CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Several policy documents approved in the late 1990s are explicit with respect to local government's role in ensuring the safety of people living in their jurisdictions. The 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) and the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security gave local government new responsibilities such as the co-ordination and implementation of crime prevention programmes within their areas of jurisdiction. The 1998 White Paper on Local Government determined that municipalities should co-operate with the South African Police Service (SAPS), other national and provincial government departments, the private sector, and non-governmental and community based organisations in developing and implementing strategies aimed at reducing crime.

The focus on local government as a key driver in local crime reduction initiatives is in line with international developments. Municipalities have a logical role to play as co-ordinators of local crime reduction efforts.[1] Crime is generally more concentrated in urban areas, and involves victims, perpetrators and circumstances specific to a particular locality. Local government is also responsible for social and infrastructural services that are at the heart of preventing crime and enhancing public feelings of safety.

While the theory behind local government's role in crime prevention makes good sense, the practice is much more challenging. The integrated, multi-agency approach to crime prevention advocated by the various policy documents is new for most government departments. Moreover, current government budgeting and reporting processes do not always support this practice. Individual departments, including those within local government, often determine their budgets with specific line functions in mind. Reporting on activities and expenditure usually follows specific functions as they are carried out for specific departments. Thus, the way government operates can inhibit the implementation of an integrated approach that involves joint departmental activities.[2] In addition to these challenges, the skills and capacity for initiating and co-ordinating crime prevention projects is often lacking at local level.

In order to overcome the challenges of separate departmental planning, local governments are required to develop integrated development plans (IDPs). The IDP is the principal five-year strategic plan that guides and informs all planning, budgeting, management and decision-making processes in a municipality.[3] While most municipalities have IDPs which can be of great assistance in fulfilling the crime prevention mandate, implementation of the plans remains a challenge largely due to the lack of experience and capacity at local level. Another issue is that the IDP is applicable only to municipal departments. Although municipalities are required to cooperate with other government departments, there is no enabling framework on how this should be done. As a result, cooperation is often determined by personalities and networks within departments.

Recognising these challenges, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) has been providing technical assistance to local governments in the area of crime prevention for several years. In keeping with these efforts, this monograph hopes to provide municipalities with a practical example of how an integrated crime reduction strategy was developed in a metropolitan area. The monograph is based on a project conducted by the ISS in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) in the Eastern Cape between September 2002 and March 2004. The monograph describes how the project started and progressed, details the findings of the crime and safety audit that informed the strategy, and concludes with the publication of the final strategy that has been submitted to the council's executive committee for approval and implementation.