

COMMUNITY-POLICE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION IN SOMALIA

LESSONS LEARNT

Sean Tait, Thomas Probert and
Abdirahman Maalim Gossar



COMMUNITY-POLICE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

LESSONS LEARNT

Sean Tait, Thomas Probert and Abdirahman Maalim Gossar



Published by Danish Demining Group (DDG), November 2019

Danish Demining Group
Borgergade 10, 3rd floor
1300 Copenhagen K.

Tel: +45 3373 5000
Email: ddg@drc.dk

Photo credit: Africa Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

Designed and typeset by COMPRESS.dsl

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	02
Summary	03
Introduction	04
Methodology	05
Community-police building in Somalia	06
Strengthening police accountability and access to justice	08
Community-police cooperation in Somalia	11
Early observations	14
Establishing the CPDC committees and raising awareness of their role	14
Using CPDC to clarify local safety needs	15
Engagement that fosters trust, access and legitimacy	16
Insecurity and crime prevention	17
Inclusion of women and youths in local security decision-making	18
Rights-based policing and accountability	20
Conclusion	22
References	25
About the authors	26

Abbreviations and acronyms

APCOF	African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum
CAG	Community action group
COB	Civilian oversight board
CPDC	Community-police dialogue and cooperation
DDG	Danish Demining Group
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
FGD	Focus-group discussions
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member State
MOIS	Ministry of Internal Security
IDP	Internally displaced person
JPP	Joint Policing Project
KII	Key informant interview
LAW	Legal Action Worldwide
NPM	New Policing Model
PAC	Police advisory committee
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPF	Somali Police Force
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPOL	United Nations Police

Summary

This study, conducted between May and July 2019, considers the preliminary impact of the first 12 months of implementation of a programme promoting community-police dialogue and cooperation (CPDC) through the vehicle of the CPDC committees in Somalia.

The study further considers the views of CPDC committee members (including police officers) regarding the initiative's impact on community-police relations, reporting of crime, fear of crime, the rights-based approach to policing, and the involvement of women and youths in local security decision-making.

The study finds that this initiative has become institutionalised in local governance structures and that it provides insight into future thinking about police policy and law-making. In particular, it raises the importance of articulating and providing for institutional systems of local community-police dialogue in any review of the Somali Police Act, and aligning this with the new federal dispensation.

It is important that police development keeps pace with the community's expectations concerning a more rights-oriented and responsive police service. CPDC committees should consciously avoid usurping police functions, such as being the intermediary in reporting crimes, and should encourage complainants to access the police directly. Finally, any intervention of this nature must guard against becoming a form of preferential gatekeeper. It is important to avoid unintentionally establishing differentiations between places where initiatives are implemented and those where they are not; or *within* communities where initiatives exist, or differentiating between individuals who are actively involved and those who are not.

Introduction

The Danish Demining Group (DDG) is currently implementing 'The Time is Now: Strengthening Police Accountability and Access to Justice in Somalia', a 34-month project that aims 'to contribute to peace and stabilisation of fragile parts of Somalia by strengthening the security and justice architecture (through) promoting more inclusive, effective, and accountable security and justice institutions in 10 districts across Somalia'. The project, as part of the wider Somalia Security and Justice Programme (SSJP), managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), seeks to create more accountable, capable, and rights-based policing and justice systems in targeted areas. It is intended that lessons from this work will inform the development of the federal security and justice architecture.

This paper describes the initial reception of the CPDC initiative by stakeholders in three districts, namely Jowhar, Dollow and Baidoa. Specifically, it seeks to understand, to the extent possible, the impact of CPDC on inclusive, legitimate and rights-based policing, and how CPDC has affected relationships between communities and customary and statutory justice institutions.

The paper begins with a short analysis of police development within the context of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its New Policing Model (NPM) before discussing in more detail the CPDC methodology for promoting community-police dialogue.

The paper reflects on key issues, including:

- The extent to which CPDC has provided, in the eyes of the public, more or less access to individual rights-based justice at the local level;
- The impact of CPDC initiatives on inclusive, effective and legitimate policing and on stability and societal cohesion in the targeted districts; and
- The effect of CPDC on the relationship between communities and customary and statutory justice systems/institutions.

Methodology

The study was undertaken by the DDG and the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) over a period of three months (from May to July 2019) in three of the ten locations in which the DDG is implementing its CPDC programme, namely Jowhar, Dollow and Baidoa. Following a desk review, the DDG and APCOF developed a questionnaire that DDG field researchers administered in addition to key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus-group discussions (FGDs). Researchers conducted interviews in both English and Somali, and responses were recorded in English.

Responses were used to compile anecdotal descriptions and assessments of respondents' experiences of participating in CPDC. All but two of the individuals interviewed had participated regularly in CPDC work. At certain stages in the interviews, respondents were asked for their views on relations among the community, the CPDC committees and the police. These provided strong impressions of how CPDC perceives itself, but, given the small scale and purposive nature of its survey sample, this study makes no claim to represent the views of the community at large.

In addition to interviews conducted with those involved in the programme, this study draws on programme documentation and reference works, including a comprehensive baseline study that was conducted during the early stages of the project.

Community-police building in Somalia

Somalia is slowly emerging from several decades of conflict that followed the collapse of the Siad Barre Regime in 1991. The establishment, in 2012, of the FGS brought about new attempts to reinvigorate stabilisation and state-building processes.

The NPM, developed in line with the security pact signed in London in 2012, establishes a federal system for policing with components at the local and Federal Member State (FMS) levels, along with the FGS level. A number of factors characterise police-building in Somalia, including the fact that Somalia's formal security institutions coexist, of necessity, with traditional and non-state security and justice formations. These non-state formations often have a deeper reach and legitimacy than those of the state. To enforce the law, the FGS and FMS police must become acceptable to local communities and build consensus on the parameters and jurisdictions of formal policing. The need to build local consensus aligns with the Strategy Plan of the Ministry of Security and the DDR (2014–2018) to operationalise a philosophy of community policing.

There are many definitions of the term 'community policing', which can create controversy as the concept is transferred from one jurisdiction to another. By common definition, community policing contrasts a model of police work focused at local levels¹ with a more traditional, centrally driven policing concept. Scholars like Bayley have understood community policing to involve greater discretion by local commanders in responding to local needs, the mobilisation of public and private non-police agencies, and a greater focus on prevention. Somalia's Strategy Plan sets a rationale for community policing to build cooperation and consensus among local communities.²

The importance of community policing to the Somali Police Force (SPF) is confirmed by the inclusion of such policing as a module in basic recruit training. In this context, community policing is explained as a philosophy and strategy to encourage the public to become partners with the police in demonstrating responsiveness, impartiality, fairness and honesty. Community policing in practice is a means to: building understanding between police and communities; joint community-police patrolling; and joint training and capacity-building and partnership in addressing safety concerns.³

1 See E. Maguire & S. Mastrofski, *Patterns of community policing in the United States*, *Police Quarterly* (2000).

2 See M. Maroga, *Community policing and station-level accountability*, CSV, Johannesburg, 2005.

3 Basic recruit training module 3, Somali Police Force, UNODC, 2017.

FMS policing plans cascade the NPM to the FMS level. These plans seek to:

- Cultivate police officials who demonstrate professionalism, vigilance, integrity, accountability and pride in their work, and who obey and enforce laws without any consideration of class, clan, creed, or condition;
- Recruit young graduates with high integrity and professionalism; and
- Ensure gender balance and train all police officers according to a standardised curriculum.⁴

FMS-level community-police service officers – who serve as the key police interlocutors in any community-police cooperation initiative – have clearly stated functions that resonate with community policing practice as it has developed internationally. They are tasked to:

- Perform mobile and foot patrols to show a presence in the community;
- Be first responders with regard to cases and complaints reported by the community;
- Protect public and private safety and security of life and property;
- Maintain law and order in the area of responsibility;
- Promote public awareness of security;
- Educate the public on gender issues and sexual and gender-based violence;
- Protect vulnerable groups;
- Undertake preliminary investigations of crimes;
- Arrest and detain offenders; and
- Provide assistance and relief in the event of public and private disasters.⁵

In a commentary on good practices and lessons learnt from the development and implementation of the NPM, development partners such as the United Nations Police (UNPOL) acknowledge the importance of a bottom-up process of police reform and community-based, intelligence-led policing, giving credence to the importance of community-police cooperation. UNPOL re-emphasises the need to build strong community relationships in order to help promote legitimacy and accountability and enhance intelligence capacity with limited resources. The joint rule-of-law programme, supported by development partners from 2018 to 2020, has further confirmed among its priorities police capacity-building with a focus on improving police service delivery at the community level.⁶

4 State police plans of Jubaland and Hirshabelle, 2017.

5 Hirshabelle Police Plan, 2017.

6 Good practices and lessons learnt from the development and implementation of the New Policing Model, UNPOL.

Strengthening police accountability and access to justice

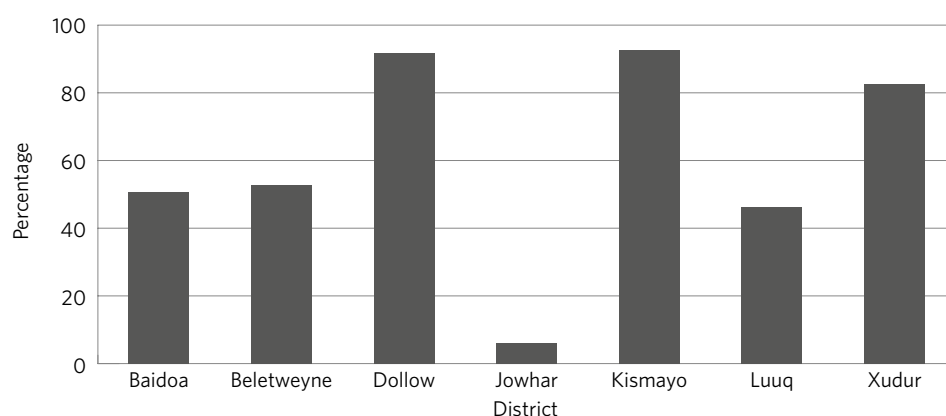
Community-police dialogue is a key component of the theory of change informing the DDG's 'The Time is Now' programme. The programme's overall objective is to contribute to peace in, and stabilisation of, fragile parts of South-Central Somalia by strengthening the security and justice architecture.

The programme, while recognising Somalia's continuing fragility, acknowledges the opportunity provided by the 2012 Peace Pact and the establishment of the FGS and FMS.

The programme's theory of change posits that more inclusive, accountable security and justice institutions can be advanced by providing the police with relevant and practical training and knowledge and by facilitating ongoing community-police dialogue.

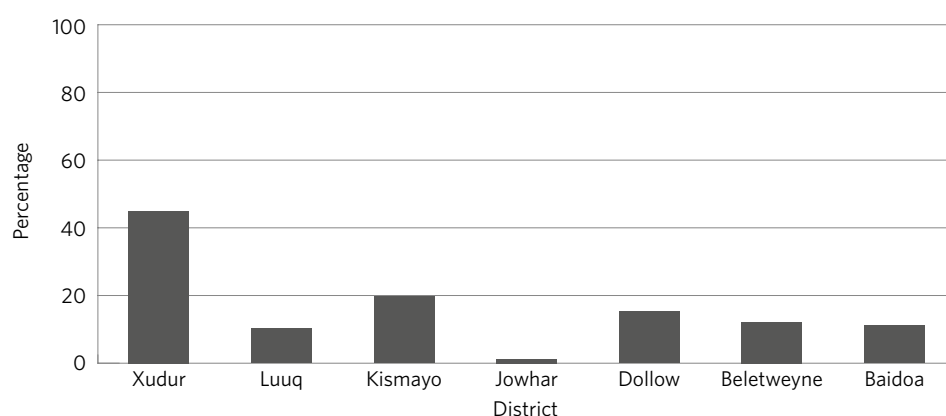
The importance of community-police dialogue was confirmed in a baseline study that the DDG conducted in 2018 ahead of its efforts to develop community-police dialogue. The study noted that satisfaction with police services varied across districts, with Jowhar and Baidoa having the lowest levels of satisfaction, while Dollow reported higher levels. Survey results also showed that police-community relations in Jowhar and Baidoa were among the weakest, while Dollow exhibited much stronger relations. At the time, Jowhar did not appear to have an established CPDC committee, presenting an apparent correlation between the presence of an effective committee and positive community impressions of community-police relations.

Figure 1: Baseline proportion of respondents satisfied with their treatment by the police, disaggregated by district



These satisfaction levels ostensibly overlapped with levels of community engagement in community-police meetings. Of the three sites revisited during the current research, Dollow had the highest baseline level of engagement, with 15% of respondents reporting participation in a CPDC meeting, while, in Baidoa, 11% claimed to have participated. In Jowhar, where satisfaction with the police was the lowest, there was almost no engagement at all.

Figure 2: Baseline levels of reported participation in community-police meetings by the community



The baseline study concluded that, while the police and the community would benefit from improved equipment, training and infrastructure, efforts to improve police-community communication and cooperation have the greatest impact.⁷ The baseline study contends that community-police dialogue can have multiple benefits. The community is sensitised about the limitations the police face and can be mobilised to overcome these limitations, or at least revise their expectations to be more realistic. The types of training and skills to be developed in the police force can be agreed upon, highlighting training that is essential to the community and motivating the police to obtain these skills so that their legitimacy and authority within the community are bolstered.

Improved police-community relations appear to be related to improved trust in the police's abilities and to increased information-sharing, with a positive impact on the security environment. Finally, the CPDC committee can act as a forum through which complaints against the police can be managed and addressed with improved transparency, eventually resulting in improved police services.⁸

The DDG theory of change assumes that a police service capable of providing fair and equitable service to communities is likely to win trust and enhance its legitimacy. While the need for basic training in policing is acknowledged, this type of training falls within the realm of other SSJP partners such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The DDG can instead add value add by focusing on developing an understanding within the police of human rights principles underpinning policing, specifically with regard to arrest and detention. Capacity-building in human rights-based approaches to

⁷ K. Armstrong, Baseline assessment: 'The Time is Now' – strengthening police accountability and access to justice in Somalia, DDG, March 2018.

⁸ Ibid.

policing is supported by a second component of the programme, namely relationship-building and collaboration between police and communities so as to ensure public safety.

These components are part of a larger programme that draws together formal and traditional systems of justice and security provision.

Output One of the programme recognises that many members of the newly formed federal FMS police have limited exposure to human rights awareness. This hinders compliance and allows violations to undermine community confidence and trust in the police. The programme thus seeks to build police officers' knowledge through a series of training courses on human rights, and, specifically, on the police's mandate to fulfil their role in a manner that is accountable and human rights-compliant. This is aimed separately at police leadership, police members, and key stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group training builds upon the dialogues set out in Output Two. This output acknowledges that a lack of community oversight and engagement, and poor communication between police and communities, contributes to mistrust, misconceptions, and inadequate cooperation between police and communities. The programme seeks to improve communication and dialogue between communities and police on practical public security challenges and priorities through CPDC forums and regular meetings, paving the way for Bayley's descriptors of community policing, namely responsiveness to local needs, cooperation with stakeholders outside of the police, and exploring prevention strategies.

Output Three supports traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms to become more inclusive and representative. These seek to enhance conflict-resolution capacity and encourage collaboration between traditional systems and emerging formal justice structures by facilitating inclusive dialogue with communities and the police.

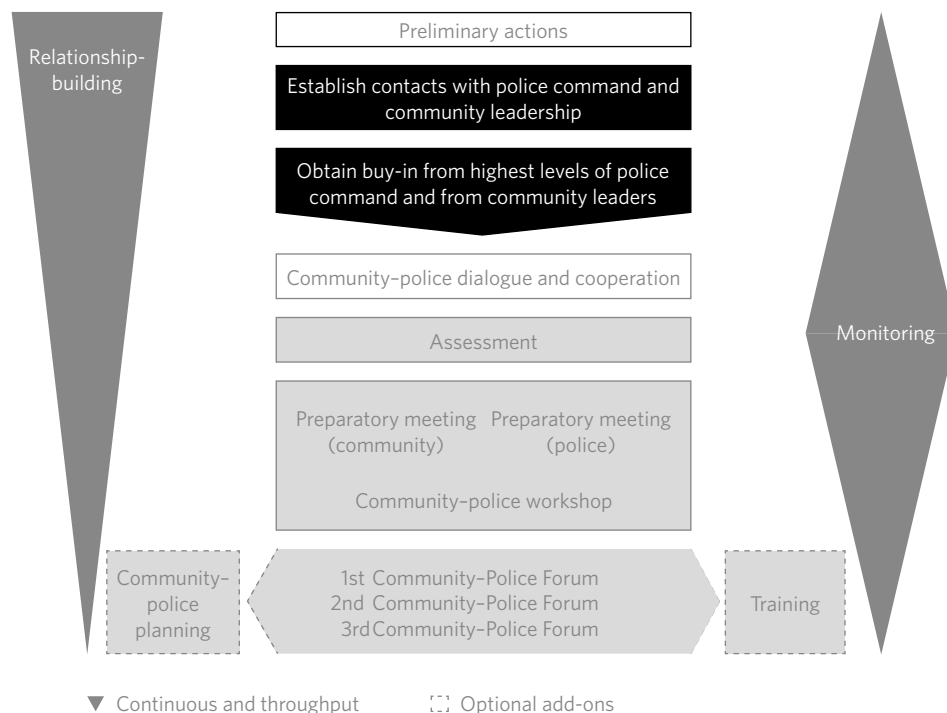
Output Four takes the knowledge developed at the local level and seeks to inform policymaking at state and federal levels through evidence-based research.

Community-police cooperation in Somalia

The CPDC committees, facilitated by the DDG, are intended to build mutual trust and cooperation between communities and the police and to encourage the development of more community-focused policing. The CPDC methodology is an incremental, consultative and inclusive process designed to clarify the roles of all involved in order to enhance trust and cooperation while building relations among stakeholders, as well as to support the provision of security services for the community.

In the initial stages of the process, the police are confirmed as responsible for the provision of security through mobilised capacity and resources, the causes of crime are addressed, and the public is educated on the role of the police. Community members are encouraged to express their concerns and fears, share relevant information, voluntarily comply with the laws in place, and engage with the police as the main providers of security services.

Figure 3: CPDC Development Process



The methodology employed to develop subsequent cooperation takes place over five phases: separate and then joint preparatory meetings of community members and the police; trust-building exercises; regular meetings of structured forums; capacity-building; and, eventually, the development and implementation of joint practical plans to promote safety.

Training and capacity-building are provided at several stages. In addition to initial training to explain the basic concepts of the 'dialogue' process, three training products have been developed specifically for this intervention to inculcate key rights concepts. These are aimed at station commanders, SPF members and the CPDC committees themselves.

A baseline study conducted by the DDG and APCOF in May 2018 found that police members had received little or no rights-based training before assuming their duties. They had little to no knowledge of the Bill of Rights in the Provisional Constitution. While senior members were more exposed to these issues, they had few tools at their disposal to manage and supervise, effectively leading to challenges with non-compliance, impunity and ad hoc application. The training was thus designed to provide basic literacy and a common understanding for each of these cohorts (police leadership, rank-and-file officers and community members) on what was expected of the police when it came to arrest, detention, dignity, non-discrimination, etc. The leadership training provides additional inputs on management and supervision, while the CPDC committees were focused on aspects such as monitoring compliance.⁹

CPDC is not the only model of police-community cooperation being tested in Somalia but arguably shows the highest degree of institutionalisation, both in the formality of its structure and also in its long history of application in various regions of Somalia.

Other models with objectives similar to those of CPDC include the civilian oversight boards (COBs), community action groups (CAGs) and police advisory committees (PACs).

COBs, which are currently supported by Legal Action Worldwide (LAW), are modelled on the PAC, an accountability mechanism supported by the UNDP under the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) until 2012. They operate through a process of weekly station visits to monitor the physical conditions of cells, the welfare of detainees, and the extent to which procedural safeguards for detainees have been met. LAW developed the COB concept in order to intervene upstream and address rights violations, including excessive periods of pre-trial police detention, arbitrary arrests, etc., especially with regard to internally displaced persons (IDPs). The methodology is similar in some ways to CPDC, including its initial exploration of the concept with local authorities, traditional elders, community members and the police, its establishment of an oversight body, and its focus on training, follow-up and mentoring support. Where the COB deviates from CPDC is that its role does not expand into developing and implementing prevention and safety initiatives but focuses more on monitoring complaints received from the community and facilitating their referral for resolution to either the Office of the Attorney General or local networks of community paralegals. The initiative is currently underway in two police stations in Mogadishu and will be reviewed this year ahead of an expansion both within Mogadishu and to Kismayo.¹⁰

⁹ Rights-based training for police members and station commanders, DDG, 2019.

¹⁰ Telephonic interview with S. Ndirangu, A. Hassan Ali and A. Bior of LAW. 26 August 2019.

Since 2016, Saferworld has facilitated police accountability committees—also modelled on the earlier TFG structure—that are linked to CAGs in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Kismayo. These committees have conducted 256 visits to 35 police stations and prisons over this period. The 20-member CAGs act as champions for community safety, contact points for people to raise concerns, and advocates for change. The programme begins by selecting CAG members based on an agreed set of criteria aimed at ensuring balance and diversity. Once established, CAG members undergo training in organisational management, gender and conflict sensitivity, along with advocacy skills. Research into conflict dynamics is undertaken, and then regular meetings are facilitated to develop action plans and follow up on progress.¹¹ While similar to the CPDC committees in certain aspects, the CAGs deviate in that they sometimes comprise only civilian members and their action plans are implemented by civil society.¹²

¹¹ www.saferworld.org.uk.

¹² In Baidoa, the CAG is made up only of civil society members.

Early observations

Establishing the CPDC committees and raising awareness of their role

Almost all interviewees for this study believed that the CPDC committees had been well received, both by the communities and by the police. Many highlighted the mobilisation work conducted by the CPDC committees, which sensitised the community and alerted those who were not directly participating in CPDC work to the initiative's existence. Meanwhile, various training ensured that police officers were highly aware of the programme.

Most respondents mentioned the joint patrols conducted by CPDC committee members alongside police officers, both as a practical crime-prevention innovation and as a means for the community to understand the work being done. Other respondents highlighted the fact that the community became aware of CPDC work by virtue of its results in resolving disputes and referring cases. One respondent in Jowhar emphasised that, during Friday prayers, some Imams in the local mosque discussed community safety concerns and the work of the CPDC committee.

Absent any follow-up population-level surveys, it is difficult to empirically assess the extent to which the community has been made aware of CPDC's existence, but training given to the direct participants, combined with the deliberately participatory nature of the CPDC committee membership design, is likely to have expanded on the baseline awareness level of the key themes of police accountability.

Police officers interviewed across the three communities were positive about how widely known CPDC was, though one officer noted that awareness was not universal; sometimes, when he tried to tell someone that he was going to refer their case to the CPDC committee, they were not aware of the committee.

When discussing how CPDC committees were set up, many respondents highlighted the representative nature of the process and how efforts were made to ensure that different groups could have their voices heard. One police officer in Jowhar noted that there had been a preparatory meeting during which members of the police and the community jointly drafted criteria for committee membership. In a response suggestive of high levels of community enthusiasm, a respondent in Baidoa noted that everybody wanted to be on the committee and that this had caused a strain in community relations.

Using CPDC to clarify local safety needs

One of the aims of the CPDC forums was to assist local communities to identify local safety needs. It was hoped that this would inform the adoption of measures to respond to these needs. In Dollow, CPDC participants mentioned discussing issues such as cars being driven by irresponsible youths as well as donkey carts and rickshaws (*bajaj*) posing security risks (in part due to their past use as vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices by al-Shabaab).

Many community respondents discussed the interactive or collaborative approach facilitated by the CPDC committees. Joint patrols appear to have contributed to a friendlier police-community relationship. One Dollow resident noted:

[A]s long as ... CPDC is a community-based approach, it [makes] it possible to stop crimes and incidents; [members] do not wear police attire and they report cases daily inside and outside the town. This allows ... CPDC members to easily identify suspects and deal with them when applicable and necessary.

However, given the small sample used for this study, it is difficult to establish whether this friendly relationship applies to the whole community or only to community members who directly participated in the joint patrols.

Respondents provided examples of what they perceived to be a more community-focused approach by the police. One respondent in Jowhar noted that the police sometimes assist pregnant women by using their vehicles to take them to the hospital. Respondents believed that CPDC had helped ease the workload of the police. One respondent in Dollow stated that this had had the knock-on effect of improving the relationship between the police and the rest of the justice sector. Respondents also noted that prosecutors and judges participate in CPDC forums – especially the Security and Justice Coordination Forums – and this allows them to understand the function of CPDC.

Respondents were of the opinion that CPDC members took on some of the ‘mass cases’ that used to be a problem, such as land disputes. These cases formerly took up a great deal of police time and were unlikely to be amicably resolved by the police (who lacked direct community knowledge). Under the new scheme, such cases are referred to the CPDC committee, which is better resourced to resolve them.

Such responses indicate that CPDC is well geared toward local contextual understanding. For example, some IDP respondents believed that their involvement in the CPDC process had resulted in increased attention for their camps: ‘It is the first time that I have seen police patrolling at night [at] the IDP site.’ One respondent was of the opinion that ‘incidents of insecurity are given a high priority compared [with] other incidents that occur in my area’, and attributed this chiefly to ‘greater information-sharing by the newly established CPDC [committee] with our IDPs’.

There remains an underlying concern that CPDC committees can become lobbies for the security concerns of certain parts of a community but not others. For example, one IDP interviewee (while he was not aware of the CPDC committee) was confident that such an initiative would only reflect majority-clan power dynamics: ‘Majority tribes have the power and the most powerful guns. They are above the law so I don’t believe this committee [would have] contributed to the effectiveness of policing in the area.’ Both police officers

and community respondents highlighted takeaways from the training, most frequently that police should seek consent when conducting searches and inform detainees of the reasons for their arrest. Most felt that the training had helped them to understand community needs.

Other impacts of CPDC have been more institutional or bureaucratic. For example, CPDC in Jowhar seems to have acted as a mobilising force (or an entry point into government) around sensitive issues. When judges and court officials were not being paid their salaries and there was a real risk of statutory justice systems grinding to a halt, the CPDC committee discussed the risk that this could lead the community to seek alternative sources of justice (potentially including al-Shabaab). The CPDC committee organised a meeting with the court officials themselves, the Judiciary Committee and the Minister of Justice. Likewise, police in Jowhar at one point deliberately terminated their cooperation with the courts, leaving them unable to enforce their orders. This issue was reported to the CPDC committee, which with the support of the Duubab Plus (the traditional dispute resolution mechanism), facilitated a dialogue meeting to resolve these issues.

Engagement that fosters trust, access and legitimacy

During an FGD among women in Baidoa, participants discussed how CPDC had conveyed a positive image of the police as ordinary citizens interested in safety and security. The police were seen as friendly and approachable, which increased contact with citizens and led to greater cooperation.

Several respondents were confident that there had been a behavioural change among the police. One described them as becoming 'kinder' in comparison with their previously harsh behaviour. Another, in Dollow, celebrated the new community-focused culture, noting that, previously, even talking to the police was problematic, but now the community and police had 'become friends'. A respondent in Baidoa commented that the dialogue forums had resulted in the police understanding the negative impacts of their actions in the community.

During an FGD in Jowhar, a police officer shared that community reporting of incidents had increased and improved. He said that this had happened with the expansion of the CPDC forums to the section level, which enabled grassroots-level engagement between the community and the police and built rapport and confidence:

In the past, we never received reports indicating sexual abuse, public violence, retaliation and acts of corruption by [the] police. These things existed but they were underreported or ... not reported [at all,] and were left unpunished even if they were reported. This left a legacy of mistrust between the police and the community. Fortunately, these cases are now appearing in our records as they are reported by citizens, and we the police are taking corrective actions to respond, including verification.

He attributed this dramatic increase in the reporting of incidents to joint community-police awareness-raising, which paved the way for changes in community perceptions and behaviour with respect to collaborating with the police.

It is difficult to differentiate attitudes that may have been shaped by respondents' direct engagement with police through CPDC meetings, joint activities and training, and those attitudes and behaviours that have changed in the broader community as a consequence

of activities taking place. However, there was general agreement among respondents that CPDC committees have contributed to a much greater willingness on the part of community members to communicate with the police about cases – both in terms of reporting crimes and of cooperating with investigations. Some linked this with the broader impression that police behaviour had itself improved, making people less fearful of interacting with them. Others saw it in more instrumental terms: either that people had been sensitised through CPDC activities to the crime-prevention benefits of information-sharing with the police, or that they had received information directly shared by the CPDC committees.

Insecurity and crime prevention

It seemed obvious to many respondents that, if police are perceived by the community as more approachable, then they will be more readily approached and therefore more effective in responding to community needs. One respondent in Dollow commented:

CPDC has made huge contributions to the effectiveness of policing because it has created an interactive relationship among civilians and the police and brought trust between the police, the community and the local government.

Another respondent in Jowhar discussed the benefits that arose from the community viewing the police as ‘their counterparts’.

Several respondents discussed the role that better communication – coupled with community vigilance – can play in crime prevention. They related stories of how people would make reports to the police if they saw individuals within the community whom they didn’t recognise. One youth leader, discussing this issue in the context of what she called the ‘neighbourhood cluster’, related how her brother-in-law had been visiting her in Jowhar from Mogadishu and, after the first night, neighbours communicated to the police that they had seen a stranger in the mosque and nearby. The police came immediately and detained him, but he was released after the young woman (a CPDC member) briefed them on his identity.

Most respondents felt that CPDC had eased the process of reporting crime to the police. One highlighted the possibility of anonymous reporting through the CPDC committee as a referral mechanism. Some, however, still expressed concerns – in Jowhar, one respondent said he doubted whether the police respected privacy/confidentiality in relation to certain matters, and so there were certain issues (for example al-Shabaab activity) that he would not report. Another respondent remained pessimistic that members of the police would investigate any report implicating members of their own clan.

Many respondents described the crime-prevention work of the CPDC committees and suggested that this has had an impact when it came to fear of crime. In Jowhar, however, it was noted that much of the fear within the community arose from fear of al-Shabaab, and that, since the CPDC committees do not engage with that issue, their impact on fear had been limited. One respondent was more circumspect, observing that, though crime still existed, the response to crime had improved. Another Jowhar respondent raised a localised example of crime prevention, noting that the CPDC committee had highlighted to police the issue of drug use in a particular area. The police responded by conducting night patrols in that area, and ‘now community members feel safe when

walking late at night in the bush that was previously used by drug addicts'. This was reinforced in other interviews conducted in Baidoa, where community leaders reported that, whereas, before the initiative, they would not go to 'far parts' of town because of safety concerns, now they felt safer in general.

Inclusion of women and youths in local security decision-making

The involvement of women and youths in CPDC was directly addressed by the research questionnaire, but several respondents raised the issue unprompted in response to questions about the effectiveness of the police, or the extent to which community views were being taken on board.

Many respondents saw clear improvement as regards this issue. They suggested that there had been a notable decrease in fear among women about making complaints to the police. Several highlighted the fact that police posts now have gender officers. In Jowhar, a respondent also highlighted issues faced by women who had been detained:

There were no female police in charge of the cells in the district and when women were taken to jail there were no females to deal with them; thanks to the CPDC committee's advocacy for women's rights, now there are six women working in the police cells.

This change was part of a broader transformation of gender representation within the Jowhar police, which increased from one female officer to more than 20 over the period of the project. Meanwhile, at a July 2019 CPDC forum, it was pointed out that there were no female police officers in Dollow. A woman in the community volunteered to join the police, and, by September 2019, had reportedly already started.

Another respondent noted the increased participation of women in community meetings:

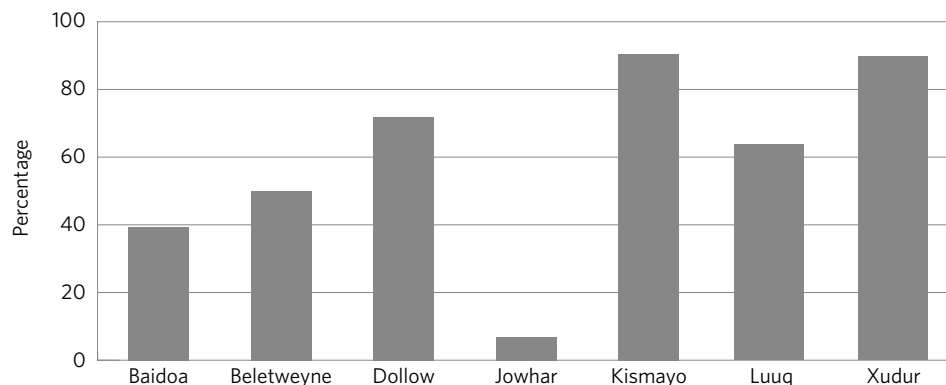
Women were not allowed[,] since men used to view their participation as wrong[,] and the community believed that it gave a bad impression for women to associate with men[,] but now women take every big role in participating in community security in the district.

Another respondent noted that female gender officers in police stations could now be senior officers and have male officers as subordinates. However, women participating in a discussion in Jowhar noted that women's participation in CPDC meetings tended to be timid, perhaps because it is seen as disrespectful for women to speak out in front of men.

It should be noted that the change in Jowhar may well have been more noticeable as a result of the very low level of participation that had existed beforehand. The baseline study highlighted that Jowhar was by some distance the worst-performing district in terms of the perception of equal treatment by gender (as shown in the figure 4).

During the recent research, respondents noted that the CPDC committees have been visible advocates for women's access to justice. For example, in rape cases, the women's representative on the CPDC committee had followed up with the police. There was a slight discrepancy in responses with respect to normal procedures for handling sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV) cases; one respondent in Dollow suggested that the police were referring cases such as rape to the CPDC committee to resolve. However, a respondent in

Figure 4: Baseline proportion of respondents who agree with the proposition that the police treat women and men equally



Baidoa indicated a more balanced handling of cases by different mechanisms (including the Guurti), noting that CPDC members who are also members of Guurti Plus (A traditional dispute resolution mechanism) had drafted the Xeer and so:

know what they can resolve using the Xeer and what they should forward to the police and the court. Issues like rape and other sorts of SGBV are crimes and they will never try to manage them but will attend to others like family disputes and land. The same respondent suggested that the customary justice system works closely with the police gender desk to ensure cooperation between the two systems on all rape cases.

An area manager for Jubaland averred that the progress encouraged by the CPDC committees would be that the elders now engage with the police before the police start an investigation. Elders console the family of the victim while the police gather evidence. The police arrest the perpetrator and refer him or her to the court for trial. After he or she is found guilty, the elders work with the perpetrator's family to decide on compensation. However, the manager also noted that perpetrators do not get custodial sentences.

A respondent in Baidoa noted that the CPDC committee may be a more accommodating forum for reporting crimes than police stations, suggesting that SGBV victims are more willing to report to the CPDC committee than directly to the police. In Jowhar, a respondent noted that newly recruited female police officers had not yet been trained in case management, but that, nonetheless, women felt safer being interviewed by them.

Many respondents described young people as being among the most active CPDC members and noted that several young police officers had been recruited. One respondent emphasised that marginalised youths in a particular section had previously had no rights, or had seen these rights violated by security forces, but now that they were represented on the CPDC committee, their rights were guaranteed. (It was not clear whether this observation extended beyond the youths who were directly involved in the CPDC committee.) Some Guurti-Plus members in Jowhar explained that youth participation in CPDC was seen as a positive development. Previously, there had been widespread suspicion of the youths as being linked with al-Shabaab, and, whenever the police approached young people in the town, they pointed their firearms at them and instructed the youths to remove their shirts

for fear they might be wearing suicide vests. However, after attending many CPDC forums together, the police and the youths seemed to come together to gradually erode the perception that all youths are fighters. A few discussants mentioned that the District Police Commissioner had formed a sports club, which they took as a clear indication of cooperation and trust between police and the youth.

Rights-based policing and accountability

Several respondents highlighted behavioural changes in terms of how the police approach members of the community and how they approach suspects whom they plan to arrest. Examples of new police behaviours include the following:

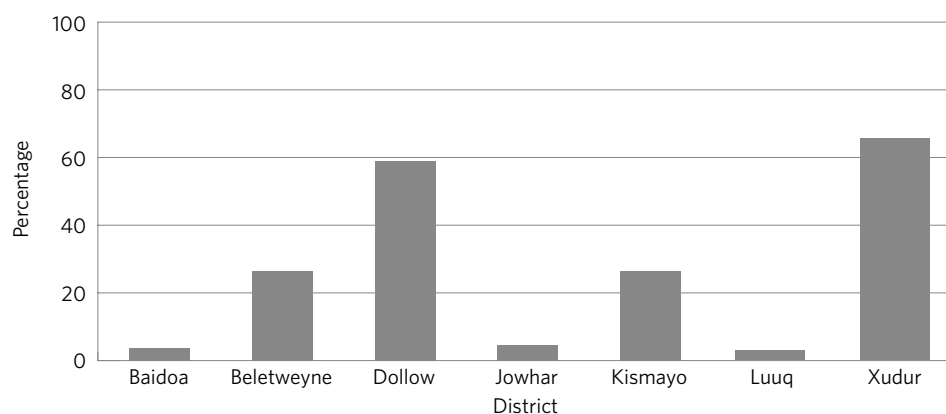
- Asking for permission to conduct searches;
- Providing detainees with more information about grounds for arrest and their rights;
- No longer firing their weapons into the air as a means of controlling traffic; and
- Allowing families of detainees awaiting trial to visit them in custody without harassment.

One respondent in Jowhar noted that the police were now respecting the 'dignity of the community', that is, not punishing people in the streets as they did before CPDC. Another rights-based policing issue that was highlighted is that the police have been proceeding with cases to trial, whereas, before, CPDC was introduced, the police would often detain suspects and then not take the cases further.

There was, however, some dissent set against the chorus of support for the CPDC initiative from one respondent who had not participated in CPDC. This individual related a recent case of the police killing a 'small minority girl' who had been in the street to celebrate Eid-al-Fitr. He linked this behaviour to clan affiliation, complaining that 'the community [is] raped, punished and killed like wild animals'.

With respect to police oversight or accountability, the baseline at two of the three sites was very low indeed. Before the intervention, only 3% of the population of Baidoa, and 4% of the population of Jowhar, reported being aware of a mechanism to make a complaint against the police.

Figure 5: Baseline proportion of respondents who are aware of a mechanism for complaints against the police



One respondent from Baidoa underlined police accountability, highlighting a case in which a soldier had threatened a woman, who complained to a member of the CPDC committee. This member followed up on the matter and filed a case against the offender, and he was made to apologise. In Jowhar, the Guurti noted that the CPDC committee had discussed poor police behaviour, including delayed responses and bribe-taking when filling a case. It is worth noting that interviews with DDG staff suggest (for example in Baidoa) that most of the cases reported by community members in fact relate to misconduct by the military (for example shooting at drivers, theft, and rape). The community finds it difficult to differentiate between the military and the police. It was observed that, while police officers are paid \$100 a month, soldiers make less, and that may be part of the reason they treat people harshly.

Another respondent in Dollow highlighted the extent to which the CPDC committee acted as a gatekeeper or bottleneck, observing that, because of the 'chain of command' within the CPDC committee, people cannot simply report crimes without the knowledge of the section heads.

In some cases, the CPDC committee may act as an intermediary between the police and other elements of the complex justice landscape. Several respondents noted that there were certain matters that the police routinely deferred to the Guurti or Duubab-Plus, such as family or land disputes. The CPDC committee may also mobilise the Guurti in cases that require 'emergency response', such as clan conflict. In these cases, the CPDC committee liaises with the police to let them know that the Guurti have become involved.

Several respondents underlined that some of the most useful CPDC members are current or former members of the Guurti-Plus, whose experience has proved of assistance. However, some female respondents suggested that elders participating in the CPDC committees were the least helpful members, as they did not take women's issues seriously.

Conclusion

Capacity and infrastructure for policing in Somalia remain under-resourced. Although plans exist to grow these,¹³ deficits in both continue to hamper police performance. However, importantly, after decades of conflict, it is the existence of multiple security providers and the many experiences of local communities with respect to those diverse security providers that characterise the policing landscape. The formal police continue to occupy a space along with other security actors, including the military and clan militias. Meanwhile, the new federal system has introduced further actors in the form of federal- and state-level police.

Regular and structured engagement and dialogue among the police, the community and key stakeholders is likely to remain a critical aspect of the broader police reform project, one to which CPDC makes an important contribution. A 2016 evaluation of earlier DDG CPDC efforts noted that ‘the CPDC process demonstrated a high level of effectiveness at re-establishing a link and fostering collaboration between the police and the community’.¹⁴ The importance of CPDC in raising awareness concerning the potential role of the police, building a common appreciation for rights and responsibilities, being able to articulate local safety needs; solving problems, and building trust and legitimacy is further confirmed by the current assessment – at least among direct beneficiaries of the project.

While the CPDC model is not the only available intervention for building police-community cooperation, it displays unique attributes, particularly concerning the extent to which it has become institutionalised in local governance structures through, among other things, its interface with district safety committees (DSCs). The objective of the DSCs is to link government officials, civil society actors and security providers, and set the safety and security priorities in the district and in the communities, in coordination with both subnational government agencies and the community safety planning groups (CSPGs). The objectives of the CSPGs are more practical in seeking to improve the immediate security situation by strengthening the target community’s capacity to resist pressures and prevent and resolve behaviours that contribute to violent conflicts, as well as to strengthen the relationship between the district authority and the community. They work in a bottom-up approach through the CPDC committees.

¹³ According to the Hirshabelle Police Plan, a force of 1 500 federal police and a state community police service of 3 000, but currently estimated at about half that number.

¹⁴ Peace and community safety programme review, DDG Altai Consulting, 2016.

While originally focused at the local level, more recent CPDC iterations have engaged substantially with the formalisation of the Federal Government of Somalia's Stabilisation Policy, set out in the Wadajir Framework, to link local-level CPDC committees to local councils and administrations through DSCs and CSPGs, comprising several of the local committees in a district.¹⁵ This level of institutionalisation demonstrates the policy potential of the community policing model. In a 2016 evaluation, the DSCs were seen by respondents as an effective security governance body, especially at the Dollow site.¹⁶

The same evaluation found that the broad programme of CPDC committees and their linkage to the DSCs had made a unique contribution to the development of secure government structures in targeted districts through efforts to integrate the newly established structures into the existing subnational governance system. Specifically, the evaluation found that the CPDC committee and DSCs contributed to community/local and district/subnational-level stability by empowering communities to drive change. This was seen to enhance conflict-management capacity, improve access to, and the functioning of, the justice system, and strengthen subnational governance. CPDC committees were credited with increasing trust in the police among local communities. By the end of the DDG Peace and Security Programme, 73% of respondents had at least an 'average' level of trust in the police, and the proportion of those who found the police difficult to contact fell from 51% to 5%.¹⁷ This provides invaluable insight into future thinking about police policy and law-making and the importance of articulating and providing for community policing in the proposed Somali Police Act, which will have to follow the new federal dispensation.

The CPDC facility is an initiative with huge potential, but several key elements have to be factored into future planning. As the CPDC committees are established, any facilitation support needs to be mindful of the respective roles and mandate of the security providers, especially those of the FGS and FMS police. This relationship is in development and is particularly relevant at the local level and in an environment where national and state-level legislation is underdeveloped. Relations can easily deteriorate in a climate of political tension between the FGS and federal member states. This can have a direct impact on how CPDC participants are perceived, whether they are drawn from the FMS or from the FGS, and especially if they are also beneficiaries of services like training. Given this complexity, it is unlikely that CPDC committees can develop without external support. The current political realities confirm the importance of an ongoing premium on neutral, skilled and sophisticated facilitation of CPDC development. This brings financial and human resource needs that make it difficult to cost a CPDC system scaled to nationwide coverage. For the immediate future, the supporting community-police dialogue will have to rely on development partners, but with ever closer involvement of the policing authorities. Consideration should also be given to the current limitation whereby CPDC committees focus on towns, for a significant population is impacted by policing in more remote areas.

This is emphasised by a second observation. As the CPDC committees develop and local communities become more familiar with, and more literate in terms of their rights and expectations of, the role of the police, it is important that police development keep pace and that the police are better empowered in their new role. The required basic training for the SPF (at FGS and FMS level) is recognised as the responsibility of partners in the broader

15 The DSCs are usually comprised of five to 20 members, including the customary village head, women and youth representatives, the District Police Commander, the District Commissioner, and possibly Deputy Commissioners.

16 Peace and community safety programme review, DDG Altai Consulting, 2016.

17 Ibid.

SSJP programme and is coordinated by the Joint Policing Project (JPP), a clearing house and coordinating mechanism for police development. This needs to be sequenced more closely with CPDC and community-police dialogue components of the programme. This is now being addressed in a more coordinated way with agreement at the MOIS level on training.

CPDC must also not become an alternative to police practice, for example by taking on the reporting and solving of crimes. To date, much of the outreach on CPDC has been aimed at making people aware of, and encouraging them to participate in, CPDC. This methodology will need to transition into building confidence in the police itself while retaining the openness to receive complaints.

New police legislation needs to be developed to provide for community-police dialogue at both FGS and FMS levels, and to provide stakeholders with confidence to progress and develop CPDC-type facilities.

This can also help address the risk faced as a result of any such initiative by international development partners, namely that of uneven security provision. This risk is faced at two levels: first, there is a differentiation between places where initiatives are being implemented and those where they are not; secondly, *within* communities where initiatives exist, there are differences between individuals who are actively involved and those who are not. The first risk can be mitigated by mainstreaming the initiative at the local, district, state or national level. The second risk is more structural and can only be monitored and remedied on an *ad hoc* basis. Finally, a broader analysis of community perceptions of the CPDC initiative (and not just among active CPDC users) and any impact it has on security provision and the broader justice landscape could be particularly instructive. Consideration should be given to how CPDC itself might inform the assessment of relevant attitudes within the community, potentially allowing more sophisticated understandings of complex concepts such as trust, accessibility, responsiveness and familiarity than appear to have been possible during the earlier baseline survey.

References

- Armstrong, K. (2018). Baseline assessment: 'The Time is Now - strengthening police accountability and access to justice in Somalia'. DDG.
- Coffey International. (2017). Understanding potential development of the justice system in Somalia and opportunities for promoting rule of law and state and peace building informed by baseline analysis of formal regional criminal courts in urban Somalia.
- DDG. (2014). Community-police dialogue and cooperation toolkit.
- DDG Altai Consulting. (2016). Peace and community safety programme review.
- Heegan Plan. (2015). Towards 'readiness' of the Somalian Police Forces. Strategic Police Support Plan (2016–2018). Hirshabelle State Police Plan, 2017.
- Jubaland State Police Plan, 2018–2027.
- London-Somali Peace Pact, 11 May 2017.
- Regional Centre on Small Arms. (nd). An assessment of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation and fragility situations, Somalia. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Somali Police Force. Basic recruit curriculum. Module 3: Community policing.
- State News Services. (25 April 2016). Somalia: Sexual violence must be subjected to criminal justice, not traditional Xeer systems, says United Nations expert.
- UNPOL. Good practices and lessons learnt from the development and implementation of the New Policing Model.
- UNSOM and World Bank. (2017). Federal Republic of Somalia Security and Justice Sector PER.

About the authors

Sean Tait is the founder and Director of APCOF. He holds an Honours degree in Criminology from the University of Cape Town. He is the former Director of the Criminal Justice Initiative at the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, and the former Executive Director of non-governmental organisation UMAC. His areas of expertise include policing, police accountability, crime prevention and peace building.

Abdirahman Maalim Gossar holds a Master of Laws degree from Stellenbosch University. His focus is largely international criminal law and international human rights law, and his thesis addressed the question of terrorism and counter-terrorism in Africa.

Thomas Probert is the Head of Research of Freedom from Violence, a multidisciplinary research initiative aimed at bringing together human rights and public health approaches towards violence reduction in Africa. He is an Extraordinary Lecturer at the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria, and a Research Associate at the Centre of Governance and Human Rights at the University of Cambridge.

