

ENVISAGING THE FUTURE OF POLICING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

INNOVATIVE VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND POLICE PARTNERSHIPS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

In 2022, the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association held a major event series called the 'Marketplace of Ideas', which showcased practical and innovative approaches to addressing public health issues that have traditionally been criminalised or over-policed, with a particular focus on policing and policing alternatives. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was a major supporter of the event series.

This report summarises the key learnings and discussions stemming from the event's violence prevention session, in which four exciting programs from around the globe were selected to present their unique approaches to leveraging the intersections of law enforcement and public health to prevent and reduce violence in their communities.

In this report, we look across these four case studies to examine the key elements of the programs, to discuss their common characteristics, and to demonstrate the importance of collaborating across sectors to change perspectives and improve community safety, health, and wellbeing outcomes.

A video recording of the full session can be viewed here:
<https://glepha.com/moi-video/>

INTRODUCTION:

POLICING, PARTNERSHIPS AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

It is universally accepted fact that violence undermines the social fabric of society and creates doubts in and weakens support for democracy. Violence in a community can raise questions about citizenship, participation and trust in the institutions of the state, including in the police (Sousa 2013). Exploring the theme of 'police, partnerships and violence prevention' is important because there are an enormous number challenges facing countries when it comes to policing across the world. In our current configuration of the world, violence exists everywhere and is not endemic to only a few communities. It is therefore important to learn how best to work towards preventing violence and start by acknowledging that the police and law enforcement agencies can rarely solve complex societal issues on their own (Mercy et al. 2017).

We now know that cross-sector partnerships and collaboration between police and public health actors and community groups are crucial if we are to meaningfully respond to the safety and wellbeing needs of communities (Caulkins & Reuter 2009; Van Dijk & Crofts 2017). For example, gender-based violence often leads to trauma and distress for women, while trauma support services are often required to deal with incidents of violence. Using strategies to reduce harm through police and public health partnerships works well to generate reductions in violence and to enhance public security.

But we need to know more about how and why these partnerships works in practice so that we are better equipped to design and implement effective programs in future. There is a need to identify and document practical measures that provide appropriate social and health services to people with unmet needs, prevent incidence of violence, keep people out of the criminal justice system, and reduce society's massive over-reliance on incarceration (Van Dijk et al. 2019).

In this report, we showcase four examples of practical police programs that are trying something new to prevent violence at the community level. These case study programs from vastly different parts of the world give us an understanding of what works on the ground with the aim of sharing knowledge, practices, and cross-cultural learnings. Collectively, these programs focus on building community-policing partnerships, strengthening the community's trust in police, integrating trauma-informed approaches to policing practice, and providing access to justice and human rights training for police officers.

The selected programs – from England, Iraq, Mexico and Fiji – bring together representatives from local communities, law enforcement agencies, and health and welfare services to discuss options for preventing and dealing with violence. Our aim is to showcase some urgently needed innovative approaches that seek to address patterns of chronic violence, and look across these programs to distil the key learnings so that we are better equipped to design and implement effective programs in future.

CASE STUDY 1:

A SYSTEM-WIDE APPROACH TO TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE IN LANCASHIRE, ENGLAND

In 2018, an agreement called the National Police and Health Consensus was signed between the police and Chief Constables of England and Wales, national public health bodies and the National Health Service (NHS) as an approach to addressing community vulnerabilities in a joined up multi-agency manner.

Following this, a discussion paper by Public Health England and the College of Policing entitled 'What is a public health approach in policing?' was developed outlining a series of public health approaches that could be operationalised to address the underlying causes of community vulnerabilities such as alcohol misuse, violence and poverty. The discussion paper looked at prevention approaches to the identification, prevention and treatment of trauma. The discussion paper explained the need for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention: A primary approach provides a universal message to prevent people from entering the statutory system in the first instance; a secondary approach prevents someone who has just entered the system from sliding further into it; while a tertiary approach is aimed at averting any sort of crisis once people are in the system to stop the situation from getting worse.

Based on this discussion paper, a landscape review was conducted drawing on the national and international evidence base. The review pointed to the need for a public health approach and recommended creating an extensive police violence reduction network based on trauma informed practices. Today, there are 20 Violence Prevention Units across England and Wales which work across statutory and third sector agencies and government departments. There is also a Trauma Prevention Network across all 43 police areas of England and Wales.

This case study centres on a formal partnership that was established in 2019 between the police and academics in Lancashire County, North West England. In Lancashire, there are social determinants and health inequalities due to problems such as educational disparities, unemployment, alcohol abuse and poverty – these factors are all drivers of community crime and violence. The National Police and Health Consensus was used as a driver and framework to aid the local discussion across Lancashire County.

The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network was established with the aim of developing a system-wide model for trauma informed practice that operates at all levels – from communities to practitioners to leaders – and focuses on prevention, along with enforcement and the effective use of data. The Network comprises a team of specialists from police, health, education, youth offending, probation, local government and social care who are working together to share best practices and connect services to tackle violent crime and its underlying causes.

The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network embodies eight principles: Recognising trauma, avoiding re-traumatisation, trust, empowerment, safety, person-centred, collaboration, and choice. According to the Network, to become ‘trauma informed’ is an ongoing journey that requires changes to cultures, processes, policies, and procedures. The Network has developed a trauma-informed pledge which leaders are required to sign and are expected to commit to developing an action plan based on these principles.



The Network plays an important function in bringing data sets together across multiple sectors to develop a picture of Lancashire's population at the individual and household and area level and help to understand more about patterns of crime and violence and the social determinants of health and health inequalities. Data is collected from a broad range of sources including the Public Health England fingertips database, police crime statistics, the multi-agency database exchange (including attendances to accident and emergency departments) for violence-related injuries, and the voices of local communities through interviews and surveys.

The Network's violence reduction activities include trauma informed training for student police officers and children's social care agency staff, programs to support local parents, such a program for fathers where there are domestic abuse and violence concerns, and multi-agency risk reduction assessment and coordination which involves working inclusively with victims, perpetrators and children in order to ascertain the underlying needs of families and underlying causes of violence.

A external evaluation of the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network conducted in 2021 by a team of researchers from Liverpool John Moores University found that in general:

- Trauma-informed approaches are acceptable and valued.
- Trauma-informed community work for early adopters is context driven and builds on local legacy and existing services and initiatives.
- People working in trauma-informed settings need space for reflection and peer and professional supervision.
- Data collection systems need to be robust and consistently updated.
- Clients need to be at the centre of evaluation, including its development.

CASE STUDY 2:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND POLICING PROGRAM IN IRAQ

The United Nations International Organisation for Migration (IOM) provides technical support to the Government of Iraq to promote the adoption of community policing. The community policing approach is aimed at preventing crime and violence, but for this to happen, both the police and the community needed to be trained on how to interact with each other. At the heart of community policing lies the objective of building trust between the police and the community.

The Community Policing Program in Iraq has two main objectives: a) to strengthen trust and confidence between the public and law enforcement agencies and b) to encourage organisational transformation within the law enforcement sector, including the decentralisation of decision-making on security issues.

Trust between the community and the police is built through Community Police Officers who develop the public's confidence and foster community relationships. Most Community Police Officers come from the same communities they serve, and are well known in their communities. These





Officers attempt to improve communication channels with local authorities, public institutions and civil society organisations. This means that more attention is paid to local issues of violence and crime, and the development of locally tailored responses.

The IOM supports the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior through capacity building, community engagement and infrastructure development. Capacity building includes institutional and individual support. For example, the IOM assists the Ministry of Interior through strategic planning, developing standard operating procedures, gender frameworks, training law enforcement officers, and supporting community members to establish Community Policing Forums.

Community Policing Forums are a platform for community engagement and are considered a neutral space to identify safety and security issues, and to develop priority lists and strategies that respond to these safety and security issues. The Forums are as inclusive as possible with participation extended to vulnerable groups, civil society groups, public institutions, and law enforcement agencies.

Community Policing Offices are in buildings designed to include a safe space known as Referral Guidance Centres where victims of crime, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and other human rights violations can receive support. Referral Guidance Centres are run by civil society organisations and located beside Community Policing Offices. At these Centres, at-risk individuals can receive immediate assistance from trained professionals, referrals to relevant social and health services, legal advice, and information regarding what options are available to them to seek redress.

Community Policing Offices, together with the Community Police Forums, have been able to significantly reduce violent disputes. For example, in the Basra area where violence was among the governorate's major security issues, they have been collaborating with security forces to limit illegal weapons and helping to facilitate alternative dispute resolution measures. In recent years, the Basra Community Policing Office has increased its staff to around 90 personnel allowing it to build a wider network of community partnerships and establish dedicated units for cross-cutting areas and priorities such as tribal coordination, community outreach and women's engagement.

As part of a 2019 evaluation of the community policing model in Iraq, IOM conducted a survey and found that 69% of community members interviewed felt that relationships with police had improved on account of the project, 86% felt that the issues raised in Community Policing Forums had been resolved, and a further 54% of the issues raised in these Forums were referred to other government agencies or civil society organisations for support.



CASE STUDY 3:

BUILDING EFFECTIVE, RESILIENT AND TRUSTED POLICE ORGANISATIONS IN MEXICO

Since 2017, the Mexico City police have been participating in a project on building effective, resilient, and trusted police organisations. In the year the project started, 85 per cent of Mexico City's inhabitants reported feeling unsafe and only 37 per cent reported having confidence in the police. Safety is a prerequisite for physical and mental health and wellbeing, and assuring community safety is a prime task of police.

The project was conducted by researchers from Yale and Boston Universities in collaboration with the Mexico City Ministry of Public Security, and partially funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Open Society Foundation, and the Open Road Alliance. The project delivered procedural justice training to police officers, and adopted the view that police forces are, first and foremost, organisations, so any attempt at police reform must fully integrate an organisational perspective and approach.

The project focused on three important questions for researching police organisation in Mexico City:

1. What should the organisational design of a police force look like? What structures, practices, processes, and managerial systems should be in place to set the minimum viable structure that would allow police organisations to succeed?
2. What paths and approaches to police organisational development seem to be most reliable?
3. What do project partners need to think about how when integrating evidence-informed practices and approaches into an existing policing organisation?



Building on extensive research (Tyler & Nobo 2022), the project started from the premise that building citizen trust in the police is not something that is immediate, but the result of gradually changing perceptions of police legitimacy. Drawing on evidence demonstrating the efficacy of procedural justice as a precursor to perceptions of legitimacy, the project sought to evaluate whether training police officers on procedural justice approaches and practices could make them more effective at building citizen trust. According to procedural justice theory, if people feel they are treated in a procedurally fair and just way, starting from the very first contact, they will view those in authority as more legitimate and respect them more.

A key part of the intervention was to train police officers to display ‘principles of justice’ such as ensuring that public citizens are encouraged to use their voice, demonstrating neutrality in the way officers make decisions, demonstrating respect through concern for the wellbeing of others, and increasing public transparency in how police make decisions.

The project team developed a training package for police officers by incorporating best practices from policing models in the US and Europe and co-designing the course together with the Mexico City Police. The program was grounded in the language, experiences, and cultures of police officers in Mexico, and was piloted and re-designed three times before its launch.

Over three days, the project team trained a group of 900 police officers and 60 managers on the concepts of procedural justice. Included in the training were modules on police legitimacy, principles of procedural justice, trust building with citizens, and Mexico City history. For the training to work effectively, it was necessary that police officers were able to comprehend the messages, identify their own biases, and internalise the messages in a way that resulted in changed behaviour.

Between four to six months after the delivery of the training, the project was evaluated. For a training program to be truly effective, participants must improve their knowledge of the content, but that content must also be internalised—that is, training must change what participants believe to be true—and these changes in knowledge and beliefs must be reflected in real changes in the behaviour of participants.

The evaluation used randomly assigned, balanced control and treatment groups to compare differences in outcomes along these three dimensions (knowledge, beliefs, and behaviour). Through different measurement instruments, the project found that following the training there was a significant shift in how police officers behaved in interactions with citizens, in the ways they conceptualised and enacted professional behaviour, in how they understood the nature of their work, and in the importance they placed in a trusting relationship between citizens and the police.

The evaluation additionally found there was a significant shift in the way police officers thought about their profession. Police who previously



saw their role as ‘strong enforcers of the law who have to chase criminals’ changed their view over time to view their role as ‘protectors’ who must gain and retain the trust of communities.

CASE STUDY 4:

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING FOR POLICE IN FIJI

Fiji, like many other countries, has challenges in relation to due processes and access to justice. It is well-documented that there have been heavy-handed and alarmingly brutal responses carried out by police officers in the past, and human rights defenders expressing criticism of the government have faced intimidation and harassment. In addition, Fiji has one of the highest rates of violence against women and children. The recent 2021 report by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in selected Pacific Island Countries found that, on average, two out of three women in Fiji experience violence by intimate partners in their lifetime. Transgender persons in particular are at risk of abuse.

When Fiji ratified the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane, Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2016, five national institutions came together to develop an implementation plan for the





Convention, including the Fiji Police Force, Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission, and Fiji Legal Aid Commission. Together, these agencies conducted research and found that people are more vulnerable during their first hour of arrest or detention.

Soon after, in the same year, a pilot project was launched in Fiji with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The project developed procedures for the police to use during the first hour of arrest, including video recorded interviews of accused persons. These first hour arrest procedures and video recording interviews:

- Ensure the rights of arrested and detained persons are protected;
- Reduce and eradicate the ill-treatment of arrested and detained persons by police officers;
- Aim to protect police officers against allegations of torture and use of force; and
- Facilitate efficient criminal justice procedures by encouraging the police to gather evidence instead of relying solely on confessions.

In partnership with national agencies, under the Fiji Police Force Support project, UNDP and OHCHR have also provided training to more than 3000 police officers on human rights. The United Nations has additionally worked hand in hand with the Fiji Police Academy to integrate compulsory human rights and gender training in the curriculum, with the recognition that such trainings can effectively decrease the incidence and reoccurrence of violence. Previously, domestic violence was viewed by the police force as a private family matter. The project has successfully

advocated for the police to make a clear statement outlining their new obligations to address gender-based and family violence. The Fiji Police Force have also established a Sexual Offences Unit and adopted gender responsive budgeting.

OHCHR has worked closely with the Fiji Police Force and there is now a dedicated Human Rights Cell within the Force to investigate complaints of human rights abuses by their own officers. Between 2015 and 2020, 400 criminal charges were laid against Fijian police or military officers. Sixteen were for rape, two for murder, nine for manslaughter and five for abduction. There were also 100 charges of assault. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions reported that in January 2022 that 68 people were charged with serious (non-sexual) offences. Eleven of these were police officers. To date, there is no published record of how many of these charges have led to convictions.



DISCUSSION

KEY LEARNINGS ACROSS THE CASE STUDY PROGRAMS

There are several common learnings across the four case study programs. In particular, we discuss approaches to violence prevention that centre on strengthening programs which require the multi-sectoral involvement of law enforcement, public health, civil society groups and communities.

Cultivating partnerships

In all four case studies, partnerships with civil society, and public health and welfare organisations assisted the police in building trust with communities. The partnerships enabled the police to adopt new perspectives to community safety and respond to community needs with respect to gender-based violence, trauma reduction strategies and human rights training. This partnership approach to working with communities also extends to the co-design and evaluation of programs. For cooperation to be successful, there must be meaningful involvement of the police, public health authorities and civil society organisations in program design and evaluation processes.

For partnerships to succeed, the police must work with trusted intermediaries such as civil society organisations that have the trust and support of the community. For example, where a major non-governmental organisation (NGO) is trusted by communities, that organisation can serve as a bridge between the public and the police, and help to shift mindsets, improve the quality of relationships, and change police behaviour.

Building trust between the community and police

A central theme that emerged in all four presentations is the importance of building trust between the community and the police. This happens through a few processes initiated by police agencies, including cultivating workable partnerships. Police officers are carrying a badge and wear a uniform that is imbued with historical meaning and significance, and can

sometimes trigger deep trauma for members of the community, given the role of the police in past events. A recognition of this history by police and other state authorities will assist in building trust.

To assist with strengthening trust, police can identify community leaders attuned to the importance of relations with police and sit with, listen to, and talk with them to deepen mutual understanding. These leaders can serve as bridges between police and communities and open doors to community participation.

An area that contributes to distrust of police is when police legitimacy is questioned by the community. The level of trust between the community and police often plummets when legitimacy issues arise. To address this, in a number of the case studies, the police started to make a conscientious effort to listen to their partners and communities. Police officers should publicly demonstrate humility and patience and put in the time required to earn the trust of others. Communities and partners feel valued when they are listened to, and learning by listening can help to build necessary trust and legitimacy.

Identifying police officers who drive change

To inspire change at scale, police organisations should identify and support police officers who demonstrate compassion, trust, and empathy, and who view prevention and problem-solving as central to their roles. Such police officers should be supported and mentored to rise through the ranks to take on leadership positions in which they can accelerate organisational changes that address the root causes of complex societal problems, develop strong cross-sectoral partnerships, and build and sustain community trust.

Linking police training and policy development

In all four case studies, the programs invested in police training and policy development. Police officers must be able to benefit from training that repositions their role as community protectors, enhances their

understanding of local cultures, and outlines their obligations towards strengthening cross-sector partnerships and building relations in the community. Police training on human rights, community policing and gender-based violence should be accompanied by policy changes and the development of regulations that guide police practice in relation to violence prevention, trauma reduction and public health and safety.

Locating community policing within broader police structures

There needs to be a commitment from senior police leadership to implement community policing across the breadth of police organisations. The location of community policing within the broader police structure will often be an indicator of how successful its implementation will be. In Iraq, for instance, community policing is a separate department within the country's Ministry of the Interior, but the project run by the International Organisation for Migration is trying to mainstream the concept so that all police officers know about and internalise the ethos of community policing as a core policing approach.

Internal capacity building

Police agencies that engage communities, academia, public health and civil society partners require continual training and internal capacity building through significant workforce development. Institutional change processes should play a significant part in the internal capacity building programs.

Academic research partners

To capture the work of policing agencies working with public health authorities and other partners, it is necessary to research the changes that police are undertaking and to understand the depth of the problems they face. Academic research plays a significant role in documenting the processes and analysing data which is required to understand problems facing the community and processes required to change the way police address issues such as mental health and trauma. Partnerships between

police and academics can improve monitoring and program development when implementing new strategies.

SOME KEY CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS

Resourcing for programs and policing partnerships

The process of community engagement and building trust in police requires sufficient human and material resources. The procurement of funding and the availability of resources helps to facilitate better partnerships and reduce rates of crime and violence.

In many countries, funding for community policing is provided by international donors. Funding is dependent on the country context, the situation in the country and donors' priorities. Since funding is priority-based, if there is an emergency, for instance, then funding for community policing will be given less of a priority. This means that in post-conflict settings, such as the case study from Iraq, funding will be contingent on the priorities of the national government and international donors, and adequate levels of funding are not always available.

Data, documenting and evaluation

Access to shared data can facilitate cooperation, impact and learning across sectors and different government departments, but where resources are limited or trust is lacking between stakeholders, data may not be available. Collecting and managing data can improve the design and quality of programs, and is a key aspect of rigorous evaluation.

Documenting, evaluating, and learning from practical experience is crucial. In several of the case studies, pilots were conducted up to three times to ensure that the programs' processes worked effectively. With a sound evidence-base we will be in a better position to design effective programs and successfully apply to funders and governments for the scale-up of small pilot projects.

CONCLUSION

Violence is a major public health issue since injury – particularly physical and psychological injury – resulting from violence clearly falls within the definition of public health. Accordingly, public health efforts to understand and prevent violence are imperative if we are to design and implement effective violence prevention programs and policies (Dahlberg & Mercy 2009).

Developing effective approaches to the prevention of violence and effective responses to incidents of violence requires a shift in the internal beliefs, behaviours and institutional capacities of the police, as well as a better understanding of how to work in meaningful partnerships with communities, civil society organisations, and health and welfare agencies.

Collectively, the four case studies in this report highlight the importance of bridging the fields of law enforcement and public health to develop effective public safety programs and partnerships. The examples demonstrate that initiatives which effectively prevent community violence involve complex cooperation among different parts of our society. Many of the known measures which ameliorate violence occur outside of the criminal justice system – within families, communities, and through activities and services that address the root causes of social and health inequity.

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GLEPHA VIOLENCE PREVENTION SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

If you are interested in finding out more about the topics explored in this report, please consider joining the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association's Violence Prevention Special Interest Group. The group seeks to provide an interdisciplinary space where professionals and academics across the globe can come together to discuss issues, exchange knowledge, and develop practice in the field of violence prevention. By sharing and discussing best practice at the local, national, and international level, along with research at the forefront of the field, it is hoped that the goal of reducing violence within and across communities can be furthered. The Special Interest Group provides a regular forum which is open to GLEPHA members and welcomes new members to engage in discussion and knowledge exchange. The group is currently made up of members with backgrounds as police officers, workers in public health, sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, philosophers and more.

To find out more about the Special Interest Group, please visit: <https://glepha.com/special-interest-groups/violence-prevention-sig/>

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