

Stock Theft Crime in a Rural Community in Limpopo, South Africa: Contributory Factors and Recommendations[★]

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Abstract: *This study sets out to carefully analyse, and evaluate, the extent of stock theft in a rural community of Giyani Limpopo province, South Africa by taking all contributory factors into account. Data was collected from 64 individuals to explore, and identify, the actual perceptions and experiences of Giyani South African Police Service Stock Theft Unit (Giyani SAPS STU) and local SAPS officers, livestock owners, community members, and other relevant stakeholders involved in understanding contributory factors to stock theft crime. The main findings of the study show that the contributing factors to stock theft in Giyani Policing Area (GPA) are: the slaughtering of stock to sell to butchery owners; the alleged involvement of SAPS and Department of Justice: Giyani Magistrates Courts' (DoJ: GMC) officials in stock theft crimes; the negligence of livestock owners; the unmarking of livestock; and, poor reporting when livestock gets stolen. The researcher developed recommendations and formulated possible strategies which involves improved resources, advanced training and better education; and the strengthening of enforcement response and reporting techniques.*

Keywords: policing, stock theft, prevention, South Africa.

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Introduction

The superlatives of the animal kingdom are diverse, and prolific. The literature indicates that animal livestock contributes significantly to the livelihoods of people living in the rural areas of developing countries (De Haan, *et al.*, 2001). South Africa is no exception; nor is the Giyani Policing Area (henceforth, GPA), Limpopo Province. Among the various difficulties faced by South African livestock farmers, in general, stock theft remains one of the biggest challenges, GPA included. In connection to this views above, Geldenhuys (2006) explains that stock theft is an escalating, unnerving and destructive reality, facing, or affecting, all sectors of the farming community, from the commercial farmer, to the stud breeder, to emerging farmers, who own only a few heads of cattle (Geldenhuys, 2009). It extends also to the rural farmer, who may own one or two heads of cattle. It was, further, stated that stock theft occurs more frequently than other types of crime, and that it is a much more serious threat in South African regions bordering other countries, such as the Eastern Cape, the Free State, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), and Limpopo.

Stock theft crime trends in South Africa currently indicate that the country is experiencing an increase of 1.5% in stock theft. Overall, the anatomy of serious crime, relating to property-related crime, amounts to 25.7%, as provided by crime statistics overview (Republic of South Africa – RSA, 2011/2012); this includes burglary (residential and non-residential), theft of motor vehicle/cycle, theft out of a motor vehicle, and *stock theft*. It was further reported that stock theft decreased by 30.7% over a period of 5 years, 2004/2005 – 2008-2009, an average reduction of 6.1% per annum. Between 2009/2010 – 2011/2012, it decreased by 0.8% over a period of 3 years - an average reduction of 0.3% per annum. Overall, there was a 1.5% increase recorded in the 2011/2012 financial year, and collectively, stock theft has decreased by 31.2% from 2004/2005 to 2011/2012 (SAPS, 2012).

Geldenhuys (2012) points out that stock theft is not a new crime – it is probably as old as agriculture, itself. Since the earliest times, stock theft has had far-reaching consequences. For rural communities, livestock are regarded as “living wealth”, and are often their only source of income, and sustenance. Thus, when their livestock are stolen, many households, and subsistence farmers, lose their livelihoods. But these farmers are not the only ones who suffer, on account of stock theft; it also has a serious impact on commercial farmers, and, thus, the red meat industry, as a whole. In support of this statement, the research questions to guide this study are: Has stock theft in the GPA increased in the last few years? What could be the factors contributing to the stock theft increase in the GPA? What type of relationship exists between SAPS and livestock owners in the GPA? Are the SAPS strategies, as employed by the STU in Giyani, effective enough in responding to stock theft? In this regard, the perspectives in line with contributory factors to the stock theft crime phenomenon increase in the GPA where highlighted by the researcher therein.

Data and methods

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted to collect data, so as to explore, and identify, the actual perceptions and experiences of Giyani SAPS STU and local SAPS

officers, livestock owners, community members, and other relevant stakeholders involved in preventing and combating stock theft in Giyani. This was done through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KII), and observation schedules.

The population sample of the study was based on the selected target groups, taken from GPA, and, Makosha and Xikukwana villages (Ward 14). The FGDs consisted of the following: Giyani SAPS officers as attached to the local police station (8); Prominent livestock farmers (20; 10 from each village); Community members (12; 6 from each village); Community Policing Forums (CPFs) managers (4; 2 from each village); and, Leaders of the local Faith-based organisations (4: 2 from each village), amounting to 48 targets.

KIIs were conducted with Sixteen (16) participants from the Giyani SAPS STU officers (7), Department of Agriculture (Veterinary Services; Land and Infrastructure; and, Natural Resource Management managers) (2); Mopani District officials (2; Community Researcher and a Community Liaison Officer); Giyani Municipality officials (2; Occupational Health and Safety Officer; Community Safety and Liaison Officer); and, Giyani Magistrates' Court personnel (3; Senior Prosecutor, Control Public Prosecutor; Court Interpreter). Overall Sixty-Four (64) study populations were selected. Gender, age, educational background, and socio-economic differentiation did not play a role. All 64 participants were Tsonga-speaking Africans; the participant's selection was based on: their knowledge of stock theft prevalence in the GPA of Limpopo Province; been a victim of this crime; and, been a member of communities affected by this crime.

A documentary study, which provides an overview of existing publications on the subject of stock theft in the GPA (Limpopo Province) (Researcher's note: as per references indicates), across Southern Africa, and some parts of the globe, was conducted by the researcher. The views of different authors which relate to the problem that was researched were discussed to place the current research project within a conceptual and theoretical context. Information sources comprised of additional, recent academic books, academic journal articles, legislation, policy documents, national instructions, and information available on the Internet, relating to the study topic. Information obtained through the literature research was collected, and also integrated with the data obtained. The documentary sources were compared with data already gathered by the researcher, and, then, added as new information to the present study, wherever relevant.

Collection of data from stock theft court sessions observation schedules was the last source utilised to gather data on the topic. A total of Three (3) cases were observed in stock theft court sessions by the researcher in the period October to November 2012 in the DoJ: GMC. The researcher attended court cases that were still to be finalised. The information was retrieved as the court proceedings commenced.

The extent of stock theft in the giyani policing area

The researcher started by asking the participants to provide their views on whether they considered stock theft to be more widespread in the last three years, or not? They were asked to elaborate on their responses. This question sought to investigate whether any of their livestock had been stolen in the previous three years (2009-2011). This was to determine whether there had been an increase (or not) in the number of stock thefts in those three annual periods. The investigation included the type of livestock stolen (from cattle, chickens, goats, and donkeys), as these are the most common livestock targeted by the criminal individuals and syndicates, and most community members concentrate on these livestock for their livelihood. The results of this study show that there was a decrease, at the time of conducting the study, in cattle, goats, and donkey theft by order of importance.

Examples of some of the responses (quoted verbatim):

“Yes it was dominant in the last 3 weeks, but currently it is low as the troubling syndicate has been cracked and locked up, some of them are still in the holding cells.” KII (Giyani SAPS STU Commander).

“Yes, the stock thieves recruit one another, and they have the support of the judicial system, knowing they will win the case, despite the seriousness of the said case. Some are government officials with the intention of generating money quick for self-enrichment. In some instances, even the livestock farmers are more involved in committing this crime. Thus, I do not feel that the SAPS did not do enough.” FGD No. 2 (Xikukwana community member).

“Stock theft has been an existing phenomenon in our area over the years; it is local, rampant and becoming transitional crime.” FGD No. 2 (Makosha community member).

The reported incidences above of stock theft in the GPA are confirmed by the participants' responses below:

Reported incidents of stock theft in Giyani (2010-2012)

Between 2010 and 2012, the following actual, and attempted, incidents took place in the GPA of Limpopo, South Africa, at the time of conducting the study (*Researcher's note: this also reads with paragraph 1.2 of Chapter [One]*).

Incident No. 1: On November 27 2012, two community members, aged 40 and 46 years, from Xamfana village, were set to appear at the DoJ: GMC to face charges of murder. This follows an incident, wherein furious residents of Xamfana and Ga-Abel allegedly attacked, and killed, a suspected stock thief who was allegedly caught red-handed on Friday, 23 November 2012.

The Giyani police station spokesperson, Warrant Officer (W/O) Seth Magadzi, said that the suspect, in his 30s, was found lying in the grazing camp with an open wound on the head. “Also one cattle was found killed on the scene, and three others attacked with a sharp object,” Magadzi said. In addition, he

said that the suspect, from Mavele village, outside Tzaneen, was caught by the community in the camp in the act of stealing cattle. "He was then attacked with sticks, and a sharp object. He died on the scene." Magadzi went on to say that stock theft is rife in the area, and people seem not to report cases of it: "We advise residents to open cases when their stock disappears. They should put hot-iron branding, freeze branding, or tattoo their cattle with a sign, in order to identify them." He urged local subsistence farmers to join stock forums, in order to deal with this growing scourge.

Xamafana community leader, Steven Manyama, said stock theft was of grave concern in the area as, week-by-week, they recorded a huge number of stock thefts: "We also find carcasses of cattle belonging to residents in the nearby bushes. Last week, three cattle were killed on the same spot. And the other week, nine cows from Ga-Abel, and two from Mpepule village, were killed." Earlier this year (2012), enraged residents of Giyani attacked, and killed, a 40-year-old man after they caught him allegedly stealing cattle. The deceased's bakkie, which was allegedly used to transport the cattle, was burnt by the angry villagers.

Incident No. 2: On 17/01/2012, a stock thief was found in a pool of blood. "Mopani Herald" reported that: "A suspected stock thief was found dead in a pool of blood next to a burnt bakkie on Tuesday morning between Phalawubeni and Makhuvha villages in Giyani."

Provincial police spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Mohale Ramatseba, said two carcasses of cattle were found next to the burnt bakkie: "Two Pangas and an axe were found at the scene, and will form part of police investigations. The burnt bakkie belonged to a butcher in the Giyani area," said Ramatseba. No arrests had yet been made, in connection with the murder, and the burning of the bakkie. Ramatseba strongly condemned the killing of the suspected stock thief, and warned community members not to take the law into their own hands, but rather, to report the involvement of any person in criminal activities to the police. The deceased was due to appear at the DoJ: GMC, in connection with a case of stock theft. *(Researcher's note: Police investigations were continuing on the killing at the time of conducting the research report; however, no arrests were made).*

Incident No. 3: On 28/04/2012, angry farmers from various parts of Limpopo marched to Malamulele Magistrates' Court to oppose the granting of bail to Giyani butchery owner, Joe Ngobeni, who faces charges of stock theft. Ngobeni, who was refused bail twice, appeared at Greater Giyani Magistrates' Court on three counts of stock theft. Ngobeni was, again, denied bail by Magistrate Daniel Maluleke, and the case was postponed until April 10. He is facing similar charges in Giyani. This incident impelled farmers from Hlanganani, Sekgosese, Malamulele, and Giyani to organise a march to the Magistrates' offices to hand over a memorandum of demands. Stock farmers committee chairman, Whiskey Mahosi, said: "Many kraals are empty because of stock theft, and grazing lands have become hunting grounds for criminals; so, we have decided to attend to stock theft cases in large numbers." He said they were law-abiding citizens, and demanded that the Departments of Justice (DoJ: GMC) and Police Giyani SAPS – Giyani SAPS STU to take cases of stock theft seriously: "We

demand no bail be granted to anyone charged with stock theft, and in case of conviction for stock theft, any person owning butchery must have that business de-licensed, because it is being used illegally."

The day previous, the Malamulele station, Commander confirmed Ngobeni's appearance, but declined to comment on the farmers' march, reported (Ntlemo, 2012).

Incident No. 4: On 28/02/2012, the police in Giyani arrested five suspects, in connection with a case of stock theft. It is reported that two suspects, aged 31 and 32, were arrested at the Gandlanani village, outside Giyani, while transporting the carcasses of stolen cattle. The arrest of the two led to the arrest of the third suspect, aged 30, at Babangu village. After questioning the three suspects, a butcher, aged 47, and his 28-year-old assistant, were arrested, while selling the meat of stolen cattle at Mavele village, in Giyani. The five suspects are expected to appear before the DoJ: GMC soon to face charges of stock theft, pending further police investigations.

Incident No. 5: Meanwhile, a 62-year-old man, Samson Mathebula, of Nsavulani village, in Giyani, appeared at the Giyani Magistrates' Court, in connection with stock theft. The elderly man allegedly stole cattle in October last year, and has been appearing in the Giyani Magistrates' Court since then. He is still in custody. Community members are protesting outside Giyani Magistrates' Court for the suspect not to be granted bail. Police are monitoring the situation. (*Researcher's note: At the time of conducting the research, the case was still in the trial roll*), [Ramatseba, 2012].)

Incident No. 6: In 2010, the community forum of Thomo village took action against a 41-year-old man, after he admitted to selling off cattle he was herding. The man, who had been hired to herd the cattle of seven cattle owners in the village, admitted to driving the cattle into an area where few villagers went, and then selling them to other people. "The man herded the cattle of seven owners on different days, and this is why it was easy for him to drive any cattle he wanted into a desolate area for trade without rousing suspicion," explained one of the man's former employers, Cedric Maswanganyi. After two of Maswanganyi's cows, and another owner's cattle, went missing, the owners decided to search the area, and they found the spot where the animals were slaughtered. "He would have gotten away with it, but we found his shoe prints on the scene," explained another cattle owner, Robert Chavalala. The village's community forum was alerted, and the man was found, still wearing the shoes whose prints were found on the scene. He was then taken to the scene where he confessed to being part of the conspiracy. After several lashes from the community forum, the man named an accomplice, whom he claimed was a middleman between himself and the buyers. The men were handed over to the police, and charged with stock theft. The Giyani police station spokesperson, Thomas Makhubele, said the accused later appeared in DoJ: GMC and the case was postponed to 9 May 2010, pending further investigation (Chauke, 2010).

In order to further determine the widespread extent of stock theft in the GPA, Limpopo Province, the stock theft court session observation schedules were also used as one of the data collection methods. The researcher was attempting to ascertain the fairness of the Justice System (DoJ: GMC) toward stock theft victims. This process is described in this section.

During this period, the researcher was able to attend three stock theft court sessions, two at the Giyani Magistrates' Court, and one at the Xikukwana Traditional Authority/Court (XTA/C). The first court case at the DoJ: GMC involved Raider Mathebula (46) – said to be “one of the kingpins most feared in the stock theft ‘business’”. To show their grave concerns, during the court session, members of MCLF from various areas in the Mopani and Vhembe districts came in numbers, chanting their wish not to see him released, and together with the other five co-accused,” reported Chauke (2013). The other five co-accused (Jan Shiviti, 32, Bennett Phosa, 32, Aubrey Manyike, 31, Joshua Mhlongo, 49, and, Dzingai Moyo, 30) were cited in the case, “State v J. Shiviti and five others – RG77/2012 on the court roll.” Among the 5 co-accused, one of them was a butchery owner from N'wamitwa village who was out on R20.000 as a first offender; one of his associates was also out on free bail. The other four were still in custody, by the research report time; the case in question was postponed to 22 and 23 April 2013 for further hearing to allow the state to call more witnesses. Chauke (2013) further stated that this case was characterised by the battle between the State and the lawyers of the accused, with the need for more witnesses to be called by the State. The case has been in-and-out of court, since July 2012, when the suspects were arrested.

Farmers around both Mopani and Vhembe districts have been following it closely to ensure its success. Speaking after the postponement, the secretary of the MCLF, Mr. Famanda Hlangwani, said the forum was pulling all strings to make sure that the suspects stayed in jail for a long time: “All we want is to see these men put away, so we can have a little chance to grow our herds again, and nothing else,” he said. The forum represents farmers from the Malamulele, Hlanganani, Sekhukhune, and Giyani areas. The suspects remained in custody.

The charges against them were:

- Stealing of stock and produce in February 2012, belonging to the under-mentioned individuals:
 - Two cows of John Nkuna (72 years of age).
 - One bull of Samuel Risenga Chauke (66 years of age).
 - Five cows of Mkhacani Thomas Mashibye (48 years age).
 - Six cows of Ben Magezi Maswanganyi (85 years of age) (Mr. Maswanganyi lost 17 cattle during the incident, but 4 were found at the crime scene, while the other 2 were not found).
 - Contravening the Meat Safety Act (Act 40 of 2000). This Act serves “to provide for measures to promote meat safety and the safety of animal products; to establish and maintain essential standards in respect of abattoirs; to regulate the importation and exportation of meat; to establish meat safety schemes; and to provide for matters connected therewith.” (SAPS, 2000: 230).
- However, all the accused pleaded not guilty to the charge in question. They were all represented by lawyers. The Magistrate said the following:

It was revealed by the prosecution that, if they were be found guilty, the competent verdicts awaiting them were as follows:

- As governed by the Firearms Control Act (Act 60 of 2000), the objective of this Act is “to establish a comprehensive and effective system of firearms control.” This is now the only arms- and ammunition-related Act for the national territory of the RSA. Section 103 provides for the declaration by court of persons unfit to possess firearms, with exceptions (Intec College Study Guide, 2003: 74; Department of Criminal Justice).
- Receiving of stolen property, knowing it has been stolen.
- Possession of goods without being able to give a satisfactory account of such possession (in terms of S36, Act 62 of 1995), and;
- Acquiring or receiving stolen property without having reasonable cause to believe that the person disposing of the property is the owner, or duly authorised by the owner (in terms of S37, Act 62 of 1955) – S260 (Joubert, 2009: 279).

The second case involved Akani Boswel Nkuna (RG 79/2011). This case was over a dispute of ownership of 2 cattle. Of his 11 cattlestolen in 2011, the complainant in question only managed to recover 2 cattle in dispute, before the court adjourned. The accused person over-branded the 2 cattle in dispute. The offender defaced the original brand by applying certain techniques to apply his own mark. This case was scheduled for 13 May 2013 to hear further State evidence.

In terms of section 165 (1) of the Constitution, the judicial authority of the Republic of South Africa vests authority in the courts established by the Constitution, and any other law. Section 165(2) of the Constitution requires the judiciary to be independent and impartial, and subject only to the Constitution, and the law. In terms of section 34 of the Constitution, every person shall have the right to have justifiable disputes settled by a court of law, or, where appropriate, another independent, impartial forum. It is, therefore, the constitutional right of a person to seek relief from the courts (Fouché, 2007: 15-16). However, what the law provides is totally the opposite in DoJ: GMC. The accused in question are portrayed by upstanding and trustworthy livestock farmers as being guilty of stock theft. (*Researcher's note: The researcher agreed with this assessment during the court proceedings, i.e., that they were, indeed, guilty before the public eye.*) It should, however, be emphasised that it is not the community that deliver the verdict. Having said that, declaring someone guilty in the public arena is easy, but, in terms of Section 35 (3) of the Constitution (1996), every accused person has the right to a fair trial, which includes the right to be presumed innocent (until proven guilty), remain silent, and testify during the proceedings. They still believe that their duty is to present themselves, and attend court.

Based on the presentations in court of the legal representatives (of the accused), it was apparent that their duty was to find weaknesses in the evidence presented by the witnesses. Such evidence is, then, deemed inadmissible before the court. Oftentimes, the witnesses and the-said victims fail to provide evidence that could prove their allegations irrefutably. Thus, the witnesses demonstrate their frustration, no solid evidence is rendered, and they end up relying on the investigation

conducted by the Giyani SAPS STU, and the colour of their stock, including injuries/wounds, the horns and spots, basing their conclusion on the fact that "if something belongs to you, it is easy to identify it". The researcher thinks this is not enough to prove their case before the court, let alone, win a case. What also emerged during the court proceedings was the level of education of the livestock owners as witnesses and victims of this crime. Some, like Ben Magezi Maswanganyi, who lost 17 herds of cattle at that time, had formal education only up to Grade 2. So, the-said witnesses are, sometimes, treated with disdain, partly on account of their level of education.

In cases that involve forensic evidence, it can be conclusively proven that the crime was committed. In such instances, the experts' findings were submitted as evidence, and the investigators acknowledged the potential importance of such evidence. In addition, the prosecution presented such evidence before the court with more confidence.

Despite their denials, regarding the stock theft, the evidence to be presented by May that year would prove otherwise. One expected that the accused were up for a hefty sentence, as the Magistrate and the Prosecutor were intent on getting a conviction. However, the defence lawyers were equally competent, and appeared prepared to protect the-said ruthless criminals at all costs. Again, whatever facts are presented before the court, the final decision still lies with the Magistrate. With that said, livestock owners still invest their faith in the Legal Justice System, which has failed them in the past. They are tired of seeing criminals go scot-free, and waiting in vain to get justice. (Cases 1 and 2 were adjourned until April and May 2013). The livestock owners end up physically and emotionally drained, and frustrated that the courts of law are not delivering justice to them.

The views of stakeholder representatives from the GDAFF, Mopani District officials, GGM officials, and DoJ: GMC officials were gathered by the researcher. Eighteen (18) individual interviews were conducted with the identified stakeholders, covering each of the identified topics. The participants were identified through earlier contacts by cell phone, prior to the main meeting, or personal visits to the stakeholders' respective offices. They were given details of the intended study, and offered an opportunity to contribute their views, either in writing, over the phone, or in person. Other individuals from relevant organisations were contacted, and asked if they would like to participate in the-said interviews, or suggest possible, relevant participants. It was explained to those contacted, or visited, that creative individuals were required for the KIIs, and that individual inputs were being sought, not the views of their particular organisations. A letter was, subsequently, sent to thank those who had provided their views. It was explained to the participants that the researcher was conducting an exploratory-descriptive study on perspectives in stock theft prevention in the GPA, Limpopo. They were asked for their views on the weaknesses of the Giyani SAPS STU and livestock owners' strategies, in terms of: how they respond to stock theft; what modifications might be introduced to overcome these weaknesses; and, what might be ideal strategic interventions to improve the current investigation on, and detection system of, stock theft crime in the Giyani communities. They were reassured that no individual's rights would be infringed

upon, and that a summary of the report would be available at the conclusion of the work. Their views are best illustrated in this chapter (Four), and Chapter Five of this study.

Contributory factors to stock theft escalation in the giyani policing area

In determining the major contribution to stock theft, this research question (What could be the factors contributing to the stock theft increase in the GPA?) received sufficient coverage from the study. The participants mentioned diverse, probable, causative factors to stock theft in Giyani. They believe that there is still a long way to go before the contributing factors can be positively addressed. The study found that one of the biggest obstacles to combating this problem was that many cases of stock theft perpetrated against the farming communities in Giyani, as well the community, in general, go unreported, due to misconceptions about: SAPS' operational conduct; the illegitimate practices by butchery owners; the branding of livestock; and, leaving livestock unattended. The police determined that pro-active communication and intervention were essential. In co-operation with livestock farmers, and community structures, such as CPFs, and MCLF, the police need to develop a multi-faceted strategy to mitigate these challenges. It was then advised that livestock owners/farming communities count their livestock on a regular basis, brand-mark them, and ensure they are registered in the stock book, to ensure a proper investigative process, given that they are equally responsible for fighting stock theft crime, together with the Giyani SAPS STU, and the nearest police station, and satellite units. These findings demonstrate that it has become increasingly important for the police, and the livestock owners in the GPA, to further assess factors that contribute to stock theft, so as to determine the root causes of the crime.

Giyani residents of different economic backgrounds, and age groups, are currently experiencing stock theft. The common scenarios are stock stolen, either when grazing, or at night, when everyone is asleep.

The researcher found some of the contributory factors to stock theft in the GPA to include the following:

- In most cases, animals are stolen, not from villages, but from cattle posts, where they are guarded only by shepherds.
- Stock theft crime in Giyani is motivated by greed (illegal self-enrichment) for commercial purposes.
- Lack of proper protection of the kraals in the villages at night time enables stock to be taken from village kraals. Most of the kraals are designed in such a way that stock thieves have easy access to stock enclosures, as they are isolated from the families, built in the outside homes of livestock owners, or the main yard/surroundings. In addition, some kraals are built in the forest, with poor security.
- There is a strong belief that perpetrators are local people who collude with syndicates outside the villages under attack. Sometimes, villages are attacked, and all the stock is driven off.
- Muti is believed to be used by foreigner syndicates, in partnership with the locals, to steal the livestock.

- In some cases, what is reported as theft is not theft. Because of customary marriages, relatives are custodians of their in-laws, if they are still young. This includes their possessions, such as stock, which are supposed to be returned to the children when they grow up. This is also the case when parents die, leaving young children behind. These children inherit the parent's possessions, which are supposed to be looked after, on the children's behalf, by relatives. However, in most cases, the adults decide to keep the assets for themselves. If the children, on reaching adulthood, try to claim their inheritance, the relatives report the assets as stolen.
- Sometimes, people steal cattle to sell the meat, or simply because they dislike the owner, the stock is slaughtered. More information on exactly who the perpetrators, and the victims, are needs to be gathered.
- Lack of reporting structures within the community (i.e., the police are not easily accessible to receive, or deal with, stock theft cases); thus, stock theft cases end up not being reported to the police.

The participants' views, relating to what they considered the contributing factors to stock theft in the GPA were elicited by the researcher. Their perceptions appeared very one-dimensional, since they thought that stock theft was caused by the factors below, in order of prevalence:

- Slaughtering stock to sell to butchery owners: more often than not, offenders steal and slaughter cattle to sell to butchery owners to get fast cash for their survival. The perpetrators steal cattle from any place, and slaughter them. In most cases, butchery owners connive with the perpetrators (organised crime syndicates) to commit this crime;
- They do not register their livestock. The Giyani SAPS STU does not know the exact number of livestock which the livestock farmers own;
- Delay by victims in reporting stolen stock;
- They do not brand-mark their livestock;
- They employ foreigners - this is in spite of the research conducted by IDASA and Afro-barometer which revealed that approximately 7 out of 10 South Africans do not trust foreigners. These numbers increased from 60% in 2008, to 67% in 2012. It was also revealed that 44% of the respondents could not provide shelter for foreigners. However, 36% of the-said respondents would do all they could to stop foreigners starting businesses where they reside;
- Livestock owners do not look after their stock in a proper way. They let their stock crawl, stray, and wander around villages at night;
- Giyani SAPS STU officers, and Justice Department officials, have, for long, been suspected of involvement in stock theft - meaning, the police are involved in this crime;
- The criminals are heavily-armed; and,
- Shortage of resources for community policing: Clothing; storage units; food for patrols; helicopters; horses; bullet-proof vests; sleeping bag; quad bikes; and, the appropriate vehicles (Giyani SAPS STU) for conducting their work as quickly as possible.

Other motivating factors, as cited by the participants in this study, were, among others:

- Greed;
- Poverty - poor people resort to stock theft, because they want to get rich quick;
- Unemployment;
- Pride and Jealousy; and,
- Social and cultural ceremonies that required an animal to be slaughtered, especially by Indians and the locals at funerals and parties.

Other reasons given by the participants, in relation to why cattle are stolen in the GPA were:

- Some of the suspects arrested for cattle theft have claimed that that was the only way they could put something on the table for themselves, and their families;
- The employment of illegal immigrants and unregistered farm workers (Farmers continue to employ illegal workers with low wages, and this creates a challenge when investigating stock theft cases, as some workers are usually difficult to track down. It is a challenge, because, in some cases, farmers employ the same people who steal from them);
- Due to the fact that the Greater Giyani Municipality have a high unemployment rate, this has forced local residents to steal;
- Farmers must mark their livestock, and make them easy to trace (i.e., marking animals by means of hot-iron branding, freeze branding, tattooing, as well as ear tagging, even if ear tags can more easily be lost). Unmarked, stolen stock is very difficult to trace, and identify. It is also a challenge in court, because positive identification cannot be done beyond a reasonable doubt, if there's no marking;
- Due to the lack of regulation and registration of livestock, there is no proper monitoring of animals coming in from the villages of neighbouring districts;
- No official or livestock farmers' patrols - which promotes free and easy access into the GPA, resulting in the unsafe transportation of animals without valid veterinary permits;
- There is no animal pound in Giyani for safe-keeping lost, or stolen, livestock for the rightful owners to identify them/come forward to claim them, and;
- There are no specialised stock theft courts in the GPA, Limpopo Province.

Policing stock theft in giyani communities: The challenges

"Do the SAPS have adequate capacity to respond to the challenges implied by stock theft in the GPA? Why do they think so?" This was one of the questions posed to the participants. One participant had this to say:

"I have 25 years as a police officer and 12 years under Giyani SAPS STU as a Warrant Officer, through my years of experience I can tell you that the challenge brought by stock theft is most members of this unit are deployed in rural areas during the day, where stock theft is most problematic, and that is when the stock thieves are not operating. Climate change, such as drought which cause a lack of food and laziness to our rural people also pose a serious challenge, as during this time majority of us do not know the best way to make a living, poverty and hunger as poor people provide a market for cheap stolen stock even when they are not directly involved in theft can be cited as another challenge to this crime." **KII** (Giyani SAPS STU Commander).

Staffing remains the major problem at the Giyani police station. The one main police station in Giyani is staffed by 463 police officers, who have been assigned to all the units, with few active police reservists. The Giyani SAPS STU is only staffed by Seven (7) personnel; and, again, Giyani boasts Four (4) satellite police stations: Dzumeri; Makhuva; Bendstore; and, Muyexe, consisting of less than 15 officers per satellite (see paragraph 1.5 of chapter One).

The station is faced with serious challenges, such as (in order of importance):

- *Lack of resources.*
- *Lack of manpower.*
- *Resistance to learning new approaches to policing. Most of the officers are Black African individuals, who have been working at the station for more than 10 years, and are not well-disposed to learning new practices to policing.*

- *Giyani still has to be resourced for the four satellite stations, which fall under its jurisdiction, so as to have officials that directly deal with stock theft cases.*

Allocation of resources is another challenge: the Giyani SAPS STU Commander indicated that, at present, the resources available met few of their needs. As the area is predominantly rural, with poor infrastructure, it makes it difficult for the police to get access to the communities, let alone deliver an effective service to the victims. The area is hilly, and the roads are not tarred, and are badly developed. This contributes to the frustration that the police experience with their limited resources. Key stakeholders, who were interviewed, also shared the same sentiments. At present, the police station is experiencing vehicle shortages; STU officers have to share the vehicles. However, the station was provided with cars in the previous financial years, but, because of poor infrastructure, and long distances, most of the cars were damaged during normal police work. Communication by telephone with the police is a significant problem, because there is only one telephone line in the CSC, and the two-way radios from the satellite police stations are insufficient to cater for their needs.

The police response to crime is also viewed by the participants as a serious challenge: it was indicated by a number of officers that it was difficult for them to respond to all calls, or incident reports, because of a lack of resources, and inaccessibility to some of the rural communities, as well as the manpower, thereof. There are a number of contributing factors impeding effective responses to calls, such as shortage of vehicles, and poor communication infrastructure. It was indicated that, in some instances, phones rang for about ten minutes without any police officer answering the calls. Of the reported incidents, the police can usually only get to the crime scene one to three hours after they may have been reported. The poor taking of statements by the police also leaves much to be desired. In addition, the GPA is marked by: poor roads leading to rural areas surrounding the inner city; unmarked animals, as the stock owners do not seem to know the procedure for obtaining the identification branding mark; and, irregular counting of livestock, as the majority of livestock farmers are illiterate and innumerate.

Others added the following:

*"I do not think there is enough capacity to respond to the challenges. There are very few police officers within the Giyani SAPS STU, which makes it not capacitated enough to respond to the challenges of the day in so far as stock theft is concerned." **FGD 2** (Xikukwana local Faith-based organisation member).*

*"No we do not have the capacity to respond to the challenges as Giyani SAPS STU members are inadequate, the Satellite Unit as well does not have officials who are equipped to work stock theft. Another fact is we lack equipment and man power, such as vehicles, horses and bikes. This crime have to be challenged in the forest and the Giyani SAPS STU members are very few to be looking after or patrolling different grazing areas in 91 villages around Giyani. How on earth can 7 officials achieve that? The truth is we all want to work in the office and do office work rather to go to the bush, for example, during rainy season who can chose to work outside, wearing boots in a muddy area while patrolling. They are failing to introduce some sort of incentives to attract new recruits to this service." **FGD No. 1** (Local SAPS Officer)*

"We are losing our livestock, and particularly cattle and goats because of the repeated attacks by stock theft syndicates. My biggest concern is that the alleged thieves enjoy impunity and, if they fall into the hands of the police, they are released in no time." **FGD No. 3** (Xikukwana Village prominent livestock farmer).

"It should be said that the majority of farmers, especially emerging ones, are still reluctant to mark their livestock, because the markings make them easier to trace, if their animals cause accidents on national roads." **KII** (GDAFF official).

Police corruption

The high number of SAPS officers and employees still involved in corrupt, and fraudulent, incidents of crime, as well as the seriousness, thereof, is alarming, and unacceptable to the management of the SAPS. Not a day goes by without the media reporting on an incident, or incidents, of SAPS officers, reservists, or employees being arrested for involvement in criminal activities.

Mofokeng (2006: 34, citing Sherman, in Newham, 2002) is of the opinion that the task environment can be viewed as a second classic approach towards understanding and combating police corruption, besides the individual police member. This phenomenon tends to focus heavily on the environment in which police officers operate.

There are persuasive arguments presenting the view that this is the most important factor influencing a police officer's behaviour. Much of what has been written tends to examine the relationship between the nature of the environment within which police officers work, and the extent to which corruption occurs. Newburn (in Newham, 2002, cited in Mofokeng, 2006: 34) went on to identify a number of 'constant' environmental, causal factors that affect the development of corruption. These include: low direct managerial visibility of police actions; low public visibility of many police actions; peer group secrecy; low status in society, due to low pay; and, frequent contacts with criminals with significant resources, who will attempt to influence the discretion of the police officers.

One of the most insightful perspectives on how the 'task environment' could lead to corruption comes from Peter Manning and John Redlinger's (1991) paper, 'Invitational Edges' (cited by Mofokeng, 2006: 34). Manning and Redlinger explain how the policing of illegitimate markets, such as drug markets, positions police officers on the 'invitational edge of corruption': "The structural constraints of legally suppressed markets expose the agent to an accumulation of attempted influence. Because sellers want effective control over their markets, they must find ways to neutralise enforcement agencies. If they cannot avoid at least arrest and charge, and it is probable that eventually they cannot, and then they must attempt to gain favourable influence with agents," suggest Manning and Redlinger (1991, in Mofokeng, 2006: 35).

Collusion between police officers and drug syndicates has been recorded in South Africa. In some cases, police officers are paid by syndicates, or drug dealers, to use their policing powers to undermine competition from other syndicates: "They [drug syndicate members] give information to corrupt members of SANAB (South African Narcotics and Alcohol Bureau) at the airport about a

consignment coming in from Brazil or Hong Kong. After the arrest is made, the dealer pays to have the seized illicit consignment released to them,” observes Thulare (1999, in Mofokeng, 2006: 35).

However, the 'task environment' takes on a more insidious form in South Africa. Not only do the police accept bribes for 'turning a blind eye' to illegitimate markets, but many police officers will deliberately exploit their powers over those who work in these markets, according to Mofokeng (2006: 35). In addition, the situation is similar, in the rural areas, where the practice of giving gifts to the police, in exchange for services, is also relatively common. According to Harris (2001: 22, in Mofokeng, 2006: 36), if a farmer was helped to recover livestock stolen in a case of stock theft, he will often hand something over to the investigators, maybe a goat, or half a sheep: “Task environment factors pose particular difficulties for police managers who wish to combat police corruption. In some cases the decriminalisation of certain activities can reduce the extent of police corruption, as was the case in the United States during the early 20th century when the prohibition of alcohol was lifted,” concludes Mofokeng (2006: 36, quoting Sherman, 1983: 374).

There will always be corrupt cops in various police forces around the world. It is an unfortunate thing, because honest and efficient police officers are often lumped together with those who damage the reputation of the whole service. Corruption is a big problem, but there are more committed and good SAPS officers than incompetent and corrupt ones. Having said that, enforcement agencies need to win back the public's trust by deviating from such practices at all costs. Corruption needs to be eradicated, as a priority. The relevant training to address incorrect behaviour needs also to be assessed. Moves within the SAPS to address these problems include: the SAPS Integrity Framework (drafted in 2007); amendments to the disciplinary system; and, establishing a new unit to investigate police corruption (replacing the Anti-Corruption which was closed in 2007), as South African enforcement agencies seem to have more than their fair share of corruption (see below):

*“... When we call them (the SAPS/STU members) they do not respond immediately, if they come, they can only do so after 4 hours. In some instances we go to the police station only to be told they are no vehicles to attend to us. However, the close villages to the inner city are the most problematic, villages such as Makosha (ward 14), Mavalani (ward 20) and Siyandhani.” **FGD No. 2 (Makosha community leader).***

Allegations of SAPS and Department of Justice officials' involvement in stock theft

During the FGDs, it emerged that the police are alleged to be involved in stock theft in Giyani. As incidents of theft increase, some livestock farmers, officials at the DAFF in Giyani, as well as members of the public, said they knew those who are involved, but were afraid of victimisation. Some threatened to take the law into their own hands to protect their animals, as they did not know who to turn to, citing police involvement as very disturbing. The livestock farmers said they were under siege, and alleged that the police collude with criminals. One emerging farmer said he had lost all his cattle, saying 9 of his cows were stolen in January 1996, and no-one had been arrested. The majority of Giyani residents cite vigilantism as a solution to problems caused by stock theft.

"We are intending to take the law into our own hands as the police have failed to help. It should be emphasized that stock theft in the area is a thorny issue in our area. Since the police are not coming closer to the affected area while our animals are stolen, slaughtered and sold." **FGD No. 3** (Makosha prominent livestock farmer).

Another participant added that the business sector and the public seemed not to understand how the Giyani SAPS STU operate, and what they could do about it:

"The police do not always co-operate when contacted to deal with stock theft cases. I admit that there is a disconnection between the law and its enforcement. The laws are partially effective in the sense that not all stock owners are aware of stock theft legislation or any mechanism to support and assist them in this crisis situation especially in the rural areas." **FGD No. 2** (Makosha local Faith-based organisation leader).

It also emerged from the focus group discussions that there were wider societal attitudes, which allow fraud to fester, and be tolerated. There are those who do not view fraud as criminal behaviour, due to the high level of unemployment, and some sectors of the community remain passive to it. Some idolised criminals as the "Robin Hoods" of their communities, distributing resources from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots'. There are also some victims, who became complicit in a scam, but insisted they were not helping to facilitate the crime of fraud. Other victims admitted that it was their fault for falling for a scam, and for taking no action to report it. Indeed, the very word, 'scam', implies something slightly less serious than a crime.

This tolerance of the operations of fraud syndicates signals how collaboration was seen as ineffective by the FGDs:

"Livestock owners have more powers than they realise, particularly with the fact that livestock farming form part of their daily living, the majority of rural people still regard livestock as an important symbol of wealth. However, this is dented when the police criminality towards stock theft, it is instantly recognisable prevention of stock theft in Giyani remain a problem and a major problem is the Giyani SAPS STU is under staffed, they have inadequate equipment, the livestock farmers they do not take proper care of their stock, for example, brand making. The mentioned challenges serve as a catalyst for stock theft growth and they also form an inextricable part of stock theft prevalent in our area (GPA)." **KII** (DoJ: GMC official).

"So even before the debate about the police involvement to stock theft in Giyani, if they are involved at higher skill and this involvement is not carefully and accounted for, they will obviously be found guilty in the court of public opinion. The fact is it does seem clear that laws have indeed been broken by some of the SAPS members." **FGD No. 2** (Xikukwana local Faith-based organisation member).

Increased case workload, and the performance of the Giyani SAPS STU

During the FGDs, it emerged that the increased workload, due to a diversity of challenges, such as: staff shortages; a lack of skills; low morale; and, inadequate training, hamper the performance of the STU in adequately responding to incidents of stock theft within the GPA.

Participants were of the view that a variety of capacity challenges hampered the performance of the Giyani SAPS STU, and the coding of their responses showed that the following were being experienced as challenges in this unit:

- Huge workload;
- Poor investigation of stock theft cases;
- Recruitment, skills development, and advanced training;
- Lack of resources;
- Giyani SAPS STU members are not professionally trained and dedicated; and,
- The Giyani SAPS STU act in isolation (i.e., without other stakeholders) in approaching stock theft:

*“...Giyani SAPS STU is understaffed and its members feel as if their workloads are too heavy and their time is spread too thinly. The truth is few are educated in within that unit, and then their skills are questioned. The unit is not recruiting young or retains the experienced ex-officials on the service to improve the quality of their investigation on continuous basis.” **KII** (GDAFF official).*

*“...more resources need to be introduced within the unit; mentorship programmes by the commander should also be introduced at all costs. They should change the format they are currently using by introducing benefits, recruiting suitable candidates to lessen the pressure (workload) and pay them better.” **KII** (Giyani SAPS STU Officer).*

*“We all know that the risks are high while conducting this job and the reward are minimal, this leads to bribery and bungling of serious stock theft cases. Therefore, top notch investigators need to be lured and retained in the service by proving better working conditions and salaries; investigators need to take control and accountability for what happens with their investigations.” **FGD No. 1** (Local SAPS Officer).*

This views of participants revealed that there was a serious skills-and-experience deficit within the STU to enable it to adequately respond to fraud syndicates. From these views, it seems as if some of the detectives are simply not adequately-trained to perform certain functions, such as profiling of *Modus Operandi* (MO). The implications for the SAPS are that it is vital for the management to facilitate, and support, continuous in-service training, so as to alleviate the skills shortage. According to Mofokeng (2010: 15, citing Van Vuuren, 1997; Schnonteich, 2001; 2002; & Minnaar, 2008), the huge workload carried by detectives make any proper and thorough investigation impossible. In support of this view, Minnaar (2008, in Mofokeng, 2010: 115) explains that a “heavy caseload tends to mean that detectives take shortcuts or simply mark dockets as ‘undetected’, or ‘witness/es cannot be traced / found’, or ‘insufficient evidence available’ – all in an effort to reduce their caseloads.

Levels of communication and co-operation

The views, regarding the levels of *communication* and *co-operation* between the communities and the police, were sought, with the participants asked to elaborate on their responses. The majority of experiences detailed by respondents were viewed by the researcher as disturbing.

Judging by their responses, it seemed that communities were taking responsibility for their own protection, and becoming involved in CPFs, and a livestock forum in their communities aimed at searching for stolen animal, protecting the community, arresting thieves, and handing them over to the police, and/or recovering stolen animals. This, also, assists with police/community communication, as well as the arrangement of meetings to discuss stock theft problems, and the way forward. They also help the police to deal with stock theft. In addition, the police do not seem to be providing the required service against stock theft in the GPA:

*“The level in question is very low because the SAPS they get low income, without the proper tracing of certain information they receive bribes while knowing the truth and in some instances they are afraid of their lives as their names protection is temporary. They normal think of what can happen to them after conducting a major arrest.” **FGD No. 1** (Local SAPS Officer).*

Another concerned local SAPS officer stated that:

*“The Giyani SAPS STU give us the power to arrest thieves; give us equipments, such as guns, torches, as well as the means of communicating with the police, such as cellphones, engage with us in the newly formed livestock forum (i.e., MCLF) and offer training to our CPFs.” **FGD No. 1** (Local SAPS Officer):*

Furthermore, the following account attests to the claims above:

*“A police officer who followed a suspicious Bakkie to the bush, only to receive from police station level asking him about his whereabouts and is he intending to do, he was reminded that by the time he checked out he stated that he was going home, only meaning he is off duty and he must go straight home and stop interfering into other people’s business, the misusing of state vehicle was also cited as the reason he must go home and stop following the Bakkie in question.” **KII** (DoJ: GMC official).*

The second account is worth quoting more fully:

*“A concerned community member reported a stock theft case at Giyani police station post witnessing cows being slaughtered in his neighbourhood. He managed to go back to the community to alert others, he was advised to call the CSC for help first and he did likewise but in vain. They then decided to go to the scene, while approaching the scene in question gun shots were heard only to scare them, with that they called the local police station to notify them that the thieves are heavily armed too. They were asked this question: Is there anyone among you who owns cattle? Their answer was no; that is when they were told to go to sleep, and leave the thieves to commence with their illegal operations.” **KII** (DoJ: GMC official).*

Inadequate collaboration and partnership amongst stakeholders

When asked if the collaboration between the relevant stakeholders; namely: the Giyani SAPS, Giyani SAPS STU, Crime Prevention and Crime Intelligence, as well as various community structures, was adequate, in terms of combating stock theft in the GPA, the participants in all of the focus groups identified a wide range of problems which contribute to the problem of inadequate collaboration, and partnership. The most striking theme that emerged from most of the views expressed was that the key stakeholders in the response to this crime are acting in isolation. The major issues have been those of: enhancement of successful partnership between the-said parties; effective communication channels; engagement; the duration of investigations, and criminal proceedings, as well as the collaboration between the local SAPS and the general public.

It was clear, from their perceptions, that this challenge was crippling the performance of the Giyani SAPS STU; thus, negatively influencing how the public view the performance of the SAPS, in general. One focus group indicated that one of the reasons for a perceived lack of collaboration is that delimitations in the field of investigation and prosecution turned out to be very “unstable”, or, rather, specialisation, or better collaboration, between key stakeholders was not made an official prerequisite. For example, the police believe that they are capable of preventing stock theft, and do not want to involve the public in their efforts; thus, the community is also never informed of the crime situation, leading to a situation of the community structures not being involved in combating stock theft, and the

police being criticised for their inability to prevent the crime under investigation. To drive the point home, one participant had this to say:

*“... due to the lack of collaboration between the SAPS and community structures, the police, in this case the STU find it difficult to determine policing priorities and plans relating to the solving of stock theft in Giyani. CPFs do not engage with the STU as it was supposed to be, their relationship is ineffective, no partner is satisfied in this regard, who on earth will be satisfied if the other partner does not co-operate to achieve the desired goals while in a relationship? Through effective collaboration collective responsibility, regarding stock theft, will amount to every person acting as a member of the SAPS, the member of the community, or the livestock, just to name the three.” **KII** (GGM official).*

The literature review indicates that, to cement a true collaboration, all stakeholders must engage in true collaboration to identify, prioritise, and address problems facing a community. Research indicates that co-operation between the police, and some public authorities, is strictly regulated by the law. This is particularly true of co-operation with judicial bodies, and somewhat true of co-operation with attorneys-in-law, and communities. Co-operation with other public authorities, such as social centres, and non-governmental organisations, is not regulated strictly by law. Considering the fact that the police are, fundamentally, perceived as a force-based body, with the main task of pursuing perpetrators of crime, this seems somewhat understandable. Sadly, we can say that co-operation with local communities and social centres is more-or-less left to internal guidelines given to by management of the police, and is affected by the level of affection that these managers have for these two types of organisation (Gorenak, 2006: 416-424). From the analysis presented herein, it seems as if the co-ordination between relevant stakeholders is, indeed, not that adequate to wage war on stock theft in the GPA. It is the view of this researcher that the nature of the intelligence functions requires that the SAPS enter into partnerships with all relevant role-players, to complement their stretched human resources. While the SAPS have considerable opportunities for gathering and collecting information and intelligence, there are also large stores of data held by other public and private interests - all of which have a potential value for policing purposes. Working in partnership with others increases the number of potential sources of information. Indeed, there may be situations, in which a key stakeholder is the only possible source of a particular item of information. It would seem as if SAPS officers often feel more comfortable when they exchange information through personal, informal networks. It is often the case that informal contact is faster, and more efficient. However, there are inherent dangers in obtaining information without the safeguards, and checks-and-balances in the formal procedure, not least of which is the question of the admissibility of the information in court. An effective and properly functioning mechanism for exchanging information (especially within Giyani, and the neighbouring places) gives less cause for an investigator to “call a friend”, and allows that officer to act with confidence on the basis of information received. However, it is not always easy to establish partnerships with other role-players, as highlighted above. Sometimes, this is because there are legal constraints restricting the sharing of data (especially personal data), or because of concerns about one’s identity being disclosed by corrupt police officials.

For the purpose of ensuring the maximum sharing of intelligence information between role-players, critical information should be shared through collaboration, typically, firstly, within SAPS, as well as with a range of other organisations from the business sector, the general public, private security companies, to Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). These various relationships have different dynamics related to needs, responsibilities, and limitations on access to information. As such, the parameters of each formal partnership should be articulated in a formal partnership agreement.

STRATEGIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the data analysed, it became clear that stock theft is high in the GPA, and the current preventative measures against stock theft in the area under study, and elsewhere, are slow to give dividends; thus, there is a long way to go to eradicate it completely. This suggests that the strategies implemented so far have not been successful. These inefficiencies should be corrected, and some other strategies that could be employed include:

Improved resources, advanced training, and better education

It is of the utmost importance that Giyani SAPS STU personnel be consistently exposed to relevant and advanced training that will develop their knowledge of investigations, and analytical skills. Both the local SAPS, at police station level, and satellite units, as well as the-said unit, to a certain extent, should be encouraged to share, and co-ordinate, their intelligence-gathering and -analysis capabilities better, and establish a unified strategic view of the stock theft syndicates threat. In instances where there is a shortage of personnel at an STU, officers attached to the local police station, and its detectives service, who have successfully completed the course, must continue to support the STUs in their investigations – this arrangement will afford investigators at the local level an opportunity to become familiar with all aspects relating to the investigation of stock theft. STUs will, however, assist, where necessary. This would also ensure that the principle of “integrated approach” is maintained. Satellite police stations at identified areas should be established, and Giyani SAPS STU officers should investigate stock theft cases thoroughly, and arrest suspects. Experienced investigators should work closely with the novice ones, to bring them before the court, and they should be given more vehicles, and more training. Public educational awareness campaigns, and school programmes, should be introduced, as well. Furthermore, in an effort to take justice to the people, specialised stock theft courts should be set up in the GPA to add to the sole Magistrates’ Court in the area.

Strengthening the enforcement response and reporting techniques

The Giyani SAPS STU need to rise to the challenge of constraints on police resources, by developing innovative, partnership solutions with all relevant stakeholders. The Giyani SAPS STU should seek to

collate, and disseminate, good practices on the prevention, and disruption, of stock theft syndicates across the policing area. The policing area is too vast: 91 villages, in total, with only 7 officials to cater for them. Considering that most livestock are stolen at night, during the day on grazing land, and in the rainy/winter season by individuals and syndicates, who operate across Giyani as master minds, there exists the need to enable resources and personnel to meet the challenges of a rural area, such as: poor infrastructure, and lack of access to certain communities. The Giyani SAPS STU should be equipped with helicopters, horses, vehicles, quad bikes, and livestock owners and herd-boys should receive cellphones, for the former to do their work as quickly as possible, and for the later to report stock theft crimes quickly. This would be aimed at improving response times and efficiency, and reduce reporting costs on livestock farmers, community members, and other relevant parties. Thus, effective reporting mechanisms, and physical reporting at police stations and satellite units, should be encouraged.

Collaboration between key stakeholders

When asked whether the collaboration between key stakeholders, namely the Giyani SAPS STU, the Crime Prevention Unit members as attached to local police station, and community structures is adequate in the response to stock theft prevention across the surrounding communities in Giyani, the groups answered in the affirmative, with only some exceptions.

One of the Xikukwana Village rural FGDs had this to say:

*“The SAPS and the livestock farmers had extensive discussions on how we are going to manage, combat and prevent stock theft in GPA.” **FGD No. 2** (Xikukwana community member).*

This statement led to the following positive responses by other members of the FGD:

*“As a rural community, we have done very well in protecting and managing many stock thefts in our communities. We have created a high standard for ourself, and we want to maintain that, we have discussed the way forward. We have livestock to protect at all costs.” **FGD No. 2** (Xikukwana CPF leader).*

*“No, we only rely on CPF for further assistance as the Giyani SAPS STU is very far to reach.” **FDG No. 3** (Xikukwana prominent livestock farmer).*

However, the Makosha village rural FGD said otherwise:

“Some of the SAPS and STU members they normal take bribes. Having said that; the biggest challenge is bribes, even if there is a problem, they will not tell the other legitimate colleagues as they are looking for the benefit, for example, buying of meat with cheap prices. Unfortunately, this crime happens during the night, rainy seasons and windy days in the absence of community members and in

*some instances if a person can buy a cow illegal, they can provide such information but it is limited and does not help the much.” **FGD No. 2** (Makosha community member).*

This comment led to further discussions on the matter by other focus group members, who cautiously shared support for the view that the-said collaboration did not exist:

*“No, I have not seen a change thus far.” **FGD No. 2** (Makosha community leader).*

*“In principle they (STU) seem to be working, but we are not receiving the required help from them.” **FGD No. 3** (Makosha village prominent livestock farmer).*

In a positive conclusion, the KII with the Giyani SAPS STU Commander yielded the following comment:

*“I personally had a very productive operational meeting with the leadership of MCLF. We really wanted to reinforce the commitment between us and the livestock farmers on curbing stock theft across our communities. SAPS remain a very important stakeholder to the livestock farmers. We have adopted a zero tolerance towards stock theft.” **KII** (Giyani SAPS STU Commander).*

CONCLUSION

Overall, the purpose of this study was to gather data on, and determine, perceptions on stock theft prevention in the GPA, Limpopo Province; thus, identifying the challenges that face the Giyani SAPS STU while highlighting the contributive factors thereof, given its inadequate approach in dealing with stock theft in the surrounding areas. Livestock remains an absolute credit to Giyani families, villages across the policing areas, and the municipality, at large. However, the capacity of the police, livestock farmers, and community members, to respond to stock theft crime, was also put under severe scrutiny. Given the limitations of the research, the study was not aimed at developing a new model on stock theft prevention methods, but, instead, amongst others: it sought to provide an overview of recent trends in factors contributing to stock theft crime within the GPA. We should also note that though the study reveals contributing factors in this regard in the GPA, there are still some challenges owing to the unidentified contributing factors to be addressed, such as: inadequate resources (i.e., personnel; sophisticated equipment – horses, helicopters, etc.); negligence by livestock owners; and, the backlog of cases caused by poor investigation. The handling of stock theft cases remains a challenge.

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