



Members of the Kalika, Nepal, community security group donate hardware such as bicycles and mobile phones to the local police. © ANIL POUDEL/SAFERWORLD



COMMUNITY SECURITY A VEHICLE FOR PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING

It is now broadly recognised that in the long term there cannot be security without development, nor development without security. This briefing explains the concept and practice of ‘community security’, an innovative and effective approach that builds security from the bottom up by empowering communities, authorities and security providers to work together to find local solutions to the security problems they face. This briefing also sets out how this approach can contribute to broader peacebuilding and statebuilding, for example, by linking local level results to national and regional reform processes and frameworks.

KEY MESSAGES

- In different contexts, community security enables various stakeholders to collaborate and address the causes, consequences and risks of conflict, violence and insecurity, strengthening the conditions for sustainable peace.
- By connecting people more constructively with representatives of the state, including security providers and local authorities, community-based approaches to security can help improve state-society relationships and increase state legitimacy.
- Advocacy and engagement with local, sub-national and national actors is crucial to work to scale and embed community security approaches into wider policies and practices.

SECURITY FOR WHOM?



Community security group members in Uzbekogzhar, Tajikistan.
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Since the 1990s donors and other actors have become increasingly engaged in the field of security building – recognising that security and development are mutually dependent.

At the EU level, policy frameworks such as the *Agenda for Change* and the *EU's Comprehensive Approach to External Conflict and Crises* call for more consistent and strategic approaches to the challenges faced by countries and societies either in transition, in conflict-affected and fragile contexts, or more generally affected by violence and insecurity. At the same time, gradual acceptance of the concept of 'human security' has also enabled the international community to look at these challenges and opportunities from different perspectives.

One of the main implications of this people-centred approach is the idea of security as a basic right, alongside other services such as health and education. As a result, empowering people to demand better provision of security, and to implement innovative and cooperative approaches with a broad range of stakeholders, is a key way to enhance their own security and build more peaceful and stable societies. While most security-related policy frameworks, both within the EU and globally, stress the need to take into account and address people's needs and concerns, and more broadly the governance aspects of security, this has proved difficult to translate into practice. As a result, a lot of security-related interventions in the last decade

have failed to make a real difference to local people.¹

An increasing number of actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), think tanks, and international organisations, are now calling for different approaches focusing on more proactive engagement and stronger links with local communities – a level frequently overlooked by security interventions.² Community security is one such approach, innovative and effective, which builds security from the bottom up by empowering communities, authorities and security providers to work together and find local solutions to their security problems.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY SECURITY?

Empowering communities: the concept behind community security

The term community security is not yet commonly used or widely understood, and there is no agreed definition. In fact, 'community security', 'community safety', 'community-based policing', 'citizen security', and 'human security' are often used interchangeably to describe a people-centred approach to security. 'Community protection', 'local peace committees' and even resilience-building and local governance programmes share similar types of engagement and outcomes.

Following the 1994 Human Development Report on human security, a distinct 'community security' approach and definition emerged in order to provide a practical and value-based framework to address communities' security challenges proactively. It built on community-based

policing traditions of police and community partnerships and problem-solving, development approaches to community empowerment, as well as strategic peacebuilding approaches. As a result, different types of actors have been implementing, supporting, or promoting community security programmes in a range of contexts, including international organisations, international donors, and international NGOs in partnership with local civil society organisations. Some governments have also created bodies and launched initiatives to design and implement community security strategies (for example, in Kosovo, Tajikistan and South Sudan).

What is commonly agreed is that community security is both a **process** promoting a community-driven approach to understanding and providing security, and an **end-state** whereby people feel protected and valued as members of society.

Building the social contract from the bottom up

In many contexts, local level structures and systems of governance are fundamental to the organisation of social, political and economic life and are effectively the first social contract that people experience. Addressing dysfunctional relationships and accountability at this level is therefore key to ensuring sustainable ways of resolving many kinds of problems, including insecurity and violence. By connecting people more constructively with representatives of the state – security providers and local authorities – community-based approaches to security can contribute to improved state-society relationships and increased state legitimacy.

DEFINING COMMUNITY SECURITY

- Community security is a people-centred approach to tackle interlinked peace, security and development needs.
- It aims to build positive relationships between communities, authorities and institutions – providing opportunities to identify security concerns and plan collective responses.
- It enables communities to be their own agents of change and empowers communities to hold to account those who should be delivering their security.
- Community inclusivity and participation are a core part of the approach, so activities can be designed and implemented reflecting people's actual needs.
- Community security approaches attempt to link local improvements up to sub-national and national levels through advocacy, and by including higher level actors in consultation and decision-making processes.
- Community security is achieved when communities have ways to articulate their security needs, and there is the local and institutional capacity to respond to them.

WHAT IS A 'COMMUNITY'?

The term 'community' is complex and can have different interpretations. Communities are usually understood as being made up of the individuals, groups and institutions who share common interests (history, identity, culture, socio-economic activity) or a common geographic area (neighbourhood, town or village, broader district-regional level). Saferworld's work understands communities as individuals, groups, and institutions in a specific territorial space that share a range of common and diverse interests, values, needs and aspirations. In this briefing, community is often used to identify the public or citizens, as opposed to police or authorities.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES: A PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SECURITY

Engaging communities, security providers and local authorities requires a careful, step-by-step approach to ensure all stakeholders understand and buy into the process and its objectives, in order to make it effective and sustainable.

Saferworld's programmatic approach to community security revolves around the following five steps:

1. Preparation and conflict analysis

A conflict analysis is the systematic study of the context, causes, actors, and dynamics behind a conflict, and the linkages between them. It should also map and analyse existing responses to conflict and the structures, mechanisms and processes used by conflict-affected populations. This information provides an overview and programming options to the supporting organisation, including whether the context is actually suitable for community security programming or not. This analysis should also ensure that any work is conflict- and gender-sensitive.

2. Identify and prioritise security problems and needs

In contexts where there are no existing local initiatives or those that do exist are dysfunctional or ineffective, the creation of a Community Security Working Group – made up of community members, and in some cases, local government authorities, security providers, civil society, and mandated to convene and facilitate community security processes at the local level – is the foundation of the community security cycle. Through these representative groups, the community will collectively identify and address their security needs. Following the establishment of a working group, more focused community-led analysis enables communities to identify and prioritise their own security concerns and determine what actions they can take. This is a crucial step that should involve all key actors



(community members, police, and local authorities) to ensure the group's actions are reflective of actual community perspectives and needs.

3. Action planning

Based on the community's analysis, community members, local authorities and security/justice providers articulate their objectives, activities, roles and responsibilities to address the security concerns they have prioritised. This may take more than one meeting, or even require focus groups ahead of a larger plenary planning session. Once again, the participation of all actors is key to ensure buy-in and ownership from all sides.

4. Implement action plans and monitor

An action plan provides a roadmap for the programme and serves as a contract that commits a community and their security providers to work together. The roadmap involves small steps that incrementally lead to more significant actions to improve people's experience of security. An action plan needs to build in

some flexibility to adapt to any changes to the implementation context and ensure monitoring throughout the action to keep the plan on track, accountable and relevant.

5. Evaluate, learn and plan improvements

The main purposes of evaluation are to improve future policies, programmes and projects, and to provide a basis for accountability. For these purposes to be met, communities, policymakers and operational staff need to actively monitor and evaluate what they are doing and learn from results and outcomes to inform future engagement.

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMING



Saferworld's experience in community security over the past ten years has highlighted a number of lessons for successful programming:

Provide capacity building support for each step of the cycle to the main actors involved

This includes supporting local civil society organisations and community security working groups to manage and facilitate the process and, in some cases, to support police and authorities to be more effective in providing the services they are responsible for. This can take various forms such as training, institutional development, and provision of advice and expertise. In some cases, small grants are made available to address a specific problem identified by the community, or equipment is provided to police and authorities to address their lack of resources. All sides should be involved in decision making to ensure transparency and oversight of the process. Saferworld emphasises from the onset that the rationale and purpose of a community security process is to identify local solutions to local problems, not to rely only on externally imported ones.

ABOVE: Community action committee meeting in Gopalganj, Bangladesh.

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ABOVE RIGHT: Women discuss security concerns at a local meeting, Kyrgyzstan.

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The process is a constant trust building exercise

Building a trusting relationship between communities, local government and police representatives is a crucial component of any community security project and a pre-condition for its effectiveness and sustainability. Safety and security concerns are often sensitive and it may initially be unusual for communities to discuss these issues with police and authorities. Significant investment is required to build trust first between the organisation supporting the process and the community, and then between the community, their security providers and authorities. A long term and flexible approach is needed to make sure trust is established and maintained among all actors at all stages of the process and beyond.

From reaction to prevention: applying problem solving approaches

A key aspect of the community security process is to transform how security problems are dealt with – moving from a reactive approach that only deals with symptoms of the problems, to a preventive approach that addresses their underlying causes and prevents their recurrence.

Scaling up: linking the local to national level

The cycle described here is focused at the community level, yet it should be supported by additional activities that link it to district or state and national levels. When appropriate, advocacy and engagement with local, sub-national and national actors can be crucial to embed community security approaches in wider policies and practices.



CONFLICT- AND GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO MANAGE RISKS

As with any interventions in the security and development domains, community security processes have risks that need to be taken into account so they can be prevented. The main risks usually relate to exacerbating tensions and divisions among groups, and increasing or entrenching gender inequalities or other types of discrimination. It is therefore imperative that conflict- and gender-sensitive approaches acknowledge these risks and avoid doing harm.

COMMUNITY SECURITY AS A VEHICLE FOR PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING

Articulating the impact that community security processes have on peacebuilding and statebuilding dynamics has to be considered with a long-term perspective. Just like any other interventions in the security and development areas, it takes time before immediate results can sustain more lasting changes. This section argues that by changing attitudes and approaches, strengthening capacities and constructive relationships to deal with and prevent insecurity and conflict, community security processes contribute to creating more resilient communities and maximising opportunities to develop human potential.



BRAC uses popular theatre performances to raise awareness of social issues in the local community, Kotalipara, Bangladesh.
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Community security puts communities at the centre of its approach in order to find locally defined and owned solutions to security problems. The issues that communities face vary from one context to another but usually fall under three main categories:

- **physical safety and security** (such as crime, small arms and light weapons possession, and violence against women)
- **access to basic services and livelihoods** (like water management, cattle raiding, and unemployment)
- **disruption of social order** (for example, drug abuse, prostitution, and street harassment).

While issues brought up are in themselves of concern to a community, it's very often the broader context in which these problems take place and develop (such as inter-ethnic tensions, prevalence of organised crime, violent extremism, poor policing or political interference) that further fuels insecurity, tensions and violence within and between communities. For example, in southern Kyrgyzstan where inter-ethnic divisions are deep and the borders are porous, access to pasture by Tajik shepherds in Kyrgyz territory is a sensitive issue which can rapidly enflame wider ethnic tensions if not handled carefully. In south western parts of Bangladesh, where state presence is weaker, lack of opportunities for youth can cause negative behaviour and insecurity in communities, and disillusion over the capacity of authorities to provide law and order – a vacuum that is also exploited by radical religious groups and polarised politics.

Overall, **communities' concerns reflect the complexities of the security and development nexus** whereby insecurity hampers both a community's well-being and the ability of its members to fulfil their potential. In turn, inequitable development opportunities and aspirations can aggravate tensions and insecurity between groups. **This vicious cycle further undermines the role and legitimacy of authorities** to settle disputes peacefully, to prevent the emergence and resurgence of insecurity, and to provide basic services to local citizens.

“Community security processes can provide a safe space for dialogue where different groups’ representatives can meet and constructively discuss the best ways to address grievances, diffuse tensions and agree on appropriate initiatives and responses.”

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

In many different contexts, community security enables different stakeholders to collaborate in order to address the causes, consequences and risks of conflict, violence and insecurity and find solutions to strengthen the conditions for sustainable peace.

- **Reducing inter-ethnic tensions or political violence**
- **Improving access to basic services, protection and development of livelihoods**
- **Addressing harassment and violence against women**
- **Improving provision of security**



Peace messages shared with local communities in Likoni during the run up to the March 2013 Kenyan elections.
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REDUCING INTER-ETHNIC TENSIONS OR POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Local incidents involving different ethnic groups can rapidly flare up into violence. Community security processes can provide a **safe space for dialogue** where different groups’ representatives can meet and constructively discuss the best ways to address grievances, diffuse tensions and agree on appropriate initiatives and responses. Involving local people in these processes is critical to ensure responses to local level conflicts are locally owned and appropriate and, consequently, more sustainable.

Ensuring peaceful elections in Kenya

Ahead of the March 2013 presidential elections, Saferworld used a community security approach to work with key peace, security and election management actors in several hot-spots to strengthen preparedness and coordination in support of peaceful national polls. In Kisumu, a Task Team consisting of community members was formed to work closely with the police and authorities, to share early warning information, to monitor and observe the electoral process and be ready to respond quickly to tensions. A risk map of the county – identifying where conflict was likely to flare up – was created by the team to help with planning and intervention strategies. As well as working with formal institutions, the team kept links with media by proactively dissipating tensions and correcting misinformation. This mobilisation helped prevent violence around election time and established mechanisms to address on-going issues in the locality.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES, PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LIVELIHOODS

These are critical drivers of tensions and conflicts especially when aggravated by a lack of state presence and fair dispute settlement mechanisms, unemployment, or environmental degradation. Community security processes add value to traditional community development approaches in that they take into account the security dimensions of the issues at stake and by taking conflict-sensitive approaches they ultimately contribute to reducing insecurity and tensions within the community.

Tackling drinking water source renovation as a security issue in Georgia

Dvani’s source of potable water is a water collector in which several springs gather before feeding a pipe to the village. It is situated 50 metres from the administrative boundary line and South Ossetian/Russian armed personnel. Approaching it is dangerous and might cause troops to open fire. A light makeshift tin board, which could be easily dislodged, was all that covered the collector, and communities were worried that it could lead to water pollution. The community wanted to construct a new cover and also to set up a system to regularly monitor water quality. They used the community security framework to identify the appropriate steps to be taken to ensure that Russian/South Ossetian forces were informed in advance of their intentions so that they did not misinterpret the process, and that representatives from the police and EU Monitoring Mission also attended the construction process.

“Community security has proved to be an effective framework to empower women and youth groups in the eyes of their own communities. This legitimacy also empowers them to engage with security providers.”

ADDRESSING HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This is a difficult challenge unless a whole community mobilises to take action. Through community security processes, women’s groups are able to articulate their needs, raise their issues to the community and convince all key stakeholders to tackle their concerns. More generally, community security has proved to be an effective framework to empower women and youth groups in the eyes of their own communities. This legitimacy also empowers them to engage with security providers, who take their concerns more seriously as they are dealing with a strengthened community voice as opposed to individuals, who in the past were often left unnoticed.

Community and police mobilisation to curb violence against women and girls in Nepal

Saferworld helped to address violence against women and girls by using community security meetings to bring police and communities together to discuss violence against women and girls and to plan how women could gain access to security and justice. The police agreed to recruit more female officers to handle domestic and gender-based violence cases. Community members agreed to educate people about their rights and what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable, legal and illegal behaviour with regard to violence against women and girls. These improvements on both the supply and demand sides of security have resulted in more women trusting police enough to report crimes, and women attesting to less violent behaviour amongst some men in the community.

IMPROVING PROVISION OF SECURITY

In many contexts, poor policing is linked to a lack of human, financial and hardware resources by police forces. Community security processes help to overcome these shortcomings in many ways. First of all, involving police and other security providers allows them to get a better understanding of security issues. Secondly, designing responses together with community representatives ensures that they are locally owned and appropriate, and therefore more effective. Thirdly, a better assessment of the context helps police services to direct scarce resources where they are most needed in the community and outside to other communities.



Community security initiatives in Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan.
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Building trust between community and police in South Sudan after independence

Following independence, people lacked trust in the police and police-community relations were poor or non-existent due to use of force by the police, poor performance (due to lack of training and professionalism), and lack of responsiveness to communities’ needs. In many parts of the country, the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) adopted a community-based policing approach in order to build trust and cooperation between the police and the communities it serves. Saferworld supported this process in Kuajok, through the Police Community Relations Committee, a body bringing together community members and police every month to talk through incidents, concerns, and issues from the previous month. The programme resulted in empowered community members, who felt they could approach the police with their security concerns and hold them constructively and respectfully accountable for addressing them. The recent conflict, which broke out in December 2013, has witnessed horrific levels of violence committed by the security providers, including some members of the SSNPS in some parts of the country. However, in some places like Kuajok, where fighting has not occurred and where there is not a large Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) presence, the SSNPS is the primary source of security for the people. Community security initiatives and strong police-community partnerships, like those promoted by Saferworld, may have assisted in preventing the outbreak of local violence by SSNPS members or other security providers and/or allowed for security to continue.

“Setting up the appropriate mechanisms for collaboration between citizens, their authorities and security providers ... is a key step to ... supporting the establishment of sound state-society relations.”

BUILDING BETTER STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

A fundamental outcome of community security consists in building trust and setting up the appropriate mechanisms for collaboration between citizens, their authorities and security providers. This is a key step to improving local governance thereby supporting the establishment of sound state-society relations.

- **Developing more responsive and legitimate institutions**
- **Empowering constructive citizenry**
- **Reinforcing accountability and transparency mechanisms**



Government and CSOs discuss community safety projects in Sunsari, Nepal.
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Developing more responsive and legitimate institutions

Through their involvement in community security processes, local authorities, police and other security providers are able to enhance their understanding of issues faced by communities and involve community representatives and civil society organisations in the design of responses. Such good practices not only lead to better responses but also enhance the legitimacy of institutions and security providers in the eyes of the public.

Empowering constructive citizenry

While community security processes involve all stakeholders at the local level, a key condition of their positive interaction lies in the constructive engagement of community representatives and civil society organisations who add value and credibility to sometimes reluctant local authorities and security providers who are not used to sharing decision making.

Reinforcing accountability and transparency mechanisms

Community security processes are implicit mechanisms whereby citizens are empowered to hold their local authorities and security providers to account. They also constitute experiences of transparent decision making for all actors involved, and which they can build on to further reinforce local governance dynamics.

FROM LOCAL TO NATIONAL

Scaling up the impact achieved at local level to a broader level is a critical challenge to community security processes, as it is for many peacebuilding interventions. Nevertheless, it is possible to achieve broader change by using community security to inform the design of security policies and initiatives at the national level, and then by supporting their effective implementation at the local level.

- **Informing the design of national level policies and processes**
- **Supporting the implementation of national level security building initiatives**

Informing the design of national level policies and processes

National level security policies and initiatives sometimes lack the connection with people they are supposed to benefit to. On the other hand, community security processes provide a wealth of information on people's security needs and concerns. Analyses collected through regular security assessments and consultations with communities, local authorities and security providers, as well as the learning on good practices and challenges to address insecurity and violence over the years can inform the design of policies and initiatives at national level to make them more effective at enhancing people security.

Supporting the implementation of national level security building initiatives

Equally important is the opportunity to use community security processes to **support the implementation of the national level security building initiatives (such as SALW control, reintegration of former combatants, community-based policing, and countering violent extremism)**. While such processes are key building block to create more secure and peaceful societies, their effective implementation is often a challenge. Nevertheless, community security has proved to be a very useful framework to inform such broader processes about local security challenges and opportunities, to provide a practical ground to actually implement policies and effectively transform how security systems function, and to reinforce local ownership of these processes. For instance, community security approaches can restore the confidence of communities in their security providers in order to hand in their weapons, reintegrate former combatants, support the police to earn the necessary legitimacy allowing them to provide a more effective policing, or jointly decide on the appropriate approaches to prevent radicalisation of youth in a community.

“... it is possible to achieve broader change by using community security to inform the design of security policies and initiatives at the national level, and then by supporting their effective implementation at the local level.”

SUPPORTING THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL LEVEL REFORMS IN KOSOVO

In Kosovo, Saferworld and local partners have regularly used their community security frameworks to conduct consultations and feed into national policies such as the Law on Arms (2009), National Strategy and Action Plan on Community Safety (2011), Community Policing Strategy (2012) and the SALW Control and Collection Strategy (2013). Their experience over the years has led them to play a supportive role to ministries at the national level by providing guidance and expertise on ways to implement policies in an effective way. Subsequently, community security processes in each municipality have been vital in supporting the actual implementation of these policies on the ground. They have built the capacities of authorities, civil society organisations, police, and community representatives to make the appropriate decisions and put the best processes in place.

COMMUNITY SECURITY: A WAY FORWARD FOR THE EU?



A community security focus group in Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan.
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Recommendations

While the EU has been supporting several types of community-based security programmes over the years, this kind of engagement, with its potential to enhance people’s security and contribute to wider peacebuilding and statebuilding, is not widely known across the institutions.

In order to address this knowledge gap and enhance the options available to the EU, it should:

- **Explore opportunities to analyse and address security challenges from the bottom up more systematically** through innovative approaches like community security across its different instruments and policy areas.
- **Raise awareness across the institutions about the rationale and practical aspects of community security** processes and their potential to contribute to peacebuilding and statebuilding dynamics through the provision of guidance, training and practical expertise.
- **Create more opportunities to support community security processes** through its grant based funding for civil society-led programmes (under instruments like EIDHR, IcSP, CSO-LA, IPA II and ENI civil society facilities) and through its geographic instruments for multi-stakeholder initiatives (EDF, DCI, ENI, IPA II).
- **Encourage and support further research and learning** to capture the experiences of an ever-growing community of practice and to identify some of the best practices which can be fed back into both the programming cycles and the policy approaches.

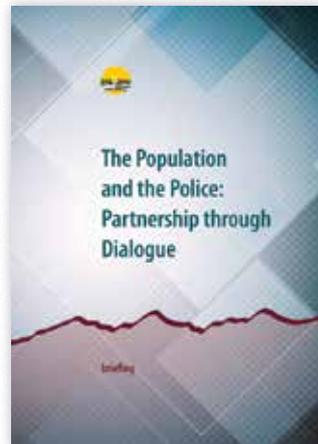
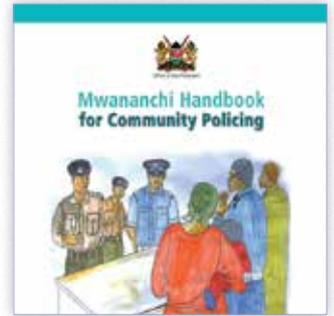
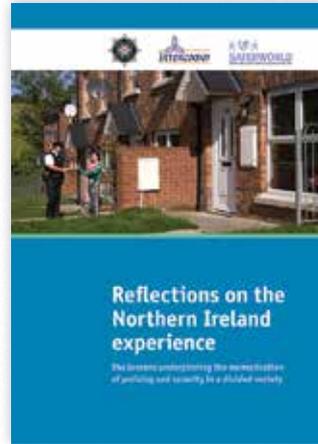
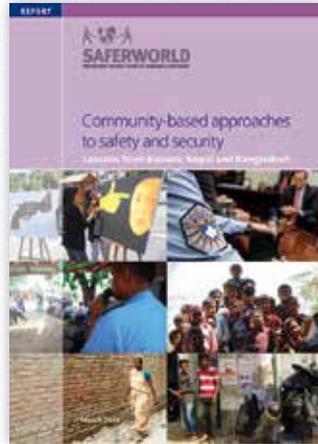
ABOUT SAFERWORLD

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation that works in over 20 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and Europe.

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COMMUNITY SECURITY RESOURCES



All our resources are available to download from our website. We can provide hard copies of specific publications on request. Read more at: www.saferworld.org.uk



- Community Security handbook
- EU external action: Towards conflict sensitivity

- Community-based approaches to safety and security: Lessons from Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh
- Operational handbook on police-community co-operation (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Community security: Rethinking policy and strategy for modern security challenges
- Creating safer communities in Bangladesh

- Reflections on the Northern Ireland experience: The lessons underpinning the normalisation of policing and security in a divided society
- The Population and the Police: Partnership through Dialogue
- Creating safer communities: Lessons from South Eastern Europe
- Implementing community-based policing in Kenya

- Mwananchi Handbook for Community Policing (Kenya)
- VIDEO Community security: putting people at the heart of security and justice
- VIDEO Community security in the Ferghana Valley
- VIDEO Community security in Shida Kartli
- Security for local communities: Can the achievements of the past few years be preserved?
- Empowering conflict-affected communities to respond to security problems in South Ossetia

NOTES

- 1 Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Justice and Security System Reform, ADE, November 2011.
- 2 See for instance: Nicole Ball and Luc van de Goor: *The challenges of undertaking effective security and justice*, INCAF, June 2011; UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery: *Community security and social cohesion. Towards a UNDP Approach*, December 2009. *Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach*, OSCE, 2014. *Piecing it Together: Post-Conflict Security in an Africa of Networked, Multilevel Governance*, ed. by David K. Leonard, IDS Bulletin 44.1, Jan 2013; Mark Shaw and Tuesday Reitano: *The evolution of organised crime in Africa: Towards a new response*, ISS paper 244, April 2013.