

## Helpdesk Research Report

# Community policing in fragile and conflict-affected states

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### Question

*Identify examples of 'community policing' in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Define how different groups use the term 'community policing' and where possible, identify examples where police services engaging with communities or community leaders in FCAS have led to safer communities.*

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## 1. Overview

Community policing is the idea of policing in partnership with community, and the strategy for implementing this partnership. Beyond this rudimentary definition, there is no common agreement on what community policing entails. Experience of various forms of community policing in different fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) have been met with mixed results – there have been some benefits, though the programmes have not been as transformative as hoped, and existing police culture and community relations have often been the critical impediment.

The first part of this helpdesk query identifies literature relating to the conceptualisation and definition of community policing and the key points of debate. The second part looks a number of cases studies from countries that have been affected by conflict, and their attempts to implement community policing.

## Definitions

Community policing means different things to different practitioners and theorists, though there seems to be acceptance that community policing refers to a **philosophy** to partner with the community and a **strategy** for the community to work with police. Many national police agencies, donors and NGOs do not have explicitly defined definitions of community policing though definitions can be inferred from related policy documents. A background document on community policing for **the Australian Government** emphasises philosophy and strategy, but also tactics and organisational changes. An evaluation of a **DFID** police project includes a definition from a project participant that emphasises the removal of barriers between the police and the public. Policy documents related to the **UN** Mission in Sudan emphasises the empowerment of internally-displaced persons to ensure their safety and ‘joining hands’ with the police. **Saferworld** outline a community-based policing process and 10 principles of community policing.

## Case studies

Case studies from Afghanistan, Kenya and Sierra Leone identify benefits from community policing (though the contents of these programmes varied). These include:

- State **legitimacy** can be strengthened through police-community exchange.
- **Trust** can be built through community policing and undermined through police militarisation.
- Valuable **intelligence insights** can be provided from the community members to the police.
- Police can **educate and inform the public** about specific dangers.

These case studies also identify challenges and lessons learned:

- An **existing lack of accountability** in the police force culture.
- An **existing suspicion** and **mistrust** of the police force.
- A **blurring of lines** between illegitimate vigilantism and legitimate policing acts.
- Senior managers **do not (or cannot) take community policing seriously**, at least in comparison to other needs.
- Community-police exchange members are **not fully representative** of the community.

Some (e.g. Baker, 2008) consider community policing programmes in FCAS as over-ambitious because they require a radical culture change, and instead advocate just trying to get the police system working in some form.

## 2. Definitions

A recent paper, providing an overview and background to community policing, comments that "[community policing] is a vague and ambiguous term, meaning many things to many people" (Denny & Jenkins, 2013: 2). Furthermore, "there is little consensus on the definitions, objectives and models of community policing; it means different things to different communities of practice" (Denny & Jenkins, 2013: Key messages).

Denny & Jenkins (2013) argue that there does, however, appear to be agreement on at least some limited descriptions: community policing is a philosophy that promotes a problem-solving approach to public

safety involving partnership with the community; and a strategy that practically involves members of the community working together with the police on issues of crime, disorder and public safety.

Despite there being an approximate common agreement about what community policing is at a fundamental level (in terms of a philosophy and strategy) there are several factors contributing to the divergence of definition (Denny & Jenkins, 2013):

- **Contested notion of ‘community’:** In some countries, especially FCAS, there is less uniformity and cohesiveness within a group than is assumed.
- **Multiple similar terms:** Programmes in democratic policing, policing by the community, policing for the community, policing with the community, community-oriented policing, and proximity or neighbourhood policing can all be considered community policing but be different in practice.
- **Domestic political factors:** The United States prefers the term ‘democratic policing’, to reflect a broader policing culture of democratic civilian control. In France, as the French Republic’s foundational principle is of a direct link between the citizen and the state, there is a reluctance to recognise the community as an intermediary, and prefer terms such as ‘proximity’ or ‘neighbourhood’. Donors tend to ‘infuse’ their own domestic model of community policing into programmes to some extent.
- **Plurality of policing actors:** In many contexts (especially in FCAS) there is a plurality of policing providers and not a state monopoly on the use of force. Examples include local, non-state, informal, and self-help policing. There is debate over recognition of the role of these actors, their relation with each other and the state, and whether non-state policing practices are included within the scope of community policing. Vigilantism, though seen as negative in many countries, can be considered legitimate in some contexts such as West Africa where it is more synonymous with the concept of vigilance.
- **Informal justice and policing systems:** There may be local, informal and traditional justice systems, as well as actors. There is debate over how to integrate these systems with existing systems and other forms of policing, and to what extent.

## Examples of definitions

Different concepts of community policing are used by national police agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental agencies, who often do not formally articulate their definition of the concept. Where it does appear in documentation, it often refers to specific projects or programmes, or in background documents to help reform strategy. These background documents do not necessarily reflect community policing as it is practiced by the organisation that commissioned them.

Due to time constraints it is not possible to provide a full mapping of definitions used by different organisations. Instead this report outlines examples of definitions by a national government, a bilateral donor, a multilateral donor and a civil society organisation.

In **Australia**, though the term community policing is “firmly ensconced in the lexicon of Australian policing” there is conceptual ambiguity over what exactly it is (Seagrave & Ratcliffe, 2004: 1). Seagrave &

Ratcliffe (2004) synthesise existing definitions and group community policing activities into four groups, so as to inform Australian practice on community policing:

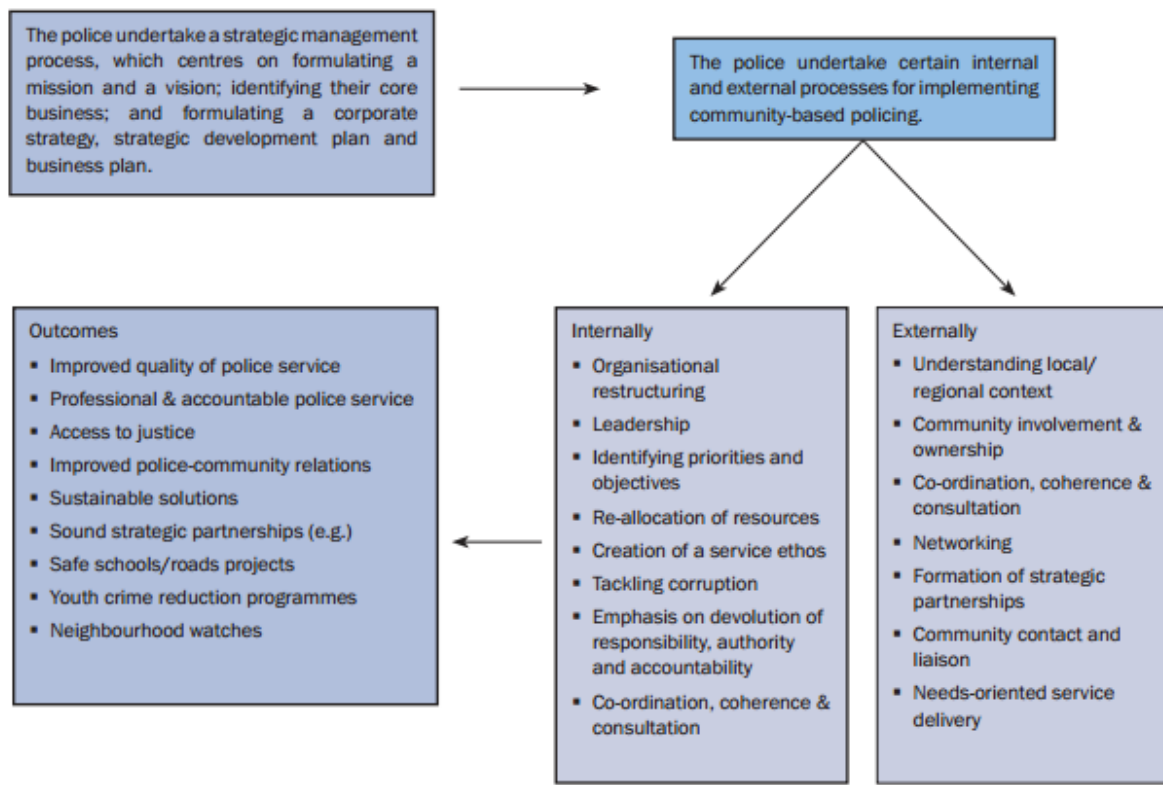
- **Philosophical:** Prioritising the community in police work. Understanding community as central to the identification and response to crime and safety concerns, and broadening the police role.
- **Strategic:** Expanding the role and duties of police officers to enable them to think more laterally, to engage in both proactive and follow-up activities and to provide a more personalised service delivery. Redeveloping police activities and operations through a reorientation that focuses less on patrol and more on local problem solving, crime prevention education, and developing positive relationships with youth. Emphasising prevention, focusing on long-term benefits and reconceptualising how the impact of police work is measured beyond crime rates and clearance rates. Developing a more localised, community-specific focus for officers to generate a sense of accountability and responsibility for specific areas.
- **Tactical:** Establishing community partnerships, through public relations/media campaigns, shopfront and mini-police stations, and neighbourhood watch. Developing problem-solving techniques to address the underlying causes of identified issues, achieved through training officers to recognise problems and to be knowledgeable regarding possible ways to address them. Officers working with the community to identify problems through community meetings.
- **Organisational:** Decentralising police services and empowering officer's to work independently. Extending the management role to include mentoring and close supervision. Shifting the focus to include qualitative information for evaluative processes (including performance appraisal), rather than traditional quantitative indicators.

**DFID** supported a police project with a community policing component in Uganda from 1990 to 1998. The evaluation notes that community policing has been defined in many different ways but notes a definition provided by a community liaison technical cooperation officer (Raleigh et al., 1998: 72): "In its most basic form it is aimed at removing the barriers between the police and the public. It is [...] a policy and strategy aimed at achieving more effective and efficient crime control, reduced fear of crime and improved quality of life". Lessons learned from the evaluation include the replication of community policing from urban to rural areas needs to take account of differences in infrastructure, and transport, as well as local community needs and priorities (Raleigh et al., 1998).

The **UN** Police carry out community policing in refugee or internally-displaced persons (IDP) camps (UNPOL, 2013a). An example of this is the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). Though community policing is not officially defined in the documentation it is possible to surmise one from the activities undertaken. In Sudan, UN Police developed a community policing model in the north of the country, "with a view to empower the IDPs to play a role in enhancing their safety and security and join hands with the police in crime prevention and maintenance of law and order in the camps" (UNPOL, 2013b). In the south of Sudan UNMIS Police conducted community policing courses to train "representatives of local communities and local police to identify security issues as well as facilitate crime prevention, promote traffic awareness and carry out night patrols" (UNMIS, 2010). Here the UNMIS Police looked to "bridge the gap between the police and community by arranging meetings and helping to establish committees" (UNMIS, 2010: 1).

In support of UNDP Albania's Support to Security Sector Reform project, the non-governmental organisation **Saferworld** conducted research and developed a philosophy and principles for community-based policing (Matthias et al., 2006). Figure 1 below demonstrates the internal and external processes that are involved in developing a community policing approach, as well as subsequent outcomes.

Figure 1. Community-based policing process



Source: Matthias et al. 2006: 11

**Saferworld** (2006) also outline 10 principles of community policing in a training handout which can add value when trying to identify or formulate an appropriate definition:

1. **Philosophy and organisational strategy:** Community policing is considered a way of thinking (a philosophy) and a way to carry out that way of thinking (a strategy) that allows the police and the community to work closely together in creative ways to solve certain social problems associated with crime.
2. **Commitment to community empowerment:** Front-line officers need greater autonomy and respect for their judgement from their police departments. Citizens must share in the rights and responsibilities implicit in identifying, prioritising, and solving problems, as equal partners with the police.
3. **Decentralised and personalised policing:** Officers must be able to maintain daily, direct, face-to-face contact with the people they serve in a clearly defined beat area. Officers should be visible, accessible and accountable to the people they serve.
4. **Immediate and long-term proactive problem solving:** Continuous, sustained contact of officers with the law-abiding people in the community to solve local concerns. Officers act as a link to other public and private agencies that can help in a given situation.
5. **Ethics, legality, responsibility and trust:** Work towards a relationship, based on mutual trust and respect. Police serve as a catalyst, challenging people to accept their share of responsibility for the overall quality of life in the community with citizens handling minor concerns.

6. **Expanding the police mandate:** Police handle a vital, proactive element in addition to the traditional reactive role of the police.
7. **Helping those with special needs:** Protect and enhance the lives of the most vulnerable – youth, the elderly, minorities, the poor, the disadvantaged, the homeless.
8. **Grass roots creativity and support:** The judicious use of technology, combined with judgment, wisdom, and experience of people to develop creative new approaches to contemporary community concerns.
9. **Internal change:** Fully integrated approach involving the full organisation of the police.
10. **Building for the future:** Decentralised, personalised police service to the community, helping to solve contemporary community concerns, needs and priorities as they change over time.

### 3. Case Studies

In the cases studies identified for this helpdesk report, the impact of community policing has been mixed and it is not clear whether community policing have ultimately led to safer communities. Community policing has often been part of wider police reform so it can be difficult to evaluate the community policing component in isolation. This is even more so in FCAS where there are a number of other factors which influence crime and community safety. These case studies identify benefits, challenges and lessons learned from implementing community policing.

#### Afghanistan

In a case study on police reform in Afghanistan, Friesendorf (2011) notes that approximately 400 members of the police were trained in the principles of community policing under the German Rule of Law Programme in 2009 and 2010, and information campaigns and roundtables were organised. Following this were community policing projects with UNDP support. These were for creating platforms for exchange with Local Councils and other forms of close exchange between the Afghanistan National Police (ANP) and the local population.

The UNDP-supported police projects focused on districts which were relatively secure due to the disarmament of illegal armed groups and the presence of sub-national government structures, yet community policing projects were carried out even in districts in relatively insecure provinces. In some districts, NGOs taught the ANP about human rights and violence against women in a number of short-term projects. However, these lacked long-term funding, were based on personal contacts and were not part of an overall strategy.

Friesendorf (2011) identifies a number of benefits from this community policing work:

- The police-community exchange **strengthened state legitimacy**.
- It produced **direct security advantages**: the ANP obtained more information about suspicious persons and finds of improvised explosive devices.
- **Helped confidence-building through simple measures**: the entrance areas of police stations were made more attractive and therefore more welcoming.
- Community-oriented police work **helped create trust**.

- The other approach of **militarisation can lead to a rift between the police and the public** which prevents the development of a relationship of trust.
- **Citizens were able to make specific demands** from police: for example, that they drove more slowly in the vicinity of schools.
- **Police were able to educate and inform the public:** police would inform school students about the danger of improvised bombs.

## Kenya

Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003) identify conclusions from a community policing project in Kangemi, an informal settlement on the outskirts of Nairobi. This project was initiated in 2000 by the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), with support from a number of bilateral and multilateral donors and international NGOs.

Based on existing neighbourhood watch groups which had been organised by the owners of land and rental structures in the settlement, the project facilitated the creation of eleven 'security zones' and assisted in setting up community policing committees for each area. These committees conducted night patrols and monitored crime in their neighbourhoods, and facilitated dialogue between the police and residents on security issues.

Against the background of the authoritarian models of policing that have operated in Kenya since colonial times, Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003) note that community policing, on the face of it, may appear a transformative model that has the potential to fundamentally alter the political culture of the police force. However, in the implementation of community policing initiatives, those implementing either fail to address or deliberately ignore the wider political context, which is characterized by practices of clientelism, corruption. Ruteere and Pommerolle (2003) identify a number of challenges of the project:

- The police force has **not embraced a culture of accountability:** There is an interaction between the development of violence and corruption inside the police forces.
- The projects are part of attempts to tackle the security issues while **sidestepping institutional failure** and the deep roots of insecurity problems in the capital.
- The projects have **no strategies for addressing police culture.**
- There is **great suspicion of the police force:** The community consequently prefer to patrol alone and only invite the police in as a back-up.
- The **line between vigilantism and community policing** has become tenuous: Vigilantism and private militia have been condemned for working outside of legal frameworks and employing senseless violence.
- Neighbourhood watches may be a signifier of **the privatisation of security** and a warning of the possible decay of the state.
- There is **poor public trust in police** at the onset: Government responses have involved the use of special squads who kill (sometimes innocent) suspects, rather than investigating and preventing crime.
- The **concept of community is vague** which has led to conflicting and often contradictory perspectives.

- The basic interaction between police and people is one of **confrontation**, community policing would need a new political culture for community policing.

## Sierra Leone

Baker (2008) outlines the lessons learned from a DFID-funded community policing project that introduced Local Police Partnership Boards – police-community forums for community participation in the local policing agenda. These forums were made up of key representatives of the community, including youth groups, women’s representatives, religious leaders, business people and chiefs. A Community Relations Office was established at each police station, responsible for identifying and liaising with key members of the community, and circulating security information.

Baker (2008) found that the Boards improved communication between police and communities and provided intelligence, investigation, intervention, arrest and dispute resolution. On the other hand forum activities, initiatives and finance were dominated by the elite. Overall, the paper concludes that the Boards were universally valued and are not seen as unwelcome foreign imports. Other key findings from this programme were:

- The **reforms may be overambitious** with respect to the post-conflict environment – attempting long-term development rather than just getting the system working in some form is not financially, politically or culturally viable and there will be no real national control or ownership.
- Senior managers **did not (or could not) treat community policing seriously**, or sympathetically. The Boards were part of a broad strategic police reform programme, with senior officers engaged in many new initiatives at the same time.
- Community policing **implementation was by junior officers** without real decision-making authority.
- Boards failed to play a role in the **police promotion process** which would have changed incentives.
- Boards had **very little input** into the local policing plans.
- There has been **no radical transformation** of police-community relationships from hostility to partnership. The vision of mutual engagement was diluted, though not abandoned.
- Boards were **not fully representative** of the local population and consequently served the Board members interests rather than the local population.
- Police put less effort into the Boards than the Board members though the **police valued the intelligence** provided by the boards.
- Crime **clear-up rates have not improved sufficiently** to stop communities initiating their own patrols (though with the sanction of the Boards).

Baker (2008) concludes that to bring such a radical culture change towards community policing, whilst simultaneously reorganising the police management structure, police duties, police accountability, police professionalisation, with very few qualified in strategic management is over-ambitious if not foolish. The author argues that transformative security sector programme, that includes police restructuring with a community policing element, will never make a serious transformation.



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