

Sector Policing: What are the challenges?

by

Millicent Maroga



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[Millicent Maroga](#) is a Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

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Increasingly, the SAPS has started to focus on implementing a strategy called 'sector policing'. This strategy calls for a more focused approach to policing at the local level including the establishment of 'sector crime forums (SCFs).' Indeed, 'sector policing' could be seen as a form of community policing. One of the key challenges to be overcome is to ensure that these new police-community based structures do not experience the same shortcomings as community policing forums. This article will describe sector policing as a new initiative and consider some challenges to its effective implementation and also highlight gaps within the sector policing national draft instruction (2003). The aim is not to criticise the national draft but to highlight gaps that need consideration.

What is sector policing?

Sector policing is a UK based policing model that can be traced back to the previous decade, initially known as neighbourhood policing.¹ Sector policing adopts a far more decentralised approach to policing intended to address root cause of crime at specific geographical locations in partnership with particular communities at local level. Thus sector policing can be seen as a 'tailor made' policing approach created to suit specific local needs.

According to Dixon,² sector policing in South African was mentioned as early as 1994 in the draft policy document, where then, the Minister of Safety and Security, Sidney Mufumadi talked of "community police officers with an intimate knowledge of a particular area and its problems as a main operational unit of a lean and efficient police organisation".

³ Dixon further states that despite the similarities, the term 'sector policing' was then not used to describe this kind of area-based problem solving policing.⁴

In 1996 sector policing was once again briefly mentioned in the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) as an operational strategy to addressing violence associated with inter-group conflict in Kwazulu- Natal. In this case the term 'sector policing' was used without

being defined to describe the deployment of police officers to affected areas.⁵

The term 'Sector policing' once again made an appearance in the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security where it was defined as:

The division of areas into smaller managerial sectors and assignment of police officers to these areas on a full time basis. These police officers regularly patrol their own sectors and are able to identify problems and seek appropriate solutions. Sector policing encourages constant contact with members of the local communities.⁶

The white paper further states that sector policing should be:

1. Proactively, vigorously and fairly conducted
2. Based on clear instructions from the police commanders to patrol officers
3. Planned on the basis of crime analysis
4. Focused on a specific problem within an area
5. Implemented on the basis of a specific time frames
6. Developed in collaboration with the municipal police and other relevant stakeholders.

The policy behind the implementation of sector policing is to maximise effective police visibility⁷ and enhance accountability at the local level. Sector policing is a multi-layered policing approach. Firstly it is a crime prevention approach aimed at mobilising and engaging local communities in fighting against crime, through the establishments of sector crime forums (SCF).

Sector crime forums are grounded within the same core elements that underpin community-policing forums, that is

- Service orientation: the provision of a professional policing service, responsive to community needs and accountably for addressing these needs
- Partnership: the facilitation of a co-operative, consultative process of problem solving
- Problem solving: the joint identification and analysis of the cause of crime and conflict and the development of innovative measures to address these
- Empowerment: the creation of joint responsibility and capacity for addressing crime and
- Accountability: the creation of a culture of accountability for addressing the needs and the concerns of communities

Secondly, it is a community oriented policing approach geared towards mobilising and engaging local communities in crime prevention. Thirdly, it is a step towards the development of a modern and democratic policing style addressing safety and security concerns of all South Africans.⁸

Implementation of sector policing

The implementation process of sector policing comprises of four phases approach. The idea behind breaking down the implementation process into clearly defined phases is to enable the stations to monitor their progress and locate any challenges that may arise during the implementation process.

Phase one entails dividing up of the precinct into clearly demarcated sectors.⁹ The number of sectors within a precinct will be determined by the capacity of the station, crime 'hot spots', and the size and diversity of the precinct. According to the National instructions (2003), when identifying sector boundaries the stations can either choose to align their sectors with the existing CAS blocks or municipal wards, or use infrastructure such as main roads, railway lines or taxi/bus terminals. They can also use demographic features such as the population size, cultural diversity, periodic inflow and outflow of non-residents, or demarcate according to the nature of the area i.e. residential, business or industrial.

The national instruction maintains that the manner in which the sectors are identified and demarcated must be realistic and the sectors should not be too big or too many to ensure manageability.

Phase two entails appointing a sector commander and a sector team. The sector commander will be responsible for

- Managing the sector
- Establishing sector crime forums
- Organising meetings and other events in the sector
- Liasing with all the relevant community stakeholders
- Initiating crime prevention strategies based on the profile and the dynamic of the sector and
- Reporting to the station commissioner¹⁰

The sector team will consist of a sector deputy, and reservists. Their role will be to assist the sector commander in coordinating the sector and the sector crime forums.

After the appointment of a sector commander, follows a process of compiling a sector profile, by the sector commander and the sector team. A sector profile is a detailed description of the area encompassing of the demographic make up of the area, businesses and other organisations operating within the area, prominent role players within the area, and major infrastructure within the area. In addition, it has to give an account of crime trends within the area including root causes of crime; factors giving rise to the occurrence of crime and factors inhibiting effective crime prevention.¹¹

Phase four entails establishing a sector-crime forum (SCF), envisaged to be representative of all relevant stakeholders. Two members of the community need to be appointed to serve as a secretary and a chairperson for the sector crime forums. The sector crime forums are expected to meet once a month to discuss crime in the area by identifying causes of crime, identifying solutions and appropriate role players to bring on board.¹² These meetings will encompass all role players within the community, various organisations and local

councillors.

If successful, sector policing can be seen to produce a number of benefits including¹³

- Improving the identification of hot crime spots and the root causes of crime at a local level;
- Better use of policing resources according to the needs of a particular sector;
- Improving visible policing;
- Allow for greater manageability given that the precincts will be divided into smaller areas;
- More effective and efficient police response to community complaints and emergencies;
- Better cooperation between the police and communities at local level to address specific crime problems

Challenges to the effective implementation of sector policing

As with any new policy initiative there is bound to be some challenges in the initial stages of implementation. With regards to sector policing it has to be borne in mind that sector policing in locality A will be confronted with different challenge from sector policing in locality B, given that it is a customised policing style. As a result the challenges discussed below are not applicable to all policing precinct.

Sector Crime Forums and Community Policing Forums

Currently, there is a lack of common understanding as to what is sector policing, and how sector-crime forums differ from community policing forums.¹⁴ The national instruction unequivocally states that SCF and CPF have to work in collaboration, with CPF acting, as a statutory body and SCF as an operational body. The biggest concern is, will sector policing ever be seen and incorporated into the mainstream policing function, whilst community policing and community policing forums are still perceived as an add function to police work.

Demarcation of sectors and SCF

The national draft is ambiguous concerning the demarcation of sectors and overlooks certain aspects that may hinder the effectiveness of sector policing. In an instance whereby the demarcation of sectors is not aligned with the existing municipal wards demarcations, the stations are likely to find themselves faced with the following problem: SCF meetings require the attendance of all stakeholders within the community including the local councillors, and metro police representatives. Thus meaning that if there are six sectors within an area these parties will attend 6 different sector meeting in a period of a month and also a CPF meeting. The primary concern arising from this instance is will these parties sustain their active participation in sector policing, considering their current workload and the demand sector policing calls upon them.

Sector-to-Sector Collaboration

The second challenge is concerning the relationship between the sectors. If the efficiency of

the sectors is to be determined by the crime rate, then that is likely to give rise to competition rather than collaboration between the sectors. Competition is two fold, it can be good and yet it can be bad. Good in a sense that it will create a threshold or a baseline of performance for the sector managers. However, it can lead to a situation whereby sector managers are reverting back to reactive policing i.e. arrests, stop and searches and raids or informal policing styles in an attempt to reduce their crime rate and achieve their set performance indicators.

Selection of Sector Managers

The national instruction provides for the appointment of a sector manager, preferably a fulltime police official. It also makes a provision for the appointment of a reservist when a police official is not available to take up that position. However, the draft does not outline a clear criterion or recruitment process for selecting and appointing sector managers. It does not specify who qualifies to be a sector managers, the rank of that individual or years in service.

During our field visitations to the various stations, it was noted that in some instances police members were selected without their knowledge that they are sector managers; while in other instances some police members were not willing to be sector managers. This raises concerns and questions the recruitment process, and suggests that a provision should be made for police members to either apply at their own accord if they want to be sector managers or be recommended by their colleagues or superiors.

Another challenge pertaining to the selection of sector managers manifest from the fact that sector managers has to be available on a 24-hour call. The national draft does not take into consideration situations whereby a sector manager resides in Pretoria and works in Johannesburg. How is it possible for that officer to be available on a 24-hour call, taking into consideration the distant between where he/she lives and the place of work.

The latter challenge can compromises on the efficiency of the sector manager and to a certain degree defeat the purposes of sector policing, which is accessible policing.

Community participation

Another challenge facing sector policing is mobilising community members and ensuring that sector crime forums represents the needs of various groups within the sectors. If sector crime forums fail to mobilise the community, they are likely to find themselves in a similar trap as community policing forum i.e. serving the needs of certain interest groups rather than that of the entire community.

Even though the National draft provides a strategic direction for sector policing and the establishment of sector crime forums, it is not inclusive.

- The national draft makes provision for training and capacity building for already appointed sector managers. However, it does not make any provision for training prospective sector managers.
- The draft is also not clear with regards to the authority of sector managers over the sector team and how are the sectors managers to be held accountable.

- Moreover, the draft does not stipulate key performance indicators for sector managers or sector policing and how are the sector managers to be evaluated.

Lessons for South Africa

A study by Dixon and Stanko (1993) In London metropolitan area on sector policing recommends the following best practises¹⁵

- **Too many sectors within a precinct create difficulties of co-ordination**
In order to ensure that there is efficient and effective co-ordination of sectors within a precinct it is advisable for station managers to divide their areas into a small number of sectors. This will not only facilitate co-ordination, but it will make it easier for station managers to oversee and to hold sector managers accountable. For South Africa, fewer sectors will make it easy for other stakeholders in the criminal justice sector such as metro police and local councillors to take part in the different sectors activities and meetings i.e. sector crime forum (SCF) meetings.
- **Inter-sector collaboration**
In an attempt to counteract the development of silos amongst the sectors, time should be set aside for cross sector meeting, where all sector managers come together to discuss problems, hot crime spot and help each other find solutions. This will also help in situations whereby an identified hot crime spot fall within the jurisdiction of two or more sectors.
- **Sector policing should be understood as more than a crime prevention programme**
For sector policing to be a sustainable policing approach, police managers have to understand it within the broader context of community policing and crime prevention. Moreover as a core function of police work rather than a mere crime prevention programme.
- **Performance indicators should reflect the key performance indicators of sector policing**
Given that sector policing is a proactive police approach, it is therefore imperative for performance indicators to reflect the principles of sector policing by rewarding and prioritise sector activities such as police-community interactions, number of community complaints, and sector manager's administration efficiency.
- **Sector managers should be given detailed job descriptions**
All sector managers should be given job description spelling out their roles as sector managers and their key performance indicators. These job descriptions should be tallied with performance prioritises and reflects sector-policing activities. This will inevitable ensure that sector-policing activities are not abandoned in favour of reactive police activities in an attempt to score point in performance appraisals. Further, this will ensure that sector policing is not treated as a short-term crime prevention or community relation programme.
- **Sector policing training should be an ongoing process**

The role of a sector manager is far deeper than managing and coordination a sector; it encompasses that of an ambassador, and a walking billboard for the SAPS. Thus training and recruiting the right people is imperative. A once off two day training is not an answer and definitely not empowering; it is essential to have an ongoing training for sector managers. Private and public sector should form a partnership for an inclusive ongoing training for sector managers, ranging from communication skills, fundraising skills, and networking skills to public relation skills. In addition to that, there should be a support structure in place for sector managers; this can be in form of supervision or mentoring services.

Conclusion

Apart from the above international lessons that can be learned to ensure that sector policing is implemented effectively, there is also a need to take the challenges confronting many CPFs into account. For sector policing to be a success it is essential for SAPS to firstly, secure the support and cooperation of the community. Secondly, review the current sector-policing models in various stations, identify good practises and then disseminate them to all sector managers. Thirdly, establish clear guidelines explaining the role and purpose of the SCF's and ensure that sector policing is internalised as both a philosophy and an operational strategy.

And lastly, review the national Instructions more importantly taken into consideration the issues raised in this paper.

Notes

¹ See Dixon, B. (2000). *The Globalisation of democratic Policing: Sector Policing and Zero Tolerance in the New South Africa*. Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town

² Ibid

³ Minister of Safety and Security. (1994). *Draft Policy Document*. Pretoria. Minister of Safety and Security

⁴ See Dixon, B. (2000). *The Globalisation of democratic Policing: Sector Policing and Zero Tolerance in the New South Africa*. Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town

⁵ Department of Safety and Security (1996). *National Crime Prevention Strategy: Summary*. Pretoria: Department For Safety and Security

⁶ Department of Safety and Security (1998). *White Paper on Safety and Security: "In Service of Safety" 1999-2004*. Department of Safety and Security. Pg 17

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Sector Policing National Instructions Draft, 2003. South African Police Service

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ SAPS/CPF Imbizo Workshop report facilitated by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), 12 April 2003

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ See Dixon, B & Stanko (1993) *Serving the People: Sector Policing and Public Accountability*. Centre for Criminal Justice Research, Department of Law, University Brunel, Uxbridge, Middlesex.