



Silent partnerships: crime prevention in two small towns

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As indicated in the previous chapters, the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security sketched the new role for local government in crime prevention in broad strokes. It left the detail to the discretion of the new local governments that would be established after the elections in December 2000.

Nevertheless, shortly after the publication of the White Paper, in October 1998, Johannesburg city hosted an International Conference for Crime Prevention Partnerships to Build Community Safety, which included, among a range of discussion forums, a Mayors' Forum. Here South African local government officials were able to learn from and exchange ideas with their counterparts in other countries. Discussions at the conference made it clear that the new role allocated to local governments in the White Paper required further direction, at least in terms of the process by which local governments could begin to engage with this role.

So the Department of Safety and Security initiated the rapid development of a manual entitled "Making South Africa safe: a manual for community based crime prevention." The manual, which provided a generic process design through which local governments could develop a locally based strategy to address priority crimes, was written by the ISS and CSIR between March and April 1999, but only published by the department in late 2000. Nevertheless, the approach outlined in the manual formed the basis of discussions with a range of senior local government officials who had either attended the international conference or had been briefed on its content. These discussions led to senior representatives of the former Highveld Ridge Transitional Local Council (now the restructured Highveld East Municipality) and the former Uitenhage Transitional Local Council (which is now incorporated within the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Council) approaching the ISS for assistance in developing a crime reduction strategy for their respective jurisdictions.

In response to this, in October 1999, the ISS developed a project intended to:

- Mobilise crime prevention activity through raising awareness of the role of local government and developing planning skills among councillors and local government officials in these two areas.

- Enhance the capacity of these two local governments for implementing their crime prevention functions by developing a strategy aimed at reducing locally prioritised crimes.
- Assist the initiation of targeted crime prevention projects.
- Test the applicability of the approach advocated in the community based crime prevention manual.

The project was therefore based on two key assumptions:

- Appropriateness of the policy: the policy mapped in the White Paper and the method through which it could be implemented, as detailed in the manual, would be appropriate for local government.
- There would be adequate commitment from role-players in the three spheres of government to implementation of this policy.

The Open Society Foundation approved funding for the project in November 1999.

Strategy development in Highveld East and Uitenhage

Following approval for funding support and the recruitment of a researcher for the project by the ISS, a series of briefings with relevant stakeholders was conducted in May 2000. The briefings were intended to inform stakeholders of the aim of the project, the process by which it was to be conducted and the potential role of each stakeholder. Stakeholders in both areas included:

- Members of the executive committees of the councils.
- The SAPS area commissioners and their management teams.
- The SAPS station commissioners and their management teams.
- Representatives of the community police forums at these stations.
- Representatives of relevant provincial government departments functioning in the areas—for example, Health, Welfare, Justice and Correctional Services.
- Representatives of stakeholders outside government structures—for example, NICRO and BAC.

The briefings were generally well received, particularly by the police, who expressed open support and a willingness to participate in the project. However some councillors did not believe that the municipality should be involved in crime prevention projects, questioning the 'unfunded mandate' delivered by national government.

Despite these concerns, a four-phase process to be used for the project was finalised and approved by all the stakeholders:

- Phase 1: Community safety audit to understand local problems.

- Phase 2: Strategy development and approval.
- Phase 3: Strategy implementation with project partners.
- Phase 4: Monitoring and evaluation.

It was also agreed that development of the crime reduction strategy for each municipality would follow four steps:

- Development of a prioritised list of crimes to be addressed which would be based on the findings of the community safety audit.
- Consultation with stakeholders on priority crimes and feasible interventions to address these crimes.
- Draft recommendations for reducing priority crimes in particular localities.
- Development of a final strategy document outlining interventions.

The briefings resulted in the official ratification of the project by both councils, approval by the main stakeholders and the establishment of crime prevention advisory committees within the municipalities to oversee the project.

The research process

Following formal approval by the councils, the project in both areas was initiated with a community safety audit to develop understanding of the scope, nature and impact of crime. The community safety audit was conducted in the following manner:

- An analysis of the demographics of each area.
- A victim survey to determine the scope and nature of crime in each area.
- A public perception survey of crime, personal safety and policing.
- An analysis of crime reported to the police.
- Correlation of the results of the victim survey with crime reported to the SAPS and with trauma cases dealt with at local clinics and hospitals.
- Interviews with SAPS managers at area and station level and with representatives of their CPFs to determine priorities.
- Focus groups with victims of prioritised crimes.
- Interviews with members of the councils and their administrations to determine their service delivery priorities.

The audit was also used to identify organisations involved in development or crime prevention programmes, such as business organisations, community based organisations and other non-governmental organisations. The research process was completed and the results integrated into descriptive data reports for the Highveld East Municipality in early August 2000 and for Uitenhage in early September 2000.

Key results of the community safety audits

In both areas, violent crime was identified as the major issue to be addressed. However, there was a clear distinction, in both the Highveld East and in Uitenhage, in the locality of most of the violent crime. Violent crime was confined mainly to the townships, while the more developed suburbs and town centres were affected by property crime. Further, crime in the township areas was increasing at a much faster rate than that in the suburbs and town centres. Thus, while the majority of residents in the Highveld East and in Uitenhage believed crime had increased over the past four years, fear of crime was much greater amongst people living in eMbalenhle in the Highveld East and in KwaNobuhle and Kamesh in Uitenhage.

In the Highveld East, three priority crimes were identified: rape, robbery and residential burglary. Rape and robbery were particularly prevalent in eMbalenhle, while residents of Secunda were affected most by robbery and burglary.

In Uitenhage, five priorities were initially identified: rape, robbery, assault, burglary and theft. However, residents of KwaNobuhle and Kamesh were most at risk of robbery, rape, and assault.

The police in both areas appeared ill-equipped to address the rising crime rates. In both areas police were under-resourced in terms of personnel and logistical support. Further, it appeared that little had been done in these areas to address the skewed distribution of the limited resources available to the police. Thus, residents of the suburbs and town centres enjoyed relatively high police visibility, while township residents seldom experienced a visible police presence. The numbers speak for themselves: in the Highveld East, there was one police official per 4,000 residents of eMbalenhle; one police official per 820 residents of Secunda and one per 200 residents of the very small town of Kinross. The pattern repeated itself in the Uitenhage area: 1,626 people per police official in KwaNobuhle, 968 people per police official in Kamesh and 173 people per police official in Uitenhage.

The skewed distribution of police personnel was compounded by the general lack of training of the police working in the townships in both areas. For instance, roughly half of the police officials in eMbalenhle were functionally illiterate and 80% did not have driver's licenses. Again the pattern was repeated in Uitenhage: KwaNobuhle police station was the worst off in terms of the number of police officials who were functionally illiterate and the number of police officials equipped to drive.

Given this, it was no surprise that while public confidence in the police was generally poor in both areas, it was much poorer among residents of the townships. It was also not surprising that, when asked what they thought could be done to reduce crime in their areas of residence, residents of the townships in both areas said that policing and law enforcement should be improved through additional personnel, logistical support and accountability.

Telling, though, was that a third of respondents residing in the townships in both areas indicated that they thought the local government should improve the delivery of its services to help address crime. Although residents of the suburbs and town centres in the Highveld East and in Uitenhage also believed that additional police resources were required to address crime adequately, they were more likely to emphasise this in the context of enforcing municipal by-laws.

Despite the high levels of crime, and particularly the prevalent fear of crime, a significant proportion of people living in the Highveld East and in Uitenhage indicated that they did not take active measures to protect themselves or engage with the police or other community based organisations to do so. So while target hardening measures, such as fencing, burglar-proofing and alarm systems were limited, they were more common in the suburbs and town centres, as was the use of private security companies.

In both areas, public knowledge of the community police forums—structures that are meant to assist police-community liaison on priority issues and which exist at every police station in the country—was poor. So too, was public knowledge of the few crime reduction projects functioning in the areas, which focused mainly on victim empowerment, awareness campaigns and youth diversion. Nevertheless, despite the public's negative perceptions of the police and limited knowledge of crime reduction initiatives, a significant majority of respondents indicated a positive willingness to either work with the police or participate in crime prevention projects. All that was required, it appeared, was that they be asked to.

Given the results of the crime audit, a crime reduction strategy in the Highveld East and in Uitenhage needed to focus on violent crime and particularly on violent crime in the township areas. Further, given the plethora of new legislation that the municipalities had to implement, their limited capacity, and the financial constraints under which they functioned, it was clear that a maximum of three priority crimes should be identified in each area.

Thus, for the Highveld East rape, robbery and residential burglary in eMbalenhle and robbery and burglary in Secunda were prioritised. Resource distribution among the

police stations in the Highveld East SAPS area would need to be reviewed to provide more resources to the SAPS in eMbalenhle and the potential to use police reservists better would also need to be explored. It was also apparent that relieving the police of non-core duties such as guard duties in the courts and providing transport for the Department of Health would improve visible patrol deployment. Further, more appropriate vehicles needed to be acquired for patrolling and following up on cases in Secunda and eMbalenhle. There were opportunities for accessing such resources from local business, and partnerships could be established with local garages to speed up the time taken on repairs of police vehicles.

With regard to potential municipal activities, public participation in existing crime reduction efforts was low, but there was a clear willingness to assist in such projects. This motivated the inclusion in the strategy of a good communication and media plan which, together with short-term measures with visible impact, would make the public feel that something was being done, and provide a practical means of public participation. For instance, the municipality could upgrade the provision of street lighting in eMbalenhle to assist the police in their functions and improve public feelings of safety, and provide target hardening measures, or information about these measures, as part of its housing development projects in the area.

For Uitenhage, rape and robbery in KwaNobuhle and Kamesh and theft in Uitenhage were prioritised. Again it was clear that the shortages of police resources in KwaNobuhle and Kamesh needed to be addressed, and that the unequal distribution of existing resources needed review. Regarding potential municipal activities, it was apparent that the limited victim support and youth offender diversion services that were already running could be extended. The local government could also improve its by-law enforcement capacity by consolidating existing capacity into one Integrated Enforcement Unit for the municipal area. This would enable health, building, and traffic officials to work together to enforce by-laws in a more authoritative and cost-effective manner.

Following analysis of the research results, the next step in the strategy development process was to develop, with the approval and support of the two councils, detailed and targeted crime prevention projects aimed at addressing the priority crimes.

Response of the stakeholders

Consultative workshops aimed at reporting and discussing the detailed results of the research and to agree on priority crimes were held with stakeholders in both municipalities.

In the course of these consultations, the police in both areas engaged most with the research findings and the recommendations stemming from it. The research results were well received, as there appeared to be correlation between the findings of the safety audit and the experience of the police. Agreement on the priorities was therefore quickly established.

However, despite the approval from both councils and the extensive consultation and briefing processes run prior to the research, the two local governments appeared least able (compared with other stakeholders) to engage with the results of the research. Concerned more with political imperatives that required immediate results, councillors in both areas struggled to see beyond the potential advantage of a municipal police service and to engage with a developmental approach to reducing crime within their areas. This meant that the wider consultative workshops, even though organised and facilitated by the local governments, were poorly attended by representatives of the councils and their administrations. There was even less engagement from provincial government. However, the workshops were well attended by other stakeholders, particularly interest groups like business organisations. So, instead of debate and agreement on the priorities to be focused on in finalising the strategy for both areas, the workshops resulted in the identification of further research projects. For instance, in the Highveld East, the stakeholders at the workshops decided on a feasibility study on the establishment of a municipal police service (which had not been identified as a priority before) and in Uitenhage, the business stakeholders decided on a study of crime in the central business district. Finalisation of the strategies for these areas was delayed by these additional research projects and later entirely held up by the local government elections.

The local government elections impacted most on Uitenhage where incorporation into the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Council resulted in the former Town Clerk, who had been driving the project, being allocated other responsibilities in the new Metropolitan Council and withdrawing from the project. Similarly, in the Highveld East, the incorporation of two smaller municipalities resulted in a new set of stakeholders for whom the concept of crime prevention and the crime reduction strategy development project was new.

Nevertheless, it was clear that following the elections in 2000, the two local governments were more ready to engage with their role in providing local safety. The administrations in both areas set about establishing public safety departments with mandates to deliver integrated public safety services, co-ordinate partnership projects aimed at reducing crime and provide emergency services. However, the set up, planning and staffing processes associated with this restructuring resulted in significant delays in decision making and a hiatus in implementation of the project.

This meant that considerable time and effort was invested in briefing the new stakeholders on crime prevention, the role of local government and the aims, value and intended impact of the project. To facilitate this, the ISS recruited a process facilitator to ensure an active participation in crime reduction initiatives from senior officials in the two local governments as well as relevant local role-players outside the local governments.

In an attempt to organise its activities, the new public safety department in the Highveld East established a council-driven project named Simunye which, together with other stakeholders, was intended to address the general concerns about crime. However, it appeared that implementation of initiatives had been delayed by the bureaucratic prerogatives of actually establishing the department and the political pressure surrounding the creation of a municipal police service (the requirements of which had been outlined in the earlier ISS report). Also, it was apparent that the results of the research had not been fully taken on board. Driven by new stakeholders, interventions planned from the Simunye project were dispersed and disjointed. However, the new council agreed that the strategy process should focus and integrate these disparate interventions.

As the detailed strategy was being developed, the Mpumalanga provincial government, which had not engaged in the earlier process, introduced a Multi-Agency Mechanism, consisting of representatives of provincial government departments and their counterparts in local government, the SAPS, CPFs and a range of NGOs and CBOs, to formulate and oversee implementation of a crime reduction strategy in the Highveld East Area. Discussions with representatives of this structure resulted in agreement that the results of the ISS research and, importantly, the strategy recommendations, would inform and guide the development of an overall strategy for the area, which would be supported by the provincial structure. At the time of writing, the draft strategy was being finalised for presentation to the council and the provincial structure.

During the additional briefings to the new stakeholders in the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Council, it became clear that focusing only on the Uitenhage area was unlikely to secure the political and administrative support required from the council. It was equally clear that there was much support and enthusiasm for extending the work in the Uitenhage area to cover the whole metropolitan area. This support and enthusiasm appeared to be motivated by two factors: the need of the metro council to show that it was attending to the priority issues affecting the quality of life of residents of the metropolitan area, and the need to integrate the divergent and disjointed interventions currently in place to address crime. Following an in-principle agreement of support from the council, the ISS developed a

proposal in order to raise funds for the project. In mid-June 2002, the Open Society Foundation agreed to support the project. The project to develop a crime reduction strategy for the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Council will be initiated in September 2002 and completed in October 2003.

Prospects for local government's role in crime prevention

The strategy development processes in the two local government areas indicated that, following the elections in 2000, municipalities were more ready to engage with their role in providing local safety. However, understanding of local government's role in crime prevention remains limited. There are a number of reasons for this.

There is not enough support and guidance from national government on crime prevention and how it should be structured at local level. This is largely attributable to the downgrading of the NCPS structure at national level, and its incorporation into the SAPS, which severely restricted the financial and technical support available from the national government.

Also, the restructuring of local government and the creation of public safety departments has made the provision of local safety the responsibility of single departments. This has made the integration of local government services—which, together, could be effective in addressing crime—more difficult.

Lacking national support, and facing political pressure to deliver in the short-term, local government's crime prevention role is seldom articulated in terms other than the establishment of expensive municipal police services or general awareness campaigns.

Given these issues, and the capacity and resource constraints affecting local government, it appears that the role most suited to municipalities is one of incremental participation in a strategy development and implementation process, rather than the supervisory and co-ordinating role advocated in the policy documents. Indeed, it appears that the policy assumption that local governments would be able to develop, initiate, co-ordinate, sustain and evaluate local crime reduction initiatives on their own was misplaced.

In the approach proposed here for local government—that of incremental participation rather than the management role outlined in the policy—local initiatives could be driven by a range of role-players outside the local government who operate with the approval and support of the council. Here, local government

becomes one partner among others, brought into the process, like the other partners, at the points where it is best suited to add value and gain benefit. These points should be clearly articulated in a strategy document that details activities, time-lines and performance indicators, and which is approved by the council.

While local governments could and should initiate interventions to reduce crime in their areas, management of these processes is perhaps most appropriately out-sourced to relevant agencies that act on behalf of the local government concerned. There are a number of prerequisites for this approach:

- The first and most obvious is formal approval and meaningful financial commitment from the council. Without this, there can be no guarantee that the local government would actively engage with its crime reduction responsibilities.
- Secondly, because the local government rightly remains the key role-player, a champion or set of champions in the council and administration is required to facilitate local government participation at appropriate times.
- Thirdly, because local government would be one partner among others, the establishment of an alliance of local agencies outside local government—like businesses, NGOs and CBOs—through which crime reduction projects can be developed and implemented, is required.