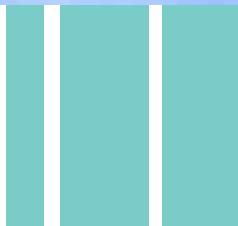


XHASA

finding authority



Contents

Introduction	1
Problems	2
Solutions	3
Our project in pictures	4
Invisible CPF	6
Family Feud update	7
Problematic policing	8

Introduction

By Saskia Kuiper

'Xhasa' – support. During our engagement with the communities of both Fingo Village and Vukani we identified the issue of 'misplaced authority' as a serious factor/ cause of crime. The communities both lack visible and reliable sources of information and help in a crisis.

Our main aim with our project was to identify the key players in the community, find out what role they played and hold them accountable to this role. This wasn't an easy task. Many of the people we spoke to presented themselves as Community Policing Forum (CPF) members when they didn't hold the title. This made it difficult to find out exactly who was on the CPF and whether or not they were doing their job. The communities' major need is support both from each other, the CPF and the police to help combat and get on top of crime.

We also met with the police, who initially, were helpful and offered complaints about the community and defences for their lack of action. However, once things got down to performance and attendance, the police were nowhere to be seen. This goes for many community members too.

The first few meetings we had, aimed specifically at finding out the problems, were very fruitful with members actually showing up and voicing their complaints. However, the next few meetings, which were aimed at finding solutions and getting down to work, were literally NOT attended. We struggled to understand this, was it:

- a) apathy to the situation, or
- b) a fear for the consequences of involvement. With regards to b) a fear for

the consequences of attendance at such meetings, the community is riddled with the fear of two families, namely Nikelo and Ayanda. These two families have a long history of violence and abuse towards each other and have unfortunately roped in the whole community into their 'family feud'. The result of this has been a community run by two families who are constantly in and out of jail. Not promising or reliable community leaders.

Our initial aim was to elect and clarify who exactly the CPF are and to get their pictures on a poster and out to the community. It is vital the community know who to contact if they have problems and to hold them accountable if they don't perform their job. Our second solution was to educate the community on what their rights are, especially as victims of crime and to make sure they know them comprehensively and exercise them confidently.

We have also had meetings with the police and sent an open letter to them to make them aware of the problems the community is having with them. Their job is to protect the communities and we are making sure this is their main priority and that they are held accountable by the community if they don't perform.

By Laea Medley and Saskia Kuiper

We identified a number of crime related issues within the areas of Fingo Village and Vukani, however, the majority of them revolved mainly around two primary issues. These were firstly, the tense relationship between the community and police and, secondly, the pervasive influence of a bloody family feud in Vukani.

The relationship between the community and the police is strained at its best. An area where the two could have worked well together was through the Community Policing Forum (CPF); this however was virtually non-existent and left a gap between the police and community. The police felt the community were often uncooperative when it came to stepping forward as witnesses to crime. Members often opted to remain silent, either due to allegiance to the perpetrator or fear of the consequences of testifying. Perpetrators would subsequently be granted bail and return to the community and commit the same crimes. The community then often blamed the police for their incompetence and as a result the police felt unappreciated and frustrated with the community. The police regularly became despondent and a distrustful cycle began.

The second problem identified was the existence of a family feud between the Nikelo and Mthwala/ Klaas families. The feud has caused

huge rifts within the community, forcing neutral parties to take sides. The two families have both suffered the loss of a family member and both want the matter settled. The community however, aggravates the situation by getting involved and demand that the Mthwala and Klaas families apologise to the community for the crimes of the two men (Luthando Klaas and Ayanda Mtwala) who are now in jail.

The feud has caused a disruption of authority and any authority which community leaders may have had has partly been placed into the hands of the Nikelo family. This is where another issue arises; often those within the community who are in positions of power either abuse this power or don't take any responsibility for it.

The CPF is a prime example of this. The majority of the community aren't sure who the legitimate CPF members are. And possible reasons for this are a) they have never been informed of who the CPF are or b) the CPF are not taking their job seriously enough and the community therefore never sees them in action. The community also revealed that they were completely in the dark as to what the process of CPF election was. The majority of them having not voted for the members and having no idea as to when, where or how they were elected.

Intimidation is also a major issue within the community, and many members will either not attend meetings at all or will be forced to attend them due to threats from other community members. Marches to the Magistrates Court are a regular occurrence and many attendees have said the only reason they participate is as a result of intimidation. Some residents even said they had been threatened that if they didn't attend the march their houses would be burnt down.

The relationship between the community and the police is strained at its best.

Vukani residents gather at the Grahamstown Magistrates Court. According to Thembele Ngqomo, one of the organisers of the march, if the justice system fails them and the criminals do not leave Vukani, the community is going to take the law into their own hands. Photo: Lisa Mills



By Warrick Smith and Saskia Kuiper

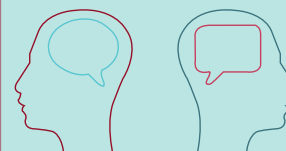
After carrying out our CMP work in Vukani and Fingo Village, we came up with a few possible solutions to the issues of crime in these areas.

From the production output side, we made use of various mediums to both raise the consciousness of the community and inform them of their basic rights. We produced TV documentaries, sound slides, and print pieces in the hope of alleviating and resolving any confusion about the problems we have outlined.

We felt we couldn't effectively solve the issue of the family feud through our CMP work alone, and as such we decided the best thing to do was to get the families together to voice their opinions. This initially proved difficult, but once we achieved it, it was a success. Through the production of two documentaries the stories of both families were told. We showed them to each family initiated a discussion about the content. The families both expressed their hurt and anger at the loss of a family member but both managed to come to a resolve. It was agreed that the Mthwala and Klaas families would be incorporated back into the community and that the intimidation and harassment would end. This was to be done at a formal community meeting to which all interested parties would be invited. We acted as mediators throughout the whole process, and it remains up to both the community and the families to follow through with their promises.

All the information accumulated during the month spent with the community was gathered together in the form of a feedback report. This was handed to the relevant stake holders

Matthew Mpahlwa placates community leaders after the exclusive meeting between the Mthwala, Klaas and Nikelo families. They felt that the community should have been involved in the mediation. Photo: Lisa Mills



We hope people will recognise the devastation crime causes in the community

within the community with the aim being to bridge the gap between both the police and the community as well as between the families and the community. We came into the communities as objective outsiders and hope our report adequately reflects our findings in such a way as to constructively show the community their downfalls as well as provide resolves.

Within the feedback report we compiled an open letter to all members of the community detailing our interactions with the police. The aim of this was to highlight the main issues we had and to hopefully initiate a change in their interaction with the community. We held those in power accountable for their faults and hopefully the community, after informing them of their rights (in the form of a brochure) will realise they too can take the police to task if they do not live up to their expectations.

We used all the tools available to us in the hope of resolving the problems identified. We succeeded in facilitating change within in the community, change which would probably have taken years to come about. We managed to do so peacefully; discouraging members that shouts to "kill" those involved would get the community nowhere. As a group we feel we were successful throughout our interaction with the community.





On 22 September Vukani residents marched to the Magistrates Court to oppose the granting of bail to two murder suspects as well as to demand the release of two community vigilantes.



The march was a climax of growing frustrations felt by the community toward the justice system – residents are tired of people continually being let out on bail. Community members also expressed resentment towards the police for their lack of presence in Vukani, also known as Grahamstown's criminal hotspot.



Tavern owner, prominent community leader and organiser of the march, Michael Nikelo, and community member Thembela Ngqomo, address the crowd outside the Magistrates Court. According to Nikelo, the two community members are in jail for injuring one of the murder suspects while they were trying to get the alleged criminals out of Vukani.



Nikelo states that the same criminals have been committing the same crimes since 2004. Nikelo's own brother was allegedly murdered by one of the murder suspects. It was this that sparked the family feud between the Nikelo's and the families of the two suspects - the Klaas and the Twala families.



The following Saturday, a community meeting was held in Vukani. The issue of an invisible CPF was the focus of the meeting and a cause of much heated debate.



Ngqomo held the meeting in the absence of Nikelo who had been arrested that morning, when the police raided his tavern.



A private meeting was held between the Mthwala, Klaas and Nikelo families. It seemed that the families were willing to move towards putting aside their differences and begin relying on the justice system to take its course.



Unfortunately members of the community had gathered outside the private meeting as they felt that the matter involved the whole community, not just the families, and that they should have been included.



Chair of the meeting, Matthew Mpahlwa, managed to smooth things over. However, the community still has strong feelings of animosity towards the Mthwala and Klaas families, despite the outcome of the meeting.

INVISIBLE CPF

By Laea Medley

As we set out to find solutions to the issues of crime in Vukani, Grahamstown, we not only have to look ahead to a crime-free community, but we also need to establish what the causes of crime are, and tackle these. Over the past few weeks, we have concluded that crime in Vukani stems from various issues within the community, ranging from unemployment and alcohol abuse, to more personal family feuds, to simpler, yet fixable issues such as the lack of street lights in the area. One of the main issues however, is the lack of visibility of legitimate Community Policing Forum (CPF) members.

Visible policing in any community helps reduce crime. The mere presence of CPF members and authority figures on the streets deters criminals, and encourages the community to fight crime together. Liziwe Gqotholo, a community member who volunteered to participate on the CPF, is active in her fight against crime. She is involved in resolving domestic feuds, as well as organising youth activities, such as soccer games, in an attempt to lead children away from a life of crime. But this is not enough. Gqotholo is only one person, and not everyone in the Vukani community recognises her as a CPF member. She feels overwhelmed by the crime situation in the area, and has admitted to being afraid.

Several community meetings in Vukani have proved that even though there is a CPF in existence, not everyone knows who is a member, and how members are elected. During a meeting on 24 September, which took place on a field in Vukani, this issue was raised by community members. However, there did not seem to be any CPF members present at the meeting to answer questions. More importantly, there were no CPF members present to provide visible policing, which may have prevented later threats to burn down the houses of those who did not attend the meeting.

In an attempt to establish who legitimate members of the CPF are, we attended a community Imbizo on 14 October. We hoped that the CPF would be identified at this meeting, both to us, and more importantly, to the community. This however, was not on the agenda. Several community members then demanded that the CPF be identified and that more effective visible policing be established in the area.

The Vukani community is frustrated with the crime in their area, and want solutions. The answer however, lies with them. Visible policing, in the form of a CPF, engages residents in the fight against crime, and reaches people who would otherwise be forgotten or ignored by the police. Two days after the community Imbizo, visible policing in Vukani was evident, with members of the community, along with police officers, patrolling the area. Hopefully, this improvement will continue long enough to reduce the crime rate in Vukani.



Left: Liziwe Gqotholo, volunteer CPF member addresses the Vukani people. Above: The Vukani community gathered for a meeting supposedly led by members of the CPF.

FAMILY FEUD

By Saskia Kuiper

On 22 October, we arrived in Vukani ready to mediate a reunion between the Nikelo, Mthwala and Klaas families. We decided on a mutual venue for the meeting, and eventually chose a small church in the area. We waited for the police to arrive before we started, as we were concerned about any conflict that may arise between the families. When the police arrived, we described the situation to them, and what we intended to do in this meeting. We asked them to sit in on the meeting, but were told that "it is not in [their] job description." We started the proceedings by asking everyone to introduce themselves. So-called "committee members" were asked to leave, leaving only key family members behind. Proceedings began with a short song followed by a prayer. Matthew Mpahlwa, who chaired the meeting, then explained to all present what the aim of the meeting was and clarified any queries. We then played both the Nikelo and Klaas documentaries. Matthew translated any English sections into isiXhosa. After watching the videos we had an interaction session between the two families, trying to find a way forward. Michael Nikelo said he 'never knew there was tension between the two families and said they should support each other through this situation. The Mthwala and Klaas families stated they didn't have a problem with the Nikelo family either. Both families felt the community was to blame as a result of their gossip around the situation. The gossip escalated the situation, with the community trying to continue the family feud. Michael's father, Solomon Nikelo, expressed concern over the Justice System, worried that it was not performing its job. He wanted to be ensured that perpetrators would be convicted. He was not against the Mthwala and Klaas families; he only wanted an explanation for why his child was killed. Michael's mother, Miriam, said she would never have peace, Michael added or corrected her by saying she would never have peace with the perpetrators, not the family. The Mthwala and Klaas family expressed that they were living in fear wanted desperately for this feud to come to an end. They said they felt very unsafe in the area, and didn't understand why everyone is against them personally when they never send their kids out to do bad things. As the meeting drew to a close, both families agreed to be friends and it was decided that the Mthwala/Klaas families would be

"We hope that discussions between the families will continue once we leave"

incorporated back into the community. Michael would lead this initiative and there would be a follow-up community meeting to which Nikelo would invite the families as well as explain the situation to the community. Unfortunately, when he left the meeting, Michael went against his word, saying there had been miscommunication concerning the nature and aim of the meeting to him. He said he had never known it was going to be purely a family meeting and had thought it was one which would include the entire community. We had phoned him earlier that day reminding him of the meeting and describing its nature, so his comment came as quite a surprise. Matthew addressed the angry mob outside explaining to them what had happened in the meeting. The six policemen were on stand-by throughout our interaction with the community outside the church. They warned us however that they did not have enough manpower to push the crowds back. The community were to be informed about the decisions taken, and told there would be an arranged community meeting where the family were to be integrated back into the Vukani community. As we left the church, community members began insulting us and calling us liars. They shouted at group member, Robyn McCormick, who had arranged the meeting, saying she was a liar and was to blame for all the problems. There was a great deal of miscommunication which led to confusion and anger over what we as a group were trying to achieve. Luckily, before we left, the community understood what we had been doing and apologised to our group for their mistakes. We also apologised for any miscommunication that may have occurred on our part. It was said that the community would be responsible for organising the meeting for the families to be integrated back into the community. We hope that discussions between the families will continue once we leave.

Problematic policing

For the past month we have been engaging with the residents of Vukani and Fingo Village. Through our investigations we have discovered that a major issue within the community is the lack of a relationship between the residents of these areas and the police. We have had a number of disappointing interactions with the police ourselves, which served to confirm the sentiments of the community. Here follows a chronological description of our interactions with the police during our project:

Before our first community focus group (23rd September) we approached the police to help us loud-hail to get as many community members there as possible, they failed to do this. The sector manager, Nomaxabiso Magula, did however come to the meeting with another inspector. Magula promised to organise for various representatives from different governmental departments (Health, Recreation, Housing, etc) to come to an Imbizo to be held on the 11th October.

In the time leading up to the second meeting, Magula became very difficult to get hold of. When we did manage to get hold of her she assured us that there was still going to be a meeting on Sunday, 11th October.

The Police held a community Imbizo, on the 14th October in Luvuyo Hall, of which we were not informed. We only found out about this by default through our connections with the community. At the meeting, the main the issue on the agenda was, among other things, sector policing. After the meeting Magula said she would fax the CPF member list to us as soon as she got back to her office, this never materialised.

We were anxious to have police present at our community meeting due to the sensitive nature of the footage we were intending to show. We called Milanda Coetzee and she sent back-up. Magula eventually arrived at the meeting herself, but she said she didn't feel safe as the only policewoman there and requested we call more members. We did call back up and they arrived. They stayed in their vehicles for duration of the meeting and left before the most crucial part, where we were going to start a discussion about the family feud. Due to the police leaving we were unable to continue our debate and tension rose to the extent that we had to call the meeting to a close to avoid aggravating the situation.

At the initial focus group meeting we asked Magula for information on who the Community Policing Forum (CPF) members in the area were and she defensively said she didn't know and we hadn't asked her to bring the list of members.

On Sunday 11 October we arrived at Luvuyo Hall for our meeting only to discover no-one was going to attend, the hall was locked. When we contacted Magula about her whereabouts she informed us that the police were having an Imbizo and would not be able to attend due to their 'drunk' state.

At the Imbizo Superintendent Du Plooy expressed his interest in helping us organising our community meeting. However on the day of our Imbizo he was unable to attend and so he said he would send a representative, unfortunately no-one arrived. We were forced to go ahead with the meeting without police presence.

We strongly believe that if we are to find any meaningful solutions to the problems faced by the communities of Fingo and Vukani it is vital that we establish a working relationship between the police and the community. Our attempts at bridging the gap between these two groups have failed and it is only with the help and input from both the police and the community that a resolution can be reached.