



CREATING PARTNERSHIPS  
THAT REDUCE THE IMPACTS  
OF THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE  
TRADE ON PEOPLE,  
ELEPHANTS AND RHINOS



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

South Africa

# RESEARCH REPORT

Community and community practitioners' attitudes, perspectives and perceptions of protected areas, conservation, and community crime in the context of illegal wildlife trade.

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## **DISCLAIMER:**

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| ATM:      | Automatic Teller Machine                              |
| CDF:      | Community Development Forum                           |
| COVID-19: | Coronavirus Disease of 2019                           |
| CPF:      | Community Policing Forum                              |
| DEFF:     | Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries     |
| DFFE:     | Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment |
| EMI:      | Environmental Management Inspectorate                 |
| FPIC      | Free, Prior and Informed Consent                      |
| GLTFCA:   | Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area         |
| GLTP:     | Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park                      |
| IWT:      | Illegal Wildlife Trade                                |
| JCPS:     | Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster        |
| KNP:      | Kruger National Park                                  |
| NGO:      | Non-government organisation                           |
| NEMA:     | National Environmental Management Act                 |
| NEMBA:    | National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act    |
| NEMPPA:   | National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act |
| PA:       | Protected Area  |
| SANParks: | South African National Parks                          |
| SAPS:     | South African Police Service                          |
| SASSA:    | South African Social Security Agency                  |
| USAID     | United States Agency for International Development    |
| WWF       | World Wide Fund for Nature                            |

## Executive Summary

Several southern African countries have implemented community-focused conservation management approaches with varying levels of success. Community-based approaches are recognised as requiring long-term commitment and resources through genuine partnerships between local people and protected areas (PA). The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) South Africa Khetha programme, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), embarked on a research project to better understand the relationship between local people and PAs, test perceptions and find leverage points for enhancing neighbourly relations. A second line of inquiry looked into perceptions of safety and security of local communities living in the research area, within the context of high levels of illegal wildlife trade (IWT) taking place in the landscape.

The study took place over a two-year period between June 2018 and July 2020. Firmly rooted in qualitative social science methodology, the project commenced with desktop research on literature and methodologies relating to community conservation and community-centered research approaches. Before entering the field, the research consultant worked in close collaboration with the Khetha team on key concepts, research processes and desired outcomes. Several qualitative research methods were employed during the research project: a literature and methods review, qualitative interviews, group discussions and participant observation. Twenty-five (25) people from various sites in the Sabie River Node, in the Ehlanzeni District of the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, were interviewed, including women of all ages who tend to be under-represented in rural research samples. Standard research protocols of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were followed. The research project received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee in the Law Faculty of the University of Cape Town.

Research participants were found to be proud members of their community and spoke fondly about their neighbours and the community at large. There was an overwhelming sense that community life was governed by the principle of *ubuntu*. However, the interview data also showed that many community members expressed negative sentiments towards internal migrants and foreign nationals. A recurring theme in the interviews was the dire economic situation and lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. While some interview participants said they were able to put bread on the table, most said that they were living in impoverished conditions. In many instances a recipient of a governmental social grant, such as the child support grant or old age pension, would support several other family members. Both during the pilot study and the subsequent fieldwork phase, service delivery protests were taking place in the area. While we did not directly address the protest action during the interviewing process, the conversation ultimately would turn to community members expressing sentiments of abandonment and feeling left to their own devices by the South African government, PAs and the private sector. Of all the interviews conducted only three respondents (12% of the sample) thought that the relationship between local communities and PAs was good. The following issues affected relationships:

1. Jobs going to outsiders: Most respondents felt that community members were overlooked or not notified of recruitment drives in PAs. Jobs were going to outsiders who had no link to local communities.
2. Access to private reserves: Community members said it was difficult to gain access to PAs for the purposes of visiting family members who were employed in reserves or park.
3. Human-wildlife conflict and compensation schemes: Human-wildlife conflict was a recurring theme. There was a perception of unfairness, selectiveness and undue disparities of compensation schemes paid out by private game reserves versus Kruger National Park (KNP).
4. Access to ancestral sites and graves: Respondents stated they were unable to gain access to ancestral sites and graves inside the KNP as and when they desired.
5. No benefits from conservation.

Although we tried to stay clear from conversations about the act of rhino poaching per se, it was the most important talking point in our research sample with either poaching or anti-poaching mentioned in 77 separate contexts. This finding in itself is remarkable and points to how rhino poaching and anti-poaching impact many layers of community life. The most worrisome findings were reports of severe human rights violations by anti-poaching personnel. These violations did not only target suspected poachers but often the human rights and civil liberties of bystanders or family members of poaching suspects were infringed or violated. Conservation agencies should engage security actors in the landscape with regards to implementing a code of conduct that clearly delineates what activity is and is not permissible in terms of South Africa's overarching human rights framework provided by the South African Constitution.

Another remedial response would be to look at existing training manuals for rangers employed in the landscape with a view to updating these or supporting new ones that are human rights focused. Conservation agencies should regularly report and assess measures to implement human rights safeguards in project programming and ensure project partners follow strict human rights guidelines through, for example, the establishment of monitoring systems for security actors and a complaints system.

The final section of the report explores crime perceptions in local communities in the Khetha landscape. Crime perception studies are an excellent gauge to assess safety and security issues and responses in communities. An interesting observation is that crime perceptions at our research sites reflected actual rural crime situation in rural South Africa in 2019/2020.

The following thematic areas emerged during data collection:

1. Perceptions of prevalence of crime and criminality at community-level
2. The crime activities that affect local people
3. Who are the perpetrators?
4. Drivers of crime
5. Impact of crime
6. Responses to crime

Stock theft was considered the most serious crime concern. Heads of cattle, sheep, goats, and chicken were frequently stolen, slaughtered and sold to butcheries in neighbouring villages and towns. Unsurprising, nearly half of the research participants (48%) considered South Africa's "second pandemic" – gender-based violence – a serious threat to community safety. Drug use in the community was also a concern. High incidence of corruption in rural communities was also mentioned as a growing safety concern.

Foreign nationals and undocumented migrants were stigmatised and perceived to be responsible for most criminal activities. 'Outsiders', local people who recently moved to the village from other municipalities and regions of South Africa, were also portrayed as criminals. Several respondents acknowledged that their neighbours were involved in crime. Young men and boys were identified as thieves who were breaking into schools, homes, and businesses, and also stealing motor vehicles and livestock. Mirroring trends elsewhere in South Africa, perpetrators of gender-based violence were intimate partners, friends, or family of the survivor.

Respondents provided thought-provoking responses to our question around the structural and socio-economic drivers of the crimes committed at community level. Several research participants saw poverty, inequality, and unemployment as drivers of crime. Problematic alcohol and drug use were seen as drivers of gender-based violence and property crimes. Boredom and lack of opportunities would push young boys towards mischief and crime. A fascinating observation was that the recent construction of a tarred access road to one of the villages opened up a highway for thieves and gangsters.

Research respondents at several research sites mentioned that they had to travel to the closest town to report cases of serious crime at a police station that serviced several villages. There are small police satellite offices in a few of our research sites, but operations are limited. Beyond the logistical issue of getting to a police station, several respondents were distrustful of the South African Police Service (SAPS). There were several respondents who had given up on the police and were either taking the law into their own hands or referred criminal cases to traditional leaders. Around the world, it is widely accepted that the state does not have the capacity to meet the security needs of local communities. Consequently, other actor groups have filled the gap, including private security companies, neighbourhood watches and community policing. In the context of South Africa, the Department of Safety and Security published the 'Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines' in 1997.

Respondents expressed concern about anti-poaching responses levelled not only against rhino poaching suspects but at random community members. Several research participants had been caught up in roadblocks and house searches carried out by private anti-poaching units and rangers where the SAPS either were not present or the required search warrants were not shown to community members. Respondents spoke of human rights violations and unpermitted use of force, even torture, during interrogations of poaching suspects or their family members. It is recommended that conservation agencies support human rights training and outreach for rangers and security personnel working in PAs. Based on research findings and observations from other researchers and practitioners in the landscape, private and public security groupings can add another layer of insecurity to rural citizens if human rights and personal freedoms enshrined in South Africa's constitution are not respected. Our data collection found brilliant examples of restorative justice principles being implemented at community levels. As the world is moving towards new forms of security governance that rely on plural and nodal policing arrangements, it makes sense to support local initiatives and programmes.



# 1. Introduction

South Africa's signature national park, the KNP was formed as a much-needed wildlife sanctuary after large-scale hunting, disease, industrial development and agricultural expansion decimated rangelands and wildlife numbers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Communities who lived in the park and adjacent areas – and lived off the land for centuries – were evicted from the land, dispossessed and deprived of their livelihoods. PAs such as the KNP became symbols of colonial rule and white privilege. While the establishment of parks and reserves was a colonial form of governance, the post-apartheid era has seen little dismantling of the nationwide structural inequalities created under colonial rule and the apartheid regime. Since the end of the apartheid regime in 1994, several institutional and regulatory changes have been introduced to build a mutually beneficial relationship between local people and PAs. Although there have been small wins – such as the restitution of land or pay-outs to some communities, the establishment of community-run reserves and lodges, the creation of community-park forums to improve relations between peoples and parks, the appointment of community liaison officers and dedicated community programming – the relationship between communities and PAs remains tense with old tropes and stereotypes on both sides affecting cooperation and goodwill. Overall, there appears to have been limited integration of local communities into the benefit schemes offered by PAs, management or co-management, and ownership of PAs and wildlife. Moreover, the fight against rhino poaching and IWT has put local communities in the spotlight with some conservation officials referring to their neighbours as “criminalised communities”, “poaching villages” and “false economies” (Hübschle and Shearing 2018).

Some recurring themes in previous research studies in and adjacent to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP) since the rise of rhino poaching in the landscape, were community disenchantment, alienation and a limited sense of belonging of local people in the broader wildlife conservation landscape. Some communities living adjacent or in the GLTP reported increased levels of crime and social decay from lawlessness associated with poaching and wildlife trafficking networks (Hübschle 2016, Hübschle and Shearing 2018, Fenio 2014, Valoi 2017, Valoi and Oxpeckers Investigative Environmental Journalism 2018). Community members were concerned that the state was focusing its attention solely on IWT investigations while the safety and security concerns of local communities were treated as less important. There was also unhappiness that the state and conservators appeared to value the lives of wild animals more than black rural lives (Hübschle 2016, Hübschle 2017).

The following excerpt from a focus group discussion in the GLTP summarises the sentiments succinctly (Hübschle and Shearing 2018):

“The rhino has its own doctor, its own policeman, its own helicopter, its own land and there are rangers that protect it. We don't have these things. If the rhino goes extinct tomorrow, maybe we can get finally get these things.”

There appears to be a disconnect between the wants and needs of local people living

near PAs and the priorities of state and conservation actors in the landscape. WWF South Africa, through its Khetha programme, and partners are exploring alternative models and thinking that move beyond the traditional “fortress conservation” paradigm which seeks to conserve wildlife and their habitats through the often forceful exclusion of local people who have lived off the land set aside for wildlife conservation (Brockington 2002). Several southern African countries have implemented community-based conservation management approaches with varying levels of success. Community-based approaches are recognised as requiring long-term commitment and resources through genuine partnerships between local people and PAs. There is a need for innovative thinking to test assumptions and find leverage points for improving communication and relationships between local people and private and public conservation actors.

With this background in mind, the objective of the research project was to gain a better understanding of the relationship between local people and PAs and the prospects for enhancing neighbourly relations. A second line of inquiry looked into perceptions of safety and security of local communities living in the Sabie River Node in the Ehlanzeni District of the Mpumalanga Province in South Africa<sup>1</sup>. The ultimate aim is to support innovative partnerships and novel approaches within civil society, communities, private sector and government to improve relationships between people and PAs.

This report is subdivided into three sections:

Section 1: A brief background to the project, methodology, unpacking of the community concept and a brief literature review on the relationship between local communities and PAs.

Section 2: A report on beliefs, attitudes and perspectives that animate the relationships between communities and PAs, including key lessons for conservation organisations and programmes’ engagement with communities and PAs.

Section 3: A report on the link between wildlife crime and other crimes within communities, and how these influences each other, and why and how crime syndicates work to undermine strategies to include communities as partners in conservation programmes. Recommendations for a shared community-wildlife safety strategy and implementation plan are also included.

As the fieldwork aspects of the project were undertaken in the months leading up to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the methodology and community programming were adapted to the new realities of the post-COVID-19 world. The suggestions provided here are based on what was known and feasible at the time of writing the report in July 2020 while in the midst of the pandemic. It is advisable to revisit the recommendations once we have a clearer idea of the long-term impacts of the pandemic and the evolving realities of a post-pandemic world.

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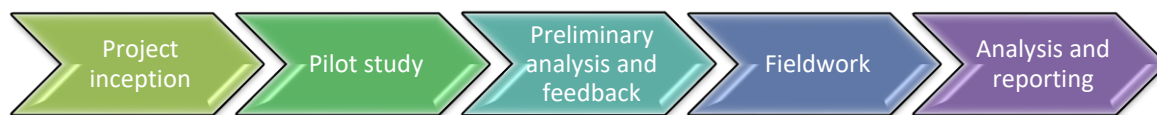
<sup>1</sup> The Khetha programme identified six geographical nodes as pilot sites where innovative models for improved community-protected area relations will be tested.

## 1.1 Methodology and methods

The methodology for this research project was designed by Dr Annette Hübschle.

### 1.1.1 Research design

This research project was firmly rooted in qualitative social science methodology and took place over a two-year period between June 2018 and July 2020. Fieldwork was completed less than three weeks before the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in South Africa in early March 2020. The impact of the pandemic on the research process was thus minimal as the active data collection had been completed. However, one of the primary purposes of the project was to trial and test research methodologies and methods for future use by team members of the Khetha programme. The conditions of research programming and community outreach have fundamentally changed since March 2020. While this section documents a somewhat outdated approach to research with and in communities in the pre-COVID-19 world, future research should accommodate the public health precautions in the times of and after the pandemic.



*Figure 1: Research Process*

The project commenced with desktop research on literature and methodologies relating to community conservation and community-centered research approaches. Before entering the field, the research consultant worked in close collaboration with the Khetha team on key concepts, research processes and desired outcomes. An inception workshop in November 2018 brought together community liaison officers, representatives from non-government organisations (NGOs) operating in the landscape and Khetha team members. Research sites, approaches and methods were discussed. The fieldwork phase consisted of a pilot study and the actual fieldwork. Both the pilot study and the fieldwork phase were followed by in-person feedback and consultations with the Khetha team, data analysis and reporting.

### 1.1.2 Methods

Several qualitative research methods were employed during the research project: a literature and methods review, qualitative interviews, group discussions and participant observation. Qualitative research engages with people's social and cultural constructions of their reality (Gray 2009), their social worlds and lived experiences. The analysis of specific cases in their temporal and spatial particularity (Flick 2014: 22) provides useful data for analysis and theory-building. Qualitative methods are well-suited for research in and with communities when researchers want to gauge attitudes, perceptions and feelings about research topics. The researcher's role is to gain a holistic overview of the context through a "process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding

(*Verstehen*), and of suspending or “bracketing” preconceptions about the topics under discussion” (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6). The researcher captures data “from the inside” which are often reviewed and verified with respondents. The main objective of qualitative research is to capture and understand people’s actions and how they situate and legitimise these actions.

With the assistance of a private game reserve, seven interviews were arranged with community liaison officers and community members in the employ of NGOs operating in the landscape to run a pilot study. The idea was to trial the research methodology, interviewing style and talking points (See Appendix A). The Community Projects Lead of the Khetha programme, joined the research project during the second fieldwork phase. The idea was that the research team would learn-by-doing. All community members were interviewed in face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Research interviews are professional conversations about social life, upon which knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 4). The approach taken was one of stepping back and relinquishing expert status (Simpson 2006: 126), listening to respondents’ life stories, insights and ascribed meanings of their relationship with PAs and safety and security concerns within the community. This type of responsive interview is useful in eliciting responses as it underscores the importance of building a relationship of trust between the interviewer and interviewee that leads to more give-and-take in conversation (Rubin and Rubin 2012: 37). Great care was taken to provide an interview setting that was informal and relaxed; the questions were flexible, open-ended and evolved in response to what the interviewees have said, and new questions were designed to tap the experience and knowledge of each interviewee (Rubin and Rubin 2012: 37). In instances where the topic of conversation delved into sensitive subjects, the researchers erred on the side of caution when it came to asking follow-up questions or probing further (Flick 2014: 208). Due to the possibility of interviewer effects,<sup>2</sup> concerted efforts were made to avoid “prompting” respondents to produce an answer (Fielding and Thomas 2015: 250) and discouraging respondents to anticipate the response they thought the researchers were seeking. To minimise respondent effects (irreducible ambiguity of questions due to different backgrounds of the researchers and the researched), the researchers explained questions rather than ticking off items on a preconceived questionnaire (Burawoy 1998: 12). Research into sensitive issues tends to engender resistance amongst those interviewed due to feelings of shame, fear of reprisals and other consequences linked to continuity in work-based relationships. The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity in and beyond the field was crucial to obtaining data that delved beyond standard one-line responses.

While the private game reserve curated the list of the first round of interviewees (sample size n=7), Khetha’s Community Projects Lead, with the assistance of community officials from the Southern African Wildlife College, visited and identified research participants one week before the fieldwork. Thus, we employed purposive sampling to target specific

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<sup>2</sup> Personal attributes of the interviewer (such as gender, ethnicity or religion) or the interview schedule (order or form of questions)- so-called interview effects - can impact the interview.

persons of interest as a means of assisting with filling gaps in the data (Gray 2009: 152). This method enabled us to pick a diverse set of community members in terms of gender, age, job and geography. We specifically targeted women of all ages who tend to be under-represented in rural research samples. Eighteen community members were interviewed during the second round of interviews.

We followed standard research protocols of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity. The research project received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee in the Law Faculty of the University of Cape Town. Khetha's Community Projects Lead requested research permission from traditional authorities before the fieldwork phase. The research team paid a courtesy visit to the paramount chief, introduced the team and obtained final sign-off and permission to interview community members on the first day of fieldwork. We committed to provide feedback on research findings once the research is finalised. It will be important to do so once lockdown regulations have been lifted.

## 1.2 Conceptualising communities

Before the research project could commence it was important to define and conceptualise the meanings of "community" within the context of the research project, the Khetha programme, the landscape, and broader society. The 'community' concept has a problematic history in the context of colonial Africa and apartheid South Africa where white people were granted individual agency while black people were depicted as a collective: typically, as members of local communities. The label pigeonholed diverse and complex African societies into communal containers. The question of land was central to colonisation. To limit mobility within African society, communities were usually tied to specific locations and local (traditional) authorities. The state controlled access and use of land by local people through these local elites (Mamdani 1996). Due to the violent history and lasting legacy of forceful evictions and dispossession, many communities are made up of individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds, differing social strata and political affiliations, as well as different geographies.<sup>3</sup> Many local communities were seen as amorphous (i.e. loose structure or structureless) and heterogeneous in composition with individual community members championing different needs and aspirations.

The role and functions of traditional authorities remain somewhat contested in post-apartheid South Africa, as this system of indirect rule served both colonial and apartheid rule. Many colonial and apartheid collaborators were co-opted into the post-1994 dispensation and continue to play an important role in local governance systems in South Africa and other southern African countries. This comes with its own set of problems, some of which will be highlighted in later sections of this report. Suffice to mention here that women remain particularly marginalised in communities where (mostly male) traditional leaders apply customary law and control access to land, resources and benefit schemes. In contemporary South Africa, the government, legislators, and policymakers, as well as the development community have embraced the concept of community and

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<sup>3</sup>In many instances, the apartheid regime dumped black people who were evicted from cities, conservation areas or farms in existing black townships, homelands and rural settlements.

community participation. Williams (2006: 197) argues it was a sense of community and strategic mobilisation that brought about the end of the apartheid state. The common political cause no longer constitutes a rallying call for change but economic, crime and social issues are cause for grave concern. Many local communities have mobilised over the lack of service delivery, drug use, gang activities or unhappiness with government inertia and corruption. The South African constitution acknowledges communities as important external constituencies in governance matters. It envisages, for example, community participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of integrated development planning at the grassroots level. Community participation in governance matters is seen to legitimise laws and policies (ibid).

As a counterpoint to anomic notions of individual self-reliance and self-interest in pursuit of wealth, the de-growth and post-capitalist movements have also embraced the notion of 'community'. The thinking is that the future sustainability of the planet can only be achieved through sharing, a sense of 'community' and togetherness. The problem here is the assumption of a common cause and shared interests. The celebration of community is partially based on mythical conceptions of "small, integrated groups using locally evolved norms to manage resources sustainably and equitably" (Agrawal and Gibson 1999: 640). However, there are many influences, alliances, and interests at community level. Individuals and leaders associated with specific communities may not always act in the best interest of the community. Figure 2 provides a good conceptualisation of the community conservation conundrum.

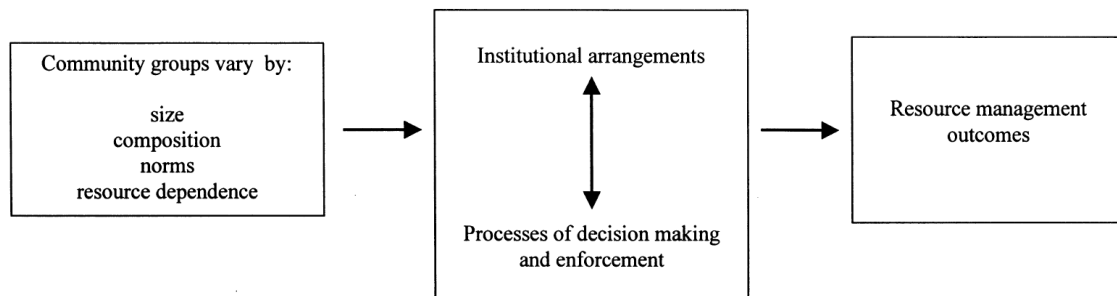


Figure 2: Agrawal and Gibson's alternative view of community and conservation.<sup>1</sup>

We acknowledge that the concept of 'community' is a controversial construct with questionable roots anchored in colonial race ideologies of yesteryear. It is employed here due to its wide application in current thinking on societal matters, responses to crime, conservation policies, and approaches.

We define community as a group of people who are located in a specific geography at a specific point in time (Kepe 1999). It is acknowledged that communities are not homogenous units; they are made up of individuals with diverse backgrounds, loyalties and aspirations.

### 1.2.1 Literature review: Communities and conservation in South Africa

This section provides a short history of protected area formation, wildlife policies and the role of local communities in conservation.

#### 1.2.1.1 A brief historical overview

During the process of colonisation, indigenous and local peoples lost property, land use, natural resource rights and access to cultural sites. Nature conservation and PAs management became tools of economic and social exclusion of local African peoples. The first colonial administrator in South Africa, Jan van Riebeeck decreed the first poaching law in 1657 after arriving at the Cape of Good Hope. Subsequent laws on wildlife protection delineated who was allowed to hunt and who was proscribed from doing so (Couzens 2003). Mimicking British anti-poaching laws, the colonial rulers asserted hunting rights for colonial settlers while local black people were excluded from hunting.<sup>4</sup> While the early wildlife protection measures served the colonial objectives of delineating who was allowed to hunt, later measures were driven by the desire to preserve wildlife for sports hunting. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, game reserves were designed to provide “free from all human interference, a sanctuary in which certain species of wildlife could prosper” (Carruthers 1993: 13). The early game reserves of what was known as Transvaal, for example, were located on land considered barren, disease-ridden and worthless to mining and agricultural interests. While the land devoted to game reserves was undesirable to other industries, national and provincial parks were established on sought-after real estate. Indigenous and local African property and hunting rights, and ancestral burial grounds (which are significant cultural sites) were not considered when reserves and parks were proclaimed. More than half of the area of the KNP is subject to land claims by local claimants in post-apartheid South Africa.

From the 1930s onwards the dominant policy of national parks and reserves was to preserve the “wilderness” without human habitation. Underpinning this endeavor was the mythical ideal of untamed wild Africa based on fictions of *terra nullius* (empty lands) prior to the European colonial arrivals. Colonial regulators stamped local people and their cultural heritage as intrusive and destructive and opted to preserve what was left of the ‘African Garden of Eden’ without local influences. To suit the ideal of an untouched, pristine wilderness, millennia of African history were wiped clear or hidden from sight (Meskell 2012: 117). With the advent of the formalised system of apartheid in 1948, African people experienced “double exclusion” from national parks (Cock and Fig 2000). They were denied equal visitor’s access to the parks and were systematically excluded from the governance of parks. Until the 1980s black visitors to the KNP had to arrange their own shelter and bring their own tents if they planned to stay at camps other than Skukuza (Dlamini 2020). Economic deprivation through apartheid further restricted access as few Africans had access to cars and dispensable income to afford vacations (Cock and Fig 2000). The apartheid regime promoted the notion that Afrikaners were the driving force behind the establishment of national parks such as the KNP. Coupled with the KNP being used for a variety of military purposes to support the apartheid regime,

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<sup>4</sup> Afrikaners were excluded from hunting rights in the British-controlled Natal and Cape.

including the training of soldiers, the covert supply to the rebel movement Renamo in Mozambique and the launch of a chemical weapons attack on Frelimo in 1992 (Cock 1993 cited in Cock and Fig 2000:3), many local people came to perceive parks as manifestations of apartheid. As a result, parks came to represent another mechanism of apartheid rule. Thus, the early colonial and apartheid history of nature conservation in South Africa is deeply intertwined with the colonial project and the systematic exploitation of African people, leading to land expropriation, the loss of hunting rights and many local people forced into exploitative labour relationships with colonial settlers. The connection of conservation, parks and wild animals with structural violence experienced by local people renders wildlife conservation a highly contentious issue, which requires more than a tacit acknowledgment that wrongs were committed. However, historian Jacob Dlamini warns of reductionist theories that reduce the relationship between the KNP and Africans as one of restriction only. He argues that the relationship is far more complex than Africans getting pigeonholed as either labourers or poachers (Dlamini 2020).

Commencing in the 1960s, the development of wildlife ranching contributed to the commodification and privatisation of wildlife in general; further entrenching property rights of the white elite while depriving black communities of the same. Wild animals were considered *res nullius* in South African common law, meaning that nobody owned them. Through legislative changes in 1991, game ranchers were granted ownership over wildlife and the right to derive income from consumptive and non-consumptive utilisation, such as the killing of wild animals for profit (Lindsey, Roulet, and Romañach 2007: 463). The rhino played an important role in the drive to privatise wildlife in South Africa. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 50 and 70 white rhinos remained in the then Hluhluwe-Umfolozzi Game Reserve<sup>5</sup> in KwaZulu-Natal, their populations significantly reduced through uncontrolled hunting. The white rhino had gone locally extinct elsewhere in South Africa. Through successful breeding and conservation programmes within the park, white rhino numbers increased by the 1960s. Rhino numbers began to exceed the carrying capacity of the park and conservators feared that an outbreak of disease could revoke the recovery of the white rhino. It was at this point that the Natal Parks Board<sup>6</sup> commenced “Operation Rhino”, which over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s saw more than 1200 white rhinos relocated from the Hluhluwe-Umfolozzi Game Reserve to the KNP, private game reserves, as well as zoos and safari parks abroad.

Nowadays, the total size of South African private rhino reserves stretches over an area of about two million hectares incorporating about 330 separate properties. According to a survey conducted by the Private Rhino Owner Association (PROA) in 2015, 33% of the national herd (about 6 200 animals) were kept on private land in South Africa<sup>7</sup>. A recent paper suggests that game ranchers in South Africa conserve 40% of the world’s white rhinos (Clements et al. 2020). Until the end of the apartheid regime in 1994, black South Africans were excluded from private land and wildlife ownership. Due to the slow pace of economic transformation in South Africa and other socio-economic factors, ownership

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<sup>5</sup> South Africa’s oldest proclaimed nature reserve is now known as the Hluhluwe-iMfolozzi Park.

<sup>6</sup> The former province of Natal is known as KwaZulu-Natal since the end of apartheid, and its parks authority is known as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the former Natal Parks Board.

<sup>7</sup> Personal communication with Pelham Jones, Private Rhino Owners Association, October 2016.



patterns have changed little: black communities look after 0,5% of black rhinos through a custodianship programme. Several requests were made by this author to the PROA and Wildlife Ranching South Africa for statistics on black ownership of rhinos and game reserves which were not forthcoming. Based on interviews with industry experts, these ownership patterns have not changed much since the end of apartheid and remain mostly in white hands. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform released a land audit in 2017 on the status of private land ownership in 2015. Individuals owned close to 30% of the total land mass of South Africa. The audit found that 72% of farms and agricultural holdings owned by individuals were white-owned (compare with Table 1). Women owned 4.9 million hectares of farms and agricultural holdings (13 %), compared to the 71% owned by men. The rest is co-owned by people of different races or the gender of the owner could not be determined (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform 2017).

*Table 1: Ownership of farms and agricultural holdings by race in South African 2015<sup>1</sup>*

| RACE                  | LAND (HECTARES)   | SHARE OF FARMS AND AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS OWNED BY INDIVIDUALS | SHARE OF TOTAL SA LAND |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---|------------------------|
| White                 | 26,663,144        | 72%   | 22%                    |
| African               | 1,314,873         | 4%  | 1%                     |
| Coloured              | 5,371,383         | 14%   | 4%                     |
| Indian                | 2,031,790         | 5%  | 2%                     |
| Co-owned <sup>8</sup> | 425,537           | 1%  | 0.3%                   |
| Other <sup>9</sup>    | 1,271,562         | 3%  | 1%                     |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>37,078,289</b> | <b>100%</b>   | <b>30%</b>             |

### *1.2.2.2 Institutional innovations*

The apartheid regime came to an end in 1994. While apartheid institutions have largely been dismantled, the old approach to conservation (fortress conservation) continues to permeate conservation practices and PAs management. The main objective behind the post-apartheid environmental framework legislation was to develop a human-centered approach to conservation. However, so-called “command and control” methods<sup>10</sup> are still the primary mechanism for enforcing compliance with wildlife laws (Kidd 2002). PAs which were created by forcefully evicting local people, remain intact. In fact, the rise of

<sup>8</sup> Co-owned land is owned by people of different races.

<sup>9</sup> The department said “other” meant the race of the owner could not be identified “due to incomplete or incorrect information or where information was not available”.

<sup>10</sup> The “command and control” mechanism prescribes the legal requirement and then ensures the compliance through an array of enforcement mechanisms.

transfrontier conservation led to the proactive expansion of cross-border conservation areas and the partial resettlement of resident communities to areas outside the PAs across southern Africa. Moreover, state and privately controlled buffer-zones were created between local communities and parks with the stated objective of wildlife protection. The following section provides a snapshot of selected legislative, institutional and policy changes since 1994 that had a bearing on local communities.

In the aftermath of the first free and fair elections in 1994, a new Constitution cleared the way for the transformation of institutional arrangements, policy frameworks and the apartheid bureaucracy. Environmental rights, sustainable development and use of natural resources became enshrined in the new Constitution. Thus, Section 24 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996: 6) reads:

*"24. Everyone has the right -*

*(a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and*

*(b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that -*

*(i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;*

*(ii) promote conservation; and*

*(iii) **secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development** (author's emphasis)."*

Thus, the balance between sustainable development and the protection of the environment is considered and guaranteed by the highest law of the land. In the immediate period following the end of apartheid, several significant events impacted the Department of Nature Conservation, which became known as the Department of Environmental Affairs, which morphed into the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) in 2019 and changed to the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in 2021. The new Constitution opened the floor for the clearing of a store of draconian apartheid laws and institutions relating to all sectors of public and private life. Concurrently, the wildlife ranching, safari and game industries experienced massive growth as the end of apartheid opened up previously untapped international markets of hunters and tourists, who boycotted the country previously. The new environmental affairs bureaucracy transformed with many former public servants from the old regime opting out by accepting retrenchment packages, early retirement or job opportunities in the private sector. While the apartheid regime endorsed the notion of sustainable use by creating incentives for white landowners, the new democratic regime developed a legislative framework, the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), which puts greater emphasis on sustainable use linked to community empowerment and social development as envisaged by the Constitution.

The Constitution entrenches the principle of co-operative governance across the national, provincial and local spheres. During the apartheid regime, the four provinces and the

homelands<sup>11</sup> could legislate their own nature conservation ordinances. On the eve of the first democratic elections, South Africa was sub-divided into nine provinces, each of which inherited apartheid era legislation. At the time there were 13 ordinances that dealt with wildlife conservation. Although some provinces enacted new environmental legislation since the end of apartheid, many pre-democratic laws remain on the provincial statute books (Dutschke 2016). Due to the constitutional provisions, the nine provinces have extensive power to legislate on matters affecting the environment. The provinces have exercised this power with varying degrees. Even though the national government has an oversight and coordination function, there is little conformity amongst the provinces, which creates confusion and legal uncertainty. This also applies to penalties which vary, in some cases quite considerably, depending on which piece of legislation is being scrutinized.

The *National Environmental Management Act* (NEMA) and its various Amendments; the *National Environmental Biodiversity Act* (NEMBA) and its respective Amendments; as well as the *National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act* (NEMPAA) create the framework legislation within which environmental protection, regulation and management operate. NEMA establishes the Environmental Management Inspectorate (EMI) to enforce the Act and any Specific Environmental Legislation. It contains a list of principles, which apply to all organs of the state and must be considered in the enforcement of environmental law. The first two principles provide that environmental management must place people and their needs at the forefront and serve their interests equitably. There are 18 other principles – only the ones relevant to communities are considered here:

*(c) Environmental Justice must not unfairly discriminate against any person, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged persons.*

*(d) Equitable access to environmental resources, benefits and services including special measures to ensure access to disadvantaged persons.*

*(e) The participation of all interested and affected parties in environmental governance must be promoted, and all people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills and capacity necessary for achieving equitable and effective participation and participation by vulnerable and disadvantaged persons must be ensured.*

*(g) Decisions must take into account the interests, needs and values of all interested and affected parties, and this includes recognising all forms of knowledge including traditional and ordinary knowledge.*

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<sup>11</sup> Also known as “bantustans”, homelands were independent administrative areas to which the majority of black South Africans were moved during the apartheid regime. The creation of bantustans was a key component of the racist apartheid policy of race segregation. Compare with South African History Online. “Homelands” <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands> (accessed on 21 July 2017)

*(h) Community wellbeing and empowerment must be promoted through environmental education, the raising of environmental awareness, the sharing of knowledge and experience and other appropriate means.*

*(o) The environment is held in public trust for the people. The beneficial use of environmental resources must serve the public interest and the environment must be protected as the people's common heritage.*<sup>12</sup>

The provisions comply with international best practices and are widely regarded as progressive and socially just. However, the focus has shifted from people-centered conservation to fortress conservation. As public enforcement and oversight bodies are chronically underfunded and sometimes mismanaged (in some provinces more than others and also depending on the body),<sup>13</sup> some of the enforcement functions in NEMA can and have been delegated to private parties. This can have negative effects on oversight and accountability (Dutschke 2016), which is particularly concerning in the current environment of increasing employment of paramilitary and military strategies, tactics and military-trained staff in the broader conservation sector. NEMBA, through the Threatened and Protected Species regulations, specifies prohibited activities in relation to listed species which include consumptive use.

The NEMPAA<sup>14</sup> sets out what areas are protected and, by extension, who has the mandate to protect and enforce compliance within these areas. It also specifically provides for the continued existence of South African National Parks (SANParks) as the management and enforcement authority for national parks. Even though the Act provides for co-management agreements with local communities and landowners, these provisions have not been implemented to the extent it was hoped. Of further importance is that the NEMPAA makes provision for the sustainable utilisation of PAs for the benefit of people. Thus, natural resources should be accessible to local communities in PAs as long as the ecological character of the area is preserved.

While South African laws, especially the national framework legislation make extensive provision for and reference to the need to include communities, the stewardship programmes for communities have not been realised fully in practice. Essentially the legislation is progressive on paper, but the enforcement mechanisms are contradictory to the NEMA principles and over-emphasise the command and control approach (Kidd 2002: 24). The enforcement bodies and the implementation plans are also not adhering to the more inclusive conservation approaches mandated by the framework legislation and the Constitution. Meanwhile the judicial branches of government are not capacitated to oversee the framework legislation.

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<sup>12</sup> Republic of South Africa, National Environmental Act of 107. 1998. *Government Gazette*. <http://www.kruger2canyons.org/029%20-%20NEMA.pdf> (22 June 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with enforcement and conservation officials, 2016. Also compare with Rademeyer (2016).

<sup>14</sup> Republic of South Africa, National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act No. 57 of 2003.

Community empowerment and involvement are given due prominence in some recent policy documents and initiatives, including the *Strategy for the conservation and sustainable use of wild populations of southern white rhino Ceratotherium simum simum in South Africa*, the *National Biodiversity Economy Strategy*, the *Biodiversity Lab* and the *Rhino Lab*. Government officials from various line ministries, the Justice, Crime Prevention and Security (JCPS) cluster and national and provincial parks, as well as stakeholders from the private sector, conservation NGOs and academia participated in the Rhino Lab in August 2017. While traditional and political leaders attended the Rhino Lab on behalf of local communities, the interests and concerns of local communities were not adequately represented (Gonçalves 2017). The Lab developed 44 initiatives to deal with rhino poaching, of which community programming was a key component. Thea Carroll, a high-level ministerial official at the time, declared during a subsequent feedback session to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Environmental Affairs that communities were key stakeholders in rhino protection matters (Parliamentary Monitoring Group 2016).

Six key interventions are aimed at addressing the underlying concerns of communities (Molewa 2017):

- Improved governance via community facilitators to ensure an inclusive local governance model for communities to raise issues as well as a vehicle to conduct broad engagement with all stakeholders;
- Anonymous community participation that allows whistle-blowers to share information with conservation authorities;
- Enhanced community ranger model with career planning and roll-out plan;
- Assessment of existing economic community empowerment programmes for purposes of consolidation, catalyse new programmes and initiatives and for smart allocation of resources;
- Development and roll-out of a broader restorative justice programme with the SAPS and other partners; and
- Launch of a community empowerment plan and identification of champions.

Although these interventions and initiatives are a step in the right direction, more efforts need to be made to capture broad-based participation and buy-in from community members and not only from elite formations. Time will tell whether the six proposed interventions will move beyond the realms of negotiations in conference halls to implementation at grassroots level.

### *1.2.2.3 Enhancing community-park relations: Community park forums*

SANParks has instituted “community park forums” which are intended to improve interactions between the parks authority, neighbouring communities and other stakeholders adjacent to national parks (Purdon and Molewa 2017). While these forums have departed from the apartheid era’s focus on forging relationships with traditional leaders by encouraging the participation of civic groups and individuals in addition to traditional leaders, women and youths remain inadequately represented (Endangered Wildlife Trust 2016: 3-4). Undermining the legitimacy of the Kruger forums and goodwill of local people is the perception that Kruger officials appear to be renegeing on an

agreement reached in the early 1990s that job openings would be advertised in public places in forum areas. Most conservation jobs are perceived to be going to “outsiders”; in other words, successful applicants are perceived to not be drawn from local communities (Endangered Wildlife Trust 2016). Introduced in 2011, a 1% community levy on all reservations is dedicated to the upliftment of communities living near parks. The levy supports provision of infrastructure and related resources for education, youth development, health and other areas decided upon by community members. With more than 2.3 million people living near KNP alone by the end of 2016,<sup>15</sup> it is clear that the tourism levy and other initiatives such as the SANParks Corporate Social Investment (CSI)<sup>16</sup> are of limited impact as the funds are spread amongst many communities. In conjunction with other government departments, DFFE is in the process of implementing more than 100 community projects across the country. These projects are implemented under the Expanded Public Works Programme and fall under various themes such as ‘People and Parks’ and ‘Biodiversity Economies’.

While the South African government has made strides in talking the talk, implementation of socially just community programming has been slow due to both internal and external constraints. The legislative and policy prerogatives look great on paper, but more work needs to be done to change the incentive structures. As an example, the South African government statistics on the number of conservation crime prosecutions is used to indicate heightened conservation agency guardianship. A proactive approach would gauge high levels of voluntary compliance, which, according to Herbig (2008), would be a better indicator of success. The command-and-control approach also provides little incentive for local communities to protect the environment. Criminal measures and criminal sanctions are forms of punishment, yet they do not encourage positive action. Civil and administrative measures focus on compelling persons to cease the harmful activity and to take measures to stop, prevent, remediate, or mitigate the harm. Traditionally, environmental authorities have relied almost exclusively on the criminal measures to compel compliance with wildlife and marine law contexts. The command-and-control approach requires well-resourced and capacitated enforcement authorities to be effective because the control functions are time consuming and expensive. These mechanisms are also inflexible in that they do not allow discretion to tailor compliance to suit specific situations (Craigie 2009). The South African legislation provides for “Alternative Compliance Mechanisms”, which are less compelling when viewed in the context of the current rhino poaching crisis. Finally, it needs to be noted that a uniformed approach is taken to community programming and upliftment. The needs of black rural women and youths (especially young men) are not sufficiently acknowledged or addressed. Women constitute the most marginalised constituencies in many communities where patriarchal governance systems deny women land and other rights. Youth employment, meanwhile, needs to be prioritised. Often the only pathway available to young men in rural areas is through participation in illegal (wildlife) economies.

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15 Interview with Major General Johan Jooste, June 2017.

16 Kruger 2 Canyon. "SANParks Launches Community Benefit Project." 2 November 2012.

#### 1.2.2.4 A short note on the land question

Dealing with a 350-year old legacy of colonial land theft and dispossession is an on-going government project. The land question is closely linked to persistent poverty and structural inequality in South Africa. Broadly speaking, land reform has done little to change the agrarian structure substantially since 1994 (see earlier in this section). Around 9% of farmland has been transferred to black people through a combination of land restitution and redistribution. However, many of the “settled” restitution claims<sup>17</sup> have not been fully implemented (Cousins 2017). Women’s land rights were diminished especially in areas, which fell under customary or traditional authorities (Cousins 2016). The land issue has also implications for PAs. Local communities had also been evicted from PAs (see earlier section), which became sites of managed ‘wilderness’ reserved for wildlife and well-heeled tourists. Some communities were relocated to nearby villages and townships, others were moved to homelands. In 1994, the Restitution of Land Rights Act established the Land Claims Court (LCC) whose function was to adjudicate disputes related to apartheid forced removals via restitution, reparation, or repair. Another institutional development was the creation of Community Property Associations (CPAs). Originally designed to replace the ‘tribal authority’ system of the apartheid era, CPAs were also meant to democratise land ownership and community development. The objective was to establish accountable, transparent, and representative institutions. However, the Communal Land Act of 2004 undid these progressive moves, granting significant rights to ‘traditional authorities’ in land allocation and administration (Ntsebeza 2004).

Around 30 land claims dealt with land within national and provincial parks. Many communities were offered formal titles to the land with communities acting as co-managers (Meer and Schnurr 2013). The last forceful removal from the KNP, for example, involved the Makuleke people who had been living between the Levhubu and Limpopo rivers in the Pafuri area. Their communal land was incorporated into the KNP in 1969 (Carruthers 1995) and became subject to a successful land claim in post-apartheid South Africa. The 1998 settlement gave back the land to the community whilst maintaining its conservation status as a national park valid for 50 years. The title deed does not grant mining or prospecting rights or the use of the land for residential or agricultural purposes. However, the land could be used for conservation and ‘associated commercial purposes’ (Kepe, Wynberg, and Ellis 2005). Although heralded as a success story, the implementation of the settlement has not been a smooth process.

The following observation by Kepe and colleagues captures the essence of the often-difficult relationship between local communities and park authorities (Kepe et al, 2005 op cit., p.11):

*“Equal partnerships between local communities and National Parks become an elusive concept, because the relationship is at best unequal as the control of resources rests with National Parks officials. Those involved in programme development and implementation exercise considerable power over communities.”*

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<sup>17</sup> Ben Cousins estimates that around 15 000 restitution have not been fully implemented.

In 2002, the South African government released the Cabinet Memorandum for the Settlement of Restitution Claims on Protected Areas, World Heritage Sites and State Forests. The guiding principles for restitution agreements are as follows:

- *The land should remain a protected area in perpetuity;*
- *No residential resettlement should occur;*
- *No development or activity should take place except for activities that are compatible with the use of land for conservation.*<sup>18</sup>

The Memorandum provides for compensation to claimants when the physical integrity of the land claim should be maintained for biodiversity purposes. Thus, the “Makuleke conservation model” has since been replaced with the “equitable redress model” for negotiations between the KNP and claimant communities.

It is clear from the above that relationships between local communities and PAs are likely to remain complex. If government authorities and other stakeholders were to go the distance with regards to resolving the land issue and communicate restitution strategies clearly, there would be one less hurdle in establishing mutually beneficial relationships.

#### *1.2.2.5 Concluding observations*

Although this section barely scratched the surface of showing the long and often difficult history of conservation, PA formation and impacts for local people in South Africa, it is essential to note that many local people had a different experience of nature conservation than what is taught in standard conservation textbooks. For them, the establishment of PAs often meant loss, exclusion and marginalisation. As per Dlamini's stance (2020), black people were not victims of their destiny but learnt to live with different forms of deprivation and exclusion. As much as early conservationists tried to hide black peoples' heritage and right of belonging in the landscape, black people's presence should not be reduced to fulfilling the role of poachers or labourers in our imaginaries. There were many different individual and community experiences of conservation in the landscape. While there is limited literature on indigenous conservation systems, mentalities and practices, several research projects are in the making to capture black history in the landscape. This aim of this section was to set the scene for the following section. The relationship between local people and PAs has seen ups and downs. Understanding the complexities and path dependency of conservation in southern Africa may assist our bid to reconcile different conservation mentalities and practices and negotiate meaningful and future-orientated partnerships in the landscape.

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<sup>18</sup> Republic of South Africa, Cabinet Memorandum No. 5 for the Settlement of Restitution Claims on Protected Areas, World Heritage Sites and State Forests, 2002.



## 2. Beliefs, attitudes and perspectives that influence relationships between communities and protected areas

### 2.1 Introduction

This report provides feedback on the findings of fieldwork undertaken in several villages located on the western boundary of the southern section of KNP. The key objective was to test beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives that affect the relationships between local communities and PAs. As described in the previous section, this relationship has been complex, often difficult, and somewhat tempestuous. The research design and methods are discussed in Section One.

There were four key thematic areas that emerged during data analysis:

1. Basic information about local communities and their daily challenges;
2. The relationship between local communities and PAs;
3. The impact of rhino poaching and anti-poaching on community-PA relations; and
4. Desires and wishes of local communities.

Thematic area 3 was included in this report as the report on crime perceptions was aimed at exploring crimes other than rhino poaching. As will be shown, anti-poaching measures have and continue to affect community-PA relationships. The following sections unpack each of the thematic areas.

### 2.2. Basic information about local communities and their daily challenges

All research engagements started with the research team asking questions about the daily lives of community members. We wanted to find out more about who our research participants were, family and community allegiances.

#### 2.2.1 Sense of community allegiance, care and *ubuntu*, and the flipside

Most research participants were proud members of their community and spoke fondly about their neighbours and the community at large. There was an overwhelming sense that community life was governed by the principle of *ubuntu*. The concept of *ubuntu* is often translated as humanity towards one another or as "I am because we are" ("*umntu ngumntu ngabantu*"). The underlying philosophy of *ubuntu* is that a universal bond of sharing connects all of humanity (Makgoro 1998). Although poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunities for youth are affecting rural communities, a sense of *ubuntu* and caring for others was expressed in all interviews. One research respondent (R2C10) elaborated what *ubuntu* meant to community members:

*“Where people live with poverty most people support each other. Whatever happens they support each other, whether it’s crime, hunger, sending children to school, they support each other, they have unity and they assist each other.”*

The philosophy of *ubuntu* encourages equality and the distribution of wealth at community level. Many research participants shared how they were helping one another. They also spoke about being and growing “stronger together”. One community member (R1C1) explained how the Shangaan concept of *kuhumelela* (to prosper) was instrumentalised and several initiatives were underway to support youth development.<sup>19</sup> Childcare and early childhood development are undertaken by the women in the community, partially supporting the African adage “it takes a village to raise a child” (R1C4) but along gendered lines. Noteworthy was that, except for two young adults, all research respondents mentioned issues that were negatively affecting the good fortunes and future of children and youths. This included concerns about poverty impacting early childhood development, illiteracy, the quality of education in rural areas, teenage pregnancies and associated high school dropout rates, problematic alcohol and drug use, lack of opportunities and scholarships for tertiary education and limited skills development for youths who were interested in pursuing artisanal careers.

The spirit of *ubuntu* is also associated with care and good neighbourliness towards “outsiders” and newcomers to communities. However, the interview data shows that many community members expressed negative sentiments towards internal migrants and foreign nationals (Section 4 discusses the link between crime perceptions and xenophobia in more detail). “Outsiders” were associated with criminality and taking up (or “stealing”) jobs that, in the minds of those interviewed, should have gone to community members. There have been many explanations and sense-making exercises to understand the prevalent distrust of others and the high levels of xenophobia in South Africa beyond this specific research site. It has been argued that xenophobia is a pathology of post-apartheid South Africa where the notion of being “foreigner” is equated with victimhood where power differentials, identity and violence are reproduced (Harris 2002). According to the isolation thesis, South Africans were isolated from the international community during the apartheid period. Although white immigration was encouraged, black immigration was not sanctioned and thus extremely limited. The opening of the borders after the end of apartheid led to big inflows of documented and undocumented African (and Asian) migrants. Some argue that as the numbers of migrants increased so did intolerance of foreign nationals against the backdrop of unrequited economic dividends of democracy. Moreover, South Africans claim exceptionalism in that they do not see themselves as Africans and regard the remainder of Africa as warzones (Steenkamp 2009). The scapegoating thesis suggests that South Africans blame migrants for their economic misfortune. While democracy brought political freedom, the majority of black South Africans remain poor, landless, and structurally excluded from the economy. Foreign nationals are an easy target for their anger and frustration as migrants often display high levels of education, social mobility,

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<sup>19</sup> A community liaison officer relayed that the concept was also used for community outreach and development programming by a luxury lodge operating in the area.

and adaptability. Moreover, politicians and prominent South Africans have been scapegoating foreign nationals in order to detract from their own failings and lack of progress in bringing about economic transformation (Tella 2016). The bio-cultural thesis puts forth that xenophobia is triggered by biological and cultural differences between South Africans and foreigners. Language, dress, physical appearance, and other characteristics enable South Africans to easily spot foreigners and creates an “us versus them” narrative. Arguments have been made that, on the one hand, there is little assimilation by foreign nationals and, on the other hand, South Africans are not reaching out and embracing fellow Africans (Nyamnjoh 2010). A combination of the three hypotheses – South Africa’s apartheid isolation, post-apartheid socio-economic disparities, and the influx and distinguishable features of migrants – may assist in understanding xenophobia in the new South Africa. In the context of this study, there might be a real danger in the post-COVID-19 world of “us” (the community) further reifying the notion of the “other” in order to reinforce and strengthen the “us” (Steinberg 2018).

Beyond the xenophobic sentiments, community members also referred to “outsiders” who were South Africans but belonged to neighbouring villages and towns or further afield from elsewhere in South Africa. A study undertaken by Twine, Saphugu, and Moshe (2003) points to justified concerns that outsiders may care less about the environment and unsustainable natural resource use when this use does not happen in their own backyard. Twine and colleagues found that the harvesting of communal natural resources by outsiders – fuelwood, plants for traditional medicine and river sand for brick-making – was widespread and in the case of fuelwood a matter of grave concern. The Twine study showed that people from other towns and villages were responsible for the unsustainable harvesting of natural resources. In our study the unsustainable harvesting of fuelwood was mentioned by one community member (R2C22). Although the respondent referred to “they/them” he did not blame outsiders but was concerned about community members cutting down big healthy trees for firewood. However, research respondents blamed outsiders for livestock theft which will be discussed in more detail in the section on crime perceptions.

Overall community members felt held and cared for by their neighbours and community members, but clear lines were drawn between “us and them”.

### 2.2.2 Poverty and cow power

A recurring theme in the interviews was the dire economic situation and lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. While some interview participants said they were able to put bread on the table, most said that they were living in impoverished conditions. In many instances a recipient of a governmental social grant, such as the child support grant or old age pension, would support several other family members. Many research participants were small-scale farmers. They reported that drought and climate change were affecting their harvests and/or livestock. One respondent explained (R2C16):

*“It is not raining like it used to. Yes, we reap but it is not enough. We get very little to eat. We are struggling with water and we have cattle. It is fine, the cattle are eating a bit but until*

*around June-July when there is nothing. We have to use our money to buy food for our cattle. So you see: we are struggling here with food for our cattle.”*

We were told that donors from the private sector and NGOs assisted with sinking boreholes in several villages. Thieves made off with solar panels linked to a borehole in one village at the time of our visit. It was not known whether the solar panels would be replaced any time soon, leaving the community with no access to ground water.

The cultural and material significance of livestock especially cattle – “cow power” (Anderson 1993) – was a common thread in interviews. Cattle carry deep cultural significance (the practice of *lobola* during marriage negotiations), they are a commodity and they have also become the site of conflict between traditional and modern systems of market exchange (compare with Comaroff 1990). One community member highlighted a generational gap in how cattle power is perceived (R1C4):

*“But also on a community level, people are starting to have a problem and difficulties of choosing what is more important. Because back then, livestock was more important. It's changing drastically. Because a lot of in-fighting that we see now is like people want them [government] to build houses. Livestock owners are saying this land is reserved for livestock. And the debate went on, and a youngster was saying: I have money in the Capitec. An elderly person is saying my money is my livestock. So, there's a serious changing [sic], and what we're going to see here in the future is that people will have to sell their livestock because they won't have place to graze.”*

Overgrazing, recurring severe droughts made worse by climate change and water sparsity, stock theft, predation, as well as increasing urbanisation and changing land use patterns are serious threats affecting rural farmers. Given the close proximity to wildlife areas, there is high risk of the transmission of zoonotic diseases from wild animals to livestock, including foot-and-mouth disease and anthrax, as well as predation and crop-raiding. Although the ownership of cattle signifies wealth and money, rural farmers near the KNP are not allowed to sell or move livestock and livestock products if from a declared foot-and-mouth disease affected areas. The “red line” is a veterinary cordon to prevent the spread of foot-and-mouth disease and other diseases beyond the Greater Kruger.

Depredation affects the livelihood strategies of rural communities immensely (see next sub-section). Previous studies (see for example Andersson et al. 2013, Chaminuka, McCrindle, and Udo 2012) document that 40% of communal cattle farmers in the Greater Kruger landscape owned less than 5 heads of cattle. Losing one head of cattle to either depredation or disease thus constitutes a significant impact on household resources and investments. Research on the wildlife economy around the Greater Kruger shows that several public-private partnerships are underway to provide communal farmers with better access to markets and supply chains within the confines of the “red line” (Hübschle and Shearing 2021). Our research participants did not mention any assistance from the Department of Agriculture or the State Veterinary Services who have implemented livestock vaccination programming, dipping as well as regular livestock surveillance, prevention and control in the Greater Kruger.

### 2.2.3 Service delivery protests: The perceived absence of government

Both during the pilot study and the subsequent fieldwork phase, service delivery protests were taking place in the area. While we did not directly address the protest action during the interviewing process, the conversation ultimately would turn to community members expressing sentiments of abandonment and feeling left to their own devices by the South African government, PAs and the private sector.

When asked what the reasons were for the service delivery protests, the responses were varied and not only targeted at insufficient provision of public services to rural communities. It bears mentioning that interview respondents acknowledged that the private sector and NGOs were assisting in many instances where the state was missing in action (e.g. sinking of boreholes, building early childhood development care facilities, schools, etc.). While there has been little progress in terms of basic public service delivery by government at the research site, the protest actions are often triggered by an event that is perceived as unfair or unjust towards specific community members. The protests then snowball and can last anything between a few days up to a month. The protests often lead to closure of important access roads and gates to private game reserves, KNP, as well as towns and villages.

One community member (R2C23) explains how hiring practices of PAs led to massive service protests in 2019:

*"I remember last year there was a strike and the reason for the strike was simply that they [Protected Area Management] hire people from outside, from far not outside and they say why don't you hire us because we stay close to that game farm, you go and hire people from far."*

Someone else (R1C7) commented on how a service protest can morph into a more localised grievance:

*"They [Protected Areas] treat us as criminals and foreigners in our own land. Hence you see a lot of strikes. Because there is a big animosity between ... So, each and every opportunity that they get to get back at the conservation organisation, they use it. Well, there are different reasons and interests. So, service protest strikes, they start as a service protest, but along the way it will change its colours, and now it's going in the direction of a more ... Ja, there is a word ... disgruntle ... disgruntled members toward a particular organisation. So, like here, service protests can start for water, but in a few days, they are actually demanding things from [specific game reserves]. That actually you must address this, you must address that. Water. Local issues. The trigger is easy. We need water, you have dams. Private companies, you are there, quiet, you don't even come and help us here. That is even our land, you are supposed to come and help us with what we want from government. But you're there, you're quiet. That is the trigger."*

Interview partners knew that they had some aces up their sleeves in terms of their geographic location along access roads to PAs and they were willing to wager these to get their voices heard. One community member (R1C6) explained:

*"It's actually because the strategic entrances to [Protected Areas] are through the communities. And communities have learnt that if we get the conservation areas impacted, government might listen to us. That's the tactic that they are currently using to actually get down to business. That informs that communities are well aware of the influence that as a start you have, to government, policy making and other areas that could alleviate some of their challenges which they have on the ground. Communities are using that as a way to get government to listen."*

Going back to the previous section where we documented government assistance in terms of livestock vaccination and dipping programming, it would appear that there is a disconnect of what falls within the ambit of national, regional and municipal delivery of services and clear delineation between civic duties and responsibilities and NGO and private sector outreach and development programming. Due to dual governance structures (traditional authorities and national government) and the legacy of apartheid oppression which deprived black people of democratic citizenship and civil rights, there appears to be a dilution and understanding of civic rights and responsibilities at rural community levels. As an example, SANParks is a public conservation organisation and even though they do engage in some community programming and outreach, they cannot be held solely responsible for employment and poverty alleviation in the Greater Kruger landscape.

### 2.3 The relationship between local communities and PAs

Of all the interviews conducted only three respondents (12% of the sample) thought that the relationship between local communities and PAs was good. These three respondents were employed in PAs. Other respondents listed a number of grievances that could be addressed through better communication strategies by PAs, dealing with issues and complaints that fall within the ambit of PA responsibilities, and civic and democratic training. These grievances are:

1. **Jobs going to outsiders:** Most respondents felt that community members were overlooked or not notified of recruitment drives in PAs. Jobs were going to outsiders who had no link to local communities.
2. **Access to private reserves:** Community members said it was difficult to gain access to PAs for the purposes of visiting family members who were employed in reserves or park. One community member (C1R7) described the process as cumbersome as "applying for an American visa".
3. **Human-wildlife conflict and compensation schemes:** Human-wildlife conflict was a recurring theme. Respondents complained about livestock predation – lions, jackals and wild dogs were the main culprits – as well as crop raiding by elephants and monkeys. Special reference was made to elephants stealing fruit during marula season. Several respondents mentioned that they were scared to walk outside the villages for fear of being attacked by wild animals. With regards to cattle losses, community members have not been notified of the conditions and

payout rules of compensation schemes. There was a perception of unfairness, selectiveness and undue disparities of compensation schemes paid out by private game reserves versus KNP.

4. **Access to ancestral sites and graves:** Respondents stated they were unable to gain access to ancestral sites and graves inside the KNP as and when they desired. A KNP official explained that there was a strictly curated event once a year when local community members were accompanied to ancestral sites and graves and that more frequent visitation rights were not possible in light of human resource constraints.<sup>20</sup>
5. **No benefits from conservation:** A significant portion of research participants said that they were seeing no benefits from conservation. One respondent (R1C6) put it succinctly:

*"We are neighbours, and we need to understand the devastation that my other neighbour might have in terms of water crises, unemployment, socio-economic challenges that they might have, we need to be able to listen up and say, how can we solve these problems together?"*

In terms of benefit schemes, some community members were adamant that jobs to community members should not be regarded as a conservation benefit to communities. One community member (R2C10) said that there was confusion about what benefits PAs are able to provide as opposed to what duties and services of government:

*"You know there is direct and direct benefit because if you can talk about employment as an indirect benefit. People cannot see that ... but then again if they can employ 20 people. Those who are unemployed will say they want employment. But then again they do not differentiate between the service of these protected areas and the service that should be delivered by the government."*

Several community members also mentioned that direct benefits (such as community levies) were paid to the traditional authorities who kept the levies for themselves. It may be useful for PAs and/or NGOs to discuss direct and indirect benefit schemes with community members.

6. **Private lodges do more for communities than KNP and government:** Some community members that participated in a group discussion felt that private reserves were doing more for local communities than KNP and the government. They spoke of bursaries and scholarship programmes, the construction of educational facilities (e.g. computer laboratories and early childhood development centres) and road resurfacing projects. These specific research participants were staying in a village that had become a safari destination for wealthy tourists who end their five-star wildlife safari with a trip to local African

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with KNP conservation official for a research project on the wildlife economy in 2019.

communities. A community liaison officer explained that several NGOs were channelling millions of Rands in donations to community projects in several communities in the Greater Kruger.

7. **“They care more about their animals than ours”**: Several respondents spoke about PAs caring more about their wild animals than the community’s domestic animals. This sentiment was not only in reference to human-wildlife conflict but also to local communities being the first line of contact and interrogation when high-value animals especially rhinos are poached in nearby reserves and parks.
8. **“When they see wild animals, they see meat”**: Due to the history of dispossession and structural exclusion, there were no community members in our sample that would consider visiting a game reserve or KNP for leisure. Beyond the obvious structural barriers of expensive entrance fees and overnight stays being unaffordable, respondents saw PAs as being frequented by wealthy mostly white tourists. While there is existing research on the importance of wildlife in African traditions, cultural rites and spirituality (Nefale 2002, Ramutsindela 2006, Hübschle 2017), several respondents made reference to the instrumental use of wildlife. Wildlife is meat on the table. It also constitutes a threat to people’s lives and livelihoods.
9. **Community projects are carried out on an ad hoc non-consultative basis and offer no long-term solutions**: Several research respondents commented on the randomness of community projects. They felt that outsiders decided on behalf of the community what their most pressing needs were. Several projects and initiatives were “white elephants” with little use to anyone in the community.

Community members also mentioned broader structural issues such as the loss of their ancestral land, total dispossession during apartheid evictions from PAs, conflict over land in communal areas and the huge inequalities between the haves and have-nots in South Africa. The land issue and the many land claims in the Greater Kruger are unlikely to be resolved in the short-term and likely to slow down further in the post-COVID-19 world. Political parties tend to canvass support around the land issue ahead of national and municipal elections. None of the conservation stakeholders in the landscape has a bearing on how soon the land issue will be resolved. However, it may be useful to communicate progress on the various land restitution processes to affected communities.

## 2.4 The impact of rhino poaching and anti-poaching on community-PA relations

Although we tried to stay clear from conversations about the act of rhino poaching per se, it was the most important talking point in our research sample with either poaching or anti-poaching mentioned in 77 separate contexts. This finding in itself is remarkable and points to how rhino poaching and anti-poaching impact many layers of community life. As one part of the research project looked into the impact of crime on local



communities, we were presented with details on rhino poaching, poachers and the trafficking supply line. There were several noteworthy themes that emerged during the interviewing process:

1. **Community members as traitors:** Several respondents talked about feeling stigmatized as wildlife criminals and enemies of PAs. One respondent who was working in a PA said (R1C1):

*We live in shame. Even for us, we are working for these reserves. When we are outside, we are enemies. They look at you and they say this man is taking news in, news out. These are the people who are really trying to protect these animals.*

2. **“Mind your own business”:** A recurring theme was that poachers were powerful and influential in communities. Although those interviewed for the purposes of this project did not agree with the practice of rhino poaching, respondents said that they were afraid to report suspicious activities to the authorities. One respondent brought in the notion of *ubuntu* (R1C2):

*“You think that what if I make this accusation and what if I'm wrong? But what if I'm right? What if I go to the police and I get killed? So, there is always that thing in the communities, sometimes, mind your business, I'll mind my business but let's be united as a community. You do you, I'll do me.”*

Another community member (R1C1) who was employed in a private reserve said:

*They always take racism, using racism like to protect themselves. Because they are saying, “you guys, you are on the side of the whites.” No, we are not on the side of the whites. We are protecting nature. So, they take like if you don't allow them to poach, if you talk against the poaching, then you are on the side of the whites. No, we are protecting nature, that is what we are doing, and it helps you.*

3. **Community members reign in poachers and neighbours who provide support services to poachers:** Respondents said that the poachers were well-known in communities but were protected by family members who saw their status lifted through rhino horn profits. It was mentioned that people were asked at community meetings not to provide accommodation and other support services to poachers en route to PAs.

4. **Human rights abuses during anti-poaching operations:** Several research participants spoke about human rights abuses and unethical conduct of rangers, private anti-poaching personnel and law enforcement officers. For example, respondents recounted how a suspected poacher was beaten up and tortured in the village by rangers from a private reserve. Another respondent spoke of a suspected poacher who was beaten up by local police officials and had several ribs broken. According to the community member, this suspected poacher ended up suing the state and all charges against him were dropped. A respondent from a nearby village told us a similar story in 2019 (R1C4):

*“So, this guy, he was shot, he was caught and then his case didn't go further. Then he was caught again, so the police beat him up and somehow landed in hospital while he was still arrested. He sued the police for beating him up, and he got his money, and went poaching again.”*

Someone else (R1C3) spoke of a man who controls rangers on the “inside”. This person was very well-known in the village “because there are lots of people that were beaten by him”. One respondent (R2C16) said that mothers of suspected poachers would be beaten up if rangers could not find the son. Another research participant (R2C12) spoke of torture to extract information from suspected poachers:

*“Yes, and they just come and kick your door down, so people are now afraid because they know maybe if you are a guy, they do many things to you. And I even heard that if they find you, they tie your private parts with an elastic band.”*

There were also several mentions of private anti-poaching officers being involved in roadblocks and house searches without search warrants and other required legal documentation. A young woman (R2C12) recounted:

*“You won't like it; they will just go through your phone and while they are slapping you or they will take you with their car and drop you maybe in the bush.”*

One respondent (R1C2) said that it was normal procedure in game reserves for anti-poaching personnel to search staff quarters unannounced and that random polygraph tests were taken. Research participants also mentioned that there were “spies” (informers) in the community who were paid to pass on information on suspicious behaviour to anti-poaching units.

5. **“Poachers die”:** There was a perception of a high mortality rate of poachers among the interviewed. Many research respondents appeared to think that the heydays of rhino poaching were over. As an example, one respondent shared the following (R1C3):

*“There was this other time, if they catch you inside, they don't speak to you, they just kill you. What are you doing inside with the animals if you are not working there? Obviously, you are a thief, or you want rhino horn. No, if you go into [name of PA retracted] for a horn, they know there is a possibility that they're not coming out if they go inside.”*

While research with active and convicted poachers found low levels of competition between rhino poaching gangs in the early years of the poaching crisis (see Hübschle 2016), one respondent (R1C4) spoke about deadly encounters between rival poaching gangs in recent years:

*So, a lot of syndicates are now turning to locals because it's difficult. It started slowly. It started by this syndicate, this group of syndicates. When you hear that a poacher was*

*killed in the fence and sometimes you hear that a poacher was not killed by the anti-poaching unit, he was killed by another syndicate.*

There was also empathy with the family of fallen poachers. Once the poacher passes, the family is left destitute. There was no mention of rhino kingpins looking after family members of deceased poachers. In the early 2010s, there was talk in conservation circles that rhino kingpins were paying legal fees for arrested poachers and a life insurance policy of sorts to family members of poachers who lost their lives while on a work mission. While the former undertaking appears to be legitimate,<sup>21</sup> we have found no evidence that kingpins support family members of deceased poachers. While there may well be rhino kingpins that do so, it makes sense that they would provide legal support to their crew to minimise impact on their own reputation and prevent incrimination and the sharing of operational information.

## 2.5 Desires and wishes of local communities

Before ending our research interactions, we asked research participants about their desires and wishes for a better future and which actions would enhance the relationship between communities and PAs. The responses were varied often tying back to previous talking points.

1. Regular access to graves and cultural sites in PAs
2. Address human-wildlife conflict
3. Pay compensation for livestock killed by predation
4. Pay compensation for crops lost through crop-raiding wildlife
5. Individual land claimants need to be consulted before, during and after land restitution claims
6. Community members should be consulted on conservation matters
7. Shorten the response time to community complaints. This recommendation was targeted at PAs. The feeling was that communities had to respond and assist PAs immediately especially with regards to anti-poaching operations, but PAs would take time or not respond at all to community complaints.
8. Access to clean water
9. Access to tertiary institutions and bursaries
10. Skills training
11. Provide civic education to communities
12. Job creation
13. Local people should be given preference during recruitment drives
14. Economic development in rural areas. Several community members want shopping centres, banks and service stations in their villages<sup>22</sup>
15. Provide economic opportunities and upskilling to local people

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<sup>21</sup> There are several criminal lawyers who act on behalf on accused poaching suspects in the landscape.

<sup>22</sup> One respondent said it cost her R100 on a minibus taxi to travel to the closest town to do her monthly shopping.

16. Ownership of wild animals. It was suggested that community members would feel more part of conservation if they could be owners of wild animals (and by extension: owners of PAs)
17. More research on whether relationship between communities and PAs is improving. One respondent (R1C6) suggested an ongoing research project to document attitude change or lack thereof over time.

Many of the wishes fall into public services typically delivered by well-functioning governments. Others should have been addressed by the private sector as well as development and conservation NGOs working in the landscape. At the time of writing this report in August 2020 the outlook for economic recovery and rural development in the post-COVID-19 world is looking grim. Unemployment, poverty, and structural disparities are likely to escalate in the short-term. However, there are several points of intervention that are possible without major financial investments:

1. Negotiate and communicate community access to PAs
2. PAs should streamline policy and compensation schemes emanating from human-wildlife conflict
3. Provide upskilling and job opportunities to local community members
4. Be responsive to local community complaints and maintain good neighbourly relations

## 2.6 Key lessons for Conservation Agencies, Organisations and Programmes

The relationship between local communities and PAs is complex and difficult. There is a long history of dispossession, eviction, and systematic oppression. In addition, rural areas see less economic development than urban areas in South Africa. The dual governance system (traditional authorities and national government) has reinforced patriarchal governance systems with women remaining marginalised and excluded from developmental initiatives.

The most worrisome findings were the reports of severe human rights violations by anti-poaching personnel. These violations did not only target suspected poachers but often the human rights and civil liberties of innocent bystanders or family members of poaching suspects were infringed or violated. Conservation organisations should take this in a serious light as they often cooperate with several conservation stakeholders that were implicated by community members. It is recommended that conservation organisations engage security actors in the landscape with regards to implementing a code of conduct that clearly delineates what is and is not permissible in terms of an overarching human rights framework provided by the South African Constitution.<sup>23</sup> Another remedial response would be to look at existing training manuals for rangers employed in the landscape with a view to updating these or supporting the development

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<sup>23</sup> The International Rangers Federation is in the process of creating a code of conduct.

of new ones that are human rights focused. For example, the *Anti-poaching in and around Protected Areas: Training guidelines for field rangers* by Lotter et al. (2016) has been developed by security experts with no training or background in human rights. Human rights are covered briefly in the manual (less than one page). Interviews with trainers and rangers in the landscape indicate high levels of fear and suspicion of human rights training (Interviews 2018; 2019; 2020). It is recommended that conservation organisations regularly report and assess measures to implement human rights safeguards in project programming and ensure that partners follow strict human rights guidelines.

To safeguard human rights in conservation work, WWF recommends the establishment of a monitoring system for ecoguards; an effective complaint system; an instituted procedure by park management for the suspension of ecoguards against whom credible allegations are raised; independent investigations of allegations; remedies to victims; and disciplinary actions by the park management itself, including referral for criminal prosecution to safeguard human rights (WWF, 2020).

It is furthermore suggested that conservation organisations:

1. Brainstorm new projects and initiatives where appropriate with community stakeholders.
2. Undertake an audit of existing projects and programming that supports rangers and law enforcement in the landscape. Have human rights violations been reported?
3. Support the implementation of a code of conduct for security actors in the landscape (public, private and communal).
4. Support human rights training for rangers and anti-poaching personnel. The training should include a module on permissible use of force.
5. Support diversity and xenophobia awareness training in communities and PAs (could be tied to other training programming).
6. Support community-park forums and assist PAs with development of clear communication strategy with neighbouring communities.
7. Assist PAs to develop a protocol on human-wildlife conflict and equitable compensation schemes and assist with a clear communication strategy.
8. Include women and girls in programming.

## **4. The link between wildlife crime and other crimes within communities**

### 4.1 Introduction

The rationale for undertaking research on crime perceptions in local communities in the Khetha landscape was driven by community members explicitly asking for research on crime in rural communities as a counterpoint to the large volumes of research undertaken on wildlife trafficking. We asked research participants about their perceptions of safety and security, the crime types that impacted them most, what was known about the perpetrators and what measures were being implemented to deal with crime in communities. Due to the size of the sample (n=25), these findings are not generalisable but provide a bird's eye view of crime perceptions of selected community members in 2019/20 near KNP. As the following sections will show, the data and findings mirror national crime statistics in parts but also point to issues that might be specific to the area and the people interviewed.

The aim of this section is to show the perceived impact of other crimes at community level. Though community perceptions relating to rhino poaching and anti-poaching responses are discussed in Section Two, a few observations on rhino poaching have nevertheless been integrated in the relevant sub-sections.

The following thematic areas emerged from the collected data:

1. Perceptions of prevalence of crime and criminality at community-level
2. List of crime activities that affect local people
3. Who are the perpetrators?
4. Drivers of crime
5. Impact of crime
6. Responses to crime

This report is structured along these thematic areas and ends with recommendations on lessons learnt for rural safety strategies.

### 4.2 Perceptions of prevalence of crime and criminality at community level

#### 4.2.1 Don't dirty your own nest

Most research respondents commenced their observations on the prevalence of crime by stating that there was little to no crime in their own community. However, once asked about what crimes worried them in terms of their own personal safety and broader security concerns that were affecting the community, respondents would speak about specific crime types and differential prevalence levels. Several people said that in the

spirit of community and ubuntu (compare with section 2) people do not dirty their own nest. One community member (R1C7) provided an interesting anecdote:

*I have my car parked outside. I have been here for ten years driving different cars. Nothing has happened. I am a committee member. Oh, he drives a nice car. It means we are developing here. Even our own people are driving nice cars. Tomorrow I can ask [name of respondent] for a lift. If I am struggling, my wife or whoever is sick at home, I can go there and ask to be transported. So, if I should steal that car, I am also stealing from myself."*

A young woman (R1C2) explained:

*"The community is actually very closely knit. All this support and you would never steal from each other. Because you don't do it in your own nest, but you can go somewhere else and do criminal business. Honestly, yes. Our communities are like that. Everyone knows everyone. You'll find in other communities those community members that are found there that break into someone's home or someone's job. In most cases it's usually people from other communities."*

Although community members were concerned about crime, there was much finger-pointing at outsiders for committing crime. Some said that 'outsiders' were targeted by criminals. This includes foreign nationals who work or trade in communities and affluent (often white) people who were the owners of service stations and supermarkets.

### 4.3 Crime activities that affected research participants

When asked about which crimes affected local people most, the responses coalesced around very specific criminal acts that mirror crime concerns in other parts of rural South Africa (see Figure 3).

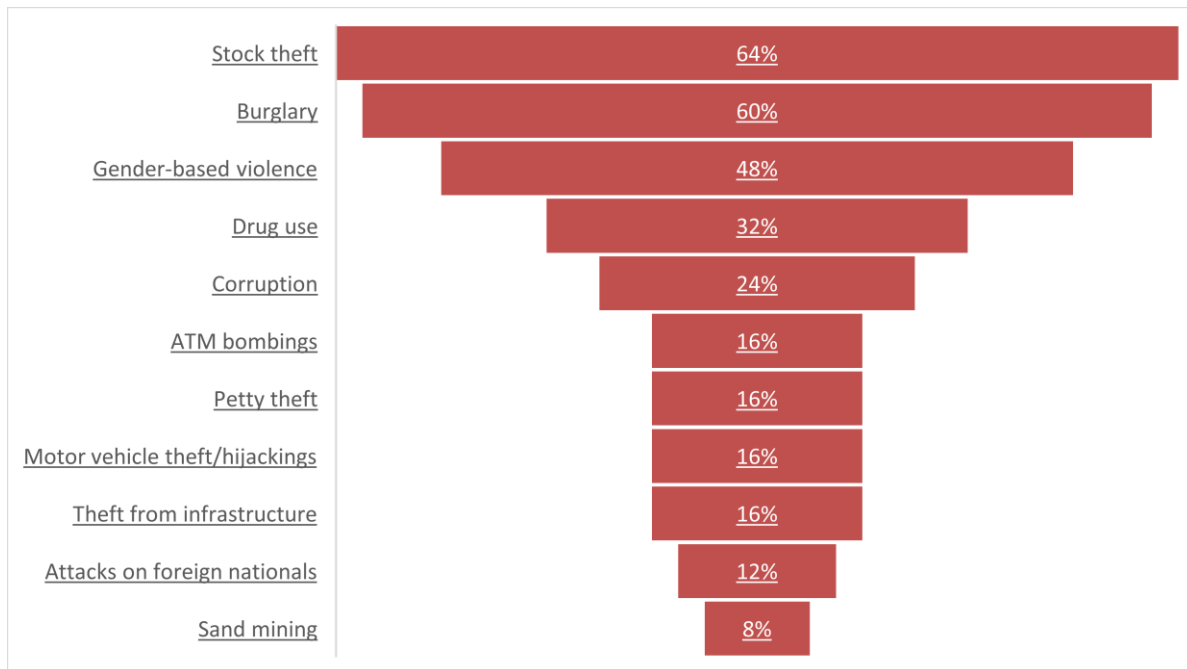


Figure 3: Perceptions of criminal activities affecting research participants.

Stock theft was considered the most serious crime concern among 64% of the research participants. Heads of cattle, sheep, goats, and chicken were frequently stolen, slaughtered and sold to butcheries in neighbouring villages and towns. Fifteen research participants (60%) had first-hand experience of residential or business burglary. A particular gripe was that criminals were breaking into schools and stealing computer equipment.

Unsurprisingly, nearly half of the research participants (48%) considered South Africa's "second pandemic" – gender-based violence – a serious threat to community safety. Research participants spoke of high levels of rape and domestic violence. Several municipalities neighbouring the KNP are amongst the worst rape hotspots in South Africa. More than 2,000 rapes were reported in Limpopo's Thohoyandou (highlighted in dark maroon in Figure 4) over a five-year period between 2015 and 2019. The small town in Limpopo Province had a population of approximately 70,000 people according to the 2011-census statistics (Saba 2019). The town of Acornhoek which is located close to several of our research sites was also a rape hotspot in 2019 with 86 reported rape cases - (highlighted in bright red in Figure 4).



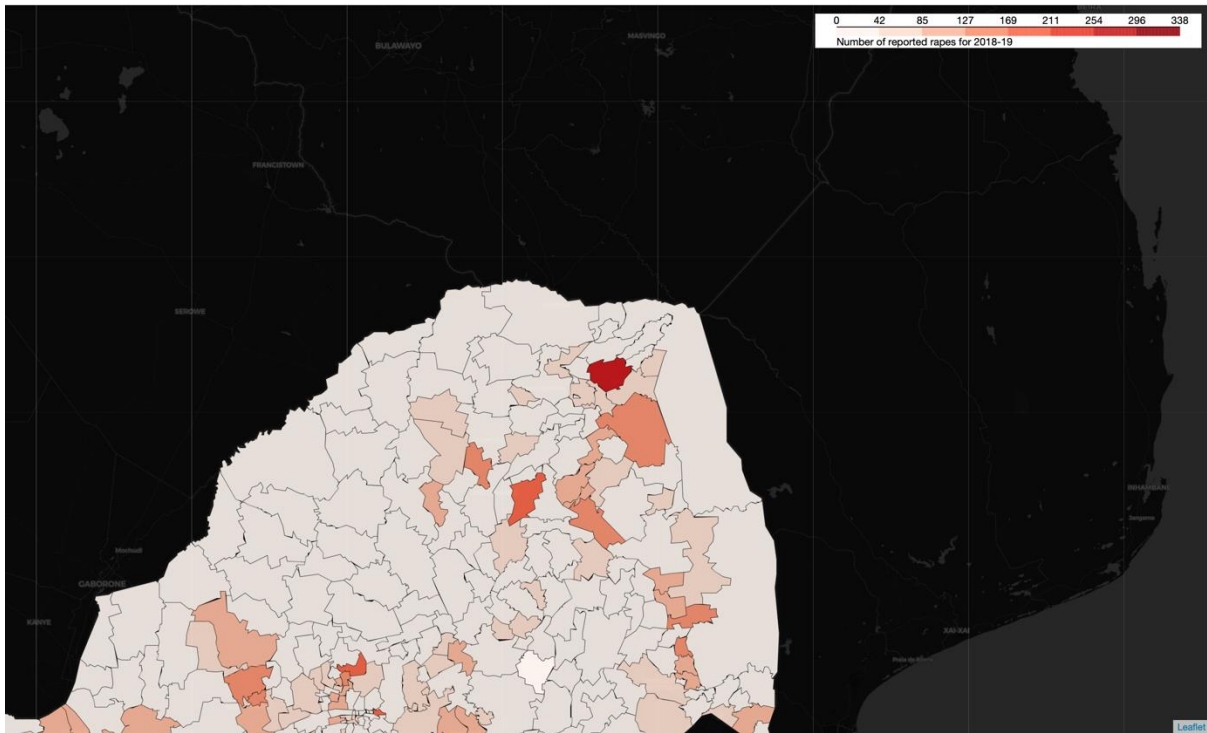


Figure 4: Rape hotspots in the northeastern regions of South Africa<sup>24</sup>

Drug use in the community was a concern for 32% of respondents. It would appear that there are a few *nyaope*<sup>25</sup> users in bigger villages and small towns (Confirmed with SAPS and drug use experts, 2020) but research respondents were more concerned about cannabis use. Private cannabis use is legal in South Africa as opposed to cannabis trafficking and trade which remain criminal activities.

Six research participants were concerned about the high incidence of corruption in rural communities. SAPS, traditional authorities, and the Department of Home Affairs were mentioned by name. With regards to police corruption, respondents talked about police officials as:

- being in cahoots with rhino poaching suspects
- 'losing' case dockets
- receiving bribes from known criminals

Reference was also made to the corruption and bribery of some traditional leaders. One respondent (R1C2) said:

*"They say that people who are in the leadership of the communities are either corrupt or [laughs] corrupt. They are just corrupt. So those are one of the issues that they want, because what they sometimes do is, we approach them for a project that will benefit the whole community, but they actually look at something that can benefit them individually and not the*

<sup>24</sup> Crime statistics 2018/2019 in South Africa (Saba 2019)

<sup>25</sup> Heroin derivative frequently smoked with cannabis.

*whole community. They even sometimes ask for bribes. I feel like that's so selfish of the community leaders. So those were one of the issues that needs to be addressed."*

It was surprising that four respondents mentioned Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) bombings as crime affecting the community. Local police officials confirmed that there had been several ATM bombings at supermarkets and service stations in the area. Noteworthy was that three respondents mentioned that they were concerned about theft, vandalism, and sabotage of important infrastructure such as cellphone substations, electricity substations and solar power farms. Since 2016, the destruction of essential infrastructure is a punishable offence in terms of Criminal Matters Amendment Act of 2015 (Manyathi-Jele 2016). It was also interesting that three research respondents mentioned attacks and threats against foreign nationals as a serious security concern. While Section Two deals with issues of 'othering' and xenophobia and a later subsection speaks to the stigmatization of foreign nationals as criminals, it is important to note that some community members are concerned about the good fortunes of foreign nationals at community-level. Two research respondents mentioned sand mining. It is interesting that sand mining and bushmeat hunting (mentioned by one person) were identified as the only biodiversity crimes other than rhino poaching during this research project. A possible explanation is that rhino poaching (see Section Two) has been drowning out other environmental crimes. One respondent said that there was so much talk about rhino poaching that people have stopped paying attention to other biodiversity crimes.

#### 4.3 Who are the perpetrators?

Ten respondents thought that foreign nationals and undocumented migrants were responsible for crime in their villages. Another eight respondents blamed 'outsiders' for criminal activities. 'Outsiders' are local people who have recently moved to the village from other municipalities and regions of South Africa. While there was a general fear and distrust of 'others', one respondent said that many of her neighbours were from Mozambique and without identity documents, it was difficult to get jobs.

However, several respondents also pointed to some of their own neighbours being involved in crime. Young men and boys were identified as thieves who were breaking into schools, homes, and businesses, and also stealing motor vehicles and livestock. Mirroring trends elsewhere in South Africa, perpetrators of gender-based violence were intimate partners, friends, or family of the survivor.

Respondents also said that rhino poachers were from their villages. One older man observed the following (R1C4):

*"And then in terms of crime itself, we know, the community knows who the poachers are. And also, the law of our country makes it difficult for an ordinary person to report the wildlife crime. Because, also to youngsters, it looks attractive. If you're committing a crime, you become richer very quickly. Even if you get arrested, the next day you are out."*

#### 4.4. Drivers of crime

What are the structural and socio-economic drivers of the crimes committed at community level? Respondents provided thought-provoking responses to this question. Several research participants saw poverty, inequality, and unemployment as drivers of crime. There were nuanced opinions on why poverty might lead people to commit crime. One community member (R2C9) remarked that “a hungry man is an angry man”. As an important side note here, the stigmatization and criminalisation of poverty is controversial and theories on the socio-economic causes of crime are seen in a critical light by criminologists and policing scholars (compare with Johnston and Shearing 2003, Merton 1938).

Problematic alcohol and drug use were seen as drivers of gender-based violence and property crimes. Research participants also spoke of high levels of unemployment especially amongst youth. Respondents mentioned that many young people had “Grade 12” but their parents were unable to afford tertiary education or an apprenticeship. Boredom and lack of opportunities would push young boys towards mischief and crime. A young woman (R2C9) expressed her disdain:

*“Most of people who are doing crime are lazy to work. Nothing for mahala, except life because it is free from God, but the other things is not free.”*

A fascinating observation was that the recent construction of a tarred access road to one of the villages opened up a highway for thieves and gangsters. One respondent remarked (R1C4):

*“The car hijacking: I think it started to be popular at a specific time. One of the things that we notice is the development that is happening, it comes with its own problems. The road access makes it easier for car theft to happen, because they can get away quickly. But back then when we didn't have good road infrastructure, a person will struggle to get away with the car. Now it's easy, you get on to the road, you go.”*

Another interesting observation was that South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) grants were perceived as drivers of crime. Community members said that armed robberies and break-ins were increasing at the time of the month when grants are paid out. It was also suggested that staff working at pay-points such as supermarkets, post offices and clothing shops were in cahoots with criminals advising them as to when the cash for pay-outs would be arriving.

With regards to rhino poaching, several respondents referred to the history of conservation, eviction and exclusion from PAs and the bad relationship between PAs and local communities as drivers of poaching.

## 4.5 Impact of crime

Respondents listed the following impacts of crime:

- **Children stay away from school:** This impact is with specific reference to property crimes including the theft of computer equipment at schools.
- **Inconvenience:** A spate of robberies and ATM bombing had led to the temporary closure of a local supermarket. This led to community members having to travel over 100 km to the next town where the closest supermarket was located.
- **No access to potable water:** Thieves stole solar panels that powered a borehole in a community.
- **Profits lost by small businesses:** Respondents mentioned that small businesses were severely impacted by theft and robberies. Rural businesspeople have no insurance cover, thus, any theft affected profits and viability of the business.
- **Women feel unsafe:** Several women said although rural life was safer than living in big cities, they felt unsafe walking on their own at night because of gender-based violence.
- **Women do not consume alcohol:** An older woman said that women in her village were not consuming alcohol to prevent domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

## 4.6 Responses to crime

Research respondents at several research sites mentioned that they had to travel to the closest town to report cases of serious crime at a police station that serviced several villages. There are small police satellite offices in a few of our research sites, but operations are limited. One research respondent said the following (R2C18):

*"Yeah, the police are just useless but no one is nearby, is far and as I said that you can go to the police station and find that there is no one, then you will be forced to go to [the closest town] and wait, you can wait for a week."*

Beyond the logistical issue of getting to SAPS, several respondents were distrustful of the police. One community member observed (R2C18):

*"No, the police are useless. They take their time. If you report the crime, they might tell you that they have no vehicle to come there. So, at night here someone steal the pump and left the pipe lying there, we tried to phone the police, but they didn't come. So, it's something like that, people used to take the law into their own hands because they are calling the police and the police doesn't take care of them. The police are useless they can kill it and destroy the evidence so there will be no proof."*

There were others who had given up on the police and were either taking the law into their own hands or referred criminal cases to traditional leaders. It is widely accepted that the state does not have the capacity to meet the security needs of local communities around the world. Other actor groups have filled the gap, including private security companies, neighbourhood watches and community policing. In the context of South

Africa, the Department of Safety and Security published the 'Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines' in 1997. Community policing is presented as a collaborative partnership-based approach to local level policing needs. The underlying logic was that policing needs could only be met through a smart partnership between the government structures, private sector participation and civil society organisations (Marks, Shearing, and Wood 2009). Unsurprising community policing forums (CPFs) have been set up at our research sites. Volunteers are invited to join and assist with security provision and crime prevention in communities. One respondent summed up key roles of CPFs (R2C22):

*"There is the CPF, we are partners with the community, they are the ones who are patrolling around here, they are the ones who monitor crime and if they see crime happening, they are allowed to do something about it or say that the crime is too big for them, okay when they report the matter and they fail, they open a case. So, they are the eyes of the police and they are keeping the relationship of the community, so without them we can't save the community and without them it is very difficult to manage the community."*

While there are guidelines on the role and functions of CPFs, these appear to have been 'adapted' to the local context. In our interviews, CPFs were portrayed as undertaking active policing and punishment instead of assisting the SAPS with crime prevention and community safety. One community member shared (R1C3):

*"But now because of the CPF people, if you are a victim and you know who the person is, they will take him, and they will beat him up."*

Many respondents spoke about the community sorting out crime themselves. Several examples of vigilante justice were mentioned. In one instance, it was suggested that mob justice led to the death of a suspected murderer. Corporal punishment administered by traditional authorities was mentioned as another form of retributive justice.

Several examples of restorative justice were also cited such as the family disciplining suspected criminals and returning stolen livestock or damages being paid to the family of a rape victim. Ndunas appear to be playing an important role in adjudicating small disputes and criminal cases. One research respondent provided an illustrative example (R1C3):

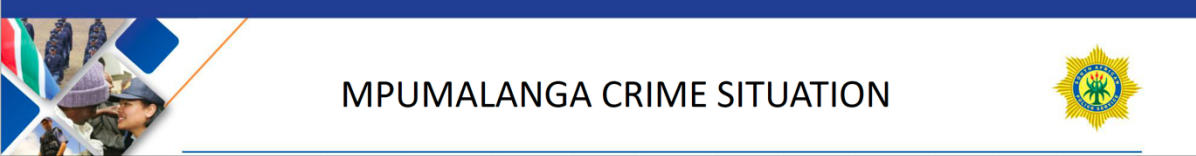
*"Okay, I can give you an example about my grandmother, but I don't think the issue was crime. It was some other issue where they had a disagreement with a neighbour of some sort. That person went to the CDF. If you go to the CDF and you can prove that there is someone who did this, this, this to me, they take you together, and you pick a date and you come. They hear both sides of your stories. They look at the information that they get from both parties, and then they choose if this one is wrong, or this one is not wrong. If you are found guilty, you pay to the other person. You pay money. Okay, so it's seen as justice. It's a just process. So, the police actually play a very small role."*

The respondent referred to the CDF which is an abbreviation for Community Development Forum. In this example, community members implemented an approach similar to the Zwelethemba-model of peacemaking (Shearing and Froestad 2010). The

model was developed in the township of Zwelethemba near Worcester in the Western Cape of South Africa. Like many other communities in apartheid South Africa, the people of Zwelethemba rendered their township ungovernable during the final years of apartheid. After South Africa's transition to democracy, the community no longer wanted ungovernability and sought out governance structures that could assist in matters such as policing, rubbish removal and the provision of basic infrastructure and services. The community came up with remedial strategies that involved them as key decision-makers and implementers. The Zwelethemba-model created a locally led and participatory set of arrangements for community security and policing, and accords poor communities a greater voice in their own governance (Hübschle and Shearing 2018). It would appear that similar governance arrangements are already implemented at our research sites near Kruger. Working with CDFs on Zwelethemba-type community security and justice models may hold the key to enhancing public safety and security in rural communities.

#### 4.6 Lessons learnt for rural safety strategies

Crime perception studies are an excellent gauge to assess safety and security issues and responses in communities. The South African crime statistics for 2019/20 were released in July 2020. An interesting observation is that crime perceptions at our research sites reflected actual rural crime issues quite accurately (compare with South African Police Service 2020). Incidents of robbery and sexual offences have been growing steadily in Mpumalanga (compare with Figure 5).



## MPUMALANGA CRIME SITUATION

| CRIME CATEGORY   | 2010/2011     | 2011/2012     | 2012/2013     | 2013/2014     | 2014/2015     | 2015/2016     | 2016/2017     | 2017/2018     | 2018/2019     | 2019/2020     | Case Diff  | % Change    |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>CONTACT CRIMES ( CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON)</b>       |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |            |             |
| Murder   | 717           | 726           | 693           | 806           | 831           | 859           | 954           | 922           | 996           | 1 046         | 50         | 5,0%        |
| Sexual Offences  | 4 345         | 3 955         | 4 065         | 3 797         | 3 474         | 3 331         | 3 216         | 3 198         | 3 470         | 3 513         | 43         | 1,2%        |
| Attempted murder   | 811           | 763           | 721           | 764           | 703           | 797           | 951           | 897           | 1 090         | 1 108         | 18         | 1,7%        |
| Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm  | 14 359        | 13 025        | 11 657        | 10 712        | 10 778        | 11 359        | 10 896        | 10 690        | 11 407        | 11 250        | -157       | -1,4%       |
| Common assault   | 10 251        | 9 187         | 8 211         | 7 467         | 7 510         | 7 649         | 7 712         | 7 641         | 8 204         | 8 423         | 219        | 2,7%        |
| Common robbery   | 3 514         | 3 324         | 3 147         | 2 977         | 2 934         | 2 746         | 2 950         | 2 541         | 2 627         | 2 610         | -17        | -0,6%       |
| Robbery with aggravating circumstances                   | 5 517         | 5 681         | 5 198         | 5 252         | 5 656         | 5 996         | 6 702         | 6 757         | 7 091         | 7 672         | 581        | 8,2%        |
| <b>Total Contact Crimes ( Crimes Against The Person)</b> | <b>39 514</b> | <b>36 661</b> | <b>33 692</b> | <b>31 775</b> | <b>31 886</b> | <b>32 737</b> | <b>33 381</b> | <b>32 646</b> | <b>34 885</b> | <b>35 622</b> | <b>737</b> | <b>2,1%</b> |
| <b>Total Sexual Offences</b>                             |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |            |             |
| Rape   | 3 528         | 3 272         | 3 486         | 3 251         | 3 000         | 2 844         | 2 708         | 2 712         | 2 903         | 2 971         | 68         | 2,3%        |
| Sexual Assault   | 217           | 251           | 241           | 243           | 221           | 244           | 264           | 282           | 384           | 371           | -13        | -3,4%       |
| Attempted Sexual Offences                                | 331           | 253           | 216           | 198           | 174           | 161           | 146           | 119           | 117           | 105           | -12        | -10,3%      |
| Contact Sexual Offences                                  | 269           | 179           | 122           | 105           | 79            | 82            | 98            | 85            | 66            | 66            | 0          | 0,0%        |
| <b>Total Sexual Offences</b>                             | <b>4 345</b>  | <b>3 955</b>  | <b>4 065</b>  | <b>3 797</b>  | <b>3 474</b>  | <b>3 331</b>  | <b>3 216</b>  | <b>3 198</b>  | <b>3 470</b>  | <b>3 513</b>  | <b>43</b>  | <b>1,2%</b> |
| <b>SOME SUBCATEGORIES OF AGGRAVATED ROBBERY</b>          |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |            |             |
| Carjacking   | 419           | 363           | 355           | 359           | 509           | 629           | 810           | 896           | 917           | 999           | 82         | 8,9%        |
| Robbery at residential premises                          | 1 045         | 1 189         | 1 123         | 1 118         | 1 112         | 1 080         | 1 138         | 1 125         | 1 069         | 1 184         | 115        | 10,8%       |
| Robbery at non-residential premises                      | 1 102         | 1 380         | 1 308         | 1 257         | 1 366         | 1 562         | 1 764         | 1 624         | 1 758         | 1 783         | 25         | 1,4%        |
| Robbery of cash in transit                               | 12            | 15            | 12            | 9             | 14            | 18            | 22            | 23            | 16            | 15            | -1         | -6,3%       |
| Bank robbery   | 3             | 1             | 2             | 2             | 2             | 1             | 0             | 0             | 0             | 0             | 0          | 0 Cases     |
| Truck hijacking  | 163           | 149           | 143           | 197           | 155           | 194           | 178           | 121           | 116           | 144           | 28         | 24,1%       |
| <b>CONTACT-RELATED CRIMES</b>                            |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |            |             |
| Arson  | 373           | 294           | 284           | 260           | 291           | 286           | 260           | 254           | 235           | 245           | 10         | 4,3%        |
| Malicious damage to property                             | 7 025         | 6 420         | 6 071         | 5 712         | 5 839         | 5 827         | 5 574         | 5 519         | 5 796         | 5 955         | 159        | 2,7%        |
| <b>Total Contact-Related Crimes</b>                      | <b>7 398</b>  | <b>6 714</b>  | <b>6 355</b>  | <b>5 972</b>  | <b>6 130</b>  | <b>6 113</b>  | <b>5 834</b>  | <b>5 773</b>  | <b>6 031</b>  | <b>6 200</b>  | <b>169</b> | <b>2,8%</b> |

Figure 5: Crime situation in Mpumalanga in 2019/20<sup>26</sup>

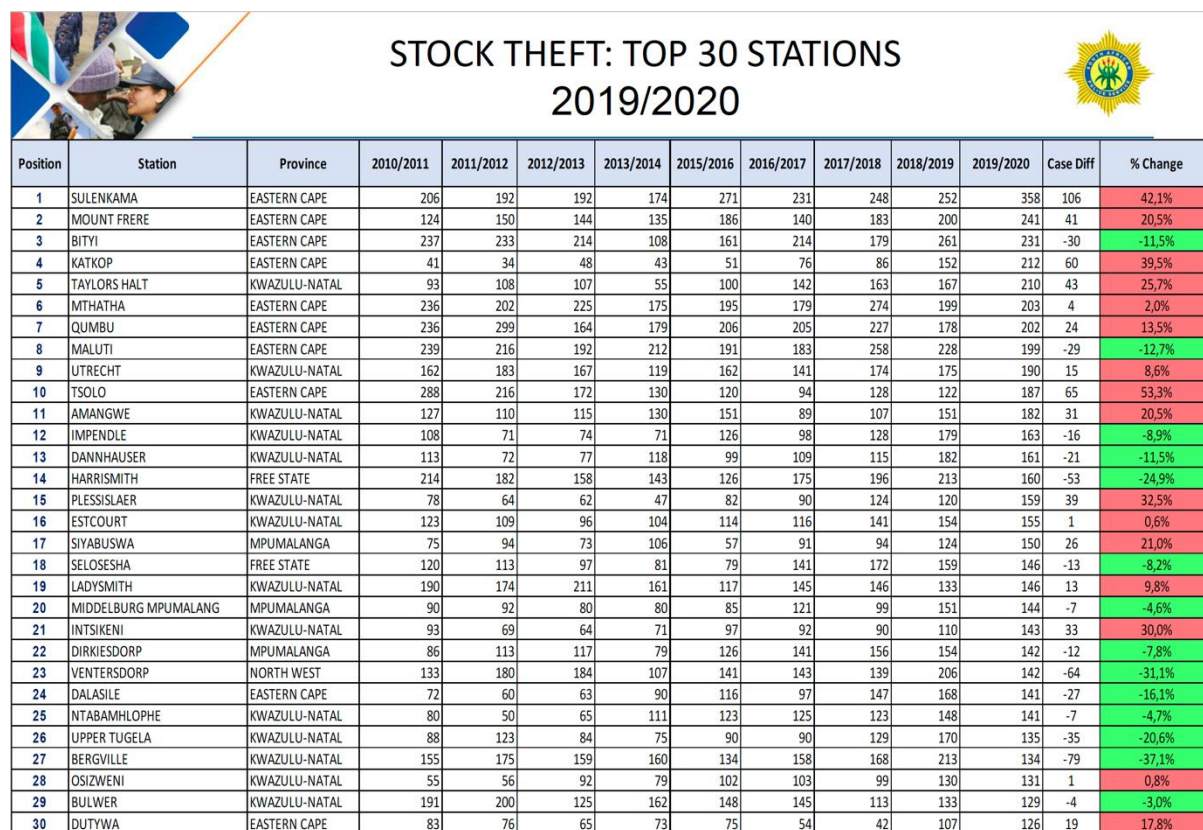
Outliers such as ATM bombings are very unusual in rural villages which might explain why several respondents considered it a serious security threat. Several police stations in Mpumalanga are listed among the Top 30 hotspots for livestock theft (compare with Figure 6).

As part of the research project, the Khetha programme seeks to assess the influence of rhino poaching and responses thereto on perceptions of community safety. We also explored whether rhino poaching was linked to other criminal markets. Section Two of the report spoke to general perceptions on rhino poaching and anti-poaching. While many respondents acknowledged that rhino poachers were embedded in local communities, no one mentioned heightened safety or security concerns because of the presence of rhino poachers. Research respondents did not support the practice of rhino poaching and mentioned that community members were actively discouraged from offering accommodation and other support services to out-of-town poachers.

Respondents were less than enthralled with anti-poaching responses levelled not only against rhino poaching suspects but at random community members. Several research participants had been caught up in roadblocks and house searches carried out by private anti-poaching units and rangers where the SAPS either were not present or the required search warrants were not shown to community members. Respondents spoke of human

<sup>26</sup> South African Police Service (2020)

rights violations and unpermitted use of force, including the use of force, even torture during interrogations of poaching suspects or their family members (compare with Section Two). Community members did not link rhino poachers to other criminal markets. However, several known poachers were known to run legal businesses (e.g. a car wash).



| Position | Station              | Province      | 2010/2011 | 2011/2012 | 2012/2013 | 2013/2014 | 2015/2016 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | Case Diff | % Change |
|----------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 1        | SULENKAMA            | EASTERN CAPE  | 206       | 192       | 192       | 174       | 271       | 231       | 248       | 252       | 358       | 106       | 42,1%    |
| 2        | MOUNT FRERE          | EASTERN CAPE  | 124       | 150       | 144       | 135       | 186       | 140       | 183       | 200       | 241       | 41        | 20,5%    |
| 3        | BITYI                | EASTERN CAPE  | 237       | 233       | 214       | 108       | 161       | 214       | 179       | 261       | 231       | -30       | -11,5%   |
| 4        | KATKOP               | EASTERN CAPE  | 41        | 34        | 48        | 43        | 51        | 76        | 86        | 152       | 212       | 60        | 39,5%    |
| 5        | TAYLORS HALT         | KWAZULU-NATAL | 93        | 108       | 107       | 55        | 100       | 142       | 163       | 167       | 210       | 43        | 25,7%    |
| 6        | MTHATHA              | EASTERN CAPE  | 236       | 202       | 225       | 175       | 195       | 179       | 274       | 199       | 203       | 4         | 2,0%     |
| 7        | QUMBU                | EASTERN CAPE  | 236       | 299       | 164       | 179       | 206       | 205       | 227       | 178       | 202       | 24        | 13,5%    |
| 8        | MALUTI               | EASTERN CAPE  | 239       | 216       | 192       | 212       | 191       | 183       | 258       | 228       | 199       | -29       | -12,7%   |
| 9        | UTRECHT              | KWAZULU-NATAL | 162       | 183       | 167       | 119       | 162       | 141       | 174       | 175       | 190       | 15        | 8,6%     |
| 10       | TSOLO                | EASTERN CAPE  | 288       | 216       | 172       | 130       | 120       | 94        | 128       | 122       | 187       | 65        | 53,3%    |
| 11       | AMANGWE              | KWAZULU-NATAL | 127       | 110       | 115       | 130       | 151       | 89        | 107       | 151       | 182       | 31        | 20,5%    |
| 12       | IMPENDLE             | KWAZULU-NATAL | 108       | 71        | 74        | 71        | 126       | 98        | 128       | 179       | 163       | -16       | -8,9%    |
| 13       | DANNHAUSER           | KWAZULU-NATAL | 113       | 72        | 77        | 118       | 99        | 109       | 115       | 182       | 161       | -21       | -11,5%   |
| 14       | HARRISMITH           | FREE STATE    | 214       | 182       | 158       | 143       | 126       | 175       | 196       | 213       | 160       | -53       | -24,9%   |
| 15       | PLESSLAER            | KWAZULU-NATAL | 78        | 64        | 62        | 47        | 82        | 90        | 124       | 120       | 159       | 39        | 32,5%    |
| 16       | ESTCOURT             | KWAZULU-NATAL | 123       | 109       | 96        | 104       | 114       | 116       | 141       | 154       | 155       | 1         | 0,6%     |
| 17       | SIYABUSWA            | MPUMALANGA    | 75        | 94        | 73        | 106       | 57        | 91        | 94        | 124       | 150       | 26        | 21,0%    |
| 18       | SELOSESHA            | FREE STATE    | 120       | 113       | 97        | 81        | 79        | 141       | 172       | 159       | 146       | -13       | -8,2%    |
| 19       | LADYSMITH            | KWAZULU-NATAL | 190       | 174       | 211       | 161       | 117       | 145       | 146       | 133       | 146       | 13        | 9,8%     |
| 20       | MIDDELBURG MPUMALANG | MPUMALANGA    | 90        | 92        | 80        | 80        | 85        | 121       | 99        | 151       | 144       | -7        | -4,6%    |
| 21       | INTSIKENI            | KWAZULU-NATAL | 93        | 69        | 64        | 71        | 97        | 92        | 90        | 110       | 143       | 33        | 30,0%    |
| 22       | DIRKIESDORP          | MPUMALANGA    | 86        | 113       | 117       | 79        | 126       | 141       | 156       | 154       | 142       | -12       | -7,8%    |
| 23       | VENTERSDORP          | NORTH WEST    | 133       | 180       | 184       | 107       | 141       | 143       | 139       | 206       | 142       | -64       | -31,1%   |
| 24       | DALASILE             | EASTERN CAPE  | 72        | 60        | 63        | 90        | 116       | 97        | 147       | 168       | 141       | -27       | -16,1%   |
| 25       | NTABAMHLOPHE         | KWAZULU-NATAL | 80        | 50        | 65        | 111       | 123       | 125       | 123       | 148       | 141       | -7        | -4,7%    |
| 26       | UPPER TUGELA         | KWAZULU-NATAL | 88        | 123       | 84        | 75        | 90        | 90        | 129       | 170       | 135       | -35       | -20,6%   |
| 27       | BERGVILLE            | KWAZULU-NATAL | 155       | 175       | 159       | 160       | 134       | 158       | 168       | 213       | 134       | -79       | -37,1%   |
| 28       | OSIZWENI             | KWAZULU-NATAL | 55        | 56        | 92        | 79        | 102       | 103       | 99        | 130       | 131       | 1         | 0,8%     |
| 29       | BULWER               | KWAZULU-NATAL | 191       | 200       | 125       | 162       | 148       | 145       | 113       | 133       | 129       | -4        | -3,0%    |
| 30       | DUTYWA               | EASTERN CAPE  | 83        | 76        | 65        | 73        | 75        | 54        | 42        | 107       | 126       | 19        | 17,8%    |

Figure 6: Top 30 Police stations dealing with Stock Theft in 2019/2020<sup>27</sup>

It is recommended that conservation organisations support human rights training and outreach for rangers and security personnel working in PAs. Based on research findings and observations from other researchers and practitioners in the landscape, private and public security groupings can add another layer of insecurity to rural citizens if human rights and personal freedoms enshrined in South Africa’s constitution are not respected (cross-reference with the recommendations to conservation organisations in Section Two).

Our data collection found brilliant examples of restorative justice principles being implemented at community levels. As the world is moving towards new forms of security governance that rely on plural and nodal policing arrangements, it makes sense to support local initiatives and programmes. The Khetha programme’s project, in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust to develop and pilot guidelines on restorative justice approaches to wildlife can learn from the restorative justice examples

<sup>27</sup> South African Police Service (2020)



being implemented in communities in the Khetha-landscape and should consider building restorative justice approaches in existing community structures.

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