

LABOUR OF LOVE: Preparations get under way for WoHer Sisulu's funeral route of Uncle Tom's Community Hall Photograph: CARA VIERECKL  
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BY LUMKA OLIPHANT

he short term insurance industry is losing about R1-billion a year to car theft syndicates \_ and fraudsters - who are shipping luxury vehicles out of the country.

To stem the tide, the South African Police Services have joined forces with their Southern African Development Community (SADC) counterparts to stamp out the thriving stolen car "export" market which involves mainly luxury vehicles.

Operation Mangochi is one of a number of highly successful intelligence-driven cross-border operations launched on the basis of SARPCCO's (Southern African Regional Police Chiefs' Cooperation Committee) constitution and agreement.

"The agreement is a trans-national or crossborder communication and policing forum between the different police agencies around the southern African region," said spokesperson for the SAPS Senior Superintendent Mary Martins-Engelbrecht.

Martins-Engelbrecht said even though the many successful cross-border operations focus on certain identified crimes, such as drugs and firearm trafficking, high priority is given to the combating and investigation of cross-border vehicle crime in the region, because SADC countries lose millions in revenue.

"Organised crime is a phenomenon which is generally recognised as contributing to global problems that adversely affect not only security, but also harm financial systems and affect economic prosperity," said Martins-Engelbrecht.

Within 10 days of launching Operation Mangochi in February, 33 luxury vehicles were impounded in Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Botswana. And 28 of these vehicles were reported stolen or hijacked in South Africa.

In their first-ever operation in Angola at the beginning of April, 69 South African luxury vehicles were recovered, and 21 were found in Zimbabwe.

Superintendent Justus van Zyl, commander of the International Vehicle Crime Investigation Unit, said that almost every day luxury vehicles leave South Africa for various SADC countries through the ports. Others are being taken by their rightful owners when they cannot afford their monthly instalments.

"This is what we call a hoola-hoop, because the owner will drive the car to another country, sell it and come back to South Africa and

report the car stolen so that he or she can claim from their insurance company," said Van Zyl.

Van Zyl said that the investigation was costing the South African government a lot of money, because the procedure required them to send complainants to identify the cars in the respective countries.

"If we had to send one complainant to Angola, we would pay R6 000 for a return flight, a hotel costs \$200 (about R1 470) a day, supply food and make sure that they are driven to the right places, so it's a costly business," he said.

Caroline da Silva, executive spokesperson for the South African Insurance Association, confirmed that people were taking their own cars over the borders.

She said between 15% and 30% of vehicle claims had a fraudulent element and was costing the motor insurance industry about R1-billion a year.

Da Silva said they were working together with Business Against Crime.

The paraffin has run out, the food is sure to follow suit, and the seven-month-old baby on Seline Nakeng's back has no idea his family is on the verge of a crisis.

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become a catalyst to register people who have long been wary of existing formally in government eyes.

But while the government struggles with documentation and its own bureaucratic problems, Gauteng's hungry are left to rely on themselves.

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uCommunication in SADC is improving, the SAPS is doing a good job, but we have a problem with the legal framework in some countries because of the innocent-buyer clause," said Da Silva.

Martins-Engelbrecht said that millions of rands' worth of vehicles had been recovered and repatriated to the respective countries as a direct result of the close co-operation between the law enforcement agencies.

But to further strengthen the relationship, the SAPS has sent its members to Swaziland to present a SADC Vehicle Crime Training Course.

The course forms part of the SARPCCO's training initiative, and is aimed at sharing expertise with 30 detectives from 12 SADC countries.

It will equip those attending with specialised investigation skills, spe-

cially formulated to apply in their different countries, when dealing with vehicle crimes. She added that the investigators would also receive training on how to deal effectively with vehicle crime syndicates operating across the borders.

The involvement. and information from the citizens across the spectrum proved invaluable to investigators and law enforcers in their common goal to hamper and eradicate cross-border crimes. Criminals and crime syndicates find it more and more difficult to ply their trade across the borders. The hands-on integrated approach by the different policing agencies is determined to paralyse the market for stolen vehicles and thereby protect the inhabitants of the region," said Martins-Engelbrecht.

R14-million for what Nakeng and others have come to call Winnie Mandela Park. Masingi has seen its transformation from untilled farmland to a place of tarred roads and even running water in some places.

Among the shacks of mostly tree kwonknc and h'lanin \_\_ nr Frw- Han

KEEPING THE SOUND ALIVE: Bongonile'onozo has been accused : late lgrooner' Mohlatinl, but Zonozo moirgoins he Is preserving TV No ID, no food parcel for shack dwellers He watches as tive of her children come home each day to the harsh reality of the familyis single bed and little more than bread to fill their stomachs.

til need a job. Monday to Friday, whatever, I need a job," Nakeng said, nninl-lu nnniwn nf half '1 ln"? AP th

Motsoatose said she is often forced to refer people to local non-governmental organisations, who themselves sometimes lack the resources or management capabilities to deal effectively with those in need. But Lesufi said the number of , 2", ": -nn\$vm nnnnln