

URBAN SAFETY BRIEF

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Better together: Partnership policing for effective urban safety

This Urban Safety Brief considers the imperative of partnership policing for ensuring safer cities in South Africa. It looks at how partnership policing can be used to address the complex crime and safety challenges faced by cities.

The SA Cities Urban Safety Reference Group's Briefs Series is designed to distil the state of current knowledge on urban safety-related topics for a policy and planning audience. It is presented quarterly to the City Budget Forum and other key stakeholders.



BACKGROUND

Cities face a range of complex crime and safety challenges but have scarce resources to address such challenges. One solution is partnership policing, which is policing in cooperation with a range of stakeholders, such as other government departments, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and community groups. Derived from the premise that the police need to work with and draw upon the capabilities and competence of communities, partnership policing is an approach that seeks to make the police and community members "co-producers of public safety".¹

In an ideal model of partnership policing, the relevant policing bodies and community representatives are equals in making crime-prevention decisions. This requires a high level of trust between communities and the police, and for the police to be viewed as providing a public service that is legitimate and receptive to the needs of the community.

Since the mid-1990s, partnership policing has occurred in various manifestations in South Africa, but more systematic cooperation is needed. The National Development Plan (2012) states that "Effective coordinated partnerships with civil society and the private sector are key components of a sustainable strategy for citizen safety", while the White Paper emphasises the importance of the police placing "communities at the centre of its approach to policing".²

Partnership policing has almost exclusively been driven by the South African Police Service (SAPS), which has adopted a relatively restrictive interpretation of this form of policing. Furthermore, most cities have not pursued partnership policing in a systematic and strategic fashion and so have not harnessed the crime prevention capacity and capabilities of the non-governmental and private sectors. As a result, initiatives between metro police and community and business tend to be ad hoc and short-term.

The brief explores the state of partnership policing in South Africa, through the different types of partnership that exist. It suggests that cities should not depend on SAPS' limited approach to collaborating with metro police, but should embrace effective partnership policing. The brief concludes with some short-term and longer term recommendations for cities.



urban safety
reference group

1. Skolnick, JH and Baylay DH. 1988. Community Policing: issues and practices around the world. Washington DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Communication and Research Utilization.
2. NPC (National Planning Commission). 2012. National Development Plan. Pretoria: NPC, p. 386. CSP (The Civilian Secretariat for Police). 2016. White Paper on Policing. Pretoria: CSP, p. 20.

DISCUSSION

01 SAPS and partnership policing

Since the 1990s, the South African government has embraced community-oriented and partnership policing. A key motivation for such approaches was to instil democratic policing values throughout SAPS and generate legitimacy and grassroots accountability for the police.³ The SAPS Act (No. 68 of 1995) requires police to establish Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in all police stations. Since 1995, SAPS has interpreted partnership policing narrowly, as the mobilising of local communities to be auxiliary resources that support the National Crime Combatting Strategy.

In recent years, SAPS has prioritised school safety and CPF capacity-building. The involvement of cities is limited, as SAPS tends to work directly with CPFs and affected schools via the Department of Basic Education. However, SAPS does envisage the involvement of metro police in school safety committees and searches at schools.

Some of the achievements to date include:

- The development of guidelines for crime prevention through partnerships.
- Capacity-building for officials to engage in partnership policing
- The establishment of “community structures” to facilitate crime prevention discussions with communities.
- A “Partnership Protocol on Crime and Violence in Schools” signed by the Ministers of Police and Basic Education (2011)
- A Schools-based Crime Prevention Programme supported by Medium-Term Strategic Frameworks (2015–2019), which is aimed at:
 - strengthening safe school committees,
 - linking schools to local police stations,
 - mobilising communities to take ownership of school safety,
 - raising awareness among learners about the impact of violence,
 - encouraging a crime/safety reporting system at schools,
 - implementing school-based crime prevention programmes and specialised operations for hotspot schools (visible policing and patrols), and
 - closing illegal shebeens and liquor outlets within 500m of schools.

02 Partnership policing SAPS and MPS

Legislation requires the MPS to actively cooperate with SAPS. The White Paper (2016) emphasises the need for effective coordination between the SAPS and MPS as a means of “maximising the utilisation of law enforcement resources for effective and efficient policing”⁴. Interactions take place at national, provincial, cluster and station levels. The National Forum of Metro Police Chiefs meet quarterly with SAPS to discuss cooperation, policing standards and procedures, and suitable practices.

In some instances, the MPS actively contribute to improving school safety. For example, in Cape Town, the MPS deploy specifically trained school resource officers (SROs) to unsafe schools in Cape Town. SROs conduct search and seizure operations, monitor and report truancy, and generally contribute to reducing crime and violence, including apprehending offenders on school grounds.⁵

03 Partnering with NWS

Neighbourhood Watch structures (NWS) are geographically specific, not-for-profit community safety entities made up of volunteers from the area. NWS may take the form of neighbourhood watch associations, street committees, street watches and flat watches. Both the SAPS and MPS collaborate with NWS to prevent crime and improve community safety.



In Buffalo City, NWS and MPS patrol jointly busy areas along the coastline (“bush walks”).



In Cape Town, accredited NWS receive some resources (e.g. reflective vests, radios), and members undergo a basic training course. NWS patrol at schools and escort groups of learners to their homes (“walking bus”) in high crime areas.⁶

3. ANC (African National Congress). 1993. Policing the Transition: transforming the Police. Johannesburg; ANC. Pelsler E. 1999. The challenges of community policing in South Africa. Institute for Security Studies Papers.

4. *Op cit.*, p. 31

5. Safety and Violence Initiative. 2017. School Safety in the Western Cape: strengths, limitation and recommendations. Briefing Note for the Western Cape Government.

04 Partnering with private security

As of 31 March 2017, there were 498 435 active private security personnel and 8995 service providers in South Africa.⁷ The private security industry frequently works closely and coordinates their activities with SAPS, MPS and NWS. They often support SAPS and MPS through providing intelligence, manning of road blocks and responding to emergencies.

The concentration of private security, particularly in CIDs, mean that SAPS and MPS can reallocate some of their policing resources from these areas to high-crime areas.⁸

- In Nelson Mandela Bay, one of the major security companies recently funded the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch Support Desk, to improve communication and sharing of information.

- Throughout South Africa, private security companies provide equipment and sponsorship to credible NWS, although such sponsorship is ultimately self-serving, as more effective NWS means that private security companies can potentially reduce the number of patrollers in an area.
- City improvement districts (CID) are typically created to improve public spaces through additional cleansing and security services, and are not-for-profit funded through levies paid by property owners within a geographic area. They contract private security companies to provide policing and patrolling services. In Johannesburg, 30 improvement districts (referred to now as voluntary management initiatives) spend over R61-million on public safety maintenance and cleaning annually.⁹

CONCLUSION

The SAPS' narrow interpretation of partnership policing and limited approach to collaborating with the MPS have substantial implications for cities in South Africa. Most city authorities do not have the mechanisms, systems and processes, financial resources and personnel – and arguably the political will – to leverage the activities of NWS and resources and expertise of the private security industry.

Cities have the opportunity to ensure more equitable policing in their cities through embracing partnership policing. The recommendations that follow include both short-term “easy wins”, based on existing successful initiatives, and longer term solutions involving technology and private-public partnerships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Accredit and support NWS

Cities could use NWS accreditation to more effectively coordinate their activities with and provide support to NWS. Such a strategy would enable city authorities to develop a database of credible community safety entities; establish effective communication mechanisms; provide training and equipment where it is most needed; hold NWS to account for their actions; and even promote non-violent norms and standards in this sector.

Provide and coordinate support for CPFs with SAPS

Functional CPFs are an integral component of effective partnership policing, but many CPFs in high crime areas are not entirely effective. City authorities should enter into agreements with the SAPS to support the CPF capacity-building programme, by providing training, funding and equipment.

Deploy neighbourhood safety officers and teams

The UK, New Zealand and Australia have used neighbourhood safety officers (NSOs) and neighbourhood safety teams (NSTs) or neighbourhood policing teams to varying degrees of success. NSTs are currently being piloted in Delft (Cape Town). An NSO is typically a specially trained MPS official who is deployed to identify and solve safety problems with the local community and local government stakeholders. NSTs draw members from relevant city entities, community organisations, such as CPFs and NWS, to provide a more comprehensive problem-solving approach to safety and security problems.

Small numbers of NSOs, which can be selected from existing metro police, or specifically recruited, can result in improved police-community relations with a relatively short period of time.

6. DCS (Department of Community Safety). 2018. Walking Bus Project. Western Cape DCS.

7. PSIRA (Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority). 2017. Annual Report 2016/17. Centurion: PSIRA.

8. Berg J. 2015. Polycentric Security Governance: legitimacy, accountability and the public interest. PhD Thesis, UCT.

9. Johannesburg CID. 2016. Johannesburg CID Forum.

This brief was compiled by the SA Cities Urban Safety Reference Group with support from the UCT Centre of Criminology.

The Urban Safety Reference Group is a platform for peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing among practitioners from the SACN member cities as well as other key government role-players on urban safety and violence prevention. It is convened by the South African Cities Network (SACN) with the support of the GIZ-Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention (VCP) Programme.

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■ **Employ school resource officers (SROs)**

The financing, recruitment and deployment of SROs may add considerable value in terms of improving school safety. They can also be the principal intermediaries in terms of facilitating interactions between schools and the SAPS. As with NSOs, SROs can be selected from existing metro police, or specifically recruited, and the deployment of small numbers of SROs to schools in high crime areas (with the support of the Metro Police and SAPS) can lead to significant improvements in school safety.

■ **Use CCTV technology and resource management (systems and software).**

CCTV can be found in most South African cities, especially Johannesburg, eThekweni, Cape Town and Nelson Mandela Bay. Linking and integrating the myriad of CCTV cameras under a common authority can contribute to more effective crime prevention. It enables improved monitoring of crime hotspots and (potentially) the tracking of offenders, and CCTV footage can be used as evidence in court proceedings. Cities could provide subsidies or create an entity overseen by the city authority, ensuring that laws relating to privacy are adhered to systematically.

Electronic policing and emergency response management and communication systems allow for real-time crime mapping and analysis, and efficiently facilitates communication across relevant city departments and community entities, such as NWS. This technology has led to improved policing responses and better use of crime prevention resources in the USA, while improvements in safety resulted from implementing similar systems in Kanpur (India), Nairobi (Kenya), Singapore and London (UK).¹⁰ The City of Cape Town recently introduced such a system called Emergency Policing and Incident Command (EPIC), but it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

■ **Promote public-private and people partnerships**

International evidence shows that public-private partnerships can contribute to substantial improvements in urban safety. In South Africa, various cities have experimented with this approach: the Cape Town Partnership had positive safety outcomes in Cape Town,¹¹ while in Nelson Mandela Bay a major motor manufacturing company donated bicycles for the City's newly appointed beach officials and tourism ambassadors who provide increased visible policing and by-law enforcement along beachfront areas.

Such partnerships can be even more effective in promoting public safety if they draw on the expertise, resources and knowledge of individual residents who have knowledge, experience and skills that can effectively contribute to crime prevention and safety promotion, either generally or in relation to specific areas.¹²

10. Coldre JR, Huntoon A and Medaris M. 2013. Introducing smart policing: foundations, principles and practice. *Police Quarterly*, 16(3): 275–286. HIS Markit. The benefits of safe cities. https://cdn.ihs.com/www/Technology/Security/IHS_Markit-Benefits_of_Safe_Cities_WhitePaper.pdf

11. Berg. *op cit*.

12. Marana P, Labaka L and Sarriegi JM. 2017. A framework for public-private-people partnerships in the city resilience-building process. *Safety Science*.