police stations are not easily reached and it is therefore not easy for police to respond on time or apprehend perpetrators quickly. This issue was also raised in the Provincial School Safety Summit where it was noted that police do not respond timeously to school safety incidents because they have to travel long distances to crime scenes on roads which are in poor condition. As a result, crimes against children are reported to teachers who in some cases assist the children to report matters.36

- **LACK OF INFORMATION**: Vulnerable groups such as women and children still do not know that they have rights to security and to be protected. Rural people going to towns are preyed upon by organised criminals in scams.

- **FARM ATTACKS**: Killings on farms have been a feature of South African life for many decades and have attracted significant attention in the last few years.37 Farm attacks have involved murders and the theft of firearms which have been used in other criminal incidents. The most comprehensive study to date found that farm attacks must be understood within the context of poverty and development rather than from the perspective of simple racial motives.38

- **GENDER AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITY**: Women are more vulnerable to certain types of crime such as domestic violence and sexual assaults. High levels of crime are often linked to high levels of economic inequality. There are also high levels of teenage pregnancy which result in a lower quality of life for both mother and child.

- **POOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**: There is a lack of access to resources and opportunities as most developments occur in urban areas. The inherent problems which face informal settlements are also common to rural informal settlements. In one rural settlement near Port Shepstone known as “Mkholombe,” which is populated by migrant workers from the Eastern Cape and foreigners who come to work in the Marburg industrial area, the congestion of the settlement results in stabbings, rapes, assaults and murders.39 A related problem is the prevalence of shebeens in these overcrowded areas.

- **INTRA-GROUP CONFLICTS**: Victimisation and perceptions of victimisation associated with historical conflicts in and between communities periodically lead to deadly violence in rural areas.
• **POORLY BUILT HOUSES:** Informal dwellings such as shacks are easier to break into and harder to secure with burglar bars and locks.

• **VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS:** Violence in schools is also a major problem in rural schools. The increase of violence in schools can be attributed to many factors, the environment of the school itself, and prevalent social ills such as poverty, domestic violence, single-parent homes, drugs, prostitution, teenage pregnancies and street violence.40

• **SUBSTANCE ABUSE:** The link between substance abuse - especially alcohol - and crime is well documented and is a pervasive problem among rural dwellers.

**Implications for Policing in Rural areas**

It is clear that without sufficient and adequate resources, the policing of rural areas will remain a challenge. Given the size, geographic isolation and dispersion of many of South Africa’s rural areas, it is unlikely that a police strategy based on a visible police presence alone will succeed in curbing crime.41

**Case Study: Msinga**

Among the most common crimes in Msinga are Stock Theft, Common Robbery, Robbery on farms, Housebreaking, Taxi Violence, Car Hijacking, Rape, Domestic Violence, alcohol and drug abuse and Housebreaking.

Other safety challenges in Msinga include people fighting over property and revenge attacks which sometime draw in vast numbers of community members.42 The area has a vast maize production belt. Outsiders entering the area to purchase maize are victimised and this affects the commercial maize sector.43

There are also problems of taxi drivers driving without licences and engaging in violent conflict over routes. There are numerous unroadworthy vehicles being driven in the area causing serious collisions. Domestic Violence occurs especially in less formal marriages. Traditional marriages offer greater protection through Traditional leadership interventions. The handling of rape cases requires attention. Offenders’ families are allowed to pay compensation - for example two head of cattle - and matters are not pursued legally thereafter.

Social workers interviewed in this study also cited the problem of persons fostering children for monetary gain. Such foster parents do not give the children adequate attention resulting in these children engaging in crime. Social workers also cited the problem of rape (including the rape
of foster children by foster parents or others in the community), a shortage of police officials, sexual abuse and abandonment of children. Social workers felt that people are reluctant to report crime because of cultural beliefs that contraventions of socially accepted norms should be reported to the Amakhosi. They also harbour the fear that if cases are reported, the victim will be intimidated. Social Workers reported that they have difficulty dealing with matters because they are not kept informed about case proceedings.

There is a perception that the SAPS take long to react to crimes in progress because they themselves are fearful of violent criminals. Levels of trust in the police are also not adequate. There is a perception that the police disclose information to suspects.

Among the main causes of crime in the area are poverty, unemployment and school dropouts. The people who are most likely to be in conflict with the law in the area are youth, taxi owners and taxi drivers.

Crime reporting is difficult for many due to their proximity from the police stations. Satellite stations are required for Msinga Top, Inyoniyezwe, Mabomvini and Keats Drift.

Traditional structures make attempts to impose order and mete out punishment. They are generally seen as effective in promoting communal justice and reconciliation.

There are some developmental programs in the area but these are limited to providing a bare minimum of services. The Church of Scotland Hospital has an HIV/AIDS and pregnancy programme and SANCA is active in the area conducting drug awareness campaigns. The Suid Afrikaanse Vroue Federasie (SAVF) has a Family Preservation Program intended to help families and individuals cope with daily life, enhance communication, resolve conflicts and promote family unification. The Municipality also has skills development programmes in beadwork, candle-making and mat-making and agriculture.

Among the most important things required for development in Msinga are the following:

- Empowerment of people about their rights;
- Increasing the professionalism of police officers;
- Job recreation;
- Establishing trust between the community and police;
- Projects on sport and career guidance to cater for the youth.
Preventing Crime

The following were cited as being necessary to prevent crime:

- Increased SAPS patrols;
- Increased road traffic enforcement to curb the problem of unroadworthy vehicles;
- The employment of more police officers, preferably from other areas;
- Improved investigations;
- Awareness campaigns, especially rights-education for women who are vulnerable to abuse and who tolerate abuse due to a lack of information;
- A strong CPF that will communicate well with the community.

6. The State’s Response to Farm Attacks: The Rural Protection Plan (RPP)

The safety of rural areas first came under serious scrutiny in 1998 at the Rural Safety Summit convened by then President Nelson Mandela. There had been at the time a spate of attacks on farmers which drew intensified and high profile attention to the safety of farms and smallholdings. The Summit resulted in the adoption of 10 resolutions and led ultimately to the development and implementation of the Rural Protection Plan (RPP). The objective of the plan was to encourage all role-players in rural safety to work together in a co-ordinated manner, and engage in joint planning, action and monitoring to combat crime in the country’s rural areas.

Research mandated by the Rural Safety Summit was undertaken in 1999 to evaluate the rural protection plan’s effectiveness and to develop a better understanding of the nature of crime on farms and smallholdings. It was found that:

- The rural protection plan’s effectiveness to combat attacks on farms and smallholdings varied from area to area;
- In rural areas situated far from police stations and army bases, the plan’s success depends primarily on strong civilian participation;
- Given that the police do not have a rapid response capability in rural areas, it is crucial that farmers and smallholders themselves take greater responsibility for their safety and security needs;
- The police’s main contribution in combating farm and smallholding attacks is in its detective and intelligence functions. Good investigative work will yield arrests and convictions. However, a weakness of the rural protection plan is that it is a difficult for the police to gather intelligence in rural informal settlements and squatter camps from where it is believed that farm and smallholding attacks are often planned and to where many perpetrators flee after an attack.
Overall, the rural protection plan was found to have been a good mechanism to drive and coordinate safety initiatives for the country’s farms and smallholdings. There are aspects of the plan that have been criticised. The emphasis of the RPP on the commercial farming sector at the expense of other rural communities and subsistence farmers has not gone down well. Others have felt that the response to farm attacks has in the past made the lives of ordinary rural residents more difficult, with some structures taking actions which are themselves criminal acts.47

7. Rural Safety Summit Resolutions

The Rural Safety Summit, which took place on 10 October 1998, aimed at achieving consensus around a future process to deal with the issue of attacks against farmers and smallholdings, as well as on more general issues of rural insecurity. The summit also aimed at strengthening existing strategies to deal with rural crime as well as the development of further action plans.48 The summit recognised that a secondary approach alone will not solve the problem of crime in the rural areas in the longer term. It was agreed that research into the probable causes and motives needed to be conducted in order to develop proper preventative strategies.

Some of the key resolutions of the Summit were:

- All initiatives to ensure greater safety and security, in particular the Rural Protection Plan, needed to be more inclusive of all people in the farming and rural communities;
- The summit accepted that the Rural Protection Plan should be utilized as the operational strategy to combat and prevent violent crimes against farming and rural communities. Information collection and analysis on causal factors and motives contributing to attacks on the farming community needed to be conducted.49
- The summit recognised that in ensuring long term safety in rural and farming communities, a sustainable focus is required. It also committed itself as role players both inside and outside of government to collaborate with the Department of Safety and Security in the development of long-term policy framework for rural safety and security.
- The government committed itself to continued improvement of safety of rural areas including adequate funding and harmonization in the operation and functioning of the Criminal Justice System to ensure an effective system of deterrence.
8. Responding to Safety Challenges in Rural areas

It is important that entire communities participate in the drawing up of crime prevention strategies for rural areas. Some of the innovations that need to be expanded include:

- **One-Stop-Centres to Combat Gender Based Violence in Rural areas**

An important development to prevent ‘secondary victimisation’ within the criminal justice system (CJS) has been the establishment of One-Stop-Centres. At these centres, usually located in a medical facility, all relevant professionals (police, medical practitioner and counsellor) see survivors at a single, non-threatening venue. This enables the survivor to relate the incident a minimum number of times and not be expected to travel from one service provider to the next repeating the traumatic ordeal. The service also facilitates coordination between the various CJS agencies thereby avoiding duplication and evidence-handling mistakes. In KZN, these centres are to be found in urban townships such as Umlazi and Phoenix but still need to be rolled out into rural areas.

- **Gun Free Zones**

Gun violence is of great concern in South Africa. Some studies have shown that more people are dying each year from gunshots than from vehicle collisions. An important approach in reducing the number of firearms in society and changing people’s attitudes and behaviour towards firearms has been the Gun Free Zone (GFZ) strategy. GFZs are spaces in which firearms are not permitted. They include schools, places of worship and government premises. Overall, the process of declaring GFZs is seen as a powerful social crime prevention tool. Rural areas would benefit from a greater roll-out of GFZs.

- **Gender Empowerment Programmes**

The work of gender empowerment organisations must be strengthened and supported. Multi-disciplinary victim empowerment services and strategies must be made more available to rural women.

- **Dealing with Domestic Violence in Rural Communities**

General problems in the implementation of the DVA – such as lack of resources and confusion about roles and responsibilities – are more pronounced in rural communities, especially farming communities. Women are by far affected worst by domestic violence.
• **KZN Protocol on Child Protection**

The *KZN Protocol on Child Protection* is a step towards providing a uniform set of guidelines to ensure that children in need of care receive the correct response from the child protection system.

• **Department of Community Safety and Liaison Initiatives Impacting on Rural Safety**

Apart from regular crime awareness campaigns in rural areas, the DCSL has targeted programmes which prioritise rural areas for implementation:

• **Special Support Programmes for victims**

The Department of Community Safety and Liaison has designed and implemented a *Women’s Safety Audit Project*, the first of its kind in South Africa. The success of the initial pilot project led to the development of a Women’s Safety Audit Toolkit which serves as a resource for women to utilise in assessing their safety in their particular communities. The Toolkit has been publicly distributed through the media and among stakeholders. The Department continues to conduct Women’s Safety Audits at regular intervals to gather information from the Province’s women about what safety threats they experience. One of the locations where the DCSL conducted a Women’s’ Safety Audit “Walk About” to raise community awareness of the abuses being perpetrated against women was the rural area Shayamoya, Umzinto where the bodies of several women were discovered in a sugar cane field after the women were brutally murdered by a serial-killer.

• **Raising awareness of protective rights amongst vulnerable groups**

The Department also runs a range of rights education and awareness-raising programmes targeting women, children, older persons and more recently, men. A comic book entitled *Kuyoze Kubenini?* (meaning ‘Until When?’) has been developed which deals with violence against women and children. This has now been produced in DVD format for wider roll-out.

• **Promotion of a Victim Support Network**

In terms of support for survivors, the Department is integrally involved in improving the Province’s Victim Friendly Facilities (VFFs) and has an ongoing programme to assess and upgrade facilities run by the SAPS and NGOs. In addition, new facilities are provided where possible and support is provided to recruit and train volunteers to serve in these Centres.
Safety Networks are being established that attempt to deal with social issues in communities. An updated resource book with contact details of Victim Friendly Facilities, information on Domestic Violence as well as the Victims' Charter is in production. A previous publication on the Domestic violence Act has been distributed throughout the province.

Central to all these programmes are the following:

- The promotion of the ethos that survivors must be treated in a professional, private, sensitive manner and referred for follow-up support services in the community;
- When complainants are properly treated, they are better able to cope with the impact of their victimisation, and the police are also able to obtain better quality statements more likely to lead to successful investigations and successful court outcomes.

- **Social Crime Prevention Programme**

  The DCSL has taken its Youth Crime Prevention training programmes and Traditional Leadership (Amakhosi) training in crime prevention to all the Provinces rural areas. Leaders who undergo the training programmes are encouraged to start community-based crime prevention programmes in their localities.

- **Police Monitoring and the Promotion of improved Community- Police Relations**

  One of the central mandates of the DCSL is to conduct police station evaluations in the Province. Regular reports are sent to the Provincial Commissioner of the SAPS pertaining to evaluations of rural police stations. Sound community-police relations remain critical in any attempt to reduce crime. The Department has for a number of years been capacitating rural Community Police Forums (CPFs) to mobilise local communities in combating crime and improving community-police relations. The Department also intervenes to resolve protracted and serious disputes in rural areas through its Communities in Dialogue programme.

- **Volunteer Social Crime Prevention Programme**

  The Department has recruited and deployed volunteers into a number of rural communities in the Province. More volunteers are being recruited to bolster the programme and the overall strategy aims to:

  - Engage communities in social crime prevention;
  - Develop local knowledge of crime patterns and trends;
  - Engage in relationship-building with communities and key stakeholders;
• Gain knowledge of localised social crime priorities and participate in localised action against interpersonal crime; and
• Support the work of the SAPS and other agencies.

9. Recommendations

9.1 All role-players must work towards alleviating and addressing the social and economic conditions which give rise to high levels of rural crime and low levels of safety for rural dwellers.

9.2 Youth unemployment must be urgently addressed. Some key suggestions which have emerged in this study include:

- Creation of a basic job opportunity for unemployed youth where they earn even a little money to care for themselves at a basic level;
- Information for rural youth on career choices and career guidance;
- Skills at a basic level offered to rural youth to enable them to start basic enterprises.

9.3 Entertainment facilities, particularly for rural youth, should be prioritised.

9.4 Awareness-raising must be conducted regarding scams perpetrated by organised gangs who prey upon rural dwellers going into towns.

9.5 Synergies of various government departments and organisations of civil society in promoting rural safety must be explored and uncovered. Preventative and responsive strategies, with programmes of action to be implemented by all stakeholders, must be devised.

9.6 To combat child abuse, rural educators and officials in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) must be provided with ongoing training and guidance on the handling of victims of all forms of child abuse. This must include: detecting abuse, assisting with reporting and minimising secondary victimisation. Overall, the accessibility and responsiveness of the CJS to child and women victims must be rigorously monitored.

9.7 Sound child protection programmes should be taught at schools to empower children. These programmes must increase children’s’ awareness of their own rights and inform them about the dangers they face and how to seek
assistance. Ultimately however, adults must take responsibility for the safety of children they come into contact with and those under their care.

9.8 School governance structures should also become more involved in abuse prevention and should link up with appropriate service providers. Schools must become ‘safe havens’ for reporting crime and should be real centres of resilience-building and support for children who come from difficult backgrounds.

9.9 To combat child labour practices, Labour Department Inspectors should be more rigorous in their inspections to ensure that children are not subjected to illegal employment practices.

9.10 Traditional authorities must play a greater role in restorative justice in a manner that ensures that victims (especially children) are protected from further victimisation. In general, traditional systems and practices which protected children and other vulnerable groups and developed pro-social attitudes should be restored to complement the CJS. Traditional authorities must also develop appropriate crime prevention responses at ward level. It is important that initiatives grow ‘organically’ from within communities themselves rather than being imposed from outside.

9.11 There should be a strategic focus on programs for vulnerable groups such as children, youth, women and the elderly. Projects should look to eradicating crime factors that contribute to the violation of their right to safety and security. The SAPS must be encouraged to improve victim support facilities at Community Service Centres especially where there is high incidence of sensitive crimes such as rape and abuse of women and children.

9.12 Community safety audits should be encouraged to properly document the safety threats faced by rural communities. CPFs in rural areas should drive this process in conjunction with the SAPS.

9.13 The performance of the CJS should be continually monitored and enhanced.

9.14 The prevention of stock theft must be built into plans for developing rural areas. Positive registered branding must continue to be emphasised.
Conclusion

The responsibility for promoting safety in rural areas lies with all members of rural communities. Local traditional leadership and local municipalities have important roles to play. Reducing overall levels of rural poverty and inequality and working towards a higher standard of rural life will be critical to improving the safety of rural areas.

A key area of challenge is crimes against rural women and children. The CJS infrastructure and response to women and children in rural areas requires much attention. Violence on farms, including both farm attacks and assaults on and among farm workers, must also be addressed in order to make rural areas safe. Stock theft - both on the petty scale for the pot and larger operations involving organised criminal networks - is another priority area highlighted in this research report.

The weakness of the rural family, impacted upon buy migrant labour, is seen as a major contributor to instabilities facing rural areas and young men in rural areas need focussed attention to turn this trend around. Much more resources are required to police and prosecute rural crime, and improve perceptions of the legitimacy of the CJS in the eyes of rural dwellers. The State and civil society both have important responsibilities develop rural communities to the point where rural people are able to live fulfilled and productive lives, and are able to access the fruits of democracy.
Endnotes


7 Julian May (2000) Poverty and Inequality in South Africa: Meeting the Challenge

8 Bowers, D., & Hamrick, K. (Eds) (October 1997) Births to unmarried mothers are rising faster in rural areas. *Rural Conditions and Trends*


10 National Rural Safety Conference Report, quoting the ISRDS, op. cit.


12 Interview with staff of the NGO Phoenix Zululand, Eshowe, 27 January 2009.

13 Interview with staff of the Hibiscus Coast Protection Services, Port Shepstone, 5 February 2009.

14 http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/incr/j/rural-crimefacts.htm.


17 http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/Monographs/No47/Chap6.html

18 Interview with Community Development Worker at Empolweni Child and Family Welfare Society, 15 January 2009.

19 DCSSL Service Delivery Evaluation feedback reports almost without exception document this response from the SAPS during station evaluations.

20 http://www.iss.co.za/pubs/Monographs/No47/Chap6.htm1

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26 Constitution of South Africa, Sect. 28 (1) (e) and (f).


29 Interview with *Siyaphambili Youth and Community Development* Organisation, Paddock, 5 February 2009.

30 Interview with Paddock CPF executive members, 5 February 2009.

31 Department of Community Safety and Liaison (2008), *Stock Theft in KwaZulu Natal*.

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45 Interview with staff of Church Agricultural Projects (NGO), 22 January 2009, Misinga.
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49 Address by President Nelson Mandela
50 Interview with Lynn Footit, Ziphakamise NGO, Port Shepstone, 5 February 2009.
Crime and personal safety are very pertinent in the minds of South Africans. The mission of the KZN Department of Community Safety & Liaison (DCSL) is that the people of KwaZulu-Natal live in a safe and secure environment. This publication is one of a range of products that the DCSL has produced in order to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of crime in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as to inform the Department’s numerous crime prevention programmes. Given the intimate and private contexts in which inter-personal is occurring, the DCSL prioritises the social crime prevention approach in its programmes. Initiatives underway by the Department include the training of youth in spearheading community-based crime prevention, improving services to vulnerable groups and victims/survivors of crime, and general awareness-raising that crime is a social problem which requires a concerted societal response.

Topics already covered include:

- Family violence
- School Violence
- Stock Theft
- Rural safety
- Sexual violence
- Schools as sites of resilience building

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