SESSION 1: APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY POLICING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

INTRODUCTION

Community policing or community-oriented policing is defined as a model of community-based public security management. It aims to replace an essentially reactive and repressive police force, mobilized on law enforcement missions, with a more preventive, anticipatory police force that co-produces security with communities. D. WISLER asserts in *Police communautaire, exposition d'une typologie* that "*behind the extraordinary success of the term 'community policing', or its francophone version […], lies a very diverse reality of approaches and practices (...)*. *Under a deceptively universal name, in fact, a whole range of practices can be found that are the result of approaches and philosophies sometimes compatible and capable of combination, but sometimes also frankly contrary*".[1]

In its manual *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) identifies the following main principles of community policing.

- Be visible and accessible to the public;
- Know, and be known by, the public;
- Engage, mobilize and partner with communities;
- Listen to communities' concerns;
- Respond to communities' needs;
- Respect and protect the rights of all community members; and
- Be accountable for their actions and the outcome of those actions[2].

In the African context and for the purpose of this presentation, we will adopt the term " Police de proximité" meaning "community policing" and retain the following four (4) fundamental principles, namely, getting close to the community, partnership, preventive measure strengthening and local security problem solving. (Community

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[1] WISLER D., **La police communautaire, exposition d'une typologie,** 2009, p.5

[2] Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach, OSCE, Vienna, 2014.

I will therefore build on these four key principles cited above, in an attempt to address the four points of discussion that the African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) invited me to elaborate on, namely:

- Contribution of community policing in preventing violent extremism and terrorism;
- Skills required by Public security Forces (Gendarmerie and Police) to better contribute to countering violent extremism;
- Link between community policing and intelligence-led policing;
- Risks and vulnerabilities in the implementation of community policing in a context of countering and preventing violent extremism.

I. CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: COMMUNITY POLICING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The security landscape in Africa has completely changed over the past two decades. Security paradigms have evolved from classic border disputes of early independence years into deadly internal conflicts before giving way to often volatile, unpredictable, complex and ambiguous hybrid security threats such as violent extremism and terrorism, which are now seen as the main security challenge in Africa.

Community policing as a model of community-based public security management could be an appropriate tool or approach not only for crime reduction, but also for addressing the security challenges facing African countries by providing endogenous, tangible, and sustainable solutions, particularly with respect to preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism. Indeed, it can contribute to:

- Anchoring policing into respect for human rights and the rule of law by the public safety forces (Police and *Gendarmerie*) thus reinforcing trust with the population;
- Improving public perceptions and interaction with the police as a prerequisite for effective support in countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism;

- Improving communication with the public on countering terrorism and violent extremism;

- Increasing public vigilance and resilience against terrorism and violent extremism;

- Enhancing police understanding of communities as a basis to better engage and co-operate with them and generate co-production;

- Helping to identify and address community safety issues and grievances;

- Facilitating timely identification and referral of critical situations[3]

Community Engagement Community policing would not be possible without community engagement. Community participation in countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism can be considered in an organized form through community bodies, freely established by community members with support and guidance from the government in a holistic and integrated approach, or as an independent and free form of organization. In Africa, where the public's sense of security is fragile, community policing could be an interesting approach to achieving the objectives of countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism, including raising public awareness, gathering intelligence, implementing preventive action, and protecting citizens and institutions through community engagement.

Prevention
- Raise awareness of the threat of violent extremism and opportunities for assistance;

- Confront ideologies and ideologues who aim to push their agenda on individuals and challenge them;

- Produce narratives that contradict extremist narratives and messages by offering alternative narratives or counter-discourses. Communities are often more effective and credible in disseminating these messages than governments and statutory bodies, since they are communicated by influential and respected peers;

- Build resilience to violent extremism;

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[3] Ibid

- Identify individuals or groups at risk by communities and more specifically by key community stakeholders. Communities can act as an early warning "system" for police and intelligence agencies if they have information or concerns about "certain" individuals or groups;

- Provide support systems to neighborhoods, families or parents (e.g., parenting skills) related to people at risk;

- Provide information that may be useful to authorities, including by preventing individuals from traveling to dangerous conflict areas abroad[4]. (The porous borders between Burkina, Mali and Niger as well as ethnic affiliations facilitate the migration and transfer of combatants from one front to another.)

Deradicalization

- Provide support to families, individuals and communities where one or more individuals have become radicalized and have fallen into violent extremism and criminality;

- Provide specialized expertise and a positive alternative that can be a role model/mentor for the individuals involved;

- Protect and support.[5]

An Inextricably Linked Pair

Community engagement and community policing are inseparable. Community policing is one of the approaches that can best capitalize on community contributions. Recent studies have confirmed the success of community policing in counterterrorism. It facilitates communication to combat crime, fear of crime and local policing concerns. Community policing contributes above all to building a climate of trust with the communities through dialogue and listening to religious and traditional chiefs, opinion leaders and all community members.

A Concept Integrated into an Overall National Security Vision: However, it is important to note that community policing is not a panacea or a turnkey solution for preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism. It is a concept which must be integrated into a comprehensive, holistic and coherent policy vision and strategy to

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[4] [4] Melinda Holmes, Preventing Violent Extremism, Protecting Rights and Community Policing : Why Civil Society and Security Sector Partnership Matter, ICAN, 2017.

[5] Ibid

counter and prevent violent extremism and terrorism, otherwise it is doomed for failure come implementation. Community policing should not be a concept isolated from a country's other security policies.

II. SKILLS REQUIRED BY SECURITY FORCES TO BETTER CONTRIBUTE TO COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The ultimate goal of community policing is to serve the community, ensure the protection of its members and of their property. Unfortunately, the Defense and Security Forces in most African countries are formatted and trained to primarily protect the government and national security interests and very often at the expense of the people. Effective and efficient community policing is rooted in mutual trust and a solid partnership with the population, and the achievement of these objectives is conditioned by factors both at the government level and in the ethics of public security personnel.

Government Level

While the security of a government can be understood as the summation of all efforts to achieve peace and stability within its borders, it will continue to depend on essential factors, namely the firm establishment of the rule of law and good governance. The successful implementation of community policing is not exempt from this conditionality.

Consolidation of the Rule of Law

ethosIt is one of the key elements of the success of community policing. The credibility of security and judicial institutions depends on effective law enforcement and combating impunity. It is essential for citizens to perceive maximum transparency, impartiality and legality in the handling of crime. Their motivation to fully participate in addressing security issues in general and countering violent extremism and terrorism is at stake. Citizen participation is a logical consequence of the entrenchment of democracy, the rule of law and good governance. Without these prerequisites, community policing cannot thrive. A few testimonies from repentant terrorists in Mali illustrate perfectly the breach of the social contract between the State and the people in many African countries.

- "I lost my property because I didn't have money to give to the judge. The system is corrupt to the absolute core".
- "I joined the MUJAO in 2016 because they convinced me of their integrity and their approach to justice.
- A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study based on more than 500 interviews with jihadists – mostly Kenyans, Nigerians and Somalis – found that in more than 70 per cent of cases, the trigger for their enlistment was an "act of the Government," such as the arrest or execution of a relative.

Police Ethics

Much of the community approach to policing is based on issues related to the behavior of law enforcement. Professional conduct and ethics are essential conditions for the effectiveness of security services in the field. Indeed, it would be unrealistic to hope for a rapprochement with the population and the establishment of partnerships without certain ethical and moral values. The image of the security services, tarnished by various abuses and breaches of police ethics can compromise the implementation of community policing. The law enforcement officer must strive to associate availability with exemplary personal behavior and avoid certain pitfalls. It is essentially about respect for others and difference, but above all about honesty and integrity. Law enforcement services in Africa have the unfortunate reputation of being infrequent, violent and are often singled out for cases of torture, arbitrary arrest, corruption, lack of professionalism, etc.

The Burkina Faso National Anti-Corruption Network (*Réseau National de Lutte contre la Corruption* – RENLAC) issues an annual National Corruption Perception Index where law enforcement rank as the most corrupt institutions in country.

Under the guise of counterterrorism, Defense and Security Forces in Africa too often resort to extrajudicial killings, brutality, and arbitrary arrests rather than genuine investigations. Conventional law enforcement eventually become more feared than terrorists or insurgents. This situation blights the future of any community policing and community engagement initiative.

<u>Protest against Police Violence in Nigeria</u>

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) or Crime Squad was established <u>in 1984</u>. Initially launched to curb armed robbery, it is now accused of human rights violations, corruption, torture, arrests and extrajudicial killings. According to Amnesty International, discontent with police violence in Nigeria is not new. In 2014, the NGO published a report with the evocative title "Welcome to Hell". It documented between January 2017 and May 2020 at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions whose victims were mainly men between the ages of 18 and 35. The vast majority of law enforcement services in Africa are in the same mindset and behavioral patterns as Nigeria's SARS: human rights abuses and resistance to reform and behavioral change.

Community policing requires that police officers be firmly rooted in professional ethics and conduct, which will make them credible and respectable in the eyes of the population. And for this they must work to reinforce certain key values such as:

- Integrity;
- Justice and fairness;
- Professionalism;
- Openness to behavioral change and reform. (Law enforcement are the most reluctant to see the implementation of community policing in some countries).

III. LINKS BETWEEN COMMUNITY POLICING AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

<u>Community Policing and Intelligence Services: Communicating Vessels</u>

Interaction between the police and citizens in the context of community policing generates an important source of information that can guide the action of law enforcement at both local and national levels. With respect to the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism, community policing should be considered as important a source as professional counterterrorism intelligence source.

Community policing and intelligence services must be complementary and mutually supportive even though they may have different approaches. Intelligence services can help community policing better identify and prioritize local security challenges by

providing basic information about a given community or group. As for community policing, it could facilitate the sharing and dissemination of information relevant to the group or community. All this helps build trust and collaboration. However, intelligence gathering should not be the main mission of community policing. It must be the result of a good implementation of community policing.

<u>The Thorny Issue of Source Protection</u>

Strong measures must be taken to ensure that citizens, groups, or communities are not exposed to vindictiveness and retaliation by armed terrorist groups that identify them as collaborators with the Defense and Security Forces or intelligence services. Indeed, many members of community structures and citizens pay a steep price and even with their lives for this collaboration. They are the preferred target of terrorist attacks. In Burkina Faso customary and religious leaders, voluntary civil defense committees (*Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie* – VDP) and members of Koglweogo associations (Local Security Initiatives) are killed daily by terrorist groups.

IV. RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN A CONTEXT OF COUNTERING AND PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

In the African context, the implementation of the concept of community policing must be part of a coherent vision of the security policies of the countries, otherwise it runs the risk of being a resounding failure. At no time should community policing be considered as the "turnkey solution" in the fight and prevention of terrorism. It must be part of a coherent overall national security policy and counterterrorism strategy.

Law enforcement in charge of implementing community policing, are the first contacts between the government and its citizens. Their attitudes and behavior in the particular context of violent extremism and terrorism will impact the principle of rapprochement, which is the first fundamental principle of community policing. For this they must pay particular attention to the following risks in the implementation of the concept:

- Avoid stigmatization and selective engagement of groups or communities as this can be counterproductive. Law enforcement engagement must not be discriminatory and must be based on in-depth and objective analyses;

- Avoid falling into the trap of excesses or exaggeration; that is to say, "everything for security", in relationships with communities or groups that can lead to demotivating them. Other local security issues other than counterterrorism should be integrated;

- Avoid using community policing to simply spy on communities or groups. It should not be a cover for special operations by law enforcement for fear of losing the trust and support of communities;

- Take into account the socio-cultural context and realities. The concept of community policing covers a range of practices that come under different approaches and philosophies, even if the principles we have just seen are relatively common to all community policing. Since social organizations and security concerns differ from country to country, it would be unrealistic to believe that a security approach is universal. Indeed, community policing or community-oriented policing contains above all a sociological characteristic. Problem solving is done with a given community, with its culture, its conception, its behavior, its own way of reacting which can be quite different from one community to another. Failure to take this fact into account exposes us to all the risks and vulnerabilities that can lead to failure.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, let me sum up the points of discussion the ACSS invited me to elaborate on by saying that:

- Community policing as a community-based approach to law enforcement, taking into account the specificities and socio-cultural realities of each context, could contribute in a tangible way to the countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism in Africa. It must, however, be part of a more holistic vision and approach to policy: a National Security Strategy.

- Community policing and intelligence services are complementary and mutually supportive. However, intelligence should not be the main objective of community policing. It must be the result of its good implementation.
- Risks and vulnerabilities in the implementation of community-based policing such as stigma of certain communities or groups, the security of relationships with communities, and the use of community policing as a means of gathering information about other communities may compromise its implementation.