ODI

Report

Securing communities?

Redefining community policing to achieve results

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Cover photo: UNDP: A Police Officer trained by UNDP enters the Ebola emergency number into a phone.

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Key messages

- Despite the popularity of community policing within wider police reforms, there is little consensus on its definitions, objectives and models.

- Communities, police, governments and donors ascribe a range of competing objectives to community policing, many of which are overambitious.

- Community policing is shaped by a number of features of the context, which we must understand in order to develop realistic expectations of what kinds of change are possible.

- There is a need to be more realistic about what community policing can achieve, focusing on specific safety and security problems and dependent on what the context allows.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CSSB	Community Security and Safety Branch
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
ICG	International Crisis Group
LPPB	Local Police Partnership Board
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SEESAC	South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
US	United States

Executive summary

Community policing is a popular donor strategy within wider police reforms in many developing countries – with programmes in places as diverse as Bangladesh, Jamaica and Sierra Leone. It takes a variety of forms, but often includes alternative dispute resolution, police–community forums, joint police–community patrols, community outreach, the establishment of community policing as a police-wide philosophy and/or specific police units tasked with responsibility for community policing. In addition to these multiple forms, community policing is ascribed a diverse set of objectives by the different actors involved (governments, police, communities and donors), including reduced crime, improved police–community relations, increased police accountability and strengthened state–society relations.

As a result of the conceptual confusion surrounding community policing, the Securing Communities project at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) attempted to map the diversity of practices that fall within its remit, to examine how community policing is shaped in different contexts and to probe the plausibility of many of the objectives ascribed to community policing. This synthesis paper draws together the findings of a background paper and four case studies (in Ethiopia, Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste), as well as wider reviews of the literature and country examples.

Community policing is invariably shaped by a number of features of the context that delimit what is possible to achieve. This speaks to the inherently political nature of policing more broadly and the need to understand reforms as embedded within political process at both national and local levels – as is increasingly recognised in the 'political turn' in development discourse more broadly. In addition, and contrary to most donor programmes and much of the literature, community policing need not refer solely to initiatives between the formal police and communities, but can also refer to 'informal' policing practices, whereby communities innovate their own strategies for dealing with local safety and security issues.

Pertinent contextual features influencing the way both formal and informal community policing practices develop include processes of state formation and the nature of the political settlement, experiences of insecurity, social cleavages and inequalities and cultures of dispute resolution. This constellation of features is important not just to understand the environment in which policing and issues of safety and security play out but also because policing and issues of safety and security are themselves constituted by the way these features have been experienced in a given location. Understanding community policing as deriving from these experiences is therefore essential in developing realistic objectives that can actually result in improvements in people's security.

Currently, multiple objectives abound, with donors, governments, police and communities all expecting community policing to deliver different results – some of which are mutually supportive and some of which exist in tension. While communities generally seek to improve police–community relations and police accountability and take greater responsibility for their own security, police and governments are more likely to be interested in crime reduction and intelligence collection, often through improved police–community relations. Donors tend to attribute more ambitious goals to their community policing work, with an emphasis on improved police–community relations, police accountability and state–society relations. Our case studies suggest it is the more modest of these objectives that are more likely to be successful. This speaks not only to the difficulty of transformation of resilient institutions like the police but also to the need to operate within the bounds of what is practicable given the context.

Yet, while community policing might not stack up against all of the substantial demands placed on it, this speaks more to the diverse and at times overambitious nature of the demands than to the value of community policing. In the case of donors, some of their expectations of community policing are based on flawed assumptions about how change (in this case improved police accountability and strengthened state–society relations) happens. Increasing recognition of the role of donors as facilitators of locally driven change suggests focusing on 'good enough' reforms that solve a particular problem (like poor police–community relations) is more realistic and more likely to deliver results than conventional approaches that focus on optimal reforms to broad areas (like state–society relations or crime reduction). Community policing can thus play an important, but much more specific, role in addressing community safety and security needs, and tailoring the ambition to the realities of the context will help deliver more targeted and effective support.

1 Introduction

As donors have oriented more of their development assistance towards fragile states since the early 2000s, their work on policing has duly increased in an effort to address the priorities of safety and security that are seen as critical to enabling broader development outcomes (Bakrania, 2014; Ellison and Pino, 2012: 2-3). A key component of this policing assistance has focused on community policing, despite the ambiguity surrounding the concept.

Broadly speaking, community policing can be defined as 'a philosophy (a way of thinking) and a strategy (a way to carry out the philosophy)' that allows the police and community to work together to solve problems of crime and disorder (Saferworld, 2006: 1; see also Ferreira, 1996). Yet, as Ellison and Pino (2012: 71) note, so vague is the idea of community policing that it 'can be transformed chameleon like into whatever its practitioners want it to be'. In multiple security and justice programmes around the world – in places as diverse as Bangladesh, Jamaica, the Solomon Islands and South Sudan – community policing is now supported as a way to achieve multiple objectives in the one context. These objectives include reduced crime, improved police–community relations, police accountability, strengthened state–society relations and more citizen-led policing. On the one hand, this multitude of purposes allows for a broad church of supporters; but on the other, it risks fragmentation and working at cross-purposes. As the UK Stabilisation Unit (2014: 7-8) notes:

> Many HMG [Her Majesty's Government] programmes use the language of 'community policing' or 'community-based policing' but these terms can mean different things to different audiences. The lack of a common understanding risks undermining key work to support the improvement of security and justice in priority countries for HMG. Common understandings of key terms and approaches is of ever greater importance given the increased profile of policing assistance, and its place alongside other actions taken in support which require close coordination and collaboration between different actors often working within the same time and space.

Lack of common understanding over purpose can be exacerbated by the various models of community policing donors tend to promote, which are typically linked to their own domestic policing systems. Of course, promotion of such models is not unique to community policing assistance, but rather a widely criticised feature of much institutional reform within development (see, for instance,

Andrews, 2012). Yet it is all the more problematic in relation to community policing given the acute challenges of police–community relations in many donor countries in recent times, which are not scrutinised when transferring these highly imperfect approaches to other countries. As a result, you find the UK supporting community policing along Peelian principles,[1] the French evincing proximity policing, the US promoting 'broken windows' policing, the Japanese bringing lessons from the Koban system and so on. The result is thus a variety of practices advocated to achieve multiple goals across diverse contexts.

Since the early 2000s, there has been growing consensus that development interventions need to be informed by a much better understanding of the complex socioeconomic and political realities of the countries in which they are taking place (Carothers and de Gramont, 2013; Unsworth, 2002). It was an interest in this diversity of context that prompted the Securing Communities project. It raised the question of why, despite the acknowledged importance of context and the diversity of experiences of insecurity around the world, community policing is a routine part of donor response. This question is all the more pressing given the lack of consensus around what community policing is. Given this lack of conceptual clarity, one participant at a workshop on community policing held at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in September 2014 noted that community policing 'was dead' – and destined for the 'dustbin of history'.

This paper, drawing together insights from four case studies[2] undertaken by ODI and in partnership with The Asia Foundation as part of the Securing Communities project, seeks to situate community policing within the deeply political contexts in which it exists, thus enabling a more realistic appraisal of what it is well placed to achieve and what it is not. This project sits within a broader programme of research within the Politics and Governance Programme at ODI that looks at how politics and governance shapes service delivery.

Based on the case study research and the wider literature, we find community policing can be useful for achieving some narrow purposes but on the whole, if it is to be effective, policymakers and programmers will have to ascribe far less ambitious and transformative goals to their community policing work, focusing instead on more discrete problems. Connected to this is the manner in which community policing has come to almost be synonymous with police reform more generally. It is increasingly difficult to separate out the community policing components of police reform from its other elements (Ellison and Pino, 2012). This underscores

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1 The Peelian principles summarise the 'policing by consent' approach espoused by Sir Robert Peel in his establishment of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. This model is based on ideas about making policing more accountable to the people and forging close police–community relationships, in which police officers are regarded as citizens in uniform. For Peel, prevention of crime was the core objective, with officers undertaking foot patrols in their communities to deter criminal activity, invested only with common law powers of arrest and prosecution (Denney and Jenkins, 2013).

2 Case studies were undertaken in Ethiopia, Jamaica, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

the extent to which community policing has become overambitious in its goals, attempting not only to improve police–community relations or reduce crime but also to transform policing institutions and contribute to strengthened state–society relations. It is these loftier goals that the project finds are least plausible for community policing to achieve in practice.

The paper proceeds in Section 2 by setting out some of the challenges of studying community policing, which are binding constraints for much research on policing more broadly. Section 3 clarifies the breadth of community policing, setting out why there is a need for a broader understanding of what falls within its bounds. Section 4 describes some of the key features of the context that we found play a fundamental role in shaping how community policing manifests (and therefore what is achievable through it). Section 5 unpacks the multiple objectives ascribed to community policing and contrasts them with the effects it appears best placed to achieve. Section 6 articulates a number of outstanding challenges community policing faces before Section 7 reflects on implications for its future.

2 Challenges of studying policing

The challenges we faced were of course determined first and foremost by the contexts in which we were operating. Case studies were undertaken in Ethiopia, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, with a desk study conducted of Jamaica.[3] This set of countries has a bias towards strong states, with some demonstrating authoritarian governance approaches, and this affects the findings presented here. To help balance this, we supplemented the cases with an overview of the literature (see Denney and Jenkins, 2013). This drew on a much wider set of community policing examples and additional research into Francophone and fragile state contexts as well as countries with longer histories of community policing (such as South Africa) and where community policing practices are not explicitly connected to the state (such as the *sungusungu* in Tanzania and the *policía comunitaria* in Mexico).

Policing is an inherently political function – associated as it is with enforcing rules, maintaining order and providing security, with the potential to deny liberties through curfew, arrest and other means (Baker, 2007: 1; Kyed and Albrecht, 2014: 2). As a result, studying policing can touch on highly sensitive areas that governments in particular are not always keen to lay open to external scrutiny. We faced this challenge particularly in the more authoritarian research settings. In these contexts, to get access to police and field sites it was necessary to obtain police and government approval for the research, as well

as, in one case, to have research sites approved and the final public text approved by the government. In the case of Sri Lanka, sensitivities, including around upcoming elections, meant it was not possible to publish the full findings. A shorter brief was produced instead, with the full report circulated to key stakeholders.

Such considerations impose difficult choices on the researcher: whether it is better to publish what is possible on policing in these contexts in order to address the dearth of research; or whether it is better not to write anything. This challenge is not unique to policing – although it may be particularly acute given government sensitivities around issues of security – but is a dilemma inherent in much political economy research, which is by its nature more politically sensitive. The approach we took was that it was better to undertake some research on policing where the opportunity presented itself, even if this was limited in scope owing to the constraints of the environment. Working only in contexts where we had complete independence from government or police would have meant missing case studies in some of the more authoritarian contexts – where there is a particularly limited literature on policing experiences, where police–community relations are often at their most dire and where research has the potential to open up important space for conversations about change.

These sensitivities also meant accessing 'community' views was not straightforward. Those we spoke with often represented particular views within communities – such as those formally associated with community policing initiatives. In addition, views shared within interviews are not necessarily to be treated as full accounts of people's perceptions of police. This was particularly a challenge in the more authoritarian settings, where people's ability to talk openly (and critically) about issues such as policing is curtailed (or at least perceived to be curtailed). This was a limitation of the methodologies used for this research. In addition, in order to obtain a more nuanced analysis of community views, more time would have been needed to speak with a wider range of community members and dig deeper into their views. This would also help avoid the risk of treating 'the community' as a monolithic entity.

Policing data is also difficult to work with – often developed on the basis of poor record-keeping and open to political interference. In Ethiopia, for instance, although we were able to obtain official crime rates at the State level, when tracing how these numbers emerged it was clear the potential for inaccuracies was rife. While some community police officers at post level kept records, others estimated numbers of crimes they had dealt with that month from memory. It is these inexact numbers that then are reported

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3   Two to three weeks of intensive fieldwork, combining semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with police, government officials, community members, donors, academics and civil society representatives, were undertaken in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka. In Timor-Leste, the case study drew on The Asia Foundation's extensive and ongoing work on community policing throughout the country. No fieldwork was undertaken for the Jamaica desk study, although phone interviews were conducted with police, donors, academics and civil society representatives.

up the policing hierarchy. Similar inconsistencies in data collection were evident in Sri Lanka. In addition, what reported crime rates can tell you is limited. Many of the police we interviewed saw declining reported crime as demonstrating the success of community policing. But of course increases in reported crime may in fact indicate improved trust between police and communities, with the latter more willing to report. As a result, separating out the data from the story behind them was not straightforward, and many questions remain. This highlights the importance of undertaking detailed qualitative work to supplement and give meaning to quantitative reporting, as well as longitudinal studies undertaken over longer time horizons.

These limitations are critically important in understanding what it is possible to learn through this research, but they are also the largely unavoidable result of conducting short-term research on sensitive topics such as policing. Longer-term, ethnographic research embedded within communities would allow for a more 'bottom-up', end user perspective of policing services – formal, informal and everything in between. Such research would be a useful complement to this project, in which only short-term fieldwork was possible. To help address some of these challenges, in the three case studies for which fieldwork was undertaken we worked alongside local researchers with long-term experience on issues of policing.

3 The breadth of community policing

A key challenge faced at the outset was what to include within the category of 'community policing' and what to exclude. There is a tendency among donors, governments and police services to treat community policing as involving purely the formal state police and its engagements with communities, treating informal policing structures separately. This relates to the difficulty many have had in acknowledging policing can occur without, or with little, involvement of formal policing organisations (Baker, 2007: 169). We found little conceptual reason to treat these as separate categories. Community policing is often defined as both a philosophy and an organisational strategy that allows the police and the community to work together to solve community problems of crime, disorder and safety (see, for instance, SEESAC, 2003: 2). Given the dominance of formal policing in the West and many more developed countries, community policing has often been understood as being limited to initiatives between the formal police and communities. Yet this adopts a particular understanding of policing that ignores the fact that in many parts of the world policing is undertaken by a more plural set of actors (Baker, 2009). Indeed, it has been estimated that 80-90% of disputes in the Global South are resolved through informal mechanisms (Albrecht and Kyed, 2011: 3). Given this reality, we see little reason to limit the concept of community policing to the formal police, particularly when such actors may not be the only,
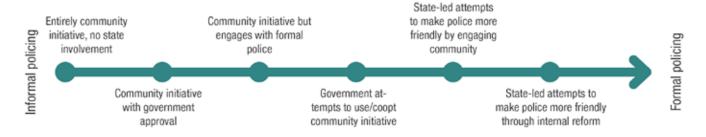
or even the primary, source of policing in a given context (Dinnen and McLeod, 2009).

Rather, we find community policing initiatives can be led by or involve communities (or parts of communities) themselves, by donors or by a range of policing providers, including the formal police but extending to chieftain police, neighbourhood watch groups, trade associations, private security companies and others (Lund, 2006). Understanding community policing in this breadth allows for more of an end user approach to policing, which takes as its starting point those who actually use policing services (Luckham and Kirk, 2012). This approach does not decide who is entitled to provide community policing, but leaves open the possibility that, in fact, multiple actors are providing it in different ways – that is, services aimed at solving community problems of crime, disorder and safety. Such an approach is in keeping with the longstanding literature on legal pluralism, recognising the importance of moving away from a strict allegiance to institutional forms and focusing more pragmatically on the functions a range of actors perform in dealing with problems of insecurity (see, for instance, Tamanaha et al., 2013). It is also 'a reflection of wider global changes: neoliberal policies of privatisation and state reregulation since the 1980s have supported a proliferation of security providers and a fragmentation of security governance away from the state' (Kyed and Albrecht, 2014: 4; see also Abrahamsen and Williams, 2009).

This approach opens up a range of community policing practices, and forms of community policing can thus be seen to exist on a spectrum, from those focused more on informal policing to those focused more on the formal state police (see Figure 1).

Using the spectrum laid out above, Figure 2 offers a number of country examples, giving a sense of the breadth of community policing practices (for more examples of community policing practices, see Denney and Jenkins, 2013). These examples range from donor-led programmes to establish formal community policing practices to state-initiated formal community policing to informal community policing initiated by communities themselves. While we recognise community policing can refer to both formal and informal policing providers given the empirical reality of policing, our own case studies have focused on more formal community policing practices. The findings in the remainder of the paper therefore speak more directly to the formal policing cases. Table 1 sets out some of the key similarities and differences between our four cases to give an overview of the spectrum of practices we examined. Across the case studies, and more broadly across the range of formal and informal community policing practices reviewed, we found a surprising consistency of activities. These include a combination of meetings between policing providers and communities; patrols undertaken by policing providers and communities; dispute resolution to resolve minor matters quickly at the local level; institutionalising

Figure 1: Spectrum of community policing

community policing as a philosophy of the formal state police; and establishing a dedicated unit within the formal state police with responsibility for community policing. Some of these activities are specific to the formal police (notably the latter two), but most can be – and are – undertaken by both formal and informal policing actors (as the country examples in Figure 2 show).

Yet, while the practices themselves are relatively similar, what diverges is the way community policing develops – who it is for, what purposes it serves and how it is understood within a given context. Our case studies found this trajectory of community policing was shaped by a number of contextual features that are critical to understanding how and why community policing develops in the manner it does in different country contexts, and the bounds of what might be possible in terms of reform.

4 Community policing does not happen in a vacuum

The mantra of the importance of context is well known in development. But this is not just true for development interventions needing to take account of it. It is also true for how community policing itself develops and plays out in a given society. For those looking to support community policing – be they police, governments or development partners – understanding the factors that will shape how community policing manifests is critical to being able to develop realistic expectations about what it will be likely to achieve and what it will not. In this sense, 'context' is not purely an observable thing that interventions sit outside of and must take into account. Rather, once programming is underway the programme itself is a part of the context and develops according to that context (Schomerus, 2014). It is thus a much more iterative process than it is often treated in standard development practice.

It is also important to recognise community policing often exists within the context of wider police reform, which in turn is often just one component of wider political reforms. All of these processes are interconnected and interdependent. It is likely impossible, for instance,

to improve accountability of the police within a wider political system characterised by corruption and political interference. And, even when not a part of wider police and political reforms, community policing is never devoid of politics, as is increasingly recognised by the 'political turn' within development discourse more broadly (see, for instance, Booth, 2012; Unsworth, 2002). This 'politics' is national in nature but also plays out within police services and at the local level. At the national level, the prevailing political settlement[4] structures how the formal police are used within society, the extent to which they are independent of politics and the nature of the laws they enforce. Politics at the local level is experienced through the ways in which power is divided within communities, whose values become community norms and who 'participates' and how. In addition to these levels, police services themselves are also political. The police do not exist outside of the national and local politics characterised above; rather, they are a constitutive part of it. As Kyed and Albrecht (2014: 2) note:

> *An omission in much of the literature on plural policing and security governance is a deeper understanding of the links between policing and politics. Politics and power structures are often approached as external to policing practices, as providing the national and global context for how security is governed.*

In addition, politics informs policing through the nature of institutional cultures (also informed by wider societal cultures), who gets recruited and promoted, notions of professionalism and how different communities are policed.

Recognising this deeply political character of policing, our case studies sought to uncover the contextual factors that appear to play an influential role in shaping experiences of community policing. We assumed the nature of policing and police–community relations were not merely the natural state of things but rather the outcome of particular histories and struggles that have shaped them in particular ways (and thus helps explain why they vary from place to place and over time). While the particular

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4   The political settlement refers to the agreement between elites about how power is organised and exercised, both formally and informally, in a society (DFID, 2010: 22; Ingram, 2014: 1-2).

Figure 2: The breadth of community policing – from formal to informal practices

Formal policing

DRC: Community policing was formally introduced as part of wider donor-supported police reforms in the early 2000s with the objective of making the police more accessible and responsive to the population. The concept is based on six principles: proximity, accessibility and availability of public services; partnership and consultation; prevention and victim support; resolving problems; accountability and transparency; and respect for human rights. The approach was piloted in five locations in four provinces in 2010. However, since 2011 it has been largely donor-driven, with a focus on police training, capacity-building activities and civil society coaching (Mayamba, 2013).

Jamaica has experimented with community policing since the 1990s as a means of building trust between communities and police in an attempt to grapple with high levels of violent crime. While the state has led on developing key policies and programmes within the Jamaica Constabulary Force, international donors have provided pilot programmes and funding. Adopted as a force-wide philosophy, community policing was rolled out in 2008; by 2011, 360 communities and more than 9,000 police were trained in its methods. In practice, it is operationalised by Community Security and Safety Branch (CSSB) officers who collaborate with local residents through 'proactive, practical problem-solving' (Chambers, 2014).

Ethiopia: The Amhara National Regional State police established community police officers at the local level from 2005 to meet regularly with elected community forums to discuss crime and safety in the community. Community police officers try to resolve disputes through these or refer them to elders or police (Denney, 2013).

Sri Lanka: Community policing has had the support of key individuals since independence but conflict has set back implementation. During the 2000s, structures were created to encourage adoption of community policing within the police: in 2007 Community Policing Units were established and in 2008 Civil Defence Committees (Civil Security Committees after the end of the war) were set up to provide a forum for citizens to share information with police. Training in community policing and Tamil language and bicycle patrolling have also been rolled out. These activities have been implemented to varying degrees with the support of government and police, while donors have provided funding and training. Yet these activities remain relatively isolated rather than force-wide, and implementation has been uneven (Chambers et al., 2014).

Timor-Leste: Community policing in Timor-Leste today is a hybrid model of indigenous and international models (Wassel, 2014). While community policing principles have struggled to take hold through donor leadership, in the past few years some progress has been made as donors take a more backseat role. Community policing is seen as both a philosophy and a strategy: current plans are to expand police officers into every suco (village) across the country, to liaise with customary authorities. However, confusion over what exactly the community policing philosophy entails and a failure to prioritise it in the police budget means it has an uncertain future (Valters et al., 2015).

Sierra Leone: Local Police Partnership Boards (LPPBs) have been established in police stations across the country with donor support. These police–community forums meet regularly to discuss security concerns in the community. Police attend, with local chiefs, women's leaders, youth leaders and other community representatives making up the rest of the members. The LPPBs build on recognition of the importance of long-standing customary dispute resolution channels in Sierra Leone, centred on chiefs. The presence and even dominance of the chief or chief's representatives on the LPPBs is significant in this regard (Albrecht et al., 2014).

Tanzania: The sungusungu emerged in 1982 as a community response to problems of cattle rustling. Communities elected local committees to conduct patrols and decide on punishments for those apprehended. Later sanctioned by the government, the sungusungu have been praised as 'arguably the most successful form of community policing in Eastern Africa' (Heald, 2009: 2), but have also been implicated in the systematic use of torture (Cross, 2013: 57).

Mexico: Communities in Guerrero state set up the policía comunitaria in 1995. This non-state community police force has more than 700 locally elected volunteers for a population of approximately 100,000. Initially, the policía comunitaria guarded rural roads and handed over suspected criminals to the state prosecutor, although their role was later expanded to undertaking community patrols and administering justice. Suspected criminals stand before a community assembly and respond to the case against them before the assembly votes on their guilt and punishment, usually combining community service with some nights spent in jail (Sierra, 2005). While this group stands out as a rare example of an indigenous mechanism that has scaled up and survived, it faces ongoing contestation with the state (Fox, 2007).

Informal policing

constellation of factors has varied across countries, they have included a number of similar elements, set out below. These factors demonstrate that community policing is not limitless in its potential – but rather that its potential is shaped by several contextual factors (including the manner in which power is organised and exercised in particular contexts) that bound what is possible.

4.1 Process of state formation and political structure

The manner in which the state itself has developed can play an important role in how policing and its interface with communities take shape. In our case study countries, this has included histories of colonialism and occupation, through which policing was structured to enforce elite rule to protect the regime rather than to serve citizen needs. For example, in Timor-Leste, both Portuguese colonial rule from 1702 to 1975 and Indonesian occupation from 1975 to 1999 left the newly independent country in 2002 with 300 years of a policing culture focused on protecting the regime and not citizens. This has shaped community policing specifically, with Timorese police understanding it as linked to the Indonesia model of village policing known as *Bimpolda* (*Bimbingan Polisi Desa*), which centred on increasing policing presence at the local level to collect intelligence (Valters et al., 2015). Such legacies are not easily undone, and building an alternative vision of policing comes up against long-held ideas about what police professionalism, effectiveness, culture and morale centre on (Hills, 2000).

In the case of Ethiopia – the only case study country not colonised – policing was shaped instead by centuries of imperial rule, decades of dictatorship and the violent contestation through which the modern state was forged (virtually every political transition in Ethiopia has been violent) (Denney, 2013). This has also tended towards a police oriented towards protecting the incumbent regime and with a tolerance for violent tactics. This was apparent in the police response to political protests following the 2005 elections, in which at least 193 people were killed and 20,000 people arrested (ICG, 2012: 4). Similarly, in Jamaica policing has been shaped by a continuation of paramilitary styles of policing, which emerged from experiences of slavery and colonialism and were further shaped by a post-independence political culture of patronage intertwined with the drug trade (Harriott, 2009). In short, a state's process of formation can have important implications for how policing is perceived as a function within society, and, although change is certainly possible, these histories have a strong hold on particularly those institutions charged with protecting the state (and, ideally, its citizens) from the threat of violence.

Often connected to how a state comes into being is its political structure, its ideology and the nature of the political settlement. Federal political systems, for instance, tend to have more decentralised policing structures, at least on paper. This is apparent in federalist Ethiopia, where each Regional State has its own police service, although in practice it is widely acknowledged that the Ethiopian Federal Police hold significantly more power. The US may

Table 1: Key features of the case studies

	Donor involvement	Community engagement	Funding	Activities
Ethiopia	Limited	High	Community and government (for salaries)	Community police officers at local level Community patrols Community and community–police dispute resolution committees
Jamaica	High	Medium	Donors, some government	Dedicated community police officers National police youth clubs Neighbourhood watch schemes Community meetings and events
Sri Lanka	High	High	Donors, some government	Police–community forums Bicycle patrols Mobile police units Police complaints box Community works days
Timor-Leste	High	Medium	Donors and government	Police–community forums Security volunteers Village police officers

be the most pertinent example of a highly decentralised policing structure, where the hundreds of State police departments and the federal police service can have distinct cultures and reputations, enforcing federal and state-specific laws across its 52 jurisdictions (Roché, 2011: 39-40). The institutional histories of how security, defence and keeping order evolve also matter for the structures and culture of policing that emerge – with varying degrees of militarisation apparent in different contexts that have implications for community policing.

The degree of centralisation of political structures can also have an important influence on the nature of policing – with more centralised systems, such as in Sri Lanka, resulting in a strong policing hierarchy with little room for manoeuvre at lower levels (Fernando, 2009). Alternatively, more decentralised political systems can result in multiple political pressures emerging from different layers of government; these can also influence the shape of policing, as we see in Ethiopia, where both political and police State-level authorities can play an important role in directing policing priorities (Denney, 2013). Political ideology can also play a role – for instance with Ethiopia's socialist roots leading to an emphasis on community participation in policing through committees, information-sharing and militia (ibid.).[5] In the more authoritarian political settings, especially Ethiopia, but also, to a lesser extent, Sri Lanka, community policing has shown its more sinister potential for providing a politicised police service with effective surveillance mechanisms. This highlights the importance of understanding the impact of these contextual features not just for better donor programming but also in order to do no harm.

4.2 Experience of insecurity and post-conflict reforms

Given that community policing support is often part of a wider package of post-conflict reforms supported by the international community, conflict or other forms of insecurity are an important feature of the context for many initiatives. Community-led community policing initiatives may also be more prevalent following conflict, given that the state may have been less focused on service delivery or unable/unwilling to provide services to all parts of the population during conflict (Ellison and Pino, 2012). Additionally, conflict can have a generative effect in stimulating governance innovations – Somaliland may be the best example – including around policing (World Bank, 2011). Yet, despite this close relationship between insecurity and community policing, there is often insufficient engagement by those supporting community policing with the ways in which insecurity has affected the nature of policing and citizens' experiences of it. Experiences of insecurity not only have long-term psychosocial effects on the population but also have long-term effects on how policing providers (both formal and informal) understand

and are equipped to undertake their role and are viewed by different groups in the local population.

This has been perhaps most apparent in Sri Lanka, which has had a series of conflicts since the 1970s, the most significant of which was the conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), lasting 26 years. The conflict years saw huge police recruitment drives to combat the LTTE threat, leading to an overall police service size of 84,000, with 68% recruited during the conflict – primarily from Sinhalese communities (Chambers et al., 2014: 1). Training for recruits during this time was shortened to allow for quick mobilisation, meaning many police were less prepared for their roles. With the end of the conflict in 2009, the majority of police had thus never experienced peacetime policing, trained as they had been to respond to a terrorist threat emerging from the population they were to be policing (ibid.). This has profoundly affected how policing is conducted in Sri Lanka and has long-running repercussions for police–community relations, particularly in the north of the country, where the Tamil community is largely based, with low levels of trust and high levels of fear of the police.

Insecurity does not always take the form of conflict, however. In Jamaica, extremely high rates of violent crime have influenced policing and shaped police–community relations by justifying harsh policing tactics in the eyes of the police as well as many community members. Between 2000 and 2009, the police were responsible for 1,748 deaths (UNDP, 2012: 134), with one source indicating that the Jamaican Constabulary Force is responsible for 10% of all homicides in the country (Uildriks, 2009: 100). Such high levels of police brutality have led to a situation in which citizens see both police and local gangs as sources of insecurity (Chambers, 2014: 7). Yet there is also a degree of social tolerance for 'undemocratic' policing methods, precisely to deal with the high levels of violence that confront Jamaican society (Harriott, 2009: 126). Such a low starting point in police–community relations can, however, also mean even modest progress is viewed as significant. In Ethiopia, older community members interviewed were, largely, surprisingly positive about how police treated them (although all noted that some corruption and excessive use of force continued). When probed on this, community members explained that, while the police still have some way to go in becoming more people-friendly, the current situation represents a vast improvement on policing under the Derg regime, in which people genuinely feared for their lives when in the presence of police (Denney, 2013). Experiences of insecurity thus also influence people's expectations of policing in important ways.

Insecurity can (in some cases) be a trigger for international intervention, which plays a role in shaping community policing (though perhaps less than we might

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5   Ethiopian militia are armed community members who are authorised by the government to maintain order by using checkpoints, reprimanding suspected criminals and bringing them to the police.

expect). In Timor-Leste, following both post-referendum violence in 1999 and a political-military crisis in 2006, the international community intervened, investing significant resources in training the Timorese police and supporting the implementation of community policing (Wassel, 2014). This undoubtedly had at least a short-term impact on some decisions regarding the direction of policing and the shape it would take. However, as the Timor-Leste case study highlights, the promotion of multiple models of community policing by different donors – the UN, Australia and New Zealand – also created confusion within the Timorese police, delaying the development of a Timorese approach to formal community policing, which really emerged only when donor policing support waned (Wassel, 2014: 13-15; 27). This is not to discount the fact that the Timorese undoubtedly borrowed from the experiences donors shared with them in developing their own community policing approach, but this is just one influence among many others and there is often a tendency to overstate the role international actors can play in shaping the nature of policing (Valters et al., 2015).

4.3 Social cleavages and inequalities

It is, of course, unsurprising that one's experience of policing depends on one's own position within society. Much has been written, for instance, about the different experience young black men in the UK and the US face in dealing with the police compared with other community members (Burnett, 2012; Weitzer and Tuch, 2005). Structures of power within communities can be based on a number of social cleavages and inequalities (including socioeconomic, regional, ethnic, religious, caste and gender divides) and influence both one's experience of insecurity (with different social groups facing different threats and security needs), as well as one's relations with the police and the nature of policing itself. In Sri Lanka, for instance, ethnic divides between Sinhalese and Tamil communities not only have shaped experiences of policing – with Tamils generally showing less confidence in the police, in part owing to the conduct of policing in the north during the civil war – but also have permeated the structure of the police itself. Tamils constitute less than 0.5% of the overwhelmingly Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan Police Service, despite making up approximately 11% of the population (Chambers et al., 2014: 3; Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2012). This clearly has implications for how Tamils experience policing compared with Sinhalese.

Other layers of inequality can further complicate this. For instance, it is reported that some Tamils in fact prefer Sinhalese police officers to Tamil officers, because Tamil officers tend to come from lower castes, and higher caste Tamils are therefore not comfortable dealing with them (Chambers et al., 2014: 3; 10).

In a similar way, in many contexts community members often do not view female police as being as experienced or legitimate as their male counterparts, encouraging their

siloisation into desk-based and administrative positions or into units dealing solely with 'female' or 'family' issues (Salahub, 2011). Such inequalities can in fact structure the composition of the police itself, in addition to shaping different groups' relationships with the police. That is, the police – as with any other state institution – tend to mirror wider power balances within society, resulting in security always being 'for' some parts of the community more than others. This is also true of informal policing providers. For community policing initiatives, such inequalities are important considerations in determining who 'the community' is – especially where there are committees made up of local people, which can tend to favour particular groups over others – as well as how policing itself is structured by and feeds cleavages within society.

4.4 Cultures of dispute resolution

Connected to the discussion in Section 3 on the different forms of community policing, the final contextual feature we found to be influential in shaping community policing was cultures of dispute resolution. These are the wider constellation of 'policing' providers (in the broad sense of those who enforce rules or norms with threat of sanction). In Ethiopia and Timor-Leste, these were customary structures of elders and chiefs who have been arbitrators of disputes within communities for generations. To varying degrees, community policing structures borrow legitimacy from these mechanisms – incorporating elders (in Ethiopia) and *suco* (village) chiefs (in Timor-Leste) into the avenues through which community police officers can resolve disputes. These need not always be customary structures, however. In Sri Lanka, Community Mediation Boards, set up in the 1980s, are a widely used forum for resolving disputes, and some community policing committees there spoke of their roles being informed by this culture of mediation. Such existing dispute resolution mechanisms provide a language or point of reference for community members and police officers alike; often, getting existing authorities on board with community policing initiatives is important to the latter's credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Indeed, donor language would cast this approach as 'building on existing local capacity' and, to the extent it does not weaken or delegitimise the existing practice, it may be acceptable.

Yet there is a possibility that community policing mechanisms, especially where they are not community-led initiatives, end up essentially being co-opted by the existing dispute resolution mechanism rather than the other way around. This is apparent in Sierra Leone, where attempts by LPPBs to involve chiefs have led, in some cases, to the chiefs essentially running the LPPBs as one part of their wider dispute resolution functions (Albrecht et al., 2014). In other cases, an antagonistic relationship might exist between the formal police and alternative policing providers, such as vigilantes or gangs, structuring state-led community policing initiatives in terms of what they are

not as much as what they are. In Jamaica, the inability of the state security apparatus to provide security and order meant that, in many cases, community residents had reverted to informal structures such as gangs, so reliance on informal security structures had become engrained in local cultures of protection. The influence of these existing dispute resolution mechanisms in terms of whom community policing initiatives draw on (and whom they do not), how they fit within the constellation of other mechanisms and how they understand dispute resolution to happen is critically important. This requires an awareness of the wider universe of policing providers, how people use them and the relationships between the providers themselves.

Community policing practices will not always resolve disputes through friendly mediation practices, and human rights concerns are legitimate in working with both formal and informal policing providers. For instance, the *sungusungu* in Tanzania, while initially established in the 1980s by communities to protect themselves against cattle raiding, had by the 1990s morphed into a much more violent community policing mechanism, beating and torturing suspected cattle raiders (Cross, 2013: 20). A similar trajectory can be seen with regard to the Bakassi Boys in Nigeria (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2004). In some cases, communities view such violent tactics as a legitimate way to resolve disputes or crimes, and this will result in a different kind of community policing than might otherwise have developed. This is apparent also in Jamaica, where police brutality remains markedly high, yet some within the community also see heavy-handed policing tactics as legitimate and necessary to curb high levels of violent crime, and thus such tactics have become a part of community policing (Chambers, 2014: 22).

This highlights a misconception embedded within much donor support to community policing initiatives – that community policing is an inherently human rights-friendly and non-violent approach to dealing with local security issues. In practice, community policing mechanisms are informed by wider community values and understandings about what constitutes a crime and what is acceptable punishment for a crime or dispute, and is likely to only be as non-violent as the community's wider approach to crime and dispute resolution, which is itself informed by historical experiences of insecurity and views of justice (see, for instance, Ruteere and Pommerolle, 2003). This is perhaps most pertinent in relation to domestic violence – a common crime that often neither the formal nor the informal police treat as 'criminal' owing to wider societal norms about the acceptability of such behaviour.

This list of features is not, of course, exhaustive, and there are undoubtedly other factors not covered here that play a role in shaping the nature of policing and police–community relations. They are, however, features that were recurrent across our case studies in helping understand how community policing developed in the way it did

and what community policing initiatives were capable of achieving. For this reason, they emerge as important areas of analysis in designing any community policing programme or supporting any community-led community policing initiative, in order to ensure they are tailored to what is realistically achievable within the given context. This will help address the tendency of community policing to ascribe overly ambitious and largely similar goals across diverse contexts, with unsurprisingly poor results, as set out in the following section.

5 Contrasting multiple objectives with limited effects

A wide range of objectives are attributed to community policing (see Call, 2002; Denney and Jenkins, 2013; Ellison and Pino, 2012). This was borne out in the case studies, where we found that communities, police, governments and donors often sought to achieve different goals through community policing practices. These include:

- Reducing crime;
- Increasing police accountability;
- Improving intelligence collection;
- Strengthening state–society relations; and
- Providing communities with greater responsibility for their security.

While there was often agreement that a number of these objectives were involved (with donors the most divergent, attributing more aspirational goals to community policing than other actors), the emphasis on them varied. Table 2 highlights the variety of (in cases overlapping) objectives different actors involved ascribed to community policing (of course this will vary in some cases, but it was largely consistent across the case studies – with government/policing views at times difficult to distinguish). These categories of objectives are undoubtedly not complete. The UK Stabilisation Unit (2014: 13-15) alone notes five priorities for its international police support: conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery, development, national security, rule of law and preventing violence against women and girls. The objectives in Table 2 are those that interviewees and policy documents consistently indicated as immediate goals for community policing, but a wider selection of cases would no doubt have yielded an even wider array of objectives.

A key question we have faced is whether these differing objectives matter. They are all, clearly, interested in improving community safety – the divergences might be more about how different actors believe this end is achieved. On the one hand, a key strength of community policing may lie in its ability to bring together a number of actors who do not always see eye-to-eye on safety and security issues by providing a broad enough church for all involved to feel their objectives are included. This

Table 2: Objectives of community policing programmes according to different actors

	Improved police–community relations	Reduced crime	Better intelligence collection	Increased police accountability	Communities take greater responsibility for security	Strengthened state–society relations
Communities	•	•		•	•	
Police	•	•	•			
Government	•	•	•			
Donors				•		•

can allow for important consensus in order to achieve some level of engagement between police, government, communities (especially where they are divided) and donors. On the other hand, if the concept of 'community policing' papers over multiple purposes without seeking to resolve these, there is a danger that in practice each of the actors will pursue their own objectives and pull in different directions, potentially undermining improved police–community relations. Thus, while allowing for multiple objectives might help create a convenient consensus and allow uneasy bedfellows to work together, it cannot get around the fact that those involved are ultimately seeking different ends and are measuring success using different barometers.

Interestingly, our case studies found little support for community policing achieving some of these objectives – such as increased police accountability, improved state–society relations and even crime reduction in some cases (see Table 3). It is important to reiterate that the four case studies examined focused largely on state- and donor-led community policing initiatives. While they drew on customary mechanisms and involved communities to varying extents, none of the cases was of a purely community-initiated policing practice. The results below thus do not necessarily apply for community-initiated practices, and additional research would be needed to explore their effects. Understanding what state- and donor-led community policing *has* been somewhat more successful at achieving might help refine the myriad purposes all involved ascribed to it, and thus provide more clarity on where its focus might most usefully lie.

5.1 Improved police–community relations

The best results of community policing we observed in our case study locations were in relation to improved police–community relations. The majority of police and community members spoke about greater interaction and more trust, highlighting how police officers were more friendly, accessible and helpful. Most community members

interviewed across the case study countries (both men and women)[6] also talked about no longer fearing the police as they have in the past. These improved relations are not insignificant, particularly in contexts where the police were previously viewed as a source of insecurity rather than protection. In Timor-Leste, for instance, a perception survey by The Asia Foundation (2014) found that, in 2013, 94% of general public respondents and 92% of community leader respondents believed the relationship between the police and their communities was good. This marked a substantial improvement on 2008, when only 48% of the general public and 78% of community leaders felt the same way (The Asia Foundation, 2008). Of course, it is difficult to attribute such positive changes to community policing specifically, although interviews with residents in areas where community policing strategies are being piloted support the survey findings, with community members and leaders noting that community policing has led to improved policing response since its introduction (Wassel, 2014: 22).

In particular, communities referred to those activities they felt made the police seem closer to them and their needs – like the community police officers in Ethiopia and Timor-Leste and the community police forums and bicycle patrolling in Sri Lanka. These activities changed the ways people interacted with (at least some) police and were most frequently mentioned by community members as being responsible for improved relations. This is in contrast with higher-level changes – like making community policing the overarching philosophy of the police service, or training – which were not seen to translate as clearly into behavioural change.

These reported improved relations, however, were largely talked about in terms of local police officers – not the police more broadly. In all our case study countries, community policing is largely taken forward by particular officers at the local level. Importantly, improved perceptions of local police officer(s) do not appear to mean communities see the police service, more broadly, as having improved. Rather, perceptions of the police service are built on impressions

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6 In Sri Lanka fewer women were interviewed, as they generally make up a smaller proportion of the Civil Security Committees that act as police–community forums. This is, in itself, telling about societal views of women's role in safety and security issues.

Table 3: Status of objectives of community policing in case study countries

Countries	Objectives (available evidence suggests met; partly met; not met)
Ethiopia	Improved police–community relations at local level Improved intelligence collection Communities feel more responsible for security Reduced crime Improved police accountability Strengthened state–society relations
Jamaica	Some improved police–community relations in some communities* Improved intelligence collection Reduced crime Improved relations between community members Improved police accountability Strengthened state–society relations
Timor-Leste	Improved police–community relations at the local level Communities feel more responsible for security** Reduced crime Improved police accountability Strengthened state–society relations
Sri Lanka	Improved police-community relations at local level Communities feel more responsible for security Reduced crime Improved police accountability Strengthened state–society relations

Notes: It is important to note that all these statuses are tentative given the short timeframes in which community policing has been in place in these countries. In addition, it is difficult to determine to what extent the outcomes can be attributed to community policing specifically, as discussed in Section 5.

* Although police–community relations in Jamaica have improved in some communities, this has not occurred everywhere and remains particularly problematic in high-crime neighbourhoods. In addition, 'improvement' needs to be understood against the very low starting point from which relations began. While we note here that this has been a positive outcome, it is one that remains heavily caveated.

** Both of these more positive outcomes are heavily caveated by the very short timeframe within which community policing has been implemented in Timor-Leste. In addition, there has been a lack of rigorous monitoring to determine whether these improvements are attributable to community policing specifically, although interview data suggest they may be (Wassel, 2014: 14-16; 22).

of all units of the police – of which community policing units tend to be just one small part. The reputations of other police units – especially paramilitary units, as in Jamaica – tend to overshadow the improvements communities might see from their local officers involved in community policing duties. For example, while some local communities in Jamaica seem to have appreciated the more citizen-friendly approach of community police officers to law enforcement, this has not necessarily extended to other units of the national-level police. Indeed, views of the police as an institution writ large continue to be poor, with a 2010 opinion survey finding the police ranked last in terms of public trust out of 11 public institutions (UNDP, 2012: 158). Thus, while community policing can promote better relations at the point of service delivery, it does not necessarily lead to improved impressions of the police service within society more broadly.

If one of the underlying objectives of community policing is to bring about broader change in the culture or behaviour of the police service, with the intention that this will improve public confidence in the institution of the police, our case studies suggest this is not being achieved. The common approach of establishing a single unit in the wider service with responsibility for community policing can help improve relations between communities and their local police officers. However, as these units tend to be isolated from wider policing functions, achieving broader cultural or behavioural change in the police remains elusive. The preferred approach, first articulated by Robert Peel in 1829, is to make community policing the overarching philosophy of the police, so every officer is, in essence, a community police officer. This clearly places the focus more centrally on changing the culture of the police, but it risks having no particular 'owner' to lead its implementation. It can thus become more rhetoric than reality.

These trade-offs were apparent in our case studies. In all four countries, community policing has been designated the responsibility of particular units of the police, with the effect that, while there have been some improvements in police–community relations in the places they work, the overall public perception of the police as an institution is not necessarily changing. In addition, although in Jamaica and Timor-Leste community policing has been enshrined as the overarching philosophy of the police, both have struggled to translate this into tangible practices beyond the existence of designated community police officers. There is, therefore, reason to assume community policing can lead to improved relations between police and communities but that these might be limited to the local level rather than constituting a transformation in societal views of the police as a whole. This is not insignificant, especially in the context of deeply divided communities that often characterises conflict-affected states, but it does highlight the need for a more modest and pragmatic reflection on what community policing is able to achieve.

It also suggests that, given the potential pitfalls of both approaches (adopting community policing as a force-wide philosophy or making it the mandate of a particular unit), perhaps the emphasis should be less on the particular form community policing takes and more on what functions can be achieved in particular places – which will of course vary from place to place depending on what objectives are suitable in that context. Recent literature on institutional reform calls for a greater focus on the outcomes of a public service rather than the form of the institutions delivering them (Andrews, 2012); to some extent, some functions of community policing (such as improved police–community relations and communities taking greater responsibility for their security) have been achieved in our case study countries, despite diverse and imperfect forms.

5.2 Strengthened state–society relations and improved police accountability

This raises serious doubts about the ability of community policing to contribute to strengthened state–society relations – an objective donors and civil society frequent cite in support of community policing. If, as above, improvements in relations happen at the local level between communities and their local officers, but not between communities and the police institution writ large, then it would appear citizens are not associating the improved service they are receiving with the state but rather with individuals. Of course, building state–society relations, particularly in post-conflict contexts, is a long-term endeavour, and it is possible that more longitudinal analysis would reveal community policing initiatives to be more successful in this regard. However, the inability of community policing to influence parts of the police beyond the dedicated unit does not seem promising. Moreover, in contexts where community policing has been used to overcome poor relations between the police and the public over the longer term, such as in South Africa, it is still not clear that improved state–society relations result. The experience of community policing in South Africa has largely been deemed a failure, perceived as an 'add-on' function to the other responsibilities of the police (Pelser, 2000: 117), failing to improve police accountability (Brogden and Nijhar, 2005) and ultimately making people reluctant to work with the police, preferring forms of self-policing instead (Minaar, 2009).

Part of the problem with using community policing to strengthen state–society relations is that it assumes 'state' and 'society' are homogenous entities and unitary actors rather than being complex, multifaceted and often contested. It may be the case that community policing is contributing to improvements between and within *some parts* of the state and *some parts* of society, while not contributing to others. In Jamaica, one of the achievements of community policing has been its capacity to reduce animosity *between* members of different urban communities, improving relations between community

members themselves. In a context where communities have been divided, enabling them to address their own internal collective action problems can be seen as a significant improvement. Indeed, this may be necessary before groups (communities, providers of public services and the state) can engage in problem-solving between them (Booth, 2012; Wild and Wales, 2015). Treating the state and society in this more disaggregated way and viewing problem-solving as a multi-stakeholder process may provide donors with a more nuanced approach to influencing relationships and understanding processes of change.

Connected to the challenge of improving state–society relations is the lack of evidence our case studies found for any change in police accountability. In Timor-Leste, a vetting process for recruits was introduced as part of wider police reforms to weed out those facing serious disciplinary issues following the 2006 political-military crisis, but is largely perceived to have been ineffective (ICG, 2010: 5). We would posit that, in order for community policing to lead to strengthened state–society relations, communities would need to see policing actors being more accountable to a credible institution (be it formal or informal) for their behaviour. While community members may be pleased to see individual police officers behaving in a friendlier manner, if this is not accompanied by seeing repercussions for those officers who continue to use excessive force, or accept bribes, then it is not likely that the overall perception of the police as an institution will change. Of course, opening up police accountability structures is a highly sensitive endeavour and not an easy starting point, particularly for external actors such as donors. It is fundamentally about behaviour and institutional change, which is a long-term endeavour.

The ability of community policing to improve citizens' view of the police as an institution will also depend on perceived political influence on local policing strategies. In Ethiopia, Jamaica and Sri Lanka, to varying degrees, political interference in policing was reported as a key factor limiting police effectiveness. In such contexts, it is difficult to see how community policing strategies can realistically improve citizens' perceptions of the state. However, without engaging in issues such as police standards and accountability, it is unlikely that the wider transformation of policing cultures necessary to improve state–society relations will result. Of course, as noted above, accountability must be to an institution citizens themselves perceive to be legitimate. If accountability is to state structures, for example, that communities *also* see as illegitimate this provides little reassurance. This highlights how such reforms to policing structures are also intimately connected to wider political reforms, and the two must go hand in hand.

5.3 Reduced crime and improved intelligence collection

All the police we spoke with in the case study countries claimed community policing was reducing crime. Yet levels of crime are difficult to measure, and attribution

of changes to community policing specifically hard to prove. In most cases, data showing reductions in crime were unreliable. As set out in Section 2, in Ethiopia official crime rates were based on unreliable data collection at the station level, making it difficult to determine whether numbers were genuine. In Sri Lanka, crime statistics were available only at the district level, so that it was impossible to know whether crime had improved or not at the station level, and thus to compare sites where community policing practices were being piloted and those where they were not to determine impact. In some cases, the data actually pointed to higher levels of crime. Reported crime reduction in Jamaica was difficult to attribute to community policing, given the multiple other crime prevention strategies being deployed at the same time, as well as the complex social causes of crime (Chambers, 2014).

It is also unclear what the data in fact tell us. Decreases in reported crime, which the police took to be a positive sign, as correlating with a reduction in levels of crime, may in fact suggest fewer people are reporting crime to the police. This could owe to deteriorating levels of trust and confidence in the police, a range of access issues or crimes being solved elsewhere (for instance through customary dispute resolution mechanisms). Whatever the case, it is clear that data on crime reporting alone are insufficient to demonstrate a reduction (or otherwise) in crime. Further analysis is needed to determine community policing's impact. However, while official data may not be able to give a clear picture of whether crime has decreased or increased, perception surveys can provide some indication of whether people *feel* safer and more secure and whether crime is more or less frequent. For example, in Timor-Leste in 2013, 73% of the general population felt their security had improved from the previous year and interviewees in areas where community policing is being piloted reported reductions in crime (The Asia Foundation, 2014: 25; Wassel, 2014: 22).

Increasingly, however, the very assumption that community policing can reduce crime is being questioned (Ellison and Pino, 2012). Such an assumption understands the causes of crime in a particular way. It suggests crime is caused by dynamics the community has information about, which, when shared with the police, will allow for crime prevention through deterrence. This explains the strong emphasis on the role of intelligence collection in much community policing work, at least from the perspective of police. In all our country case studies, police talked about community policing as a strategy to improve relations with communities in order to obtain better intelligence from them to help deter crime. While this may make sense for some crimes, it does not sufficiently appreciate the social causes of crime that community policing is not likely to help address through intelligence collection. If we accept that crime is a social phenomenon, then it follows that crime reduction is possible only by also engaging with the many social determinants of crime – such as inequality and unemployment – in addition to traditional policing work (Garland, 2001). This begins to look quite different to the community policing programmes donors often support, which have a more limited – and overwhelmingly policing – focus. As a UK Stabilisation Unit report on policing (2014: 9) notes, 'Police are never the sole answer to problems of security and injustice'. In order to more effectively reduce crime, therefore, community policing initiatives need to go beyond improved intelligence collection from communities to engage in the wider social work that characterises community policing in many donor countries.

5.4 Communities taking greater responsibility for their security

Finally, while it is difficult to measure the extent to which community policing is enabling communities to take greater responsibility for their own security, the case studies certainly found this sentiment in communities themselves. In Ethiopia and Sri Lanka especially, those involved in community policing forums felt these provided them with the space and legitimacy to articulate the safety priorities in their communities, as well as to discuss with others, including police and customary leaders, who best to resolve them. This is an important result and suggests some degree of community empowerment (although this might not always be new, as discussed below). However, it must also be noted that perceptions of what constitutes security within a community may differ from those of international donors. For example, in Sri Lanka, social and moral concerns, as well as crime, were considered elements that threatened levels of community security.

Where community policing is more community-led, this sense of responsibility for security can extend even further than just those involved in community policing forums. For instance, while in Sri Lanka this sense of greater responsibility was articulated by those involved in the Civil Security Committees, in Ethiopia it extended more widely within the community – in part because the Ethiopian community policing system involves a much larger number of community members through various layers of committees,[7] but also because it is a community initiative almost as much as it is a police initiative (although, in the Ethiopian political context, there are also questions about the extent to which this community participation is coerced). As a result, we found most people in Amhara Regional State in Ethiopia would see one part of the community policing structure (the community police officers, or, more commonly, the various community committees or the elders) as the first point of call for a dispute or crime. This essentially enables the community to deal with such security issues without the involvement of the formal police, and, in the first instance, without the involvement of the community police officer (who is called only when the community groups are unable to resolve the matter).

There are, of course, questions about the extent to which such diversion from the formal police is new. In

contexts such as Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste, community policing structures build on already existing and highly popular customary institutions that to a large extent have already played this kind of role. However, community policing does appear in these cases to be providing a mechanism to coordinate some customary and informal dispute resolution practices with more formal policing structures. In some cases, these more formal structures may be largely co-opted by the informal (see, for instance, Albrecht et al., 2014). But providing the community policing structures enable communities to feel more empowered in articulating their own security needs – and 'communities' is understood inclusively to ensure certain groups interests are not used to dominate others – then this result seems positive.

5.5 What does this tell us about the track record of community policing?

There is thus a mixed record of success of the various objectives that are attributed to community policing. Community policing does appear capable of yielding some important results in relation to improved police–community relations and empowering communities (or parts of them) to take greater responsibility for their security, and what they perceive as threats to it. Yet there is less support for the notion that community policing, in the forms we examined in the case studies, contributes to strengthening state–society relations or improving police accountability. While such objectives are likely to be achieved only in the long term, we did not find evidence in the case studies, or in the wider literature, to suggest this was taking place. However, to the extent that community policing is increasing capacity for collective action at the local level, this may contribute to the creation of a more enabling environment in which this could take place in future. As to whether community policing reduces crime, there are insufficient data to confirm this or to attribute such reductions to community policing specifically. It seems unlikely, however, given the complex social causes of crime, that a response focusing overwhelmingly on policing can achieve such reductions. Moreover, where this is an objective of community policing, other strategies would need to be deployed alongside formal policing functions in order to achieve it.

Contrasting the effects of community policing with the objectives attributed to it across our case studies, a recurring theme is the over-ambition with which community policing is treated, as well as the diversity of objectives of the different actors involved. While there are some positive signs for improvements in police–community relations, and some degree of support for communities taking greater responsibility for their security, in no cases

did we find all expectations met. More broadly, despite some positive effects, community policing has failed to fundamentally alter the dominant practice of policing. Jamaican policing is still dominated by paramilitary styles of policing; Ethiopian policing is still associated with the surveillance function that characterises much of the security sector there; and rights groups have continued to criticise parts of the Sri Lankan police for involvement in the disappearances of political activists. There are, of course, few if any programmes or approaches that can solve all these issues in one fell swoop. Again, it is important that community policing interventions be conceived of as one part of a much wider political reform process. The key point is that there need to be high levels of modesty and specificity about what community policing is likely able to achieve. This is all the more so in post-conflict and strong state contexts. Given that 'there is scant evidence even from the developed world that community policing has done any of these things' (Ellison and Pino, 2012: 72), there appears little basis for assuming it can be more successful in arguably more complex settings.

Yet, while community policing might not stack up against all of the substantial demands placed on it, this speaks more to the diverse and at times overambitious nature of the demands rather than to the value of community policing. In the case of donors, some of their expectations of community policing are based on flawed assumptions about how change (in this case improved police accountability and strengthened state–society relations) happens. Increasing recognition of the role of donors as facilitators of locally driven change suggests focusing on 'good enough' reforms that solve a particular problem (like poor police–community relations or intra-community relations) is more realistic and more likely to deliver results than conventional approaches that focus on optimal reforms to broad areas (like state–society relations) (Booth and Unsworth, 2014). As we know, policing reform is one of the most politically sensitive areas donors can engage in – centred on altering the way the claimed monopoly on the legitimate use of force is exercised and how the rules of society are enforced. Donors are never going to be the main influence on these issues (Hills, 2010). Rather, they can play a role on the sidelines supporting local reformers in addressing specific problems. These solutions to these problems will be shaped by the particular contextual features that characterise the country, as Section 3 of this paper set out. It is these local political dynamics that shape the realm of the possible for community policing and that donors need to understand in order to determine what problems are realistically solvable.

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7   Community policing in Ethiopia starts with the family police (with a community policing representative from each household) and extends to the 'Block' Conflict Resolving Committee (for approximately 30-50 households), the Advisory Council (at the community level) and higher woreda, zone and regional Advisory Councils (see Denney, 2013: 11).

6 Operational challenges

Across our case studies, we also found a number of challenges faced by community policing – none of which appeared to be being actively dealt with. Here, we deal with four of these challenges. If community policing is to have a future, these will need to be tackled.

First, contrary to much of the literature on community policing, which suggests it can be a citizen-led effort to contribute to police reform, in none of our case studies was community policing demand-led. Rather, in each case study, the police or development partners had introduced formal community policing. Of course, this owes in part to our selection of cases: had we looked at more informal policing mechanisms, such as the *policía comunitaria* in Mexico or the *sungusungu* in Tanzania, for instance, this factor would likely have been more apparent. Nonetheless, it is striking that, in relation to improving the behaviour and accountability of the formal police, community policing programmes have not emerged as a result of citizen demand. This is an important finding for those looking to support community policing initiatives. Often, development practitioners assume the presence of demand, or a willingness to act on demand, that is not present and not an accurate or complete picture of the nature of governance problems more broadly (Booth, 2012: 8). One way to get around this may be to shift community policing thinking away from the good governance agenda with which it is often bundled, towards thinking more broadly about how communities and their variety of policing providers can better address local safety and security issues.

Second, the community policing initiatives examined in our case studies were all weakly connected – if they were connected at all – to the wider justice sector. This creates problems, for instance, if more criminals are (apparently) being apprehended and yet major court delays lead to high levels of pre-trial detention. Or, as community members in Ethiopia recounted, because the judiciary is perceived as extremely corrupt and people know the cases will go nowhere, they do not see the point in reporting crimes to the police, even though they trust the police more than in the past. If community policing initiatives are to effectively provide people with quality safety and security, people need to be assured their complaints will achieve justice – whether through formal or informal systems. As a result, community policing cannot focus on the police alone, but must engage also with the wider justice sector – be that the formal courts or informal dispute resolution processes, where these are more widely used.

Third, all of the community policing initiatives we examined were heavily under-financed or donor-dependent. This speaks to a broader problem of state commitment to community policing: unless it is genuinely seen as central to governments' own plans, it is unlikely to receive significant funding (Hills, 2010). And as long as donors are seen to be willing to finance it, community policing is unlikely to make it onto government or police budgets,

given the lack of incentive. This raises important questions about the sustainability of community policing efforts, as well as the openness of governments and policing providers to genuine reform. In three of our four case studies, community policing was substantially funded by donors. The exception was Ethiopia, where it is funded largely by communities themselves (save the salaries of the community police officers, which the government pays). Finding ways to share costs across development partners, police and their governments and communities themselves is a difficult but ultimately more effective approach to ensuring community policing activities are sustainable. In addition, and even more importantly, getting to a point at which governments, police and communities are *willing* to contribute to community policing costs is possibly the best indicator that the initiative is in fact utilised and working. It is also important to consider the different levels of government necessary to engage. While donor programmes work largely at the national government level, working on issues of local security may mean it is most appropriate to work with local governments, especially on issues of coordination and accountability.

Finally, one could be forgiven for thinking community policing and police reform are synonymous, so bundled together have the two concepts become (Ellison and Pino, 2012). Given the significantly more limited results we argue community policing is capable of achieving, this conflation with police reform more broadly is worrying. As we have highlighted, there are certain results that community policing appears from our case studies to be well placed to achieve – such as improved police–community relations at the local level and greater community responsibility for issues of safety and security. These can be important components of reform of wider policing systems (both formal and informal). Yet they represent just one possible entry point. Community policing cannot reduce crime (although it *may* improve reporting of it), transform policing culture or make the police more accountable and professional. Other strategies are needed to achieve such huge institutional transformations. Key to this is gaining a better understanding of how police officers learn – which is likely not through one-off training courses and manuals. Protecting community policing from the more ambitious goals of wider police reform, which it is ill equipped to achieve, will help ensure more targeted and realistic results.

7 Conclusion: where does this leave community policing and what can we do differently?

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this paper – does all this mean community policing is destined for the dustbin of history? While there is clearly a need for much more realism and specificity in terms of what it can achieve, there do appear to be some areas in which

community policing can make a valuable contribution – such as improving police–community relations and making people feel more involved in their own security. Tailoring community policing programmes towards these more specific objectives will provide greater clarity of purpose and more realistic programmes. In order to enable this, however, our findings suggest some changes are needed. Donors looking to support community policing need to invest in understanding the nature of complex social systems and the key contextual features that shape what it is possible for community policing to achieve in a given context, including histories of state formation and the political settlement, experiences of insecurity and post-conflict reforms, social cleavages and inequalities and cultures of dispute resolution. Adapting to these contexts should result in more varied approaches to community policing, contingent on the interplay of the contextual factors that shape the enabling (or constraining) environment. In addition to this, there is a need to undertake a broad mapping of the providers of policing, so programming begins from an end user perspective of services available rather than attempting to rationalise the system of providers from a top-down view that tends to bias the state. This will allow for a broader range of community policing approaches that engage with how people actually access policing, whether that be through the formal police or otherwise. Engaging with the political contexts within which policing exists will also have implications for the skill sets needed to reform policing – going beyond the technical skills of former police officers to include those with more ethnographic, political and community development backgrounds.

There is also a need to ensure the objectives ascribed to community policing match what it is possible to achieve based on a thorough understanding of the context.

Different settings will offer different opportunities and constraints in terms of what is feasible, particularly for external actors whose influence is inevitably limited. In addition to good contextual analysis providing some bounds for what is likely possible, this should be based on investigations of previous programmes and a realism about what is achievable when faced with particularly resilient institutional cultures that are often not open to outside scrutiny or change (Denney and Kirwen, 2014: 4). In the case of donors that tend to operate with short, or at best medium, timeframes, such ambition will need to be even more modest. Looking to address particular problems – such as lack of community involvement in security or poor police–community relations – is more likely to be a successful focus of reforms than wider transformations. Finally, if crime reduction is an important focus, then there is a need to think beyond just police response, through to the social causes of crime. Community policing may be helpful in encouraging increased reporting, but is insufficient to address the myriad and complex social causes of crime, which will require significant non-police programming as well.

Community policing is thus perhaps not dead, but it is certainly in need of new approaches. To date, it has existed as a rather vague and all-encompassing agenda – and even benefited from this lack of precision – but as a result has delivered limited results. In order for it to remain relevant and demonstrate its usefulness, there is a need to become much clearer about what community policing can realistically achieve in a given context by focusing on particular, solvable problems. Identifying these problems and politically feasible solutions will depend on understanding how the context shapes the nature of policing and what is possible as a result.

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