

Stolen Opportunities:

The Impact of Crime on South Africa's Poor

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Introduction

Measuring the unequal impact of crime

Vulnerability to victimisation

Vulnerability to the effects of victimisation

Contextualising Crime and Poverty

Northern Cape Eastern Cape

State responses

The practice of prevention

Prevention in practice

(Poor) young offenders

Governance and Crime prevention

Endnotes

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INTRODUCTION

Crime is of increasing concern to South Africa's citizenry and government. Despite the prominence of criminality as an issue, surprisingly little is known about it as a phenomenon. South Africa has some of the highest rates of violent crime in the world – yet very little can be said about how these crimes occur, where they occur, and whom they affect. This has significant implications not only for an understanding of the causes of crime but also for the implementation of appropriate policies to combat crime.

To date the research and policy focus on crime control and prevention has been narrow, with a slant towards wealthier suburban residents and business groupings which are more likely to lobby around the issue of crime. Yet crime is not primarily concentrated in the major metropolitan areas, where it arguably has the highest visibility. In fact, parts of the country not generally believed to have a criminality problem, such as Northern Cape province, display levels of crime higher than elsewhere in South Africa when instances of crime are compared as a ratio of population.

Little acknowledged, then, is the impact of crime on millions of South Africans with scant access to the media or to pressure groups and government. It is these people – the country's poor – who arguably bear the brunt of high crime levels. In terms of per capita gross domestic product, South Africa is relatively wealthy. But most of the country's inhabitants are either extremely poor or are continually vulnerable to becoming poor.

Researching the issue of how these people are affected by crime is complicated by the shortage of reliable statistics and information. Given the paucity of data, this study has sought to supplement national and regional statistics with qualitative research work, based largely on interview material, in specific areas in the country – Northern and Eastern Cape – which are affected by crime in different ways. While there has been some debate on the relationship between poverty (or more accurately inequality) and crime, no single South African study has explored how crime *impacts* on the poor.

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MEASURING THE UNEQUAL IMPACT OF CRIME

For most South Africans, particularly the poor, crime is not a recent phenomenon. Extreme levels of inequality and decades of political conflict have produced a society prone to crime. However, experiences of crime have probably varied. During the era of race domination, apartheid offences were classified as crimes, while those engaged in 'the struggle' – particularly from the mid-1980s onwards – justified using violence against the state. Perpetrators of violence in KwaZulu-Natal in the mid-1980s and in Gauteng from 1990 onwards regarded violent crimes as legitimate forms of defence against political opponents.

In South Africa, crime and politics have thus been closely linked. But the impact of the widespread use of violence extended beyond state agencies and political groupings: the disempowering effects of apartheid and the legacy of political violence have been associated with high levels of domestic violence and violence against women and children. As a result, the use of violence for political and personal aims has become endemic.

The decade from 1980 to 1990, when the apartheid state was most strongly challenged, showed significant increases in all forms of crime despite the common perception that crime only began to (slowly) increase from 1990 with the political transition (see figures 1–6.). In fact, most serious crime, notably murder, rape, robbery and housebreaking, began to increase from mid-1980 onwards. But understanding and measuring criminality in South Africa is difficult, given the absence of reliable statistics. The historical divide between the people and police and the vagaries of apartheid record-keeping, which included the 'homelands' and 'self-governing territories', complicate any analysis.

The reliability of official crime statistics is subject to two broad factors: the relationship between the public and the police, and the internal practices and procedures of the police. Recording crime depends first on victims or bystanders reporting the offence to the police, who then need to record it. Only a portion of crimes reach this stage. Whether or not crimes will be reported usually depends on:

- the nature of the crime itself – petty crimes and crimes considered to be personal or humiliating, such as rape, domestic violence and even assault, may not be reported. And in the case of violent crimes in which the victim is known to the offender, fear of reprisals may also inhibit reporting. On the other hand, if stolen property is insured, the offence is likely to be reported even if considered to be petty, such as the theft of a car radio; and
- the reporting environment – the distance to the nearest police station, access to transport and to telephones, particularly for less serious crimes, and the expected reaction and effectiveness of the

police and criminal justice system.

Police practices and the level of police staffing influence the recorded incidence of so-called 'victimless' crimes such as drug-related offences, gambling and prostitution. Furthermore, differences in police numbers across geographical areas also affect crime statistics, as do police management and control. For example, certain crimes which are hard to solve may be recorded less often than others in order to inflate the recorded rate at which crimes are solved by the police.¹

In South Africa, many of these determinants have been complicated by historical factors. In terms of the relationship between the public and the police, the latter have, in the past, functioned more as an army enforcing and maintaining a particular system of government rather than a legitimate agency protecting the rights of the country's citizens. The deep animosity which this engendered against the police undoubtedly still affects crime reporting.

The historical exclusion from the former South African Police (SAP) records of crimes reported in the so-called bantustans implies that the 'dark figure' of unrecorded crime in the country is substantial. For example, no data has been obtainable for the former Transkei, Ciskei and parts of Bophuthatswana in the period prior to 1996. And although South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics now include these areas, the chronic shortages of infrastructure, human resources and training in them – not to mention inefficiency and corruption – mean that it may be some time before even current statistics can be considered to be a true reflection of the crime situation.

A comprehensive victimisation survey has not been undertaken throughout South Africa. By gathering information from people about their experiences of crime, these surveys attempt to provide information which escapes official sources as a result of reporting and recording tendencies. The official SAPS crime statistics are thus the only ones available. Given the problems outlined above, these figures should not be analysed for minutiae and rejected out of hand, but probed for broader trends. Measuring crime during apartheid's last decade shows, perhaps surprisingly, that at the height of political conflict in the 1980s rates of increases in some crimes appeared to slow down (figures 1-6, pages 21–23). The state of emergency from 1985 to 1990 probably suppressed crime levels, as well as the reporting and recording of crimes that did occur.

Political liberalisation in 1990 brought a crime explosion as social controls were loosened and certain new opportunities opened up for the growth of criminal activity.² Rising crime is probably related to political, social and economic trends which began before the formal political transition but were accentuated by it. Evidence suggests that crime rates in black townships have been high for years, but that racial segregation largely insulated whites from its effects. The erosion and then collapse of apartheid boundaries allowed crime to move out of the townships and into the suburbs, where it is more likely to be recorded.

Recorded levels of almost all crime increased significantly in the period 1990 to 1994. Most crimes increased phenomenally during this period: assault increased by 18 per cent, rape by 42 per cent, robbery by 40 per cent, vehicle theft by 34 per cent, and burglary by 20 per cent. Crimes of the affluent also increased; although accurate figures are not available, commercial crimes increased significantly.

Since 1994 an analysis of the most recent crime rates per 100 000 of the population suggests that while many crimes are increasing, the rates of increase in a few serious crimes are stabilising.³ Attempted murder, rape, robbery (excluding armed robbery), serious and common assault and housebreakings have all increased. The only crimes that have stabilised to some degree are murder, armed robbery, and motor vehicle theft (table 1).^{4a}

Stabilisation is, however, occurring at very high levels. Given the limited period of time against which this is measured, it is too soon to argue – as the SAPS has – that a downturn may follow. Indeed, reporting levels of some categories of crime, notably rape and assault, continue to increase. Comparative experience from other societies with high levels of crime suggests that unless adequate policy measures are taken, criminal activity has the potential to become institutionalised. Thus the next three to five years present a crucial window for the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies. Despite this, however, national trends should be treated with caution, since a closer analysis reveals that crime is not stabilising in all parts of the country.

Table 1: Changing crime rates, 1994–6

Crime type	Ratio/100 000 of the population			% difference in cases reported in 1994/96
	1994	1995	1996	
Murder	66.6			
Attempted murder	67.8	64.3	67.5	4.5
Rape	105.3	115.2	119.5	19.0
Serious assault	521.9	535.8	545.6	9.6
Common assault	481.0	497.3	486.2	6.0
Armed robbery	210.8	194.1	159.1	-20.8
Other robbery	80.5	99.1	122.0	58.9
Housebreaking residential	566.0	591.7	583.6	8.1
Housebreaking business	221.1	209.4	208.1	-1.3
Motor vehicle theft	258.9	245.0	229.0	-7.3

In fact, the impact of crime on the country is not uniform, and increases in crime appear to affect different parts of South African society in different ways. This implies that since not all South Africans are exposed to equal dangers, different strategies will need to be devised in particular areas to curb crime.

Since 1994 Gauteng, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape have had the highest murder rates of all the provinces (figure 7.). Since that year the murder rate has declined in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Northern Province. Rates appear to be increasing in Mpumalanga, North West and Western Cape.

The national picture for assault is quite different. By far the highest rates of serious assault were recorded in Northern and Western Cape (figure 10). Also, unlike the murder figures, rates have generally remained the same since 1994 throughout the country, except for those in Northern Cape, which have steadily increased. Common assault trends show similar patterns (figure 11, page 26). The spatial distribution of rape is similar to that of assault, with most rapes per head of population occurring in Northern Cape, Gauteng, and Western Cape (figure 9).

Turning to property crimes, aggravated robbery – which is also a violent crime – displays a very different trend to the other violent crimes. By far the highest rates occur in Gauteng, followed at much lower levels by KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape (figure 12). Other robberies of a less violent nature also occur at a higher rate in Gauteng, although rates are higher in Western and Northern Cape than for

aggravated robbery (figure 13). These less serious robberies have also increased markedly in 1996, particularly in Gauteng and North West provinces.

Housebreaking is generally stabilising in many provinces (figure 14). Thefts from business premises occur most frequently in Western and Northern Cape, although these figures are hard to interpret and would be more comparable if measured off business ownership rather than unit of population. Housebreaking involving residential premises clearly afflicts Gauteng more than other provinces, although rates in Western Cape are also high. As with other property crimes, housebreaking rates are also high in Northern Cape and Free State.

Within provinces, crime patterns also vary between rural and urban areas. Crime rates are usually higher in cities than in rural areas; in the former, factors associated with high crime rates predominate, such as greater population density, increased opportunities for crime, urbanisation and attendant overcrowding, unemployment, gang activity, and the availability of firearms. The anonymity of cities, particularly in respect of the perpetration of property crimes, is also relevant.^{4b}

These factors, along with the history of years of political (and, in the case of Cape Town, gang) violence, rapid urbanisation, burgeoning informal settlements and related dynamics associated with the 'breakdown of apartheid cities',⁵ would account for the higher crime rates in Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where the urban complexes around Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban respectively are located. But high violent crime rates in Northern Cape are less easy to explain, since there are no comparable urban areas in this province.

The complexity of spatial crime patterns is highlighted by an analysis of crime rates in 1994 in urban and 'non-urban' areas of the former provinces.⁶ Higher violent crime rates were found in the non-urban than the urban areas of Northern Cape, Western Cape and former Natal. In the other provinces, crime rates generally were higher in the urban complexes than in the surrounding non-urban areas. This shapes explanations of the high violent crime rates in Northern and Western Cape, since it suggests that many of these crimes occur outside the urban areas. In the case of KwaZulu-Natal, this trend is more easily explained by the spread of political violence to rural areas of the province after 1990.⁷

VULNERABILITY TO VICTIMISATION

Crime, then, does not affect all citizens uniformly – race, class and gender are significant determinants of the nature of victimisation in South Africa. In comparative terms, the wealthy are victims of property crime, while the poor are the victims of violent crime as well as of property crime.

Ironically, it was not until 1988 that the commissioner of the SAP again began to provide race-specific crime statistics. Marks and Andersson have shown that Africans are 20 times more at risk from a homicide death than whites.⁸ Indeed, SAP figures for the late 1980s – when crime began to grow rapidly – show that whites were victims of only 4,2 per cent of rapes and 2,8 per cent of murders.⁹

The disproportionate risk of violence for black (and poor) people is also illustrated by a hospital-based survey of non-fatal injuries due to external causes in Johannesburg–Soweto between 1989 and 1990. Butchart *et al* found that among victims of interpersonal violence, 22 per cent were coloured (8 per cent of the denominator population), and 68 per cent were African (62 per cent of the population).¹⁰ According to the authors these findings are not surprising, given the '*well-documented observation that interpersonal violence the world over and in colonial societies in particular occurs most frequently among people subject to the dual pressures of structurally entrenched economic and racial inequalities*'.¹¹

Similar results were reported by the Cape Metropolitan Study in respect of rates of violence against women in 1990: the annual incidence of violence measured per 100 000 of the population was 3 546 for African women, 2 169 for coloureds, and 313 for whites.¹²

Race classification in South Africa often, but not always, reflects income differences between groups of people. Hence victimisation statistics for black South Africans are used here to represent victimisation of the country's poor. The Cape Metropolitan Study confirms this association: most of the women who were victims of violence in 1990 were unemployed or occupied low-income jobs, and 93 per cent reported a monthly household income of less than R1 000.¹³

Violence against women, rich and poor, largely occurs in the home environment or is perpetrated by people known to the woman. Poverty can, however, predispose women and children to becoming victims of domestic violence. High unemployment and the marginalisation of men increase the risk of domestic violence for these family members.¹⁴ Research conducted in working class townships around Durban revealed a link between domestic (and political) violence and the erosive effects of apartheid and poverty on men's ability to generate and control the resources of the community and family – traditionally the basis of their respect and power.

Compensation, sometimes through violence, may be sought within the family where authority over women and children – still largely regarded as men's property – is socially more acceptable.¹⁵

Problems which begin as conflict within the family over money or food reportedly often result in violence.¹⁶ The fact that women and children often feel 'trapped' and powerless in abusive relationships due to their dependence on partners for food, shelter and money enables this violence to continue – thus exposing poor women to greater levels of repeat victimisation. Dependencies of this sort have been associated with cases of assault and rape within the domestic environment being withdrawn after charges are laid with the police.¹⁷ Women, particularly those with children, fear the loss of support which separation from or a jail term for a breadwinner might result in.¹⁸ Independence of men and the ability to get and keep adequately paid jobs are crucial for women to permanently leave abusive relationships.¹⁹ For poor women, these opportunities are especially limited.

Victims of rape, perhaps more so than those of domestic violence, seem to be concentrated among the poor: in 1995 the SAPS estimated that 95 per cent of rapes were reported by African women. More specifically, in 1992 65 per cent of rapes reported in Johannesburg, Alexandra and Soweto occurred in Soweto. And in Hillbrow, 71 per cent of rape victims in cases reported to the police were African, although the 1991 census recorded three times as many white women as Africans in the area.²⁰

A countrywide survey of perceptions of crime conducted in 1995 (henceforth referred to as the 1995 HSRC survey) analysed according to per capita income reinforces these conclusions: a much higher proportion of those in the lowest income quartile reported being the victims of violent crimes than those in higher income brackets.²¹ Half of the 'very poor' category of respondents (with a per capita income of less than R116 a month) reported assault as being 'the most important crime' committed against them or a member of their household, as opposed to only one in 10 of the highest income category (with a per capita income of R713). After assault, the most commonly reported crime by the 'very poor' was child abuse and rape, accounting for 17 per cent of victimisation. None of the respondents in the remaining income categories listed this crime.

The predominance of violent crime among the poor is reinforced by further survey material on whether injuries were sustained as a result of most commonly reported crimes. The proportion of crimes in which no injuries occurred increased with income: 36,2 per cent of the first (poorest) income quartile reported no injuries, followed by 43,4 per cent of the second quartile, 65,6 per cent of the third, and 77,3 per cent

of the highest income group. More crimes committed against the poorest group therefore involved violence.²²

Crimes of property, unlike violent crimes, affect South Africans across the racial and class spectrum, reflecting patterns of wealth and ownership. In the late 1980s, for example, 48,6 per cent of all burglaries occurred on white residential premises, 24,1 per cent on black residential premises, and the rest on business premises.²³ The 1995 HSRC survey shows a more even distribution of property crime victimisation than of violent crime. However, it suggests that the 'very poor' are less likely to be victims of property crime than the moderately better off (with monthly per capita incomes of between R116 and R713). One in five of the latter reported having been victimised by housebreakings, as opposed to only 5,4 per cent of the 'very poor'. In fact, the 'very poor' and the highest earners reported being victims of housebreaking, robbery and theft of motor vehicles *less often* than the middle income category. The most commonly reported crime in the highest income group was the theft of goods. This is probably a function of different degrees of property ownership combined with differential access to security measures.

Areas inhabited by the poor are less likely to have the kinds of infrastructural development – such as street lighting and urban planning – which facilitate personal crime prevention. For example, women in rural areas of Northern Province rated electrification as a high priority in improving their life circumstances, given that it reduced their vulnerability to physical attack and sexual assault.²⁴ The same would apply to people living in urban and particularly informal settlements, where a lack of infrastructural development also places the poor at greater risk: the layout of overcrowded squatter camps where access roads are absent have been linked to violence between households as well as more random attacks.²⁵ A recent study of violence and injury in a Johannesburg township found that the rate of both fatal and non-fatal attacks was almost twice as high in the informal settlements – which are also the poorest – than in the other neighbourhoods.²⁶

Also, having to walk long distances to collect water and firewood in rural areas increases women's chances of victimisation. In the former homeland of KaNgwane, for example, most rapes which women were aware of were committed while women were away from their homes performing these chores; they believed that 'basic utilities would greatly increase women's safety'.²⁷ A similar problem has been reported in urban areas. In a squatter settlement outside Somerset West in the Western Cape, 'stories of rape and attacks on women collecting wood fuel in the forests abounded, and each woman had at least one story of being accosted by unknown men. The forests were renowned as places of evil and danger, where skollies roamed. Women were very aware of the dangers of rape, but their only protection was one another'.²⁸ Given that 48,6 per cent of the three million African rural households in South Africa have no access to piped water, 55 per cent and 57 per cent rely on wood for cooking and heating respectively, and 20 per cent have no access to sanitation,²⁹ the implications in terms of safety are evident.

Another perspective in terms of access to infrastructure is that poor communities can be 'entrapped' in a deprived environment if crime acts as a disincentive to infrastructural investments, or if infrastructure is destroyed or stolen. People in the rural community of Blinkwater in Northern Province, for example, reported that the pump which supplied the local water reservoir was too far from the community to be secure, and that one pump had already been stolen.³⁰

The installation of infrastructure such as telephones and roads may also facilitate policing. In a survey in Northern Cape, 99 per cent of respondents said they would feel safer from crime if they had access to a telephone.³¹ (In the case of roads, though, it has been shown that the development of rural road networks in the former Transkei makes communities more accessible not only to the police but also to criminals.³²)

One key survival strategy of the poor to rising levels of insecurity – of which declining feelings of physical safety are only one component – is to move.³³ Environmental factors which heighten the vulnerability of the poor to crime contribute to this decision. Political violence has been identified as a reason for migration both to and within informal settlements in KwaZulu-Natal.³⁴ The 1995 HSRC survey showed that substantially more people in poorer income groups 'seriously considered' moving as a response to declining levels of safety: 13 per cent of the 'very poor' agreed that moving was one response to crime, as opposed to 4 per cent of the wealthiest category of respondents.

The poor are also less able to install physical security measures such as burglar proofing and electronic alarms to protect their property. In any event, patterns of victimisation of the poor in relation to violent crime suggest that the installation of such security devices would have less effect than for wealthier groups, because poorer people are more likely to be victimised by those whom they know (or even live with). In a Johannesburg township, between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of all violence was found to be intimate or 'acquaintance' violence – as opposed to stranger or gang violence, for example – which occurred most often in homes or in other private settings.³⁵ In the 1995 HSRC survey, 42 per cent of the 'very poor' group reported the offender being known by the victim, as opposed to only 6 per cent of the highest income group. This suggests that the provision of physical security measures would not *prevent* victimisation.

On another level, those who are wealthier are in a position to hire physical protection measures in the form of private security, which the poor cannot afford. In South Africa this has wider consequences: the pervasive use of private security in the (white) suburbs means that a critical mass of private policing is reached which provides a greater degree of overall protection to wealthier areas. In comparative terms, poorer areas are doubly disadvantaged: not only are similar levels of private policing unavailable, but public policing resources too are generally underdeveloped. In fact, the poor – and thus the majority of South Africans – are more likely to be policed solely by the public police than those who are economically better off.

The poor are further disadvantaged by the fact that public police resources were (and still are) concentrated almost entirely in white areas: in 1996, 74,6 per cent of police stations nationally were based in white areas.³⁶ South Africa thus has a legacy of uneven policing, which has contributed to the popular perception that the country is underpoliced in comparison with other societies. In fact, the SAPS is not much smaller proportionately than forces in other countries. Its combined police strength is 3,1 active force members for every 1 000 people – not much less than the European average of 3,5.³⁷

In South Africa, these factors combined mean that the poor are particularly disadvantaged in respect of policing: the reliance by lower income groups on (in many cases inadequate and even non-existent) public transport, and the necessity of walking long distances in public areas, puts them at risk. For example, in the Johannesburg inner city in 1992, many rapes were committed while women were travelling to and from work.

By contrast, reported rapes in white suburbs were less common and occurred mainly in situations of housebreaking and theft.³⁸ In addition to the higher situational risk associated with public places, the transformation of the public police has not (and will not in the short to medium term) produce safer working and living environments.

Given that the environment – public transport and shopping areas – in which the poor live their day-to-day lives is more likely to be policed publicly than privately, and that historically sufficient police resources have not been allocated to these areas, the risk of victimisation may be greater.

This growing divide between how the rich and poor are policed has important longer-term policy implications. Greater public pressure (in many cases from the wealthy) for police to concentrate on law enforcement accentuates this dualism: 'The rich will be increasingly policed preventively by commercial security, while the poor will be policed reactively by enforcement-oriented public police. Moreover, since there seems to be a qualitative difference in the efficacy of these approaches – deterrence versus protection – the poor will also be relatively less secure.'³⁹

A counter to this might be that community networks in poorer areas help to prevent crime, given the stronger community surveillance networks which they may provide. Yet research on the experience and perceptions of poverty in South Africa strongly indicates that 'the notion of community is extremely tenuous ... The result is that many communities are extremely divided, with little commonality in terms of needs and aspirations.'⁴⁰

This has important implications for, *inter alia*, community policing initiatives. Experiences in townships in Eastern Cape, for example, have shown that the success of community police forums depends on issues such as sustaining the community's interest, participation and long-term commitment, and an ability to resolve internal community (or police–community) conflicts.⁴¹ The importance of cohesion and common purpose suggests that the chances of community policing succeeding as a crime prevention strategy in poorer areas are greatly reduced.

VULNERABILITY TO THE EFFECTS OF VICTIMISATION

An old police adage illustrates that it is difficult to prioritise crime according to the value of the property stolen or influence of the victim: the impact of the loss of an uninsured bicycle on someone with no other means of transport is greater than that of a BMW to its typical owner, who is covered by insurance and access to other means of transport. This suggests that while the actual loss of the 'haves' as a result of criminal activity may be substantial in financial terms, the cost of crime for the 'have-nots' is greater, given fewer available mechanisms – such as insurance and alternative means of transport – to cushion the effects of being victimised.

This introduces the concept of vulnerability – a crucial component of conceptualising poverty, 'whereby poverty is not only about being poor, it is also about the risk of becoming poor or poorer in the face of change'.⁴² The shock of being victimised by crime makes the poor more vulnerable by eroding the means available to them to withstand its effects, and to recover afterwards. Described in terms of 'assets', these means may take a variety of forms: stores of wealth; productive resources (such as land and housing); human assets such as labour, health and education; and social networks. In some cases, heightened vulnerability may force victims to resort to criminal activity as a means of survival – beginning a process whereby the poor are criminalised by the desperate nature of their plight.

South African research has substantiated the argument that 'the main asset of most poor people is their body'⁴³ – the link between their ability to work and earn an income. If this is the case, violent crime levels in South Africa mean that the odds are heavily stacked against the majority of the country's people: trauma has been identified as the major cause of potential and actual loss of productive work time in the country. More than 16 per cent of all deaths in South Africa occur as a result of trauma, compared to the World Health Organisation's global figure of 5,2 per cent. This ranks trauma as the second largest cause of overall deaths (after circulatory diseases), compared to a ranking of fourth place in the United States – considered to be a violent society – and even lower in most other countries.⁴⁴

Not all trauma is the result of crime, but in South Africa it is the leading cause of injury and death: of the trauma cases recorded in the Cape Metropolitan area in 1990, 34 per cent of injuries and 53,2 per cent of deaths were caused by violence.⁴⁵ Violent crime, it has been argued, takes its toll on the health and lives

of the poor in particular. In the most extreme cases, the death of income-generating family members appears to be one of the most severe shocks which cause vulnerable households to rapidly become poverty-stricken.⁴⁶

Crime also affects people's ability to work in less direct ways. For example, restrictions on movement in high crime areas, intimidation associated with gang activity, intimidation associated with political conflict (and work stayaways), transport problems associated with taxi or train violence, and the loss of employment opportunities when business premises are destroyed, causes businesses to close. In a study of the perceptions of violence among residents of the Phola Park squatter camp on the East Rand, 16 per cent of people said they or their partners had lost their jobs as a result of violence – mainly because they could not get to work during prolonged periods of violence.⁴⁷ Research in South Africa and other developing countries has shown that the loss of the ability to seek employment is the shock which has the greatest impact on many poor people.⁴⁸

Health and education are 'human assets' closely linked to people's ability to work, since they are two factors which determine the returns on labour. In terms of mental and physical health, the conditions faced by children in poor households in South Africa are dire. At least part of the problem is attributable to violence. Research among the country's poor showed that 'children are being abused and neglected on an unacceptable scale', aspects of which include sexual abuse and rape, and children being forced into prostitution.⁴⁹ According to the poor themselves, alcohol abuse also leads to child abuse. Children are also not continuously parented or schooled, having to often relocate due to crises or as a coping strategy for poverty.⁵⁰

Violent crime quite obviously affects people's health – but the poor face not only greater chances of victimisation, but also limited access to health services. In fact, research suggests that public health services do not reach the poor, particularly those in isolated rural areas.⁵¹ This problem is magnified where mental health care is concerned. Mental health in general and the provision of related services have been neglected in the past. There is a high burn-out and turnover rate among social workers, because the health and welfare system is poorly resourced and its staff overburdened. Even when social work services are available, they often achieve little more than crisis management. In rural Tsolo and Qumbu in the former Transkei, where violence has claimed more than 400 lives since 1993, the three social workers can provide only material support for victims for the first 24 hours – no counselling and support for families and children are possible.⁵² When considered in conjunction with the country's high levels of violent crime, the absence of mental health care bodes ill for this society's long-term productivity and stability.

Crime affects access to education when schools are closed as a result of violence and gang-related activity, or if pupils and teachers fear attending due to the threat of victimisation. Research among the poor, for example, has found that sexual harassment contributes to girls' failure to continue education, since it often leads to pregnancy.⁵³ Crime, or the threat of crime, in turn reduces the ability of the poor to improve their chances of gaining employment. While this is an obvious point, it remains important, since education has consistently been listed as a priority area for improved access to income generation by the poor themselves.⁵⁴

Social networks, in the form of household and broader community relations, constitute additional non-material resources which enable people to withstand conditions of poverty. The family size and number of workers in a home determines the disposable income available to the household. Broader social networks also link individuals and families, allowing for co-operation and support around common problems. Within the household, crimes such as domestic violence undermine these networks. Women are unable to leave when they or their children need the housing and/or income which an abuser provides. In cases where there is a history of abuse, they are often afraid to ask their partners for money,

or are forced to hand over the income they themselves have earned.⁵⁵

Violence more generally may also result in the dispersal and relocation of the family.⁵⁶ After suffering similar effects from years of 'institutional violence' brought about by mass removals and migrant labour, the disintegration of family life – particularly for those barely able to ensure members' survival and development – is compounded by violence.⁵⁷

The poor are therefore not only the most vulnerable to certain categories of crime, but are also vulnerable to the effects that victimisation may have. While it has been argued that the poor in general are vulnerable to victimisation, the degree of vulnerability and the nature of victimisation vary according to specific circumstances. This relationship is explored by examining two case studies.

Figure 1: Number of reported murders



Figure 2: Number of reported rapes



Figure 3: Number of reported serious assaults



Figure 4: Number of reported armed robberies



Figure 5: Number of reported housebreakings (residential and business premises)

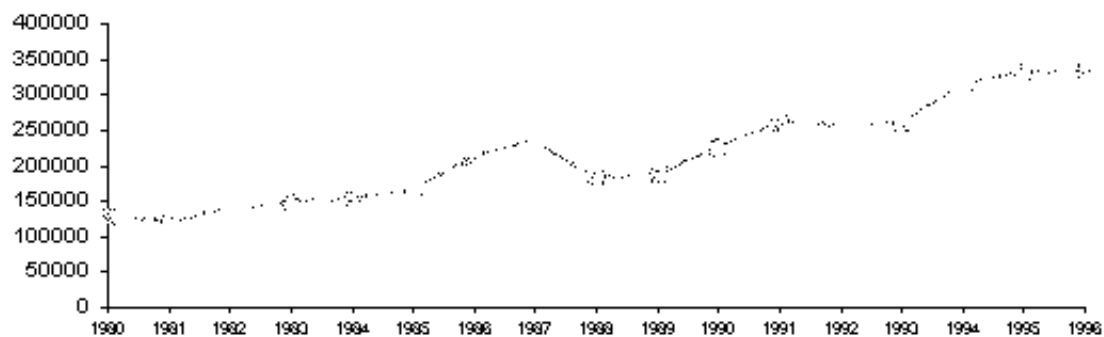


Figure 6: Number of reported motor vehicle thefts



Figure 7: Murder ratio/100 000 of the population

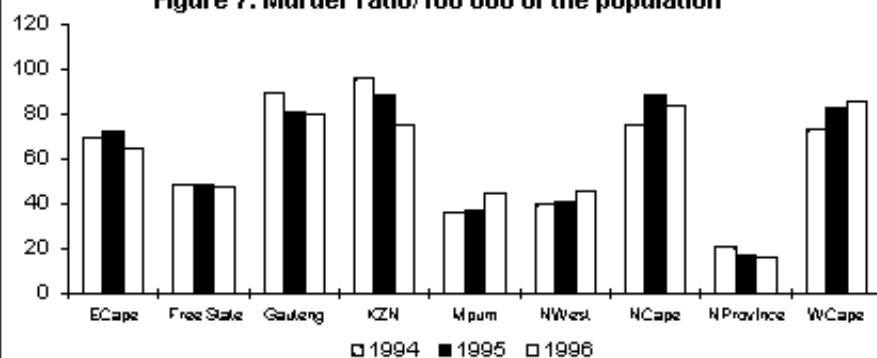


Figure 8: Attempted murder ratio/100 000 of the population

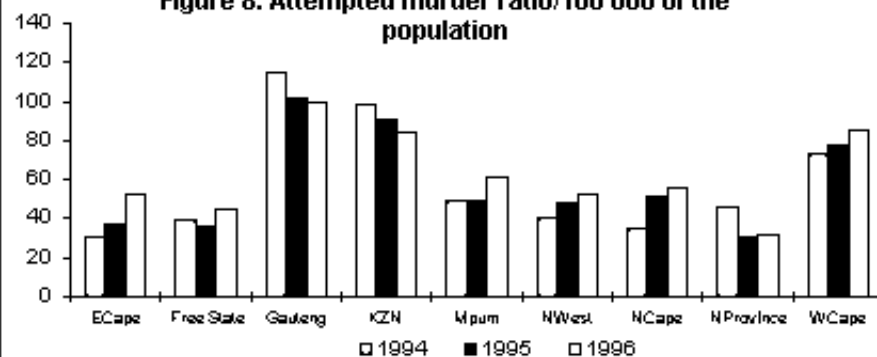


Figure 9: Rape ratio/100 000 of the population

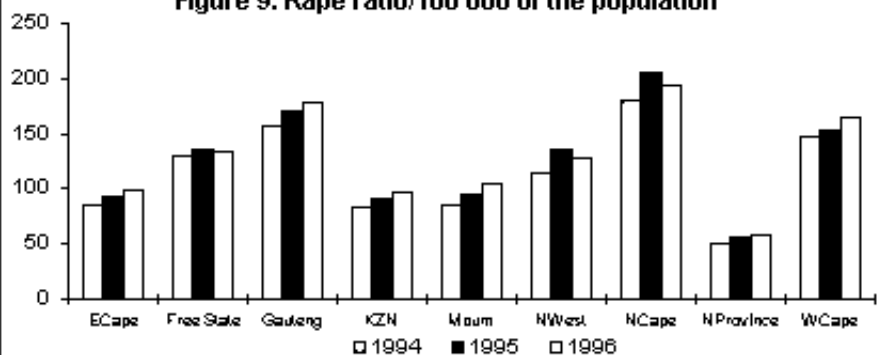


Figure 10: Serious assault ratio/100 000 of the population

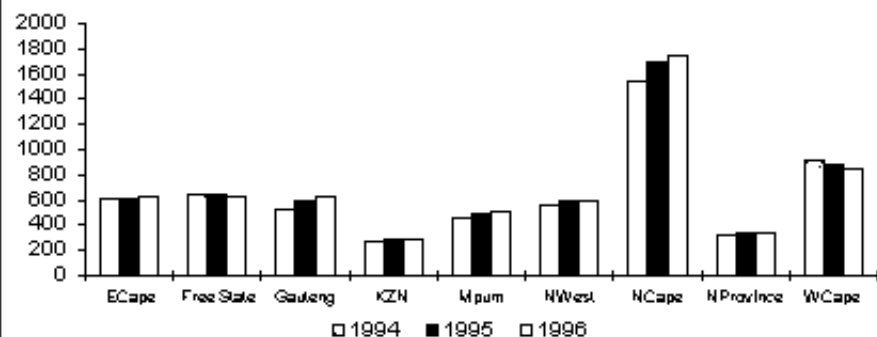


Figure 11: Common assault ratio/100 000 population

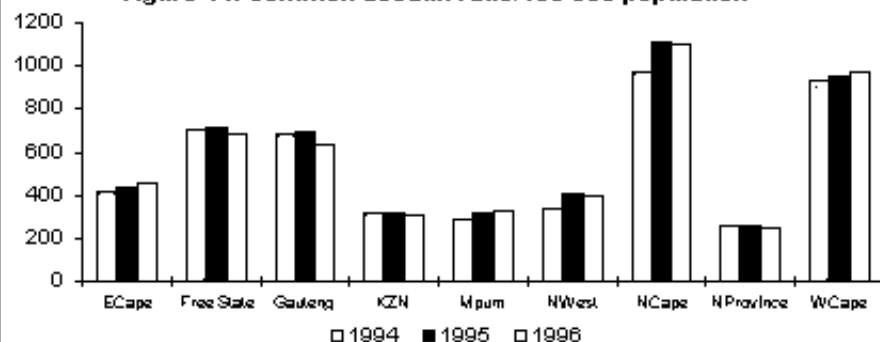


Figure 12: Aggravated robbery ratio/100 000 of the population

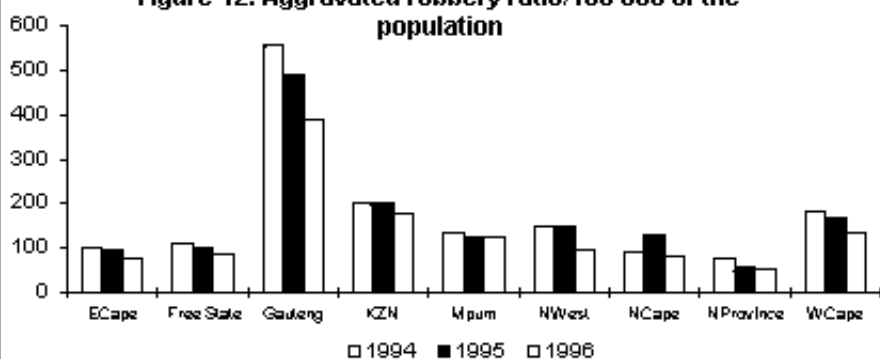


Figure 13: Other robbery ratio/100 000 of the population

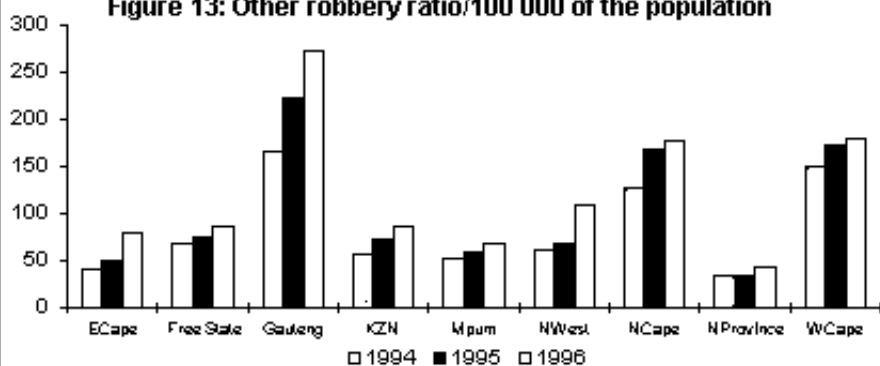
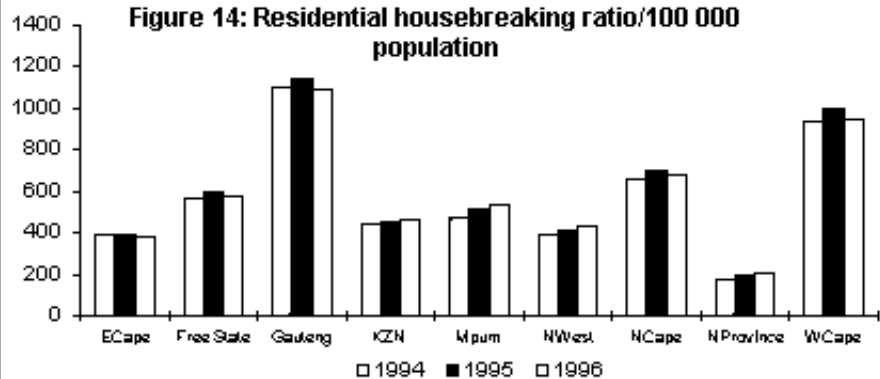


Figure 14: Residential housebreaking ratio/100 000 population



CONTEXTUALISING CRIME AND POVERTY

The Northern and Eastern Cape provinces display significantly different crime profiles, and crime in both provinces affects the poor in significantly different ways. Indeed, an analysis of crime patterns in Northern Cape suggests that the solution to the province's problem does not lie in more police, or more aggressive policing interventions. In contrast, the nature of crime and the state of development of policing in parts of Eastern Cape suggest that significant improvements in police service would greatly enhance the position of the province's poor.

Crime patterns and development indicators differ markedly in the two provinces. Violent crimes such as murder, assault, rape and child abuse – characterised in Northern Cape largely by their association with alcohol, and a familiarity among victims and offenders – are comparatively high in that province and in Kimberley especially. In the former Transkei in Eastern Cape, murder and assault arising from group clashes associated with cattle theft and other political issues have claimed hundreds of lives and have left many people destitute. Police interventions have done little, if anything, to curb crime and restore confidence.

There are also marked differences in human development indicators for the provinces. At 0,73 Northern Cape has the second highest human development index – reflecting life expectancy, adult literacy and income – while Eastern Cape's HDI of 0,48 is at the lower end of the country's scale. Unemployment in Northern Cape is below the national rate of 19 per cent, while 24 per cent of the economically active are without work in Eastern Cape – among the highest rates in the country. Despite its comparative advantages, pockets of poverty do exist in Northern Cape. The long-term sustainability of the province – which has the second lowest economic growth rate – is also uncertain. Indeed, the development indices for the province largely reflect the dominance of coloured people, who make up 52 per cent of its population. Kimberley, the focus of the Northern Cape case study, is one of seven of the 25 districts in the province in which Africans rather than coloureds are in the majority.⁵⁸

Demographically, Eastern Cape houses 16,4 per cent of the country's population, while only 2 per cent of its people live in Northern Cape. Being by far the largest province in geographic terms, Northern Cape has a population density of only 2 people per square kilometre, while that of Eastern Cape, at 39 people per square kilometre, is just higher than the national average. The rural parts of Northern Cape are dominated by large commercial farms which provide relatively little employment. In this province, 78 per cent of people are functionally urbanised, compared with 55 per cent in Eastern Cape.⁵⁹

NORTHERN CAPE

SAPS crime statistics for January to December 1996 show surprisingly high levels of violent crime in Northern Cape province. Indeed, violent crimes such as rape and assault measured against 100 000 head of population are the highest of all South Africa's provinces.⁶⁰

The average national incidence per 100 000 of the population for serious assault is 545,6. Northern Cape's figure is more than three times higher at 1 751,2 (figure 10). Common assault rates show similar tendencies: 486,2 for the country, compared to 1 103,8 for Northern Cape (figure 11). Figures for both rape and murder are also much higher than the national average. While the national average per 100 000 head of population for rape is 119,5, Northern Cape's rate is 194,2 (figure 9). Murder figures for the province suggest that victimisation rates are above those of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal at 83,7, compared to a national average of 61,1 (figure 7).

Crimes involving juveniles and children are also, according to interviewees, comparatively frequent in Northern Cape.⁶¹ The province was identified as having the highest reported levels of child abuse and

child rape in the country. The involvement of juveniles as perpetrators in these (and other) crimes was also identified as a concern. Since child abuse can involve several different crimes, it is not recorded by police as a specific crime category. One dimension of the problem is, however, reflected in the levels of cruelty towards and ill-treatment of children – which excludes sexual offences, assault and murder. At 12,5, the rate per 100 000 head of population in Northern Cape is well above the national of 5,5, and second only to Western Cape's rate of 13,4.⁶²

Research in the province and in Kimberley in particular has confirmed police statistics on violent crime. It is likely that figures of reported violent crime in Northern Cape are more accurate than for the rest of the country. A combination of several factors may contribute to this:

- The province did not experience any integration of former bantustan police agencies with the former South African Police (SAP). This means that problems of police integration, amalgamating crime databases and the inclusion of areas where recording has been poor or absent have not been an issue.
- Although the province is largely rural, with large distances between towns, the settlement geography of Northern Cape encourages reporting. Small town communities – 78 per cent of the population is urbanised⁶³ – which are relatively isolated are each served by an individual police station. Small town dynamics, associated with people knowing each other as well as the police, are also believed to encourage reporting.⁶⁴
- Afrikaans is widely spoken as the first language of the province, and most people understand and speak it as a second or third language.⁶⁵ It is also largely the dominant language used by state agencies, such as the police.
- The infrastructure in Northern Cape – particularly roads and telephone distribution – makes the police more accessible to ordinary citizens than elsewhere in the country. Although many rural communities in Northern Cape are without access by proclaimed road, and most proclaimed roads are gravel, the provincial road network is extensive and well distributed across the whole province.⁶⁶ The number of people with access to a telephone is higher than the national average of 9,9 per 100 people. In Kimberley 12,9 people in every 100 have access to a phone.⁶⁷
- Interview material suggests that community and family support networks or structures in former coloured areas are not as developed as in African areas. This encourages the use of the police as the first recourse, particularly in the case of rape, domestic violence and associated crimes.⁶⁸ It may also be true that higher reporting rates for rape and assaults reflect the precarious position of women whose lives are in danger, and who simply have no other means of resolving the problem. Similar dynamics have been reported in native American communities, where 'reporting abuses in small communities where escape is limited are acts of near-desperation or defiance'.⁶⁹
- Since 1992, several government departments in the province have run campaigns to promote the reporting of violent crime.⁷⁰

Although perceptions of security and of changing crime levels do not always correlate with official statistics, high reported crime rates in Northern Cape are reflected in victimisation surveys. Most Northern Cape residents (53 per cent) feel unsafe in their communities, which is higher than the national average of 46 per cent and second only to KwaZulu-Natal, where the highest number of people (62 per cent) said they feel unsafe. One reason for this is probably that the majority (57 per cent) in Northern Cape believe crime has increased in their community over the past six months, as indeed do most South Africans surveyed. However, more people held this view in Northern Cape, Western Cape, Eastern Cape

and KwaZulu-Natal than in the other provinces. The fact that 13 per cent of those in Northern Cape said they had personally been a victim of crime in recent months – a higher figure than that recorded in any other province in the country – must contribute to feelings of insecurity.⁷¹

For the vast majority of people living in Northern Cape, unemployment and poverty are seen as the fundamental causes of the crime problem.⁷² These views are by no means exclusive to the province: in a national victimisation survey among black South Africans, 80 per cent of all respondents listed socio-economic factors such as unemployment, poverty and illiteracy as the root cause of crime.⁷³ In Northern Cape a lack of recreation and entertainment, particularly for the youth, are also believed to cause crime.⁷⁴ Without exception, the excessive use of alcohol – often as a result of these broader problems – was identified as a key factor leading to crime.

Poverty and unemployment can be associated with the perpetration of certain crimes. But focusing only on structural features such as these as causes of crime does not always explain crime patterns in particular areas, and is not helpful to policy-makers. Poverty and unemployment often usefully describe the contexts within which crime occurs. In terms of trends, these arguments are too general: they do not explain why rates for most violent crimes are substantially higher in Northern Cape than in other provinces equally or more affected by unemployment and poverty.

Northern Cape is facing long-term economic decline and a shrinkage of formal sector employment.⁷⁵ But when compared to other provinces in the country (which have lower violent crime rates), Northern Cape is better off in terms of economic and human development indicators. The unemployment rate is lower than the national average and that of Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province and North West. Northern Cape also has the second highest human development index – a measure of life expectancy, adult literacy and income – of all provinces.⁷⁶

Explanations of the comparatively high rates of violent crime in Northern Cape cannot be separated from the socio-economic context in which crime occurs. But these structural conditions need to be 'linked down' to specific situations and patterns of criminal behaviour in particular communities.⁷⁷ If interventions are to be identified and implemented, it needs to be clear to policy-makers how being poor, for example, actually translates into criminal behaviour.

Generally, most black South Africans – including those in Northern Cape – do not believe the police are fighting crime effectively. Countrywide, the most common complaints related to police performance (49 per cent), corruption (33 per cent) and inadequate staff and resources (which in this survey referred to vehicles, 16 per cent). In Northern Cape, resource shortages are ranked above corruption.⁷⁸ Vigilante action is not, however, believed to be the solution for people in that province. Only 19 per cent of people, less than the national average of 23 per cent, thought the community itself should sentence criminals instead of handing them over to the police.

Despite some negative perceptions of the police, policing in Northern Cape may be better than in other provinces. Asked about reasons for feeling unsafe, the perceived absence of the police was given by 18 per cent of all black South Africans. Compared with the rest of the country, people in Northern Cape reported the lowest proportions in this regard: only 8 per cent compared with 27 per cent in Northern Province and 22 per cent in North West, for example.⁷⁹ And people were found to be most critical of the police in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Province and Gauteng. Compared to the other provinces, Northern Cape is better off in terms of police numbers, with the lowest number of civilians per official at 237:1.

If the statistics on violent crime in Northern Cape clearly reflect the extent of the problem compared to the rest of the country, they say little about the underlying causes or features which are common to most

incidents of crime.⁸⁰ Until police statistics in the province are collected with a view to recording specific details around individual instances of violent crime, the task of fully understanding the causes of criminality in the province will be difficult.

In the absence of useful statistics, interview material provided some insight into two defining features common to the majority of violent crimes in Northern Cape and in Kimberley in particular.

Victims and offenders are known to each other

The police statistics, as outlined above, suggest that the chances of becoming a victim of violent crime are higher in Northern Cape than elsewhere. This needs to be interpreted carefully, since research suggests that outsiders to particular areas are less likely to be victimised since a significant proportion of violence takes place within the context of the family or the community.

Again, this raises the importance of understanding the dynamics of criminality specific to particular places: despite the statistics, the defining features of crime in Kimberley mean that a stranger walking the streets of Hillbrow is probably more likely to become a victim of violent crime than one in Kimberley's Galeshewe township.

Interpersonal violence in Northern Cape, and especially Kimberley, often takes the form of violence between friends, within the family, and in particular against woman and children. At the time of the research, the Child Protection Unit (CPU) in Kimberley had 700 dockets relating to instances of child abuse, statutory rape, and a range of other offences relating to the abuse of children.⁸¹ (By way of comparison, the Western Cape CPU handled 1 500 cases in 1995.⁸²) In particular, the rape of young children and under-age teenagers is a serious problem, and many of these attacks occur within the family unit.⁸³ This pattern fits the national picture for crimes reported against children in 1996.⁸⁴ While rape as a general category appears to have decreased over the past year in Northern Cape, recorded rapes of under-age girls has increased.⁸⁵

In 1996 there were 1 450 reported rapes in the province – a figure of approximately 120 a month for a population of just over 700 000. Prosecution rates are significantly lower; the police in Galeshewe, for example, were only investigating 31 cases over a three-month period between December 1996 and February 1997. In Kimberley hospital's casualties department, on the other hand, 26 rapes, largely those cases in which serious physical injury had occurred, were reported during January 1997. Although no figures are available, police, prosecutors and health officials reported that many complaints were withdrawn, particularly where offenders and victims were known to each other.⁸⁶

Rape is not the only crime which results in the withdrawal of complaints. Domestic violence (which police largely record as assault), which may contribute to Northern Cape's very high rate of serious assault, is another crime in which cases against offenders are often dropped. There are three dimensions to complaints being withdrawn. First, if victims lose faith in the legal process and believe the case will not have the desired result, they may withdraw the complaints. Second, as would be expected, victims do not follow through with prosecutions when they fear retribution from offenders who are known to them. Third, where people – especially women with children – are dependent on the perpetrators, many fear the loss of support that would result if they were to separate, or the latter were to be imprisoned.⁸⁷

The heightened vulnerability of the poor to domestic violence and rape was described in Kimberley. Problems which begin as conflict over money or food often result in violence: 'Men think women are their property to do with what they like. They don't think they are committing a crime when they abuse women. They are not worried about the police.'⁸⁸ At a recent White Ribbon Campaign launched in Kimberley, women were encouraged to speak out about their problems. The common predicament was

that women often felt 'trapped' in abusive relationships due to their dependence on partners for food, shelter and money.⁸⁹

Young parenthood, especially among the poor, has also been associated with domestic violence.⁹⁰ Teenage pregnancy is prevalent in the urban areas of Northern Cape: in Kimberley and Upington about one quarter of teenage girls become pregnant.⁹¹ The absence of working mothers, and fathers' limited presence, often lead to neglect and the abuse of children. Violent tendencies among children have also been associated with inadequate parenting skills, especially among young parents.⁹²

If violence in the home environment and between people who are known to each other is as common in Northern Cape as the research suggests, this may be one reason why there is a high incidence of violent crimes generally in the province. Campbell, drawing on McKendrick and Hoffmann's analogy of the family as the 'cradle of violence',⁹³ argues that 'because the family is a microcosm of society, the prevalence of violence in a particular society is invariably linked to high levels of domestic violence'.⁹⁴ The family is the arena in which men particularly learn to use violence as an accepted means of resolving conflicts generally.

At another level of dependency, there is some evidence in Kimberley that teenage girls and children of poor families receive financial or material rewards in exchange for sexual favours, effectively beginning a process of criminalising the victim.⁹⁵ A similar scenario faces (largely male) youths who are reportedly employed by drug dealers to sell their merchandise in Galeshewe township. Competition between these children for entry into the business often erupts violently on school premises.⁹⁶ Child labour, which is associated with poverty, is considered to be a problem in Kimberley. Some children are involved in buying and delivering alcohol from shebeens to people around the township. Children who start working at an early age – often at the behest of their parents – spend their time on the streets outside of parental and school supervision, where they are more exposed to victimisation as well as being drawn into criminal activity.⁹⁷

Victims and offenders are often under the influence of alcohol

Alcohol is a crucial feature of Northern Cape's crime landscape, and has been associated with a variety of violent crimes in the province. Research elicited graphic accounts of the effects of alcohol on child abuse and rape: parents who drink excessively become negligent and abusive, sometimes being present and intoxicated while children are molested; young women drinking at shebeens and street parties are exposed to rape. A lack of entertainment and 'boredom' was identified as one reason for high alcohol consumption. This was also a factor in a study of the alcohol–crime relationship among offenders: prisoners in Northern Cape commonly identified 'a need for fun' as the reason for their first try at alcohol. They also expressed a preference for drinking in company, especially with friends of the same age or younger than themselves.⁹⁸

Shebeens are open throughout the day, and several sell liquor to teenagers and children – many of whom are sent to buy alcohol for adults. Shebeens are the locus of much violence, particularly over weekends, and alcohol is believed to be the driving force behind most assaults.⁹⁹ Characteristically, both victims and offenders of violent crimes are under the influence. This alcohol–violence scenario has several important features:

- women also drink excessively;¹⁰⁰
- although guns are now used more often in criminal activity, most murders are committed with knives, and most serious assaults with broken bottles and blunt instruments. The majority of murders were described as 'assaults that go too far'.¹⁰¹ Against a background of high alcohol

consumption, many of these incidents may be the result of spontaneous, and possibly avoidable conflicts – such as men fighting over a woman¹⁰² – as opposed to pre-planned, purposeful attacks;

- this has implications for the province, given that the murder rate is already the second highest in the country, and the rate of serious assault is more than three times higher than the national average. Significantly, Galeshewe township - with a population of around 140 000 - is the main contributor to these provincial totals. During 1996 the provincial ambulance service in Kimberley transported 6 887 assault victims from Galeshewe to hospital. This amounts to 52,6 per cent of all serious assaults recorded by police for the entire province,¹⁰³ and an assault rate of 4 919,2 per 100 000 people - significantly above the already high provincial rate of 1 751,2. If alcohol abuse is the main contributor to these very high levels of assault, intervention in this regard is crucial. The number of assault victims transported by the ambulance service is also more than the 5 991 incidents of serious assault recorded by police for the Diamondfield region where Kimberley is situated - indicating the degree of under-reporting of assault to police. Forty per cent of murders in Northern Cape in 1996 occurred in the Diamondfield area - probably also largely in Galeshewe.

The prevalence of alcohol abuse in Northern Cape is not altogether surprising. South Africans generally drink large quantities of liquor: between 1 July 1995 and 30 June 1996 an estimated 6 billion litres of alcohol was consumed. With an adult per capita absolute alcohol consumption of nearly 10 litres per year, these drinking habits place South Africa among the highest consumers of alcohol in the world.¹⁰⁴

The history of alcohol in South Africa has influenced these drinking patterns. For decades alcohol presented a useful way for the state as well as mining concerns to control the black labour force, both for political and economic reasons. Inspired by similar motives, the tot system in the Cape was already entrenched by the 18th century. By the 1970s the state's liquor interests, according to Scharf, 'formed an integral part of the functioning and success of the apartheid policy'.¹⁰⁵ Not all black people were passive participants in these processes, however. Alcohol became a rallying point for defiance of and resistance to the state, as well as a means of economic survival in impoverished urban communities. In the process, excessive alcohol consumption took its toll on society, affecting people's health, families and livelihoods.

Particular aspects of this history contributed to current high consumption levels:

- Prohibitions on drinking among black people between 1928 and 1962 encouraged the development of an extensive illegal liquor trade. Eventually about 60 per cent of all alcohol supplied to Africans was channelled through shebeens.¹⁰⁶ Even after consumption was legalised in 1962, shebeens continued to flourish in the absence of adequate numbers of legal facilities in townships and due to trading restrictions and regulations.
- It was in the previous government's interests to promote alcohol consumption, since local government finance in black townships depended on it for three decades. In 1945 the state established beer halls selling sorghum beer in townships. The profits from these sales were the primary source of local authority revenue until 1980. Despite the illegality of shebeens, many liquor outlets run by municipalities after prohibition supplied shebeens with most of their alcohol supplies. During the 1976 student uprising, many of the beer halls were targeted and destroyed because they symbolised the state. Importantly, they were also a source of social decay, wrecking the lives of people in townships and beyond, where ties were maintained with family in rural areas.
- In the Cape, the tot system – providing wine as part of the wage – reduced the outlay of farmers' cash wages and tied workers to farms through alcohol dependence. Unsurprisingly, 'a bottle and a

half of doctored wine per day from the age of 12 also did much to produce a rural class of alcoholics'.¹⁰⁷ The tot system was not only used to secure cheap labour, but also to dispose of surplus wine. According to Scully,¹⁰⁸ the sale of poor quality wine was so vital to wine farmers' livelihoods that the state did not limit wine sales to the coloured population (in the face of restrictions on African consumption) or abolish the tot system.

With its economy dominated by diamond mining and the wine industry, all these aspects have shaped Northern Cape's alcohol history. The tot system – despite the fact that this practice is now illegal – is still used on wine and other farms in the province. Socio-economic factors such as the lack of development, illiteracy, low levels of school attendance, a lack of recreation and sport facilities, low wages, unemployment and boredom have also been associated with high levels of alcohol abuse in towns and rural areas.¹⁰⁹

These factors would not, however, explain why alcohol consumption is higher in Northern Cape than in other provinces which are worse off in terms of similar indicators. Compared to other provinces though, legally supplied liquor does seem more accessible. There are nearly twice as many liquor licences per unit of the population in Northern Cape as there are for South Africa as a whole, mainly issued for bottle stores – of which there is nearly three times the national average per unit population in the province. The majority of liquor stores in Northern Cape are white-owned, but many are situated on the periphery of townships and sell almost exclusively to township customers.¹¹⁰ The fact that under apartheid (and until 1962) coloured people were allowed unlimited choice of alcohol (which African people were not) probably accounts for the high number of liquor licences in the province.

The sale of illegal alcohol from unlicensed outlets is as widespread in Kimberley and Upington as in the rest of the country. Galeshewe typically has three to five shebeens per street, with the figure rising to between seven and 10 in some streets. Most shebeens are run in residential areas by people (often women) desperate to make a living: South African Breweries has estimated that the average income per person per month from this informal business in 1994/5 was only R400.¹¹¹ Several operate 24 hours a day, and serve under-age customers.

The impact of the alcohol industry is severe. The prevalence of risky or binge drinking is high. Adult, African and coloured urban males and the youth fall into the high-risk group in South Africa, and estimates are that 30 per cent of these people drink at dangerous levels.¹¹² This can be compared to 6 per cent in England and Wales.¹¹³ In Northern Cape, rural farm workers and women join this category of risky drinkers. Excessive drinking can in turn be linked to crime and violence, with high social and health-related costs.

Alcohol is a major factor in domestic violence, child abuse, assault and murder. In the absence of data about perpetrators, information is usually gathered from victims. In the case of murder, 53 per cent of homicide victims in the Cape metropole in 1996 had considerably high blood alcohol levels.¹¹⁴ This compares with 30 per cent of victims tested in Los Angeles between 1970 and 1979.¹¹⁵ In the case of assault, the Cape Metropolitan Study established that 63,6 per cent of injuries caused by interpersonal violence were alcohol-related.¹¹⁶ The same study found that in violence occurring in the home against women, nearly 68 per cent of incidents were alcohol-related.¹¹⁷

There is much circumstantial evidence that strong links exist between alcohol consumption and crime.¹¹⁸ Indeed, the first study on alcohol and drug use among offenders in South African prisons confirms findings in Northern Cape: violent crimes such as murder and rape are associated with alcohol use, with offenders reporting it gives them 'courage'.¹¹⁹ But worldwide, research has failed to show a linear causal relationship between alcohol and criminal activity. It has been argued that the social situations, circumstances and environment in which crime occurs may be more important than the

consumption itself, and that violence and intoxication may have the same causes. It has even been suggested that alcohol makes offenders less able to avoid arrest.¹²⁰ Most research suggests that while drug and alcohol use does not necessarily start criminal careers, it tends to intensify and perpetuate them.¹²¹ It is likely, then, that alcohol will be more closely associated with repeat offending.

EASTERN CAPE

If crime statistics for Northern Cape, measured per 100 000 of the population, demonstrate that the province has very high levels of violent crime, the same cannot be said of Eastern Cape. Recently released SAPS statistics for January to December 1996 suggest that crime in Eastern Cape is less of a problem. Reported crime statistics show that the province is below the national average in virtually all categories of crime, including housebreaking, robbery, stock theft, shoplifting, theft of motor vehicles, fraud, attempted murder, rape, and common assault.

There are two exceptions to this, however: the province is above the national average for serious assault and murder (see figures 7 and 10, pages 24–25). But in both cases Eastern Cape is closer to the national average than a range of other provinces. In the case of murder the national average is 61,1 per 100 000 head of population; Eastern Cape, with a reported figure of 64,5, falls behind Western Cape (85,5), Northern Cape (83,7), Gauteng (80,0) and KwaZulu-Natal (74,8). In the case of serious assault – with a national average per 100 000 people of 545,6 – Eastern Cape, with a figure of 625,7, falls behind Northern Cape (1751,2), Western Cape (841,7) and Gauteng (630,5).

The SAPS statistics for murder in Eastern Cape (as in the rest of the country) are probably fairly accurate, given the greater likelihood of reporting. However, the same cannot be said of other categories of crime. If the particular circumstances of Northern Cape encourage higher levels of reporting, the opposite may apply to Eastern Cape. Interview material suggests that a combination of a number of factors has contributed to this:

- The quality of the statistics for the whole province, and the former Transkei in particular, are generally poorer than for the rest of the country. Prior to 1995 no crime statistics were kept in the former Transkei, and so the system of recording had to be established from scratch. Although the former Transkei did provide reported crime figures for January to December 1996, provincial police managers regard the data as an uneven reflection of the extent of crime; consistent reporting procedures still need to be established in some areas, and there is no history of data management at station level.
- People in Eastern Cape, particularly in the former Transkei, do not trust the police and are therefore less likely to report. Almost all interview material from both police and non-police sources confirmed this. In the words of the provincial MEC for Safety and Security: 'We have to persuade people that the police are there to serve them, and that they should participate in community police forums and approach the police for assistance.'¹²²
- People do not report crime to the police because, in many instances, alternatives exist to the state agencies of criminal justice. According to a senior Safety and Security official: 'People devise their own mechanisms of protection, and have a self-help attitude to criminal justice issues.'¹²³ Added to this, there is almost no history of reporting crime, and people see little necessity for doing so; 'reporting crime does little because the police do nothing about the reported instance'.¹²⁴
- The geography of the area makes reporting difficult. Many areas are inaccessible and so do not have a permanent police presence. Reporting thus requires a considerable effort on the part of any witness or victim of crime. The 33 police stations in the former Transkei serve a dispersed

population of more than two million,¹²⁵ compared with 85 stations for a population of 763 900 in Northern Cape.¹²⁶

The above factors suggest that the SAPS statistics for the area are far less accurate than those for Northern Cape. There is some evidence, however, that reporting may increase over the short to medium term. If policing services improve, and local police commissioners become more active in building the trust of community representatives, then more reporting may follow. In turn, there is general agreement that the old system of tribal courts no longer functions in most areas, and this could result in a higher propensity to report. Over time this may point to the need for provincial decision-makers to manage perceptions that crime in Eastern Cape is growing rapidly, when any such growth may simply reflect higher levels of reporting.

It is difficult to determine from the available evidence the extent to which more accurate reporting will change the overall crime profile of Eastern Cape. Interview material, however, suggests that the extent of some crimes which directly affect the poor in the province are not accurately reflected in the statistics. These are as follows:

Stock theft: The stealing of stock in the rural areas of Eastern Cape is nothing new. Stock theft here differs from that in Northern Cape, where commercial farmers are targeted. In the former Transkei, stock theft is mostly 'the poor stealing from the poor', with a small number of animals being taken at one time.¹²⁷ While it is difficult to determine the extent of the problem in the former Transkei, it appears to be fairly widespread. Given perceptions that the police cannot resolve the problem, the issue of stock theft has given rise to community self-help groups in particular areas. The dynamics of stock theft and the responses of citizens when the police response is inadequate are clearly illustrated by the examples of Qumbu and Tsolo near Umtata in the former Transkei. Here, clashes between stock thieves and anti-stock theft groups have left at least 400 people dead since 1993.¹²⁸ The conflict has been complicated by local political dynamics, and the poor response of the police.¹²⁹

Taxi violence: The province has been plagued by high levels of taxi-related violence. The problem stems from the deregulation of the taxi industry and the resultant levels of competition among rival taxi organisations. A new dynamic in the province is the use of 'hit squads' by rival competitors to eliminate competition. The issue of taxi violence in the province, however, has been complicated by a specific dynamic unique to Eastern Cape. Given that in the former Transkei and Ciskei police officers were allowed to operate taxis to supplement their income, policing the industry was often biased in favour of specific organisations. Since 1994/95 no police officer is (theoretically) allowed to be involved in the taxi industry, but many of the old linkages remain. Following the rationalisation of the police agencies in the Transkei and Ciskei, many officers fell back on the industry as a source of income. Those operators who are former policemen are often able to access police weapons through old networks, and maintain a good knowledge of police operations and tactics.¹³⁰

Quantitative survey data along with interview material also suggest that under-reporting is possible in the following categories of crime: robbery, housebreaking, rape, child abuse, and car hijackings. It is difficult to verify the extent to which this is the case. If anything, however, these findings reinforce the conclusion reached above around lower levels of reporting in the province. Indeed, provincial comparisons suggest that Eastern Cape shows consistently lower totals for most crime categories (see figures 7–14, pages 24–27).

As in Northern Cape, the majority of residents in Eastern Cape believe poverty to be at the root of crime in the province. This conclusion is strongly supported by quantitative survey evidence¹³¹ – the vast majority of survey respondents regarded poverty to be the central cause of crime – as well as qualitative interview material. Police managers at all levels as well as political representatives in the province agreed

that high levels of poverty resulted in crime. Such explanations, however, explain little: even taking into consideration lower levels of reporting in Eastern Cape and higher levels in Northern Cape, levels of poverty do not necessarily correlate with levels of crime. Indeed, to attribute high crime levels to the poor in particular because they are poor is to victimise them twice.

Feelings of insecurity in the province are extensive, and growing: about half of all survey respondents indicated that they did not feel secure in their communities – an increase of around 5 per cent over earlier survey findings.¹³² Fear of crime appears to be a key concern: what is clear from survey data of community perceptions is that residents of Eastern Cape perceive (wrongly as it turns out) that increases in levels of crime in their province have been higher than in any other province. Indeed, no other province's residents regard crime to have increased as dramatically as those in Eastern Cape. Given current levels of reporting, it is difficult to verify this, but it is probably the case (as has been found in numerous comparative studies) that fear of crime is not necessarily related to actual levels of recorded criminality.

Importantly, the survey data from the province suggest very clearly that feelings of insecurity are directly related to perceptions of ineffective policing. The majority of respondents in the Eastern Cape survey felt that the police 'were not fighting crime effectively'. Only 38 per cent of respondents viewed the police to be effective in fighting crime. Respondents regarded the police to be weak in three key areas: performance (62 per cent); corruption (23 per cent); and infrastructure (18 per cent). A significant number of respondents (16 per cent) asserted that communities themselves should sentence criminals instead of handing them over to the police. Almost 70 per cent of respondents said they would contact the police if they caught someone committing a violent crime against a member of their family, and 28 per cent (a figure comparatively higher than the rest of the country) said they would take the law into their own hands.¹³³

Qualitative interview material reinforced the quantitative research findings that the key reasons for increases in crime are related to the inefficiency of the criminal justice system and the police in particular. Quantitative interview material suggested that one key issue of concern is the absence of state policing institutions in many areas, and (where they were present) a complete lack of public confidence in their ability.

In this respect Eastern Cape differs fundamentally from Northern Cape. In the latter, despite the seriousness of the crime problem, there is a well-established system of policing. Northern Cape provincial police managers are not faced with the difficulties of transforming a system of policing the poor – one which has always been more aimed at control than community service. This is not to argue that there are no problems with policing in Northern Cape, but that institutionalised lines of command and uniform operating procedures will ease the transformation exercise.

Also, it has been argued that many of the problems of crime in Northern Cape cannot be solved by policing interventions alone, and that particular crime prevention solutions need to be sought which encompass a complex array of social and economic features. This may not be the first priority in the former Transkei: the challenge there is to establish legitimate and effective forms of policing for the poor in areas where they have never been present.

Policing structures in the Transkei were built on earlier colonial forms of control, and were designed more to assert a degree of central state authority among the rural poor than to operate as a system of service delivery. Colonial forms of control policing were interwoven with other forms of local authority – district commissioners, magistrates, chiefs and headmen – to ensure compliance among the poor.¹³⁴ Indeed, the police were often junior players in the hierarchy of local state control – headmen, assisted by a small contingent of 'native constables', performed as much of a policing as an administrative function.

The system of local control remained closely integrated: by the late 1920s, when 'native constables' had become members of the SAP, they remained 'under [the magistrate's] direct command for duty'.¹³⁵ It was also only in the 1930s that criminal investigation was transferred from magistrates to the police. When required, local forms of control were supplemented by 'fire force' policing interventions: before 1912 by the deployment of detachments of the Cape Mounted Rifles, and later by units of the newly established SAP.

Until the 1960s – despite the increasing role of magistrates and the SAP itself – the headman's role as policeman persisted. From then on the SAP presence in the Transkei was consolidated, and over time it was they 'rather than the local magistrates who were expected to receive intelligence inputs from headmen and local informers'.¹³⁶ Indeed, the collection of intelligence was (and remained) the key role of local police. This signifies just how skewed the policing function was towards control, and illustrates the extent to which informer networks represented the penetration of the security instruments of the state – in short, the poor were not policed, they were spied on. A visible policing presence was often more a cause for concern than a source of security. This form of control persisted: in a study of a Transkei community in the early 1980s, Andrew Spiegel noted that 'it was still regarded as exceptional and indeed quite threatening to see uniformed police off the arterial road running through the village and in any homestead other than one alongside the road'.¹³⁷

The administration of policing was transferred to the Transkei government's own department of police in 1972, four years before the territory became 'independent' in 1976. By 1975 the SAP had handed administrative control over all police stations, personnel and equipment in the territory to the Transkei Police. The Transkei Police were the key to the buttressing of state authority under the autocratic and corrupt regime of George Matanzima – control of policing fell to a select number of ex-Rhodesian security force members, and increasingly became a brutal mechanism for eradicating political opposition. The military coup of 1987 (led by then Brigadier Bantu Holomisa) resulted in the downgrading of the Transkei Police. The Military Council actively sought to depoliticise the role of the police (presumably to lessen the threat of a counter coup), and downgraded their security role.

Tensions between the police and the military remained a feature of the local political terrain – reflected in the almost complete absence of the Transkei Police at the second anniversary celebrations of the coup in December 1989.¹³⁸ Such tensions meant that attempts by Holomisa to encourage new methods of police work, including communication and increased contact with Transkei citizens, was given little more than lip service by police commanders. The discrediting of the Transkei Police in the military takeover also had specific organisational implications: there was a dramatic increase in corruption (which remains a problem) as levels of morale fell.¹³⁹

Post-1994 attempts to transform policing in the territory have met with only limited success. The amalgamation process in Eastern Cape has meant bringing together police officers from the former Transkei and Ciskei and the SAP – most of the 8 500 members of the Transkei and Ciskei Police have had only a six-week basic training course, and many have never had any formal police training.¹⁴⁰ The average length of training up to the level of a superintendent is three weeks.¹⁴¹

As elsewhere in the country, the skills of the middle management complement of the former Transkei Police are weak. The need for good managers in rural policing is accentuated by the degree of independence enjoyed by station commissioners operating in isolated areas. Interventions in this area, however, are generally short-term – station commissioners are to be given a one-week course on management techniques in the near future.¹⁴²

Poor management has resulted in high levels of corruption, given weak controls and weak administrative systems. Corruption is also institutionalised in many areas, and community trust in the police remains

poor. The position is complicated by the fact that former jurisdictions which fell under Transkei and Ciskei continue to operate under their bantustan police acts.

SAPS structures in Eastern Cape are plagued by poor morale. This is particularly the case in the former Transkei where, in February 1995, striking members of the Transkei police clashed with units of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). The officers were protesting against poor working conditions and levels of pay. Many of these grievances remain; station level officers are often unmotivated, and display little desire to initiate contact with the communities they are meant to serve.

The degree of access which police have to the poor is limited by the lack of infrastructure in many areas. Central to this is the inadequate development of the system of roads, and the lack of telephones – 19 of the 33 police stations in the former Transkei have no telephone or fax communications. In 1995, in the whole of the former Transkei, there were only 27 working police vehicles.¹⁴³

Provincial police managers place great store on the upgrading of policing facilities: 'When the infrastructure is up and running, only then can we improve the confidence of the people in the police.'¹⁴⁴ Policing without adequate levels of infrastructure, the outgoing provincial commissioner argues, makes the community policing concept a hollow one: 'community policing is useless without actual delivery – otherwise it is simply raising expectations which cannot be fulfilled'.¹⁴⁵ Police managers are thus critical of a European Union project being instituted in the province which aims to provide training on community policing, when 'the money could be better spent on improving infrastructure'.¹⁴⁶

Community policing initiatives in fragmented and conflict-ridden communities are plagued by problems of representation, as well as power plays between opposing groups. In Qumbu the domination of the CPF by some individuals and the presence of a weak station commissioner (who in fact never attended CPF meetings) ensured that the forum was unable to deal adequately with the conflict.¹⁴⁷ The poor, lacking resources and more likely to be intimidated by the police, are often not well placed to sustain CPFs. Indeed, CPFs often work best in (white and wealthy) areas which require them the least, and remain fragmented and weak in poorer areas. Evidence from Qumbu suggested that interest in, and attendance of, the CPF was low, and that there was some safety risk attached to participating in the forum.¹⁴⁸

In general, participation in CPFs is affected by the perception that the police and criminal justice system are unable to secure convictions. As in the rest of the country, a critical area of weakness in the former Transkei is among detectives – 87 per cent of all detectives have had no training at all in detective work, and in most cases detective work is 'nonexistent'.¹⁴⁹ Here, more than in any other area, the legacies of the past weigh heavily. The shift from a system of informants to one of detection has been a slow one. Police are still said to 'use people as spies, alienating communities away from the police'.¹⁵⁰ As in the past, the police remain largely isolated from the communities they are meant to serve and 'rely on a culture of using people as informers' rather than seeking to build the trust of citizens.¹⁵¹

One of the key problems in Tsolo and Qumbu was the poor standard of the police's investigative work. The Kroon Commission, appointed to enquire into the matter, reported a litany of defects in the work performed by investigating officers in the former Transkei. The commission listed 47 areas of concern about the role of detectives, which included the following:

- 'failing to interview and take statements from complainants or from other persons named in statements by them or other witness or in the warning statements of suspects or failing to establish the identity of, and take statements from, other persons who must obviously have been present at the time;'

- 'failing to make enquiries from neighbours of complainants or victims or from other local persons or from headmen;'
- 'failing to contact informers or to maintain contact with them.'
- 'failing to become properly acquainted with the contents of a docket, with the result that no further investigative work was done or that indicated investigative work was not done;' and
- 'failing to pick up the interrelationship between different cases and to investigate such cases jointly.'¹⁵²

The very real problems surrounding policing in the former Transkei suggest that concrete improvements in the workings of the criminal justice system will be difficult to achieve. This is not to say, however, that general levels of service (and community confidence in the police) cannot be improved. It was clear from visiting local police stations that the police have a valuable role to play as a mediating agency in local disputes. In most cases, however, station commissioners lack the confidence and experience to initiate such contacts with the community, and policing remains isolated from the communities with which it is meant to engage. This interaction, however, is very important if confidence in local level policing in the Transkei is to be strengthened.

In poor rural communities in which service delivery is almost absent, the burden on those state structures that are in place is great. Police in these areas often play a wider variety of roles than their urban colleagues. The discussion on policing in colonial Transkei pointed to the degree to which state representation in rural areas was embodied in a limited number of institutions – generally magistrates, district commissioners and the police. Contemporary forms of rural policing carry many parallels with these forms of local governance. In poverty-stricken rural communities the police are often among the few accessible representatives of state authority, or are at least equipped to reach communities where there is little or no state penetration.

That suggests a broadening of the role of the police in the short term, for which they may be ill-prepared. Provincial police managers are increasingly aware of the degree to which they act as the 'leading edge' of governance, simply because the state remains administratively weak in the poor rural communities of the former Transkei. As one officer noted: 'Anything that goes wrong becomes the responsibility of the police. The demands on the police go way beyond dealing with crime.'¹⁵³ That overburdens a poorly equipped and trained organisation. Senior police managers argue that 'policing cannot occur in a vacuum', and that a number of developmental issues should be introduced simultaneously with policing services.¹⁵⁴

It also suggests, however, that local level development and the introduction of government services (including those of safety and security) should be co-ordinated. Proper policing should not be seen as outside of and unconnected to development processes, but as central to their delivery.

The degree to which the lack of infrastructural development impacts on how the poor are policed in the former Transkei is obvious from the discussion above. As important, however, is the ability of the poor to impact on police priorities and actions in the areas within which they live. This is accentuated by the fact that for many poor people in rural areas, the police are the front end of state representation.

STATE RESPONSES

The problems of Northern and Eastern Cape illustrate just how complex the challenge is of formulating and implementing appropriate policy responses to growing levels of crime. The poor, who are largely the

victims of crime, have little hope of relief in the short term. State institutions tasked with the (reactive) management of crime and criminal justice are plagued by problems of resources, the management thereof, and a lack of adequately trained personnel.

Despite government assertions to the contrary, new policies aimed at curbing crime are still, given the immense problems of the criminal justice system, more reactive than preventive. This has serious implications for the poor. Three key issues should be noted in this regard:

- The poor, as has been argued earlier, are more likely to be policed by the public police in a reactive manner than are the wealthier classes who, in South Africa, are increasingly more likely to be policed preventively by private security.
- The problems of criminality in poor communities can often be traced to socio-economic circumstances which can be altered by interventions quite apart from policing. Yet the response of state institutions is more likely to be reactive in such cases rather than seeking innovative and preventive policy interventions.
- Preventive strategies, given the arguments around the poor's limited ability to cushion themselves from the costs of crime, are also more appealing. No matter how efficient the system of criminal justice, it will do little in the form of restitution for victims of crime and those they support. For the poor, then, who bear the burden of crime, successful crime prevention is critically important.

Without an adequate focus on crime prevention, the state institutions of criminal justice will remain overburdened. More seriously, state policy towards crime control will hinge more heavily on the reactive as opposed to the preventive sphere. In this context, prevention refers to those activities that are intended to reduce or prevent the occurrence of specific types of crime (or the fear of them), either by altering the environment in which they occur or by intervening more broadly to alter the social or other conditions which are thought to have causal significance in regard to them.¹⁵⁵

Most criminal events have many possible causes: some are remote or 'distal' (for example, abuse in childhood producing violent assaults in adulthood); others may be structural changes (the introduction, for example, of electronic banking) which create new opportunities for crime. Importantly, as Paul Eklom notes, some causes are 'proximal': 'the presence of a motivated offender in a suitable crime situation immediately before the occurrence of the event'. It is at the point of these 'proximal' circumstances that the diverse structural, social, ecological and psychological causes of the criminal event inevitably converge.¹⁵⁶ And it is here that crime prevention interventions are, in the short to medium term, likely to be most effective, and indeed most measurable.

The diagram¹⁵⁷ overleaf illustrates the causal chain of a criminal event. The 'programmed potential' of the individual refers to past life circumstances which may impact on the likelihood of committing an offence. 'Current state' refers to the position of the potential offender at the time, such as being under the influence of alcohol or being in (or outside of) the company of particular people. 'Modulators' encompass a range of distinctive factors, such as the possibility of intervention while the offence is being committed, the degree to which the offender believes there will be a follow-up after the crime, and circumstances (such as leaving a car door unlocked) which may make the offence easier to commit. The 'environment' describes all those factors relating to the physical context in which an event occurs. These generally make it easier for an offence to be committed (such as visibility or the lack thereof). In sum, the commission of a crime reflects the conjunction of:

- a ready, willing and able offender;

- a vulnerable, attractive or provocative target;
- a favourable environment; and
- the absence of willing, able and credible modulators.

If the above model is accepted, preventive intervention would include a range of actions which aim to influence the chain of events at any one (or all) of these levels. Indeed, comparative research during the past decade suggests that single measures are rarely sufficient to reduce crime, criminality and fear of crime in high crime neighbourhoods.¹⁵⁸ Crime prevention initiatives which rely on a general response to a general problem have been shown elsewhere to make little difference to levels of criminality. The most viable crime prevention strategies are those which concentrate on a particular crime (or group of crimes), and aim to put in place a customised, comprehensive programme of preventive measures.

THE PRACTICE OF PREVENTION

Crime prevention strategies therefore require a range of multifaceted programmes which aim to combat and prevent a single offence or category of offences. That means that in Northern Cape, for example, a multifaceted strategy is required to tackle a single crime such as rape. This requires programmes which consider education, alcohol distribution, environmental factors (such as lighting or the positions of shebeens in relation to schools), victim support, and finally policing (to ensure that there are regular patrols in high crime areas, and that laws relating to alcohol consumption are enforced).

Yet provincial crime prevention strategies have often failed to take on board this programmatic approach. They are more likely to be statements of intent than a vigorous array of programmes. And police strategies in relation to domestic violence or rape are seldom measured in the same basket as victim support and prevention strategies. The result is that, given that they are not assessed together, real co-ordination between departments seldom moves beyond the committee room.

In Northern Cape it has been shown that the problem of criminality is not necessarily one of too few police but relates, among other issues, to addressing high levels of alcohol consumption and gaining a better understanding of interpersonal violence.

In terms of the former, prevention will need to include enforcing controls, such as the issuing of liquor licenses to bottle stores situated near schools and the selling of alcohol to minors, as well as more far-reaching strategies. Interventions which treat demand must be balanced with those that police and legislate consumption.¹⁵⁹ Several alcohol consumption patterns reported by offenders surveyed in prison could, for example, be modified through law enforcement measures: risky drug and alcohol consumption (taken in high quantities) was found to be high in the period before being arrested;¹⁶⁰ distilled spirits (which have the highest absolute alcohol content) were not only found to be quite popular, but were consumed often and in large quantities; drug-taking was commonly a group activity occurring mostly

with friends (sometimes gang members) and at places of traders and drug dealers such as shebeens and taverns; and offenders generally reported having easy access to drugs and alcohol.¹⁶¹

Alone, however, enforcing laws and controls cannot prevent abuse. And simply policing crimes such as public drunkenness, for example, may do little more than overburden the criminal justice system. Other drinking and drug-taking patterns reported by offenders require education and development-oriented strategies aimed at ameliorating the social conditions underlying drug abuse. 'Morning' drinking – indicative of long-term and heavy alcohol use – was common; offenders lived in environments conducive to and accommodating of drug abuse in which use by friends and family often influenced initial consumption; and direct social pressure to use alcohol was quite common. Added to these environmental pressures, there was a 'positive orientation towards drug use': offenders did not expect discrimination against such use and were personally attracted to the habit, believing in the rewards which it would bring.¹⁶²

These kinds of strategies also need to be considered within the criminal justice system. Evidence suggests that involving offenders in community-based or corrections-based treatment can 'reduce drug use, criminal behaviour and recidivism, even when the (drug users) ... do not participate in the programme voluntarily'.¹⁶³

Government responses to alcohol abuse in the past have fallen far short of achieving this balance, focusing on control measures which are largely the responsibility of the departments of Police, Justice, and Trade and Industry. The treatment of alcohol problems has been inadequately funded, and facilities have tended to be concentrated in large urban areas, with major disparities in resources spent on the different races under the apartheid government. Departments of Health and Education have hardly been involved, and few resources have been spent on prevention.¹⁶⁴

While there have been some advances in policy-making with regard to alcohol and other drugs, interventions which directly address substance abuse have been found to be ad hoc and fragmented. Problems include a lack of political commitment nationally to address substance abuse and to provide resources for policy implementation, an absence of an intersectoral national drug control strategy, a failure to involve local structures in the process, and a lack of leadership at provincial and national levels to drive the strategy.¹⁶⁵

Prevention should aim to shape the initial intake of drugs and alcohol, detect abuse and the risk of abuse, and act on this through treatment and controls. This requires a focus on the individual, on the environment in which the individual lives, and on the use of drugs.¹⁶⁶ While initiatives are beginning to be formulated to address these problems, they remain fragmented and unco-ordinated, seldom rely on rigorous policy analysis, and lack an evaluative component.

As it is, the focus on crime prevention more generally has been undermined by the urgent need to reform South Africa's system of criminal justice. The system, stretching across the departments of Safety and Security, Justice and Correctional Services, has never been a unified one, and is characterised by multiple blockages causing delays throughout the 'pipeline'. Links between various departments are weak and the involvement of departments such as Welfare, Education and Health – key role players in crime prevention – is minimal.

Within the police, reform has concentrated on the visible component of the service and on community policing. And while processes of transformation here are far from complete, policy-makers have virtually ignored the issue of detecting crime. This is part of the reason for South Africa's low conviction rates, but most critical is the lack of co-ordination and co-operation between detectives and public prosecutors. Also, many public prosecutors are inexperienced, and magistrates' courts are badly managed.

At the end of the criminal justice pipeline, South Africa's prisons are also in dire need of reform. Staff shortages, prisoner and warder unrest and increasing corruption are bringing the crisis to a head. Rigid sentencing policies also contribute to high prisoner numbers and overcrowding, but again, part of the problem relates to other elements along the pipeline. About one quarter of all the country's 130 000 inmates are awaiting trial.¹⁶⁷

The control of parole by the Department of Correctional Services provides an invitation for bribery and an easy (but inappropriate) mechanism for releasing pressure on the system. But probably the clearest sign that the system is failing is the fact that more than half of those imprisoned will again commit crimes upon their release. Rehabilitation is practically non-existent and the likelihood of improvements is slim, given that new budgetary allocations will be for more prisons and the staff to guard them.¹⁶⁸

The failure of the criminal justice system to deter or punish offenders has been marked by a growing loss of confidence in the police and courts, and a concomitant tendency among people to take the law into their own hands. Forms of alternative protection vary: the wealthier sections of society can afford to buy their safety from the private security sector; the poor have to confront the problem more directly, often by taking action themselves. Neither of these security options necessarily alleviates the burden on the public police. Indeed, as was argued earlier, the growth of the private security industry may encourage uneven policing, to the disadvantage of the country's poor.

PREVENTION IN PRACTICE

The weaknesses of the criminal justice system have not escaped the government: the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) released in 1996 aims to unify and co-ordinate the activities of the departments involved in crime control and prevention.¹⁶⁹

Six core government departments – Correctional Services, Defence, Intelligence, Justice, Safety and Security, and Welfare – were involved in developing a more holistic approach to crime prevention. At a different level, but in keeping with these goals, the 'community policing' concept (which is barely mentioned in the NCPS document) is superseded by the concept of 'crime prevention', entailing the building of partnerships between government agencies and outside organisations and civil society. Despite this shift in the NCPS, community policing is still a priority for the police. The change of emphasis may, however, reduce pressure on the police – emanating from those responsible for the NCPS's implementation – to pursue community policing.

The NCPS's greatest strength, its inclusive and comprehensive nature, is also potentially its greatest weakness. The key to its success will be co-ordination and measurement, something government has shown little sign of tackling. While the document allows for monitoring at departmental and programme level, there is no national means of review, and virtually no time frames for implementation. A substantial literature is being developed elsewhere for the measurement of crime prevention and control initiatives, and comparative experience suggests that unless crime prevention initiatives are properly evaluated, the longer-term success of any programme will be jeopardised.¹⁷⁰

At the outset, the focus of the NCPS is in fact more reactive than preventive, and contains several oversights. For example, it expresses a commitment to victims, particularly women and children, but apart from acknowledging that crimes against women require a special focus the document says little else. Initiatives taken by government and the police so far – such as installing one-way glass screens for identifying perpetrators, and 'victim packages' for women to use after medical examinations – have been ad hoc.¹⁷¹ The police are the first point of contact with the criminal justice system, and as such play a crucial role in determining the success of initiatives aimed at responding to violence against women.

As is the case with reforming the juvenile justice system (see below), much remains to be done at a national level to reform the state's response to the problem of domestic violence. The police have yet to formulate co-ordinated policies and procedures for dealing with women who are victims of violence, and particularly domestic violence. Several special police units have been created in this regard, but the SAPS's response has largely been inadequate.¹⁷² Domestic violence is not regarded as a serious crime, and South African criminal law does not enable people to lay charges of specific violations in this regard.

This is evidenced in a recent SAPS Police Plan (1996/97) in which crimes against property are prioritised above crimes against people. In fact, the only reference to any aspect of violence against women is a passing reference to loss of life as a result of 'violent crimes, domestic violence and witchcraft'.¹⁷³ Also, within the police no specialised units deal with crimes such as rape (despite the country's high rates), with property crimes being singled out for special attention instead.

Training the police to deal more appropriately with crimes against women has been identified as important, and several initiatives have begun in this regard. But a review of these programmes has found them to be largely inadequate. The very low attendance rates under one voluntary programme reflects the negative attitude of individual police stations or station commanders towards gender sensitivity training.¹⁷⁴ Police often regard handling women victims as better suited to female police officers, but in reality few charge offices and flying squads are staffed by women.

Even with improved police training, problems currently reported at the local level will further frustrate responses to gender violence. The new emphasis of the police on an 'integrated and multi-agency approach' which involves civil society and NGOs in the field has not had visible effects. And there is also a lack of co-ordination between welfare services and the police, with police responses to victims often being frustrated by bureaucratic procedures.¹⁷⁵

Apart from weaknesses in relation to specific issues such as domestic violence, those prevention programmes which are contained in the NCPS, of which there are 18, are nationally driven and are far from being implemented – in the short to medium term they will have little effect on crime levels. The programmes are divided into four pillars: criminal justice process, community values and education, environmental design, and transnational crime.

- Thus, under Pillar 1, the NCPS contains a large number of programmes which aim to repair and reform the operation of the reactive components of the criminal justice system. For example, one key pillar of the NCPS, which deals with repairing the blockages in the criminal justice system, concentrates largely on improving the efficiency of the state's response once a crime has already been committed. A number of business plans have been completed and strategies devised to, for example, improve court management, the handling of offenders between prisons and courts, and the management of convicted criminals in prisons and places of safety.
- Pillar 2, which focuses on community values and education, aims at increasing community pressure and public participation in crime prevention. While the aims of the programme are laudable, they have little impact on the poor. Interventions which, to date, have been conducted through the labour movement and co-ordinated at the National Economic, Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) have pulled in only those in full employment in the urban sector, and have had little contact with poor rural people.
- Under Pillar 3, environmental design, little work has been done. Programmes are mostly to be led by the Department of Safety and Security, involving a broad spectrum of public and private sector

role players such as the departments of Sport and Recreation, Welfare, Housing, and Home Affairs, as well as architects, town planners and development agencies. The danger is that programmes to 'design out crime' will be seen as a panacea when comparative experience suggests that this approach may only have a limited effect on crime levels. Importantly also, environmental design strategies are more likely to be successful in more developed urban areas (where the wealthy live) than in underdeveloped areas where there is little infrastructure around which to formulate policies. It is also possible that environmental design strategies will encourage inappropriate physical design measures which will encourage greater social distance between the rich and the poor – walled suburban complexes and fenced-off suburbs are just two illustrations of this. These measures may also result in the displacement of crime to other, less protected areas (often where poorer people live) rather than its prevention. In so far as these strategies work better in wealthier areas, the risks for people living in lower income neighbourhoods are more likely to increase.

- Pillar 4 looks at countering the question of organised criminal activity. This concerns the very poor only indirectly. Indeed, in some cases in Western Cape organised crime groups and local gangs constitute a social welfare net for many of the destitute. In Western Cape, support for People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (Pagad) has seldom been from poor communities, with members more likely to be drawn from the comparatively wealthier sectors.

The preventive components of the NCPS and their effect on the poor may be limited. In turn, given the weak assessment component of the Strategy, evaluation of the impacts of the NCPS on any component of society is unlikely. Thus the greatest weakness of the NCPS is that it does not lay out clear guidelines and an appropriate strategy for how prevention programmes can be implemented at the local level within the context of a national framework. What is required is an understanding of how local government and SAPS commanders can initiate innovative crime prevention programmes. This is a critical oversight, and has had the unfortunate consequence of concentrating all the pressure for crime prevention at the national level. In any event, the NCPS with its (short- to medium-term) reactive focus does little to address this issue.

Proposals around reshaping juvenile justice, for example, deal with young people who are *already* in trouble. But for the poor in particular, interventions must be aimed at preventing young people from coming into contact with the system at all. Youths tend to become involved in crime due to economic need, family problems, educational difficulties, boredom, lack of vocational opportunities, peer pressure, and a lack of conflict resolution skills.¹⁷⁶ This not only places young people from poorer backgrounds at greater risk of entering the criminal justice system; they are also less able (as has been argued above) to withstand its impact. Indeed, a case study of state reform in the area of juvenile justice usefully illustrates the (slow) pace at which the transformation of the criminal justice system is taking place.

(POOR) YOUNG OFFENDERS

The criminal justice system currently processes juveniles in much the same way as it does adults. With its emphasis on retributive punishment, which neither curbs crime nor helps people not to offend again, many of these young offenders simply end up back in the system – often more brutalised by their experiences than before entering it. Documented cases of assault and murder in prison cells have led campaigners to state that 'locking a young person up with an adult, even for five minutes, may be fatal'.¹⁷⁷

The need for prevention has been recognised by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk (IMC). Set up in mid-1995, the IMC – consisting of representatives of the Ministries of Welfare, Justice, Safety and Security, Correctional Services, Education, Health, and the RDP Office – was

intended to respond to the crisis brought about by the release in 1994 of hundreds of awaiting trial juveniles. It also sought to transform the child and youth care system.¹⁷⁸

While the IMC states that prevention services cannot be too specifically targeted, special attention to poor children is called for. Strategies focus on education and the family and community as arenas for intervention. Suggested programmes include teaching parenting skills at school, support services such as child care for working parents, training teachers to identify youth at risk, life skills training, either at school or through community structures, and involving the media in prevention. Importantly, preventive programmes should also be available to reintegrate young offenders into their families and communities, upon completing early intervention programmes.

Once a crime has been committed, early interventions are aimed at diverting young people away from the criminal justice system.¹⁷⁹ This requires the substantial retraining of police as well as setting guidelines around arresting juveniles, contacting parents or guardians, and liaising with reception centres. Ideally, probation officers should assess children at these centres to determine how cases are handled and whether they should be referred to diversion programmes. Young people not accused of committing serious crimes and those not prosecuted more than twice are targeted for diversion.

This process provides 'secondary prevention'¹⁸⁰ by intervening to stop youngsters from reoffending. Diversion is key, but the capacity of these programmes is limited. Most are offered by branches of the National Institute of Crime and Rehabilitation of Offenders (Nicro) in 20 areas of the country, with probation services running programmes in some areas. Diversion also seldom reaches young offenders guilty of violent and sexual crimes, or street children. Recognised programmes are not a prerequisite for diversion – prosecutors can withdraw cases on condition of referral to a treatment programme. Many community groups and non-governmental organisations already offer programmes which can be expanded to cater for diversion. Still, the shortages must be addressed: estimates in 1995 were that community-based programmes could cater for only about 2 000 of the approximately 35 000 perpetrators of minor offences.¹⁸¹ This secondary intervention – particularly where diversion programmes are concerned – is the domain of the departments of Welfare and Justice. The co-operation of the police is also, however, crucial in the initial stages of arrest and assessment.

Two national programmes of the NCPS are aimed at addressing these issues: diversion programmes for minor offenders, and secure care for juveniles. A programme team was to have been established to 'manage the extension of diversion and rationalisation of diversion policy in the criminal justice system'.¹⁸² In both cases Welfare is the assigned lead department, in conjunction with the IMC.

Several pilot projects under the auspices of the IMC are currently testing programmes aimed at the assessment and diversion of juveniles in conflict with the law, as well as identifying and responding to those at risk. While some of these projects have yet to start functioning, notable successes have been reported by the arrest, reception and referral project in Durban and the Family Group Conferencing pilot in Pretoria. The former confirms that the majority of young offenders do not commit violent crimes: only 4 per cent of the 2 500 children seen during the past 11 months were admitted for violent offences. Problems experienced included a lack of co-operation by the police, the exclusiveness of Nicro's diversion programmes, which need to be expanded to accommodate more youths, and the lack of capacity to follow up cases after young people are assessed and released back into their communities.

Of the 23 family group conferences (FGCs) conducted by the latter pilot, none of the youths reoffended, and FGCs were found to cost a fraction of the adversarial process of trial and prison. Problems reported were that the police were found to be reluctant to refer cases after arrest to the project, and prosecutors were not referring more serious cases (youths attending FGCs were referred for assault, housebreaking and theft).

Despite the high costs involved, the pilot projects are considered necessary to test whether proposed policies around juvenile justice will work.¹⁸³ But national-level changes recommended in 1994 around assessment, sentencing and diversion procedures have yet to be embraced by government.¹⁸⁴ No mechanisms have been put in place to ensure uniformity and sensitivity in the handling of young offenders, and the police in particular have not developed mandates for processing juveniles.¹⁸⁵ This is confirmed by the reports from several of the IMC pilot projects, and one reason is probably that while the NCPS identifies child offenders as a priority, provincial police plans do not.

In terms of sentencing procedures, community-based sentencing is not being exercised, and juveniles are still processed through the system as before. There has been little progress in reducing the numbers of youths being detained to await trial. Although 10 times more young offenders now attend Nicro diversion programmes, this still represents less than 5 per cent of those being arrested.¹⁸⁶ Legislative changes – without the implementation of alternative diversion and sentencing options – have warped the system still further: incarceration as a sentence for juveniles has increased by 30 per cent (rather than decreased as proposed) since whipping was abolished in 1995.¹⁸⁷

The NCPS has not begun its work on reforming juvenile justice,¹⁸⁸ and implementation has been slowed by problems around logistics and budgeting. There are not enough probation officers to undertake the assessment and referral of young offenders. The Department of Welfare is currently training social workers in this area, although budget limitations are slowing the process and preventing the employment of youth 'assessors' of the juvenile justice process in particular.¹⁸⁹ All the departments involved in reforming the justice system for young offenders are reportedly not ready to implement the necessary programmes. Welfare, the lead department, is overwhelmed with general transformation requirements, of which juvenile justice is just one part.¹⁹⁰

The impetus for improving police responses to juveniles, promoting diversion, reforming sentencing procedures, and monitoring existing (unofficial) programmes in order to avoid duplication needs to come from the national level. Currently this falls far short of expectations. Implementation of the NCPS programmes and of diversion in particular will, however, most effectively occur at the local level, since this requires the involvement of local authorities.¹⁹¹ Indeed, as is argued below, the distribution of responsibility for crime prevention among various tiers of government is a critical success factor for intervention.

GOVERNANCE AND CRIME PREVENTION

A fuller understanding of the nature and distribution of crime in South Africa has profound policy implications: crime differs markedly from locality to locality. This suggests that Pretoria-centric crime prevention initiatives will have little effect on problems specific to different areas across the country, pointing to an urgent need to decentralise crime prevention policy initiatives.

At the same time this cannot be done without guidance from national actors, and the development of clear frameworks to ensure that crime prevention policies are in line with national frameworks. Equally true, however, is the fact that effective crime prevention requires detailed assessment of the problems of any area before adequate solutions can be implemented.

These problems point to a number of possible policy alternatives. At the outset, given the different crime prevention challenges across the country, it may be advisable to site the issue of crime prevention more firmly in the office of MECs for Safety and Security. Currently, crime prevention is concentrated at the national level under the NCPS. The staging of provincial crime prevention summits and the formulation of provincial crime prevention strategies emphasise the importance of this initiative. In essence, this

should entail a greater responsibility (and political accountability) for co-ordinating crime prevention initiatives at a provincial and local level within the context of national frameworks. Crime prevention programmes should also be specifically budgeted for at the provincial level, although financial resources will still be allocated from the national level.

Such an option also offers an appropriate outlet for the frustrations of MECs who feel that, given the constitutional provisions of a national police agency, they have been sidelined. One consequence of this has been a growing (and in many cases public) tension between MECs and their provincial commissioners.¹⁹² The current arrangement distances MECs from political accountability for crime control at the same time as weakening their responsibility for crime prevention. What is also lacking is a comprehensive evaluative framework for provincial crime prevention plans – unless the provincial strategies are constructed according to a range of guidelines, and operate according to clear objectives, they run the risk of simply being statements of intent.

In the framework of both national and provincial crime prevention programmes, much greater attention needs to be given to specific crime prevention strategies for the poor. As has been argued above, the wealthier components of society are often in a far better position, given where they live and the resources they possess, to prevent crime. The growth of private security in the suburbs is a case in point. The poor, on the other hand, are seldom the focus of crime prevention strategies partly because they are not in a position to lobby on the issue, and partly because crime prevention programmes are easier to implement and monitor in wealthier urban areas. Those in government charged with crime prevention need to specifically build the needs of the poor into any evaluative framework for crime prevention programmes.

For poor communities, it must be emphasised that the police retain a key role in crime prevention initiatives. In wealthier metropolitan areas with better developed forms of local government and larger amounts of resources, the police cannot be the only players in crime prevention initiatives. Indeed, in these circumstances the police, given that they are largely designed to react to crime once it has occurred, are seldom well placed to lead or in some cases even participate in crime prevention strategies.

This is not the case in, among others, rural areas and informal settlements fringing the cities, where many of the poor live. Apartheid forms of governance have resulted in uneven criminal justice and policing responses to the problem – often bearing little relation to the forms and extent of criminality. Rural areas, particularly the former homeland regions, are especially underresourced, requiring policy responses quite different from those in the urban centres which are currently enjoying the attention of planners.

Much of the debate on crime and crime prevention in South Africa has concentrated on the country's urban centres. Here the transformation of policing to achieve a more equitable, efficient and service-oriented approach remains the key challenge. This is no less true of rural policing. Indeed, in these areas the challenges facing the new order may be greater, and (in the short term) the gains more palpable. Transforming the former bantustan policing agencies – which are central to the policing of many of the rural and urban poor – has been little studied. Yet evidence suggests that the short-term gains of better policing in poor rural areas such as the former Transkei may be significant, given a history of almost non-existent (or alternatively intermittent and brutal) policing interventions.

Service-oriented and community-centred forms of policing may also go some way towards undermining growing levels of insecurity among poor rural inhabitants. While it is difficult to determine, given current evidence, whether high levels of insecurity and crime impact negatively on development, there is substantial evidence to suggest that for many of the most vulnerable rural residents in the case study area, achieving a safer living environment was a central concern. And while effective policing is key to

achieving this, the police agencies in rural areas are often, as has been argued, the 'front end of the state', delivering a wider degree of service functions than simply responding to criminal incidents.

Transformation of the police in these circumstances is critical for more effective crime prevention – hence the concentration of this study on policing. The case study of the former Transkei suggests that innovative and proactive forms of policing could have greatly reduced conflict in Tsolo and Qumbu. The transformation of policing at this level and the building of policing partnerships and greater accountability for community needs are urgently required. In rural areas in particular, given the potentially wide focus of their activities, the police can play a useful role in co-ordinating prevention initiatives. Yet, given high levels of crime, poor training and a lack of innovative management, the police remain essentially reactive – spending time and resources on problems (as in Qumbu and Tsolo) which could have been prevented with appropriate actions.

Questions of crime prevention then often hinge on the development of appropriate forms of governance. In areas such as Northern Cape, where local government institutions are arguably better developed and the causes of crime not necessarily linked to achieving better policing (while this is of course both desirable and possible), crime prevention requires the co-ordination of a range of actors. In areas such as the rural Transkei, given the changing nature of local governance and the weakness of local institutions, the police have a key role to play in crime prevention through appropriate interventions.

The implications of this argument for the poor are critical. At the outset, poorer communities are seldom seen (at least by the rich and powerful) as the predominant victims of crime. Yet the poor form not only the majority of victims, but also have fewer resources with which to cushion the costs of crime than the wealthy. That makes a focus on prevention strategies for the poor not only logical but essential: improving the reactive system of criminal justice, while important, does not necessarily assist poorer victims of crime. Unfortunately, the debate on crime prevention centres on the interests of the rich, who are in any event policed more preventively than the poor.

The danger is that government policy will only focus on improving the efficiency of the (reactive) criminal justice system. Also, government strategies such as the NCPS hold few benefits for the poor and destitute and, in any event, are more reactive than preventive in focus. In respect of security questions, the poor have always been the focus of reactive strategies. Without an adequate focus on crime prevention designed specifically for the poor, the interests of those who bear the burden of crime will continue to be ignored.

ENDNOTES

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