

COMMUNITY POLICING STRATEGY IN UGANDA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under Article 212(d) of the Constitution, the Uganda Police Force is mandated to prevent crime with the co-operation of the public and the population generally. This therefore means that crime prevention requires a partnership approach between the police and the communities we serve. To achieve this therefore, we need to adopt Community policing strategy as a principal method of policing to fight crime, and carry out law enforcement. Community policing must cease to be, merely, the business of the Department of Community Affairs, and C.L.Os, but the core of policing, and, therefore the business of Command, at regional, district/division/station/post levels. Community Policing is a proactive, as opposed to the traditional reactive, approach to policing in which the Police builds partnerships with other government departments (particularly, the local government), NGOs, and the community, generally, with the objectives of detecting crimes and criminals (real and potential), and addressing the roots causes of crime, as well as the fear of crime. In fact, as is commonly said, community policing is what good cops always do.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the community policing strategy is crime prevention. The specific objectives for the department of community policing are:

- a) To mainstream Community Policing as the principal method of policing to fight crime, and carry out law enforcement.
- b) To Customize the Community Policing Model to the situation of Uganda by taking advantage of the grassroots-based LC system and linking it to the Police Post.
- c) To provide improved quality of police services by ensuring that the various police departments work in close partnership with each other through planned, timely, effective communication and coordination systems with the ultimate goal of preventing crime.
- d) To identify threats to vulnerable groups to crime e.g. children women, business people, bodabodas, IDP returnees etc.
- e) To ensure that the public audit police performance.
- f) To ensure effective coordination and cooperation with the public/stakeholders and promote good customer care.
- g) To ensure that the budgeting process of the police reflects and includes community policing as a priority area of funding.

3.0 CONCEPTUALISATION OF COMMUNITY POLICING.

The basis for community policing in Uganda is both Legal and doctrinal.

a) Legal

The Constitution enjoins us under article **212(d)** to cooperate with the public, other security organs and the population generally in the performance of our functions. It is also the duty of the citizen under article **17(f)** of the Constitution to co-operate with lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order.

Implementing Community Policing therefore, is obeying a Constitutional command. It is also grounded in the strategic thinking and planning of the police since the UPF corporate objective is to provide an enlightened and motivated police force that is efficient and accountable to the people. We can not be efficient, professional and accountable to the people if we can not forge purposeful and mutual alliances with them to fight crime through community policing.

b) Doctrinal

World over the role of the Police has continued to change from being reactive to pro-active policing. The police are increasingly using a system that induces communities to become partners in all security matters. Members of the public are now largely responsible for assisting the police to deliver quality services to the communities they serve. This is achieved through Community Policing.

The concept of community policing is now considered as **second generation** policing. The new paradigm in police work requires the integration of traditional police duties and functions into life and activities of communities. The purpose of community policing is to encourage **Public Private Partnership** in the fight against crime. Community policing emphasizes building partnerships between police and community members. It has two core ideas; Community partnerships and, problem solving. Community policing is building mutually trustful and respectful relationships between the police and community members. Problem solving is a means to uncover the basic issues facing a community and to develop and implement creative solutions to those problems.

The Public / communities in order to fully support the Police need to take center stage by being more active through a very strong partnership. This in its intrinsic value represents a fundamental shift in the basic role of the Police to develop new partnerships with key elements of the community. Crime prevention initiatives and civic security must be decentralized to the basic manageable units of society in our case, through Local Councils and other organized communities.

Community policing approach involves inducing communities to become partners in all security matters within their areas. It is intended to make each community understand that it is largely responsible for 'policing' itself. The approach encourages communities to find solutions to local crime problems with the assistance of their police. Communities are expected to gain more interest and confidence in police work, and to become more willing to assist the police in all its activities.

- Community policing calls for a high degree of mutual trust, confidence and benefit between the police and the public. The approach is expected to remove the existing barriers between the police and the public and to bring about effective and efficient means of controlling crime, improved police services, peace and security which will in turn help to foster social and economic development.

It is both a philosophy and an organizational strategy that allows the police and community residents to work closely together in new ways to solve the problems of crime, fear of crime, physical and social disorders, and neighborhood decay. The philosophy rests on the belief that law-abiding people in the community deserve input into the police process, in exchange for participation and support. It also rests on the belief that solutions to contemporary community problems demand freeing creative, new ways to address neighborhood concerns beyond a narrow focus on individual crime incidents.

The major consideration therefore, is that the basis of community policing is the joint effort between the citizen and the police in addressing the local crime problems. This effort requires that the citizen becomes a member of the team that is going to solve a problem. Thus, citizens must

- Consent to being policed (policing by consent)
- Help in defining their problems
- Get involved in the planning of the solutions
- Assist in implementing the plans
- Decide if they feel their needs are being satisfied.

Community policing means, that crime and disorder are not just police problems, but community problems. Communities have an obligation to work together with the police to solve these problems. In the past, police defined themselves as “law enforcement”, and crime control was our turf. If crime increased, it just meant we needed more cops. Today, there is increasing recognition that partnerships with groups of all sorts are an effective way of controlling crime.

Community policing is the most appropriate direction of the future. This move is a result of the failure of traditional law enforcement methods to adequately eliminate crime and the fear of crime, and the recognition by law enforcement agencies that they cannot solve social problems on their own.

Community policing enjoins all our department resources to work in a united partnership with stakeholders; NGOs, religious, business and transport communities, LCs and government agencies, organized communities of foreign nationals etc. Our renewed focus will be on solving problems consistent with the community’s expectations in addition to enforcing the laws.

Community policing is about policing at its most important and challenging levels – in both rural and urban communities. It is about a new policing philosophy and practice, one that encourages collaboration with the community and other agencies and organizations that are responsible for community safety.

4.0 BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY POLICING

- Provides stronger safer communities.
- Better understanding of police limitations.
- Self satisfaction from solving problems.
- Becoming creative and innovative; problem solvers.
- Become familiar with people and their concerns.

- Understanding community attitudes
- Provision of resources and also more effective and efficient utilization of resources.
- Improves communication between the community and the police.
- Improves police accountability.
- Promotes constitutionalism, respect and observance of human rights.
- Improves people's trust in their government.
- Improves investments and quality of life.
- Assists in intelligence led operations.

5.0 METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Community policing must be infused into all aspects of policing e.g. patrols, intelligence, criminal investigations, traffic, and the counter which must have good and friendly officers (customer care). The new community policing strategy begins at the neighborhood level. Local Government administration in Uganda is delivered under the L.C. system. Therefore, implementation of Community policing will be achieved under the LC system. In the urban areas especially in Kampala city however, due to high levels of population and crime, Community policing will be based at zonal level (LC1). There must be interaction at these levels if this programme is to succeed. The Community policing programme is conducted every first week of a month beginning with a Monday till Sunday. This however, does not mean that Unit Commanders and CLOs should not visit particular areas where it is absolutely important to go and meet the community in case there is a peculiar problem of a particular nature.

6.0 ACTIVITIES UNDER COMMUNITY POLICING

Building Private-Public Partnerships.

This is where Police officers, community members and Government agency representative's etc work together to change those conditions that allow crime and disorder problems to take hold in a particular neighborhood.

Information gathering and dissemination.

Community policing will play a critical role by providing the Police with information about specific crimes in their communities. This is the information that is developed into intelligence. The Police need to intervene early and effectively with specific crime patterns or individual career criminals. Integrating intelligence with operational activities e.g. By identifying hot spots, and target groups in order to deter potential criminal incidents.

Joint operations.

This will be achieved through forming joint patrols between the police and the communities to deter crime in their localities. Unit Commanders shall be responsible for ensuring focused and coordinated high visibility foot and motorized patrols based on zones and beat areas, maintain effective communication and coordination with friendly forces and ensuring quick response to calls.

Civic Education and mass sensitization.

During Community policing programme, the team will educate and sensitize communities to be security conscious and report any criminal activity. Citizens must be educated, sensitized and trained to recognize public safety concerns and reporting criminal behavior. The general objective is to empower communities to identify and resolve those public safety related issues confronting them.

Conducting meetings.

The team will conduct focused meetings where ever it will be necessary, in order to address issues concerning the underlying causes and conditions that contribute to crime problems in any community such as gangs, drug abuse, access to small / light weapons, criminal attacks to investments etc- that are contributing to crime in many different communities.

Registration of residents and visitors.

The team should encourage LCs to keep an up to date list of all people in the areas and what they do for a living. This will help to monitor illegal activities and crime in general.

Carry out a performance auditing of the police.

The communities policed must be able to take stock and evaluate the **efficiency, effectiveness and corrupt** tendencies in their police through Community policing. An accountable Police is one that invites and allows the community to audit and critique their performance. The community must inform the Police of their priorities and expectations and then hold them accountable for their performance. Hot lines especially for commanders should be provided to the public.

Supporting vulnerable groups in society. Domestic violence, gender based violence and child protection need to be given particular attention by the Police while on community policing. If these are not properly managed they lead to other crimes.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Community policing emphasizes building relationships between police and community members. It is not soft on crime. Police officers will continue to apprehend criminals and enforce the law. Crime prevention is at the heart of Community policing. The UPF seeks to promote a community based policing approach that is centered and focused on the fulfillment of community needs and aspirations. Communities that are empowered and clear about their problems are more willing to support the Police in devising strategies, and to commit their resources to achieve solutions to the problems identified. This community policing strategy therefore, provides the ammunition to achieving the above goals, objectives and aspirations. We are sure we have set a steady and prudent course for successfully accomplishing our goal of providing the highest quality of Police services and excellence to the citizens of Uganda.