

SCOTTISH POLICING AND POLICY TRANSFER: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE MODEL OF COMMUNITY POLICING IN SRI LANKA

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BACKGROUND

For over 30 years Sri Lanka had been embroiled in a civil conflict involving the authorities and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE). During that period it is believed that over 70,000 Sri Lankan people died. While the conflict was largely concentrated on the areas of the north and east of the Country, the Tamil Tigers had also struck in the capital city of Colombo, predominantly by the detonation of bombs. During this period of three decades many of the resources that could have been invested in the development of the Country were instead directed to the conflict. As a consequence, when the fighting came to an end in June, 2009 Sri Lanka was a Country in desperate need of assistance to develop its economic, commercial and social infra-structure.

As with all conflicts, once peace comes there are many allegations of atrocities, brutalities and abuses from both sides. These allegations of past incidents are in the process of being investigated both by the authorities in Sri Lanka and by International Agencies, such as the United Nations. While it is entirely right and appropriate that such allegations are thoroughly and comprehensively investigated, the Country and the communities within it also need help in moving forward to develop its internal structures and recover from the years of internal conflict.

In August, 2010 the Scottish Government agreed to provide financial support to develop community policing in Sri Lanka. This was as part of the Scottish Government's South Asia Economic Development Fund which seeks to enhance Scotland's relationship with important partners in the South Asia region. The community policing programme, managed by the Scottish Police College, is based on an extensive partnership involving the Sri Lanka Police service (SLPS); the Office of the Strategic Adviser in the Sri Lanka Ministry of Defence; The British High Commission in Sri Lanka; The Asia Foundation and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

Partnerships & Programme

To help contextualise the situation, the population of Sri Lanka is 20 million people. The police have a strength of about 80,000 officers. Police HQ is in Colombo, the capital city but delivery of policing at Province level is vested in a Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police for each of the 9 Provinces. Throughout the Country there are 420 police stations.

The first stage of the programme was focussed on building relationships and trust. While this was important for all the partners involved, it was especially critical for the Scottish Police College team to create a good and strong relationship with the Sri Lanka Police service. This was made a bit easier because, through UK Government funding, the Scottish Police College had been involved in Sri Lanka in 2007 and 2008 and personal relationships made then were invaluable in re-forming good organisational relationships between the main players and in moving the programme from a proposal to full implementation.

As the relationships developed all the partners came to understand their role in the programme of activities and the contribution they were to make:

- the Scottish Government were to provide the funding.
- the Scottish Police College were to provide the training expertise and act a strategic advisers.
- the SQA were to assist the Scottish Police College and the project team to develop and validate a new qualification, the International Vocational Award in Community Policing which will subsequently be awarded to successful Sri Lanka police officers.

- the Sri Lanka Police service were to provide governance for the project at a senior level and support the project through the availability and commitment of police officers for training.
- the Office of the Strategic Adviser, Ministry of Defence was to endorse the proposals agreed by the Sri Lanka Police and the Scottish Police College and facilitate the required business visas for visits by trainers from Scotland.
- the Asia Foundation was already working with the Sri Lanka Police service in providing support for community engagement projects and training in Tamil language skills, they were to continue with that and where possible expand activities, while also arranging for the translation of learning materials into Sinhala and Tamil languages.

In return for the funding from Scottish Government, the Scottish Police College made some key commitments, which were:

Year 1 (August 2010-March 2011)	Year 2 (April 2011- March 2012)	Year 3 (April 2012- March 2013)
<p>Create a new International Vocational award (IVA) in Community Policing</p> <p>Establish a form of local governance for the project in Sri Lanka</p> <p>Establish a baseline assessment so that it is clear where the police are starting from in terms of Community policing in Sri Lanka</p>	<p>Provide training for two batches of Sri Lanka police officers in the IVA in Community Policing, with 24 in each batch studying two units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy of Community Policing • Strategic Change (issues around transparency, empowerment and accountability) 	<p>Provide training for two batches of Sri Lanka police officers in the IVA in Community Policing, with 24 in each batch studying two units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy of Community Policing • Strategic Change (issues around transparency, empowerment and accountability)

The training in Year 2 and Year 3 is structured in two units, as shown above, and takes 20 weeks to complete because of the focus on knowledge, skills **and** application. During the 20 weeks we have 8 weeks of direct contact with the students, delivering learning and assessment. They also have 12 weeks to undertake two projects the first of which is in their workplace, so the programme is delivered as - 3 weeks teaching – 6 weeks project – 3 weeks teaching – 6 weeks project – 2 weeks assessment.

Year 3 will be a repeat of year 2.

While that summarises our commitment to Scottish Government, as a project team we also agreed to some further activities with our colleagues in Sri Lanka. We agreed that we would assist them to develop a Strategic Implementation Plan for Community Policing and to facilitate that, we agreed to organise a conference, or seminars on community policing.

Also, our initial discussions around the shape and structure of the programme resulted in an agreement that we would expand training to take on 30 students at a time rather than the original 24. It was first thought that training could be delivered in local communities to local police officers but through consultation and negotiation it was realised that that would be impractical and would be unlikely to have the desired impact. The Inspector General of Police identified an old police building outside of Colombo that he thought could be utilised for our purposes.

As it transpired the building in Gampaha was ideal for the purpose and it is now established as the Sri Lanka Police Centre for Community Police Training. Funds from the project and the Sri Lanka Police were directed at developing the facilities and infra-structure in the building and it now functions with internet capable computers, air-conditioned classroom and a library.

Strategic Planning

Through early negotiation and consultation we were fully aware that the Sri Lanka Police service identified this post-conflict period as an opportunity for change. There was a general consensus among senior leaders in the organisation that they had lost the trust and goodwill of the people and there existed a belief in Sri Lankan society that the police were corrupt and had little respect for human rights.

To ensure that our perceptions were accurate and based on more than just our observations and discussions, we arranged a series of 3 x 1 day seminars to be attended by senior police officers from across all 9 Provinces in Sri Lanka. Through these seminars we hoped to obtain an enhanced understanding of the issues impacting on the police organisation but also to gain an insight into the aspirations of senior officers for the future of the police service in the Country.

The seminars were supported by the Inspector General of Police and the Ministry of Defence and each of the three seminars was attended by 25 of the most senior officers in Sri Lanka. During the seminars we posed the following questions.

- What happens now?
- What are the challenges in change?
- What are the likely resistors to change?
- Why is it in the Sri Lanka Police's best interests to adopt community policing?
- What might policing in Sri Lanka look like by 2016?
- What might policing in Sri Lanka look like by 2013?

From the responses forthcoming and the insights we gained we were then in a position to work with the Sri Lanka Police Monitoring Committee to develop the 'Sri Lanka Police Strategic Implementation Plan for Community Policing', 2011 to 2015.

This plan identifies priorities and details activities which, if fully implemented, will see the Sri Lanka Police Service adopt the philosophy of community policing as a strategic priority for introduction across the 9 Provinces of the Country.

In terms of implementation, the plan is effective at three levels.

First, at a strategic level, it places responsibility for the introduction of training and thereafter for community policing with the Monitoring Committee of the Sri Lanka Police service who are aided by strategic advisers from Scotland. Also at this level, the Scottish advisers have visited every Province and been afforded the opportunity to speak with all senior police officers (over 900) in every Province to ensure that at a senior level all are aware of the intent of the programme.

Second, at a tactical level, a team of 26 Sri Lanka Police trainers have completed the training course and obtained the IVA qualification and are now delivering their newly designed one week course to mid-ranking police officers across the service. This programme of training will train 40 officers every week from October 2011 to May 2012, a total of 21 iterations. In addition, Scottish Police College trainers, having delivered the IVA to the trainers in the first batch, will now focus on delivering training to 90 Assistant Superintendents (ASPs) between November 2011 and March 2013 – three courses of thirty. ASPs are the key players to delivery in the strategic plan. The ASPs to be trained are drawn from every Province and individually they are responsible for managing, on average, three police stations and 900 staff.

Third, at an operational level, the Sri Lanka Police trainers will deliver their training to over 1,000 OICs (Officers in Charge of Community Policing in police stations) and they will then cascade the training throughout their policing area. In addition, the Sri Lanka Police Academy and the Sri Lanka Police College, together with the In-Service training centres (12) throughout the Country, will adapt their training curricula to include Community Policing for all new recruits whether at Constable, Sub-Inspector or Assistant Superintendent level.

By adopting this comprehensive implementation strategy it is hoped that the ASPs will feel that they have support across the organisation and knowledgeable staff that they can draw on when implementing their projects.

In December 2011, the first batch of ASPs – unfortunately only 25 strong due to absence and illness - will have completed their learning on the philosophy of community policing and embark on their projects which will impact immediately on at least 75 communities in 9 Provinces across Sri Lanka. Their project is to design and implement a Community Policing Plan for their Policing District. Towards the end of January, 2012 their progress will be reviewed as a further element of the qualification assessment.

Knowledge Transfer

A strategic plan in itself cannot introduce community policing in a Country as large and diverse as Sri Lanka. The programme therefore has a highly important focus on the transfer of knowledge to those who can then 'champion' community policing to the police and importantly, the communities of Sri Lanka.

The main reason for developing a qualification in Community Policing was that the qualification sets a standard but also, for those achieving that standard, it offers professional credibility and a qualification that can be highly valued.

The qualification itself is set at SCQF level 8 and carries 32 credits over two equal sized units. Its focus is firmly on encouraging the development of the knowledge and skills required to understand the broad philosophy of community policing and interpret and apply that philosophy in the context of the culture of Sri Lanka. It pays passing reference to existing models of community policing that have been implemented elsewhere but instead focusses on more generic issues such as partnership working, community engagement and problem solving and offers skills and techniques that can be used in these areas by police officers and community members alike.

In addition to the learning and experiences delivered in the classroom, the project team also produced a reasonably comprehensive pre-read book of 100 pages, which students are required to read before commencing the course. This pre-read was translated in Sinhalese and Tamil languages by the Asia Foundation and, as a consequence, this allows the reader to develop a better understanding of the philosophy and concepts in their own language, before they attend for classroom based tuition. Scaled down versions of this book (about 30 pages) have also been distributed to all police stations in the Country.

Towards a sustainable model of community policing

As the programme approaches the half way stage in terms of Scottish Government funding, we are forever keen to emphasise to the Sri Lanka Police service that sustainable change can only ever be achieved through their efforts, and that goes far beyond March, 2013. Currently there is a tendency for the police to be too reliant on the advice and drive coming from Scotland. Over the coming months we have to work hard to try to change that dependency.

The project team are of a view that this endeavour has certain unique qualities that make it different from many other community policing projects delivered across the world. Firstly, it does not seek to emulate practice from elsewhere but instead delivers a broad philosophy and encourages local police officers to adopt, adapt or ignore elements so that the philosophy might fit the culture of the Country. Secondly, it offers local police officers a qualification in the subject matter and the opportunity to gain personal and professional credibility as a consequence. Thirdly, it seeks to place governance and control very firmly in local hands. Finally, the project itself is similar to good community policing, it is very firmly based on the ethos of partnership and problem solving.

In terms of training and changing the approach to policing, we have created the platform and the work with ASPs over the coming months will be critical to the success of the programme. If we convince them that the extra effort involved in doing their job differently is worth it, if they can begin to see early and tangible successes, then we may well achieve the strategic objective of the 'Strategic Implementation Plan for Community Policing' which is:

"...to build capacity across the Sri Lanka Police for the adoption and implementation of Community Policing."

In September, 2011 when celebrating the 145th Anniversary of the Sri Lanka Police service, the Inspector General of Police, Mr Illangakoon in his address to the police made the first public commitment to change to community policing. Shortly thereafter a Government Minister made a further public commitment to community policing. Both are significant steps forward in commitment at the highest level and the project team are hoping to both support the commitment and capitalise on it.