

# Community Safety and Community Policing: Achieving Local and National Accountability

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## Abstract

South Africa is the most violent country in the world. Though "political" violence grabs the headlines, it accounts for 10,9% of violent deaths, with 89,1% arising from everyday interpersonal incidents; the expectation that order will return after a political settlement is thus ill-founded. Civil ordering has broken down, and police reform alone will not restore a rule-governed society.

The concept of embedded policing is used to argue that community safety rather than community policing must be achieved through the proliferation of civil ordering and injury prevention programmes, coordinated by a Community Safety Forum within which community policing is one of the components of ordering: a Community Policing Charter is proposed, specifying police service standards and methods of implementation. Finally, it is argued that bottom-up initiatives will not succeed unless they hook into a workable national accountability system that creates "circles of power" through which individuals and communities achieve and maintain political leverage.

## The most violent country in the world

South Africa is the most violent country in the world. The following table based on 1989 national mortality data, and more recent statistics for other countries provided by the World Health Organisation, (Health Psychology Unit, 1993) shows that if South Africa were a member of WHO, it would have had the notoriety of displacing St Lucia (a Caribbean island) and Ecuador as the country with the highest murder rate in the world; if the table were

corrected by the insertion of 1993 mortality, the gap would widen (for further comparative data, see Butchart and Brown, 1991).

What causes this high death rate? Van der Spuy (1993) reports that in 1992, 10,9% of the 20 135 violent deaths in South Africa "were related to political or unrest situations." A similar picture emerges from the epidemiological data assembled by the Health Psychology Unit (Butchart et al., 1991): of 3 535 patients interviewed at the 11 Johannesburg hospitals admitting trauma cases in the year beginning June 1989, 24% of

Country	Males	Females	WHO Ranking for Males
South Africa	46.5	7.0	Not listed
Saint Lucia	22.6	Not given	1
Ecuador	21.8	2.2	2
USSR (former)	16.3	4.7	4
USA	13.3	3.9	7
UK	1.0	0.4	Too low to rank
Japan	0.7	0.5	Too low to rank

males gave robbery as the motive for the attack: our field workers reported that almost none of those sampled attributed their injuries to political violence. The same study showed that in Johannesburg, 14 of every 100 "coloured males" in the 18-24 age group would make a hospital visit every year because of injuries sustained in interpersonal violence.

Under the weight of this violence — the minor weight of the interorganisational and the huge weight of the interpersonal — civil order in South Africa is disintegrating.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the clearance rate for crimes against the person in 1991 was 92,2% (in Nell, 1993). In South Africa, one reads in *The Star* of August 9, 1993: "The death toll for the weekend was 41. No-one has been arrested for the atrocities."

This "political" violence is deliberately misinterpreted, both by the police and by political leaders, to mean that after a political settlement, order will return to South Africa. On the contrary: The policing problems of the new South Africa — if ever we arrive there — will be awesome.

### Inadequate Solutions

How is competent, effective policing to be achieved?

Top-heavy reform. Even if joint control of the security forces were to be achieved under the incoming Transitional Executive Council, and even if a new top management structure were put in place at police headquarters, many of the fundamental obstacles to police reform would remain in place — in particular, the national culture of authoritarianism, and the politicisation of the police (Nell, 1993). Moreover, on-the-ground accountability of the police to individual citizens and to community organisations would still have to be achieved.

A community policing focus. Drawing on our own experience and other models, the Health Psychology Unit has prepared a Community Policing Charter which specifies the service standards a community can reasonably expect of its local police station (See Appendix). These derive from well-tried international models of police service standards, for example the United Kingdom *Victim Charter* (1990). It is argued that a local initiative on the scale of a single police station is unlikely to be resisted by the police hierarchy, and could be driven by community initiatives based on a representative Community Safety Forum.

At the same time, participation in local policing experiments is likely to meet the need the South African Police have to establish credible community links. The Community Policing Charter outlines a top-down method of enlisting police participation in a limited number of such local experiments by formally adopting the Charter, designating participating police stations, initiating community-monitored audit procedures, and conducting a consultative personnel policy (Appendix).

We believe that the Charter is a timely and appropriate document. It builds community capacity for engagement with the police and releases considerable community energy by propagating the revolutionary notion that the police have a duty to deliver an adequate and publicly audited service to the community. In both the NICRO experiment in Mannenberg in Cape Town and through Gerald Williamson's work in Eldorado Park, considerable progress towards achieving these goals has already been made.

Responses from the Eldorado Park community and from the Wits-Vaal Police Community Relations Committee of the National Peace Secretariat suggest that the Charter is workable and should be implemented as widely as possible and as soon as possible.

Nonetheless, the Charter in itself cannot address this country's civil ordering needs. A theoretical digression is required in order to show what this inadequacy is, and how it could be remedied.

### Embedded Policing

In Chapter 7 of *Policing for a New South Africa*, Brogden and Shearing (1993) argue for a system of dual policing through "a resurrection of civil society" that will not only monitor policing but take direct responsibility for it through local government structures that would "direct ... foster and coordinate peace keeping as a central feature of civil society" (p.203).

What do the terms "peace" and "policing" mean? Shearing (1992) writes that peace derives from the old English "frith," meaning freedom from molestation, and, by extension means a reduction of risk:

**(Peace) exists when stores are not robbed, pedestrians are not molested, computer codes not broken, and executives and their families are able to enjoy life free from threats, assassinations or kidnapping. (Spitzer, 1987)**

Policing means preservation of the peace so that persons and property are free of interference and can go about their business safely. In the 1993 book, the concept of peace is extended to mean dominion: "Genuine liberty requires ... institutionally guaranteed equality of access to liberty-assets" so that an individual can fully enjoy the freedom of a society.

In this sense, the bottom-heavy system Brogden and Shearing advocate, founded in a network of civil institutions that combine to maintain a peaceful neighbourhood, are explicitly linked to the medieval institution of "frankpledge", a feudal system in which "policing was the responsibility of all community members, was integrated with their other functions, and was supervised by a small number of specialised security persons — sheriffs and constables — designated to ensure that community members were exercising their security responsibilities properly" (Shearing & Stenning, 1983, p.499).

The notion of networked or embedded policing derives in turn from Foucault's dictum that there is no focal point to modern power, but an endless network of power relations. For example, Shearing and Stenning's paper, "From the Panopticon to Disneyworld," (1984) poses an engaging question: Why is it that crime is unknown in Disneyworld although there is no visible security presence, while hundreds of thousands of people are packed tightly together in slowly moving queues, or caged in moving vehicles under conditions of great frustration, in a situation that lends itself to pickpocketing, mugging and worse?

The simple answer is that surveillance — "policing" — is embedded in the corporate and organisational structure of Disneyworld. Every Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, food server and cleaner is a repository of public order: "We invite you to come with us on a guided tour of this modern police facility in which discipline and control are, like many of the characters one sees about, in costume" (Shearing and Stenning, 1984). Thus, on a visit to Disneyworld, Shearing's daughter developed a blister on her heel, took off her shoes, and within ten yards was approached by a character costumed like a Bahamian police officer with white pith helmet and white gloves, who told her that walking barefoot was not permitted "for the safety of visitors," and advised that he would be compelled to escort her out of the complex unless she put on her shoes again.

#### **A hammer and a box of tools**

To return now to the Community Policing Charter: An interaction between a community and the police, even if it succeeds in achieving competent, accountable bandit-catching (to use Shearing's phrase) — and this will be a giant step forward — will in itself be unable to restore civil order to communities in which violence is endemic. The Charter on its own gives police inappropriate salience in the establishment of civil order, and makes community leadership unduly dependent on the police who are misperceived as the sole ordering resource.

In conversation, Shearing uses a compelling metaphor: If you give a child a hammer, everything becomes a nail; if you give a police force batons and handcuffs, there is one answer to every social problem — rape, embezzlement, and forgery: Arrest and imprison: "Carpentry isn't about hammering, it's about using a whole box full of tools."

How might one set about creating a community-friendly toolkit and getting ordinary people to use the tools in order to create not just embedded policing — that's too simple — but embedded ordering?

An answer to this question — and what follows is an attempt to frame an answer — would close the gap between top-down police reform initiatives, and the attainment of competent and accountable local ordering.

**Community Ordering Programmes of the Johannesburg South Centre for Peace Action**

The Health Psychology Unit's Johannesburg South Centre for Peace Action is a non-governmental organisation established in 1990; it now has a staff of 18 and a budget of some R2 million a year. Its current programmes are:

### **Women's Programme**

Shelter for Battered Women. Well-secured premises have been hired, furnished and equipped, and the shelter at the time of writing housed seven women and 16 children. It provides a service for the CPA's catchment area, namely Eldorado Park, Lenasia, and Soweto. Recruitment of a night worker and a child care worker is presently in progress. A new injection of funds from the Federal Republic of Germany will be applied to these posts and to the upgrading of shelter equipment.

Skills Development and Support Groups. Ongoing training by the present women's programme workers is given in mothering, parenting, and employment-related skills (this latter in collaboration with the CPA's Small Business Development Programme).

Advocacy for the compensation victims of abuse in collaboration with the National Women's Alliance is undertaken; the proposed Victim Charter will focus and extend this work.

Big Buddy Programme directed at the children of abused women presently in the shelter is run by volunteers trained in the CPA's other programmes.

### **Youth and School-based Services**

The CPA's Youth Centre operates in Eldorado Park at a free-standing house with a garden provided at a nominal rental by the Johannesburg City Council.

Schools programme. This programme runs at schools in the catchment area for one school period a week for six weeks. Its content is life skills in communication, in assertiveness, conflict resolution, career choice and development, and in "saying no" to drugs, molestation and other unwanted sexuality. The programmes also act as a conduit that channels pupils to other Youth Centre programmes.

Homework programme is operated at schools and at the Youth Centre immediately after school.

Big Buddy programme for kids with scholastic difficulties.

Juvenile Group caters for youth with a criminal record and, like the school programme, is focused on life skills and, for this group, on the development of viable alternatives to criminality.

Peace Action Group is based on school dropouts and offers both recreation and skills development. This group will receive training from the youth leaders so that members may

serve as peace workers and conduct peace education campaigns in all of the schools within the Johannesburg-Soweto-Eldorado Park region.

Youth Leadership programme. Ten trainees are acquiring skills to act as a core volunteer group to co-ordinate activities at the Youth Centre.

School Holiday Package. This runs at the premises of the Youth Centre. Its constituents are a vocational guidance programme based on vocational preference tests, administered by an intern psychologist on our staff with the assistance of psychology students from Rand Afrikaans University. Other constituents are recreational, skills training, home-work supervision, study skills, life option programme, arts and drama programme and peace education.

Teenage Mother Programme which includes an anti-natal service drawing on the skills of City Health Clinics, and post-natal training in parenting skills and a self-help support group facilitated by a Centre worker.

Youth Counsellor Programme. This eight week programme was at the time of writing in its third week. It is aimed at training volunteer counsellors and placing these in appropriate CPA projects.

Hiking Club. This draws on local youth and at the time of writing the second youth camp at a venue outside Johannesburg was in progress.

Activity Groups. Community volunteers are offering classes in art, gymnastics, guitar, and choir singing.

#### **Small Business Development Programme**

Entrepreneurial training is now being offered to a fourth group of 15 trainees drawn from the Johannesburg PWV area. This training includes basic business startup skills and financial administration.

Access to Working Capital. The programme acts as an intermediary between training programme graduates and venture capital sources. 25 loans have to date been negotiated for graduates with the Get-Up Trust.

Access to Skills Training. The programme links graduates with training programmes in areas such as welding, bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing etc., offered by the National Department of Manpower at its Chamdor Centre, and at a parallel NGO, the Reef Training Centre.

Advice and mentorship is offered on an ongoing basis to programme graduates.

Product contract access is offered through the programme's network of contacts.

Stokvel Programme. The Stokvel is a unique South African informal co-operative structure in which the members contribute an affordable fixed monthly sum. This accumulates to become startup capital for a business project, decided upon through a process of collective decision making. Such projects might be a sew and knit factory, light manufacturing, retailing, etc. The CPA Stokvel programme is modelled on a successful Stokvel project operating on the East Rand.

Advanced Entrepreneurial Training is offered to small and medium-sized businesses that need to bolster their accounting and financial management and marketing strategies.

### **Adult Services**

Parent Effectiveness Training (PET) and Stress Management. A support group for parents has been initiated at the CPA's Chiawelo Clinic (part of the State funded Soweto Community Health Centre Programme).

Other PET programmes have operated at the CPA's offices.

Regional Child Abuse Conference. This is currently in planning and will network State and NGO groups concerned with this problem. It is noted that the prevention of child abuse has been a successful component of the school-based programme; a primary school group's playlet about child abuse was recently featured on the National television programme, Agenda.

Counselling Services. These are offered for families, for wife batterers, especially for the partners of women at the shelter, and for other victims of violence.

Chiawelo Clinic. This is defined as primarily for the survivors of interpersonal violence and victims of abuse. This clinic has been operating since 1987 as a referral centre, but the redefinition has greatly increased the number of referrals, which is now some 15 per session, all of whom are seen and referred to appropriate agencies if they cannot be offered on-the-spot counselling.

### **Outreach Programme**

This is staffed by a full-time worker who co-ordinates the following services:

Consultation and training to other agencies. It is noted that numerous requests for such services have been received from Bloemfontein, Durban, Cape Town, etc., partly as a result of the national television coverage described below, and partly as a result of the intensive documentation and publication programme described in a previous section.

Placement of volunteers who have undergone training through the CPA, exercising due caution to avoid overwhelming these part-time and semi-skilled workers with demands beyond their capability.

Media coverage. The outreach worker uses the CPA's strong media links to get local and national coverage for parallel agencies in the catchment area. For example, the CPA was featured in a two-hour breakfast television slot in May this year, *Good Morning South Africa*, and coverage included non-CPA agencies such as the Harvey Cohen Centre, Child Welfare, Johannesburg Association for the Aged, Eldorado Park Advice Centre and the Eldorado Park Women's Group.

As a result, the actuality programme, *Agenda*, will feature the work of the Harvey Cohen Centre in a documentary now being filmed.

### Oral History

Copious photographic and tape-recorded material has been assembled by volunteer workers toward the publication of an illustrated book, *A Day in the Life of Eldorado Park*. At the same time, a pictorial map of the town will be produced. This represents a deliberate attempt to reclaim a genuine history that documents the origin of this community through the machinations of the Group Areas Act, the origins of the various extensions, old-timers' memories of their previous places of residence, the disruptive relocation, and the emergent sense of community in Eldorado Park itself.

The programme consults widely with South African historians. It publishes a newsletter, *Bekgeskiedenis*, the second issue of which will appear in August.

### From violence prevention to injury control

The CPA's goal was initially conceptualised as violence prevention; this places the problem within the domain of "law and order," and especially of policing.

However, the notion of embedded ordering suggests that the goal would be more appropriately redefined as injury control.

This is a true paradigm shift, redefining violence as a public health rather than a policing problem, and brings to bear an entire new range of initiatives drawn from the disciplines of community health and primary health care, within which community policing forms one component.

### From a Community-Police Liaison Forum to a Community Safety Forum

The community mechanism for the implementation of injury control measures is a representative Community Safety Forum, set up by full-time CPA workers, from which further community bodies will be derived. In summary, these are:

The Monitoring Liaison Forum, focused on powerful bottom-up, community-driven strategies for implementation of the Community Policing Charter.

The Local Peace Committee, which, in addition to its duties under the NPA, would also work for community calming by non-coercive interventions such as safe houses, a women's shelter and interventions based on systems theory to address conflict area; such interventions draw directly on the expertise of community psychologists.

The Local Government Forum would set out to implement the community reconstruction initiatives of the National Peace Accord at local level, and work toward greater civic assertiveness in other directions.

Each of these bodies, coordinated by the Community Safety Forum, will seek to focus political energy on common-sense injury control programmes, among which competent, accountable crime prevention and detection at the local level is one component.

## Accountability

### Circles of Power

Accountability cannot be achieved at local level if national government and the civil service are inefficient, unresponsive, and arrogant.

Unless the bottom-up initiatives described in the preceding sections have genuine leverage over politicians and civil servants, the community forums will become talkshops that produce no real social change and will inevitably collapse.

It is beyond the scope of this document to define accountability or to describe fully the methods by which a culture of accountability might be achieved so as to create true circles of power, linking community activists to local, regional and national decision making. In summary, we believe that the Accountability Foundation we have established will be able, by using the political leverage of its national trustees, to insert accountability methods into the national agenda in a non-conflictual and non-authoritarian fashion through a Citizen's Charter programme.

The model for this programme is the audit-based accountability system embodied in the British Citizen's Charter movement.

It is proposed that operational Citizen's Charter documents be prepared in the following areas:

- Community Policing Charter
- Victim Charter

- Civil Service Charter (embodying a code of conduct for the Civil Service Housing Charter (giving the rights of tenants of state and private housing)
- Parent's Charter (dealing with parent expectations of the educational system.)

Each charter will specify service standards for the relevant government departments, state what course of action is open to citizens when services are unacceptable and to what compensation they are entitled; and, wherever possible, allow choice between competing service providers.

### Consultative Process

Expert panels made up of Trustees and other advisers will identify stakeholders for each of these Charters, inviting each such organisation or group to send representatives who will participate in a Charter Commission. For example, for the Civil Service Code of Conduct, stakeholders would be political parties, civics, the Civil Service Association, the Civil Service Commission, and non-governmental organisations in the area of human rights and good government.

Commissions will write and publish Charters on the basis of wide consensus, though not necessarily unanimity.

Once a Charter had been formulated, the Accountability Foundation would hold national and local workshops to advocate for adoption of the Charter, and, through its Centre for Peace Action and satellite programmes, encourage communities to exert bottom-up pressure for the adoption of specific charters.

### Creating a Multitude of Bottom-Up Civil Ordering Initiatives

If these Charters are to have an impact on local life and to exert an influence on the way politicians and bureaucrats manage national affairs at central and regional level, the following steps will have to be facilitated by the Accountability Foundation in every community that requests such assistance by conducting national workshops for the leadership of church, civic, business, and educational groups in advocating and lobbying for specific local programmes, in local coalition building, in the best utilisation of the media for publicity, and by devising implementation strategies for the achievement of the objectives of the various Citizen Charters with particular emphasis on civil society assertiveness.

## Appendix

## Synopsis of the Community Policing Charter<sup>1</sup>

### What the Community can Expect of the Police

#### Response Times

Written undertakings will be given by the local police station on response times to life-threatening situations and other calls.

#### Complaint Management

Complainants will be informed in writing of investigation progress, and docket closure; the loss of a docket will result in immediate re-opening and re-investigation of the matter in question.

#### Victim Management

Victims of violence will be processed by trained personnel, with the institution of Safe Houses for the victims of battering, sexual or child abuse.

Witness protection shall be adequate

#### Crime Statistics

Clearance rates (the number of complaints per crime category divided by the number of dockets handed to the Attorney General for prosecution of the suspect) will be regularly reported on the basis of audited statistics.

#### Treatment of Suspects

Interrogations must be tape-recorded and lay visitors shall have the right to visit detainees under interrogation or in the cells at any time.

#### Supersession

Special Units, such as the Internal Stability Unit, the Vehicle Theft Unit, etc., shall fall under the command of the Station Commander when entering that station's area and shall be obliged to uphold all agreements entered into between the Station Commander and community groups.

#### Complaints Review

A committee made up of the Station Commander, the chairperson of the Community Safety Forum, and a retired attorney, advocate, or judge, who shall act as chairman, shall be established to deal expeditiously with allegations of misconduct against individual members of the police.

### Bottom-up Implementation of the Community Policing Charter

A representative Community Safety Forum of 20-30 persons shall be established, and shall meet monthly in public with the Press present at venues in different parts of the geographic area.

Three to six months after its establishment, and once the committees described below are working smoothly, the Forum will invite the Station Commander and his senior officers to enter a into consultative relationship at which community safety needs will be reviewed and police responses sought.

#### Committees:

The forum shall establish a Monitoring Liaison Group that will determine community perceptions of the police and the quality of police service standards; a Local Government Group that will address other civil service accountability needs of the community; and a Local Peace Committee affiliated with the National Peace Secretariat.

### Top-down Ratification of the Charter

The Community Safety Forum shall in due course request through the Regional Peace Committee or the Regional Police-Community Relations Forum of the National Peace Accord that the policing experiment in the area in question be recognised by the Regional Commissioner and that he facilitate the experiment by formally adopting the Charter for the police station area in question; by agreeing to written crime and clearance rate auditing; by guaranteeing personnel stability for the two year duration of the experiment in the police station in question; by accepting the recommendations of the Complaints Review committee specified above; and by preventing supersession of the Station Commander by specialist units.

#### Note:

<sup>1</sup> A fully detailed Community Policing Charter and its method of implementation appear in *Toward Community Policing in South Africa*, Health Psychology Unit, January 1993.

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