

# **COMMUNITY POLICING:** **THE DOCTRINE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This manual presents the doctrine of community policing for the use United Nations Civilian Police when they advise foreign police during the reconstruction phase of peacekeeping operations. It answers the following questions:

- What is community policing?
- What are its basic strategies?
- Why is community policing helpful to police?
- What forms has it taken in practice?
- What community policing is not?
- What are the organizational requirements of community policing?

The manual presents a generic model of community policing that can be implemented anywhere. It should be understood, however, that while the strategy of community policing will be useful to police anywhere, its operational forms will vary from situation to situation. The assessments that must be made in adapting community policing to varying contexts are set forth in the companion manual Community Policing: The Implementation Process. Two other manuals in this series set forth a program for training UNCIVPOL in community policing and a program for evaluating the sustainability and success of community policing.

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing is a strategy for encouraging the public to become partners with the police in controlling and preventing crime. It does this by demonstrating to the public that police are prepared to respond to their security concerns, values their advice, and will act in a fair, honest, and impartial manner. In exchange, police ask the public to assist them by providing information about crime, criminals, and circumstances that create crime, and by contributing their time, resources, and moral support for crime prevention programs. In short, community policing views public cooperation as essential to successful crime control and develops programs for obtaining willing public assistance.

## THE BASIC STRATEGIES OF COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing as practiced around the world consists of four essential strategies - responding to individuals, consulting with communities, mobilizing communities, and solving recurring problems. These strategies are designed to encourage the community to become partners in controlling and preventing crime. The variety of practices that give concrete form to these strategies will be reviewed below under "Community Policing in Practice."

### (1) Responding to individuals.

In order to obtain the public cooperation that is essential to successful crime control and prevention, the police must demonstrate that they are willing and able to respond to the security needs of individuals and groups. The police must show that they give priority to the needs of individual citizens, as opposed to pursuing their own, or a government's, agenda. They do so by actively soliciting requests for assistance from the public and responding promptly, courteously, and sympathetically to them. If they cannot provide what is needed, they advise people about alternative avenues of redress and assistance. In short, police treat the public as clients to be served rather than as problems to be managed or exploited.

(2) Consulting with communities.

Police create occasions for the regular solicitation of input from communities and community organizations about crime, disorder, and activities that generate fear. They go out of their way to hear the public's concerns and to discuss with them what might be done. Consultation is critical to demonstrating that police give high priority to the security needs and fears of individuals. Because the public knows more about criminal events than the police, their input is essential to the effective use of police resources.

Furthermore, by consulting with the public, police show that they care about the needs of individual citizens. It is a crucial means for demonstrating that the police serve the public rather than themselves.

(3) Mobilizing communities.

Police organize the community to help them in controlling crime. Assistance may take many forms - providing information about crime and criminals, serving as volunteers in crime prevention campaigns, donating facilities and equipment, adopting self-protection measures, and mediating local disputes. Furthermore, the public has more power to influence people to behave properly through informal social control than the police do

through the enforcement of law. As police themselves well know, they cannot correct fundamental problems of social disorganization. Communities, however, can, if they are willing to do so.

(4) Solving recurring problems.

Community policing works preventively to change conditions that lead to crime rather than responding over and over again to individual incidents. In community policing, police analyze patterns of criminality and disorder, adjusting their activities to focus on particular persons and places. Community policing treats crime as groups of problems to be solved, not as separate events where one or more persons are caught and punished. Community policing also broadens the range of preventive activities undertaken by the police, supplementing law enforcement with regulatory, educational, and developmental activities.

### WHY SHOULD COMMUNITY POLICING BE ADOPTED?

Community policing should be adopted in order to make the police more effective at controlling and preventing crime. Community policing is based on the recognition that police will be much more successful in carrying out their responsibility for protecting society if they have the public on their side. By enlisting the cooperation of the public, police get improved information about crime, new material resources, moral support for their activities, and respect.

Community policing is based on the fact that the ability of the police to control crime through law enforcement based exclusively on their own resources is limited. There are not enough police to provide an effective visible deterrent to crime or to be on-hand when emergencies occur. Experienced police officers around the world know this to be true. Indeed, community policing is by no means a new movement. It is the sort of policing that exists in small rural communities where police live with the people.

Why is it important to enlist the community in crime prevention and control? How can the public make the police more effective? What can the public provide to the police that the police do not have on their own?

(1) Information about crimes. In order to deter potential criminals by enforcing laws, police need information that only the public can provide. Very simply, if the public doesn't report crime, the police can't take action against it. Very little crime is discovered by the police without information from the public. In most criminal investigations, too, the likely identity of the culprit is almost always provided by the victim or bystanders - a name, a relationship to the victim, an address, a detailed description, and a license plate number. Such information is the beginning of most successful criminal investigations. Without it, police don't know where to begin.

(2) Advance warning. The public can also provide information about conditions that lead to problems for the police, such as quarrelsome families, unruly bars, repeat offenders, dangerous physical conditions, and rude and harassing behavior.

(3) Self-defense. Crime prevention depends a great deal on what the public does for itself by way of self-defense. The police can't be everywhere, but the public is. Community policing gives priority to educating people about measures they may take to protect themselves, such as avoiding high

crime areas, securing their cars, and installing locks and alarms in their homes.

(4) Strategic intelligence. Research has shown that police are more effective at controlling crime when they have information that allows them to focus resources on particular people or locations. The information that allows police to do this comes from communities.

Furthermore, through close interaction with the public the police learn to distinguish respectable people from troublemakers. In this way, they avoid offending people who are potentially their friends, while deterring those whom most people in the community view as problems.

(5) Support for law enforcement. By consulting with communities about their needs and fears, the police develop support for law-enforcement actions, such as random breath-testing of drivers of motor vehicles, questioning people on the street after crimes have occurred, taking children who are truant to their parents, raiding drug-houses, or photographing men who solicit prostitutes in residential areas. The strategies of community policing allow police to work with the community rather than against it.

(6) Respect. Community policing provides opportunities for individuals to criticize the police. Although this is often difficult for the police, it provides an opportunity

for the community to express its anger and for the police to explain their actions. By becoming publicly accountable, the police are more trusted and, in turn, more respected.

In summary, community policing is a strategy for making the police more effective at crime prevention and control by encouraging the help and support of the community. The public is the most under-used resource available to police worldwide.

## COMMUNITY POLICING IN PRACTICE

Responsiveness, consultation, mobilization, and problem solving are the basic strategies of community policing. The programs that are needed to implement these strategies will vary from place to place depending on social conditions and the capabilities of the police. Here are some of the programs that have been used to implement the four core strategies.

### (1) Responsiveness

- Emergency telephone numbers, such as 911 (USA), 999 (New Zealand), 110 (Japan), 000 (UK), and 100 (India), that make it easier for individuals to get police assistance.
- Clean, comfortable reception rooms in police stations to encourage walk-in crime reporting.
- Police station staff trained to respond promptly, intelligently, and sympathetically to requests for service whether by phone or in person.
- Police contact offices dispersed so as to be close to where people live and work, such as koban in Japan and neighborhood police posts in Singapore, that can provide immediate assistance to most requests.

- "Beat" or "Neighborhood" police officers assigned to patrol specific areas where they become the primary contact between police and residents. These community police officers familiarize themselves with the particular security problems of their areas and working cooperatively with the public to devise appropriate crime-prevention programs. Such officers may have small offices within their beats and be required to patrol on foot or bicycle.
- Requiring "beat" officers to contact each residence and business within their area regularly to inquire about potential security problems and to offer advice about improving protection.
- Programs to help victims recover from the effects of crime.
- Programs that support both victims and witnesses in understanding and participating in trials and other official proceedings.
- Requiring first-line supervisors to re-contact people who have solicited police help to inquire whether they were satisfied with what the police did and how they were treated.

- Reassuring elderly residents, especially those living alone, by visits from police officers at frequent intervals.
- Creating government assistance centers in local areas where representatives from various government agencies, including the police, will be available to respond to requests for service. These are sometimes called "one-stop government shopping centers."
- Translating important laws and procedures into local languages.

(2) Consultation

- Consultative committees that meet regularly with police to provide information about local problems and to discuss strategies for meeting them. Such committees may be created at different levels of police organization - stations, districts, divisions, regions, and force-wide.
- Consultative committees may also be based on social identities, such as tribes and religions, or occupations, such as taxi drivers and retail store owners.
- Creation of liaison officers to make regular contact with groups who have special needs, such as tribal and

aboriginal people, women, ethnic and religious minorities, and homosexuals.

- Liaison at appropriate levels with representatives of the growing private security industry.
- Assigning police officers to work in schools to teach crime prevention, address problems of truancy and vandalism, assist school officials in dealing with delinquent students, and monitor individuals who prey on young people.

(3) Mobilization

- Neighborhood Watch is undoubtedly the most familiar mobilization program. It organizes people to notify police about possible criminal activity and educates them about appropriate crime prevention measures. Although most common in residential neighborhoods, it has been adopted by businesses, such as banks and bar owners, by the owners of large apartment buildings, and by farmers in rural areas. In each case, the police take the lead in organizing the program, providing crime prevention information and participating in regular meetings.
- Providing locks, alarms, and other security hardware to residents and businesses, usually at cost, and providing technicians to install them.

- Preparing crime-prevention manuals for people at risk of different sorts of crime, such as purse-snatching, theft from motor vehicles, day-time burglaries, or harassment on public transportation,
- Enlisting and training members of the public to patrol the streets or to keep watch during the night to supplement the deterrent presence of the police.
- Creating special telephone lines or other notification procedures where citizens may provide information anonymously to the police ("hotlines, "crime stoppers").
- Developing networks of clearly marked safe houses where children and other vulnerable people may go for help if they feel threatened.
- Training local leaders in dispute resolution and mediation so as to prevent neighborhood problems from leading to violence or serious property damage.
- Coordinating with other government agencies, such as departments of sanitation or mental health services, to address conditions that generate crime and disorder.

#### (4) Problem Solving

The standard strategies of policing the world over are visible patrolling and the investigation of criminal activity. These strategies are reactive, relying, by and large, on immediate enforcement of law. The problem-solving strategy adopts an explicitly proactive approach, while at the same time preserving the traditional practices. Problems solving requires police to develop the capacity to address conditions that generate criminal activity and recurrent calls for police assistance. Problem solving involves four basic activities:

- (1) Discovery of recurrent problems.
- (2) Analysis of the causes of these problems.
- (3) Development of programs of remediation that can be organized by the police with the help of the community and other government agencies.
- (4) Assessment of the success of the remedial programs.

This process is known by several acronyms, the most famous being SARA, for "scan," "analyze," "respond," and "assess." The problem-solving approach focuses all the strategies of community policing - responding, consulting, and mobilizing - on situations that repeatedly require police attention but cannot be solved by law enforcement.

Some of the chronic problems that account for repeated police attention and have been subject to problem solving are the following:

- disorderly youths at convenience stores and malls;
- street prostitution in residential areas;
- thefts from cars in parking lots;
- sick elderly persons living alone;
- families that threaten and harass their neighbors;
- homes and apartments vulnerable to daytime burglary;
- unsafe traffic intersections and crosswalks near schools;
- drug dealing in public places;
- purse snatching from women on streets;
- disputes between drivers and riders in public transportation.

Because conditions vary from place to place, it is not possible to summarize the solutions that police have found for problems like these. Fortunately, however, there is extensive writing about problem solving, as well as websites devoted to sharing information about programs that police agencies have developed to deal with different problems (See below "Further Reading"). Here is a selection

of some of the approaches that problem-solving police agencies have used:

- Enforcement of health and safety codes to close troublesome bars and nightclubs;
- Assisted apartment owners to evict tenants who engage in disorderly behavior;
- Developed plans with other government agencies to provide playgrounds and social clubs for young people;
- Worked with building and architectural firms to design buildings and communities that reduce opportunities for crime;
- Educated staff at convenience stores and bars about handling unruly patrons without violence;
- Negotiated understandings with people about how to get along with one another, such as school students and shop owners, youths and elderly people, and drivers and riders of private transportation vans;
- Urged the passage of ordinances against public nuisances, such as begging or urinating in public;
- Taken out court orders requiring individuals to stop acting in particular ways;
- Obtained consent from communities for the police to undertake surveillance and questioning in order to

- discourage specified forms of law breaking, such as drug dealing or weapons carrying;
- Coordinated law enforcement with public prosecutors and judges so that arrests and citations for minor offences resulted in significant punishment rather than routine dismissal.

Community policing is a means to an end, namely, providing effective and humane protection of communities. Community policing is smart policing because it recognizes that community problems, of which crime is one, require community solutions and the focusing of all community resources, including those of the police.

In the companion manual, Community Policing: The Implementation Process, a plan for implementing the basic practices of community policing is presented. It discusses the activities what UN advisors need to do in order to develop community policing in peacekeeping contexts.

### WHAT COMMUNITY POLICING ISN'T

Community policing requires the police to make the public genuine partners in controlling and preventing crime. If particular police programs do not accomplish this goal, then they should not be called community policing. Unfortunately, because "community policing" is so attractive as a slogan, police often claim to be doing it even when they are not. Almost anything worthwhile that police do has been labeled "community policing," including random-breath testing for alcohol impaired drivers, horse-patrols, crackdowns on prostitution in residential areas, and closed-circuit television monitoring of public places.

Furthermore, because many police understand through their own experience the value of responding, consulting, mobilizing, and problem solving, they frequently say that they have been doing "community policing" all along when in fact they have not. Understanding the philosophy of community policing is not the same as implementing it in practice.

Here some of the police strategies that have been called "community policing" but are not, because they do not directly contribute to responsiveness, consultation, mobilization, or problem solving:

- Community policing is not a particular kind of facility, such as mini-stations, storefront police stations, or mobile vans. Community policing is a particular set of activities, namely, responsiveness, consultation, mobilization, and problem solving. If officers do not practice these activities, community policing cannot be said to exist even though police may be deployed throughout communities.
- Assigning police officers to specific territorial jurisdictions ("beats) has been a customary practice of police almost everywhere. It does not, however, lead necessarily to making officers more responsive, consultative, mobilizing, or problem solving. "Beats" create opportunities for community policing, but they do not guarantee it.
- Creation of public relations units. Community policing is a program for changing the way police services are delivered on the solid expectation that doing so will improve public regard for the police. Improved public image is a consequence of community policing and not a substitute for it.
- Soft law-enforcement. Community policing is not "no-powers-policing" or "grin-and-wave" policing," as it has been called in some places. Community policing

- uses a wider array of tools than law enforcement to control crime, but it does not turn a blind-eye to violations of the law. Law enforcement remains an important tactic in community policing.
- Zero tolerance. The key to determining whether police are practicing community policing is whether they create a collaborative partnership with the police in preventing and controlling crime. The public may welcome zero tolerance, which is strict law enforcement against minor crimes, but doing so is an intensification of traditional policing and is not community policing.
  - CompStat. Holding subordinate officers accountable through computer-assisted management may encourage the development of innovative strategies, but it does not necessarily lead to closer cooperative relations with the public. Indeed, CompStat may actually encourage police to think they can control crime on their own without substantial public input.
  - Structural reorganization. Police agencies undoubtedly need selective reorganization. Doing so, however, does not automatically create crime-prevention partnerships with the public. In fact, reorganization often distracts from meaningful operational change, which,

in the case of the police, means how they deliver  
police services.

### CONCLUSION

Community policing is based on an appreciation of the value of citizen input into public safety. It is a program for incorporating what the public wants into the crime control activities of the police in exchange for the public doing what the police want in terms of supportive assistance. In community policing, communication between the police and the public must be two-way - from the public upward as well as from the police downwards. In repressive political contexts, however, community policing can become a device for community control rather than community partnership. It can become an instrument for managing the public rather than sharing responsibility with it. It follows, therefore, that the success of community policing depends in large part on the political character of governments, as well as their commitment to it. Genuine community policing will be difficult to develop in non-democratic political environments.

### FURTHER READING

People who want to read further about community policing, in particular about how it is being practiced in different places, should consult the following sources.

#### I. Writing

Alderson, John. 1979. Policing Freedom. Plymouth, UK: Macdonald and Evans.

Goldstein, Herman. 1991. Problem-oriented Policing. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

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Skogan, Westley, and Kathleen Frydel. 2004. Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Skolnick, Jerome H., and David H. Bayley. 1988. Community Policing: Issues and Practices Around the World. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Trojanowicz, R., and B. Bucqueroux. 1990. Community Policing: A Contemporary Perspective. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.

#### II. Internet websites

Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.  
[www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)

Community Policing Consortium.  
[www.communitypolicing.org](http://www.communitypolicing.org)

Community Oriented Police Services.  
[www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov)

MegaLinks in Criminal Justice.

[www.ncwc.edu](http://www.ncwc.edu)

Singapore Police Force.  
[www.spf.gov.sg](http://www.spf.gov.sg)

United Nations.  
[www.UNMIK.org](http://www.UNMIK.org)