

The Roles of Community Policing for Community Security and Peace Building: The Case of Asella Town Administration

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Abstract

Community policing is the most means of reacting to incidents and insecurity before it happens and improving social environment as well as reducing fear of crime. Despite its vital roles in maintaining peace and security for the local community, there is no adequate literature on the roles of community policing for community security and peace building. This implies that there is little known about the roles of community policing in Asella Town administration and as a result this study aimed to assess the roles of community policing for community security and peace building in Asella Town Administration. To conduct this research qualitative research approach was used. For this purpose, data collected through different data collection mechanism including key informants, focus group discussion and participant observation. were analyzed through thematic data analysis approach. The findings of this research indicate that, community policing brings the police officers and the community of Asella town together to deter crime and promote community security. It also increased the perceptions of safety and reduced anti-social behavior. It also empowered the community of the town to take charge of their security needs. It also increased the satisfaction of police officers towards their work in community. The collective security action of community policing in the Asella town involved various community members such as elders, youth and religious organization. Community policing needs to be practiced in a systematic way to demonstrate better results in maintaining peace and security issues. Community meetings on community policing must be take place regularly in order to involve more community members in community policing activities.

Keywords: Community Policing, Community Security and Stability, Asella Town

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Police service is one of the most critical services demands made by the public (Mesfin, 2006). It ensures safety and security of a society, which is crucial for achieving goals of the economic growth, peace and democracy. Extensive efforts have been made to construct a framework for policing that promotes security to encourage and support democratic governance and development worldwide. The common standards recognize different but interconnected functions of the police are to protect life, liberty and security, to maintain public safety and social peace, as well as, to promote and uphold the rule of law and human rights (Louise et al, 2010). However, the functions of the police are bounded by different challenges and are not always successful. Hence, an articulate response to crime and public safety requires a community approach that address crime in a given community by themselves (Caroline, 1999).

Traditionally, the maintenance of law and order in any society has usually been the exclusive role of police and other law enforcement bodies in the absence of active participation of the wider members of the community. During those days, the police not only faced difficulty in tackling crime but also criticized for unfriendly nature of the relationship with members of the community. Thus, to prevent crime successfully there must be community partnership and involvement. It was in reaction to this development that the concept of community policing was introduced (Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017). Community policing has emerged as a major issue in the development of public safety in many countries in the world. Some of these countries are: England, Singapore, Canada, Israel and Scandinavian countries i.e., Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland. This implies that community policing is a worldwide growth and demand.

Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017 vividly indicated that

In Ethiopia “Community policing was announced officially as a policy at the national level in 2005 but development of the approach had been ongoing for a number of years before it. In 2004 members of the Ethiopian Federal Police undertook community policing training provided by British trainers in Addis Ababa. Following this, some senior officers travelled to Europe to undertake further training and returned to sensitize colleagues about the community policing approach and this in turn, an interest within the Federal Police and key individuals began to read more about the approach and to articulate how it could be shaped to address the challenges faced in Ethiopian context (Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017).

As noted by Safer world (2008) the people who are mostly affected by insecurity are people who have little opportunity to engage constructively with police officers. This could create feelings of mistrust between the police

and the communities they serve. Consequently, for the countries experienced legacy of mistrust, the adoption of a different philosophy of policing is not a matter of choice (Mathias et al, 2006). 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, the researcher understood from the key informants that the crime recorded in the town in 2016/17 and 2017/18 were around 1251. Consequently, the town implemented community policing to tackle social problems and/ crime prevention based on the full participation of the community. This is due to the fact that community policing is a 'proactive rather than a reactive approach in fighting crime' (Ian, 2009).

Asella Town Administration has eight kebelles with more than 94,000 populations (CSA, 2013). It has two woreda police stations. Namely, woreda one police station and woreda two police station with more than 250 regular police members. This paper, therefore, aims to assess the roles of community policing for community security and peace building in Asella Town Administration.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Community policing is helpful to minimize neighborhood insecurity and to develop the quality of life in the society. It also can be utilized efficiently not only to combat crime, but also to build stronger communities through a closer collaboration between the police officers and the people (Taye, 2011; Safer world, 2008; and Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994). There are vital contributions that the police offices have been playing by increasing the community participation in each zone and town administration. However, researches focusing on the roles of community policing for community security and peace building in the study area are lacking in literature. On the other hand, research assessing the roles of community-oriented policing as a strategic component of a community level imply to ensure community peace and peace building approaches is inadequate in scientific literature.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to assess the roles of community policing for community security and peace building in Asella town administration.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The output of this research will be used as input for police organization in general and for Asella town to maximize the benefits of community policing, particularly to increase the bondage between the community and police officers in implementing community policing services. The study will also use for policy maker to consider and revisit the identified findings. In addition to this, it will also be helpful as a reference or source of information for other researchers.

1.5. Definition of Terms and Concepts

Community: A group of people living in the same defined area sharing the same basic values, organization and interests (Rifkin et al, 1988). It is also an informally organized social entity which is characterized by a sense of identity (White, 1982). Others also argue that a population which is geographically focused but which also exists as a discrete social entity, with a local collective identity and corporate purpose (Manderson et al, 1992). Besides, 'a community is defined as any group of people which is likely to have a number of characteristics in common such as, geographical area, occupation, ethnicity, economic status, shared government and a common cultural and historical heritage' (Taye, 2011).

Community Policing: involves the importance of active partnership between the police, civil societies and other agencies of government work together in identifying and solving problems to improve the overall quality of life as whole and crime prevention in particular (Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017).

Peace building: is a mechanism to make the world a better place for humanity to live in. It is the daily activities, individually or collectively, human beings aspire to all humankind. It is building of good relationships.

Following this introduction, the second section examines method while the third section briefly investigates the roles of community policing for community security. The fourth section of this article deals with conclusion and recommendation.

2. Methods

This study employed qualitative research approach due to the fact that it tends to focus on how people or groups of people can have different ways of looking at social or psychological reality, take different perspectives on board, focuses on description and interpretation and might lead to development of new concepts or theory, or to an evaluation of an organizational process (Cross Well, 2007). Besides, qualitative research approach is preferred to collect data about human life, realities, experiences, behavior, emotion, feeling, organizational function, social movement, cultural phenomena and their interaction with nature (Adams et.al, 2007).

It also based on data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected by using interview and focus group discussion as well as personal observation in study area. Accordingly, purposively in-

depth interviews are conducted with the ten members of the police officers leading community policing and working in the crime prevention department in the town and woreda police stations. One focused group discussion conducted with the selected community from eight kebelles of the town, who have high awareness and information about community policing in the town. In addition to this, secondary sources were also reviewed.

2.1. Target population

Members of the police officers leading community policing and working in the crime prevention department in the town and woreda police stations participated in the study. Besides, one focused group discussion consisted of eight members selected from community, who have high awareness and information about community policing in the town are involved in the study. The study site is the living place of the researcher and in turn he has information about the roles of community policing in the town.

2.2. Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The study employed purposive sampling technique to involve appropriate key informants and focus group discussion in the study. Accordingly, ten key informants from members of the police officers leading community policing and working in the crime prevention department in the town and woreda police stations were selected. The key informants were selected from all kebelles and woreda police stations. Interview was conducted with the key informants in their working office as per the interview guide; the researcher utilized 25-30 minutes for each key informant. Besides, one focused group discussion consisted of eight members, who have high awareness and information about community policing in the town are involved in the study. Focused group discussion was conducted in Afaan Oromo language.

2.3. Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected in Afan Oromo translated to English. The data collected through interview and focus group discussion were analyzed through thematic data analysis approach.

2.4. Description of the Study Area

Arsi is one of the zones of the Oromia Region in Ethiopia. It is bordered on the south by Bale, on the southwest by the West Arsi Zone, on the northwest by East Shewa, on the north by the Afar Region and on the east by West Hararghe. The administrative center of this zone is in Asella, is located 175 km from Addis Ababa. The 2013 national census stated a total population for Asella town was 94,234 of whom 46,998 were men and 47,236 were women (CSA, 2013).

3. The Roles of Community Policing for Community Security and Peace Building in Asella Town Administration

Community Policing has a vital benefit for community Security and Peace Building. In this regard, the key informants were asked to forward about the benefits of community policing to the community. They argue that after the commencement of community policing, the local community feel protected /safe at any time. They also added that it would help the community during an emergency and has been prevented crimes in neighborhood at the night time. This implies that relatively more than any time peoples have been moved freely to different places after the beginning of community policing. This indicates that the confidence of the community over the community policing was developed from time to time.

Community policing is a management approach that promotes community policing partnership, proactive problem-solving and community engagement to address the causes of crime, fear of crime and other community concerns (Farrell, 1994). In addition to this, almost all the key informants argue that after the commencement of community policing, the community of the town has developed confidence on the support of the community policing in their neighborhood and local. This implies that because of individuals believe their community and the community policing in their area has assisted them in time of emergency and as a result the fear of crime is to some extent has reduced and thereby friendship prevailed in the community. Besides, community policing contributed to the continuation of the public order and property, rule of law, and the protection of human rights in the town. Crimes like theft and /robbery, and sexual offences were among the crimes show decline since the introduction of community policing in Asella Town Administration.

The community of Asella town has enjoyed freedom of movement without fear of persistent or large-scale violence. Such an environment is characterized by a local norm of public order, physical security and protection of civilians. In this regard, the focus group discussant explained that community policing involved the community as co-makers of community security. This is due to the fact that community policing served to show its willingness to improve the security of its people through coordination and consultation between the police and the policed. Similarly, as noted by Friedmann (1992), it is also expected to employ formal and informal community, social control mechanisms to prevent and contain delinquency by relying on the community itself to co-produce public

safety (Friedmann, and Cannon, 2007).

Community policing seeks to empower communities to take responsibility of their security needs, which backbone of police officers and institution, and as result, enabled the community in peace making in absence of and lack of police officers. Besides, both the focused group discussion and key informants results implied that the police and the community members have been collaborated to encourage and preserve peace and prosperity. For the patrol officer, police/community partnership entails talking to local business owners to identify their problems and concerns, visiting residents in their homes to offer advice on security, and helping them to organize and support neighborhood watch and regular community meetings.

Determining the underlying causes of crime depends, to a great extent, on an in-depth knowledge of community (BJA, 1994). Therefore, community participation in identifying and setting priorities in community policing contributed to problem-solving efforts by the community and the police in the town. The key informants argue that cooperative problem solving reinforces trust, facilitates the exchange of information, and leads to the identification of other areas that could benefit from the mutual attention of the police and the community.

According to Whisenand et al, 2002, community policing promotes realistic acknowledgement of police functions. Besides, it increases police community relationship and officers' satisfaction with their work. The outcome of focus group discussion and key informants indicated that after the beginning of community policing in Asella Town Administration, the police officers have got supporter and alliance in their effort to combat or protect crime and find out criminals. In addition to this, community policing provides important information that is necessary to address community concerns and solve crime (Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017). In recent years, the scope of this relationship and network has expanded. This implies that the police and community have begun to expect more from each other as security and development partners. The results of focus group discussion also imply that crime and fear of crime was reduced since the introduction of community policing in Asella Town Administration though, it is not sufficient.

Community policing brings the community and the police station together. Since it is a joint cooperation with the community members and the police members and officers, this could work to bring the community and the police closer to each other. Thus, it is possible to argue that the police officers and members achieved self-satisfaction in solving security problems and create better communications and better relations with the public. Besides, good reputation of police officers, who have involved in community policing have established with the community.

According to Fleming et al, 2009, when traditional ways of dealing with crime were thought to be neither effective in reducing crime nor in reducing the fear or perception of crime. Thus, community policing was put forward as a better way of dealing with crime. In addition to this, community policing reduced the possibility for police-citizen conflict; a better flow of information between the police and the community; and better implementation of crime prevention and crime control activities (Whisenand et al, 2002). The outcome of focus group discussant implied that community policing is reducing fear in the community with an increase in police participation in the community. Consequently, they felt more secure. This feeling of security helped the police to establish trust within the community.

Moreover, community policing requires physical proximity of police to the community. In this regard, in Asella town there are various police stations easily accessible to the community and community policing, as well as, the trend of police officer's assignment to each ketena for patrolling service with the community, this in turn made the work of police officers easier in particular and the police offices in general. Besides, the interview conducted with the police officers implied that community policing enabled the police officers to solve conflicts in collaboration with the communities they served. This is a collaborative measure that does not deter parties from going to formal legal institution. They added that, police officers are backed by the community so as to save both police instruction and community from serious socio-economic and political impacts and crisis.

In addition to this, focus group discussant argues that community policing is a means of policing community where the police are close to the public, know their needs, has regular contacts, and act for them in accordance with the community's wishes. This helped police to get a better sense of community's need and the community also developed greater trust in the police, build up and strengthen the community. Each law enforcement agents-community partnership is expected to rebuild citizen trust and activate the informal social control processes that contribute to deviance prevention, and allow police access to the various information rooted in their jurisdictions (as Lyons, 2002 cited in (Friedmann, and Cannon, 2007). Although the main purpose of this interaction is to incorporate citizens into the crime prevention process, such alliances are anticipated to re-invent the informal and formal inspection and social control that served to monitor and impede the development of serious criminal activity (ibid). Consequently, the community not seen the police officers as a problem rather seen as partners in development and co-producers agents of peace builder. The rationale in this regard is that police alone can neither create nor maintain safety of the communities (Mulugeta and Mekuriaw, 2017).

The community and police officers were committed to work together to improve the safety of their neighborhood. This signify that the individual members of the community begun to strengthen the relation with

the police officers and the most people in the town began to give priority for public security after the commencement of community policing in Asella Town Administration. Similarly, according to BJA (1994), as the police alone cannot effectively control crime; it requires a partnership with community, the most effective method of policing. As the discussant in focus group discussion (FGD) held at Asella town stated, police officers are not the only responsible bodies to prevent crimes in their neighborhood. Similarly, they argue that, community policing could not merely be able to survive without terror of misdemeanor but also be responsible for maintaining community safe. Besides, it recognizes the shared responsibility of the police and the community in ensuring a safe and safe atmosphere for all societies. It intends at establishing an energetic and equal partnership between the police and the community through which crime and community safety issues can mutually be discussed periodically.

Community policing is collective security action, which focuses on proactively addressing the immediate conditions that give rise to public security issues and social disorder. The collective security action of community policing in the Asella town involved a number of various community members including elders, youth and religious organization. Community policing to be successful it cannot be an isolated activity of police officers. Almost all of the key informants and FGD participants expressed that, crimes are decreasing to some extent in town and the relation between the police officers and the community was slightly developed after the commencement of community policing and in turn, the community of the town develop their interest to continue as residents in the area due to the existence of peace and stability.

Community policing is, in essence, collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems (BJA, 1994). This implies that community policing is playing a major role in police-community collaborations in problem solving. It is making community members active participants in the process of problem solving, and the patrol officers' pivotal role in community policing require profound changes within the police organization (BJA, 1994). The neighborhood patrol officer, backed by the police organization, helped community members to mobilize support and resources to solve problems and enhance their quality of life. Community members voiced their concerns, and take action to address these concerns. Creating a constructive partnership will require the energy, creativity, understanding, and patience of all involved.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Police and community are the two most significant actors for community security and stability as well as community policing. It served as a tool of policing community so as to maintain peace and security and secure community from crime and insecurity. It is important means of creating alliance between police officers and co-policing with community. It has played an important role in reducing crimes in Asella Town Administration since it was introduced in the town. The study found out that crimes have reduced after the introduction of community policing in the town. Crimes like theft and/robbery, and sexual offences were among the crimes show decline since the introduction of community policing in Asella Town Administration. This implies that with developing the awareness and involvement of the community in community policing activities, community security and stability started to maintain in Asella Town Administration.

Based on the findings obtained, the following recommendations have been drawn from the study. To ensure the success of community policing in Asella Town Administration, the important task needs to be taken place is, to develop the awareness of the community about the practice or strategy of community policing. Community policing needs to be practiced in a systematic way to demonstrate better results in maintaining peace and security, crime reduction and order issues. Moreover, community meetings on community policing must be take place regularly in order to involve community members in community policing activities. Besides, there is a need for continued capacity building program in the form of workshops and training on community roles and responsibilities to the community policing.

The other issue come in to the recommendation is about the participation and representation of different members of the community. Since the involvement and representation of different members of the community especially that of women's in community policing is not satisfactory in Asella town, it needs much work to increase the involvement of women. Besides, to advance collective security up to a satisfactory standard, interaction and collaboration with various institutions, private sectors, civil society, religious organization, political parties and influential individuals are mandatory.

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