

## The roles that the community can play to fight crime in their areas of residence

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### Abstract

The main function of the police is to fight, prevent and reduce crime. They also investigate crime, catch criminals, protect the community and property and reduce fear of crime. However, the police cannot fight crime alone, it is not the sole responsibility of the police to do so. Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agencies, the individuals, communities and organizations (civic and business) can fight crime successfully. It is upon the police to perform their duties (functions) well and with integrity so that communities can have trust and work with them in the fight against crime. Communities are expected to work with the police to fight crime, protect their properties and help identify criminals. Many countries around the world (globally) have adopted Community Policing Strategies in order to work closely with communities in the fight against crime.

**Method:** The study utilised mixed method research consisting of qualitative and quantitative research to collect data. The qualitative research method included semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions) with six (6) members each of the SAPS Heads of Visible Policing (VISPOL) unit and interviews with community safety structures such as the Community Police Forum (CPF) and Patrollers. The quantitative data collection process utilised a survey questionnaire to solicit responses from 476 participants. Thus 68 respondents from each of the four regions of Gauteng province. Qualitative data was analysed thematically, while the quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

**Keywords:** Community Policing, Community, Community Safety Structures, Community Policing Forums

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### I. Introduction and Background

Crime is a thorn in all the communities, and it is a global problem (Baxter, 2020 & United Nations, 2015). Contact crimes and violent crimes such as murder and rape are ever increasing and affecting young and old (GDCS, 2020). The main role of the police is to fight, prevent and reduce crime, catch criminals, protect the community and property and reduce fear of crime so that the communities should feel safe (Morgan, 1996 & University of Southampton, 2021). However, the police cannot fight crime alone, it is not the sole responsibility of the police to fight crime (UN, 2015 & SAPS, 2014a). Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency, individuals, communities and organizations (civic and business) they should serve to develop solutions to crime and increase trust in the police (UN, 2015).

The police cannot solve public safety problems or crime alone, therefore, community policing encourages interactive partnership with relevant stakeholders' especially vulnerable communities (UN, 2015 & SAPS, 2014a). These crime-fighting partnerships are used to accomplish the two interrelated goals of developing solutions to problems through collaborative problem solving and improving public trust (UN, 2015 & Lancaster, 2017). The public should (obligated) play a role in prioritizing and addressing public safety problems together with the Law Enforcement Agencies (IOL, 2006). Some community members or citizens know criminals and have witnessed crimes; therefore, they can assist the police by giving information or identifying the criminals or suspects (Clarke, 2021 & SAPS, 2014a).

Most of the states (Law Enforcement Agencies) have adopted the evidence-based, consultative and participatory approaches to prevent and reduce crime (UN, 2015). This approach involves all sectors of society, including non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector – the community becoming the central role players (UN, 2015). In South Africa, the South African Police Services (SAPS) have developed a Community Policing Strategy (CPS) that involves communities in the quest to prevent and fight crime (SAPS, 2014a), whereas, the Provincial Departments of Community Safety (DCS) or the Provincial Secretariats have facilitated the establishment of Community Policing Forums (CPFs) and other programmes at the SAPS police stations and communities in the nine provinces (SAPS, no date & SAPS, 2014a).

### **1.1 Aim of the article**

This article aims to explain the role community members can play in the fight against crime and crime prevention in their areas.

### **1.2 Objectives of this article**

This article sought to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify measures that can be taken to harness community policing
- To strengthen relations between the community, the police and other relevant stakeholders
- To investigate the role of the community (in Gauteng) in contributing towards fighting crime

## **II. Literature review**

This section comprises of the existing literature that describes the roles that community members should play in the fight against crime in partnership with the SAPS.

### **2.1. Community policing and the role players**

Community policing involves community members, local government, the police or Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and other relevant stakeholders working together to tackle crime and is being practiced in many countries around the world (UN, 2015 & Lancaster, 2017). The South African government through the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 announced the police should involve the voluntary participation of the communities (SAPS, n. d. & Zhao, et al., 2002). The partnership and community policing should be a consultative and collaborative arrangement between police and citizens (SAPS, 2014a; UN, 2015 and Nyaura & Ngugi, 2014). This partnership can only work well when there is proper dialogue among the participants (stakeholders) (UN, 2015). For community policing to be effective, the police should respond to the specific needs of the most at-risk groups such as women, young people, elderly people, ethnic minorities, migrants, displaced people and refugees (UN, 2015).

The South African Police Service (SAPS) Community Policing Strategy (CPS) and Community in Blue Policing Concept was launched under the theme "Towards an integrated and sustainable policing for a safe and secure South Africa" (SAPS, 2014a). The CPS reaffirmed the SAPS's commitment to reduce crime by involving the communities with a theme "On a journey to a safer South Africa" (SAPS, 2014a). The CPS encourages the SAPS to fight crime by working closely with the communities in order to stimulate active citizenry, citizen participation, encourages a proactive policing approach in addressing public safety concerns (SAPS, 2014a). The CPS transforms and reorganises government and facilitates real community participation (SAPS, 2014a). The CPS through sector and district policing, directs that the policing areas be divided into smaller manageable sectors and districts, assigning Police Officers to patrol areas and interact with local community members (SAPS, 2014a).

### **2.2 How communication (technology) can bolster Community policing**

The use of communication technologies (systems) like media, social networks, the internet or biological communication known as "word of mouth" is effective in conveying messages, transfer and process crime (safety and security) information between police, communities and other relevant stakeholders (YAL, 2021 & Goodwin College, 2000). The communication channels should enable all the stakeholders to participate in the flow of information (YAL, 2021). Most of the LEAs globally are utilizing social media tools and platforms to engage the public, strengthen relationships and communicate for investigative purposes, crime prevention and criminal justice activities (UN, 2015). Social media is participatory (posting) and can assist in crime investigation and to alert the public about a crime that has occurred or is occurring (live), it allows all to play a role in fighting crime (UN, 2015; Goodwin College, 2000 & YAL, 2021).

Communication is very important because it can be used as a base for any action of community policing such as access, gathering and sharing crime information, planning any crime-fighting initiative and a coordinating tool between the police and the community (YAL, 2021). To ensure that all is on board, communication can be used as a platform where ideas are exchanged, clarity is created, education/awareness shared, proposals are made and opinions are shared (YAL, 2021). Through constant communication, the police can win back the confidence of the community, remove misunderstandings, fears, boost morale and motivates (YAL, 2021). The role of the community can be outlined by using appropriate community channels and systems (YAL, 2021).

### **2.3 The role of community members in crime prevention**

Responsible citizens or community members are expected to work and assist the police to fight crime (SAPS, 2014a & UN, 2015). Their role is to report crime, crime activities and help the LEAs to remove opportunities of crime amongst themselves (Manaliyo, 2016 & UN, 2015). Reporting crime and fighting crime

is daunting, dangerous and makes community members uneasy, however, these discomforts can be averted or eased if there are good relations and trust between the police and community members (Manaliyo, 2016). These discomforts and fears are lessened or removed through effective communication systems in place which brings communities together, fostering partnership and reassuring the communities that the police do care and aim to protect them (Your Article Library (2021).

Cooperation between community structures such as CPFs, WASP, MASP, Patrollers, Youth Desks and other civil organisations is vital to mobilise community support, running education and awareness campaigns, and to patrol the streets (SAPS, n. d. & UN, 2015). The partnership will see community members playing their role by assisting the police in identifying crime hot spots and informing the police about problems in the area, reporting any information on wanted suspects, illegal firearms, or any criminal activities (SAPS, n. d.). Furthermore, these community members should monitor police service delivery and provide possible solutions or alternatives to constantly strengthen partnerships and improve service delivery (SAPS, n. d.). In South Africa, members of the community can report crime at any nearest police station and they can remain anonymous. They can report crime telephonically using these emergency numbers: 08600 10111 or 10111 (SAPS, 2014b). This information of reporting crime and the process must be communicated to the members of the community (YAL, 2021).

#### **2.4 The benefits of Community Participation in Crime Prevention**

Participatory community policing plays a significant role in the government decision-making process, lessens community resistance and also serves as an early warning system for the state to act and prevent crime from occurring proactively (Benit-Gbaffou, 2008; Gill et al. & Yesufu, 2021). Apart from improving relations between police and the citizens, community participation reduces crime prevalence, disorderly conduct and fear of being victimized through more effective and responsive policing (Yesufu, 2021; Nyaura & Ngugi, 2014 and Gill et al., 2014, cited by Journal of Experimental Criminology in 2014). However, the local communities need to be fully empowered with appropriate skills and resources that would allow them to participate effectively in crime prevention initiatives (Zhao et al., 2002).

#### **2.5 The impact of community perception on the Criminal Justice System**

Sometimes the community members do not fully play their role in fighting crime because there is little faith and trust in the police or the Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs). This is because the police fail to combat rising crime levels and there are low conviction rates. Furthermore, public perceptions about the poor integrity of the police play a major role. Community members always believe that the courts release perpetrators - they allow the perpetrators to go free or be released early and there are no harsh sentences (Statistic SA, 2020 & Mthomboti, S; Negota, A & Mistry, D, 2019). Communities expect the Criminal Justice System (CJS) to always be on the side of the victims, regardless of the rules and procedures of the CJS (Stats SA, 2020). The lack of faith in the police also resulted in the prevalence of under-reporting of crime incidents to the police (Stats SA, 2020 & GDCS, 2020).

Police visibility means a lot to ordinary citizens; it assures them that they are being protected and that the police are here to fight crime in their areas (Borovec; Balgač & Mraović, 2019). Police visibility is an influencing factor on citizens' perception of safety (Borovec; Balgač & Mraović, 2019). The community members feel unsafe because the police do not patrol the streets and crime hotspots (poor police visibility), therefore, poor police visibility coerced members of the community not to fully volunteer in community safety programmes such as patrolling the streets at night because the police assigned for the job are not doing it (Masha, 2020; Sibembe & DA Gauteng, 2021). Neglecting known hotspots discouraged communities to play their role parallel to the police (PMG, 2018).

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study conducted by the Gauteng Department of Community Safety titled "investigating the role the community of Gauteng played in the fight against crime" utilised qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data from the respondents.

**Qualitative data** utilised a research guide with semi-structured questions to interview respondents. The interviews enabled the researchers to interview respondents who are more likely to advance the purpose and objectives of the study based on the insights they have on the phenomenon being studied (Given, 2008).

The respondents interviewed were six (6) Heads of Visible Policing (VISPOL) units from the Gauteng SAPS police stations (Bronkhorstspuit, Springs, Meyerton, Randfontein, Midrand and Boipatong) and one (1 x 6) Community Policing Forums (CPF) Chairpersons serving within these six (6) above mentioned SAPS precincts.

**Quantitative data** was sourced through a structured questionnaire. Gauteng province has an estimated 15,5 million people - 26,0% of South Africa's population (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Therefore, according to Raosoft (2004), the sample size for a population of 15.5 million people is 385. This study utilised 476

respondents as recommended by the Raosoft sample size calculator. The study utilised a 10% margin of error, 90% confidence level and 50% response distribution level as recommended or guided by the Raosoft sample size calculator in each of the municipal sample sizes (Raosoft, 2004).

**Table 1: The Gauteng community sample frame**

| Name of Municipality | Name of Area/s                                  | Total Population | Sampled size |
|----------------------|---|------------------|--------------|
| City of Tshwane      | Bronkhorstspuit, Zithobeni, Eesterust & Laudium | 2 921 488        | 68           |
| City of Johannesburg | Diepsloot, Lenasia & Midrand                    | 4 434 827        | 68           |
| Mogale City          | Randfontein, Mohlakeng & Toekomsrus             | 362 422          | 68           |
| Merafong City        | Carletonville & Khutsong                        | 197 520          | 68           |
| Midvaal              | Meyerton & Mamello                              | 95 301           | 68           |
| Lesedi               | Springs & Nigel                                 | 99 520           | 68           |
| Emfuleni             | Vanderbijlpark & Boipatong                      | 721 663          | 68           |
| <b>Total</b>         |   | <b>8 832 220</b> | <b>476</b>   |

Source: Statistics South Africa 2020

**Qualitative data** analysis was conducted through a thematic analysis where the participant's responses were used to identify themes.

**Quantitative data analysis** utilised the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and data was pre-coded in a Likert scale format. Furthermore, the quantitative data method utilised descriptive and frequencies statistical analysis.

#### **IV. Research findings**

This section represents the study conducted by the Gauteng Department of Community Safety (GDSCS) in 2021/22 where it investigated the role played by the community of Gauteng province in the fight against crime.

##### **4.1 Presentation and analysis of the qualitative findings**

This section presents the qualitative analysis of the study. It includes one-on-one interviews with the Visible Policing (VISPOL) unit Commanders, Chairpersons of the community structures (Community Policing Forums, Community Patrollers, Women As Safety Promoters, Men As Safety Promoters and Youth Desk). The findings of this study explain the role played by the community of Gauteng in the fight against crime.

##### **4.1.1 Understanding the concept of “community policing”**

The respondents (community structures and VISPOL) interviewed seemed to understand the concept of “community policing”, which includes their volunteer roles as community members as well as representatives of community structures. Community structures as volunteers, are determined to serve their community and also to play a significant role in fighting crime in their areas. They work relentlessly to recruit community members to play their role in fighting crime and encourage them to report incidents of crime. The VISPOL police also understand their role as far as working with these structures and the entire community in the fight against crime. In some areas such as Laudium, Boipatong Meyerton, Lenasia and Springs, community structures have indicated that they have good working relations with the police. The police also indicated that they have good relationships with the community structures.

The study revealed that the community structures particularly the CPF, function differently in the cities and suburbs than in the townships. Regardless that the executive serves in both areas, their roles are different because of the economic and political situation. The affluent areas such as Meyerton, Springs and Midrand are well resourced as they even assist the stations with stationery and office equipment. The CPF in Springs and Meyerton indicated that they have assets worth R3 million in the form of CCTV cameras installed in strategic areas within their town, the 4X4 patrol vehicles, cones, security equipment and other necessary equipment used for protection. The CPFs in these areas are well equipped and they also assist in managing road accident scenes with cones, tapes and tow trucks that are owned by the CPF members. The CPFs in the suburbs are well resourced to fight crime and assist the police to fight crime.

On the contrary, the CPFs in the township also indicated that they fail to perform the same tasks as those in town because they do not have same resources such as vehicles and money. Instead, patrolling the streets by community patrollers became a feature in most of the townships. The patrollers in the suburbs used their own marked vehicles, whilst those in the townships rely on the police vans or walk on foot during the night. Some respondents in Ezithobeni and Khutsong indicated that some of the police do not want to work with

the patrollers – it seems patrollers prevent them from doing dodgy things or secret activities. The study then concluded that there is lot of commitment from both young and old in the community to volunteer in the structures.

#### **4.1.2 The role the Community of Gauteng played in the fight against crime**

According to the CPFs and Community patrollers, most of the community members feel they are not obliged to protect their neighbourhoods. They argue that the police are responsible for patrolling as well as fighting crime. However, there are communities such as Eesterust and Khutsong where members of the community volunteer and join the patrols during the night. The only challenge is that they do not have resources such as torches to patrol dark streets. Most of the volunteers are working, however, the unemployed people including youths do not bother to join in the fight against crime – without a stipend or remuneration. In the suburbs (Carletonville, Springs, Meyerton and Midrand) community members volunteer without complaints, except that the youth (mostly whites) are not participating. According to one respondent from Diepsloot, the community only participates in the fight against crime when they have apprehended a suspect, this is when mob justice takes place. Community participation in the townships and informal settlement still lacks volunteers.

#### **4.1.3 What prevents communities from volunteering to fight crime?**

The community has witnessed various forms of corruption committed by the police such as taking bribes from illegal immigrants, missing dockets, non-attendance of community emergencies and failing to arrest a well know suspect because they are known and friends of the police. All these allegations contributed to the low participation of the community in the fight against crime and loss of trust in the police. With the perceived failure of the government to punish corrupt police and failure to manage the police, therefore, community members are reluctant to join in the fight against crime in their areas.

The other risk of informing the police about incidents and suspects of crime is that the police divulge the information to the suspects – the community fears reprisal from the suspects. Some of the police in the townships do not attend to community tipoffs, due to fact that they are friends with the criminals. A VISPOL commander mentioned that the police do not trust each other –because the criminals receive police information from some corrupt cops, they fail to disclose or share some of the information with other members.

##### *4.1.3.1 Poor treatment of community by the Community Service Centres (CSC)*

The community structures indicated that the officers at the CSC tend to ill-treat members of the community when they come to report incidents of crime or seek help. Additionally, the officers at the CSC harass victims of crime by interrogating, doubting or second-guessing their statements. In Eersterust there is a complaint of language barriers, as the community is dominated by Afrikaans speaking coloured people, but most of the police in the CSC are Blacks who do not speak Afrikaans, so the community feels that they do not receive proper help and their statements are always withdrawn in court due to contradictions by officers. The poor treatment of complainants, victims and people seeking help at the CSC discouraged community members from working with the police in the fight against crime. The lack of partnership and mutual understanding strained relations between the community and the police.

The study discovered that most of the community structures do not have good relations with the police, the only stable relationship is with a senior member such as the Station Commander and Head of VISPOL. These poor relations are experienced mostly by structures in the black communities. The SAPS has ceased to contact the community and communicate matters of crime with them. The police cited this lack of interaction due to COVID-19 regulations and the lockdown. Furthermore, the police indicated that they have communication with the structures through social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

## **4.2. Presentation and analysis of the quantitative findings**

This section presents the quantitative findings from the samples number of respondents according to demographics:

### **4.2.1 Demographic information**

**Table 2. Profile of respondents in the study**

| Race of the participants |           |         |  |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|--|
| Race                     | Frequency | Percent |  |
| Black                    | 346       | 71,9    |  |
| White                    | 49        | 10,2    |  |
| Coloured                 | 61        | 12,7    |  |



|                                    |           |         |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Indian                             | 23        | 4,8     |
| Other (specify)                    | 1         | 0,2     |
| Refuse to answer                   | 1         | 0,2     |
| Gender of the participants         |           |         |
| Gender                             | Frequency | Percent |
| Male                               | 230       | 47,8    |
| Female                             | 223       | 46,4    |
| LGTBQ+                             | 13        | 2,7     |
| Refuse to answer                   | 3         | 0,6     |
| Other                              | 1         | 0,2     |
| Total                              | 470       | 97,7    |
| 99                                 | 11        | 2,3     |
|                                    | 481       | 100,0   |
| Citizenship of the respondents     |           |         |
|                                    | Frequency | Percent |
| South African citizen              | 477       | 99,2    |
| Immigrated from an African country | 3         | 0,6     |
| Immigrated from outside of Africa  | 1         | 0,2     |
| Total                              | 481       | 100,0   |

The above table depicts the profile of the respondents. Most of the respondents interviewed were South African citizens (99,2%) and three (0,6%) respondents immigrated from African countries and one respondent (0,2) was from outside the African continent. The gender of the respondents is 47,8% males, 46,4% females and 2,7% LGBTQIA+ while the race of the respondents is mostly African/Black people (71,9%), followed by Coloreds (12,7%), Whites (10,2%) and Indians (4,6%).

#### 4.2.2 Police visibility in their areas

The patrol by police in areas is high (62,4%) whereas the percentage of those who hardly see the police patrolling is (29,6%). About 5.4% of respondents mentioned that they do not know whether the police patrol their areas or not.

#### 4.2.3 The role of communities in the fight against crime

The role of the community varies and also depends on the situation in which community members find themselves. Some are victims or witnesses of crime while others have knowledge of the criminals and suspects. Some community members are volunteers in 000community safety structures and programmes of the GDCS. There were also ordinary community members or citizens willing to assist the police.

##### 4.2.3.1 Reporting crime to the police

Most of the respondents were allowed to choose more than one option to respond to this question. Reporting crime is not a wise option according to most of the respondents. However, a total of 70,8% of victims reported crime to the police whilst 22,1% did not. All (100%) respondents fear being victimized by the perpetrators and their friends, while 72% felt that even when they can report crime, the courts release these criminals. About 67% of the respondents say the station is too far, therefore, reporting crime during the night is not even possible. Some (68%) of the victims did not report a crime because they do not trust the police. Other reasons why these victims did not report a crime to the police is because they have lost confidence in the police (78%). 64% indicated that they would rather take the law into own hands. About 43% of respondents prefer to report a crime to the CPFs.

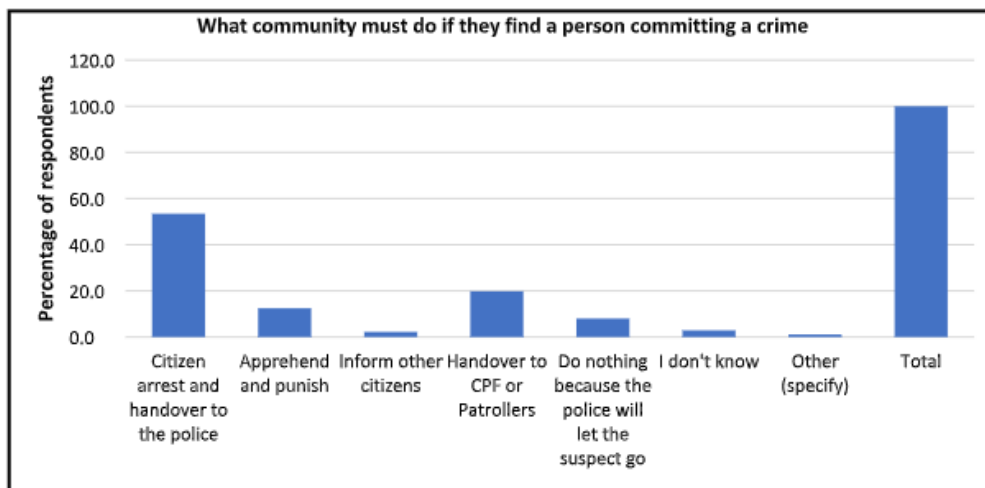
4.2.3.2 Action taken by respondents when they are aware of crime

As responsible citizens, the respondents were also asked, what action (role) they will take when they are aware of crime or knew the perpetrators and a high number of respondents in Mohlakeng (35%) and Lenasia (33%) mentioned that they will tell or warn other community members. This was followed by those who feel they will warn their family. In Meyerton and Bophelong most respondents mentioned that they will report crime to the police. The older respondents (60+ old) mentioned that they will not take action due to their age.

4.2.3.3 What the community does if they find a person committing a crime

The other role of the community in the fight against crime is the action they took to ensure that crime is reduced or prevented. The figure below depicts actions the community intended to take when confronted with crime situations. These actions are part of the role the community plays in the fight against crime even when they chose to do nothing which could also be considered as action. The respondents were asked “what will they do as citizens if they find a person committing a crime in their areas/neighborhood?”

Figure 1. What must the community do if they find a person committing a crime?



In a situation where a person is found committing crime, the majority of the respondents (53,5%) feel they will apprehend the suspect and hand them over to the police as an option. About 19,8% of the respondents believe it is better to hand over the suspect to the CPF and Patrollers, 12,5% feel community members must apprehend and punish the suspect whilst 8,0% believe that the community must not do anything or not involve the police, because the police will let the suspect go. Only a few respondents (2,9%) believe that the community must inform other citizens – spreading the word about suspects and criminals is part of community participation in crime prevention. The majority of respondents showed that they still have hope in the justice system and are willing to work with the police i.e. including the police, CPF and patrollers is part of community policing.

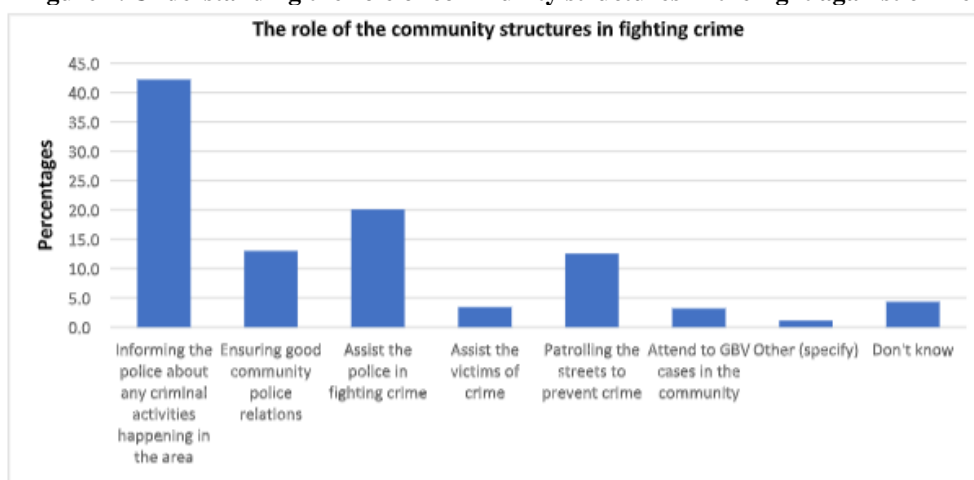
4.2.3.4 Knowledge of the existing community safety structures

Many respondents are aware of the existence of community structures. In Boipatong all (100%) respondents are aware of community structures, Laudium (91%), however, in Randfontein only 42% are aware of them. There were also respondents who indicated they are not aware of the existence of community structures, for example, those in Zithobeni (24%) and Carletonville (29%). The most known structures are the CPF (54,7%), followed by Community Patrollers (22,6%) then Neighbourhood watch (6,4%) in the suburbs. The least known community structures in Gauteng are Gender Based Violence Brigades (5,6%), Ward Committees (3,0%), WASP (5,0%) and MASP (0,9%). The CPFs (38,8%) and Patroller programme (26,4%) are the structures that most community or respondents participated. The WASP at 1,9% and MASP (2,3%) have the lowest community participation because they are not known in most communities. This information is an indication that community members are willing to fight crime in their areas. Community structures need to be popularised (through communication channels) within the community in order to obtain more volunteers.

4.2.3.5 Understanding the role of community safety structures

The study also investigated the communities understanding of the role of community safety structures in their areas. Consequently, figure 2 below shows how the respondents after having knowledge of the structures, understand the role of these community safety structures:

Figure 2. Understanding the role of community structures in the fight against crime



In figure 2 above, the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer on the list of eight options. About 42.2% of respondents indicated that the role of community structures is to inform the police about any criminal activities happening in the area, 20.1% they assist the police in fighting crime. Some respondents (13.0%) also indicated that the role of the community structures is to ensure there is good community police relations – thus ensuring effective community policing partnership prevails, 12% thought it is to patrol the streets to prevent crime from happening. Whilst a further 3.4% believe community structures assist the victim of crime and 3.2% think the community structures attend to gender-based violence cases in the community. The community assists victims and reports cases to the police but also involve relevant stakeholders such as social workers and Non-Governmental Organizations. In brief, the community understands that community structures work closely with the police and some victims of crime.

4.2.3.6 How the community members behave during protests and mob justice

Table 3. Community behavior in the fight against crime

| Statements  | Yes   | Maybe | Sometimes | No    | Not sure | Not at all | Total |
|---|-------|-------|-----------|-------|----------|------------|-------|
| Q.4.13 Would you join looting to get food and other items because of poverty and unemployment | 23,6% | 9,9%  | 7,1%      | 44,4% | 3,5%     | 11,5%      | 100%  |
| Q.4.14 Would you join the protests against crime in the community?                            | 67,5% | 8,3%  | 3,1%      | 14,3% | 2,9%     | 3,8%       | 100%  |
| Q.4.15 Would you join a vigilante group to kill criminals?                                    | 13,8% | 4,8%  | 3,9%      | 52,2% | 5,1%     | 20,2%      | 100%  |
| Q.4.16 Would you join in mob justice to fight crime?  | 30,7% | 9,5%  | 5,3%      | 36,5% | 4,9%     | 13,0%      | 100%  |
| Q.4.17 Would you join peaceful protests to fight crime?                                       | 79,9% | 5,6%  | 4,6%      | 6,3%  | 1,9%     | 1,9%       | 100%  |
| Q.4.18 Would you work with the police to fight crime?   | 75,3% | 6,1%  | 4,5%      | 8,2%  | 2,5%     | 3,4%       | 100%  |
| Q.4.19 Would you attend community meetings against crime?                                     | 83,1% | 5,0%  | 3,6%      | 5,9%  | 0,9%     | 1,6%       | 100%  |

Most of the respondents (83.1%) indicated that they would attend community meetings against crime, join peaceful protests to fight crime (79.9%) and work with the police to fight crime (75.3%). Since they have a right to protest, 67.5% of respondents indicated they would join protests against crime in the community. While 30.7% of the respondents indicated that they would join in mob justice to fight crime, Some (13.8%) indicated that they would not join a vigilante group to kill criminals and 23,6 said they would join looting to get food and other items because of poverty and unemployment. There were a few respondents who were unsure on which action to take when confronted with the situations listed above, however, some were adamant that they will not join peaceful protest (6.3%), looting (44.4%), vigilante groups (52.2%), work with the police (8.2%) or attend community meetings (5.9%) to fight crime.



**4.2.3.7 Perception of the police by community members**

The other factor contributing to poor community participation in the fight against crime, is how they perceive the police. In order to expect the community to play their role in the fight against crime, it is significant to understand the way the community feel about the police in their areas. Working together in partnership with the police can foster effective community policing. Therefore, perception of police is crucial.

**Table 4: Community perception of the police**

|  | Not at all | A little | Somewhat | A lot | To a great extent | Total |
|--|------------|----------|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| Q 4.1 To what extent do the Law Enforcement Agencies such as the SAPS develop relationships with community members (e.g. Residence, organizations and groups)  | 34,1%      | 33,4%    | 15,0%    | 11,4% | 6,1%              | 100%  |
| Q 4.2 To what extent do law enforcement agencies regularly communicate with community members (e.g. websites, emails, or public meetings)  | 38,2%      | 33,2%    | 14,2%    | 10,3% | 4,1%              | 100%  |
| Q 4.3 To what extent do law enforcement agencies make it easy for community members to provide inputs?   | 36,4%      | 24,5%    | 15,2%    | 9,4%  | 14,5%             | 100%  |
| Q 4.4 To what extent does your community work together with law enforcement agencies to solve local problems   | 23,2%      | 28,9%    | 16,0%    | 20,7% | 11,3%             | 100%  |
| Q 4.5 To what extent do law enforcement agencies provide services to the community?  | 26,1%      | 35,2%    | 13,9%    | 19,1% | 5,7%              | 100%  |
| Q 4.6 I believe that law enforcement agencies with which I have had the most contact are generally fair and unbiased   | 26,7%      | 30,8%    | 19,6%    | 16,2% | 6,7%              | 100%  |
| Q 4.7 I believe that the law enforcement agency (SAPS) I identified earlier do a good job in working with the community to solve local crime issues  | 29,8%      | 28,4%    | 16,2%    | 16,6% | 9,0%              | 100%  |
| Q 4.8 The law enforcement agencies in my area share necessary and /or relevant information with the community through outreach programmes, social media, public meetings or other local media such as TV or radio. | 43,6%      | 21,8%    | 15,5%    | 13,8% | 5,4%              | 100%  |

The responds from the table above indicated the dissatisfaction of the community with the police in their areas. The majority alluded “not at all” with respect to whether or not they had developed relationships with SAPS or any other LEA. The same response was given when asked if SAPS or LEAs regularly communicate with community members, made it easy for them to provide inputs, if they are doing a good job in working with the community to solve local crime issues and whether they share necessary and /or relevant information with the community through outreach programmes, social media, public meetings or other local media such as TV or radio. The majority of respondents also indicated that the police (SAPS) “do a little” in the categories such as Q4.1-Q4.3 and Q4.7 & Q4.8 in the above table 4.

The majority of respondents alluded that the police “do little” to provide services to the police (Q 4.5) and have contact, to be fair and unbiased (Q4.6). “doing a lot” this category received very few positive results in all the questions (Q4.1 – Q4.7) which indicates the little commitment the police offered to the community as above.

**V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The findings of the study indicated that most people lost trust in the police because of their bad behaviour, corruption and ill-treatment of community members. Regardless of this behaviour, some community members are willing to work closely with the police to fight crime. Evidence of willingness is seen mostly in the volunteer work done through the community safety structures such as the CPFs, Community Patroller programme, WASP and MASP. Trust in the criminal justice system is very low in the communities of Gauteng and South Africa. The police are not always visible on the streets and thus the level of crime is very high in residential areas.

The lack of trust in the criminal justice system led to poor reporting of crimes such as burglary, theft, assault. Some of the communities resorted to taking the law into their own hands, which is illegal. The lack of good communication between the police stations and the community further alienated people. The community is disgruntled by the way police neglect their communities and also fail to patrol and remove the risks, activities and opportunities of crime in the identified hotspots.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

Community participation is paramount and the partnership between all relevant stakeholders needs to be enhanced. Police integrity and good communication can achieve the objectives of community policing and lead to community members playing their role to fight crime, prevent crime, report crime and reduce many fears.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

After a thorough analysis of the data collected through qualitative and quantitative methods of research, the following recommendations were made:

### **7.1 Improving communication between community and LEAs for better results**

The lack of communication between the police and the community is a barrier to good community police relations. It can also prevent the community from playing an effective role in the fight against crime-.

### **7.2 Improve police visibility on the streets and identified crime hotspots**

Police visibility will serve as an assurance that the police and community fight for the common goal of eradicating crime.

### **7.3 Police need to behave professionally on and off duty**

There is a need for police officers to set a good example in the community by behaving professionally and displaying good morals and integrity so that they can earn the respect of the community

### **7.4 Prioritising the involvement of youth in the fight against crime**

Community policing and community structures should prioritise the involvement of youth as they are active members of the community and capable of protecting people. Most youth spend time on the streets, involving them in the fight against crime can reduce the opportunity of youth doing crime.

### **7.5 Adoption of Ghana's Deployment Community Policing Assistants model**

Best practices that can assist communities in the fight against crime can be used. Additionally, the LEAs can also utilise volunteers to gain experience whilst assisting the police in the fight against crime.

### **7.6 Deploying Community Policing Assistants**

The Government of Ghana deployed 9,000 Community Policing Assistants Nationwide. With budget cuts annually, members of the community are requested to assist local police, serve their community, and meet new friends by becoming a volunteer at their local police department. Here are some of the duties volunteers are often asked to do by local police: Fingerprinting, Neighborhood radar speed checking, Check on abandoned vehicles, Phoning crime victims to answer questions, Doing home safety checks for vacationing homeowners, Assisting with special events, Doing bike patrols in community parks, Compile crime statistics in the community, Writing citations for handicapped parking violations, Helping with neighborhood watch, Assisting with search and rescue, Verifying vehicle window tints, Logging evidence, Tour guides, Take police reports, Working on cold case files, Assist with missing person searches and Locate and recover surveillance video.

#### **7.6.1 There are professional backgrounds of volunteers that police departments really need:**

- Religious leaders who can assist with Chaplain programs
- Security specialists who can conduct security reviews at schools and other institutions
- Individuals proficient in another language to help with translation
- Mental Health Professionals who can counsel victims of crime
- Veterinarians to provide care for police canine units
- Banking and financial experts to assist with financial fraud and identity theft cases
- Illustrators to compose drawings of suspects
- Dog trainers to assist with police canine units
- Computer programmers

The LEAs can utilise volunteers to gain experience and /at the same time play a role in assisting the police in the fight against crime.

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