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Ferlio

Group of Investigators

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NEWSLETTER

Volume 07 – June 2021

In this newsletter, you will find an article discussing Mahatma Gandhi's Great-Granddaughter Jailed for Fraud in South Africa. The increase in identity theft in SA and the rise of Covid-19 Vaccination Card Fraud. We make special mention of A21. Katie from the organization provided an insightful article regarding human trafficking. We also include "Into the Second Decade of The So Called Rhino War" by the investigator of the month, Maj Gen (ret) Johan Jooste.

MAHATMA GANDHI'S GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER JAILED FOR FRAUD IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY HINDUSTAN TIMES

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/mahatma-gandhi-s-great-granddaughter-jailed-for-fraud-in-south-africa-101623111683741.html>

A 56-year-old great-granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi, who was an accused in a six-million rand fraud and forgery case, has been sentenced to seven years in jail by a Durban court.

Ashish Lata Ramgobin was found guilty by the court on Monday.

She was accused of defrauding businessman SR Maharaj after he advanced R6.2 million to her for allegedly clearing import and Customs duties for a non-existent consignment from India. He was promised a share of profits.

Lata Ramgobin, who is the daughter of noted rights activists Ela Gandhi and late Mewa Ramgobind, was also refused leave to appeal both the conviction and the sentence by the Durban Specialized Commercial Crime Court.

When trial in the case against Lata Ramgobin started in 2015, Brigadier Hangwani Mulaudzi of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) had said that she allegedly provided forged invoices and documents to convince potential investors that three containers of linen were being shipped in from India.

At that time, Lata Ramgobin was released on a bail of 50,000 rand.

On Monday, the court during the hearing was informed that Lata Ramgobin had met Maharaj, director of the New Africa Alliance Footwear Distributors, in August 2015.

The company imports, manufactures and sells clothing, linen and footwear. Maharaj's company also provides finance to other companies on a profit-share basis. Lata Ramgobin had told Maharaj that she had imported three containers of linen for the South African Hospital Group, NetCare.

"She said she was experiencing financial difficulties to pay for import costs and customs, and she needed the money to clear the goods at the harbor," NPA spokesperson Natasha Kara said on Monday.

"She advised him (Maharaj) that she needed R6.2 million. To convince him, she showed him what she claimed was a signed purchase order for the goods. Later that month, she sent him what seemed to be a NetCare invoice and delivery note as proof that the goods were delivered and payment was imminent," she said.

Lata Ramgobin "further sent him confirmation from NetCare's bank account that payment had been made", Kara said.

Because of Ramgobin's family credentials and NetCare documents, Maharaj had entered into a written agreement with her for the loan.

However, after Maharaj found out that the documents were forged and NetCare had no arrangements with Lata Ramgobin, he laid criminal charges.

Ramgobin was founder and executive director of the Participative Development Initiative at the NGO International Centre for Non-Violence, where she described herself as "an activist with focus on environmental, societal and political interests."

A number of other descendants of Mahatma Gandhi are human rights activists and among them are Lata Ramgobin's cousins Kirti Menon, the late Satish Dhupelia, and Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie.

Ramgobin's mother Ela Gandhi in particular has been internationally recognized for her efforts, including national honors from both India and South Africa.

MASSIVE INCREASE IN CRIMINALS TRYING TO STEAL YOUR IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY BUSINESSTECH –

[HTTPS://BUSINESSTECH.CO.ZA/NEWS/FINANCE/496229/MASSIVE-INCREASE-IN-CRIMINALS-TRYING-TO-STEAL-YOUR-IDENTITY-IN-SOUTH-AFRICA/](https://businessstech.co.za/news/finance/496229/massive-increase-in-criminals-trying-to-steal-your-identity-in-south-africa/)

Global insights group TransUnion has detected a significant surge in fraud and criminal activity related to financial services in South Africa, with fraud in this sector surging over 187% in the last year.

As more consumers go online for banking and other financial transactions, TransUnion said that fraudsters are ramping up their efforts in the financial services industry, resulting in an increase in digital fraud attempts.

South Africa's data tracks global trends, where the rate of financial services fraud attempts increased 149%, the group said.

Across all industries, the rate of suspected digital fraud attempts globally rose 24% when comparing the first four months of 2021 with the last four months of 2020. In South Africa, the overall percentage of fraud attempts increased by 7% during the same time period.

TransUnion monitors digital fraud attempts reported by businesses in varied industries such as financial services, healthcare, insurance, retail and telecommunications and gambling and gaming.

The conclusions are based on intelligence from billions of transactions and more than 40,000 websites and apps.

In financial services, the primary type of fraud being committed involves 'true identity theft' – which is when a criminal uses the stolen identity of a customer to commit fraud.

The second and third most reported type of digital fraud by TransUnion financial services customers are first party application fraud and account takeover, respectively.

Top Suspected Digital Fraud Rate Attempt Increases and Declines by Industry

Industry	Suspected Fraud Percentage Change from South Africa	Top Type of Fraud Globally
Largest Percentage Increases		
Financial Services	187.34%	True Identity Theft
Travel & Leisure	29.47%	Credit Card Fraud
Communities (online dating, forums, etc.)	22.66%	Profile Misrepresentation
Largest Percentage Declines		
Gaming	-39.30%	Gold Farming
Insurance	-28.45%	Suspected Ghost Broker
Retail	-10.28%	Promotion Abuse

First-party application fraud is when a consumer refuses to repay legitimately incurred debts and/or falsely claims to be a victim of identity fraud to evade debt. Account takeover is when someone other than the owner of an account uses the account without permission, indicating that the account has been maliciously compromised.

“An interesting dynamic is playing out where we are seeing other industries facing far fewer suspected fraud attempts than what has been observed in financial services. In some cases, we are seeing a decline in such fraud attempts,” said Keith Wardell, product director at TransUnion Africa.

“The key takeaway for businesses is that fraudsters do not treat every industry equally. They often pick and choose an industry to focus on based on the time of

year or what businesses are seeing more transactional activity. At times, fraud attempts are simply conducted at random simply to determine if businesses are prepared to meet their challenges.”

The trend of increased digital fraud also aligns with the increase of remote and digital transactions being conducted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the group said.

In late September 2020, 40% of consumers with a financial account said in a TransUnion commissioned survey that they are using digital platforms more frequently since the onset of the pandemic. The same survey found 60% of consumers said that the majority of their financial transactions are conducted via mobile applications

THE RISE OF COVID-19 VACCINATION CARD FRAUD

BY RON CRESSWELL, J.D., CFE, RESEARCH SPECIALIST, ASSOCIATION OF CERTIFIED FRAUD EXAMINERS

If you received a COVID-19 vaccination, you probably also received a printed vaccination certificate. These certificates will become more important in the coming months. As more people are vaccinated and the world begins to open up, proof of vaccination will be required to participate in certain activities. Several cruise lines, including Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Lines, now require passengers to provide proof of vaccination. The European Union is developing a system to relax travel restrictions for individuals who can prove they have been fully vaccinated. Many employers have announced that they will require proof of vaccination for employees who wish to return to the

workplace. Some cities already require proof of vaccination, or a recent negative COVID-19 test, to attend large events. Vaccination-based restrictions are likely to increase as the year progresses, and proof of vaccination will be the key to navigating those restrictions.

While there has been talk of digital vaccination passes, most of those digital options are still in the planning phases. According to the New York Times, “Most of the hundreds of millions of people worldwide who got at least one shot of a COVID-19 vaccine in the past few months received a flimsy piece of paper.” In the U.S.,

vaccinated individuals receive a 4-by-3-inch paper card entitled “COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card.” The card contains the logo of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as blanks for the patient’s name and birthdate, the type of vaccine the patient received, and the date and location of the vaccinations. The blanks are generally filled in manually by the patient, the vaccination provider or both. These cards are very easy to replicate, using only basic word processing software and a printer. As a result, COVID-19 vaccination card fraud is on the rise.

Counterfeit vaccination cards

In April, the Washington Post published an article discussing the online proliferation of counterfeit vaccination cards. According to the article, several listings on eBay offered blank CDC vaccination cards for around \$10 each. Another eBay listing offered a “Clear Pouch for CDC Vaccination Record Card” for \$8.99; however, customers who ordered the pouch received a blank vaccination card and no pouch. The Washington Post traced the listings to a pharmacist in Chicago.

For months, similar offers have been posted on Etsy, Facebook, OfferUp, TikTok, Twitter and Shopify. On April 1, the attorneys general of 47 states sent a letter to the CEOs of Twitter, Shopify and eBay stating that the companies’ platforms were being used to sell counterfeit, blank or fraudulently completed CDC vaccination cards. The letter demanded that the companies monitor their platforms and remove such listings as they were discovered. Online retailers and social media companies appear to be complying with those demands. However, blank and counterfeit vaccination cards can still be purchased on the dark web. Additionally, anti-vaccination websites and forums contain threads discussing how to obtain and create fake vaccination cards.

In response to the rise of vaccination card fraud, the FBI issued a public service announcement on March 30 entitled, “If You Make or Buy a Fake COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card, You Endanger Yourself and Those Around You, and You Are Breaking the Law.” The announcement states that fake vaccination cards bearing the seal of the CDC, or another government agency violate federal law. Those who violate the law may be subject to a substantial fine and imprisoned for up to five years. Fake vaccination cards also violate state laws.

In addition to breaking the law and slowing mass vaccination efforts, counterfeit and falsely completed vaccination cards create obvious dangers. People who

use fake vaccination cards to travel, go back to work or attend large events potentially expose themselves and others to COVID-19. According to North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein, the use of fake vaccination cards could “extend the pandemic, resulting in more people sick and more people dead.” An abundance of fake vaccination cards could also undermine public trust in the real cards as proof of vaccination.

Posting vaccination card photos

To acknowledge or celebrate their COVID-19 vaccination, many people have posted photos of their vaccination cards on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These photos create an opportunity for identity thieves. The CDC’s vaccination card contains two important pieces of personal information: the patient’s name and birthdate. This information can help fraudsters build a profile to steal your identity, open accounts in your name and perpetrate many other scams.

Such photos also help fraudsters create fake vaccination cards. The cards contain blanks for vaccine lot numbers and vaccination provider codes, which are generally filled in by the vaccination provider. Fraudsters can use this information to make fake vaccination cards appear more legitimate.

According to the FBI, you should not post a photo of your vaccination card online. If you have already posted such a photo, you should remove it.

In the future, proof of vaccination may take a digital form that is more secure and less susceptible to fraud. For now, however, we have a paper card. Patients should keep their COVID-19 vaccination cards in a safe place, not post photos of it online and stay informed about the ways it can be used to commit fraud.

https://www.acfe.com/fraud-examiner.aspx?id=4295013741&mkt_tok=NDEwLUhZTC01NzkAAAF9JKbTSdg-TI4V7jKijCkMoZXAetWvFlAs3UfHIsuVfBCSKlHQ9yiLwUjOPX8UoT9y5uFLPkf6ZSohYBeIGWL953QohTmr6R9jIx8Dyz35uqc2



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

A21 Fighting Against Human Trafficking



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THE NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING HOTLINE

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Human Trafficking, a buzzword floating around the media quite frequently these days, but still largely misunderstood or incorrectly identified both globally and locally. When we hear the word we think of abduction, kidnapping, chains, sex and perhaps a Liam Neeson type figure chasing down crime rings to rescue the chained, kidnapped victims. Imagery and perceptions like this, although can at times be true, paint a very inaccurate picture of the scope and more likely reality of human trafficking not only globally but particularly in South Africa.

Why is this important? Well, we often refer to human trafficking to the crime hidden in plain sight. And when we do not know what we are looking for, it is highly likely that we are missing very real, highly vulnerable victims around us every day. When we believe people are only abducted, we miss the clear red flags in everyday interactions that could indicate recruitment into human trafficking rings. And the sad reality is that less than 1% of victims will ever be rescued from their exploitation once trafficked.

So, what is human trafficking? It is the unlawful act of transporting or coercing people in order to benefit from their work or service, typically in the form of forced Labour or sexual exploitation. In essence, it is commodifying a human being and using them for profit.

Human trafficking by numbers in South Africa according to the Global Slavery Index (GSI, 2018)

- There are an estimated 155,000 victims in South Africa at one time.
- In Africa, the prevalence rate of trafficking in 2.8/1000 people.

But perhaps the more pertinent number we need to focus on is 54/100. This is the indication of vulnerability of a population. In other words, 54% of South Africans are highly vulnerable to falling prey to human trafficking. According to the GSI, vulnerabilities can be broken down into two (2) categories: individual and systemic factors.

- Individual vulnerabilities include education, access to running water, average household wage, substance abuse, and a supportive family environment

- Systemic vulnerabilities-

- Corruption, conflict, and adverse environmental change
- Civil Rights
- GDP
- Corruption
- Wages received
- Infant mortality rates
- Literacy
- Access to clean water and basic needs met
- Cell phone usage
- Violent crime
- Gender based violence

In order to understand the crime of human trafficking in South Africa, it is vital to understand what kind of environment allows the crime to operate and function. And when you understand the South African landscape and we understand how trafficking syndicates operate, you can quite clearly see how trafficking CAN flourish and run rampant in SA.

Let us unpack some of the common forms of exploitation we see in South Africa, as some of the common methods of recruitment we find.

Types of exploitation we see in South Africa include:

SEX TRAFFICKING

Forcing, deceiving, or coercing a person to perform a commercial sex act.

FORCED LABOR

Forcing a person to work in captivity for little or no pay.

BONDED LABOR

Forcing a person to work for low wages to pay back an impossible debt.

INVOLUNTARY DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

Forcing a person to work and live in the same place for little or no pay.

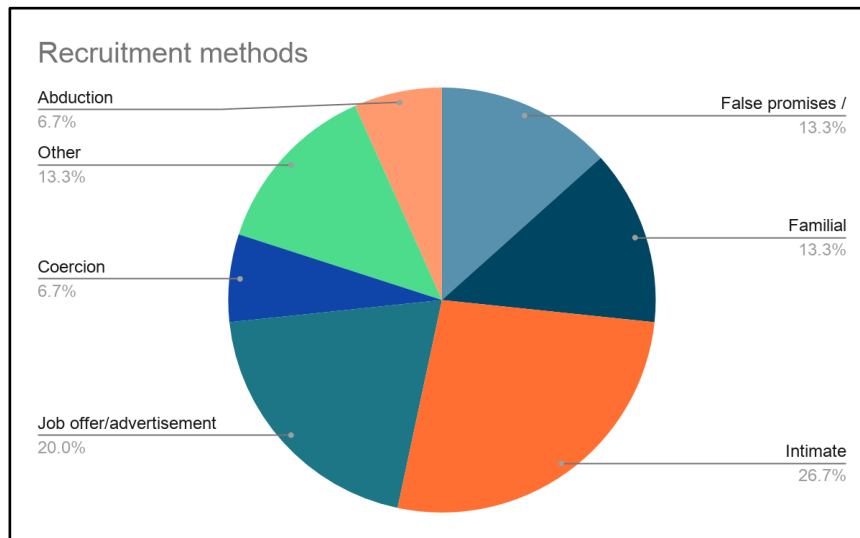


According to data collected through the 2020 reporting period of the National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH), the reported cases of human trafficking indicated the following forms of exploitation.

Common recruitment methods used to gain the consent of a victim, or lure them into these exploitative situations typically fall into the following categories:

- False job opportunities
- Sold by a family member
- Intimate partner relationship/loverboy method
- Repay a debt
- Abduction

Of all the cases reported to the NHTH in 2020, these were the recruitment methods used most commonly.



⁴The South African National Human Trafficking Hotline ('NHTH') is a dedicated service to support victims of human trafficking and provide advice and assistance on human trafficking issues. The NHTH is operated by A21 South Africa and is available to receive reports of suspected trafficking 24/7, as well as provide crisis intervention, information and referrals to various entities including law enforcement and community support agencies. The NHTH works in close partnership with national institutions to ensure a rapid response in reporting cases to the correct authorities or nodal point coordinators who are tasked to respond to Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and monitor the effectiveness of the response.

A trend identified in 2020 was that of fraudulent job listings and false job opportunities. These false opportunities often involved promises of job or educational opportunities as well as promises of a better life. The NHTH experienced a spike in job vetting requests from October 2020, with a 365.7% increase in requests submitted in the final three months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. These cases included callers contacting the NHTH with concerns regarding job advertisements and requesting support in investigating the legitimacy of proposed work opportunities. Upon further investigation, many reports displayed concerning indicators of risk that had the potential to lead to exploitative situations. The NHTH believes this is due to desperation caused by COVID-19 lockdowns and job losses. Increase in desperation often results in increase in risk taking behaviour. What was particularly worrying was how limited the general caller's understanding of what was "normal" or "safe" for a job hunting or job interview process, again emphasizing the high rate of vulnerability in South Africa.

Current landscape of identification and investigation:

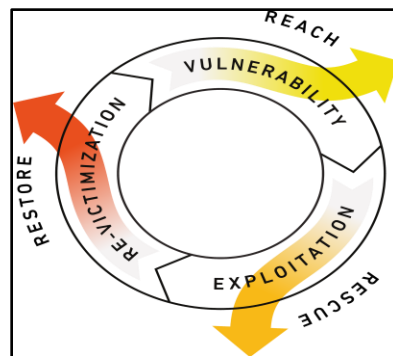
This is a complex subject to tackle, but what A21 has seen over the past few years is two (2) major hurdles. That is Identification Training and Resources. There has limited training on the legislation surrounding human trafficking but more importantly around understanding the complexities of the crime. A21 and the NHTH has had multiple reports of victims being turned away when trying to report at local police stations due to limited to no understanding of the crime. Secondly, A21 has observed that the resources (human and financial) directed towards priority crimes and organized crimes are diminishing. Small teams of 2 or 3 are tasked to investigate a number of different forms of organized crime across an entire province and human trafficking is directed to a local station level unless it is obviously connected to a larger ring. This however is usually impossible to tell on first consultation with a victim and usually valuable intel only surfaces after trust is built. Unless the organization providing care to the victim is in communication with the IO, this information is often lost or not connected to larger rings. In 2020 the reports to the NHTH indicated 696 potential victims. However only 22 positive identifications and rescues took place. There are many COVID-19 related factors that resulted in such poor rescue rates; however, they still largely pertain to training and human resources. There of course are many other factors such as corruption or collusion or victims being unwilling to give statements due to extreme fear. However, the above seems to be the most prominent in A21's operational experience.

¹ In 2020 The NHTH received a total of 4,847 contacts

1. The NHTH experienced an increase in the number of human trafficking-related reports received as compared to 2019 (46.5%)
2. 696 potential victims of trafficking were reported to the NHTH
3. 22 victims were able to be directly identified and supported by the NHTH
4. Females constituted the majority of victims reported to the NHTH (82%)
5. Minors comprised over a third of reports of potential victims to the NHTH (34.8%)
6. The predominant nationality of victims identified by the NHTH were overwhelmingly South African (71%)
7. The NHTH experienced a 367.5% increase in employment screening requests from October through December 2020



About A21:



A21 is a global counter trafficking organization. We are driven by a radical hope that the cycle of human trafficking can be broken. Since 2008, we've seen awareness prevent trafficking on a massive scale, human trafficking hotlines and professional trainings lead to the identification of victims, and countless lives restored to freedom through our model—reach, rescue, and restore. We know how to stop the cycle of human trafficking.

A21 has operated in South Africa since 2013 and adopts a holistic three-pronged anti-trafficking strategy focusing on prevention and awareness to reduce the prevalence of trafficking, intervention and identification of victims through the A21 managed National Human Trafficking Hotline (NHTH) and restorative aftercare services and reintegration support for survivors of trafficking.

A21 South Africa also runs an awareness campaign aimed at highlighting the issue of human trafficking using localized scenarios in short videos, that contextualize the crime for the everyday person in their daily life, while encouraging them to ACT on what they see and report suspicious behaviour. To see the campaign or participate in sharing the short videos check out our [website](#).

To find out more about A21's operations around the world, check out our [Freedom Report](#) for 2020.

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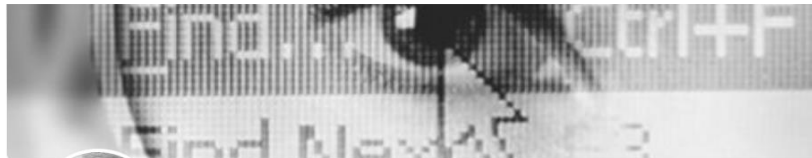
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INVESTIGATOR OF THE MONTH:

INTO THE SECOND DECADE OF THE SO CALLED RHINO WAR - By Maj Gen (ret) Johan Jooste

By Maj Gen (ret) Johan Jooste

Program Manager: Law enforcement and security

Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

The proliferation of transnational organized criminal networks in South Africa combined with increasing global demand for wildlife and wildlife products has led to a significant escalation in the poaching and trafficking of the country's wildlife resources, in particular the illegal killing of the rhinoceros's population and the subsequent illegal trade in horns of this iconic species

After ten years of implementing various strategies against local poachers recruited and managed by crime syndicates, South Africa could arrest the escalation of rhino losses and manage it down by approximately twenty-five percent. This represents a moderate win, but by no means victory and the status of South Africa's rhino population remains extremely vulnerable. Law enforcement agencies with support from the private sector have been drawn into a war of attrition, with relentless pressure on the human and financial resources required to counter this scourge. This pressure is exacerbated by threat displacement to other areas all over the country and neighboring countries whenever the problem is addressed successfully in any park or area.

It is widely accepted that a composite solution involving all of law enforcement, biological management, community-based wildlife crime prevention, responsive legal actions and demand reduction campaigns is required but many of these will only have direct impact in the medium to long term and in the interim, a business-as-usual approach to law enforcement will not suffice.

New approach

To shift the needle from a moderate to a strong win and ultimately victory for rhinos in South Africa, a more proactive approach is required, building on successes to date to ensure the collapse of crime networks in the country. This will only be possible through superior situational awareness built on actionable intelligence that is actively pursued by conservation agencies. This can then be processed within the intelligence and law enforcement agencies to enable high performance and integrated investigative teams to ultimately arrest and bring to trial, those key figures behind the rampant poaching problem in South Africa and the region as a whole.

The project will be implemented in select wildlife zones encompassing protected areas in South Africa where key populations of rhino are found on private farms as well as in private, provincial and national parks. Through an

infusion of leadership and coordination at a landscape-scale, joint planning and integrated implementation will ensure that circa 70% of the South African rhino herd will receive priority attention and will aim to reduce all crime in these zones to reduce the ability of criminals to operate with any degree of success. The project will include measures in the Greater Limpopo Trans Frontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) so that threat displacement to the rhino populations in the neighboring Zimbabwe and Mozambique is also prevented.

The aim is to ensure a more integrated and coordinated response, by blurring the distinction between national, provincial and private parks. The idea is to prevent borders and boundaries from inhibiting planning and implementation as far as is practical to allow for maximum integrated effort. The modus operandi will be as follows:

- After securing buy-in by all public and private management authorities within a zone, a thorough and professional assessment will be done to confirm the status quo and the interventions and projects required to achieve the necessary level of readiness.
- A zone cooperative framework will ensure an alliance of all rhino owners and role players aimed at enabling formal and informal communication towards an integrated approach which ultimately will benefit the region in terms of synergies derived from focus on the common goal i.e., the prevention of rhino poaching and crime in the region.
- Community projects and involvement will be an integral part of all endeavors and projects. Such projects will include education/awareness, socio-economic and enterprise development.
- Starting with individual measures to protect the various rhino populations, these efforts will be coordinated in various clusters and ultimately in the whole region.
- This will be augmented with the regional capacity to react to incidents which will of course require connectivity and mobility.
- Concurrently proactive measures will be enabled by shared situational awareness derived from information sharing and processing.
- Appropriate, affordable and sustainable technologies will be utilized.

Closure

As rhino numbers continue to decline in South Africa, a “business-as-usual” approach will not be sufficient to address the problem. Criminal syndicates are applying increasing effort to find and kill a target that is becoming harder to find. Civil Society working in close collaboration with Government needs to improve cooperation and collate and apply the lessons learnt over the past decade to secure South Africa’s core rhino populations and in so doing, demonstrate that it is possible to contain poaching losses within range states no matter the value of the target species. The wildlife zone concept will demonstrate that, through cooperation, application of best-practice law enforcement methodologies and community-driven wildlife crime prevention projects, a model for success within Africa’s range states does exist. From South Africa, this model can be exported to other rhino range states and even globally to secure any vulnerable species targeted by poaching.

