



SAFERWORLD

PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

Community-based approaches to safety and security

Lessons from Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh



March 2013



Executive summary

THIS REPORT IDENTIFIES lessons relevant for donors and implementing agencies seeking to support community-based approaches to security.¹ It is based on Saferworld and partners' community security work in Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh in 2010–13.

Although not a formal evaluation, this report suggests that community security programmes produce measurable improvements to communities' own experiences of safety and security. It also identifies a range of results relevant to the provision of capable, accountable and responsive security provision and wider peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts.

The findings also argue for the critical role of civil society in security and justice sector development and point to some of the measures necessary to support such groups effectively. The report reinforces the observation that successful security and justice interventions need to integrate both community-based and institutionally-led reforms. Finally, it provides some practical lessons for donors and agencies seeking to support community-based approaches to safety and security through their work.

Saferworld's community security work in Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh

This report does not attempt to provide an exhaustive description of our community security work in Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh; rather, it is intended as a representative illustration to ground the lessons we have learned from our work.

In Kosovo, much of Saferworld's community security work has involved promoting public participation in the raft of laws and policies developed after independence. Supporting Kosovo's institutions to actually *implement* security-related laws and policies has also been important. Civil society in Kosovo has been essential, providing a bridge between communities and national or international actors and helping to improve coordination between the multiplicity of organisations and institutions working on security issues in Kosovo. Carefully nurtured relationships and grounded contextual analysis have also enabled progress to be made in establishing community forums in the extremely divided north of Kosovo – the first time in 14 years that Serbian and Albanian communities have discussed such issues together.

¹ This report often makes reference to the term 'community security'. However, the nomenclature is less important than the approach being described, and ensuring conflict sensitivity is key. In some countries the word 'security' is loaded with implications that distract from or even undermine Saferworld's goal of helping communities to articulate and address the things that make them feel unsafe or insecure. In these instances, we simply find another way of describing the work – 'community safety', or 'freedom from fear programming'. The approach to community-level security described here also shares similarities with other programming approaches common in the humanitarian and development spheres, such as 'protection' and 'resilience'.

Nepal's civil war undermined the ability of the police to provide security to communities, and Nepal's security services face high levels of politicisation. Women and girls suffer especially in this context and much of Saferworld's community security work has focused on addressing violence against women and girls – both through empowering women directly and mobilising youth. As in many contexts, Saferworld's community security programme in Nepal has faced the challenge of trying to address the wide variety of 'security' and 'development' problems prioritised by communities and we have begun to explore a range of new partnerships to better incorporate livelihood opportunities into our work.

In Bangladesh, political crisis risks undermining wider development and a large proportion of the country's population lives under or precariously near the national poverty line. Mobilising the youth of a Dhaka slum to address community security concerns helped address youth unemployment as a driver of insecurity while building more trusting relations between the police and community members. Supporting the community to establish a child safety centre helped raise family incomes in the area but has faced sustainability challenges. In rural Kishoreganj, peer-to-peer work raised awareness about sexual harassment while community members created 'crime maps' to help police redirect patrols to problem areas. Working as a group and having the support of local police has also made community members more confident in tackling issues around drug/alcohol abuse and gambling. As part of scaling up community security activities in Bangladesh, Saferworld and BRAC have worked to deepen a shared vision of community security – significant given BRAC's reach across the country.

Lessons learned

From our community security work in Kosovo, Nepal and Bangladesh we have been able to identify a number of lessons that are relevant for donors and implementing agencies in the design and delivery of community-based approaches to security.

Results

The community security work surveyed in this report identifies tangible results in relation to informing national policy development; improving coordination between national and international security actors; enhancing local governance; improving trust between communities and security providers; redistributing resources to meet community needs; increasing civil society capacity to inform the work of security providers; building trust between social groups; empowering women and improving their experience of safety and security; mobilising youth to address security issues; and contributing to increased earning potential for poor and marginalised populations.

One challenge for those designing community-based approaches to security, however, is clearly articulating the results chain sought. It is all too easy to focus on the immediate community-level changes that come about as a result of community security activities – pavements built in a village worried about road traffic accidents, or unexploded ordnance cleared from farmers' fruit orchards, for instance.

Important though they are, results at this level might best be seen as intermediate results within an overall theory of change which seeks to address some of the underlying structural issues driving conflict and insecurity. The ultimate changes sought are a contribution to capable, accountable and responsive security and justice provision, along with empowered citizenry, the development of broader state-society relations and a strengthening of the social contract within societies.

This being the case, it is important that the monitoring and evaluation of such programming should reflect specific changes sought to relationships within and between communities themselves, security providers and relevant authorities, and with international actors who influence the way decisions and policy are made. It is

also important to recognise that there will be no common template for the changes sought, and that the precise mix of results desired should be grounded in a thorough assessment of what is needed, and possible, in each context.

Community security as a building block for peacebuilding and statebuilding

In many contexts, local governance is fundamental to the organisation of social, political and economic life and as such can be considered as the first social contract that people experience. By connecting people with representatives of the state, community-based approaches to security can contribute to improved state-society relationships and increased state legitimacy. Community-based approaches to security and justice also have the potential to help strengthen the links between formal and informal systems.

Helping to improve the confidence of communities, along with their relationship to other communities and authorities, may make a contribution to these communities' resilience to violence. Similarly, supporting the ability and opportunity for civil society to engage in issues around conflict and security builds and reinforces important 'capacities for peace' within conflict-affected or fragile societies.

Selected recommendations

- Theories of change should be used in order to establish an appropriate and meaningful hierarchy of results sought, along with a coherent explanation for how lower-level or intermediate outcomes make a contribution to broader impacts. Programmes should be evaluated both on how well they achieve individual results within this theory of change (delivery) and how relevant the theory of change was for the context (design).
- As the changes that community-based approaches to security seek to bring about concern relationships and behaviour, programme design should make provisions for participatory monitoring and evaluation through case studies, focus groups or other robust qualitative analytical tools.

The importance of civil society

It is not possible to build the kind of trusting relationship with communities needed to identify and address complex and sensitive security issues overnight – this takes time, patience and a high level of community knowledge and cultural awareness. Given this reality, local and national civil society is indispensable for building and maintaining relationships with communities.

Civil society can also play an invaluable role in coordinating between different actors involved in providing or supporting security provision. This coordination may be vertical (between different levels of decision-making, such as village, district and national forums) or horizontal (providing not only a direct connection with communities but also space for different forums from the same level to interact and share information with each other).

Civil society can play a useful role in disseminating and raising awareness of new policies and laws. Such policies and legislation are likely to be stronger if developed through the broad-based consultation that civil society is often able to facilitate, and civil society's ability and appetite for promoting and explaining such reforms will be higher if it is already invested in their development.

In many contexts, civil society has traditionally been denied space to engage on issues of safety or security. Subsequently, civil society's capacity for critical analysis and constructive advocacy in this area may often be limited. Given the important functions of civil society for successful security sector reform, it is important to look at how best to support the development of civil society's capacity in this area. Civil society can also help monitor the implementation of security sector reforms. Such feedback is necessary for the continual refinement and adjustment of reform processes, testing the theory against the reality, and should be seen as a useful contribution to the development of strategies for security provision, not solely as an accountability mechanism.

Exchange visits between civil society groups working in different contexts are an important part of capacity building, as are supporting the development of civil society networks both in-country and internationally. Given that issues related to security can be sensitive or even dangerous for civil society to engage with in conflict-affected and fragile countries, there are also measures that the international community can take to improve the environment for their advocacy and dialogue – for example diplomatic engagement with political and security leaderships and pressing for formal mechanisms to protect civil society.

Selected recommendations

- All community security interventions should make a contribution to building the sustainable capacity of national and local civil society. Donors should ensure the tenders governing the design of all large security sector or rule of law interventions require bidding agencies or consortia to include a significant role for civil society partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of such interventions, as well as a component for building civil society capacities.
- International actors supporting efforts to promote rule of law and improved security and justice provision should ensure they are working at the diplomatic level to support space for civil society to engage in and influence security policy and decision-making.
- Donors should continue the trend towards multi-country community security programmes that contain explicit objectives and budget lines for cross-context learning and support for the continued supplementation of the evidence base for community-based approaches to safety and security.

Community security's role within an integrated approach to security and justice

Security and justice interventions often seem to operate at *either* a predominantly community-based level or a predominantly centralised or institutional level. Saferworld's approach to community security emphasises the importance of working in a coordinated way at both levels.

This requires having strong relationships with government and police representatives at different levels. Such relationships need to be carefully built – although adversarial relationships may have utility for some kinds of work around accountability, here they will not be sufficient. Instead a relationship of trust must be built up where security providers feel that civil society inputs are constructive and useful, allowing civil society organisations to make careful critiques of the way security providers and authorities operate without fear of endangering the overall relationship.

Empowering communities to articulate their security concerns and supporting appropriate security responses is a critical and often overlooked part of promoting security and access to justice. However, just as centralised and institutional-led approaches to security sector reform are inadequate, community-based approaches alone will not ensure the long-term, sustainable transformation of justice and security provision in fragile states. Instead, both types of approach should be combined, building the capacity of security institutions with the involvement of affected communities to ensure the capacity developed is the *right* capacity to meet community needs.

Selected recommendations

- Agencies undertaking community-based security programming should include a thorough actor and power analysis within their design phases and ensure that community-level programming is accompanied by an advocacy strategy for engaging with relevant actors at sub-national and national/international levels.
- International actors supporting security and justice programmes should ensure that the totality of their combined programming is sufficient and coordinated across both

supply and demand sides. Donors (and INGOs) should ensure that their portfolios complement each other's and provide opportunities for community groups and civil society to inform, monitor and critically evaluate institutional-focused security and justice interventions.

Implementing community security programming

There can be no standardised template for community security programmes. Instead, a set of principles and ways of working should be adapted to the specific requirements of the context. Similarly, it is important to understand and build on what already exists – designing and establishing new structures, groups or platforms risks duplication. It is usually far more effective and sustainable to engage with those that already exist and strengthen or support them to build capacities that are deficient or absent.

It is critical to allow enough time to develop a strong shared vision of community security with implementing partners. Such a detailed vision is foundational for ensuring the success of programmes. Similarly, short-term projects do not allow sufficient time for essential trust-building, and reduce the possibility of the community security approach becoming embedded into local-level planning, decision-making and security-provision processes – which in turn undermines the chance for the intervention to be sustainable beyond the project duration.

Community insecurity is often rooted in or linked to economic challenges, and communities frequently identify a wide variety of issues as 'security' concerns. Tangible outputs that relate to livelihoods or public infrastructure may also provide an entry point into thinking about less easily graspable changes in governance, or represent a neutral starting point for community security interventions in contexts where trust between different communities, or between communities and security providers, is very low. Responding to such a range of concerns requires a high degree of strategic and operational flexibility, and so agencies and their donors need to think carefully about the mix of capacities and skills required for community-based approaches to security and reflect this in the range of partnerships they pursue.

Ensuring the participation of women (and other marginalised groups) in community committees is vital, but must be balanced against what can realistically be achieved in any given context. An incremental approach should be taken in contexts where women's participation significantly challenges social and cultural norms. When addressing gender-based violence, promoting immediate protection and support needs to go hand in hand with efforts to address the underlying causes of violence, which often involves working with male community members and should always be based on a grounded theory of change.

Donors funding community security interventions should require implementing agencies to base the design of their programmes on a thorough context analysis and, wherever possible, to build on existing structures rather than create new ones. This should include analysis of gender norms within the community, so that activities can be tailored to be culturally appropriate while also aiming to support women's participation and avoid entrenching unequal gender relations.

Selected recommendations

- Implementing agencies and donors need to allow sufficient time and resources to invest in partners, including developing a strong and nuanced shared vision of overall goals and a theory of change for community security.
- Donors should carefully consider the mix of implementing partners they need for interventions that integrate community-based security and justice with broader development, while implementing agencies could consider integrating a 'security and safety' lens into existing community-driven development work.

- Donors should be flexible with regard to the specific issues that are addressed through community security interventions, as long as progress can be shown towards the overall goals of improved relationships between security providers, local authorities and communities, and more responsive and relevant provision of security services.

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.

COVER PHOTOS

TOP ROW: Kosovo. **MIDDLE ROW:** Nepal. **BOTTOM ROW:** Bangladesh.
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