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The implementation of Sector Policing in South Africa: Successes and Challenges

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Background

- The dawn of democracy in 1994 ushered in **diverse changes** on how a democratically elected government would **provide services to its citizenry**.
- Part of these services includes **policing services**. The police organization had to **transform** itself to respond to the new constitutional order.
- Part of this transformational process included the development, adoption and implementation diverse philosophies, policies, strategies and concepts.
- Simply to respond to the constitutional remit as enshrined in section 205 (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

Background cont

- Sector policing became one of the internationally “borrowed” concept which was supposed to be localized or domesticated in this country and based on crime dynamics.
- This is a product of a “benchmarking process” from United Kingdom (London) allegedly based on the visit by a senior member of the police to England.
- Sector policing as a concept was viewed as an implementation tool of community policing philosophy which the country adopted as part of the new dispensation

Background cont

- This concept is succinctly defined as “the division of areas into smaller managerial sectors and the assignment of police officers to these areas on a full time basis. These police officers regularly patrol their own sector and are able to identify problems and seek appropriate solutions. Sector policing encourages constant contact with members of local communities” South Africa (White Paper, 1998).

Background cont:

- In its quest to implement sector policing the South African Police Service issued out a National Instruction (NI 3 of 2013) which serves as a directive for the implementation of this concept.
- This national instruction posits that "*Sector policing* is a policing approach to **support the implementation** of the philosophy of **community and partnership policing**, by dividing a policing area into smaller manageable sectors to improve community interaction".
- Over and above the White Paper on Safety and Security (1998) and the NI 3 of 2013, a set of operational guidelines for the sector managers and sector teams (2015) were developed and published.

Successes

– **Geographical domination and stability**

- The implementation of sector policing around 1998 until early 2000 saw high but temporary domination and stability of the areas by the police.
- It could be that there was excitement about this policing concept or mixture of other concurrent interventions.
- It should be noted that around that time also, there were a number of operations (operation Monozite & Crackdown) as informed then by the national crime combatting strategy with the express purpose of stabilizing certain areas.
- These interventions took place across the sectors.
- Be that as it may, temporary geographical domination and stability was realized and could partly be attributed to sector policing.

Successes

- **Enhancement of community interaction and consultation**

- The fact that sector crime forums were created, majority of people who could not play a meaningful role at the community police forum level, could partake at sector level.
- This enhanced community interaction and consultation and resulted in the “practical manifestation of community policing”.

Successes

- **Improved police visibility and quick response**

- Sector policing was prioritized by the SAPS and more resources were allocated especially at the then Presidential police stations e.g Thabong in Free State
- This resulted in an improved police visibility and response time precisely due to availability of vehicle/s in the sector most of time.
- The close proximity of vehicles and members closer to the community of a specific sector led to quick response to the complaints.

Successes

- **Promotion of community police relation**

- Communities knew the sector managers and other members well.
- More interaction took place in the streets, at sector forum meetings as well as at the CSC.
- These interaction outside the CSC environment led to improved community relations.

The Challenges

- **Incongruence between the definition of the concept and its practical implementation.**

- The implementation process resulted in a departure from the definition of sector policing to something broader than its definition.
- The police station area was supposed to be divided into smaller and manageable sectors, however the demarcation criteria brought in the wards which are bigger that a police station area or cut across number of police stations.
- Sector policing objectives were broadened to the extent that it became difficult to link the theory (concept and definition) with the actualization thereof.
- The theory eventually became an ordinary intervention which deals with a heavy loaded objectives scope.
- The broadness and ambiguity of the objectives as spelled out by the implementation guidelines makes the assessment of the concept to be difficult.

The Challenges

- Another challenge that was experienced regarding the objectives of Sector Policing and implementation thereof is conflict between the demarcation criteria and the provisions made by the implementation guidelines.
- The NI 3 of 2013 prescribed a minimum of 2 sectors (what about the maximum?) which went against the notion of “smaller sectors”. (smaller-not defined in sq km-could mean anything to anybody)
- Most of the police stations which initially subscribed to the division of “smaller sectors” immediately re-demarcated their areas irrespective of size into “a minimum” of two sectors.
- This could be attributed to limited resources which then lead to these fundamental questions.
- Why the SAPS implemented a concept that is resource intensive without providing such resources?.
- Did the organization conduct a feasibility study and develop a resource plan for this sector policing?.
- To what extent did the fixed establishment affects the effectiveness of sector policing?.

The Challenges

- Not only did the minimum of two sectors caused confusion but the criteria in terms of geographical demarcation “A *sector* must be of a manageable size and must, as far as is reasonably possible, be aligned with the CAS blocks, municipal wards, magisterial boundaries, mountain ranges and or rivers”.
- With the exception of CAS blocks which are confined to the station precinct, the rest are bigger than the station precinct

The Challenges

Detachment of sector policing from being a community-police driven initiative to being a police oriented concept thus resulting in it being a costly and resource intensive concept.

- The whole notion of sector policing was to prevent crime through well informed intelligence driven projects working with local community that resides within the demarcated sector. However, **police took full responsibility of the policy implementation** by deploying vehicles in each sector and allocating cell phones.
- In the process the police found themselves doing crime prevention (normal patrols and attendance of complaints) instead **of identifying crime generators, developing and implementing project plans** with the community as well as local government to respond to the crime generators.
- The principle of community involvement and participation was only seen in the meetings (Sector Crime Forums).

The Challenges

Developing sector policing policy frameworks without the participation of civil society, NGO's and other interests groups

- Sector policing implementation process (development of policy framework) was never taken through a comprehensive community consultation and marketing process.
- The policy implementers did not learn from the implementation of community policing. When the philosophy of community policing was adopted, civil society groups, NGO's and others played a poignant role. Police and community members within various community police forums across the country were trained by IDASA.
- There were structured capacity building programs such as running community police forum, Community policing and human rights etc that were developed and implemented.
- Community in general rallied behind the philosophy.
- Even though the focus was on the implementation of a tool (community police forum), it created more awareness regarding community policing.
- This was not the case with sector policing.

The Challenges

- **The absence of well researched monitoring and evaluation tools to measure the impact and success of implementation process**.

- The implementation guidelines did not build in monitoring and evaluation tools to evaluate the success factor of this concept. The monitoring and evaluation tools could have amongst others assisted SAPS to continuously benchmark with the country where the concept was borrowed from. There are fundamental question that we need to ask ourselves today;
- Do SAPS have a benchmarking report that led to the implementation of sector policing in South Africa or is it true that it simply came in based on the visit by a senior officer to London?
- Did the SAPS make regular visits to London (UK) to determine whether the concept is still applied?
- If so, how did SAPS use the information based on this concept to improve its implementation modalities.
- Is this concept still relevant in UK and if not, why was it abandoned?

The Challenges

- **The implementation of sector policing outside the scope of community policing strategy.**

• This concept was seen to be the practical manifestation of community policing. However, the community policing philosophy was and still is hanging as a pie in the sky without being reduced to a strategy. The absence of community policing strategy contributed negatively to the manifestation of community policing through sector policing. The strategy could have assisted in the implementation of pragmatic programmes to transform communities who are viewed as militant.

Recommendations

The concept is great. No doubt about it. However, as part of developing a new policing model for South Africa, it would be propitious to consider the following:

- A production of the **state of policing report** which will evaluate number of policing methods, approaches and strategies including sector policing. This will pave the way for the development of a policing model for South Africa and assist in determining whether sector policing should be part of the model or not.
- **Comprehensive engagement** and consultation with South Africans about sector policing drawing on the lessons learnt on how the philosophy of community policing was marketed.
- Ministry of Police sends a delegation(SAPS, National Secretariat for Police, Research institutes) England to determine the success factors and other challenges associated with the sector policing **(Benchmarking exercise).**
- **Proper budgetary processes** in relation to sector policing enhancement must be undertaken in case where the model of policing will embrace this concept.

Recommendations

- Review the objective scope of sector policing to ease the process of measuring progress and monitor its impact.
- Development/finalization and implementation of community policing strategy.
- Consider linking sector policing with safer cities, streets and open spaces which are international crime prevention programmmes of UN-Habitaat.
- Consideration of numerous studies and benchmarking reports on sector policing globally and develop a South African sector policing version which can be adapted to the needs of a particular community.

Concluding remarks

- It will be critical for the country to make a determination how the soft approach as represented by sector policing, community policing and **social crime prevention** shall co-exist with “tough” policing (combatting) in this democratic dispensation.
- If we are to think of including sector policing as part of policing model, and as an integral ingredients of democratic policing style, it will be important to deeply consider what is contained in this paper and other research work conducted on this subject.

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Each generation must out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it" F. Fanon

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Thank you

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