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THE CHALLENGES OF
COMMUNITY POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA
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INTRODUCTION

In his opening address to Parliament on 25 June 1999, South Africa's new president committed the government to take measures to *"... strengthen the Community Police Fora to improve their capacity to mobilise the people against crime and to improve co-operation between the people and the law enforcement agencies."* This, he said, would be one of *"... the hallmarks of the national offensive against crime and violence."*

President Mbeki's commitment to enhance Community Police Forums (CPFs) is not surprising — these structures exist (sometimes in name only) at almost every police station in the country and are the most visible, if not the only, expression of South Africa's community policing policy.

What is surprising, is that this statement appears to contradict the direction of the White Paper on Safety and Security, approved by cabinet in September 1998, which explicitly provides for strengthening the capacity of elected local government to 'supplement' the functions of CPFs. Furthermore, it also appears to pre-empt the review of the practical appropriateness of South Africa's community policing policy which was mandated by the White Paper. This would be a great pity as, without such a review, it is unlikely that anything more will be added to enhance local level policing than the current rhetorical appeals to a vague concept of 'the community' with, as experienced elsewhere, *"... all its imprecise aura of vacuous virtue."*[1]

If the President's commitment to strengthen CPFs is seen as more than rhetoric — especially in the light of the country's crime rates — then community policing has to be examined against the reality of the challenges that face it.

This paper attempts to outline these challenges by providing a brief analysis of the origins of community policing in South Africa and how this influenced the conceptualisation of the later community policing policy. This is followed by a descriptive analysis of the development and content of the policy that guides community policing in the country and the assumptions underlying the policy. Next, the manner in which the policy has been implemented and the impact of implementation is considered. To conclude the paper, an outline of some of the key lessons learned from the South African experience of community policing is provided.

ORIGIN OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is easy now, as South Africa's infant democracy begins to grow and strengthen, to forget the pain of its birth. However, to form a coherent understanding of community policing in South Africa, it is necessary to look back on that experience. For it is here, in the vicious political violence that engulfed the country shortly after the unbanning of the liberation movements in February 1990 that the shape of South Africa's community policing was set.

During the first months of 1991, increasing violence was destabilising KwaZulu-Natal and large areas of the Transvaal (now Gauteng), and evidence of police collusion in the violence

was mounting.[2] To address this, the African National Congress (ANC) began to motivate for a peace summit at which a formally binding agreement between themselves, the Inkatha movement and the government could be struck.

Following long and often bitter negotiations, the ANC, Inkatha and the government signed a National Peace Accord on 14 September 1991. The agreement contained 'general provisions' which included the following:

"The police shall endeavour to protect the people of South Africa from all criminal acts and shall do so in a rigorously non-partisan fashion, regardless of the political belief and affiliation, race, religion, gender or ethnic origin of the perpetrators or victims of such acts ... The police shall be guided by the belief that they are accountable to society in rendering their policing services and shall therefore conduct themselves so as to secure and retain the respect and approval of the public. Through such accountability and friendly, effective and prompt service, the police shall endeavour to obtain the co-operation of the public whose partnership in the task of crime control and prevention is essential ..."[3]

In addition to these provisions, the National Peace Accord provided a code of conduct for the police, which emphasised that:

"... the police have an obligation to 'preserve the fundamental and constitutional rights of each individual in South Africa, to 'secure the favour and approval of the public', to use the least possible degree of force, to 'be sensitive to the 'balance between individual freedom and collective security' and to act in a professional and honest way."[4]

A core criticism of the code at the time was that, while it set out the principles appropriate for policing, it did not provide *"... concrete mechanisms of enforcement."*[5] Nor, for that matter, did it provide incentives for compliance.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the provisions of the National Peace Accord and the code of conduct together provided a vision for the fundamental transformation of policing in the country. The key principles outlined in these documents — accountability, integrity, impartiality, effective service — are those that inform all models of community policing.

However, a number of authors have pointed out that the political popularity of community policing can be attributed to the flexibility or definitional vagueness of the concept itself — it incorporates a variety of differing or even conflicting definitions, the interpretation of which may be embraced and promoted by roleplayers across the political spectrum.[6]

This may well account for the willingness of the police to accept the provisions of the National Peace Accord and the code of conduct. Faced with a major and growing legitimacy and credibility crisis, senior officers had begun to see the need for change. Indeed, even before the Accord was signed, the police were arguing that a new approach had been adopted. As the then Deputy Commissioner of the South African Police (SAP), Lieutenant-General Mulder van Eyk, put it:

"The South African Police realises that the organisation must not only be attuned to the community but also function in the context of the community. Effective policing therefore means the strengthening of relationships through which co-operation and voluntary obedience to the law will be maximised ... An attempt is being made to implement this principle of partnership with the public in every facet of policing."[7]

Part of this attempt was the creation of police-community liaison forums at local level which were established, run and chaired by police officers for 'consultative' purposes. The limitations of these structures were soon apparent. As noted by researchers at the time:

"There is little evidence that the police are generally aware of the issues of representativity, or that forums lead to substantive input and positive responses on the part of the police. This is borne out by the experiences of those involved in the Local Dispute Resolution Committees of the National Peace Accord. As with many liaison forums the police are often unwilling (or

unable because of organisational policy) to regard the views of the 'community representatives' as necessarily relevant or deserving of an organisational response."[8]

However, the National Peace Accord also established structures by which a more representative and legitimate input from political and community organisations could be acquired at local, regional and national level. These included Regional and Local Dispute Resolution Committees which reported to a National Peace Secretariat, as well as a Police Board. The mandate of these structures was essentially one of monitoring and advice — they were explicitly excluded from any formal role in the *"... day-to day functioning of the police."*[9] Despite this limitation, these structures provided the means, for the first time, by which political and community organisations could make an input, albeit limited, in police planning.

At national level, the National Peace Accord provided for a Commission of Inquiry Regarding the Prevention of Public Violence and Intimidation (popularly known as the Goldstone Commission) with a broad mandate, including the formal investigation of police misconduct.

The National Peace Accord thus initiated, for the first time in South Africa's history, a structured framework for police accountability. However, the issue of the legitimacy of the police remained one that required attention. As one observer noted:

"... the structures of the National Peace Accord will go only part of the way to making police accountable to the communities they serve. Only when an authority which is perceived as legitimate and representative of the majority of the population has control over the SAP will conditions be established for democratically accountable policing."[10]

It is these two interrelated issues — democratic control or accountability and through this, improving the legitimacy of the police — that primarily shaped the nature of the community policing policy that was to come.

SOUTH AFRICA'S COMMUNITY POLICING POLICY

The first formal reference to 'community policing' as the prescribed approach, style or methodology for policing in a democratic South Africa is found in the Interim Constitution (Act No 200 of 1993). In Section 221(1) and (2), the Constitution directed that an Act of Parliament was to *"... provide for the establishment of community-police forums in respect of police stations",* which would include the following functions:

"a)the promotion of the accountability of the Service to local communities and co-operation of communities with the service

b) the monitoring of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service;

c)advising the Service regarding local policing priorities;

d)the evaluation of the provision of visible policing services, including -
   i.the provision, siting and staffing of police stations

   ii.the reception and processing of complaints and charges;

   iii.the provision of protective services at gatherings;

   iv.the patrolling of residential and business areas; and

   v.the prosecution of offenders; and
e)requesting enquiries into policing matters in the locality concerned."[11]

In Section 222, the Constitution directed that the Act was to provide for the establishment of an independent complaints mechanism to ensure that police misconduct could be independently investigated.

Thus, the political prerogative informing community policing was one of democratic accountability — the police were to be democratised and legitimised by enhancing oversight and accountability generally, and particularly by enhancing interaction, consultation and

accountability at local, or police station level. Informing this prerogative, of course, was the concern of the ANC regarding the politics of the police. Preparing to inherit an extremely powerful, organised and armed organisation, hostile to democratisation and, as had become clear, thoroughly implicated in the violence, the primary issue was neutralising the potential of the police to destabilise the new democracy.

The emphasis on accountability was continued with the publication of the new government's first formal policy statement on safety and security in mid-1994 — the minister's draft policy document entitled Change. It placed particular emphasis on the democratic control of the police service and community involvement in safety and security issues. In doing so, the policy statement contextualised the transformation of the police service within the ambit of community policing. As the new minister put it, community policing *"... must be made to permeate every aspect and level of policing."*[12]

These principles were subsequently entrenched in the South African Police Service Act (No 68 of 1995) which formalised the rationalisation and amalgamation of the eleven existing police agencies into a unified national South African Police Service (SAPS) with a single budget and command structure. The Act formally established a civilian Secretariat for Safety and Security with oversight and monitoring functions and created an Independent Complaints Directorate to ensure independent investigation of complaints of police abuses. Furthermore, the Act formally established and detailed the functioning of Community Police Forums (CPFs). In terms of this Act, the functions of the CPFs remained those outlined in the Interim Constitution. It became the responsibility of the police, particularly station, area and provincial commissioners, to establish CPFs at police stations, and area and provincial boards. Community consultation and input were therefore structured throughout the command structure of the new SAPS.

In April 1997, the Department of Safety and Security published its formal policy on community policing — the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines. Developed through a consultative process over a three-year period, the Policy Framework defined community policing in terms of a collaborative, partnership-based approach to local level problem-solving.

As this was the first explicit expression of community policing as a methodology for reducing crime by improving the service provided by the police, the policy marked a watershed in the development of community policing in South Africa. The policy therefore articulated a drive towards the transformation of the SAPS into an effective organisation, accountable at various levels and responsive to the needs of those it served.

Written retroactively in response to developments on the ground, the policy document was mainly intended to provide direction for police managers. The document therefore provided detailed step-by-step guidelines for establishing CPFs, a guide on change management, guidelines for demographic and local level crime analysis, the development of partnerships and local level problem-solving.

The five core elements of community policing in South Africa were defined as:
- *service orientation:* the provision of a professional policing service, responsive to community needs and accountable for addressing these needs;
- *partnership:* the facilitation of a co-operative, consultative process of problem-solving;
- *problem-solving:* the joint identification and analysis of the causes of crime and conflict and the development of innovative measures to address these;
- *empowerment:* the creation of joint responsibility and capacity for addressing crime
- *accountability:* the creation of a culture of accountability for addressing the needs and concerns of communities. This was outlined primarily in terms of the functions of various structures like the national and provincial secretariats, the Independent Complaints Directorate and members of the provincial legislatures responsible for safety and security (MECs).

Assumptions of the model

It has been argued that the above definition corresponds with the distinctive features of the neo-liberal model of community policing as it evolved in Western Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom (and articulated there by the New Right). According to Shearing, this definition correlates with a 'second phase' in the development of community policing in the West — following an earlier 'bandit-catching' phase in which community consultation was used primarily to gather crime intelligence. The second phase is characterised by two distinguishing features:

"... The first is a change in definition of the police from a 'force' a 'service'. An important expression of this change has been the development of 'consultative forums' designed to permit communities to make their policing concerns known to the police and to provide a vehicle for holding the police accountable to them ... Second, is the reconception of the police as people who enable communities to solve their own problems rather than as people who solve problems on their own. Policing for the state police, has become 'everybody's business' rather than simply 'police business'."[14]

Shearing and McMahon argue that this model incorporates the neo-liberal agenda through three related initiatives:

"First, the promotion of a community-based mode of policing that shifts the business of policing to the civil realm while establishing the police as facilitators and brokers of civil policing. Second, an advocacy of problem-solving strategies that promote the use of non-state resources and knowledge through the establishment of an 'enterprise culture' that will mobilise the entrepreneurial efforts of citizens. Third, an exploitation of the commodification of security that the emergence of private security has made possible ... What, it is argued, is required to accomplish this transformation of South African policing is the retraining of police and communities so that they can accomplish the performances that a partnership of state steering and civil rowing requires."[15]

Two critical assumptions regarding the prerequisites of such a model merit some analysis — those relating to 'community' and to capacity.

Community

The first and most important assumption of relevance here is that of 'community'. As Taylor has observed:

"It is clear that community is an open-textured concept; that is to say, there cannot be an exhaustive specification of the conditions for the correct use of the concept ... There are, however, three attributes or characteristics possessed in some degree by all communities ... The first and most basic of these 'core' characteristics is that a set of persons who compose a community have beliefs and values in common ... The second characteristic is that relations between members should be direct and they should be many-sided. Relations are direct to the extent that they are unmediated — by representatives, leaders, bureaucrats, institutions such as those of the state, or by codes, abstractions and reifications ... The third and final characteristic of community is that of reciprocity."[16]

This definition is useful in that it places 'community' concretely as a form of association that may exist in varying degrees in and across different localities.

However, given South Africa's highly politicised, divided, hostile and fragmented society, it is a moot point whether such relationships existed at the time the comments on policing policy were written. For that matter, it is debatable whether such relationships have yet developed in any one locality to the extent that a 'community' may actually be identified.

Also, while a specific locality is not particularly relevant in terms of this general definition, it is critical to South Africa's community policing policy, as the policy specifically located public input at each police station's CPF, and then up through the police command structure. Indeed, CPFs had been established for the express purpose of mediating a relationship between the police and those they are meant to serve. The point therefore is whether one could, or can today, speak sensibly of identifiable 'communities' outside of specific interest

groups.

Steven Friedman, a local policy analyst, has outlined the importance of the absence of a clear definition of 'community':

"This is no semantic quibble, given that 'communities' are meant to set priorities, to engage in decision-making, and to engage the police in Community Police Forums. In reality 'the community' is not a uniform, definable entity: communities are extremely divided with little commonalties in terms of needs and aspirations. It is, therefore, by no means clear to whom safety and security strategists are responding when they invoke 'the community': this is of crucial operational importance ... More generally, if one measure of the effectiveness of safety and security strategies is to be their acceptability among the 'community', the result could be approaches which are sensitive to the needs of particular interests, but not all or even most citizens."[17]

Thus, the clear danger of assuming, without rigorous assessment, the existence of 'community' in a particular locality lies in the potential of this assumption to result in the exclusion of input and, because of this, the politicisation of community policing initiatives. As Van der Spuy has questioned: *"Which groups may lay claim to the policing mandate on behalf of the community?"*[18]

Indeed, one researcher has suggested that South Africa's community policing model, because it does not define 'community', provides legitimacy to a form of 'partnership policing' in which the police engage with defined private interest groups — non-governmental organisations, business organisations and other interest groups.[19] Friedman notes that, while this does begin to *"... define the nature of the 'community', it confirms the exclusion of, for example, grassroots citizens."*[20]

This is of direct relevance to the success or failure of community policing initiatives because, as Lyons points out, *"the logic of community policing assumes communities to be a form of association capable of informal social control."*[21]

Informal social control may here be read to refer to the ability of 'communities' to generate a coherent set of norms and values which, when realised in everyday interaction, regulate individual activities for the common good.[22] In other words, the logic of community policing assumes the availability of inherent community resources — social capital — that may be tapped and enhanced to produce social order.

The key issue is that of reciprocity, the ability of people sharing a residential area to engage with, receive and contribute to the generation of social capital. Thus, for Lyons:

"Reciprocity is a structural condition for the generation of social capital. The structures and agency supported by community policing ... must take into account the importance of intracommunity reciprocity for the effective operation of the informal social controls police seek to mobilise."[23]

This is because, for Lyons, *"[a] core assumption in the logic of community policing is that innovative police practices can mobilise now latent informal mechanisms of social control embedded within community life. Advocates argue that community policing will be more effective because it revitalizes communities with these capacities. Police community partnerships are expected to empower citizens to overcome their fears and contribute to the co-production of social order."*[24]

Clearly, the key assumption here is that the reciprocal relationships that build the social capital to be contributed by a 'community' are generically crime preventive.

The extent to which this holds true for South Africa is questionable. Recent research by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry notes that:

"The focus groups from the African townships told a story about powerlessness in the face of

poverty. There was a very open acknowledgement of a communal complicity in crime from both men and women."[25]

This observation appears to be supported by research into the motivations of youthful perpetrators of violent crime, conducted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR). The research indicates that while the

"... youth involved in crime — or amagents as they are popularly referred to in the townships — all had complex narratives to tell ... it is clear that crime is one of the new forms of initiation into manhood for the young boys in the urban setting of the township. The age-old institutions and traditional rituals that once governed young boys' entry into adult life have been replaced by rites of passage that are often brutal and deadly."[26]

These research findings thus problematise the assumption that the social capital generated through reciprocal intra-community relationships will necessarily be positive and crime preventive.[27] As Crawford puts it:

"Communities are often portrayed as the antithesis of violence and crime. On the contrary, however, the collective values of a community may serve to stimulate and sustain criminality."[28]

It may be argued that this is particularly applicable to those situations in which the generation of *"vertical social capital"* — that resulting from the *"... reciprocal relationships between citizens and state agencies"*[29] — is either inadequate or corrupt. This relates directly to the integrity, both actual and perceived, of the criminal justice system, including the police.

Thus, questioning the assumptions informing the conceptualisation of 'community' inevitably leads to questioning the capacity requirements for successful community policing. As Lyons puts it:

"... the most basic reciprocal exchange at the heart of stories about community policing is a police / state commitment to perform their duties in a way that enhances the generation of social capital in communities and a community commitment to invest a portion of that capital in cooperative efforts with the police to improve public safety."[30]

Given the analysis above, just how much South Africa's disadvantaged and fragmented communities are able to contribute, remains debatable.

Institutional capacity

Institutional capacity here refers to that of the police, and whether the police are really able to engage in the 'innovative practices' required to 'revitalise' or 'empower' communities. Given the severe capacity constraints facing the police organisation, the availability of such capacity may be even more questionable.

First among these constraints is the personnel of the SAPS which is still largely undertrained and underskilled — some 25 per cent of the 128 000 members of the SAPS remain functionally illiterate. Even more members have never received formal training in the actual methodology of community policing.

Secondly, the hierarchical organisation of personnel inhibits individual innovation — the SAPS may well be the one and only police agency in which there are more ranked members than constables, more managers than managed. Extremely top-heavy and centralised, the SAPS has delegated very limited actual management authority to its local level operational command, the station commissioners. This is, of course, exactly the level of command that is meant to engage and deal creatively with the concerns of local residents.

Thirdly, the continuing lack of a coherent and integrated training, deployment, development and succession strategy geared towards enhancing local level service delivery means that there are no systemic incentives for rewarding innovative and effective practice at the local level.

What this reflects, most clearly, is the lack of a coherent and integrated recruitment, training, deployment and succession strategy. That this continues may well be a result of a prejudiced view of those who choose to join the police — a view most cynically put by the present Chief Executive Officer of the SAPS, Meyer Kahn, who reportedly believes that:

"... a certain type of person will always become a policeman. He is not a genius. The best we can hope is that he is honest and hardworking."[31]

Thus, is it plausible to assume that the personnel of the SAPS, developed in an extremely centralised, hierarchical, and still largely insular organisational culture, have been equipped to deliver the decentralised, informed, innovative and proactive responses required by community policing? Clearly not.

This is mainly an issue of leadership and management and implies a great deal more than the 'retraining' of the police as has been done elsewhere. And it begins with the most senior leadership.

Given the political prerogative of neutralising the potential of the police to undermine the fledgling democracy, the new government instituted a variety of measures to weed out those most closely associated with the former SAP's last commissioner, General Johan van der Merwe. However, because of the constraints of the Interim Constitution's 'sunset clause' that protected civil service jobs, other SAP personnel had to be found to fill the vacancies. These senior officers were selected mainly on the basis of the distance they had managed to keep from Van der Merwe and, particularly, his Security Branch or, if this was too close for comfort, by the relative cleanliness of their hands.

The impact of this has been observed by a local researcher, Johnny Steinberg, who notes that:

"Selecting people negatively, for what they have not done rather than for their proven ability is unlikely to produce an inspiring leadership."[32]

Furthermore, the measures used to encourage the tainted to leave — mainly lucrative severance packages — were applied across the organisation, also encouraging some of the brightest and the best who were qualified for and confident of making it outside the police, to leave. This has arguably left the police without the sound management cadre required to drive the transformation of policing practice required by community policing.

That two critical assumptions informing South Africa's community policing remain largely hidden and unpacked, and that the appropriateness of South Africa's community policing policy model is therefore also assumed, may well be attributed to what one researcher has termed the *"seductive quality"*[33] of its core tenets. Given its conceptual flexibility and, particularly, its popular acclaim, who would say it may be inappropriate?

Community policing on the agenda

The Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines was distributed to all police training institutions and stations in 1997 and workshops were held with some police officers throughout the country. In addition, a user-friendly comic — entitled Safer Streets — which incorporated the Framework and provided guidelines for the functioning of CPFs was published by the Department for use at local level.

Two years later, the Department of Safety and Security's White Paper affirmed community policing as the appropriate methodology for enhancing policing in South Africa. It outlined a significant role for the structures of community policing in the provision of local level crime prevention, particularly social crime prevention programmes.

Community policing was thus placed firmly on government's agenda.

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY POLICING

The SAPS

The response of the SAPS to the development of community policing policy, apart from fulfilling its legislative responsibility of establishing CPFs, has been largely symbolic.

The organisation has formally changed its uniform symbols and 'demilitarised' its rank structure. It has also upgraded the status of senior management positions outside the central Head Office in Pretoria, most notably by allocating senior ranks to particular police stations (largely on the basis of population density). In doing so, it has devolved some, albeit very limited, authority to these positions. Other than these changes, perhaps the most obvious expression of the SAPS' symbolic response is the structural approach adopted for implementation of the community policing policy. The organisation has attempted to 'align' existing (and changing) structures to the requirements of the policy.

With the appointment of a new management echelon in 1994 and the restructuring this entailed, the 'function' of community policing became the 'responsibility' of the National Policy and Strategy Component of the Division: National Management Services. This was led by the former head of the SAP's Community Relations Division, who had set up the liaison forums and deployed community liaison officers (often of Security Branch experience) throughout the country.

In 1997, following a further restructuring of SAPS Head Office, a Partnership Projects subcomponent was established as part of a new division, the National Crime and Prevention and Response Service. This subcomponent, headed by a director, created a National Community Policing Desk, managed by a superintendent. The responsibility of the desk was described as *"... guiding and facilitating the institutionalisation of Community Policing in South Africa."* The primary functions of the desk were:

- *"The development of the existing Policy Framework on Community Policing*
- *The issuing of Regulations, National Orders and additional Guidelines on Community Policing*
- *To initiate National Workshops on Community Policing and to empower National and Provincial role-players to this end*
- *To manage a Community Policing Programme Forum effectively*
- *To take part in practical projects aimed at achieving Priorities 3 and 5 of the Police Priorities and Objectives for 1997/1998*
- *To assist with the development of the training curriculum on Community Policing ...*
- *To contribute on a regular basis to the reviewing of all training curricula and to integrate Community Policing into all levels of training*
- *To contribute to the Service Delivery Improvement Programme*
- *To establish continuous and regular communication on Community Policing down to police station level..*
- *To develop a Framework and Guidelines on Partnership Policing."*[34]

These facilitation functions resulted primarily from the view of the SAPS that the implementation of community policing, apart from the national training function, is a provincial 'responsibility'. This is a direct result of the onus placed by the South African Police Service Act (Section 19(1)) on provincial commissioners to ensure the establishment of CPFs.

Provincial community police co-ordinators have thus been appointed at the nine provincial SAPS Head Offices, functioning often in liaison with members of the provincial secretariats, to co-ordinate projects and workshops intended to enhance community policing at area and station levels of the SAPS.

A similar 'responsibility' has been allocated to area and station level community police officers. However, this responsibility focuses almost wholly on the functions and requirements, particularly logistical, of CPFs.[35]

It is apparent from the above that community policing has been generally viewed as the 'responsibility' of particular functions within the SAPS and that this responsibility is

interpreted, at various levels, primarily in terms of the establishment and maintenance of CPFs.

CPFs are thus often seen as more than a vehicle for community participation — rather, a trend has developed, within and outside the SAPS, in which community policing is seen as synonymous with the functions of the CPFs. Concerns regarding this had been expressed as early as 1995. A Departmental Technical Team on Community Policing, which had initiated the process that was to result in the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines, had cautioned that such a focus would be detrimental to the development of alternative local mechanisms and, importantly, to *"... the empowerment of individual police officers to practice community policing as part of their day-to-day responsibilities."*[36]

The focus on CPFs has therefore meant that there has been little, if any, understanding of the policy as an operational methodology impacting on all functions of the organisation. This is despite the focus of several dedicated programmes run essentially for the improvement of community policing — the Belgian-sponsored Community Policing Pilot Project, the privately sponsored Operation Lifeline, the many DFID-sponsored projects and the current police-initiated Service Delivery Improvement Programme.

This assessment is justified by the lack of evidence pointing to the actual operational integration of police patrol and specialised functions at station level. Indeed, there is some evidence pointing to real antipathy and resistance to integration between the patrol or proactive functions and the detective or reactive functions.[37] Thus, it is not surprising that the Community Agency for Social Enquiry found in its research that:

"Many of the police personnel we interviewed could speak the language of community policing, but had not internalised the practice, or the practice was limited to one-off displays of goodwill."[38]

Generally, community policing has been interpreted as an 'add-on' function to the 'other' responsibilities of the police. It is therefore clear that one of the primary goals of the community policing policy — the fundamental transformation of the SAPS — has not transpired in the manner envisaged by the new policy-makers.

Thus, CPFs remain the most visible expression of community policing in South Africa. The issue, then, is to assess the shape of the implementation of community policing policy through CPFs.

Community police forums

The mandated functions of CPFs, as outlined above, may be categorised into three key responsibilities:

"... (i) the improvement of police-community relations; (ii) the oversight of policing at local level; and (iii) the mobilization of the community to take joint responsibility in the fight against crime."[39]

These responsibilities are contradictory. The challenges this poses for the practical functioning of CPFs have been pointed out as follows:

"Is it reasonable to believe, for instance, that, given the history of conflict between the police and communities, that a structure that was designed both to improve relations and oversee the police would succeed in both functions. Is it plausible that in communities where police were perceived to be oppressors and where the police believe that the most constructive crime prevention is police-led, that many members of the community would willingly give of their time and resources to assist the police in fighting crime?"[40]

To add to this, one may ask whether it is plausible to believe that in other localities, those in which the police had been supported, people would care about oversight.

Given these differing and contradictory functions, it is not surprising that the experience of

CPFs and therefore of community policing, has differed considerably across the country.

However, this experience, it appears, is not random. Rather, the experience of community policing appears to be determined by an identifiable and specific set of challenges faced by the police and the people they serve in particular localities. Furthermore, it is the extent to which these challenges have been overcome that determines the impact of community policing in a particular locality. This was the key finding of a recent pilot project conducted by the National Secretariat for Safety and Security as a feasibility study for a comprehensive review of the development and implementation of South Africa's community policing policy.

The results of the study posit a conceptual framework consisting of five consecutive and cumulative stages or challenges which are faced in particular localities as they develop community policing — these are basic resources, trust, (policy specific) education, incremental resources and, finally, full partnership.[41] The study therefore suggests a trajectory in the practice of community policing in South Africa.

The starting point on this trajectory, or the first and most obvious challenge for community policing, is the availability of the basic resources required by the police and those they serve in a particular locality. For the police, this challenge refers to a lack of those resources required for undertaking basic policing tasks — thus a lack of resources such as basic education (literacy and numeracy in some cases), availability and functioning of vehicles, equipment and infrastructure appropriate to the topography, and a lack of the means to gather and analyse intelligence. For people in these localities, the lack of basic resources refers to their inability to contribute in a meaningful manner to their CPF. This relates to a lack of basic education, difficulty in getting to and from the police station, and a lack of communication means. The lack of basic infrastructure like roads, telecommunications and electricity, is also a relevant factor. In these localities, there is very little policing of any kind.[42] The primary cause of this is the historical legacy of underdevelopment and it may be expected that many of the police areas situated in the former homelands are affected.

The effect of this lack of resources on community policing has been succinctly analysed by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry:

"We found widespread empathy for the lack of resources in the police from community leadership and in the focus groups from the community more broadly. This situation highlights the need for community involvement as an added resource to participate in policing. However, it also threatens the process of community involvement as SAPS is physically unable to meet community expectations and needs in some cases. The low morale created by the lack of resources makes members of the SAPS more resistant to change, and even angry with the additional demands community policing places on them."[43]

However, in those localities where the basic resource requirements have been acquired, the primary issue or challenge, it seems, is that of developing a basic level of trust. This is a complex issue as it functions both as a measurement of policy impact, as well as a precondition for community policing. Given South Africa's history, the historical relationship between the police and the people in a particular locality is clearly relevant. Perhaps even more relevant is the prevailing perception of the integrity of the police — perceptions of police competence and corruption have a significant effect on levels of trust. Public understanding of the roles of the broader criminal justice system has a similar impact — the granting of bail, the withdrawal of charges or a lack of conviction in cases gone to trial are often blamed on the police. Political and racial stratification also impact on the development of trust as police actions are perceived to protect or promote the interests of one or another political or racial group. For the police, the most critical factor relevant to the building of trust is the prevailing attitude toward change — as relevant for station management as for junior personnel. One or more of the issues related to trust negatively affected almost fifty per cent of the localities assessed in the research. Because of the range of issues impacting on the development of trust, the research found that these were spread across the country in rural and urban areas, as well as in both predominately white and predominately black areas.[44]

While the pilot project was too limited to extrapolate its findings generally, it does appear to

indicate that the issue of trust remains the primary challenge faced by the majority of South Africa's police stations and the people represented at CPFs. Of importance is that in areas of low trust there is a real potential for the CPF to be used as a platform for political interest groups. Of equal importance is that at these localities, the continuous grappling with developing trust results in little or few improvements to actual service delivery, increasingly negative public perceptions of safety and security (because more information becomes available), and little actual reduction in crime.[45]

The danger lies in the likelihood that, should a basic level of trust fail to be developed, the police will become increasingly marginalised through either the development of self-policing or its stronger form, vigilantism.

However, once a basic level of trust has been achieved, it is apparent that the challenge becomes one of understanding the actual requirements of the policy. This refers mainly to the clarification of and agreement on clear roles and responsibilities. Of relevance therefore, is the extent to which CPF representatives and police personnel have received education and training in the core elements and objectives of community policing, as well as in an appropriate demarcation of roles. In more than half of the police stations assessed in the study, less than 25 per cent of personnel had had any formal training in community policing. An interesting finding was that personnel at those police stations who had received little or no training, and who were predominately black and disadvantaged, perceived the available SAPS training to be more effective than those who had actually received formal training. Respondents indicated a need for training to be frequent, consistent, operationally practical and standardised. Localities in need of further policy specific education had dealt with some of the issues related to trust and had begun to see limited improvements to service delivery, but no improvements to the prevailing perceptions of safety and security and no impact on actual crime levels.[46]

However, the research indicated that, should the education and training needs of the police and members of CPFs not be met, it is likely that the CPF at these localities would either regress to become simply a forum for complaints or, of more concern, the means by which CPF representatives can dominate and gain control over police operational procedures.

Moving to the next challenge, once trust has developed and roles and responsibilities clarified, equity, or rather the inequity of the distribution of policing resources appears to become the major issue. The CPF begins to function as the means by which additional resources are provided to the police to enable them to enhance their service delivery. Although the nature of these resources differs from area to area, they often take the form of funding for vehicles, computers and other equipment, but also the provision of support personnel to assist in administrative tasks and patrolling by police reservists. Thus, the relative wealth of the area's residents, the engagement of private business and the ability and willingness of residents to contribute time or other resources are key factors. For the police, the key factor appears to be the ability of the station and area management to deal with the bureaucratic procedures required for accepting donations — either financial or in-kind. However, this stage describes, for the more privileged localities, an involvement usually limited to financial donations, and for disadvantaged localities, a considerable investment in time and energy. Some sixteen per cent of the localities assessed in the research were identified at this stage and most of these were located in more privileged areas.[47]

In these localities, there had been improvements in the relationship and levels of trust between the police and the CPF, some improvements in service delivery and perceptions of safety and security, but no significant impact was made on levels of crime.

The final stage is that of 'full partnership', a situation where the police and CPFs are apparently able to develop an active relationship with other roleplayers with the goal of jointly contributing to crime reduction. The distinguishing element appears to be the achievement of critical mass, that is, the mobilisation of all or most other relevant roleplayers — like other government departments and non-governmental and community-based organisations — to engage in crime prevention programmes. The key factors driving these relationships appear to be the extent of local activism and a co-operative synergy between a range of

organisations. Also important is the continuity of progress on projects which is related to the continuity of strong leadership at the police station and in the CPF. Just six per cent of the localities assessed in the research could be classified at this level — all of them in privileged localities.

That very few CPFs are involved in networking relationships aimed at actual crime reduction is a finding which seems to be supported by research done in the Western Cape — where many CPFs have developed into 'Community Safety Forums', aimed at ensuring greater interaction and co-ordination with other agencies of the criminal justice system and ensuring greater community participation. Despite this development, further research has indicated that:

" ... 60% of the CPFs currently in place in the province were not engaged in problem identification or prioritisation; and that 65% were not engaged in problem-solving. This finding was based on an analysis of the content of CPF meetings, agendas and minutes."[49]

However, it is significant that only in localities where there has been a dedicated effort at involving other roleplayers in active prevention projects, that there appears to be some reduction in actual crime. Given the range of methodological problems associated with measuring actual levels of crime and the number of variable factors that influence crime rates, it is not clear whether any real reduction in crime, if this has actually occurred, can be solely attributed to the successful implementation of the core elements of South Africa's community policing policy. What certainly may be attributed to this, though, is the significant level of trust between the police and CPFs, a comparatively high level of service delivery and positive perceptions of safety and security in these localities.[50]

The findings of other researchers appear to support the findings of the Secretariat's limited research study. For instance, Altbeker and Rauch note that:

"In communities in which levels of conflict with the police were high, there has been, for obvious reasons, more emphasis placed on the importance of overseeing the police and building relations, in other communities, emphasis within CPFs appears more focussed on improving safety and security through assisting, and collaborating with, the police. This pattern has been reinforced by a difference between these communities in the role they accord the police in preventing crime, with black communities typically more concerned with ameliorating socio-economic causes of crime and white communities more concerned with keeping crime and criminals out of their areas. Because this pattern is also matched by very dramatic differences between levels of income, community participation in rich areas appears to focus on assisting the police in keeping crime out. While there is space for honest differences on the degree to which this is a legitimate strategy, it has had the consequence that the development of community-centred crime prevention programmes involving the police are much more developed in rich areas than in poor, black areas."[51]

Research by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry has also reflected this theme:

"Firstly, whites generally had more skills and resources and were therefore more successful at fundraising and initiating projects ... Secondly, the kinds of issues white forums concentrated on differed from those of black forums. Some of the former were little more than anti-crime fora, whilst many of the latter had a broader social and developmental focus."[52]

An ironic potential of this pattern, which is a danger inherent in the trajectory posited by the Secretariat's research, is that implementation of the policy may well entrench the very social divisions that the policy was meant to help overcome. This would primarily occur through the displacement of crime to those communities which, because of their relative poverty, are less able to deal with its effects. As Altbeker and Rauch point out:

"There can be little doubt that in a country with as deeply embedded inequalities as SA, there are real moral and political difficulties with programmes which may increase inequality by skewing the distribution of policing resources and/or of crime in such a way that poorer communities, already more at risk of violent crime, become even more at risk of victimisation.

These difficulties are real and, in the long-term, may become highly politicised."[53]

This is supported by Shaw and Louw who noted that:

"The poor, lacking resources and more likely to be intimidated by the police, are often not well placed to sustain CPFs. Indeed, CPFs often work best in (white and wealthy) areas which require them the least, and remain fragmented and weak in poorer areas."[54]

Thus, the resources — both intellectual and physical — available to CPFs and of the people in particular localities remain crucial factors in the successful implementation of community policing policy.

This is problematised by the contested legal status of CPFs. The crux of the issue is whether or not CPFs may be considered formal 'organs of the state' and, therefore, whether or not the state has an obligation to sustain them. There is a reasonable argument to be made that CPFs meet the criteria outlined in The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996, Section 239) for such organisations:

> *"a)any department of state or administration in the national, provincial or local sphere of government; or*
>
> *b)any other functionary or institution*
> > *i.exercising a power or performing a function in terms the Constitution or a provincial constitution; or*
> >
> > *ii.exercising a public power or performing a public function in terms of any legislation but does not include a court or judicial officer."*[55]

Clearly, CPFs were created through legislation and exercise public functions in terms of this legislation. At issue is the nature of the support required to sustain CPFs. While the state was clearly obligated to establish CPFs, it was surely not the intention of the legislation to create a state-subsidised profession. Certainly, the Community Policing Policy Framework and Guidelines is clear on this point. Section 7.6 states that *"[m]embership of and participation at Community Police Forums and Boards is a voluntary community service."*[56]

The formal legality of this position, given the argument above, is open for debate, and state funding for CPFs remains a constant theme often addressed at seminars, summits and other gatherings. The key purpose of such funding would apparently be to enable CPFs to meet their basic administrative requirements, which often include telephones, stationery, transportation and the remuneration of permanent administrative posts in a CPF.[57]

However, there now appears to be a growing recognition that CPFs should be project-driven and that if funding is to be made available by the state, it will be allocated to crime prevention projects. This correlates directly with the direction provided in the White Paper for the facilitation of local level crime prevention.

Apart from the issue of resources and the specific factors pertinent to the development of community policing outlined above, four general factors have been identified as critical in the implementation of community policing in South Africa. The Secretariat's pilot project identified those factors that appear to have an influence at all localities:

"Level of activism in the community — refers to the degree to which members of the community are able and willing to engage with issues of safety and security

Leadership style and commitment — refers to both that at police stations and in their communities, particularly at the CPFs

Relevant education and training — refers to the level of basic education and training in the police and in the community

Commitment of junior members of the SAPS — refers to the willingness of these members of the SAPS to engage with the requirements of the policy."[58]

That the attitude or mindset of the police — expressed in its leadership style, training, and, particularly, the commitment of junior members — remains a critical issue some five years after the first articulation of the policy, must surely be attributed to the lack of an informed and dedicated implementation strategy for the policy. This, it must be assumed, relates directly to the lack of authoritative and committed leadership in the Department.

In summary, it is clear that the core elements of South Africa's community policing policy have not been 'mainstreamed' as the operational methodology of the police.

Despite this, however, it is also clear that implementation of the policy, through the establishment and functioning of CPFs, has generally facilitated positive contact and engagement between the police and those they serve. This engagement has resulted in an improved and strengthened political legitimacy for the police — a key objective of the policy.

However, given the analysis above, it seems unlikely that the implementation of the policy, in its current form and with its sole focus on CPFs, will facilitate achievement of the policy's wider goals — improved service delivery and actual reduction in crime.

CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined the origin of community policing in South Africa and the manner in which this has influenced the later community policing policy. It has been argued that the key factors informing the policy were the political prerogatives of ensuring democratic control or accountability and through this, greater legitimacy for the police. However, initially focused on facilitating contact between the police and a predominately antagonistic public, the goals of the policy were extended in 1997 to focus on enhancing service delivery and the reduction of crime. That great difficulty has been experienced in the pursuit of these more comprehensive objectives may well be attributed to the lack of an open and critical assessment of the prerequisites for achieving these goals. Nevertheless, the analysis of the manner in which community policing has developed, by identifying the general and specific factors which either facilitate or inhibit implementation of the policy, provides cause for optimism that meaningful action could be taken to enhance community policing in South Africa.

The requirements for such action are outlined below.

The first requirement would be that of authoritative and willing leadership in the Department of Safety and Security. This may well be on the cards, given the intention of the new government to recruit qualified lateral entrants to senior managerial positions in the police — announced by the new president in his opening address to Parliament on 25 June 1999. Furthermore, as pointed out by an observer, President Mbeki:

"... coupled these statements with the appointment of the bellicose and combative Steve Tshwete as Minister of Safety and Security, a sign that he is preparing to take on vested interests in police management."[59]

The second requirement would be a coherent, integrated and actionable implementation strategy, developed through a critical and open review of the policy (its assumptions and its requirements) and of actual conditions on the ground. Based on this analysis, it would target specific interventions at particular localities throughout the country. Given some of the issues related to the lack of basic resources in various localities, the specific interventions outlined in such a strategy would clearly need to be multidisciplinary and not limited to the functions of the Department of Safety and Security only.

Integral components of such an implementation strategy would need to be an informed personnel recruitment, development, deployment and succession planning in which appropriate entrance criteria, an integrated training curriculum and an appropriate performance-based and incentive-oriented promotion system were specified. Accountability for service delivery would need to be the key theme emphasised here. Therefore, the adequacy of police training would have to be reviewed to ensure that the principles of community policing informed, in a practical manner, all training and development programmes

— including those of the specialised services, but particularly management development programmes.

Clearly, such an implementation strategy implies a review of the organisational structure of the police — a review aimed at assessing the manner in which the organisational design either impedes or facilitates the delivery of a policing service responsive to local needs.

These requirements, not surprisingly, imply an informed and fundamental transformation of policing practice in South Africa — a key and as yet unfulfilled objective of community policing policy as it has been articulated during the past five years.

ENDNOTES

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