

Workshop Report: Buffering Against Instability

Date: 18th April 2024

Location: Greytown, KZN

Hosts: Agbiz in collaboration with Kwanalu

Introduction:

Agbiz, in partnership with Kwanalu, organised a workshop aimed at equipping members of the farming community with strategies to cope with instability and unrest, drawing from the experiences of the July 2021 unrest in KZN. The workshop sought to facilitate learning from past challenges and foster collaboration to build resilient communities capable of addressing and preventing future upheavals. Pannar Seed kindly hosted and sponsored the workshop.

Presentations in the workshop

Sandy la Marque's Presentation ([Kwanalu](#))

Sandy la Marque from Kwanalu provided insights into the events of the July 2021 unrest, emphasising the pivotal role played by organised agriculture during the crisis. Key lessons learned by Kwanalu included the establishment of a Joint Operations Centre (JOC) for coordination, the effectiveness of farmer-led leadership, the importance of real-time information and communication and advice on what people's rights were under the circumstances, and the value of multi-agency collaboration. During the July 2021 unrest in KZN, there were incidents of looting, arson, roadblockages, intimidation, and the burning of crops, among others. The unrest hampered access to food and the movement of goods and services for all those affected. Trade was impacted, not only in KZN but countrywide. The presentation is attached.

Presentation by Julian Channing-Pearce ([Umvoti community G911](#))

Julian Channing-Pearce shared how Greytown worked to protect the town from the unrest and subsequent actions taken. There was very little intelligence beforehand, and they did not expect the unrest. At the time of the unrest, there were no police reservists or commandos. Many cell-phone towers were down; they had to largely rely on the existing radio network. There was a lot of false information going around. Lots of gunshots were heard. The community was then divided into sectors, and ordinary townspeople assisted in manning roadblocks that were set up to protect the town. He highlighted the establishment of a 24-hour service call centre funded to monitor town security. Greytown has been actively involved in crime prevention initiatives, fostering relationships with community sectors and emergency services, and engaging with investigators and the judiciary to address crimes against its members.

Presentation by John Odendaal (Pannar Seed)

John Odendaal stressed the importance of acting in an organised and coordinated fashion. Pannar Seed had a crisis response plan in place. Lines of communication proved to be important, as did building trust-based relationships with the surrounding community.

Presentation by Ian Hill ([G911](#))

Ian Hill said that communities need to take responsibility for their own safety and be proactive. G911 used to be a very small organisation and had to professionalise, improve its administration, and move to a full-time management structure. They also had to change their funding model. He said that security companies and SAPS should ideally work closely together.

Presentation by the Institute for Security Studies ([ISS](#))

Dr. Chandre Gould from the ISS, assisted by Bongiwé Mlangeni, provided an overview of crime and its consequences in the country, emphasising the importance of collaboration between communities and businesses in rural areas. The ISS mentioned how important it is for the employer or business to care for their employees' wellbeing. The presentation highlighted the significance of fostering relationships between affluent and poor communities. The ISS [violence prevention forum](#) practices deep democracy, listening to communities, and fostering unusual partnerships. The ISS was keen to keep working with the agricultural community to prevent violence. The presentation is attached.

[Kwanalu Wyre programme](#)

Sandy la Marque presented the Woman and Youth in Rural Entrepreneurship (WYRE) programme. This programme is a true reflection of communities and businesses working together—a programme of faith and hope where communities are coming together. Kwanalu's (WYRE) initiative offers a comprehensive support package aimed at fostering self-employment and job creation in rural areas. This includes providing basic business administration skills, leadership training, business incubation, and financial support to successful candidates. The programme aims to address inclusivity in agriculture by empowering individuals across the value chain, including producers, traders, and service providers. Additionally, it prioritises rural safety and security, recognising the importance of creating a conducive environment for economic development in rural towns. The presentation is attached.

Presentation by PJ Hassard (Kwanalu)

PJ Hassard shared his personal experience of building a relationship with his neighbouring community over a period of 30 years and emphasised how critical trust was. The community came together during the 2021 unrest and all acted in unity to protect the town of Hluhluwe.

Key Insights and Recommendations:

The workshop underscored the importance of preparedness, intelligence, coordination, and collaboration in enhancing resilience within agricultural communities. Participants were encouraged to implement lessons learned from past experience and continue working together to strengthen the resilience of rural areas against future challenges.

Conclusion:

The workshop served as a platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders in the agricultural sector. By learning from past experience and leveraging collective efforts, participants aim to create stability and foster thriving agricultural communities.

Next Steps:

Stakeholders are encouraged to implement the strategies discussed, foster ongoing collaboration, and remain vigilant in addressing challenges to ensure the resilience and prosperity of rural areas.

GWK has kindly made a video of the workshop that will be distributed to participants and members. The Agbiz working group on buffering against instability will take these lessons on board and have ongoing engagements on the topic.

By Agricultural Economist and Policy Analyst Thapelo Machaba