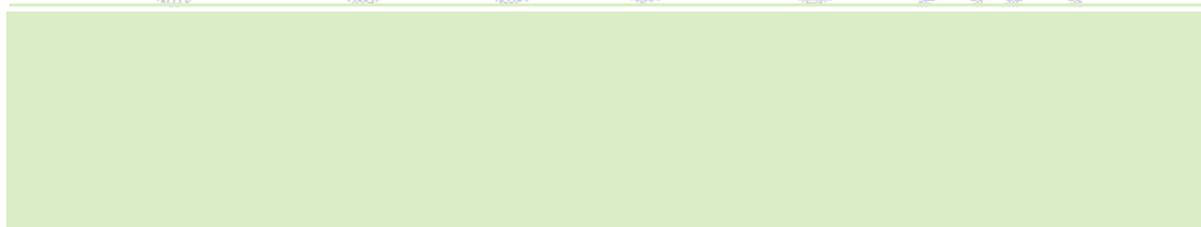




# GRSP FOCUS



## Community participation in traffic law enforcement





## Community participation

**“Community participation is often the key to effective policing.**

**The people who live and work in an area are best placed to identify the problems facing them and possible solutions to those problems”**

Department for International Development  
UK, 2000

The protection of life and property is the basic objective of policing, thus traffic safety should qualify as a key priority for police services. In many countries, more lives are lost on the road than through murder (see table); and road crashes are also a leading cause of destruction of motor vehicles, a rare possession and highly valued property in low-income countries (LICs). In reality, however, since few road crashes involve criminal intent, they have been traditionally viewed as ‘accidents’, and as a result, traffic safety is rarely a priority for the justice sector.

crashes to be reduced through improved collaboration between the police and the community.

Road death vs murder			
	Year	Road deaths	Murder
Delhi	2002	1,696	511
Karnataka	2002	6,366	1,627
UK	2000	409	761
London	2001	299	171
Bangladesh	2000	3,058	3,386
Dhaka	2000	301	325

Traffic safety can be seen to have become a priority in many roadside villages and urban communities in LICs, where, unable to escape the threat from traffic, residents have constructed illegal speed humps. In these situations, it should be possible for both the incidence and the impacts of road

### Community participation and policing

There is increasing awareness of the limitations of the police in preventing and controlling crime and the need for the community to be a ‘co-producer’ of safety. Consultation, whereby the

community provides information to the police, has been the traditional starting point for collaboration. Under community policing initiatives, many countries have established community police forums or police advisory committees that include appointed public representatives.

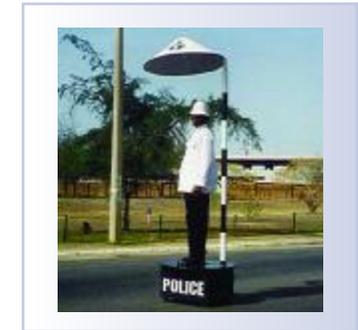
### Traffic policing

*“For most police, traffic regulation is ... trivial and resented by the public. Accounting for a large proportion of police-citizen contacts, traffic regulation rarely makes friends for the police...”* (Bayley, 1994).

Traffic policing is often not appreciated by the police themselves. Traffic patrolling involves routine exposure to both air pollution and the outdoor elements, and can be both dull and hazardous work. For example, in 2002, road crashes accounted for two-thirds of the police killed in the line of duty in Bangladesh.

In most low income countries police services suffer from under-investment and the traffic police tend to be particularly poorly resourced. Few services allow officers to specialise in traffic with traffic postings restricted to two or three years. This lack of appreciation for experience also extends to senior officers who are

often assigned to traffic policing without any previous experience or additional training in traffic control.



Traffic policing is often not appreciated by the police themselves.

Being largely without transport, the focus of the traffic police in many countries has traditionally been directing traffic or document checking with little, if any, regard towards the safety of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users. Traffic police will also have limited contact with the local community, as generally they do not live in or near the community for which they are responsible and their postings are rotated frequently. Also, petty corruption is high in traffic law enforcement. One consequence is that, for example in Bangladesh and Bangalore, junior officers (who account for the vast majority of all traffic police) are not allowed to fine traffic violators.



## Community participation



Minister of Transport Abdulah Omar, South Africa launching "Eldorado Park" – a road safety project involving school children in the community - Nov. 2002.

### Access to justice

Recent research has shown how access to justice is just as important to the public as other basic services, such as education, health or transport. Furthermore, while traditionally viewed as the perpetrators of crime, poor people have been identified as the common victim in low income countries. They suffer from a lack of protection from the police as well as police extortion, and can live in a state of lawlessness where they are forced to spend their own limited funds on self-protection (Anderson, 2002).

The widespread under-reporting of road crashes by the public in certain countries indicates the lack of confidence in the justice sector. Under-reporting is believed to be aggravated by road traffic victims being treated unfairly by the police. While some governments have begun assisting women and child victims of domestic and sexual violence, little support appears to be available for road crash victims. Charities, often established by victims themselves (e.g. Drive Alive in South Africa), have developed in many countries to assist road crash victims.

### Community participation potential in traffic law enforcement

The role of the community in promoting traffic law enforcement can be described under four basic approaches, which range in terms of the extent to which they support the traffic police, the level of commitment involved, and their independence.

### Consultation

Consultation is the logical starting point for improving collaboration between local residents and the police. Local residents can assist traffic police by providing additional information on the location and circumstances of unreported crashes, as well as on locations where crashes are 'waiting to happen', and where offences such as illegal turns or speeding, are a problem. In Delhi, the traffic police have established local committees. In South Africa, community traffic safety forums have been promoted by the Department of Transport.

### Volunteers

Local residents interested in assisting the traffic police on a more regular basis can volunteer on such programmes as traffic wardens. Based in Delhi, the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE), an NGO with both paid staff and volunteers, introduced traffic wardens in India. Scholar patrol

programmes are also active in many African countries, including South Africa.

British Columbia's SpeedWatch programme works with community volunteers who are concerned about speeding in their area. Local groups are trained by the police to use speed detection equipment and provide the police and road authority with speed data to assist with the prioritisation of engineering and enforcement interventions. A similar programme has been introduced by the Avon and Somerset Constabulary in the UK.



Childrens crossing point. Child Aid Trust Ghana Accra Ghana.

## Community participation

### Partnerships

Partnership initiatives, involving other organisations working with the police, are promoted in most countries and are required in the UK by the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998. In India, IRTE has undertaken several partnerships with the police, including their Interceptor programme, in which patrol vehicles are equipped with video technology, speed radar, breathalysers, and computer recording of traffic violations. These vehicles are jointly staffed by police and civilians. This programme has been introduced in other states in India. IRTE has also been involved in training the police and working with other organisations, including the police, on organising road safety weeks.

### Advocacy

Advocacy can be undertaken at the local level by individuals, but the larger national efforts are better known. Some campaigning efforts will be welcomed and supported by the police; don't drink and drive campaigns for example. Other themes may be less welcomed, especially by senior police, who may not agree with calls for more priority to be given to traffic policing.

IRTE has campaigned for improvements to the traffic police in India, including a video discussing the need for

standardised training systems. In Bangalore, Friend for Life is an NGO which uses the internet to promote the use of motorcycle helmets.

Road traffic victim charities (i.e. survivor advocacy) have been vocal in campaigning for better treatment and the empowerment of road crash victims. In South Africa, Drive Alive publishes a booklet for bereaved families and has organised conferences on the impacts of road death and injury.

A key objective of RoadPeace's Justice Campaign in the UK was national standards in UK road crash investigation. Partly due to this pressure, in 2001, the UK Association of Chief of Police Officers launched the Road Death Investigation Manual, intended to establish minimum standards and increase the quality of fatal crash investigations.

### Community support

The community can support the traffic police in a variety of ways, including local knowledge of hazardous locations and movements, volunteering as traffic wardens to assist pedestrians and control traffic, and campaigning for greater priority to be given to road safety by the public, police and the politicians.

## Find out more

This GRSP leaflet is based on the findings of a scoping study conducted by TRL on behalf of DFID which reviewed the role of community participation in traffic law enforcement, including access to justice.

**DFID** Department for  
International  
Development



### Publications

Aeron-Thomas A (2003) *Community Traffic Policing Scoping Study: Final Report*. TRL Report PR/INT/265/2003

Anderson M (2002). *Getting Rights Right: Is access to justice as important as access to health or education?* ID21 Insights No. 43. [www.id21.org/insights/insights43](http://www.id21.org/insights/insights43)

### Websites

RoadPeace: [www.roadpeace.org](http://www.roadpeace.org)

Institute of Road Traffic Education IRTE: [www.irte.com](http://www.irte.com)



UK Demonstration highlighting average monthly road deaths (300 pairs of shoes) Copyright RoadPeace

Bayley, David H (1994) *Police for the Future*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.

DFID (2000). *Policy Statement on Safety, Security and Accessible Justice*. [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)



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