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UNDERSTANDING THE CRITICALITY OF CONTEXT IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITY POLICING: A POST SOVIET CASE STUDY

Over the last 10 years the countries emerging from the break up of the Soviet Union have grappled with the reform of their criminal justice systems, with some enjoying considerable success, while others have seen virtually no change whatsoever. As part of this process, the provision of international assistance by a whole host of countries and organisations has been evident although questions have been raised about the efficacy of this work. This paper reflects upon a three-year project funded by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office to introduce context specific community policing into two areas of a city in Ukraine. It highlights the lessons learnt from this project, not only in terms of introducing new ways for the Ukrainian police to work, but also the way in which international assistance should be provided. It concludes that the experiences of other countries can be useful to the new states emerging from the former Soviet Union, but only if they are carefully tailored to the local context.

INTRODUCTION

The extent of democratic reform in the societies emerging from Soviet control and influence can best be described as patchy and inconsistent, with some countries making considerable progress while others continue to reflect many of the practices of the past. Reforming criminal justice systems – the quintessence of the former regime – has proved to be a particularly difficult, drawn out and contentious task for many countries (Ferreira, 1996). Although the rhetoric of modernising and democratising the criminal justice system is regularly espoused by political elites, particularly in terms of signing up to international conventions on human rights and inviting overseas groups to participate in reform projects, political discourse has been dominated by issues of crime control and order maintenance rather than broadening access to justice and increasing transparency and accountability: 'increased crime rates and fear of crime have resulted in order maintenance replacing freedom and democracy at the top of political agendas' (Mawby, 2001). Indeed, for many states of the former Soviet Union, the start of the 21st Century has seen them continuing with criminal justice systems that remain highly centralised and for the most part politicised and militarised police forces (Shelley, 1999; Mawby, 2001).

In countries such as Russia and Ukraine very little progress has been made in democratising police relations with the public despite numerous declarations, presidential edicts and even changes to the law. Overt statements expressing the need to re-orient the police towards public needs, to develop more transparency, and make public opinion the main criterion for evaluating police performance have in reality produced very little change in practices and procedures (Beck et al, 2004), In these countries there have been numerous examples of what might be described as tokenised reform experimentation. For instance, back in 1990, experiments on setting up municipal police forces began in the Soviet Union in an attempt to develop ways to make the police more responsive to local needs, but they did not become a common practice, and today municipal militias operate in just a few cities (Galeotti, 1993). More recently, in

2002, a new system of police performance evaluation was tested' in 7 regions in Russia, and is apparently to be introduced nationally, but little is known about the progress of this initiative.

Where there has been virtually no change since the collapse of the Soviet Union is in the wholly negative image the public have of the police. Their reputation continues to be one of an agency that routinely violates human rights, is involved in corruption and acts primarily in the pursuit of their own interests (Shelley, 1999; Gilinski, 2000). Consequently, public trust in the police in many Eastern European countries remains extremely low (Zvekic, 1996; Human Rights Watch, 1999). In addition, throughout the 1990s the police forces of the former Soviet Union have suffered from a severe crisis in funding, which left them understaffed, poorly trained and equipped, demoralised and unprepared to control growing crime rates and new patterns of criminality (Foglesong & Solomon, 2001). As a result, high levels of public distrust are also accompanied by strong perceptions of the police as incompetent, unprofessional and ineffective in coping with crime.

The 1990s saw a dramatic growth in overseas assistance to post Soviet countries, particularly relating to reforming their criminal justice systems, promoting democracy and the rule of law, good governance and compliance with international human rights standards. Both the US[1] and UK governments, legal organisations, training institutions, the World Bank, the EU, private charitable foundations and other bodies have spent millions of Euros and Dollars supporting this work. While it is very difficult to provide an overview on the overall success of this process, the available findings provide a very mixed picture. Some assessments draw positive conclusions stating that the programmes generally enjoyed broad support and highlight the considerable progress made. Others have been much more critical. For instance the US Rule of Law Assistance Programme was described as having 'limited impact so far, and results may not be sustainable in many cases' (Ford, 2001). Conclusions by the World Bank with respect to donor-supported reforms of criminal justice systems in Eastern Europe stated that 'many of the accumulated lessons are negative ones – techniques or tactics that don't work, create unfortunate side- effects, or simply produce less than was promised' (Hammergren, 2001).

A considerable amount of international policing assistance has been focused on promoting westernised approaches, in particular the much heralded 'community-policing' model. This US-born term has been defined in a number of different ways, although the version offered by Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux summarises well the underlying concept:

> *'a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between people and their police. It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together as equal partners to identify, prioritise, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighbourhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall quality of life in the area' (Trojanowicz, R, Bucqueroux, B, 1998: 6).*

Fundamental to this approach is a non-confrontational and broadly supportive relationship between the police and the community they are tasked to serve. While considerable scepticism remains about the efficacy of this approach in western countries, it has been the model of first choice for international donor agencies. The history of experimenting with community policing in post-Communist countries is rather short, with most programmes starting in the late 1990s. Some examples include police training initiatives promoted in Russia and Ukraine by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development, by the US State De-

partment's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Moscow-based Indem Foundation. Similar initiatives have been carried out in other post Soviet countries such as a community policing project in Mongolia supported by the Constitutional Legal Policy Institute (Focus Newsletter, 2002); the CIDA-funded project designed to reform the policing of the streets in the Czech Republic (CIDA, 2003); the 'Steps to community safety' project in Romania (Abraham, 2002); and reforms in Poland aimed at developing a new police organisational structure (Ivkovic and Haberfeld, 2000).

To date there is a lack of published data on how many of these initiatives have performed, although available reports are not always wholly positive. In Poland for instance, a recent study on attitudes towards community-oriented, problem-solving policing found 'a lack of desire to take part in the implementation process' (Haberfeld, et al, 2002), while in Romania it was concluded that: 'there has been a lot of talk about so-called community policing, but the results have not met expectations' (Abraham, 2001).

Some analysts think community policing is unlikely to develop in post-Communist societies because of cultural, organisational, socio-structural, political and other factors. Wright notes that 'as Szikinger (1993) has shown in relation to Hungary, the possibilities for adoption of …community-based models of policing are severely limited by the continued weakness of local communities in relation to the state' (Wright, 2001). Haberfeld in relation to Poland noted that 'it is unreasonable to consider the above concept [community policing] for a country which is still in the process of struggling with its own identity' (Haberfeld, 1997). More broadly, Brogden has argued that in the former Soviet countries: 'centralised organisation, cultural perceptions of the role and practices of the state police, and legal limitations of the police mandate – apart from a range of factors in relation to resources and tradition – militate against community policing development' (Brogden, 1999).

Certainly these studies suggest a lack of existing evidence to suggest that community policing is workable in post-Communist countries. However, what is not clear from these studies is the extent to which failure, or an inability to deliver the purported aims, is due to fundamental problems with the model or with the way in which it is (or is not) adapted to fit the local context. Have these failures got more to do with the nature of the foreign aid programmes and the way in which they are designed and delivered, than the inappropriateness of the generalised principles encompassed within the concept of community policing?

This paper provides results from a detailed evaluation of a recently completed three-year project on introducing context specific community policing in one Ukrainian city. It looks critically at the factors that may influence the success or failure of this type of project and highlights the critical importance of understanding the local context and generating local support.

AIMS AND METHOD

The three-year project (May 2000-May 2003) was part of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office ASSIST scheme administered by the British Council (Ukraine) and implemented by the University of Leicester (UK) in collaboration with the National University of Internal Affairs (Kharkiv, Ukraine). The key aims were: to introduce a number of community policing schemes selected to 'fit' the local context; and to

measure the effects they had on police-public relationships and public involvement in crime prevention.

At the outset, manageability was a fundamental concern of the research team and therefore the area chosen to take part in the experiment was carefully selected. The project was implemented in two contrasting areas within the city of Kharkiv (one of the largest industrial centres in Eastern Ukraine combining typical urban and suburban areas). One area was a centralised urban part of the city, while the other was a peripheral suburban/rural area with a high proportion of small private land plots and summer houses (dachas). The rural area was a district with a relatively settled population, close links between the police and the local community, a stabilised crime situation, and where people were more likely to express readiness to co-operate with the police. The urban district, in contrast, had a far more transient population, a large proportion of people living in rented accommodation, much more impersonal relations between the police and the residents, and higher levels of crime, with violent street crime around residential blocks seen as a particularly serious problem (Beck and Chistyakova, 2001).

The project was organised into three phases: background research; implementation; and evaluation. The background research included a large survey of local residents and police in the two areas, focused on current levels of crime and victimisation; the extent of concern about crime and the fear of crime; attitudes towards the police; readiness to co-operate; and the extent of co-operation between the police and the public (Beck and Chistyakova, 2001). The survey was conducted in July 2000 and covered 2,000 respondents (1,000 in each area) and all available police officers in both areas (56 officers). Based on the results from this research, a plan of implementation was designed that included the types of schemes normally considered to be part of the 'community policing' style of work:

- *Reorganisation of the police.* The plan included releasing the experimental units from existing requirements to meet 'performance indicators,'[2] introducing new job positions of Crime Prevention Co-ordinator, Youth Liaison Co-ordinator and Community Development Co-ordinator, and additional staff (20 officers) to release beat officers from current duty room responsibilities to allow them to spend more time working with the public.
- *Neighbourhood Watch (NW) schemes.* The plan involved establishing regular groups of NW co-ordinators to discuss crime and housing problems, disseminate crime prevention advice, and report suspicious persons/incidents to the police. A local NGO was invited to co-ordinate the scheme, organise meetings, distribute literature, and serve as a link between residents and the police. In addition, the NGO organised sport and cultural events in the neighbourhoods where police officers were involved.
- *Volunteer patrols*. Described as 'Assistants to Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinators', patrols of groups of 2-3 local residents were organised at night. They were provided with bright yellow over jackets and armbands specially designed for the purpose.
- *Target hardening/burglary reduction scheme.* This scheme was designed to respond to concerns of residents of blocks of flats with poor entrance security (this was a key concern highlighted by the initial research phase of the project). Groups of residents who were willing to make a small financial contribution were offered new security equipment (metal doors, locks, entrance lighting etc). A committee consisting of a police representative, a member of the local housing authority and the head of the local NGO were made responsible for co-ordinating the scheme.

- *Beat officer/public meetings.* Meetings were set up to enhance communication between the police and the local community. The meetings were planned as a regular (once a month) event advertised locally, that would normally start with the beat officer introducing himself and talking about crime and police work in the area. The public were then able to ask questions and raise any issues they might have. The meeting was also an opportunity for the dissemination of crime prevention advice.
- *School liaison schemes.* These were set up to build relationships between the police and local schools. Two NGOs working with children co-ordinated this work. The schemes involved regular visits to schools by beat officers and the newly established Youth Liaison Co-ordinator; distributing crime prevention literature among children, parents and teachers; and organising sport and cultural events for children. School Consultative Committees were organised to bring together children, teachers, parents and police officers to discuss relevant issues.

In addition, the National University of Internal Affairs developed and delivered a training course for those taking part, which focused upon the principles of community policing and how to deliver the specific schemes outlined above (Beck et al, 2001). The project also relied upon generating a considerable amount of publicity material7 to raise awareness, including advertising on TV and radio, a range of crime prevention leaflets, brochures, posters, signs, stickers, and advertising on the side of trolley buses and in the metro.

The schemes were launched in September-October 2001 and the evaluation phase began in October 2002. The evaluation survey covered 2,000 respondents and all the available police officers in both areas. In addition to repeating the questions included in the first survey, the second survey also asked respondents about their awareness of the schemes, whether they took part in any of them, how well each scheme was organised and how useful it was. In addition, supplementary surveys were conducted with school children, teachers, parents, NW participants and co-ordinators, and beat meeting attendees. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with heads and deputy heads of police divisions, heads of housing associations, heads of local councils and directors of local schools.

FINDINGS

The following section presents the findings from the evaluation phase of the project. First, data are considered on public awareness and involvement in the schemes. The data collected in 2000 and 2002 is then compared to see whether there were any significant changes in public perceptions of contacts with militia, readiness to co-operate, trust, and precautions taken to protect property. Additionally, in-depth interviews carried out in 2002 together with additional survey data is presented to illustrate any changes in police-public relationships, social cohesion and safety in the area, and perceptions of the police reorganisation.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE SCHEMES

Overall, 60 per cent, or three-fifths of the local residents of the experimental areas had heard[3] about at least one of the schemes developed by the project. The level of awareness varied depending on the type of scheme and the area in which it was implemented (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of local residents who had heard about the schemes[4]

Scheme	Rural	Urban	All
School liaison*	26	20	23
Beat meetings*	22	11	16
Property Marking	15	14	15
Neighbourhood Watch	12	12	12
Dissemination of literature*	15	8	11

Overall, local residents in the rural area were more aware of the schemes than their counterparts in the urban district. The school liaison scheme was the most known about initiative (23% of all residents) followed by beat meetings (16%) and then the property marking scheme (15%). The dissemination of literature was considered to be the scheme that the least number of respondents were aware of (11%).

The evaluation survey found that 15 per cent of the local population had taken part in at least one of the schemes. The level of involvement varied by scheme and by area of residence (Table 2).

Table 2.
Percentage of local residents who took part in the schemes at least once, by area[5]

Scheme	Rural	Urban	All
Received literature*	9	5	7
School liaison	7	5	6
Beat meetings*	5	3	4
Neighbourhood Watch	3	3	3
Property Marking*	3	1	2

The most likely way in which local residents were involved in the project was through receiving crime prevention literature (7%), followed by the school liaison programme. The relatively high score for crime prevention literature compared with the other schemes is probably because it is a quite easy and cheap to distribute it to a wide range of people living in the experimental areas. Distribution was done via NW Co-ordinators, beat officer visits, beat meetings, and visits to schools. Indeed, most of those who said they 'have heard' about the project had received some form of project literature. In terms of the participation in the school liaison scheme, the schools themselves played a significant role in reaching out to the local population and making them aware of it. The beat meetings, NW and property marking were organised in selected neighbourhoods within the areas (because of budgetary constraints) and participation in these schemes was inevitably more limited. Overall, rural residents were somewhat more actively involved through receiving literature, school liaison, beat meetings and property marking: perhaps existing closer militia links with the community in this area provided better grounds for implementing these schemes.

PERCEPTION OF CONTACTS WITH THE MILITIA

In 2002, people who for whatever reason, came into contact with the police were somewhat more satisfied than their counterparts in the pre-project survey in 2000. They were more likely to think they were treated in an attentive and sympathetic manner and less likely to view their treatment as indifferent or hostile (Table 3).

Table 3. Respondents' perception of the way the militia treated them[6]

Treatment	All residents	
	2000	2002
With attention and sympathy	36	39
With some attention	27	35
With indifference	27	21
With irritation	8	4
With hostility	2	1
Total	**100**	**100**

The rate at which members of the public thought that they had been badly treated was half the rate it was prior to the start of the project. This could in part be due to the training the police officers received, but it could also be due to their greater availability (through enabling beat officers to spend more time in the community).

The survey also measured the extent to which those members of the public who had contacted the police felt they had actually been helped in someway (either through recording or updating them on a specific crime, or giving them general information they had requested). The post-project survey found that those who had contacted police were more likely to say the police had helped them than those responding to the pre-project survey in 2000 (Table 4).

Table 4. Whether the militia helped the public[7]

Treatment	Rural*		Urban		All*	
	2000	2002	2000	2002	2000	2002
Yes	38	32	44	40	41	36
Probably yes	8	23	9	17	9	20
Probably no	14	9	3	7	12	10
No	32	26	11	12	32	25
Don't know	8	10	33	24	6	9
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

The difference was not statistically significant for both areas however – those in the rural area were far more likely to consider their treatment favourably than those living in the urban area. This is probably partly explained by the longevity of service of the officers working in the rural area compared with their counterparts in the urban area. High staff turnover was an ongoing concern in the urban area – the public there were perhaps less likely to be able to build lasting relationships with their local officers. The urban area also had to deal with a greater volume of crime which in turn could affect the ability of the local officers to provide the public with a markedly better service.

Data from the NW survey also suggested that there were improvements in how the public perceived their contacts with the police. Some 61 per cent of NW co-ordinators and 57 per cent NW of participants in the urban area, and 56 per cent of NW co-ordinators and 42 per cent of NW participants in the rural area believed the programme improved their relations with the militia. When asked in what ways the relations improved, the respondents pointed out: 'more frequent contacts with the militia'; 'better mutual understanding'; 'working together'; 'joint patrols', and 'militia started to get more involved in our lives'. Nobody thought the relations had got worse. Participating officers and other agencies involved also commented on the improvement of public perceptions of their contacts with the police:

'People now know they can contact me, the police, if they need to. They started to understand that the police can help even in simple family matters, just by giving advice and consultation' (beat officer, rural area).

'Meetings with the beat officers and co-ordinators helped to break the old stereotype: 'it's the same whether you contact the police or not…' (deputy head on public order, rural area).

'People now have a positive attitude towards police officer visits. They see that the police are not only an instrument of punishment, but also an advisor, a friend…' (director of a local school, rural area).

Greater police involvement with children such as helping to organise sports activities also seemed to positively help in changing their image:

'For the first time, the children were able to see the policeman as a friend, with who they could discuss different subjects, ask him questions … During project implementation, parents started to contact the police more often to ask for help with their children, and children themselves started to ask for help' (head of the NGO, participant in school liaison work).

'Several times we organised football matches for schoolchildren. When we played together they saw us as one of them … and they started to feel interested in such events. A month later one of them asked me: 'When is the next match with Solonitsevka Šurban areaĆ?'… Together with the parents we participated in making a school park' (beat officer, rural area).

'We went with the Youth Liaison Co-ordinator to childrens' clubs, schools, to neighbourhoods, we organised celebrations, sports events, gave them presents. Now they all know the police, they try on our hats; all children say they want to be policemen. When we come to schools we look smart in our uniforms, we play football with them…. They started to look at us differently…. When we walk in the neighbourhood, everybody recognises us…' (detective, underage offenders division of the CID, urban area).

Once again, there were key differences between the two areas. Children in the rural area were more likely to find meetings with militia officers interesting and were more likely to say they wanted such meetings to continue in the future (76% versus 63% in the urban area). More than a half of rural children (52%) saw militiaman as somebody who could help them in solving their problems, whereas only 30% of urban children held this view.

Overall, 12% of the population of the areas felt there was improvement in their relations with the police during the last year (against 4% of those who thought the relations got worse), and for those who participated in the schemes, the difference was even greater (16%).

READINESS TO HELP/CO-OPERATE

One of the key objectives of the project was to try and develop better co-operation between the police and the public. The post-project survey found that for all residents, the proportion of those who were willing to help had increased significantly (from 60% to 67%). Recognition of the importance of closer links between the police and the public was even more pronounced when the views of participants in one or more of the project schemes were compared with non participants (Table 5). Three quarters of scheme participants (75%) were of the view that closer links were important compared with two thirds of non- participants.

Table 5. Importance of closer links[8]

	All local residents*		Local residents 2002*	
	2000	**2002**	**Participants**	**Non-participants**
Yes/probably yes	60	67	75	66
Probably no/no	18	14	10	15
Don't know	22	19	12	19
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

In addition, related data showed that the proportion of those willing to meet their beat officer also increased from 26 per cent to 37 per cent, and reached nearly half (47%) among scheme participants.

In terms of looking to the future, a higher proportion of post-project respondents expressed readiness to help the police in the future; again, among the participants in the experiment the percentage of 'unconditional supporters' was significantly higher (Table 6).

Table 6. Readiness to help militia in the future[9]

	All local residents*		Local residents 2002*	
	2000	**2002**	**Participants**	**Non-participants**
Yes	30	36	47	34
Under certain conditions	44	45	40	46
Never	26	19	13	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

The data suggest that participation in the experiment could be a factor in increasing public readiness to co-operate with the police. These data are reinforced by comments made by participating police officers and a local authority representative who noticed that during the project implementation phase more local residents started to offer their assistance in reporting crime and suspicious persons:

'People started to receive more information about crime, about those who are wanted by the police, and we also started to receive more information about crime from the people' (beat officer, rural area).

'There is more information from the members of the public about crimes committed or about to be committed. People read the leaflets and know the telephone numbers they can call, they receive beat officer contact cards, so everyone can contact us. People call us and try to help' (beat officer, urban area).

'I already know 20-30 people who regularly come to the division, talk to the officers. They tell us about crimes committed or about to be committed, give us advice, where we should send the patrols to' (head of police division, urban area).

'Once I was at a local school talking about crime. When I asked if anyone had any questions, there was at the beginning silence in the room. But a few minutes later children and their parents started to come to me and one of them said: "on the first floor in the block where I live somebody sells drugs"… then a child tells me about his friend who is a bag-snatcher…. And then there were more children and parents telling about crimes. I did not expect such a response …' (detective, underage offenders division of the CID, urban area).

'Even in the investigation department, they started to feel benefits of closer links with the public.'(beat officer, rural area).

'Recently I received an anonymous call and that helped us to solve drug-related crime. People found out that they could call anonymously and give information about crimes. I could give several examples like this' (beat officer, rural area).

'Before, people were watching thieves stealing from their neighbours' garden but kept silence. Now, there are positive shifts. For example, there were cases of stealing from the local cemetery, and the thieves' neighbour reported the crime. Such cases were not reported before' (head of a village council).

'In our experimental areas we try to help each other. If a police officer comes to the neighbourhood and says: "I am from the CID department, I need your help", the people now have a more positive attitude, they are more willing to give information. In other areas they just shut their doors and refuse to help' (beat officer, rural area).

LEVELS OF TRUST IN THE POLICE

A dramatic difference between many eastern European countries and their western European counterparts is the extent to which the public do not trust the police. The post-project survey found that the overall proportion of people who expressed some degree of trust ('yes' or 'probably yes') in the police did not increase between 2000 and 2002 (Table 7).

Table 7. Whether the public trust the local militia[10]

Trust	**All local residents***		**Local residents 2002***	
	2000	**2002**	**Participants**	**Non-participants**
Yes	27	22	27	21
Probably yes	16	23	29	22
Probably no	12	16	12	16
No	19	17	13	18
Don't know	26	22	19	23
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

However, for those participating in one or more of the schemes, the proportion of positive responses were significantly higher – over a half stated they now trusted the militia compared with 43 per cent of non-participants. The data on the level of trust in the militia is an interesting finding and there may be at least two explanations for the inability of the project to make any significant difference in the way the public as a whole viewed the militia. First, the question asked the public about the police in general and their response may be based more upon their reflections on policing at the national level rather than in their own area (for instance ongoing scandals about police involvement in the assassination of members of the media and their role in organised crime). Secondly, deep seated negative attitudes about the role of police in society remain and it would be unrealistic to expect such a highly focussed and moderately resourced project to have a significant impact upon entire communities and their perceptions of the militia.

At the same time the data from the project suggests that lack of trust does not necessarily mean unwillingness to co-operate with the militia: in 2000, even before the start of the initiatives, 74% said they would co-operate with the police in the future (30% were ready to co-operate 'without any conditions' and 44% 'under certain conditions', see Table 8). As might be expected, the proportion of those ready to co-operate was lower

among those who said they did not trust in the police, but even amongst this group 19 per cent said that they were ready to co-operate without any conditions and as many as 43 per cent were ready to co-operate 'under certain conditions'. In the words of one of the interviewees: 'in principle, I am ready to co-operate. But I cannot suggest anything specific, and I am a bit scared of the police' (woman, 35 years old, urban area, 2000).

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN TO PROTECT PROPERTY

Comparisons between 2000 and 2002 data showed that for a number of crime prevention measures, significant progress had been achieved in educating the public to take greater precautions to protect their property, such as arrangements with neighbours, paying for guards, joining NW schemes, and not leaving their property empty. At the same time, the proportion of people who took no precautions to protect their property had decreased (Table 8).

Table 8. Precautions to protect property[11]

	All local residents		**Participants**
	2000	**2002**	
No precautions	40	37	28*
Try not to leave my property	16	23*	31*
Special locks	15	17	24*
Arrangement with neighbours	12	16*	27*
Neighbourhood Watch	–	1	6*

Not surprisingly, the changes were especially noticeable in those who participated in the experiment: among them there were significantly more who used special locks, arrangements with neighbours, and joined NW schemes.

For the urban residents, safety in and around blocks of flats was one of the main priorities identified in the pre-project survey of residents, and the project team decided to provide resources to the militia and the local NGO to tackle this problem. The area has now become a recognised case study in best practice in the city for improving security in block entrances. Results from the post-project survey highlighted the extent to which local residents 'bought in' to this initiative: the proportion of residents paying for an entrance guard increased from 9 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2002, while in the rural area it remained at less than 1 per cent. In addition, more people in the urban area started to use arrangements with neighbours (from 11% to 14%) and more people made arrangements not to leave their property empty (from 17% to 28%).

PERCEIVED IMPROVEMENTS IN PUBLIC ORDER AND PROPERTY SAFETY

A very significant proportion of NW participants believed that the programme helped them to make their homes more secure – 94 per cent of urban respondents and 78 per cent of rural respondents. Militia officers expressed similar views:[12]

'After the doors had been installed and the guards hired by the residents the burglary rates reduced significantly, because there is constant observation and the guards can see who is entering or leaving the block' (beat officer, urban area).

Overall, 20 per cent of the local residents thought that public order in the area had got better in the last year (against 8% of those who thought it had got worse); and 31 per cent of scheme participants thought the situation had improved.

PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE RE-ORGANISATION BY PARTICIPATING OFFICERS AND THE LOCAL NGO

The re-organisation of the militia in the two areas taking part in the project had been a core initiative, without which much of the other schemes would have not been possible. The post-project survey was interested in finding out what the militia officers taking part in this process thought about it, together with the staff working in the local NGO. Interviews with militia officers provided evidence of the impact of the organisational changes upon their work. According to some the benefits were highly noticeable:

'New posts of Co-ordinators were introduced… beat officers were released from their responsibilities in duty rooms which allowed them to work directly with the public... Coordinators are very important people; they are the link... all that worked quite well. Now there is more time and more possibilities, there is less pressure to achieve the performance indicators, statistical figures; and there is more time for genuine communication' (deputy head on public order, rural area).

'Both beat officers and CID officers comment positively on the experiment. It seriously helps us in our work. We receive more information from the public. I think this project should be implemented in the whole of Ukraine' (beat officer, urban area).

'A particularly good thing about the experiment was that we should inform citizens living in our area about the situation with crime. This is very useful so that people could understand what kinds of crime are more frequent and where they take place… They are our main helpers' (beat officer, urban area).

However, there were those who were less convinced and pointed to the continuing problem of meeting nationally set performance targets and being able to focus exclusively on the needs of local communities:

'As it stands now, we have got our 'global' tasks, and we have to fulfil them, whether we are or we are not in the experiment' (head of police subdivision, rural area).

'Nobody released us from the performance indicators. That part of the experiment did not turn out as expected' (deputy head on public order, rural area).

The head of the NGO organising the NW scheme also felt there was lack of involvement of the police officers assigned as Community Development Coordinators:

'There were cases when we had to cancel a meeting because the militia officer did not turn up. Sometimes it was difficult simply to find a co-ordinator from the militia and talk to him. Besides, in Solonitsevka Šrural areaĆ we had the co-ordinator from the militia changed 5 times during the year' (from the report of the head of the NGO).

THE SOVIET LEGACY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

The Kharkov version of Neighbourhood Watch seemed to reawaken community spirit within groups of local residents – something which many respondents said had disappeared since the end of the Soviet era. According to the surveys carried out by the project team, the main reasons why the NW programme was considered important and worthwhile by residents was that they felt 'we have to solve our problems together'; 'somebody has to do it' and 'it is my duty'.

Interviews with the heads of housing associations and the NGO co-ordinating NW suggested that closer links were developed between residents of the blocks taking part:

'People got closer together during the experiment. Before they did not care much about each other. You know, "this does not concern me". And when they decided to install the doors, to hire guards, they got to know each other much better. Through the experiment they became friends' (head of a housing association, urban area).

Some 80 per cent of participants in the urban area and 54 per cent in the rural area said the programme had improved relations between them. This was particularly noticeable amongst the older generation of residents who constituted the 'core' of the NW group. These people's willingness to participate was very much based upon their habit of being part of a 'collective', contributing to communal action, a sense of duty, and for many – past experience of being involved in state-organised forms of public assistance to the milita during the Soviet times:

'I used to be a member of a public patrol in the past… we have to get together again, to solve problems of public order' (man, 65 years old, urban area, 2000).

'The older generation know and understand public patrols very well, because they participated in them in the past. This is their youth, their life. They are quite active participants' (director of local school, rural area, 2002).

The data also showed that practices such as militia-public patrols are remembered not just for being instruments of state control but also as practices of crime prevention that proved to have some benefits to the community:

'To prevent crime, the Soviet practice of public patrols should be restored' (woman, 49 years old, rural area, 2000).

'I think patrols were a very good practice of co-operation with the public' (milita officer, 38 years old, man, rural area, 2000).

As data from this project suggests, those who were actively involved in the past might accept ideas of community policing more readily. People who have had experience of helping the militia were more likely to say they were ready to co-operate with them in the future (Beck and Chistyakova, 2001). Moreover, people who said they collaborated with the milita in the past were more likely to get involved in the schemes developed by the project: among them, 24 per cent took part in at least one of the schemes, whereas among those who did not have such experience only 13 per cent took part.

LACK OF RESOURCES AS A BARRIER TO IMPLEMENTATION

Before the start of the experiment, when militia officers were asked about the major problems faced by the militia, 'poor technical equipment' (95% of answers) and 'poor pay' (85%) were at the top of the list. Although the experiment was able to provide pay for 10 additional officers, the basic level of the pay still remained at survival level and was certainly insufficient to motivate officers to contribute to the additional work that some of the schemes required. Poor and backward technical and technological equipment remained a serious obstacle throughout the experiment. In the evaluation interviews with militia officers, lack of technical resources and financial incentives were named among the main reasons for difficulties in establishing or maintaining links with the local residents. In particular, respondents pointed out a severe lack of gasoline, cars, and a lack of telephone/radio connections, which was a particular concern in the rural area.

DISCUSSION

This intensive and long term project has generated a considerable number of findings on the efficacy of western models of policing for countries emerging from the Soviet era. It has also highlighted key factors relating to the provision of international assistance on police reform. Overall, the project demonstrated that some of the initiatives commonly used as part of a community policing model can be introduced into a post-Soviet state. Public perceptions of the police can be modestly improved as can their readiness to provide assistance. The militia divisions taking part in the project found that they received more information from the public about crime, dangerous places and suspicious persons. The project also showed that crime prevention schemes can help to encourage people to be more vigilant, take more measures to protect their property from crime; enhance feelings of safety and play a role in improving social cohesion in a neighbourhood.[13]

A key finding, and something which international donors intending to become involved in facilitating community policing projects need to be acutely aware off, is adequately understanding the perception of the public – how do they feel about their local police, what commitment can you expect from them and how likely are they to co-operate? In Kharkov, the public, despite having very low levels of trust in the militia, thought that co-operation was important – helping the militia was seen as an important act in itself, irrespective of whether the police were viewed as doing a good or bad job. Citizens were willing to help because they thought it was important in generating community safety and public order. Understanding this was critical in developing community policing style initiatives that could 'tap in' to this perspective.

The project also found that past experiences and memories of the Soviet version of community policing (in particular, among the older generation) can become a facilitator of public involvement in certain schemes, but discourage people from participation in some other schemes. Certainly particular practices are remembered mostly as mechanisms designed to further state and party control and act as a means of spying on the public. Others were seen as key factors in maintaining community safety and public order (such as citizen patrols and regular meetings to discuss local problems). Understanding past policing initiatives and reflecting upon how they may influence the extent to which the public were likely to become involved in future schemes was an important process – not least in the language to be used when 'advertising' the schemes. The key was to develop a community policing agenda that was focused on delivering results designed to enhance feelings of local safety rather than serving the ideological requirements of the political elite.

Key to the success of many of the schemes was the active involvement of a range of non-police agencies in their design and implementation. In particular, NGOs and housing authorities acted as critical link or bridge agencies between the militia and local residents. The public in most post-Communist states tend to trust NGOs much more than they do the state in general and the militia in particular. For instance, the NGOs working on this project were able to act as a conduit between the militia and the public, arranging meetings, organising local groups and distributing information. This finding confirms those found by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (2002): 'NGOs can play an important role in supporting the development towards community policing in, for example, providing human rights training to police officers'. In addition, Kremplewski (2001) recommended that the police and NGOs should share responsibilities for crime prevention.

There are undoubtedly a number of serious impediments to introducing community policing style initiatives in post-Communist societies and the Kharkov project ran into many of them. Brogden (1999) is right in saying that the organisation of the militia is a

major obstacle. Responses from rank-and-file officers in this study clearly highlighted the negative impact of centralised controls upon the way in which they were able to interact with the public. The use of performance indicators solely based upon clear up rates runs counter to providing a customer-friendly police service – it encourages bad and illegal police practices (such as the use of torture to secure confessions and the discouragement of reporting by the public of difficult to solve crimes) and ensures that the priority of the police is always upon detection rather than prevention. Without Government and Ministry level commitment to genuine structural and indeed ideological change to the way in which the militia operate, then the prospects for widespread adoption of community policing seems remote. Certainly within Ukraine, inertia and the perpetuation of the status quo seems to be the prevailing doctrine although there have been some more encouraging recent developments over willingness to change[14]. Those providing international assistance need to reflect upon the implications of broader organisational and political structures within which the police operate, otherwise pilot projects will remain pilots and the dissemination of best practice will not be achieved.

Understanding the extent to which local partners have access to resources is an important factor when considering the implementation of community-policing style initiatives. As Wright (2001) properly highlighted: 'in the West, community policing initiatives have been very resource-intensive'. The idea that community policing is a cheap option is something that potential recipients of aid need to be very quickly disabused of. This is compounded by the overall lack of resources most police forces of post-Soviet countries have – in Ukraine, even the basic needs of the police are only financed at one third of the required level (Kravchenko quoted in Foglesong and Solomon, 2001). Stories of a lack of petrol for cars, officers having to use and pay for local transport to attend incidents and little or no technical equpment in police stations were common from the Kharkov study.

What these findings highlight is the criticality of understanding the local context – without which any project is likely to fail. Parachuting in policing models and expecting them to work is not only grossly naïve but can be positively counter productive. Understanding the context takes time and it requires the active involvement of local partners (the Kharkov project spent one year researching the context before starting any implementation phase). It is also important to be flexible in the approach to be adopted – how might a particular initiative need to be adapted to meet the local context? For instance, the Kharkov project found that relatively close links between the militia, local authorities and schools in the rural area facilitated the development of youth liaison schemes, while concerns of urban residents about block and neighbourhood safety contributed to the success of NW and burglary reduction in the urban district.

The philosophy of community policing is relatively simple – the police and the public work together to solve local problems. The reality is that implementing such an approach is highly dependent upon a complex historical web of political, social and economic factors that together shape the prospects for success. Understanding this web is a critical component in establishing police reform in post Soviet societies.

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NOTES

1 For instance, through US Anti-Crime Training and Technical Assistance Program, $145 million has been provided in 1995-2002 in the Eurasian states to familiarise post-Soviet law enforcement agencies with modern techniques for coping with crime and reform the legal underpinnings of law enforcement and judicial entities, and strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights.

2 All policing areas are judged against national averages (particularly clear up rates) and those that are below them are considered to be failing in their duties and may face some form of disciplinary action. It is thought that this has a significant effect upon the way in which the militia record and investigate crime (in particular discouraging the recording of crimes that are difficult to solve).

3 When asked whether they have heard about the schemes, the respondents were given options: 'yes', 'probably yes' and 'no'.

4 Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

5 Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

6 The differences in the table are statistically significant.

7 Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

8 Statistically significant differences are marked with *

9 Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

10 Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

11 Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Statistically significant differences are marked with *.

12 Unfortunately it was not possible to use victimisation data to obtain a statistical measure of change in the rates of burglary in the Neighbourhood Watch blocks because of the relatively small sample and low overall rate of reported burglaries (3% in 2000 and 2% in 2002). In addition, the militia did not have sufficient records on reported burglaries from the participating NW blocks. Therefore, the researchers could only rely upon opinions expressed by the militia and residents themselves.

13 In the Kharkov experiment, several groups of NW participants made a decision to collect money and repair and redesign their block entrances. The local residents then started to raise their own problem-solving agenda. The spectrum of future activities (as mentioned by the NW survey respondents) included regeneration; help to retired, poor, and disabled; repairing entrances; and organising leisure activities for young people.

14 Soon after the end of the project, the Ministry of Interior held a special meeting to evaluate the findings from the project and how the results should be disseminated throughout the organisation. This linked with the Presidential Order of 26th of March 2002 'On measures to strengthen discipline and improve the work of the staff of law enforcement bodies'. Kharkov was also identified as the 'home base' for the dissemination of know-how relating to interactions between the militia and the public.

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