

Challenges to the Implementation of Community Policing in Mekelle City Administration

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Abstract

Community policing is aimed at discovering and resolving community problems though a number of challenges are affecting it. But these challenges are inadequate in the scientific literature. Consequently, the objective of this paper is to assess the challenges that are affecting the implementation of community policing in Mekelle City based on primary and secondary data. Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed. The data collected through key informants and focus group discussion were analyzed critically. 183 questionnaires from the 188 questionnaire were found eligible for analysis. The findings show that inadequacy of know-how about community policing, low public trust in the police, weak police-community relations, low participation of community in community policing initiatives, insufficient media coverage of community policing activities, low participation of business community, frequent staff rotation, lack of sufficient resource to support community policing activities are the challenges that are affecting the implementation of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. Therefore, to ensure the success of community policing the important actions to be necessarily taken is to develop the awareness of the community about the practice of community policing.

Keywords: Challenge, Implementation, Community policing

I. Introduction

Community policing has been defined differently by different scholars; some defined by function and purposes, others by program and structures, still others as a philosophy, spirit, and some as a political ideology. This implies that there is an obvious lack of conceptual clarity and agreement among scholars in community policing as an idea or program (Kam, 2000). In line with this, many scholars also defined the term community policing in different ways. For instance, for reformers, community policing is a new model of policing, a complete guiding philosophy (BJA, 1994). Others stated it as a set of community oriented programs and practices.

For example American Bureau of Justice Assistance defines community policing as follows:

“Community policing is democracy in action. It requires the active participation of local government, civic and business leaders, public and private agencies, residents, churches, schools, and hospitals” (Ibid).

Community policing brings together the community and police to prevent crime and solve neighborhood problems. In community policing, the focus is on preventing crime before it happens, not responding to calls for service once the crime happens. Community policing gives citizens more control over the quality of life in their neighborhood. It also enables police become part of the locality and this assists police get a better sense of inhabitants' needs and helps residents to develop greater faith in the police (Dominique et al, 2007).

Community policing is an idea that promotes organizational strategies, which maintain the systematic use of cooperation and problem-solving methods, to proactively deal with the immediate conditions that give rise to community safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime (COPS, 2004). It is a partnership between police and the community which seeks to discover and resolve community problems. It is also a philosophy on crime control and prevention which advocates mutual cooperation between the police and the people to deal with crime. Besides, community oriented policing is an agency wide doctrine that promotes citizen partnerships and proactive problem solving to address the causes of crime (David, 1996).

There is a general consensus that development of any area is unlikely without sustainable security. Insecurity hampers socio-economic growth in different ways in the sense that it threatens physical security; the absence of safe living environments, dangers that prevent people from achieving sustainable livelihoods, and the impact upon health and education services. As one of the main contributors of security, police plays a crucial role in creating favorable environment in which development can take place (Safer world, 2008).

Crime and fear of crime are some of the social problems that are affecting the quality of life of the whole world (Ogadimma et al, 2012). In line with this relatively crimes are the major impediments of development in the developing world. Ethiopia do also share more or less similar challenges faced in the developing world in relation to crime rates and crime prevention strategies (MoCB, 2005). Specifically, according to the key informants from Mekelle police bureau, diversified, complex and serious crimes in huge numbers are committed in Mekelle city. However, they argue that the most frequent crimes committed in the city are theft, housebreak, forgery, robbery, assault /violence and sexual offences. To tackle the aforementioned social problems different

countries or police institutions have been introduced different policing styles. However, policing approaches that worked in the past are not always successful at present. This implies that policing approaches should advance with the advancement of time (Ogadimma et al, 2012). According to Jenny (2008) insist that community policing is important in reducing crimes or developing the quality of life in the society in general but there are large gaps between policy and actions. From this one can argue that there are challenges to the implementation of community policing and procedures though this challenges have not been studied well.

The police forces in Tigray regional state are trying to deal with it despite many challenges. The challenges that community policing have been facing are not well identified. Therefore, the objective of this study is to assess the challenges that are affecting the implementation of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. Following this introduction, the second section examines methodology while the third section briefly analysis challenges that are affecting the implementation of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. The fourth section of this article deals with conclusion and recommendation.

II. Methodology

This article employed both qualitative and quantitative research approaches and it also based on data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected using questionnaire, interview and focus group discussion. Accordingly, purposively deep interviews are conducted with the members of the police officers leading community policing and working in the crime prevention department in the city. The executive members of the community policing in the selected four ketenas of the two sub cities were the target population for the focus group discussion. In addition to this, secondary sources were also reviewed.

Mekelle city administration has seven sub city administrations that are divided into *tabias* in which under the *tabias* there are totally 106 *ketenas*, which are the lowest units in the local administrative hierarchy in the city. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample frame and from the total of seven sub cities the researchers selected kedemay Weyane and Quiha. In line with this, purposive sampling was also used to select among the members of the community policing in each *ketenas* and to select among the members of the police officers in the city.

Kedemay Weyane and Quiha sub-cities have 21 *ketenas*. The researchers selected 4 out of total 21 *ketenas* through lottery method. This is because community policing as a means to combat crime exercised almost in a similar manner across the study area and thus, taking these ketenas through such method does not create difference. These ketenas are Endananya, Hosanna, ketena 1 and ketena 2 with 1100, 814, 1214 and 916 household heads respectively. Totally there are 4044 household heads in the selected four *ketenas*. To select representative sampling from the total population, random sampling techniques is used. The random sampling technique is employed to reduce the sampling bias. Respondents for the questionnaire are totally 188 (community members in household level residing in the four ketenas) are determined based on Kothari's formula (2004), as follows.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where

N = size of population;

p = sample proportion of successes;

n = size of sample;

$q = 1 - p$;

z = the value of the standard deviate at a given confidence level;

e = acceptable error (the precision);

Thus, $N = 4044$, $p = 0.02$, $z = 2.005$, $e = 0.02$

$$n = \frac{(2.005)^2 \cdot (0.02) \cdot (1-0.02) \cdot (4044)}{(0.02)^2 (4044-1) + (2.005)^2 (0.02) (1-0.02)} = \frac{318.63}{1.6172+0.07879249}$$

$$n = \frac{318.63}{1.69599249} = 187.87 \approx 188$$

$n = 188$

The data collected from respondents through questionnaire were analyzed using simple quantitative analysis techniques such as percentage and frequency distributions and the data collected through interview and focus group discussion were also analyzed critically. Besides, 183 questionnaires from the 188 questionnaires were found eligible for analysis. Based on data collected from respondents through questionnaire, the results of the study critically analyzed and described as follows.

III. Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Community Policing in Mekelle City Administration

Since 2010 attempts have been made to implement community policing in organized manner in Tigray regional state and specifically in Mekelle city administration. However, the implementation of community policing in

Mekelle city administration has not been provided abundant result as expected due to the challenges that are provided as follows.

Table 1: Perceptions of Respondents on the Challenges to Community Policing (CP) in Mekelle City Administration

No	Description	Frequency(Fr)	Percent (%)
1.	What do you think about the challenges to community policing in Mekelle city Administration?		
1.1	Inadequacy of know-how about CP of the community	114	62.3%
1.2	Low public trust in the police	143	78.1%
1.3	Weak Police-community relations	145	79.2%
1.4	Low participation of community in CP initiatives	99	54.1%
1.5	Insufficient media coverage of CP activities	100	54.6%
1.6	Low participation of business community	134	73.2%

Source: Own Survey, 2013

As it can be seen from the above table 1, the above listed points/ideas were more or less perceived by the respondents' as the main challenges of the community policing in Mekelle City Administration. Above all, a weak police-community relation was perceived by the majority of the respondents; 145 (79.2%) responded as the key challenge of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. This implies that community- police relation was considered as an impediment for the success of community policing. From the above data one can deduce that strong community-police relation is an important ingredient for effective implementation of community policing. According to Taye (2011) the most likely reasons for the poor relationship between the police and the communities are:

- Lack of interest of the community to participate in police activities
- Lack of response to police calls
- Suspicion of corruption on the part of police officers
- police misconduct
- Failure of community to provide crime-related information to the police and
- Police perceived as arrogant and brutal rather than as partners

Besides, the outcomes of the focus group discussion and interview revealed that weak police- community relation threatens the success of community policing in the city. However, the key informants argue that encouraging progress has been observed recently in their relation. As noticed by Oliver (2004), police-community relation is a long range, full scale effort to acquaint police and the community with each others' problems and stimulate actions aimed at solving those problems. Both police and community must be involved in identifying and solving all sorts of problems. The most key informants of the focus group discussion and interviewees suggested that some inhabitants in a neighborhood were aware of what was expected from them and felt as they should patrol or safeguard their own residential area on a voluntary basis. Still some others argue that they should employ neighborhood-watch guards who were paid by the community. However, some individuals in the study areas because of poor awareness about community policing they leave security issues to the police and thereby they were not ready to involve in community policing initiatives. Additionally, the participants noted that some community members in Mekelle City Administration even hide criminals and crime-related materials for the same reason.

Above all, inadequacy of knowledge of the Mekelle community about community policing was considered as a major challenge for the success of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. However, as the respondents told to the researchers, lack of awareness was not the only problem in the community it was also a problem in the police officers too. As can be seen from the table 1, most of the respondents; 143 (78.1%) argue that low public trust in the police is affecting community policing in Mekelle City Administration. Besides, the outcomes of the focus group and interview also show that even though there is efforts that have been made to introduce and publicize community policing, a legacy of mistrust and suspicion between communities and police thwarts efforts to build relationships between the police and the community to some extent. Some respondents also disclosed that there is hate to the police officers because the community believes that the police all the time use force and catch citizens without reason. Nevertheless, the public trust in the police was undoubtedly developed positively from time to time after the commencement of community policing in Mekelle City Administration though it is not satisfactory.

With regard to the participation of the community in the community policing initiatives out of the 183 respondents 99 (54.1 %) of them replied that weak or low involvement of the community in community policing activities as a challenge that are affecting the effectiveness of community policing in Mekelle City

Administration. Furthermore, the key informants of the focus group discussion and interview suggested that though the participation of the community in community policing is increasing from time to time it is still not sufficient. From the above data, one can conclude that most respondents consider that the level of involvement of the Mekelle community in community policing initiatives was a major hurdle for the success of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. Lack of awareness about community policing, giving priority to personal cases, bad attitude of the community to the police and assuming security matters as the only responsibility of police institutions are the reasons that mentioned by the most respondents.

Likewise, as noticed by Taye (2011) the causes for non-involvement of the society in the community police initiative are lack of knowledge and understanding of community policing, fear of revenge by criminals, fear of police mistreatment, no or little understanding of existing laws, hatred for police due to their misconduct, weakness of police to share power and considering all crime prevention duties to the police. As can be understood from the table 1, majority of the respondents; 100 (54.6%) believe that insufficient media coverage of community policing activities by the media negatively affected the success of community policing in Mekelle City Administration. According to BJA (1994), all forms of media should cover the implementation of community policing from the press and public television to the community newsletter.

Finally, as can be seen from table 1, 134 (73.2%) of the respondents responded that there is low participation of the business community in Mekelle City Administration. This implies that low participation of the business community is one of the challenges that are affecting the success of community policing in the city. Similarly, an outcome of the focus group and interview shows that there has been weak participation of the business community in Mekelle city without denying there are some good progresses recently. According to Stevens (2003), the business group has a vital role in the implementation of community policing, as community policing encourages partnership with the community to improve public safety, diminish fear of crime and develop the quality of life. In general, the weakness of business community to involve strongly in community policing was considered as a barrier for the success of the program in the city though their participation was developed from time to time as their awareness or understanding was increased in community policing.

Table 2: Perceptions of Respondents on the Challenges to Community Policing in Mekelle City Administration

No	Description	Frequency	Percent (%)
1. Which is considered as challenge to community policing (CP) in Mekelle City Administration?			
1.1	Low interest of police officers in CP	76	41.5%
1.2	Frequent Staff rotation	139	76.0%
1.3	Lack of sufficient resource to support CP activities	150	82.0%
1.4	Institutional resistance to change and ethical problem	98	53.6%
1.5	Burnout and low morale of police officers	109	59.6%

Source: Own Survey, 2013

As it is pointed out in table 2 above the willingness or interest of the police officers was not perceived as a key challenge to the community policing in Mekelle city; that is out of 183 respondents only 76 (41.5%) of them perceived the willingness of police officers as obstacle. Likewise, most of the key informants of the focus group discussion and interview replied to the question “how do you see the interest of police officers towards the community-policing approach in Mekelle city?” replied in the affirmative that is, Mekelle city police officers are relatively from the previous times willing to participate and share their powers with the community whom they serve in community policing in the city. From this one can infer that the interest of police officers in community policing in the city is relatively good and the probability that police officers interest to be considered as a major challenge is low. Nonetheless, as the key informants told to the researchers it is not to mean all police officers are positive about community policing in Mekelle city.

Regarding whether staff rotation was a challenge for the success of community policing in Mekelle city; majority of the respondents; 139 (76 %) stated as it is the main challenge. In line with this, as it is pointed out by most of the focus group discussion and interview key informants staff rotation was a major challenge that are affecting community policing success in Mekelle city. All in all, most of the key informants argue that frequent rotation of police officers in Mekelle city is affecting the success of community policing since it made the relationship between police and community weak and it also threatens the continuity of the program as there is no stability. Similarly, according to Safer world (2008), the frequent rotation of police officers mainly affects the implementation of the community policing program negatively. This is particularly damaging in a context where human and financial resources are overstretched, and has an unfavorable effect on the continuity, effectiveness and stability of the program.

With regard to the resource allocation to the community policing activities in the city, out of 183 respondents 150 (82%) of them replied that lack of sufficient resource allocation as a major challenge for the successful implementation of community policing in Mekelle city. By the same token, key informants of the focus group discussion and interview also suggested that Mekelle police suffered from a lack of necessary materials such as communication facilities and adequately equipped accessible offices. Generally, the budget allocated to community policing is too low to meet the safety and security needs of Mekelle city.

As can be deduced from the table 2, regarding institutional resistance to change and misconducts in the police officers, 98 (53.6 %) of the respondents perceived as it was the challenge to community policing in Mekelle city. Similarly, most of the key informants of the focus group discussion share the same idea with the idea of respondents above. That is, resistance to change and misconducts in the police officers were the challenges to the community policing in Mekelle city though good improvements were observed from time to time. According to Safer world (2008), there is widespread lack of understanding about and full commitment to change within some areas of the government and police services. As per the questionnaire respondents, focus group discussion and interview participants, the following are among the unethical behaviors observed by Mekelle police officers. These include they sometimes use force during investigations and in detaining suspects, some officers frequent absent from duty, they abuse power by detaining suspects illegally and some officers are not fair to all.

Finally as can be seen from the same table above, stress and low morale of police officers are also considered as a challenge for community policing in Mekelle city. Out of the 183 respondents, 109 (59.6%) of them perceive it as an obstacle for the success of community policing in Mekelle city. Similarly, the focus group participants and police officers argue that low wages, poor working conditions and terms of employment continue to have a negative effect on police morale.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

The history of community policing in Ethiopia goes back to 2010. Since then it has evolved in different forms in different parts of the country. In line with this, community policing was started in regional state of Tigray in the same year only in two woredas, that is, in Mekelle in Dehub wereda in 27 ketenas and in Hintalo wejrat wereda in 23 ketenas. It is a popular contemporary policing approach reacting to the decline in public confidence in police and mounting evidence that police forces could not fight crime by themselves (Jenny, 2008). It has also gained momentum in recent years as police and community chief's look for more effective ways to endorse public safety and to improve the quality of life in their areas (ibid).

There are a number of challenges that are affecting community policing in Mekelle city. Of these challenges, lack of know-how about community policing is one of the challenges that are encountering community policing. Weak police and community relations paved the way for crime activities and in turn make community a place and base of criminals from time to time. The weak police-community relation and coordination could make police officers ineffective. Added to this it increases low public trust in the police, fear of revenge by criminals, low participation of community in community policing initiatives. In addition to this, institutional resistance to change and ethical badly-behaved, low involvement of medias and business community, miscarriage of community to provide crime-related information to the police, low spirits of police officers, frequent staff rotation and deficiency of ample resource to back community policing activities are identified as challenges to community policing in Mekelle city.

To ensure the success of community policing in Mekelle city, the initial step to be necessarily considered is to develop the awareness of the community about the practice of community policing. This can be achieved through having focused sector forums, awareness campaigns and outreach programs within communities. Community meetings on community policing must be also held regularly in order to involve community members in community policing activities and initiatives, as well as, print and electronic media must be used maximally by distribution of pamphlets containing information on community policing, TV and radio talk shows. Moreover, there is a need for continued capacity building programs in the form of workshops and training on community roles and responsibilities to the community policing forum members.

The other issue that comes into the recommendation is about the participation and representation of different members of the community. Though, the involvement and representation of different members of the community especially that of women's in community policing is relatively better, it is not possible to say that the participation is satisfactory and this in turn hurts the effectiveness of community policing in Mekelle city. Thus, a special focus needs to be put in place to encourage all members of the community to engage or involve in community policing activities in their neighborhood and the endeavor to increase the involvement of different sections of the community in community policing. Finally, in connection with allocation of resources for the community policing activities in Mekelle city, the Mekelle police bureau required to support the community policing activities by providing budget, offices, transport, computers, and other necessary resources.

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