



Group Tensions and Informalisation of Community Leadership: Factors Affecting Social Cohesion and Collective Violence in Makhanda, Eastern Cape

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

This report presents the findings of research conducted by the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) in Makhanda (Eastern Cape Province) in August 2022 and January 2023. Conducted as part of the [Kagisano programme](#), this research builds on -and updates- an original study conducted in the same area in 2017. The 2017 study resulted in a [Grahamstown \(Makhanda\) Case Study Report](#) (hereinafter referred to as the ‘original report’). As an update of the original research, the current report should be read together with the above-mentioned detailed original report.

Like the original study, this research aims to identify obstacles to -and opportunities for- social cohesion in order to inform interventions to address collective or group-based violence and foster social cohesion in 16 selected sites in the country. In its simplest form, social cohesion refers to the ability of different population groups and people to peacefully live together differently (Freedom House, 2017¹). Updating the original research was important to assess whether there may have been significant changes in the empirical reality in the targeted, highly mobile and fluid communities, and by doing so, ensure that new interventions are not based on outdated data and information. Further, the new research collected additional baseline qualitative and quantitative data. This baseline data is not available in the original reports but is required for the new, planned community-based programmes.

1.2 METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

Findings discussed in this report are informed by three main data sources: i) desktop research or review of literature on relevant research themes, ii) qualitative interviews with key informants and general observations, and iii) community-based and targeted quantitative surveys.

In-depth face-to-face interviews and general observations were carried out in August 2022 by a team of two researchers and a lead researcher with vast experience in the field and the area. The team conducted a total of 14 in-depth face-to-face interviews with purposively sampled key informants. Targeted key informants for this research were leaders or members of organisations and institutions living, working in or familiar with the community. These included amongst others: faith-based organisations, women organisations, youth

¹ Freedom House, 2017. ‘[Social Cohesion Synthesis Report](#)’. Johannesburg: Freedom House.

organisations, civic and political organisations, sports and cultural groups, business fora or associations, stokvels and self-help organisations, labour unions, advocacy groups, school and student bodies, migrant organisations, international NGOs, the police, CPF, ward council, street communities, etc.

In Makhandanda, participants included key informants who are deeply and directly involved in the community, including informal and formal community leaders. The research targeted key informants for two reasons: (i) to get a sense of their own experience living and/working in the community, and (ii) to ask them about the community experience i.e., to draw on their situated knowledge, perspective, and professional experience to reflect and share information on community's lived experiences concerning specific research themes.

In addition to qualitative interviews, the research used community-based and targeted surveys to collect quantitative data. While digital, the surveys were administered by enumerators in person in January 2023. In Makhandanda, the surveys recorded responses from a total of 213 participants.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This research finds the following main issues that have direct or indirect implications for social cohesion and collective violence in Makhandanda. These issues need to be addressed for the programme to achieve its objectives of promoting social cohesion and preventing collective violence in the area:

1. **Group tensions and conflict:** Despite having a very low foreign national population compared to other cities, the relations and interactions between South Africans and foreign nationals in Makhandanda remain complex and tense. The perceived 'growing' population of foreign nationals in Makhandanda is said to be a threat to the locals' lives and livelihoods. Foreigners are often accused of stealing business opportunities and other various forms of social ills. Further, levels of suspicion and mistrust also exist between the 'bonafide Makhandans' and immigrants from other parts of the country, whom the 'locals' accuse of being disinterested in developing the town and only see the town as a place where they just generate income and leave.
2. **Socio-economic hardships:** Makhandanda residents face pressing livelihood and socio-economic hardships including i) unemployment, ii) poor service delivery characterized by lack of functional road systems, adequate housing and associated services including water, sewer systems, and electricity particularly in townships where Black people live; and iii) rising crime rates particularly murder and sexual offenses. As elsewhere, socio-economic challenges and hardships are an obstacle to social cohesion as they

undermine residents' safety and socio-economic prosperity as well as trust in local institutions of authority and leadership. This often leads to tensions and collective violence in the form of violent service delivery protests.

3. ***Distrust of formal authority and the emergence of informal and private community leadership:*** According to participants, Makhanda residents generally do not trust the formal structures of authority, particularly the municipality, ward councils, the police, and the justice system. Residents perceive these structures/institutions as incompetent, corrupt, and unhelpful, and have subsequently given up engaging with them with regards to their daily concerns such as crime, conflict resolution, and service provision. This lack of trust in formal institutions of authority has opened avenues for community driven informal and private leadership structures. The approaches to addressing conflict and societal challenges by some of these groups are often violent and punitive and do not operate within the confines of the law. Rule of law is a critical and indispensable building block for sustainable social cohesion and for the prevention of violence, personal or collective.
4. ***Collective violence:*** According to participants, Makhanda has, in the recent past, experienced two main types of collective (or group) violence: violent service delivery protests and university student protests. While in the past, service delivery protests in Makhanda have been largely peaceful, people's continued frustrations with poor service delivery have led some residents to stage violent protests. In the past years, Rhodes university students have organised protests, some of which turned violent, over various issues including the demand for a decolonised and deracialised education system; systemic exclusion; rape; water shortages at the university and surrounding locations

2.2 POPULATION GROUPS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS

As the original report indicates, the majority of the population of Makhanda is Black African, followed by Coloured, then Whites and Others. Its population growth has been largely driven by a combination of natural increase and in-migration especially from the Eastern Cape province and elsewhere across South Africa. Between 2010 and 2020, the town witnessed a steady average population growth of 1.03% per year (Makana Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2021-2022). According to respondents, Makhanda has, over the recent years, witnessed the growing presence of new immigrants both from within and beyond the borders of South Africa. As one participant explained:

Often, we see new, new faces popping up and down and these guys come from all over. If you meet someone, they will tell you that they come from Cape Town, I come from there too. Many of them ran

away from other towns, just to be here as well...Others are coming from as far as Pakistan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.²

Participants expressed that the town has witnessed significant demographic changes over the past 20 years. One participant for example noted: “The town is not the same anymore as it was 20 years ago. Almost everyone knew each other... Now, there are new faces everywhere.”³

According to participants, Makhanda residents have mixed feelings about the growing presence of ‘outsiders’ in the town. By outsiders, the respondents referred to people who are in Makhanda temporarily especially for economic reasons, and have homes elsewhere, either locally or internationally. Put simply, these are immigrants from elsewhere in the Eastern Cape and international immigrants from Pakistan, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria.

Some sections of the community generally feel that immigrants are taking away local business opportunities. According to a SANCO representative, these business owners have appropriated business opportunities that are meant for the locals. He explained:

They have taken all the strategic spots (business) in this community. Every busy corner, there is a shop owned by Ethiopians, those from Bangladesh, and Pakistanis. It is only them. You cannot see shops owned by locals. The majority of the shops here are owned and run by them (foreign nationals). The local businesses died when the foreigners came.⁴

While some participants indicated this perception creates tension and resentment towards foreign nationals, others expressed that the community has no problems with foreign nationals, especially those running small businesses in the townships. Asked to describe the nature of the relationship between foreign nationals and the locals, one participant explained: “We have no issues with ‘my friend’⁵. Many of them are renting spaces in our yards. Many people here have good relations with them. They get goods on credit and pay later. We also do not have a shopping centre nearby, so these people have brought services close to us.”⁶

As the previous report has shown, Makhanda East, largely populated by blacks and colloquially known as the *location* or *township*, is spatially segregated and does not have a mall or shopping centres. Residents must travel to town to do their shopping. The Spaza shops owned and run by some foreign nationals, some

² Interview with Makhanda respondent, 13 August 2022

³ Ibid

⁴ Interview, SANCO, 14 August 2022

⁵ A term colloquially used to refer to foreign nationals from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and Pakistan running small businesses especially in South Africa’s townships.

⁶ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 12 August 2022.

participants expressed, help to bridge this gap, and their ability to provide some residents with credit facilities makes them even more ideal for some residents.

Other than interactions largely based on economic transactions and benefits, there seem to be very low levels of interaction and mutuality between the residents of Makhanda and outsiders, particularly those from other countries. According to respondents, foreign nationals do not participate in any community programs or activities apart from those that are religiously related. Beyond the parameters of the church, there are very minimum interactions between the locals and outsiders.

While language barriers might arguably explain low levels of interactions between the locals and foreign nationals, they do explain the low levels of interactions among people sharing the same language and relatively similar cultural backgrounds. As the respondents noted, most of the blacks in Makhanda, who constitute the largest racial group, speak IsiXhosa as their first language. Despite sharing the same language, culture, and originating from relatively similar backgrounds, the levels of social interactions and participation in different community activities even amongst people of the 'same group' remain minimal. As respondents noted, this may be attributed to the fact that people who migrate to Makhanda from elsewhere across the country and beyond have little or no motivation to invest their time in community activities because they have homes elsewhere. As one participant explained: "They see the town as their cash cow, they are here only to milk the town, take money here, and develop their own homes. They do not participate in community activities because they do not see the town as their home. For some of us, this is our home."⁷

From the above excerpt, those born outside Makhanda are generally perceived not to have the interests of the town at heart and can easily move elsewhere if the town does not satisfy their interests. It is these perceptions that certain groups are less interested in participating in community activities, for instance, that somehow brew tension between different groups and create social cohesion challenges because 'we do not see the town the same way'.⁸

⁷ Interview, resident, 17 August 2022

⁸ Interview, with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

2.3 LIVELIHOOD AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

According to research participants, the main livelihood and socio-economic challenges Makhanda residents face include unemployment, poor service delivery, and crime.

Unemployment

Unemployment remains one of the major challenges faced by many people in Makhanda. One participant explained:

We have many issues here in Makhanda, but unemployment ranks the highest. So many people here are unemployed. The youths are frustrated. It frustrates us as the leaders because when people have something to complain about, they come to us. When they have nothing to eat, they come to come to you, see...they tell you that they don't have anywhere else to go. It pains. You have your own responsibilities at home. Then there are other kids that you also must look after. Yet, we have billionaires in this country, and selfish leaders who cannot plough back into our communities in whatever form.⁹

The unemployment situation in Makhanda reflects the country's overall picture and worries about the growing rates of unemployment in the country. In the first quarter of 2023, statistics reveal that the country's unemployment rate rose from 32.7% to 32.9%. The number of unemployed persons during this same period has risen by over 179 000.¹⁰

Despite the lack of employment opportunities, respondents also explained that many of the young people, especially those graduating straight from the local university and other technical colleges, are reluctant to either learn new skills or do other jobs that may not relate to their areas of specialisation. Certain jobs, such as those in construction and plumbing for instance, are often shunned by many young people as they are often considered "dirty and of low class"¹¹ Explaining what he thought were the contributing factors to unemployment in Makhanda, the participant said:

It's sad that people are looking down on some trades, like brick laying, especially those who have graduated from colleges, they are reluctant to learn new skills, technical skills that can help them to get by whilst they look for employment, something that immigrants from other countries have done.¹²

⁹ Interview, resident, 17 August 2022

¹⁰ Trading Economics. 2023. "South Africa Unemployment Rate - 2023 Data - 2024 Forecast - 2000-2022 Historical." 2023. <https://tradingeconomics.com/south-africa/unemployment-rate>.

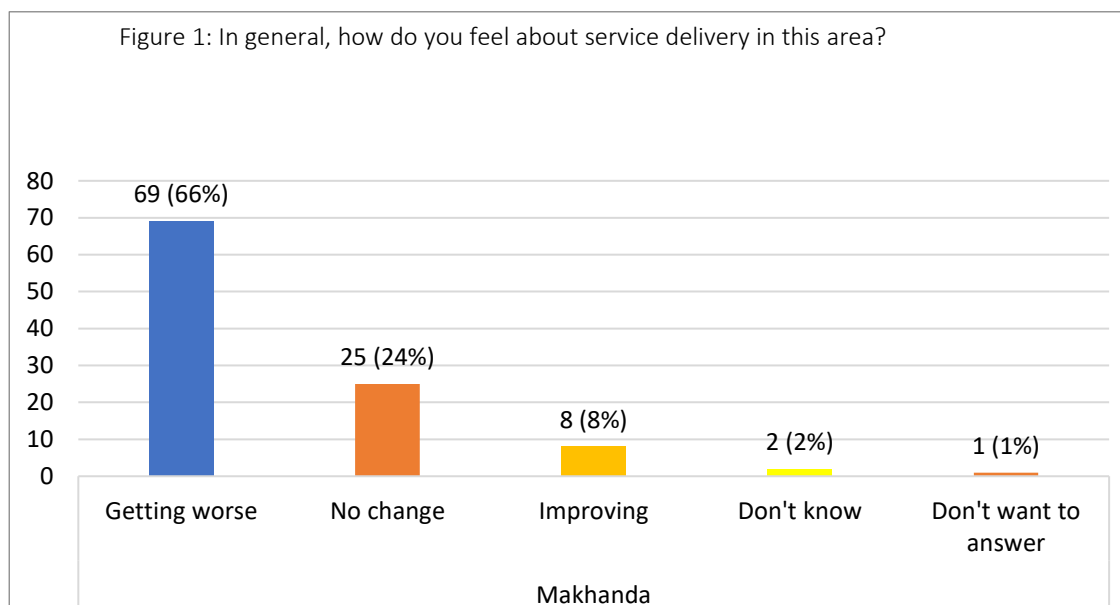
¹¹ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

¹² Interview, Makhanda resident, 18 August 2022

In a town of limited formal employment opportunities, participation in the informal economy has become the main livelihood source for some people in Makhanda. Street trading, waste recycling, and an emerging gambling culture are alternatives to formal forms of employment offered by the local municipality and the university. Importantly, the government, through the Department of Social Development, has several grants that qualifying and deserving citizens can apply for as one of the efforts to cushion citizens from economic shocks and poverty. These include, among others, grants for older persons, children, people living with disabilities, and the Social Relief of Distress grants. Combined, these grants, as participants highlighted, are some of the sources from where people draw their livelihoods. The economic impacts of COVID increased the demand and application for various grants across the whole country, and Makhanda was no exception.

Poor service delivery

According to the respondents, the Makhanda residents (particularly those residing in Makhanda East or townships, as they are popularly known, the majority of whom are black), are generally not satisfied with the level and quality of service delivery in their areas. Indeed, 90% of surveyed Makhanda residents (n=105) feel that service delivery is getting worse (66%) and has not changed (24% in their area; only 8% feel that service delivery is improving (Figure 1. See more survey results in Annex 1).



Lack of functional road systems, adequate housing, and associated services including water, sewer systems, and electricity are some of the pressing challenges faced by many residents in Makhanda. Commenting on the extent of service delivery, one participant expressed their disappointment that the post-apartheid government

has done very little to either provide decent and quality services to its citizens, or at least maintain the infrastructure that it (the government) inherited from the colonial regime. He charged:

Service delivery here is a huge problem. People do not ask for much, but just decent services. They are failing to provide the basic services to make people happy. People's rights are being violated every day due to a lack of access to basic services. I am saying violated in the sense that, at least basic needs, you have the right to basic needs. There are no exceptions. For example, look at the infrastructure here, the roads. These roads were made by the white government before the new government came into power. All the ANC had to do was maintain these roads. It's not happening.¹³

Another participant echoed the same sentiments: "So, when you were driving here, you noticed our infrastructure, the potholes left, right and centre. How do we expect business investors to invest in such a town with such kind of a potholes and this infrastructure that is not maintained?"¹⁴

Participants attributed the existing challenges of service delivery in Makhanda to the antagonistic forces between the municipal administrative forces and politics. As one participant explained:

The municipality here has two key components. There is the political arm and the administrative one. The political arm is always trying to influence municipal decisions for political reasons, and this has huge implications for service delivery. Politicians see things in a certain way, and those in administration also see things in their own ways. At the end, there are no synergies between these two groups.¹⁵

In 2020, the Legal Resource Centre, acting on behalf of Makhanda residents, obtained a court order against the Makana Local Municipality that compelled the municipality to address sanitation problems that were being experienced by the residents.¹⁶ As the other sections of this report will show, poor service delivery in Makhanda has often resulted in violent protests from disgruntled residents who often feel betrayed by the post-apartheid government.

Crime

The low unemployment rates coupled with high levels of poverty breed a conducive environment for different types of criminal activities.¹⁷ All participants expressed concern over the growing levels of crime in a city once

¹³ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

¹⁴ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

¹⁵ Interview, with Makhanda respondent, 12 August 2022

¹⁶ Jordaan, N. 2020. "Makana Municipality Ordered to Address Sanitation Problems in Makhanda after Sewage Spills." TimesLIVE. March 6, 2020. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2020-06-03-makana-municipality-ordered-to-address-sanitation-problems-in-makhanda-after-sewage-spills/>.

¹⁷ Beall, Jo, Owen Crankshaw, and Susan Parnell. 2000. "The Causes of Unemployment in Post-apartheid Johannesburg and the Livelihood Strategies of the Poor." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 91 (4): 379–96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00125>.

perceived to be the 'City of Saints' because of its popularity for being home to multiple religious institutions (Muvhuti 2019). Participants indicated that contact crimes (murder, attempted murder, common assault, GBV, sexual offences, aggravated robbery, and common robbery); property-related crimes (for instance, stock theft), and drug-related crimes are the most common crimes in Makhanda. These views confirmed the 2022 crime statistics for the town as shown in the figure below:

Table I: Crime stats for Grahamstown Police Station: Q3 (July - September) 2022¹⁸

CRIME CATEGORY	July to September 2018	July to September 2019	July to September 2020	July to September 2021	July to September 2022	Count Diff	% Change
CONTACT CRIMES (CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON)							
Murder	1	3	7	1	5	4	400.0%
Sexual Offences	12	11	9	7	14	7	100.0%
Attempted murder	4	0	2	2	3	1	50.0%
Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm	45	57	42	30	38	8	26.7%
Common assault	72	86	59	47	76	29	61.7%
Common robbery	23	20	21	15	17	2	13.3%
Robbery with aggravating circumstances	30	36	27	21	14	-7	-33.3%
Total Contact Crimes (Crimes against the person)	187	213	167	123	167	44	35.8%
Total Sexual Offences							
Rape	7	8	9	5	8	3	60.0%
Sexual Assault	5	2	0	2	5	3	150.0%
Attempted sexual offences	0	1	0	0	1	1	1 Count Higher
Contact sexual offences	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 Count
Total Sexual Offences	12	11	9	7	14	7	100.0%
SOME SUBCATEGORIES OF AGGRAVATED ROBBERY							
Carjacking	1	0	0	1	0	-1	-100.0%
Robbery at residential premises	4	3	2	5	1	-4	-80.0%
Robbery at non-residential premises	5	4	4	2	1	-1	-50.0%
Bank Robbery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 Count
Robbery of cash in transit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 Count
Truck hijacking	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 Count
CONTACT-RELATED CRIMES							
Arson	0	0	0	1	1	0	0.0%
Malicious damage to property	21	29	32	27	27	0	0.0%
Total Contact-Related Crimes	21	29	32	28	28	0	0.0%
PROPERTY-RELATED CRIMES							
Burglary at non-residential premises	28	30	24	15	19	4	26.7%
Burglary at residential premises	109	93	65	55	56	1	1.8%
Theft of motor vehicle and motorcycle	11	9	1	3	2	-1	-33.3%
Theft out of or from motor vehicle	58	56	85	47	34	-13	-27.7%
Stock-theft	3	3	10	1	3	2	200.0%
Total Property-Related Crimes	209	191	185	121	114	-7	-5.8%
OTHER SERIOUS CRIMES							
All theft not mentioned elsewhere	137	143	97	137	144	7	5.1%
Commercial crime	41	36	29	48	53	5	10.4%
Shoplifting	17	40	22	24	25	1	4.2%
Total Other Serious Crimes	195	219	148	209	222	13	6.2%
Total 17 Community Reported Serious Crimes	612	652	532	481	531	50	10.4%
CRIME DETECTED AS A RESULT OF POLICE ACTION							
Illegal possession of firearms and ammunition	2	0	4	4	0	-4	-100.0%
Drug-related crime	21	18	29	19	29	10	52.6%
Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs	23	15	2	2	4	2	100.0%
Sexual offences detected as a result of police action	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 Count
Total crime detected as a result of police action	46	33	35	25	33	8	32.0%

As the above statistics show, there has been a steady increase in different categories of contact crimes in Q3 of 2022. For example, in Q3 2022, murder crimes increased by 400% from the same period in 2021; sexual offenses increased by 100%, and the number of total contact crimes increased by 35.8% in the same period.

¹⁸ Stas SA, 2022. https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1854&PPN=P0211&SCH=73290

The concerns towards the growing criminal activities in Makhanda are reflected in the town's Integrated Development Plan (IDP), with intensifying the fight against crime as one of its core priorities. A weak justice system, coupled by corruption amongst some law enforcement officials has weakened the relations between ordinary people and the state's security and justice systems. With growing levels of crime in their communities, residents in Makhanda have taken it upon themselves to deal with the perpetrators of crime, and in most instances, with absolute disregard to the law. Community organisations such as Anti-Crime have emerged as alternatives to what most respondents described as a flawed, ineffective, and corrupt justice system. As one participant explained:

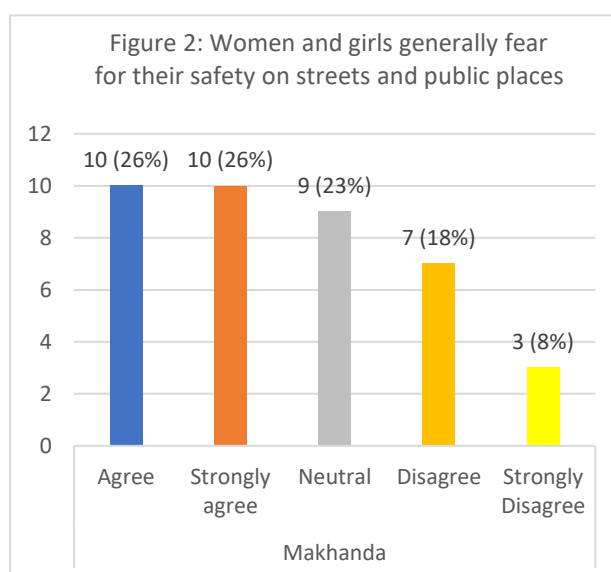
These days, people would rather call guys from Anti-Crime than report to the police. The problem with the police is that they arrest someone today, and tomorrow, you see the same person back on the streets. I am not sure if the problem is with the police or with our courts. Sometimes, you hear that the case was thrown away because there was not enough evidence for a conviction. People get tired...¹⁹

Gender-based crime and violence

According to respondents, GBV is also a serious and recurring problem in Makhanda, but it remains one of the main underreported crimes. Indeed, i) 70% of surveyed Makhanda residents (=105) know at least one woman or girl who have been a victim of violent crime; ii) 56% of surveyed Makhanda women and girls (n=39) agree that violent crimes against women are a major problem in this area, and iii) 52% of surveyed Makhanda women and girls (n=39) agree that women and girls generally fear for their safety on streets and public places; only 16% disagree (Figure 2).

Commenting on the concerns of the growing cases of GBV and precisely violence against women, one participant explained how violence has been appropriated by men as a form of expressing power over women, as well as those who identify as LGBTQ+ communities. One participant explained:

Men generally think and feel that they own female bodies. That is why the levels of gender-based violence are high everywhere in this country. Just within the past four or three months, two women were killed by one person. One of them was our member. Violence against women is very high in this



¹⁹ Interview, with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022.

community. Women are getting abused, women are getting raped, women are being killed by men because of men, that is not a good thing. It is something that, as men, we are seeing women as soft targets, we are taking out our frustrations on them because we think we own them. It is even sad because the police are not doing enough to fight these issues...²⁰

The victims, as the above excerpt has shown, do not see reasons to report such cases due to a lack of trust in the police. They “often suffer in silence, and if they decide to report, they would rather turn to informal community structures such as Anti-Crime than go to the police station.”²¹

Some respondents placed the blame for the rising crime, and community frustrations on the courts and the justice system. One respondent, for example, lamented:

It's becoming so bad, and often when crime happens, if the crime is out of hand, they will first blame the police. And I can tell you now, it's not the police. The police do their job; the main failure is our justice system. This morning, we dealt with guys who had been arrested for bank robberies, hijacking, and all that stuff. They got how many years? The guys are still walking the streets. People feel betrayed by cases like these.²²

Growing concerns towards crime levels have propelled investments in surveillance systems, especially by private security companies that, in any case, are equally key actors in policing Makhanda. With almost 30 years of existence, Hi-Tec, a privately owned and arguably, the biggest private security company in Makhanda has in the recent years revolutionised its security operations by investing in latest surveillance systems. According to its Operations Manager, the company has installed cameras in popular crime hotspots.

The above-discussed socio-economic challenges and hardships are an obstacle to social cohesion as they undermine residents' safety and socio-economic prosperity as well as trust in local institutions of authority and leadership. As discussed later, this leads to tensions and collective violence, for example, in the form of violent service delivery protests.

2.4 AUTHORITY AND LEADERSHIP

Makhanda, like elsewhere, has diverse institutions of authority and community leadership structures, both formal and informal. These institutions and structures included the local municipality, the police, ward councils, political parties, civic organisations, business forums, traditional structures, women's groups, social movements, and the community policing forum (CPF) among others. Because of the town's spatial diversity,

²⁰ Interview, with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

²¹ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022.

²² Interview with Makhanda respondent, 13 August 2022

some institutions are popular in certain locations than others. For instance, community leadership structures are more active and visible in townships than they are in affluent suburban locations.

Political leadership

In Makhanda, political parties remain one of the visible leadership structures, with the ANC being the dominant party. In the recent Local Municipality Elections (2021), the ANC, for instance, garnered 11 seats of the available 14 seats. Figure 1 below shows how the ANC fared against its other political competitors.

Figure 1: Makana Local Municipality Elections, 2021

Party	Ward			List			Total seats
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats	
African National Congress	9,341	49.53	11	9,333	51.82	3	14
Makana Citizens Front	3,277	17.38	0	3,396	18.86	5	5
Democratic Alliance	3,127	16.58	2	3,182	17.67	3	5
Economic Freedom Fighters	1,130	5.99	0	1,050	5.83	2	2
Independent candidates	1,099	5.83	1				1
Makana Independent New Deal	330	1.75	0	371	2.06	0	0
Patriotic Alliance	184	0.98	0	222	1.23	0	0
Azanian People's Organisation	142	0.75	0	172	0.95	0	0
Freedom Front Plus	135	0.72	0	136	0.76	0	0
African Transformation Movement	95	0.50	0	149	0.83	0	0
Total	18,860	100.00	14	18,011	100.00	13	27

Source: <https://wikitable.frith.dev/lge2021/EC104>

The ANC, respondents noted, is popular in the townships while the DA, its main competitor, is more popular in the Western parts of the town (the suburbs). Ironically, the ANC continues to be very popular and a preferred political party amongst especially the blacks in the townships, despite the indications of frustrations that the ruling party's councillors are always not available and yet people have been voting for the same party over the years.²³ Importantly, new political players like Makhanda Citizens Front are slowly gaining popularity, as evidenced by how they performed in the local municipal elections, as shown in Figure 1. The new party's resolution on corruption and poor service delivery resonated well with many residents in Makhanda.²⁴

²³ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 14 August 2022

²⁴ Majavu, A. 2021. "Tired of Corruption, Fair and Square Is How Makana Sees Future Politics." TimesLIVE. September 7, 2021. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-07-09-tired-of-corruption-fair-and-square-is-how-makana-sees-future-politics/>.

Informal community leadership

The absence of trusted formal leadership structures in many communities across the country has led to the emergence of often organic, informal structures. According to respondents, these include street committees, anti-crime groups, and many other informal structures that are responsible for everyday life in the communities. Informal leadership structures are often seen as better alternatives to the formalised structures of authorities, whom most of the respondents noted that they might exist on paper but are non-existent in a practical sense. As one participant explained:

“They do not show up when we need their services the most. That is why when we have problems of crime, for instance, we rather report to anti-crime groups because they are here in the township, and they respond effectively and on time to our issues.”²⁵

In the eastern and northern parts of the town, the Community Policing Forum (CPF) is very popular and often attends to community challenges, especially those related to crime, safety, and security. On the other hand, affluent communities in the western parts of the town are largely serviced by private security companies, notably Hi-Tec Security. This was confirmed by a representative from a private security company who stated:

Most of our clients are from the suburbs and the areas surrounding the university (Rhodes). We do not have clients from the locations. But we try and extend our services there if need be. For instance, at times we receive emergency calls from the locations, and if we have people nearby those areas on patrols, we send them there whilst we contact the police. We also have contacts for members of the CPF, and anti-crime groups. We also contact them if we receive reports from the communities. You will find out that sometimes, you get to the scene, and the CPF members are already there.²⁶

The above sentiments point to a relatively close relationship that exists between the different actors who are responsible for policing communities in Makhanda. While community leadership structures such as CPF and Anti-Crime are applauded for their active engagements and involvements in community activities, concerns were raised by respondents about how some of these ‘leaders’ are implicated in cases of crime, violence, and the destabilisation of the communities. As one respondent explained:

They are becoming the law themselves. In the beginning, they were quite good. We worked well with them; they have helped us before. They followed the right procedures and somewhere along the line, they started falling off the bus, which we need to sit with them and try get them back on the bus again. The reason being that they are causing more damage than what criminals are doing. There is a couple of murder cases where they are implicated. There are a couple of people who have been killed in the last two years, badly, which is becoming a big problem! Uhhh... so yeah, in the beginning they were doing the right things- they were phoning us and phoning the police. We would respond. We would

²⁵ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 17 August 2022

²⁶ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 13 August 2022

arrest the person, but taking the thing (law) into your own hands is not really resolving the issue. At the end of the day, they get in trouble more than the criminals, you understand.

As the above explanation reveals, in the absence of formalised institutions of authority, informal structures have the potential to destabilise communities when they become laws unto themselves, and this has huge implications for the realisation of socially cohesive and peaceful communities.

Social Movements

While the organisations identified in the preceding section seem to focus largely on issues of safety and security, the challenges of service delivery in Makhanda have birthed different organisations that have been vocal about service delivery challenges. SANCO, Unemployed People's Movement (UPM), Masifunde Education and Development Trust, amongst others, have been vocal about raising awareness about various socio-economic challenges confronting the town of Makhanda, and in many instances, have taken the responsibility of asking the local municipalities to account for service delivery problems. According to the respondents, the calls for service delivery are not just ordinary calls, but are demands for citizenship, belonging, and recognition in a post-apartheid society. Narrating the motivation behind the establishment of the UPM, its leader said:

There is a leadership crisis in this town, and poor service delivery. We then felt that we must organize ourselves into movements, so we are able to amplify our voice. What we have witnessed since 1994 is leaders who are not accountable to the citizens, but only accountable to their parties.²⁷

The participant went on to explain the state of poor service delivery in the town and how desperate the community is to see things change. Generally, when people are not satisfied with the extent of service delivery in their communities, they tend to somehow dissociate themselves from the politicians and the activities of the community where politicians are present. A participant stated:

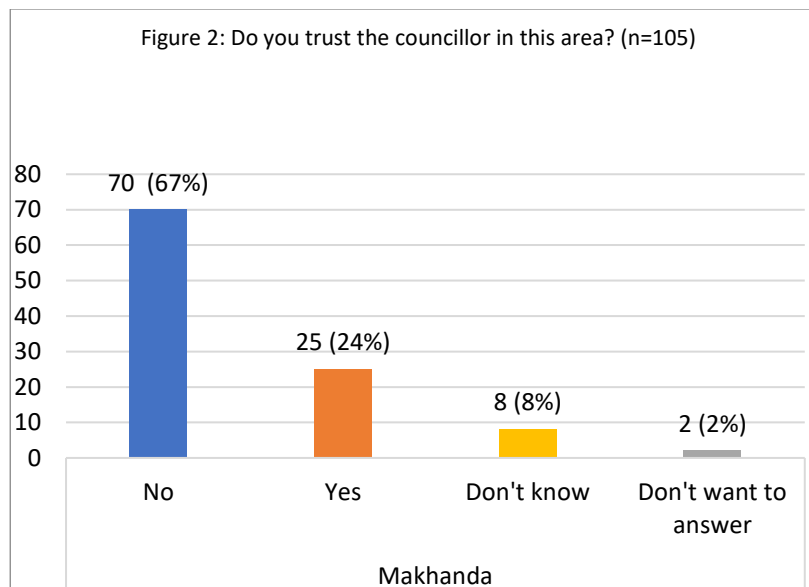
The trust and connections between people and their leaders (political) is fading. You see that trust deficit in the planning meetings. People don't show up, they don't attend. You see this trust deficit even on social networks. How people relate to politicians and political parties. If people must speak about political parties and politicians, do they not speak of corruption? They do. That's the language of thieving. That you see on social networks.²⁸

The lack of trust in formal leadership structures was made clear by our survey results, indicating that 67% and 63% of surveyed Makhanda residents (n=105) do not trust the councillor (Figure 2) and the police, respectively. Survey results also confirm residents' disengagement or dissociation from formal structures, as, for example,

²⁷ Interview, with Makhanda respondent, 14 August 2022

²⁸ Ibid

77% of surveyed Makhanda residents (n=105) do not engage often with local structures to address service delivery concerns; 54% never do.



2.5 COLLECTIVE VIOLENCE

According to respondents, there are various types of collective or group violence in Mamelodi East. The most

According to respondents, Makhanda has, in the recent past, experienced two main types of collective (or group) violence: violent service delivery protests and university student protests.

Violent service delivery protests

While in the past, service delivery protests in Makhanda have been largely peaceful, people's continued frustrations with poor service delivery by the local municipality has driven acts of violent protests amongst residents who often use these protests as acts of claiming citizenship, recognition, and belonging.²⁹ In May 2021, members of the local taxi association, BATA and Umcedo, together with other residents, brought the town to a halt when they blocked roads to protest against the state of service delivery in the town, including poor roads.³⁰

Often, a dysfunctional local government that has allowed infrastructure to deteriorate has been cited by respondents as the main cause of poor service delivery in Makhanda. In 2020, the High Court ordered the

²⁹ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 14 August 2022

³⁰ Nash, S. 2021. "All Eyes on Makhanda as Taxi Industry Brings Town to a Halt." ALGAO, May 24, 2021. <https://www.algoafm.co.za/local/all-eyes-on-makhanda-as-taxi-industry-brings-town-to-a-halt>.

dissolution of Makana Municipality for its unconstitutional lack of service delivery (Ellis 2020). In its Integrated Development Plan 2021-2022, the Makana Municipality identified water and sanitation infrastructure, roads, and pedestrian maintenance amongst others as key areas that required urgent attention (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). Attention to these key issues should not come as a surprise, considering the protests in recent years by the residents regarding poor sanitation, water, and roads among others. While the municipality officials often cite budgetary problems as the main issue impacting service delivery, the general sense from the respondents is that there is a lack of skilled human resources in the municipal structures to propel service delivery and development. One participant, for example, explained:

It looks like people have subcontracted their freedom and expectations to people who are not skilled to run our communities. If you look at that municipal structure, I mean, people in positions of authority lack the necessary skills. So, the problem with the municipality is not just a material problem, like a lack of resources, like finances, it is a crisis of human resources.³¹

University student protests

Rhodes university in Makhanda has in the past years seen a wave of student protests on various issues, chief amongst them, the demand for a decolonised and deracialised education system; systemic exclusion; rape; and most recently, protests over water outages at the university and surrounding locations. According to one participant, the institution's education system was systematically designed to exclude learners from underprivileged backgrounds, who, in any case, struggle with accommodation and finances to fund their desired programs. These circumstances, the respondent noted, have created a society of desperation. He explained:

...so many young learners are excluded by the university, but systematically. This somehow creates a society of desperation, and you know, a society that survives on desperation is a society that ought to be replaced. We need more activists to fight for a better society.³²

While students have often protested at Rhodes University and other tertiary institutions across the country for different reasons, some mentioned in the preceding section, the recent protests over water outages mirror the extent of service delivery by the municipality in Makhanda. In May this year, more than 300 students at Rhodes University joined other residents and civic organisations in Makhanda to demand immediate and long-term solutions to the water outages that had rocked different parts of the town, including the university.³³

³¹ Interview with Makhanda respondent, 12 August 2022

³² Interview with Makhanda respondent, 14 August 2022

³³ Dyongman, Loyiso. 2023. "'How Are We Going to Survive without Water?' Asks Protesting Rhodes University Student." News24. May 8, 2023.

3. CONCLUSION

This research finds the following main issues that have direct or indirect implications for social cohesion and collective violence in Makhanda. These issues need to be addressed for the programme to achieve its objectives of promoting social cohesion and preventing collective violence in the area.

Group tensions and conflict: Despite having a very low foreign national population compared to other cities, the relations and interactions between South Africans and foreign nationals in Makhanda remain complex and tense. The perceived ‘growing’ population of foreign nationals in Makhanda is said to be a threat to the locals’ lives and livelihoods. Foreigners are often accused of stealing business opportunities and other various forms of social ills. Further, levels of suspicion and mistrust also exist between the ‘bonafide Makhandans’ and immigrants from other parts of the country, whom the ‘locals’ accuse of being disinterested in developing the town and only see the town as a place where they just generate income and leave.

Socio-economic hardships: Makhanda residents face pressing livelihood and socio-economic hardships including i) unemployment, ii) poor service delivery characterized by lack of functional road systems, adequate housing and associated services including water, sewer systems, and electricity particularly in townships where Blacks live; and iii) rising crime rates particularly murder and sexual offenses. As elsewhere, socio-economic challenges and hardships are an obstacle to social cohesion as they undermine residents’ safety and socio-economic prosperity as well as trust in local institutions of authority and leadership. This often leads to tensions and collective violence in the form of violent service delivery protests.

Distrust of formal authority and the emergence of informal and private community leadership: According to participants, Makhanda residents generally do not trust the formal structures of authority, particularly the municipality, ward councils, the police, and the justice system. Residents perceive these structures as incompetent, corrupt, and unhelpful, and have subsequently given up engaging with them with regard to their daily concerns such as crime, conflict resolution, and service provision. This lack of trust in formal institutions of authority has opened avenues for community-driven informal and private leadership structures. The approaches to addressing conflict and societal challenges by some of these groups are often violent and punitive and do not operate within the confines of the law. Rule of law is a critical and indispensable building block for sustainable social cohesion and for the prevention of violence, personal or collective.

Collective violence: According to participants, Makhanda has, in the recent past, experienced two main types of collective (or group) violence: violent service delivery protests and university student protests. While in the past, service delivery protests in Makhanda have been largely peaceful, people’s continued frustrations with

poor service delivery have led some residents to stage violent protests. In the past years, Rhodes university students have organised protests, some of which turned violent, over various issues including the demand for a decolonised and deracialised education system; systemic exclusion; rape; and water shortages at the university and surrounding locations.

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