



REPORT: AGBIZ WORKSHOP ON RURAL REJUVENATION: BUFFERING AGAINST INSTABILITY

Agbiz hosted its third workshop in a series of rural rejuvenation workshops on 20 January 2023. The previous workshops dealt with energy security and public-private partnerships. The third workshop intended to learn from the July 2021 and other incidences of unrest and instability and to equip members to be proactive in identifying and managing the risks of social instability.

Overview: Lizette Lancaster: Institute for Security Studies (ISS)

Lizette Lancaster, who is the manager for the crime and justice information hub within the justice and violence prevention programme of the ISS, provided an overview of the root causes of social instability, the crime situation in South Africa, the tracking and monitoring of protest action and lessons learnt during the 2021 July unrest and other incidents of violent protest action.

South Africa has a very high murder rate: 36.4 per 100 000 people as opposed to the global murder rate of 5.8 per 100 000 people. Research has shown that if a country can succeed in bringing down its murder rate, many other crimes also decrease. Key factors that are shaping crime and insecurity in South Africa include the accelerated growth in organised crime over the past five years, political dynamics, the impact of Covid on jobs, growing food insecurity and ongoing service delivery challenges. Factors such as poverty, high unemployment and the illicit drug trade are considered risk factors for violence and crime.

There are effective ways of bringing down crime and there are also effective ways to manage crowds during protest action. An expert panel appointed following the Marikana massacre made several recommendations regarding crowd management.

The ISS has been mapping incidents of violence resulting from community protests labour strikes and political conflict. From this mapping, it has become clear that there are definite hotspots. These hotspots have a history of sporadic violent protests, and inter-group and public violence. Hotspots are predictable and should be monitored.

A perspective from the insurance sector: Themba Sibiyi, SASRIA

Themba Sibiyi, strategy manager at SARIA explained first of all what the purpose of SASRIA is and what kind of incidents it covers. SASRIA provides coverage for damage directly related to or caused by riots, strikes, terrorism, and public disorder. He gave an overview of the damage caused by the July 2021 unrest, the claims paid out by SASRIA and the long-term implications of the unrest. The estimated damage was R50 billion, 3 000 stores were looted, 40 000 formal businesses and 50 000 informal traders were affected. SARIA had to pay out claims to the amount of R32 billion and had to liquidate assets and ask for assistance from Treasury to do so. Treasury contributed R22 billion.

Lessons learnt from the KZN unrest: Dr Kathy Hurly, Kwanalu

Dr Kathy Hurly, the head of the Women and Youth in Rural Entrepreneurship programme at Kwanalu shared some lessons learnt from the July 2021 unrest in KwaZulu-Natal. Every fabric of the agricultural and rural landscape of KZN was severely impacted. Financial, social and other losses continued to be felt. During the unrest, Kwanalu monitored what was going on and had virtual meetings with its local leadership daily. Key routes and critical economic points were identified. They also secured and facilitated humanitarian aid to affected communities as soon as this was possible. A business restoration programme was initiated to assist rural town businesses in recovery. A rural entrepreneurship programme underpinned by leadership and business training with mentorship aimed at providing opportunities to

youth and women in rural towns was started. This initiative has been very successful and has made a difference in communities and built relationships.

A legal perspective: Rowan Willcock: Joubert, Galpin, Searle

Rowan Willcock, a director at Joubert, Galpin and Searle attorneys presented on the potential legal remedies available to affected businesses and the effectiveness of these remedies. He also spoke about some alternative approaches. He shared the lessons learnt from labour unrest in the Sundays River Valley. The valley was shut down and isolated in a protest action that stemmed from wage disputes in 2018 and 2022. The economic impacts were devastating. Businesses and producers used the law and obtained interdicts. This was not very effective.

To alleviate poverty and challenges with service provision, a Collaborative was established and funded by pack houses and producers in the valley. It aims to develop and empower people from all communities in the Sundays River Valley. Since 2018, over R22 million has been contributed by growers to these various projects. Growers' efforts towards community upliftment initiatives have been complemented by an additional R50 million that was sourced from Government to upgrade water and sanitation facilities, by the Growers Forum. The Collaborative is involved in adult skills development, victim support, economic development, sports and recreation and in supporting arts and culture in the community.

Rowan also alluded to the value of alternative dispute resolution and pre-dispute forums to deal with conflict and disputes.