U4 Expert Answer

Community policing as a tool against corruption

Query

Are there any examples of how community policing is/has been used to fight corruption within the police or the judiciary?

Purpose

We are trying to describe Community Policing as tool for anti-corruption and we are wondering if there are any previous experiences.

Content

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Summary

Community-based policing refers to policing models that promote partnerships between police and communities to address community concerns and ensure that the police respond to the needs of the broader public.

Such policing model is increasingly referred to as an international good policing practice to promote broad goals of professionalism, responsiveness and accountability. While usually not explicitly or exclusively implemented as an anti-corruption tool, countries as diverse as Kenya, Nigeria, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Mexico and the United States have implemented community policing related reforms to address challenges of police efficiency, public image and corruption.

However, in spite of high expectations and widespread support for this type of policing, the impact of such approaches on corruption and accountability has not been clearly established. In terms of anti-corruption benefits, some argue that bringing police forces closer to the community is likely to strengthen the accountability of the police to the public. Others consider that community policing could create more opportunities for corruption/unethical practices by promoting closer ties between the police and the community and providing opportunities for long-term personal interactions, preferential treatments and the development of corrupt networks.

Very few studies specifically look at the impact of community policing on corruption and more research would be needed to verify the current assumptions that are being made in this regard. While this approach seems to have a positive impact on citizens' perception of police performance and police attitudes and behaviours, evidence is inconclusive on the effect of

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community policing on crime reduction, increased accountability to the public and decreased levels of corruption.

1 Benefits and challenges of community policing

What is community policing?

Community policing is emerging as a promising complementary approach to more traditional forms of policing. By bringing the police closer to the people and developing partner relations with citizens, this approach aims at restoring trust between civilians and the police and at gaining community support for police reform, especially in settings where the police forces are perceived as brutal, corrupt and unaccountable. This can be especially important in post-conflict countries where confidence has been lost in conflict.

The United States' Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)[1] defines Community Policing as 'a policing philosophy that promotes and supports organisational strategies to address the causes and reduce the fear of crime and social disorder through problem-solving tactics and police/community partnerships.' Within this framework, community policing focuses on delivering policing services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement, as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships. According to COPS, community policing is comprised of three key components

(COPS website:
http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=36):

1) **Community partnerships**, consisting of collaborative partnerships between the police and the individuals and organisations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police;

2) **Organisational transformation** involving the alignment of organisational management, structure, personnel and information systems to support

community partnerships and collaborative/pro-active problem- solving;

3) **Problem-solving** defined as the process of engaging in pro-active and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and rigorously evaluate effective responses.

As such, community policing involves a cooperative effort on both the community and the police, with the police engaging in pro-social activities to enhance the well-being of the community and the community taking an active role in helping the police carry out law enforcement activities. Through this reciprocal and beneficial interactions, community policing is meant to improve poor police-community relations and increase the responsiveness of police services to the community needs by identifying in partnership issues within the mandate of the police that need to be addressed at the community level (Liou, K. T. and Savage, E., 1996).

The ultimate goal of community policing is to create a professional, representative, responsive and accountable institution that works in partnership with the public (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004). Bringing police forces closer to the people is believed to contribute to fear reduction, increased satisfaction with police services, and the development of problem-solving techniques. In particular, this involves: 1) assigning officers to areas long enough to enable them to identify local problems and concerns, and; 2) developing the capacity of both officers and community to analyse and address these concerns.

Overview of police corruption challenges

Police corruption manifests itself in a variety of ways ranging from petty and bureaucratic corruption to the criminal infiltration of the state, state capture and other forms of political corruption (Chêne, M., 2010).

The first level of corruption relates to **street-level corruption** where police officials abuse their power in their day-to-day interactions with citizens to obtain money in exchange for not reporting illegal activities or expediting bureaucratic procedures. In some countries, this can also take the form of extortion when police officers threaten to fine or arrest citizens under false pretence in order to collect bribes.

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[1] In the United States, community policing has become a widespread model of policing, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has been created by the Justice Department to support innovative work in Community Policing.

Bureaucratic corruption can also occur when police officers misuse internal procedures and resources for private gain, with practices ranging from misuse of police vehicles for private purposes to diversion of salaries or benefits funds or the theft of seized contraband goods. Police resources can also be misused when officers sell or selectively provide their legitimate services to wealthy selected groups or individuals.

At another level, police officers can abuse their power to build their own criminal enterprise, protect criminals from law enforcement and/or conspire with criminals to commit crime, leading to collusion between the police and criminal organisations and the **criminal infiltration of the police forces**. These forms of corruption are especially prevalent in countries with high levels of organised crime, as criminals need to infiltrate law enforcement agencies to sustain and expand their activities. The highest level of penetration of the public sector is referred to as state capture, where criminals infiltrate the highest levels of political power to manipulate law and policy making to serve their own interests.

These various forms of police corruption each require different forms of anti-corruption interventions (USAID, 2007). As part of democratic policing approaches, community policing is often promoted as a promising approach to strengthen police integrity by creating a "double demand" on police by "requiring that police adhere to high standards of conduct while also providing high standards of service" (USAID, 2007)

Expected benefits of community policing in terms of control of corruption

Overview of expected benefits

The key assumption underlying community policing is that community participation is likely to enhance safety and social order by solving community related crime (OSCE 2008). More specifically, such approach is believed to have a positive impact many aspects of police work, including on:

1)   Supporting (local) crime prevention and reduction through a problem-solving approach to local policing;

2)   Strengthening the ability of communities to convey their concerns and find tailored solutions to their problems;

3)   Improving police/public relationships by strengthening social bonds and informal social control within communities;

4)   Strengthening community support for police action by building public trust and confidence in police services, and improving police image/citizens perceptions of police performances;

5)   Reducing police corruption by changing the way the police operates and increasing police accountability to the community it serves;

6)   Increasing information flows between the community and the police;

7)   Increasing police job satisfaction.

Expected anti-corruption benefits

In terms of its potential impact on crime reduction and corruption, case studies indicate that community policing can have a beneficial effect on **the quality and quantity of information flows** between the police and the community (Mesko, G and Ziembo-Vogl, J., 2000). In turn, this information can be collated into intelligence which can be used to prioritise and address local crime and disorder problems, including corruption. Due to increased level of trust and respect, citizens can become more inclined to report crimes, provide tips/intelligence, serve as witness, etc, supporting police performances and efficiency in preventing and combating crime. As such, improvement in police/community interactions can have an impact on law enforcement and anti-corruption and vice-versa.

Beyond supporting police performances, community policing has been promoted as a strategy to improve the **accountability of the police to the public**. While some argue that community policing may weaken mechanisms of horizontal accountability, others consider that, by giving local citizens a voice in the planning and evaluation of police work, community policing constitutes an accountability shift from the police hierarchy to the community and should result in greater police accountability to the public (Mesko, G and Ziembo-Vogl, J., 2000).

Some also argue that with increased job satisfaction, some forms of corruption stemming from frustration with police forces may also decrease when police officers gain a sense of purpose and recognition by the community (Mesko, G and Ziembo-Vogl, J., 2000).

Potential corruption challenges associated with community policing

Overview of corruption challenges

While some see community policing as an opportunity to strengthen social accountability mechanisms, others consider that community policing could create more opportunities for corruption/unethical practices by promoting closer ties between the police and the community. Community policing implies sustained relations with members of the community, which provide opportunities for long-term personal interactions, preferential treatments and the development of corrupt networks. By encouraging police officers to actively engage with the communities, community policing can also introduce a form of discretion and favouritism in the interactions between the police and selected members of the community (Bracey, D.H., 1992).

The closer police-community ties grow, the less impartial and impersonal the relationships are likely to become, fuelling opportunities for **discretion** and corruption. This can materialise in the exchange of small gifts in exchange for favour policing, in the abuse of discretion in selectively applying the law to specific groups or individuals, or in pressures from community/neighbourhood to look the other way (Mesko, G and Ziembo-Vogl, J., 2000).

Community policing can also lead to **selective delivery of police and security services**, with police forces primarily servicing privileged segments of the community. In Latin America for example, where it is a relatively common practice to pay for police protection, some studies show that community policing has the potential to exacerbate disparities, with populations that can pay more for policing service often better served by community police forces than others that may need policing more (Müller, M., 2010).

Clientelistic practices can also develop, with influential members of the community using police forces as their own private security guards.

Politics can also have a detrimental impact on the implementation of community policing. Community police forces can be influenced by powerful local politicians to serve their political interests rather than those of the community at large. In Mexico City for example, the ruling party determines the supply of security equipment to the police in specific boroughs

and decisions in this regard maybe biased by political factionalism (Müller, M., 2010).

Community policing can also potentially **weaken horizontal accountability mechanisms** with less hierarchical controls over police officers who can end up operating in relative autonomy at the community level.

Community policing and corruption challenges overtime

A case study of American policing from an historical perspective illustrates how these various challenges have materialised in the past (Mesko, G and Ziembo-Vogl, J., 2000). In the nineteen century, American policing was decentralised, dominated by local politicians and notorious for its widespread recourse to corruption and brutality. Political patronage was common practice and police forces were often used by local politicians as a political tool. In addition, police officers were often recruited in the areas they would be assigned to and patrol, giving rise to various forms of political corruption and discrimination against strangers due to the strong identification of the police with local norms. The role of the police was not strictly limited to law enforcement but extended to broader social services provided to the community.

As a response to these challenges, the professionalization of police forces was promoted to break these corrupting ties with local politicians and stem away a variety of police misconduct. The relationships between citizens and police became characterised by remoteness, more strictly legalistic approaches and an exclusive focus on law enforcement. This is believed to have led to other forms of unethical practices, ultimately culminating into police abuse of authority and discretion which was later identified as one of the grounds/contributing factors of the riots in the 60s.

As a response, the crime prevention/community relation movement was developed in an effort to improve the police image and improve the accountability of the police to the public, promoting closer interactions between the police and community, and signalising the return to more decentralised methods of policing and broader provision of services.

2 Examples of community policing as an anti-corruption tool

Community policing is referred to as an international good policing practice to promote broad goals of professionalism, responsiveness and accountability. While usually not explicitly or exclusively implemented as an anti-corruption tool, many countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Serbia, and Sierra Leone have implemented community policing related reforms to address challenges of police efficiency, public image and corruption.

Country examples of community policing

Nigeria

In Nigeria, community policing was introduced into selected pilot in 2004 as an effort to address mutual antagonisms that had developed between the public and the police forces. Numerous studies conducted on the police-public relations in Nigeria had revealed that the public had no confidence in the Nigeria Police Force, which was perceived as brutal, corrupt and ineffective by the community. The community policing programme has been accompanied by massive awareness raising and sensitisation campaigns targeting both the public and the police forces as well as intensive training programmes aimed at creating new skills, a change in attitudes and behaviours.

The initiative is credited to have brought a number of positive results (DFID, 2010). In terms of police performances, increased information flows have been noted, resulting in increased intelligence and improved investigations. Conflict prevention/reduction initiatives are also perceived to have yielded positive results, as reflected by a lowering of the crime rate. A positive change in attitude of police forces has also been observed, with more responsiveness and service-orientedness of the police forces. There is also more openness and transparency internally (i.e. between staff of all levels) and externally (i.e. between the police and community members). Communities perceive a decrease in levels of corruption and have acknowledged the change at public meetings.

In spite of these positive results, community policing efforts have faced a number of challenges, including interference of powerful members of the community in

the course of justice, financial constraints and bad reputation and resistance to change on the part of some corrupt police officers who had incentives in keeping the current status quo, financial constraints and bad image of the police (Olusegun, I. L., 2009).

Sierra Leone

The introduction of community policing in Sierra Leone illustrates how such approaches can be beneficial in post-conflict states, where the relationships between the police and the community have often been destroyed by decades of conflict and a blurred distinction between the military and police institutions. In such settings, community policing can be a useful strategy to restore citizens' trust in the institution.

In the post-conflict era, police forces faced major challenges of training, capacity and accountability in Sierra Leone and police reform including community based policing elements was introduced in the early 2000s, to restore corroded trust between the police and the communities (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004). The reform was centred around the concept of local needs policing. Partnerships boards were established by the police, chaired by civilians and including representatives from important local groups and interests, giving communities a voice in local policing, crime prevention and as a means of monitoring the police.

Reforms had a concomitant focus on strengthening both individual and institutional capacity. At the individual level, officers were trained in being more responsive to local needs, victim support, and crime prevention. At the institutional level, management structures were made more transparent with merit-based recruitment and promotion processes, new financial management systems and the introduction of complaint mechanisms to stamp corruption. The reform was also accompanied by efforts to raise awareness at the community level about citizens' rights and entitlements, the role of the police, with a special focus on populations who suffered during the civil war – women and children. Evaluations recorded significant progress in terms of police behaviour, standards and accountability.

Serbia

In Serbia, community-based police reform has faced a number of challenges, including the need to focus on institutional level reforms. Contrary to Sierra Leone, police reforms primarily focussed on building the capacity and integrity of individual police officers

through specialised training programme without a parallel focus on institutional capacity (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004). A number of pilot sites were introduced but a highly centralised management structure hampered the effective implementation of community policing reforms on the ground. Although some progress has been made since the Milosevic administration, the police remains confronted to major accountability challenges in the absence of adequate financial management systems, lack of transparent promotion procedures, and a blurred distinction between the political and operational aspects of the police.

In the absence of a concomitant focus on institutional capacity, reforms had a more limited impact. Officers engaged in the reform process were not able to implement and use newly acquired skills due to lack of sufficient management and institutional structures and the absence of a legal/procedural framework to support these changes.

Kenya
The Kenyan example of community policing is atypical, as it was initiated by citizens besides the State as "self-help security services" and not part of an institutional reform. In the late 1990s, following a similar Tanzanian experience, villagers mobilised themselves and formed a collective force referred to as "Sungusungu" to counter a wave of cattle theft, creating an hybrid form of policing at the community level. This form of community policing developed independently from the government to avoid systemic corruption of police and judiciary.

The "Sungusungu" are governed by an assembly representing all sections of the community to ensure impartiality and that police services are not selectively delivered based on sectional loyalties Although strictly speaking illegal, a modus vivendi between the police and these private security forces after some initial frictions and "Sungusungu" were finally officially tolerated (Heald, S., 2007).

Evidence of impact of community policing
There are not many recent studies looking at the impact and effectiveness of community policing and even fewer specifically looking at corruption and anti-corruption. While this approach seems to have a positive impact on citizens' perception of police performance and police attitudes and behaviours, evidence is inconclusive on the effect of community

policing on crime reduction and increased accountability to the public.

Citizens' perception of police performance
A study analysing the impact of community policing before and after the implementation of a community-oriented policing programme in three neighbourhood of the city of West Palm Beach, Florida, revealed a positive shift in the public attitudes and perceptions of police performances. Citizens' satisfaction translated into perceived decreased levels of local crime, increased perception of police performance, neighbourhood improvements and better community-police relations (Liou, K. T. and Savage, E., 1996). A more recent study analysing findings from twelve cities found that perceptions of community policing have strong positive effects on satisfaction with police and crime prevention behaviors. However, citizen perceptions of community policing do not directly affect levels of fear (Scheider, M. and al, 2003).

Other studies challenge these findings and suggest that closer links and interactions between police officers and community members have little or no effect on overall police performances. For example, an intervention conducted by the Rajasthan Police tested several interventions to enhance police performance, improve public trust and gather objective data on crime rates and performances. In different police stations, the respective impact of improving police training, freezing administrative transfers, introducing a weekly day off and duty rotation system, and community based monitoring, consisting of local community observers observing day-to-day activities was tested. Training and the freezing of transfers were found to be the most effective interventions in terms of higher job satisfaction and victims' satisfaction with the investigation, while community observers had little to no effect on the public perception of police performance (Banerjee, A., Chattopadhayay R., Duflo, E and Keniston, D., 2008).

Police attitudes and behaviours
Community policing also seem to have positive effects on police staff attitudes towards their work. Personnel surveys conducted after community policing was implemented in Madison, Wisconsin, in the late 80s suggest a correlation between community policing and job satisfaction. Personnel surveys conducted in 1987 and 1989 found a significant increase over time in the belief that the organization practiced community policing participatory management style. This belief was positively and significantly related to (a) satisfaction

with work, the organization, supervision, and job growth potential; (b) perceived significance of work; (c) task identity; and (d) work autonomy (Wickoff, M.A., Skogan, W., 1994).

Crime reduction

In spite of these positive findings, evidence is less conclusive in terms of crime reduction, as reflected by various studies conducted in the United States where community policing has become an important model of policing in recent years, with many police departments shifting from a traditional form of policing to a more community-oriented approach. While violent crime rates have simultaneously declined across major American cities, evidence does not point towards a causal relation between community policing and control of crime.

For example, an evaluation of the impact of community policing on crime reduction in Oakland, California, suggests that there is no statistical evidence that community policing interventions are associated with crime and violence reduction (Wilson, J. and Cox, A., 2008). These findings could be interpreted in different ways: and indicate (1) that such intervention is not effective; (2) that the evaluation does not capture some positive outcomes; (3) that the intervention results in an increased propensity to report crime, thus off-setting crime reductions; (4) that implementation challenges undermine the effectiveness of the interventions; or (5) that such interventions do not directly translate into crime reductions.

Another study looking at robbery and homicide rates in 164 American cities found that community policing had little effect on the control and decline in violent crime ((Mac Donal, J., 2002). On the contrary, policing strategies focused on arrests were associated with reductions in violent crime over time.

Increased accountability to the community

A case study of a large community policing project in Mexico City indicates that clientelism, police corruption and political factionalism permeate the initiative, undermining its impact on crime reduction and public security (Müller, M., 2010). Findings indicate:

- Widespread clientelist practices in neighbourhood committees,

- Middle class neighbourhood committees paying for better protection than tougher neighbourhoods;

- Resource allocation across neighbourhoods based on political factionalism;

- More generally, detrimental impact of local politics on the outcome of such project.

Mexico City experience suggests that community policing does not necessarily translate into better police performances and greater accountability to the community. The case study concludes that policy-makers should more carefully assess the assumed link between such approaches - which are often referred to as best practice for crime/corruption reduction - and more efficient, democratic and accountable policing in deep distrust between police and local residents and practices.

Good practice in implementing community policing reforms

From the above examples, there is a relative consensus that the implementation process comprises three major phases – preparation, implementation and evaluation – and should be accompanied by a change management strategy to overcome resistance to change. It is also recommended to adopt an incremental approach that build up progressively the organisational capacity of both the police and the communities (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004).

Preparatory stage

The preparatory phase involves a pre-engagement analysis of the local context and a consultative/participatory design and planning process to win the support and commitment of all stakeholders (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004 and OSCE 2008).

The assessment of the local context in the implementation area can include a risk and conflict as well as a crime trend analysis, an assessment of the police organisation and its relationship with the broader justice and security sectors, as well as a review of existing governance structures. In addition, a stakeholder and leadership analysis should be conducted to identify key figures in the police, the government and civil society as well as financial assessment and viability should be conducted to assess the financial needs and absorptive capacity of the local government and police organisation (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004).

The planning process involves designing a comprehensive and detailed strategic development plan defining clear objectives, implementation benchmarks, and resource allocation. A core implementation group should be selected to supervise and implement the reform process. Reform goals should bear relation to the local context and the road map to achieve them should be cautious and flexible. Adequate resources should be allocated to the reform process,

Implementation

Managing the reform implementation can involve a wide range of activities, including conducting pilot projects, establishing adequate accountability and organisational structures, ensuring national and local oversight, conducting capacity-building activities, developing programs addressing corruption risks, designing/implementing internal and external communication strategies, etc (Groenewald, H., and Peake, G., 2004).

More specifically, the implementation involves activities focussing both on police organisation and community participation (OSCE, 2008).

Measures targeting police organisation typically include:

- Establishing pilot stations and foot patrol in pilot neighbourhood ensuring visibility and easy access to the police;

- Training police staff on the concept of community policing, mentoring, supervision;

- Adopting clear regulation and policies to deal with ethical dilemmas and negative impact of close community-relations ties;

- Implementing a robust anti-corruption strategy including good management, supervision and controls, fair and transparent disciplinary procedures and the introduction of an effective complaints mechanisms;

- Focussing on developing both individual and institutional capacities.

- At the community level, activities aimed at building trust and facilitating participation should focus on community empowerment and can include:

- Establishing public forums and community forums at the grassroots level ;

- Educating community members on how they can be involved in problem-solving process;

- Creating alternative occasions for meeting and exchanges such as police open days, visits to schools, information campaigns,

- Complementing crime preventing problem solving approaches with more traditional law enforcement;

- Developing sound cooperation with the media.

Evaluation

Community policing interventions are long-term reform processes that should be supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation at all stages of the reform process to assess whether the intervention is achieving its strategic goals. This involves identifying quantitative and qualitative indicators and benchmarks from the on-set and building them into the programme design to allow ongoing monitoring of outputs and outcomes.

General criteria for assessing the implementation of community policing approaches relate to their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (OSCE, 2008). Monitoring and evaluation could specifically focus on the extent of police organisational transformation, the performance of other government agencies and the development of police-public partnerships. Qualitative criteria can be complemented by quantitative criteria such as crime statistics, crime clearance rates and victimisation reports. The public should be kept informed of the evaluation reports and lessons learnt disseminated to inform the design of similar programmes.

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