Lack of community participation in the fight against stock theft in Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality, South Africa: What went wrong?

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ABSTRACT

The South African Police Services (SAPS) has a constitutional responsibility to prevent, combat, and investigate crime that would naturally occur within communities. It therefore stands to reason that, if the police are to fulfill this responsibility, community members should be involved. This paper examines the phenomenon of lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft in Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality, Mpumalanga Province. To achieve this objective, it was necessary to first determine the extent to which community in the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality is involved in the fight against stock theft. A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study with the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect data with the help of a digital recorder. The sample consisted of 22 participants selected through purposeful sampling, who included farmers, herdsmen, Community Police Forum members, and community leaders. A grounded data analysis approach was adopted in this study. Grounded grouping of meaning held by the participants in the setting were noticed. This involved decreasing the data to a practicable set of subjects to write into the final storyline (De Vos et al., 2005). Similar topics were clustered together and the authors operated with a single cluster of topics at intervals. The study found that the community in the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality is not involved in the fight against stock theft and that this could mainly be attributed to the poor relationship between the South African Police Service and the community.

Introduction

Community participation in crime prevention activities is increasingly gaining global dominance following high crime rates in many parts of the world engendered by the ineffectiveness of law enforcement. The involvement of communities in crime prevention is widely regarded as an ideal approach towards crime prevention and crime reduction. Community participation in crime prevention is grounded on the doctrine that traditional law enforcement cannot fight crime effectively without support from local communities who know their areas (Liebmann & Coulson, 2004). Both the level and nature of crime in South Africa and the changing landscape of South Africa’s communities are in a way forcing the police to seek more effective methods to deal with crime. Many urban communities are experiencing serious problems with illegal drugs, gang violence, murders, muggings, and burglaries. Suburban and rural communities have not escaped unscathed. Rural areas such as the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality is also experiencing increases in crime and disorder, especially the crime of stock theft in rural communities.

Statistics show that in South Africa, stock theft is increasingly becoming a challenge. This includes rural provinces such as Mpumalanga, Limpopo, KwaZulu Natal, Free State, and Eastern Cape. South Africa recorded 29 672 counts of stock theft in the 2018/2019 financial year. This is a 2.9% increase from the previous financial year (2017/2018), when 28 849 cases were recorded, which is a representation of a 7.2% increase. The 2019/2020 financial year saw a record of 28 418 cases of stock theft (South African
Police Services, 2020). Although there is a significant decrease in stock theft cases from the 2018/2019 to 2019/2020 financial years in the country, stock theft remains a concern in Mpumalanga. According to the SAPS, both Mpumalanga and Gauteng Province are the only two provinces that reported an increase in stock theft in the third quarter of 2019/2020 to 2020/2021 financial years (SAPS: 2020).

The increase in this type of crime poses a question as to what perpetuates the lack of community participation in preventing stock theft within the area under study notwithstanding the legislative provisions that allow the community to work with the police. For instance, section 18 of the South African Police Services Act 68 of 1995, as amended makes provision for *inter alia*, the establishment of partnership between the community and the service; promotion of communication between the community and the service; promotion of cooperation between the service and the community in fulfilling the need of the community regarding policing; improving transparency in the service and accountability of the service to the community, and promoting joint problem identification and problem-solving by the service and the community. (South African Police Service, 1995). This provision essentially gives effect to section 205 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

This paper examines the phenomenon of lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft in Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality, Mpumalanga Province. To achieve this objective, it was necessary to first determine the extent to which the community in the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality was involved in the fight against stock theft. This paper is organized as follows: following the introduction part, a second part is a literature review and theoretical framework which demonstrates their interconnectedness in relation to phenomenon under study. The third part provides information on research and methodology including data collection and analysis. This is then followed by the fourth part which addresses the findings and discussions. Finally, this paper offers recommendations and conclusions.

**Literature Review**

The inclusion of a theoretical framework in research is important because it is through it that a research study makes sense of different aspects of a phenomenon. Furthermore, theories help to identify and select concepts and key areas of a phenomenon for a study (Bezuidenhout, 2014). Key to this study is the phenomenon of community involvement as a strategy to prevent and combat crime. Through scholarly theories, this study attempted to make sense of different aspects of community involvement in the fight against crime; stock theft in particular. To make sense of different aspects of the phenomenon under study, the following theories are deemed relevant: the routine activity theory, the broken window theory, and the social bond theory.

**Routine Activity Theory**

The routine activity theory was first formulated by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979. Clarke & Felson (1993) further developed the theory to become one of the most widely cited and influential theoretical constructs in the field of criminology. In their initial formulation, Cohen & Felson (1979) postulated that the routine activity theory suggests that the organisation of routine activities in society creates opportunities for crime. In other words, the daily routine activities of people, including where they work and whom they socialise with strongly influence when and where crime occurs and to whom (Miró, 2014).

The theorists of the routine activity approach drew heavily from the human ecology theory of Amos Hawley developed in 1950. To those theorists, the timing of various activities by the hour of the day and the day of the week was equally important in understanding human behaviour. The routine activity perspective provides three major areas of focus for victimisation events to take place. Crime can only occur in the absence of a capable guardian, as it leaves a suitable target unprotected against a motivated offender when they come together in time and space (Savard, 2018). The structure of routine activities influences criminal opportunity and affects trends in direct physical contact either with a person or their property.

In this way, guardians can be viewed as control agents in the routine activity theory of crime. This is because guardians are likely to assume personal responsibility for the residential places that they belong to, and for targets, which belong to or are connected with them. The theory has relevance in community involvement in crime prevention because it conceives not only formal law enforcement agents (such as the police) as capable guardians, but also includes family members and community members who also serve the same purpose of curbing criminal tendencies and victimisation. In this regard, the theory is said to consider community-based strategies such as a neighbourhood watch as a guardian to protect a suitable target (victim) and to discourage a motivated offender. As mentioned, the routine activity approach focuses on offenders making direct contact with targets at a specific time and place.

Unlike cybercrime that takes place over a distance throughout the globe, stock theft requires that the offender be physically present to steal the livestock in the absence of a capable guardian or witness. The theory is therefore limited to place-based crime (Fattah, 1991). This theory focuses on the presence of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of guardianship. The focus of the routine activity theory on only these three elements does not render it immune from criticism. The first criticism centres on the issue of crime shift. Some argue that the discouragement of a criminal event does nothing to reduce the likelihood that a similar crime will be committed by the offender at a different time and place. As the argument goes, guardianship simply moves crime from one area to another.

Secondly, the routine activity theory tends to ignore the research literature that associates crime with offender characteristics (social learning, psychological, identity, and self-esteem). Thirdly, there is a heated debate in the routine activities camp over the proper
conceptualisation of the theory as a micro or macro approach to crime. Fourthly, most studies that have tested the theory had the logical fallacy of believing that temporal succession implies a causal relation and descriptive study. At this stage in its development, the theory is limited in its predictive capacity (Brunet, 2002).

**Broken Window Theory**

The broken window theory was developed by James Wilson and George Kelling in 1982. Kelling was hired in 1985 as a consultant to the New York City Transit Authority. The subways in New York were in an awful condition and Kelling implemented new measures, such as removing all graffiti made during the night every day. This process continued until the graffiti successfully and progressively disappeared. The police started enforcing the law very strictly against public drinkers and urinators. The rate of both petty and serious crimes fell suddenly and significantly. The broken window theory suggests that small signs of disorder create more and more serious cycles of problems. In other words, when people become ignorant of petty crimes, it creates a breeding ground for more serious crimes to occur (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988).

The doctrine of analogy, in this case, suggests that if one window is broken in a particular house and not repaired immediately, all of its windows, if not taken care of, will be broken eventually. Under the broken window theory, a clean environment that is constantly maintained sends signals that the area is monitored and that criminal behaviour will not be tolerated. This means that a lack of community engagement in the fight against crime sends a signal that the community is not in control and will therefore not be able to defend their property against criminal invasion (Bayley, 1994).

Furthermore, an untidy environment, where there is no maintenance of buildings, graffiti, and excessive litter, sends the signal that the area is not monitored. It also sends a signal that one can engage in criminal behaviour with little risk of being tracked down, especially in communities where the trust between the police and the community is broken, and where the gap between the police and the community is so wide that members of the public are often reluctant to report crimes to the police or stand as witnesses in courts (Ikuteyijo, 2009).

Although the theory focuses more on urban areas, it is applicable in rural areas, where crimes, such as stealing livestock of low value such as chickens, goats, and sheep, exist. Before long, stealing a truckload of stock becomes a reality. The theory is relevant in explaining community participation in crime prevention as it encourages the community to focus on maintaining order both to counteract the fear of crime and to combat crime itself. The theory also explains that collective effort by both the SAPS and community members can help reduce the rate of crime in the community, especially the crime of stock theft in the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality area.

Despite the theory being popular in both academic and law enforcement circles, the broken window theory is not without its critics. One line of criticism is that there is little empirical evidence that disorder, when left unchallenged, causes crime. To validate the theory in its entirety, it must be shown that disorder causes fear, that fear causes a breakdown of social controls, and that this breakdown of social controls, in turn, causes crime. Finally, crime must be shown to increase levels of disorder (Bayley, 1994)

**Social Bond Theory**

Whereas most theories in criminology concentrate on explaining deviance and crime, Travis Hirschi’s social bond theory rather speaks to crime prevention. Hirschi developed the social bond perspective in 1969, which explained the way or process by which an individual is tied to social norms, values, and rules of society. The social bond theory focuses on the sociological forces that can prevent people from participating in deviant behaviour (Hirschi, 1969).

According to Hirschi (1969), four prominent elements should be reinstated in conventional society to form social bonds between members of the community. First is attachment, which refers to the strength of an individual’s bonds to key people around him or her. This might be parents, friends, teachers, and significant others in the community. Attachment to parents is considered to be the most important in terms of the socialisation process. Concerning this study, the most significant bond that needs to be tied is between the community and the police.

Ren et al. (2006) argue that attachment to community correlates with citizen involvement in community policing activities, which will, in turn, reduce crime. Pattavina et al., (2006) concurred that those who feel like they are part of the neighbourhood are significantly more likely to be involved in collective crime prevention and would thus enhance police efforts to deal with crime. However, if there is no attachment between the police and the citizens, collaboration against fighting crime will never take place.

The second is commitment. People who are committed to conventional forms of conduct, such as going to school, running a business, or maintaining a reputation in the community, have invested a considerable amount of time, energy, money, and self-esteem in these activities. When these individuals consider engaging in crime, they must weigh up the cost of their behaviour and might run the risk of losing the investment they have made over time. The involvement of community members in the prevention of crime through legitimate platforms is therefore seen as a commitment to a good cause and such members would thus not engage in criminal activities, such as stock theft in particular.

The third is involvement, which refers to the type of activities that occupy an individual during the day. If activities of crime prevention could occupy community members not only during the day but also during the night, crime levels in the geographical area
under study could be reduced. It is therefore important that community members be encouraged to become involved in the activities of their local Community Policing Forums (CPF). Fourth is belief, which refers to a person’s obligation to obey the rules of society. The less an individual feels obliged to respect the rules of society, the more likely they are to break the rules. This goes hand in hand with respect for authority figures such as police officials.

**Research and Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research approach utilising semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Twenty-two participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy and comprised police officials from three different police stations in the rural areas of the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, farmers, herders, CPF members, and community leaders. Relevant monographs, reports, journals, and Internet publications constituted the sources of secondary data for the study. The Human Sciences Research Council’s code of conduct was observed, and this research was approved by the Tshwane University of Technology’s (TUT) Faculty of Humanities.

All ethical conditions were adhered to in this study, including informed consent that was obtained before data collection and that all participants had the choice to opt-out of the study. To ensure that the ethical requirements of the TUT were fulfilled, a letter of permission from the Faculty of Humanities Research and the Ethics Committee was obtained. The data collected through audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English as topics and themes for examination by coding and grouping the data. An interview schedule was used to guide the interview thereby ensuring that the same questions are posed to the participants in the language of their choice, which was mainly isiZulu and English. All isiZulu responses were then translated with the use of a professional language practitioner services. Even though interviews were treated as a conversation, the following procedure was adopted to ensure the credibility of the collected data:

1. An appointment was secured with each participant at a time, which suited him or her.
2. Participants were informed that the information obtained would be treated with the highest confidentiality hence all participants remained anonymous, and the research is for academic purposes only.
3. Permission to record the interview was acquired and a tape recorder was used to record the data in order to revisit certain answers when necessary.
4. Participants were informed that the interview was structured and that probing questions would be determined by the information given by the participant.
5. Interviews were conducted in a quiet environment conducive for a conversation.

A grounded data analysis approach was adopted in this study. Grounded grouping of meaning held by the participants in the setting were noticed. This involved decreasing the data to a practicable set of subjects to write into the final storyline (De Vos et al., 2005). Similar topics were clustered together and the authors operated with a single cluster of topics at intervals.

**Findings and discussions**

**Theme 1: The extent to which the community of Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality is involved in the fight against stock theft?**

To address this theme, the following question was posed: To what extent is the community of Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality involved in the fight against stock theft? This question received adequate coverage from the study. The participants were diverse, and the same question was posed to all the participants. Participants mentioned several causative factors that result in a lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft in the area. Many participants maintain that there is no active community participation or involvement in the fight against stock theft in the area. Only a few farmers and police officers mentioned that they have an active forum in which they work together in dealing with stock theft. One of the SAPS participants stated that they are not working well with the community, because if they were, stock theft would not be this high. Below are some of the participants’ responses:

Participants 2, 3, 4, 17, 22, 25, and 26 are of the view that there is no active community involvement in the fight against stock theft in the area. Participant 25 confidently said that the community doesn’t get involved “if they were, they would have stopped the stock theft”.

Participants 13, 15, 18, 20, and 21 are of the view that there is active community involvement in the fight against stock theft, but they could not give more information on how the community is involved.

Participants 14, 16, and 19 opted to remain neutral in answering the question.

**Theme 2: Contributing factors to lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft.**

To address this theme the following question was asked: What do you think are the contributing factors to lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft in your area? There were different views from the participants. Some community members believe that the police are not doing their job or they are working with the said perpetrators of stock theft. Other participants, especially police officers, stated that the community does not want to come forward with information, citing that people are afraid...
that they won’t be protected after giving such information to the police. Community members are afraid to give information because the perpetrators of stock theft live within the same community as them, so they are avoiding being targets once the perpetrator is out of prison. Below are some of participants’ responses:

Participants 7, 8, 11, 16, 17, 21, and 22 stated that one of the barriers to a working relationship between the SAPS and the community is that cases are not solved, few cases get resolved, and people end up losing trust in the police. They further said people are afraid to work with the police because police are also involved in stock theft cases. The CPF members are not paid and they believe if they can get paid the structure cannot collapse and thus ensuring that the relationship between the police and the community does not fade away.

Police are working with the culprits as they are sometimes seen coming to collect stock from young boys. Community members believe it is police duty to deal with crime and they are getting paid to do that. There are no frequent meetings between the SAPS and the community members to share ideas on how to deal with stock theft in the area.

Participant 4 stated he cannot mention any barriers because he has never experience stock theft as he is surrounded by white farmers who are always patrolling the area during the day and at night. Therefore no reason pushes him to work with the police.

Participant 3 stated that another barrier to a working relationship between the SAPS and the community is that the community does not have a leader who has a vision that they should try something.

Participant 2 who is a farmer, stated that the police are always absent and take up to six weeks to respond to an opened case. He said that during the time of the interview, they were still busy with a 2012 case that is always being postponed.

Participant 1 is of the view that police are not doing enough, farmers have information on who is committing the crime, but the police do not respond swiftly. They have plans in place, but the problem is the implementation thereof.

Participant 9 stated that people believe that the police don’t do their work because they report a culprit today and the following day the person is back. He is of the view that police are not good when it comes to taking statements. This is because many suspected criminals usually win the cases due to a lack of evidence.

Discussions

Lack of community involvement has the potential to create an opportunity for thieves since they know that there is no working relationship between the police and the community. Communities with high rates of participation in committees, clubs, local institutions, and other organisations will have lower rates of victimisation and delinquency than communities in which such participation is low (Sampson & Groves, 1989). It is not surprising that stock theft in Mpumalanga is on the rise. The work of the police would be difficult without the support of local communities who possess information about their area and criminal activities taking place in it (Fleissner & Heinzelm, 1996).

As is clear from the findings of this study, there are underlying reasons for the lack of community involvement in the fight against stock theft in the rural areas of the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality. What appears to be at the centre of these reasons relates to police professionalism, which must characterise policing in general (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2006). The relationship between the police and citizens must be informed by the ethical and professional principles that allow for the effective development of police work (Fernandez, 2014). Ensuring police integrity is essential in gaining public trust and achieving public safety (UNODC, 2006). This appears to be a challenge experienced by the SAPS in general (Manaliyo, 2016).

Corruption and the involvement of police officials in criminal activities do not help the situation in the rural areas of the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality. The participants in this study raised this as a concern that explained their reluctance to be involved in the fight against stock theft, which indicates that it might remain a dream to bring the level of stock theft down. Such behaviour will have a lasting impact on the lives and livelihood of concerned communities.

The inefficiency and ineffectiveness of how the police handle cases within the area of study should be a cause for concern because this can only damage the credibility of not only the police but the entire criminal justice and arguably weaken the rule of law. The criminal justice poor performance, lack of timeliness, perceived inefficiencies, and frequent failure to meet the public expectations are a serious concern (Dandurand, 2014). This is exacerbated by what seems to be the undisputable long-standing government challenge in many sectors of the economy, corruption. Yesefu (2013) argues that institutional police corruption has thrived for decades in South Africa because of the secrecy associated with policing. The police conduct as presented by this study’s results is unprofessional and unacceptable.

As a critical action, the state has committed to professionalise the public service, strengthen accountability, improve coordination and prosecute corruption (National Planning Commission, 2012). The National Development Commission further acknowledges the SAPS’s aim to develop professionalism and discipline among its members and that some steps have already been taken, such as developing a code of conduct but recommends that SAPS should integrate this code with its human resource systems and non-adherence should have consequences for its members (National Planning Commission, 2012).
Such reluctance can be attributed to a lack of communication between the police and the community of the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality. This militates against the recommendation of the National Development Plan (NDP) to encourage communication between the police and communities with the aim of reducing fear and increasing the responsibility for safety to all role players including citizens (National Planning Commission, 2012).

As correctly argued by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) (2016), the community should be involved with the full range of aspects of the decision-making process from the start of discussions about a community crime prevention strategy. This emphasis is well within the Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Cluster plan to mobilise communities in the fight against crime. By introducing changes to the CPF regime to embrace a broader notion of community safety, including their role in all matters dealing with not only the police but the entire Criminal Justice System (Republic of South Africa, 2009). It would appear that the mobilization of communities in the fight against crimes such as stock theft remains a lip service for communities in the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality for as far back as more than a decade. If the results of this study point to the fact that the community is not involved in efforts to prevent crime, then the launch of community mobilisation campaign in the 124 priority police station areas (Pelser & Rauch, 2001) did not include the area under study.

**Recommendations**

**Cooperation**

The police and the community should work together as a team to deal with stock theft issues. The CPF situated at Daggakraal is not actively working with the police to deal with crime. There is no facility like an office where people can go to report crime issues. Many participants mentioned that it is because they are not paid, therefore they don’t participate. The researcher recommends that the members of CPF be given food vouchers every month so that they can focus more on fighting crime, rather than focusing on finding food for their families for the next day.

Participants at Wakkerstroom, Amersfoort, and Volksrust mentioned that they are not aware of any CPF existence. Farmers at Wakkerstroom rely on the KwaZulu-Natal CPF since their farms overlap with KZN. The researcher recommends that a CPF be established in these areas. These areas are too big for one chairperson to oversee all of them. Each area should have its chairperson.

The stock owners should adhere to their duties. All owners of cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs should register an identification mark at the office of the registrar of animal identification. Each owner must mark his/her animals in a prescribed manner. All cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs of which the identification mark have become indistinct or invisible, must be rebranded following the legal provisions.

Any owner of an animal with an identification mark on it, who wants to sell, barter or give away the animal within 14 days after he/she became the owner of such animal, must provide the new owner with a document of identification. This means that within 14 days the animal can be disposed of without having being branded with the new owner’s mark, since it already has the previous owner’s mark on it and a document of identification has been issued.

The owner of an animal who wants to sell, barter or give away an animal, must mark the animal with his/her mark before disposing of it. The owner must also provide to the new owner a document of identification. The new owner must keep the document of identification for one year. This means that after 14 days the animal cannot be disposed of without having being branded with the new owner’s mark and a document of identification has been issued.

The stock owner should count their stock regularly. report all stock theft cases immediately. They should also keep a controlled stock register.

*The SAPS in the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality should facilitate and maintain a partnership between the community and the police, including the establishment of, and support for the functioning of CPFs; support the participation of CPFs in CSFs; facilitate communication between the police and the community; improving the rendering of police services to the community. There should be a joint identification of local policing priorities and co-ownership of problem-solving programmes. Police should conduct periodic reporting to the community (accountability), in conjunction with the CPF structures as well as facilitate and implement approved rural safety policies and strategies.*

**Transparency**

Several participants believed that the police are also involved in the stealing of their livestock. The researcher recommends that the police should be transparent to the public and the police station should therefore have an open door policy. Transparency is essential to positive police-community relationships. Police should report to the community about recent incidents. They should try to release as much information possible about it as soon as possible, so the community will not feel that information is purposefully being withheld from them. For example, if a member of the police is arrested for stock theft, the community should be informed before and after the trial has taken place.
Each police station should have a suggestion box and a tip box where members of the public can report any wrongdoing from the police side without fear of being harassed or victimised after reporting. The tip-box should only be opened by the station commander and have a monthly evaluation of the public reporting and complaints.

Awareness campaigns

The public is unaware of several things, such as how the criminal justice system works, and the procedures to follow when you apply for the branding certificate. The public is also unaware when or at what age they are supposed to tattoo or brand their livestock. The researcher recommends that in the community there should be a campaign to teach the public how to apply for a branding certificate and how and when to brand their livestock, because most of the livestock that is stolen, is not branded and then branded by the thieves, which makes it difficult to prove ownership afterward. There are also different types of branding which livestock owners in the Dr. Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Municipality should be informed about. These methods are as follows:

i. Hot-iron branding: The stock owner burns a mark on the skin of his animals with a hot-iron. Calves younger than six months of age should not be branded;

ii. Freeze-branding: A branding mark can also be put on the animals by way of freeze-branding. Freeze branding is done by utilizing dry ice and alcohol; and

iii. Tattoo mark: Tattoo tongs and ink are used to mark the animals. Calves can be tattooed from one week of age (South Africa, 2008).

Conclusions

From the results of this study, it is evidential that the community of Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality is not actively involved in the fight against stock theft. This study further reveals several reasons that can be attributed to lack of community participation to prevent stock theft in the Dr. Pixley ka Isaka Seme Municipality. In the main, police corruption, police inefficiency, community’s fear of victimization, lack of communication appears to be the culprit for lack of community participation in the fight against stock theft. Ongoing assessment and analysis of the nature of the crime problem will be critical to effectively harness the collaboration of all persons and entities. It is imperative for the government to listen to the community, as well as communicate with the people. Beyond simply listening, the government needs to hear what the community is saying, to be fully in touch with communities needs when it comes to stock theft. Measures should be put in place to ensure the protection of community members who are willing to be actively involved in the fight against stock theft.

Concerned community members must organise themselves into formalised structures with the help of the SAPS to enable effective collaboration in the fight against stock theft. Training and retraining of police officials on ethics remain crucial. It is our view that police officials must undergo a training programme tailor-made for police officials whose responsibilities include stock theft prevention. In this way, it would be fair to take disciplinary actions against those who are involved in unethical conduct. This will also help to restore police dignity and trust in the community.

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