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Contents

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Inclusive Approaches to Community Policing and CVE

Summary

- Accountable and effective policing institutions are key to stability in volatile environments, especially societies transitioning from conflict or authoritarian rule. From a development or peacebuilding perspective, community policing can aid in reform of security institutions and give civil society an active role in the process.

- Community policing—simultaneously an ethos, a strategy, and a collaboration—helps promote democratic policing ideals and advance a human security paradigm.

- Challenges to implementing such programs in transitional societies are considerable and tied to demographic and cultural variations in both communities and security actors. Developing trust, a key to success in all community policing, can be particularly difficult.

- Challenges are also unique when dealing with marginalized communities and members of society. Neither a police service nor a given community are monolithic. How police interact with one segment of a community might be—might need to be—completely different than how they approach another.

- Community policing programs designed to prevent violent extremism require a common and nuanced understanding between the community and the police as to what constitutes violent extremism and what is an effective response. When they agree, they can develop effective joint solutions to mitigate the threat.

- Key competencies can be grouped into four categories: those important to success for any community policing programs, those relevant to efforts to reform the security sector, to promote women's inclusion in security, or to prevent violent extremism. These objectives often overlap.

Introduction

Community policing is both an ethos and an organizational strategy or instrument that aims to promote a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community to ensure safety and security. Yet it is precisely because it is both a philosophy and a tool—

resulting in disconnect between theory and the realities of implementation—that has given rise to numerous iterations, models, and applications of the ideal.[1]

Accountable and effective policing institutions are key to stability in volatile environments, especially societies transitioning from conflict or authoritarian rule. From a development or peacebuilding perspective, community policing can aid in reform of the security institutions by allowing civil society a role in providing oversight and accountability for services as well as engaged participation in the planning or provision of security. Community policing can be understood as a mechanism by which to promote democratic policing ideals and to advance a human security paradigm: One in which responsibility for the safety of a community is shared by both state and nonstate actors, and one that reflects the different needs and voices of all members of a community—both men and women. From this perspective, community policing is a collaborative process by which communities and the state can create mutual ownership of a security agenda. Additionally, some community policing programs are deliberately designed to help promote women's roles in security and ensure that their unique needs and concerns are met. In this way, community policing can be applied as a tool to help promote women's empowerment and bolster their public roles in transitional societies.

Community policing is not a new concept and has long been "exported" by the West to postconflict and transitional societies as a peacebuilding and reform strategy. The last few years in particular have witnessed a considerable increase in community policing programming. The increase, however, has not been as a reform tool but as a strategy to prevent terrorism and violent extremism—and use has focused more explicitly on security goals than on the reform process. In the period after 9/11, community policing became the accepted domestic security strategy, especially in the United States and the UK, to help prevent violent extremism, with programs such as Prevent in the UK setting the bar. These programs aim to strike a careful balance among security service provision, strategic communication and relationship-building, and the elicitation of information in an effort to prevent and divert individuals from potential or near-engagement in terrorist activity. Their success, like all community policing programs, is rooted in trust and, even more critically, in a common and nuanced understanding between the community and the police as to what constitutes violent extremism and what is an effective security response.

What happens, then, when community policing is promoted in transitional societies in need of security and justice reform, or to those with marginalized and underserviced communities, or as a way to engage women in the provision of community-level security, or to prevent violent extremism? Community policing programs often serve multiple objectives. It is incumbent on security, gender, and peacebuilding practitioners to increasingly expand their understanding of the scope and spectrum of methodologies and the assumptions that underpin them and to reconcile sometimes competing objectives—all the while ensuring that they are not doing more harm than good in the communities they aim to assist.

Transitional Societies

The challenges that surround the successful implementation of community policing programs in societies transitioning from conflict or authoritarian regimes are considerable. They not only stem from the damage to society and institutions that conflict and violence bring but also are tied to the demographic and cultural variations in the nature of both communities and security actors.

Informal Security Actors

Who provides security when formal government institutions, including the police, are weak or not in place? In Nigeria, for example, a robust spectrum of informal security actors

provide a crucial role in keeping communities safe. This voluntary policing sector, as it is also called, is organized by and a part of the communities its members serve. It emerged in the absence of a fully functioning formal police force and also represents a renaissance of traditional indigenous tribal security systems. In many cases, these forces fill a gap for communities, one created by an underresourced police service that lacks access to and the trust of the communities in which they work or, in some cases, the absence of any functional police service. Some informal policing groups in Nigeria are trained and subject to accountability mechanisms in the same way a formal service would be, and many work in tandem with the national police. As one workshop expert noted, the working partnerships between the informal and formal policing sectors in Nigeria can, in some circumstances, create a sort of "virtuous circle" in which their interaction keeps each in check and, in their competing for the trust of the community, enhances their competencies.

Violence by Boko Haram and al-Shabaab has increased the security needs in both Nigeria and Kenya, and the informal sector is playing a role in both prevention and response, albeit often controversially. Those who first responded to the Westgate attack in Nairobi in 2013 were neighborhood watch members and licensed weapon carriers. In May 2014 in Jos, Plateau, Nigeria, a suicide bomber was apprehended by local "vigilantes" only hours before a potential attack that would have killed hundreds gathered for a public viewing of a football match.

Many Western security experts, however, resist the concept of a voluntary policing sector, seeing it as a both a security risk and a path to further delegitimizing the formal police service. Some paramilitary groups, for example, have evolved into predatory entities, harming rather than helping communities. It is important, as one workshop expert noted, not to romanticize the informal security sector. In Nigeria and Kenya, vigilantes have contributed to community safety but also on occasion tend to issue harsh punishments, engage in extortion, and advance criminality by participating in activities such as illicit trafficking. Some informal actors may have a particularly adverse impact on women, especially those who are involved in human trafficking or who fail to respond to the unique security needs of women.

One scholar of community policing noted, "You cannot impose a Western legal ideology and structure in a context that perceives that import as simply reinforcing the rule of neo-colonial elites irrespective of present local failings. The community policing movement…has largely not woken up to that simple lesson from development theory."[2] When accountability mechanisms are in place, the informal sector can play a vital role in keeping communities safe in many transitional societies and, despite these limitations, can be an important component of public ownership of community-level security. Indeed, in some cases, they may be the only providers of security.

Absence of Trust

The colonial legacy of authoritarian police institutions—designed not to serve and protect the people but to repress nationalist movements—underpins the lack of trust between police and communities in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria. The Nigerian Police Force still carries much of the centralized structure and culture of its original establishment, as indicated by its name (a force rather than a service), centralized command, and lack of serious reform. Although indications of progress are numerous, and bright spots acknowledged, an isolated incident or experience of abuse by the police can influence impressions in a community in a way that would be less damaging with a service with a long established history of democratic policing. The same is true in Kenya, where the legacy of harsh colonial policing, compounded by continuing punitive approaches, makes it difficult for the police to establish the trust needed for effective community policing. This charged history makes trust-building on the local community level very challenging. One workshop expert explicitly

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noted the "fundamental tension between the colonial legacy and community policing," and indeed the colonial authoritarian model of policing is the antithesis of community policing.

Community policing programs are rooted in trust, but trust-based relationships are hard to establish when police services face significant reform challenges or actively commit human rights abuses. Security experts often argue that a baseline of institutional reform is needed before launching community policing programs. Yet this does not accommodate the realities of policing in transitional countries such as Nigeria. As one expert from Abuja observed, "If we wait for fundamental reform, we will wait forever." Nor does it acknowledge that community policing itself can be a reform mechanism. When designed with explicit reform objectives, community policing programs can generate a trust-building process that contributes to the development of other conditions necessary for decentralized and effective security, such as transparency, accountability, and local and inclusive participation.

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Marginalized Communities

Who or what constitutes a community? Is it a society, a village, a neighborhood? Who within these groups should participate in a community policing program? Community policing programs face unique challenges when dealing with marginalized communities and members of society, whether an ethnic minority or a diaspora in a London borough, Somali refugees in Kenya, or women with limited voice and legal protection. Just as it is important not to view a police service as monolithic, so it is for the communities they serve. How police interact with one segment of a community might be completely different than how they approach another.

Role of Women

In USIP's Women Preventing Extremist Violence (WPEV) project,[3] women in Nigeria articulated their concern that police not only lacked the skills needed to interact with the women in the community in a respectful and productive way but also did not take women's unique security concerns seriously. Issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, and assault were often dismissed as family problems, and the police were unwilling to engage in addressing these crimes. Special family units exist to tackle these issues but are often underfunded and marginalized within the larger police structure. Further exacerbating this dynamic is that in Nigeria, because of the centralized structure, police are often assigned—sometimes purposely—to communities with which they have no sociocultural ties and whose local language or dialect they may not even speak.

The concept of the natural bridge suggests that female police officers are more responsive to the needs of women in a community by virtue of their gender and provide other women more direct access to security. As to reporting and policing sexual crimes, female officers have often served as a "safe" conduit to services for women who have been sexually victimized. Experts in this working session suggested that, in addition to recognizing that a gender sensitive lens is critical to community policing, the overall individual skill sets of the officers are what make successful community policing.

Research has questioned the concept that female police officers, solely on the basis of their gender, are more adept at community relations.[4] Conversely, in the pilot WPEV project in Nigeria, it was clear that the female civil society leaders who participated—because of their experiences in interfaith fora and as peacebuilders—had enhanced relationship-building skills and faculties that clearly contributed to the improvement of community-police relations. That they did underscores the idea that women and girls are not a homogenous group and that other aspects of their social identity, such as ethnicity or religious affiliations, may dominate how

women as police officers interact with women in communities that are different from their own—and how the women in these communities interact with police.

Risk of Profiling

Kenya is home to a large ethnic Somali population. Some are Somali-Kenyans whose citizenship is established; others are refugees or immigrants from the violence in Somalia. The ethnic Somalis of Kenya are a heterogeneous group with internal divisions, clan allegiances, and distinct subcultures on the coast, in the northeast, and in Nairobi. Yet because of the spillover of al-Shabaab violence into Kenya's borders, and indeed the violence from within the Somali community in Kenya, the Kenyan police have been actively pursuing perceived threats by ethnic Somalis. They have done so more often than not in a way that gives rise to allegations of profiling, abuse, and tactics that only exacerbate and further polarize the relationship between police and the ethnic Somali community.

When considering the issue of policing different ethnic groups, workshop experts argue that sustained engagement in the community, a commitment to building relationships, and strong interpersonal and cross-cultural skills are more important than ethnic affinity or gender or whether the police were actually drawn from the community.

Community Policing and CVE

Community policing is understood today and increasingly promoted as an effective approach to preventing terrorist activity. In this application, it builds on community-police relationships and collaborative ownership of security issues and focuses on jointly identifying and diverting threats of violent extremism at very early stages. It requires significant trust between police and the community and a sophisticated level of information sharing. If CVE objectives are launched prematurely, that is, in community relationships with either too little trust or incompatible understanding of what constitutes terrorist activity, these programs can quickly be reduced to elaborate informant programs, which pose great risk of abuse and offer only limited benefit to the communities.

Workshop experts agree that the most important feature of a community policing program designed to prevent violent extremism is a shared understanding of the threat. When the police and community members agree, they can develop joint solutions to mitigate the threat to include generating a deeper understanding of the local drivers of violent extremism and the unique competencies and strategies needed to prevent it. If the community tacitly supports or feels sympathy for violent extremists, or if indeed the state is viewed as the enemy and the police as its arm—as may be the case with some Somalis in Kenya or some Nigerians in northern Nigeria—then community policing has no chance of success. According to one workshop expert, the crisis with Boko Haram in Nigeria may be having a galvanizing impact on community-police relations in areas close to but not directly experiencing the insurgency, as both perceive the group as a significant security problem. When the community and the police see themselves as equally threatened, they are united in response: A shared security challenge for both the community and the police is a key success factor for close cooperation.

It is therefore important to think through the unique competencies needed for community policing programs designed with CVE objectives, those designed as reform tools, and those designed to engage women in security—even though these objectives and programs often overlap.[5] One workshop expert argued that police engaged in CVE work must be held to an even higher standard than those policing other crimes. Certainly, police engaged in CVE work must have a high degree of emotional intelligence, empathy, and willingness to

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work in a pre-criminal space and allow those vulnerable to recruitment or indeed those who have dabbled in violent extremist activity an opportunity to exit, to be reformed and helped along a different path. Within the Prevent program in London, police officers assigned to community engagement tasks have no investigative mandate but know that, as police officers, they are obliged to report a threat should they encounter one.[6] This reflects a sophisticated level of policing rooted in a significant level of trust with the communities served.

Both police and communities involved in CVE must also have a clear understanding of radicalization. False assumptions about how and why individuals engage in violence and about who is at risk of joining or being recruited into a violent extremist group can derail any community policing program with CVE objectives. Both the community and the police must clearly understand the relationship between radical or conservative ideas and violent and criminal behavior. Espousing intolerance does not guarantee involvement in violent action. More important, and especially applicable in diaspora or culturally different communities, just because a person exhibits conservative religious traditions through dress or comportment does not necessarily mean any affiliation with or interest in groups that justify or endorse violence through an extremist interpretation of religious dogma.

The workshop experts discussed community policing and CVE programs across a wide range of contexts and distilled the key attributes or competencies. Although community policing programs often have multiple and overlapping objectives, it is helpful to group these competencies into four general categories: those important to success for any community policing programs and those relevant to efforts to reform the security sector, to promote women's inclusion in security, or to prevent violent extremism.

Baseline competencies for community policing programs
- Promote participation, transparency, and accountability
- Require responsiveness, honesty, fairness, and nondiscrimination
- Exhibit mutual respect
- Reflect common and shared values
- Reject politicization of roles and relationships
- Require strong communication skills and relationship-building skills of all lead participants
- Ensure sustained engagement by police

Additional reform tool competencies
- Understand and strive to accommodate indigenous security structures and cultural norms (to the extent that they are compatible with human rights and the rule of law)
- Ensure safety for participants
- Ensure trauma awareness and sensitivity for police working with the community

Additional women's empowerment tool competencies
- Acknowledge and respond to security concerns unique to women
- Identify and address obstacles to women's inclusion and participation, such as location and timing
- Ensure that police have the sensitivity and skills to engage productively and appropriately with women, especially in traditional societies
- Ensure that women understand their rights and protections in engaging with police
- Improve the status of women-focused units within the police

Additional CVE tool competencies
- Ensure a common understanding of the multifaceted threat of violent extremism to the community
- Ensure a common understanding of the drivers of radicalization and violent extremism

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- Ensure a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in safeguarding the community
- Ensure that police service reflects a baseline of reform and accountability
- Ensure that police emphasize prevention and diversion of individuals on a path to violent extremism rather than pursuit, that is, allow for exit
- Require enhanced cross cultural skills, flexibility, and innovative approaches for police working with marginalized communities and hard to reach individuals

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The objectives of a community policing program should be clear, and specialized competencies are required for programs designed to engage women in security or to prevent violent extremism.
- Community policing programs should acknowledge and accommodate local indigenous structures and cultural norms of the countries in which they are implemented, especially in transitional societies and with marginalized communities, while upholding universal human rights and the rule of law.
- Community policing should always reflect a relationship between police and the community that is mutually beneficial, trust based, inclusive, and sustained. This includes a consideration of the unique security concerns of women and the skills needed to address them.
- Community policing in support of CVE objectives requires some minimal baseline of reform for the services, staff with a unique and advanced set of specialized competencies, and a common understanding of what constitutes violent extremism.
- The donor community needs to be more sensitive to the fact that building community-policing programs is a long-term process and that certain indicators of success when prematurely required can both disrupt this process and give false results. Indicators need to be tailored to individual contexts, and measures of success will vary.
- In establishing community policing programs, the donor community needs to develop better assessment tools and a baseline understanding of the relationship between police and communities.
- In addition to police-focused training and preparation for community policing, communities must also be educated and trained to develop the skills to interact with the police.

Notes

1. Workshop attendees included Fauziya Abdi of the Royal United Services Institute, Kenya; Bob Arnot of Justice for All, DFID, Nigeria; Linda Bishai, Africa Program, USIP; Matthew Herbert, STATT Consulting; Georgia Holmer, Center for Gender and Peacebuilding, USIP; Isioma Kemakolam, Search for Common Ground, Nigeria; Kathleen Kuehnast, Center for Gender and Peacebuilding, USIP; Christina Murtaugh, Rule of Law Center, USIP; Robert Perito, The Perito Group; Simon Smith, Metropolitan Police (London), United Kingdom; Fulco van Deventer, Human Security Collective, The Netherlands; Christopher Wakube, Saferworld, Kenya; and Kamil Yilmaz, Turkish National Police, Turkey. Alan Schwartz, Policy Futures, facilitated the workshop and provided analytic guidance for the workshop design and process.

2. Mike Brogden, "Horses for Courses and Thin Blue Lines: Community Policing in Transitional Society," *Police Quarterly* 8, no.1 (2005): 64, 88.

3. USIP's WPEV project is in alignment with the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which reflects key concerns of the United Nations Security Resolution 1325 that promotes the participation of women in matters of peace and security to include conflict prevention and countering violent extremism.

4. Cara Rabe-Hemp, "Female Officers and the Ethic of Care:Does Officer Gender Impact Police Behaviors?" *Journal of Criminal Justice* 36, no. 5 (2008): 5.

5. It is worth noting here that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) assesses that attempts at leveraging community policing for CVE should be embedded in a broader implementation of community policing in its own right, as a reform tool in support of democratic policing. That is, community policing for CVE may not be possible in the absence of a broader community policing program focused on reform. See especially OSCE, *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*, March 17, 2014.

6. It is helpful to examine the lessons learned surrounding the importance of trust in the review and development of multiple iterations of the PREVENT program in the UK. See especially "Prevent Strategy," 2011, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf.

Of Related Interest

- *Creating Spaces for Effective CVE Approaches* by Georgia Holmer (Peace Brief, September 2014)

- *Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective* by Georgia Holmer (Special Report, August 2013)

- *A Crucial Link: Local Peace Committees and National Peacebuilding* by Andries Odendaal (USIP Press, 2013)

- *Engaging Extremists: Trade-Offs, Timing, and Diplomacy* edited by I. William Zartman and Guy Olivier Faure (USIP Press, 2011)

- *Common Strategies for Women in Transition Countries* by Steven E. Steiner (Peace Brief, September 2013)