Metaketa Initiative (Community Policing)

Cabinet Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

Metaketa Initiative (Community Policing):

Tested community policing interventions in six developing countries, reaching an estimated 9 million people and measuring impacts on:

- Community attitudes toward police
- Community cooperation with the police
- Police attitudes and behaviours
- Crime

Methodology

Randomised controlled trials were conducted in and coordinated across six sites: Brazil, Colombia, Liberia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Uganda.
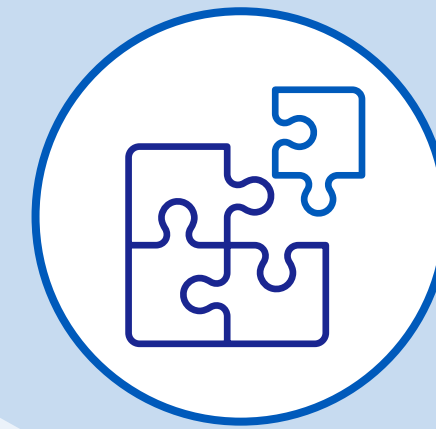
Interventions were implemented by local police agencies to ensure community policing interventions were locally appropriate. Common elements across all sites included town hall meetings and the introduction of foot patrols.

Trials leveraged both survey and administrative data.

The coordinated evaluations produced stronger, more robust evidence than an evidence synthesis from a similar number of uncoordinated evaluations might have. Coordination helped FCDO better understand where and why such interventions work, and better predict where and why they could work in the future.

Findings

The community policing Metaketa showed little impact from the intervention on the outcomes of interest.

Crime was not reduced.

"In the main analysis, the authors detect no evidence that community policing affected crime victimization or police abuse as measured by both surveys and administrative data." **(EGAP Policy Brief)**

Citizen's attitudes did not improve.

"Community policing does not appear to affect citizens' perceptions of insecurity, perceptions of the police, or willingness to cooperate with the police" **(EGAP Policy Brief)**

While treatment areas saw greater levels of community policing activity (as was expected), interventions were often implemented unevenly and incompletely.

The authors conclude that national governments should proceed with caution if adopting the community policing model, unless structural constraints or operational practices within the police are also addressed.
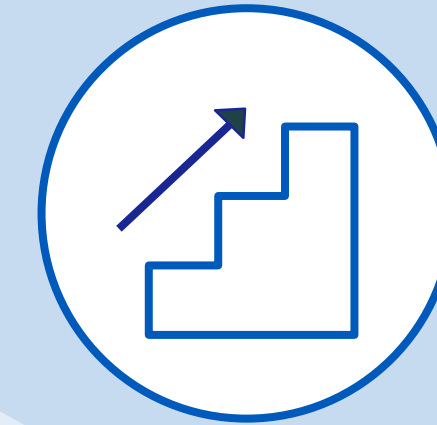
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Impacts

An Associate Director of the leading global research centre J-PAL described community policing as **"an area with very little rigorous evaluation" and that Metaketa "offers a major expansion in the experimental evidence base."**

The authors identify several possible reasons why their community policing interventions were ineffective, including misaligned officer incentives (which prioritised high-profile crimes over 'lesser' crimes like fraud, abuse, or harassment) and high officer turnover (which reduced rapport with the public). Policymakers may wish to target these structural elements to further improve policing. **(EGAP Policy Brief)**

The results have been widely shared, including five well attended webinars with attendance from the UK and US governments, policy makers and practitioners worldwide. Viewing figures are in the thousands. There has been strong social media engagement with the tweets promoting the journal article, sharing the evidence further.

Next steps

The results will be used to inform evidence-driven policy guidelines, such as through The Committee on Law and Justice of The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's ad hoc committee on policing institutions, police practices and capacities, and police legitimacy in the international context.

Links

Read the Journal article

Read the Policy brief