

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Several policy documents propose a role for local governments in ensuring the safety of their constituencies. The National Crime Prevention Strategy, the White Paper on Safety and Security, and the White Paper on Local Government suggest that municipalities should develop and coordinate crime prevention programmes in collaboration with the South African Police Service (SAPS), other national and provincial government departments, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations. Legislation providing for local governments to set up their own municipal police services provides the clearest indication that safety from crime is considered a responsibility of local government.

While the theory and policy make good sense, in practice, local government's role in crime prevention is proving to be more challenging than was initially anticipated. Shortages of skills and capacity, restructuring and changes to boundaries, and difficulties working in an integrated, inter-departmental way, are some of the explanatory factors.

Nevertheless, several local and metropolitan municipalities have taken up the challenge. In most cases, the first step is drawing up a crime reduction strategy. With support from the Open Society Foundation, the ISS assisted the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality (NMMM) in the Eastern Cape with this process. By documenting the research results and the strategy, this monograph hopes to assist practitioners by providing a practical example of a project that is currently being implemented.

The NMMM consists of the three former municipalities of Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage and Dispatch. It is the fifth largest metro in the country and the biggest in the Eastern Cape. The metro's population – estimated at around one million – is relatively youthful and undereducated. Poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, racial inequalities, poor infrastructure and inadequate access to services are the major challenges facing the NMMM. Many of these problems can be directly linked to crime. The metro recognises this, as

illustrated in its Vision 2020, which includes enhancing safety and security as a core goal.

The ISS' role in developing a strategy for the metro was formally approved by the council in March 2002. Drawing on the SAPS manual, Making South Africa Safe: A Manual for Community Based Crime Prevention, as well as the ISS' experience in providing technical assistance to local government, a crime audit of the NMMM was conducted, and the results used to draft a crime reduction strategy.

The crime audit revealed the following issues about crime in the metro that were relevant for strategy development:

- The most important crimes are robbery and housebreaking. Other crimes that could be considered are rape and assault.
- Interventions aimed at dealing with violent crimes like assault and robbery ought to focus on the poorer parts of the metro. Property crimes like housebreaking are prevalent across the metro. Inner city and tourist areas should be targeted for reduction of high profile crimes like robbery.
- Many of the places that people are most afraid of are used for shopping and commuting, and are thus difficult to avoid.
- A majority of people simply stay indoors for fear of criminal victimisation. Few people take any precautions to protect their homes or property. The public need to be made aware about safety issues and encouraged to get involved in crime prevention.
- Young people in NMMM are well informed about certain crimes, such as robbery and drug related offences, and provide a valuable source of information about the nature of these crimes.
- Criminal careers seem to start at a young age and involve petty crimes. Children are also believed to be involved in drug related crimes, some of which take place at school. Many of the reasons that young people get involved in crime relate to parenting, socialisation, and schooling.
- Public knowledge of, and participation in, community policing forums or other community anti-crime initiatives is low. Systems of communicating about such projects need to be improved and formalised. Elected councillors could play a more active role in crime prevention projects in their wards.

In terms of the SAPS capacity for crime reduction, relevant findings from the audit were:

- Projects that require law enforcement or visible policing must take the SAPS' resource shortages into account, and be highly focused.

- A more visible police presence is likely to make people feel safer.
- The strategy should provide for the NMMM to play an active role in sector policing.
- Communication and teamwork between the SAPS and NMMM officials should be improved, both at the political and operational level.
- Problems relating to the metro's Community Based Volunteer programme should be resolved.
- SAPS members are keen to work with the metro and have clear and constructive suggestions about areas for collaboration.

As regards capacity in the NMMM, relevant findings from the audit were:

- The safety and security business unit should be the lead department on the metro's crime reduction strategy.
- Traffic and bylaw enforcement activities, together with registration and licensing functions, can be targeted towards preventing crime.
- Housing delivery, which is the NMMM's main priority, should be carried out with safety and crime prevention considerations in mind. These relate to issues of housing design and town planning, but also to land-use bylaws that can be applied to stop the use of land for illegal purposes (such as chop-shops).
- With the SAPS, the relevant business units should identify the metro's 'crime prevention through environmental design' needs.
- There is potential for collaboration between the safety and security, and environment and health units, on projects to prevent rape and domestic violence, as well as bylaw enforcement.
- The recreational services unit should identify and support key individuals in schools and communities to drive sports, arts and cultural programmes.
- Bylaw enforcement needs to be stepped up, particularly with regard to those bylaws that can contribute to preventing crime.

Key issues facing the NMMM in the implementation of any crime reduction strategy were identified as the following:

- The management and coordination of the strategy. Recommendations included establishing a crime reduction committee, and appointing four coordinators dedicated to strategy implementation.
- How partnerships are formed and maintained. Recommendations included forming bi-lateral, project based partnerships, and formalising partnerships with key stakeholders like the SAPS.
- Improving the enforcement of bylaws. Recommendations included accelerating the process of rationalising and consolidating all existing

bylaws and introducing new bylaws, conducting awareness campaigns about the value of bylaw enforcement, and targeting the efforts of traffic, security and bylaw enforcement officers towards selected crime problems.

- Encouraging public participation. Recommendations included strengthening existing crime prevention projects and supporting new business and community initiatives.
- Targeting only a few crime problems. Recommendations included focusing on residential burglary, robbery and rape in specific parts of the metro where these crimes are problematic. Changes in crime trends would however need to be monitored in order to amend the focus areas when necessary.

The final NMMM crime reduction strategy details project activities in the following eight areas:

1. Developing effective partnerships and improving working relationships with key role players.
2. Supporting effective policing and law enforcement.
3. Preventing crime through the deployment of Community Based Volunteers at crime hotspots.
4. Stamping out the theft of municipal infrastructure and resources.
5. Supplementing visible policing efforts with technological aids such as CCTV.
6. Providing effective bylaw enforcement services.
7. Co-ordinating, providing and enhancing targeted crime prevention through social development projects.
8. Co-ordinating, providing and enhancing targeted crime prevention through environmental design projects.