

## PP8. INCREASING THE EFFICACY AND EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS

[Tags: Community policing, Dialogue, Citizens]

To increase their effectiveness and efficiency, community-policing programs should meet certain criteria, such as:

- ✓ be accessible to all citizens – Community policing programs should address the needs of all residents of an area and not employ an “elite-driven” approach;
- ✓ be carried out in good faith and respect the spirit of the law;
- ✓ measures should be taken to ensure confidentiality, when circumstances requires it;
- ✓ be non-profit;
- ✓ be focused on the role of the police as duty bearer to respect and protect human rights;
- ✓ enforce the principles of good governance: transparency, accountability, responsibility, participation and responsiveness;
- ✓ employ innovative, proactive, collaborative and strategic approaches to crime prevention. Research has shown that the increase in police presence by itself was less effective than proactive and/or community policing interventions in reducing the fear of crime.

The implementation of community policing strategies and programs requires a more or less substantial re-organisation of the police at the level, in terms of material and human resources, working culture and methods as well as leadership style (e.g. decentralized decision-making, restructuring of internal communicational processes and tools).

Technology can be seen as an important tool for changing traditional policing practice. Community policing programs should employ, whenever possible, different technological means to address security, communication and problem-solving issues.

Examples:

- The use of foot patrols;
- The creation of storefronts police substations;
- The creation of community consultative groups;
- Decentralized decision-making;
- Restructuring of internal communicational processes and tools.

Mode of implementation:

- Individuals must be treated in an open, respectful and fair manner;
- No discrimination should be made against one individual (or group) on any grounds or personal biases;
- Set-up clear and transparent procedures to prevent, detect and punish community policing personnel violating their legal and/or ethical obligations;
- Community police personnel must not take any advantage of any member in the communities they serve and must always act in the best interest of the community as a whole;

- Organize community consultative groups, for a better and closer dialogue with citizens.
- Strengthen police capacities to reach out with their services to the “hard-to-reach” groups, by creating opportunities for “positive interaction”;
- Strengthen language proficiency of officers in the languages spoken in a specific area, including main minority or immigrant languages;
- Engage all actors in a community in local safety and security committees, as a means of solving underlying tensions;
- Establish partnerships with social services and civil society organisations to provide rapid and pertinent services to victims of crime;
- Services on the police’s behalf should be provided in all required languages, but also pro-actively brought to the attention of minority or other underrepresented groups;
- Increase the number of foot patrols or bicycle patrols, which offer citizens the feeling of security;
- Careful analyse and plan the organisational change;
- Use modern management approaches such as the police as a “learning organization”, which sees change as a positive process;
- Decentralize and deconcentrate management structures with a view to placing higher responsibility on mid-management levels and devolving competences and autonomy in decision taking to the “front-line” officer;
- Set-up community-based crime prevention projects;
- Identify and employ suitable technological means for making policing practice more proactive (e.g. technological tools for connecting to crime and control databases, cameras, mobile phones, and being closer to the citizens in general);
- Carry-out training programs for community policing personnel (e.g. webinars, e-learning);
- Communicate in a comprehensive and detailed manner the strategies being employed at all organisational levels;
- Check availability of competent ICT personnel;
- Allocate an adequate number of staff members to the programme;
- Consider the political/financial/legal/technical support that the programme requires and plan for ways to achieve it.

#### Resources:

- Zhao, J., Scheider, M., & Thurman, Q. (2002). The effect of police presence on public fear reduction and satisfaction: A review of the literature. *The Justice Professional*, 15, 273–299.
- Skogan, W. (2009). Concern about crime and confidence in the police: Reassurance or accountability? *Police Quarterly*, 12, 301–318.
- Scheider, M. C., Chapman, R., & Schapiro, A. (2009). Towards the unification of policing innovations under community policing. *Policing: An international journal of police strategies & management*, 32, 694–718.
- Russo, S., & Roccato, M. (2010). How long does victimization foster fear of crime? A longitudinal study. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 38, 960–974.