

## **Challenging traditional approaches to security and justice reform:**

### **Local models of community policing**

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*Note: Part of a panel submission with Gordon Peake (ANU); Sinclair Dinnen (ANU); and Todd Wassel (Asia Foundation).*

Security and justice reforms have risen on the agenda of a number of donor countries over the last 15 years, largely prompted by a reorientation of aid to focus on fragile states. These security and justice reforms remain dominated by traditional, outdated modes of assistance that frequently fall back on blueprint approaches and have not learned the lessons of earlier rule of law assistance in the 1960s-70s. This is a sector in which politically-savvy and locally-led approaches to development assistance are needed in order to achieve relevant and sustainable reforms, yet are strikingly absent. Such ways of working are less about large investments in training and infrastructure, and more about supporting local reformers to drive change from within.

One area of programming where this need for new approaches is particularly apparent is community policing. Community policing has become a standard project deployed within security and justice reforms, initially based upon British models of policing that have since been adapted internationally. Yet what community policing looks like in a given place is inextricably linked to a number of features of the context – including histories of state formation and conflict, the nature of the political system, cultures of dispute resolution and social cleavages. Without understanding these influences on the shape of community policing, international reforms resort to imposing exogenous models of good police-community relations, to little effect.

This paper draws on ODI research analysing community policing across Asia, Africa and Latin America, to highlight how the dominant ways of working in security and justice programming risk achieving limited results without a fundamental rethink of what shapes policing in different contexts. It argues that in order to achieve more sustainable reforms, a politically-savvy approach is needed that can help to engage with the realities of how policing is experienced, rather than how reformers would ideally like to see it operate.