

RHR programme 'tackles Boitumelong gangsterism

16/04/19 Semphete Pg 11 bcsd Tm POS

Rebaone Moeng

Gangsterism was on the edge of taking over the lives of many young people in Bloemhof, leaving communities of Boitumelong Township in fear.

Following a number of killings and other criminal activities in the area, the situation got out of control when communities started to isolate certain young people who were believed to be members of these gangs. This saw the establishment of an informal settlement mostly occupied by these so-called gangsters, putting more pressure on other young people to find themselves a space in groups as a way of protecting themselves. This increased the level of gangsterism in the area.

The situation has, however, drastically settled down following an intervention by Office of the Premier and all Bokone Bophirima provincial government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and parastatals.

As part of the intervention, a prayer session was held last year involving all sector departments, Boitumelong community members, gangster groups, NGOs and faith-based organisations.

In an attempt to strengthen the intervention, different government departments organized a number of activities including soccer tournaments in an effort to promote reconciliation amongst gangster groups, visiting schools and sharing information on substance abuse, bullying and crime in general.

However, killings and attacks by gang-

sters continued, something that led to another intervention team holding a dialogue with community members and gangster groups to allow an interaction that would lead to social cohesion.

Addressing more than 500 community members comprising gangster members during the dialogue, MEC for Community Safety and Transport Management, Dr Mpho Mothabane, condemned the killings and encouraged the youth to take part in recreational activities at their disposal for them to stay away from criminal activities.

"Most of our youth find themselves joining gangsters because they're fearing for their lives and trying to secure protection for themselves, not realizing that their lives are more in danger as gang members than abstaining from gangsterism.

"They destroy their lives with a lot of elements because, that is where they start smoking dagga, drinking alcohol and taking drugs, killing and raping, leading to death or jail sentence," said Mothabane.

Gang violence has turned into a critical anti-social and economic issue, putting a high toll on the general public, as well as the business community as it impacts negatively on both business and potential investors. As a result, small businesses in the area end up losing revenue due to theft and graffiti clean-up.

"If a gang decides to claim a territory as its own in our townships, they put fear in current and potential customers and prevent them from [supporting] the business. This does not only have a negative impact on business but also on potential investors, affecting the economic growth of our province," said the MEC.

One of the known gangsters in the area



Boitumelong community members attending a gangsterism intervention meeting with one gangster member [standing] responding with anger to the discussions

said they were not happy with what they were doing, but were being forced into gangsterism by unemployment and could not stand seeing themselves going to bed on empty stomachs.

"There is no hope for us and now we only find pleasure in nothing except gangsterism," he said.

His partner in crime - but from an opposite gang - said gangsterism would continue to affect the Boitumelong area because of its socio-economic conditions.

"We are desperate, angry and dis-

illusioned by our system of government which made us believe that we are a forgotten location [township]," he said with an irritated voice.

An intervention plan has been developed and government departments that are involved are expected to report on a quarterly basis on their service delivery oriented activities aimed at creating jobs and allowing young people to participate in different recreational and economic spin-offs in the area.

Traffic authorities demonstrate dedication to save innocent lives

16/04/18 Semphete Pg14 Dase TM POS

Rebaone Moeng

Drunk drivers felt the pinch of law enforcement agencies when traffic authorities took control of major roads in the province in an effort to save the lives of people traveling to different destinations throughout the Easter holidays.

Drunk driving is one of the key factors contributing to a high number of road accidents and fatalities in Bokone Bophirima province and the country at large, but for this year's Easter holidays it became an unfortunate moment for those who found themselves on the wrong side of the law.

Community Safety and Transport Management traffic officers worked around the clock on different operations across the province and a number of drunk drivers were arrested and appeared before different magistrate's courts.

In Bojanala District Municipality alone, 31 people were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol. Other people were arrested for speeding, another factor contributing to road accidents.

A 26-year-old man was caught traveling 146km/h in Mooflooi in the Bapong area and was then arrested after it was established that the vehicle he was driving has been reported stolen.

Community Safety and Transport Management MEC, Dr Mpho Mothabane, commended traffic officers for showing commitment and hard work to save people's lives.

"Our officers have done a sterling work during Easter long weekend and we commend them for their commitment and hard work displayed," said Mothabane.

The MEC said the department had a huge challenge of reducing the rate of accidents and fatalities on public roads.



Community Safety and Transport Management MEC Dr Mpho Mothabane, interacting with one of the motorists

He however said this was not the responsibility of government alone.

"We have law abiding road users but their innocence on the road gets affected as a result of those irresponsible ones deciding to be on the wrong side of the law. Most of families have gone through the pain of death, [children] left orphans and adults widowed because of silly mistakes of people who don't value their lives. However, we will not relent until

there are no longer accidents and fatalities on our roads," warned Mothabane.

The MEC had, for the duration of the Easter long weekend, joined law enforcement operations in different parts of the province and interacted with road users, including taxi commuters and drivers as he distributed pamphlets and led the road safety ambassadorship.

He said the awareness campaigns were set to encourage safe road usage and re-

duce road accidents and fatalities, particularly during busy seasons like Easter weekend.

"We continue to experience high number of accidents and fatalities during busy seasons and this leads to government losing billions of rands that could have been utilized for service delivery, hence we initiate a positive change of attitude on our roads.

Research shows that the main contributing factors to loss of lives on the country's roads are reckless and negligent driving, over speeding, drunk driving, unroadworthy vehicles, driver fatigue and bad driver behavior.

"If all road users can obey the rules of the road and comply, it will save the country from death pains. Road safety is our responsibility. We should always stick to the speed limit, stay away from drunk driving, overloading and the use of cell phones while driving and make sure vehicles are roadworthy. If we can all avoid being on the wrong side of the law, South Africa will be a road carnage free country," MEC Mothabane said.

Traffic volumes have since decreased this week after the reopening of schools on Tuesday.

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Police officers searched vehicles at roadblocks during the Easter weekend

Two men remanded in custody for Ganyesa murders

Obakeng Maje

16/04/18 Semphete Pg 6 MWSARS POS

Two murder, kidnapping and rape accused Keabetswe Maseng (29) and Ofentse Maseko (24) have been remanded in custody at the Vryburg Magistrate's Court.

They appeared briefly on Wednesday on two counts of murder, four of attempted murder, car hijacking, business robbery, illegal possession of firearm and ammunition, kidnapping and rape.

The suspects were remanded in custody until 17 April 2018 for formal bail application.

Bokone Bophirima provincial police spokesperson, Lieutenant-Colonel Amanda Funani, said: "The suspects were apprehended after they allegedly shot and killed Bongani Lethogile and Edwin Chichindua in Ganyesa village, 70 kilometres outside Vryburg on Sunday (1 April 2018). The police found two men with gun wounds and a seriously injured

woman after responding to information about a shooting incident that occurred along the Ganyesa main road.

"It is alleged that a group of women were from a local tavern when the suspects tried to rob them. The women screamed for help and the two men who were driving past tried to assist them. Lethogile and Chichindua were allegedly shot at by the suspects and their vehicle collided with a fence".

Funani said Lethogile and Chichindua were later found dead inside their vehicle.

Acting Provincial Commissioner of the police, Major General Ryno Naidoo, commended the police for their quick response that led to the arrest of the suspects. He also expressed condolences to the families of the two men who lost their lives while trying to assist the women that were being robbed.

The incident saw members of the community going on a rampage, damaging property as they demanded that the accused be released to them.

"We urge members of the community to refrain from taking the law into their own hands. Community members should allow the police to continue with their investigations. The police will not allow lawlessness, including disrupting court proceedings, as that is tantamount to attacking the authority of the state," he said.

The community allegedly torched Ganyesa Magistrate's Court, a state vehicle and looted, foreign-owned shops. They also disrupted court proceedings at Ganyesa Magistrate's Court during the first appearance.

Minister of Justice and Correctional Services, Adv Michael Masutha, condemned the incident in the strongest possible terms. Masutha said no grievance, however legitimate, justifies the destruction of public or private property during protest action.

"We need to appreciate the fact that public property belongs to the people of South Africa. Burning a court, school,

clinic or any other public asset, negatively impacts on government's capacity to deliver services and wastes the little resources we have.

"This, in turn, lengthens the period that it would ordinarily take to resolve a plethora of our national challenges. The burning of the court has not advanced the cause of the protesters, rather it has meant that the court is obstructed and delayed from considering and settling important cases such as those of maintenance, assault, disputes and others," he said.

Masutha added that the Justice and Correctional Services department has provisionally moved the Ganyesa Magistrate's Court to the Vryburg Magistrate's Court. The administration of traffic related offences and non-criminal court services would, however, continue to operate at the Ganyesa Traffic department.

Twelve people were arrested and charged with public violence. They appeared at Vryburg Magistrate's Court on Monday.

Municipal boss 'beats up union leader'

Samwu: Maluleka hides fleet contract

By **Neo Goba**

The municipal manager of Madibeng local municipality in North West is facing charges of assault after he allegedly assaulted a union official who had demanded to see a contract between the municipality and a vehicle-leasing company which provides the municipality with fleet cars.

Morris Maluleka is being accused of assault by SA Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) local secretary, Ikgomotseng Kotsokwane.

Kotsokwane said the incident happened on Thursday at the municipal offices where he had gone to demand to see a copy of the contract between Madibeng and Bertobright, with which Maluleka has allegedly signed for 146 vehicles.

"We have opened a case of assault against the municipal manager of Madibeng local municipal... We feel that the contract that the municipal manager has signed with Bertobright for 146 vehicles will collapse the municipality," Kotsokwane said.

He said Maluleka refused to show them the contract and instead pushed and slapped him with an open hand.

North West police spokesman Brigadier Sabata Mokgwabone confirmed a charge has been laid.

"A case of common assault has been opened against the municipal manager. It is still under investigation and no arrest has been made," Mokgwabone said.

Kotsokwane told Sowetan they wrote to Maluleka a few weeks ago pleading with him for the copy of the contract, to no avail.

He said they wanted to see the terms of reference of the con-

tract as there were more vehicles than drivers at the municipality, which, he said, equated to wasteful expenditure.

"He's refusing us to see the contract and this only confirms our suspicion and we ask ourselves what is it that he's hiding?"

Maluleka yesterday denied that he assaulted Kotsokwane. He further dismissed claims of corruption at the municipality.

He accused Samwu of being bitter as he had clamped down on corruption.

"The problem is that according to the auditor-general's report, there are Madibeng [municipality] employees who own water tankers and contractors and these employees are illegally doing business with the municipality," Maluleka said.

"We were spending about R20-million a month [for leasing of vehicles] despite the fact that we are sitting with about 40 to 50 vehicles with mechanical problems..." said Maluleka.

According to auditor-general report on Brits-based municipality, about R870-million was spent unauthorised, while R170-million was irregular expenditure.



Samwu trashed Madibeng offices last week.