

EGAP STORIES OF CHANGE

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# CAN COMMUNITY POLICING IMPROVE TRUST IN THE POLICE?

## LESSONS FROM UGANDA

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The Metaketa Initiative is a **collaborative research model** with a mission to improve knowledge about critical governance issues through **rigorous field experiments**. In each Metaketa "round," the initiative coordinates multiple studies on a specific topic or intervention in a variety of countries and contexts.

The fourth Metaketa round focused on **community policing**, with studies in six countries assessing the effects of community policing programs on building citizen trust in police and reducing crime. Here we share the story of an experiment in **Uganda** where researchers combine a model of community policing with advanced training in neighborhood watch teams.

The Metaketa Initiative is led by Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) at the University of California, Berkeley. It is partially funded by the UK's Department for International Development and involves a global network of researchers conducting studies in countries around the world.

## PROJECT COUNTRY: UGANDA



## PROJECT TIMELINE



BASELINE: JUNE 2018  
INTERVENTION: JULY 2018  
ENDLINE: DECEMBER 2019



Local Leaders from Nawanyango Sub County in Kamuli district planning a twelve (12) months schedule of village meetings after the district training with Police Officers for joint implementation

# THE CHALLENGE

Improving police – community relations is a top priority in the developing world. In order to strengthen this relationship, governments must reduce crime and insecurity. Mitigating these issues requires strong police institutions and increased cooperation between police officers and citizens. However, in many countries, the police are seen as corrupt and the least trusted government institution. This hinders their ability to provide public safety, legitimacy, and stability in the community. Take Uganda for example, police – community relations have long been strained in this country by the police’s excessive use of force against civilians, political bias, and corruption.

One plausible way to regain the community’s trust in the police is to introduce a community policing program that increases police – community interactions and provides a platform for citizen feedback and police action. Community policing was first established in Uganda in 1989, with the Kampala Police Station designated as a pilot site. The program was officially expanded to cover the entire country in 1993, though the Uganda Police Force (UPF) did not introduce any formal mechanisms to ensure nationwide implementation. While the UPF drafted a community policing manual in 2012, anecdotal evidence

suggests that it has not been widely implemented. In an evaluation conducted in 2013, Irish Aid concluded that while there is “strong political will and leadership by the Inspector General of Police to implement community policing across the Ugandan Police Force, the UPF has yet to develop a roll-out plan, a re-training program, and a means of monitoring implementation” (Irish Aid, 2013).

Nonetheless, interest in community policing remains high within the UPF and among other government stakeholders (especially the Office of the Prime Minister and the Justice and Law Secretariat). Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni re-introduced community policing as the primary approach to policing throughout the country at the UPF’s centenary celebrations in October 2014, and a more structured community policing pilot project was implemented in the Muyenga suburb of Kampala in 2010.

“CAN COMMUNITY POLICING PROGRAMS IMPROVE POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS?”



Local Leaders from Bugembe Town Council in Jinja district planning a twelve (12) months schedule of village meetings after the district training with Police Officers for joint implementation

# RESEARCH DESIGN



Local Leaders from Kanyil Central, Mella Sub County in Tororo district planning a twelve (12) months schedule of village meetings after the district training with Police Officers for joint implementation

## INTERVENTION THAT INCLUDED A PACKAGE OF COMMUNITY POLICING MECHANISMS

To evaluate the effectiveness of community policing in Uganda, a research project developed out of a long-term relationship that Robert Blair (Brown University), Guy Grossman (University of Pennsylvania), Benjamin Kachero (Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda), and Anna Wilke (Columbia University) along with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) had with the UPF.

The intervention consisted of three core components:

- 1.) Police-community town hall meetings every two months
- 2.) The formation of community watch teams
- 3.) Dissemination of information about UPF oversight and accountability mechanisms

YIDO conducted two-day trainings for all participating UPF officers. Officers were expected to participate in the trainings and conduct the aspects of the community policing program as part of their regular activities. As such, they were not compensated in cash or kind for the trainings.

As part of the project, the researchers established a working group comprised of police officers from the UPF, IPA staff, and YIDO staff. This working group provided a platform to discuss the research design, what would be feasible and not, and project progress in real time. The working group's efforts resulted in an updated manual detailing standard operating procedures for the community policing model implemented.

# RESULTS

Results from this study found no evidence that the community policing program implemented in Uganda affected any of the main outcomes of the project. That is, the intervention did not reduce the incidences of crime, improve perceptions of the police, or increase trust in police. Additionally, citizens were no more likely to express satisfaction with the police and no less likely to feel intimidated by the police. Further, citizens did not improve their beliefs about police intentions.

One final and somewhat surprising finding was that the community policing program appears to have worsened rather than diminished police abuse, especially with regard to bribe-seeking and corruption. While the program increased the frequency of police-community interactions, it seems these interactions were sometimes accompanied by police requests for bribes to pay for fuel, stationary, and other necessities to do their job effectively.

However, the results do show that citizens' knowledge about the criminal justice system improved and that the number of crimes reported by the UPF increased. This second finding could be due to an increase in citizen crime reporting, rather than to an increase in crime per se.

13

Number of districts included in the study.

72

Number of rural, relatively high-crime police stations included in the study.

# LESSONS + IMPACT

Perhaps the most important lesson learned from this study is that careful monitoring, incentives, and sanctions must be put in place for community policing to be successful. That is, these mechanisms that allow for maximum compliance and minimize the risk of police misconduct are necessary, without which community policing may only reinforce existing negative police-community relations.

While the results are mixed, this project has provided substantive impact in several ways. For example, staff at YIDO, one of the study's implementing partners, have now been exposed to randomized controlled trials and plan to use this model to evaluate some of their other programming, which aims to provide innovative economic, health, and education services that nurture and empower youth, children, and women in Uganda.

Additionally, many who participated in this project have gone on to incorporate the experimental methods they learned during the implementation of this study in their own research. For example, Benjamin Kachero now uses social science methodology to evaluate the performance of government programs in Ugandan ministries, departments, and agencies. He has also participated in an EGAP Learning Days workshop and uses EGAP's methods guides, namely the randomization and power calculation tools, for this and other projects he is working on. Further, he has conducted a series of short trainings on these new methodologies for his colleagues in the Office of the Prime Minister.

## QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

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As researchers and practitioners continue to study community policing, here are a few questions for further consideration:

- Can community policing be used effectively by new and reconstituted police forces in contexts in which the legitimacy of the state is challenged?
- What are strategies for reducing insecurity between citizens and the police?
- What factors contribute to insecurity between citizens and the police?
- Does community involvement increase police accountability?

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### LEARN MORE

For additional information and technical details about this study, visit the [project webpage](#).

For more on the researcher / implementing partner relationship, read [Partnership Lessons 12: Uganda Community Policing with the Youth Integrated Development Organization](#).

Explore other projects in the [Metaketa IV round](#).

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