

MEDIA RELEASE

UP studies show how police-community partnerships can reduce crime in high-risk cities

Research by the University of Pretoria (UP) has demonstrated the importance of community policing forums in fighting crime in high-risk environments, such as in Johannesburg.

“UP is passionate about doing innovative, impactful research that is transformational for people and society,” says Dr Mary Mangai, a lecturer at UP’s School of Public Management and Administration (SPMA) and lead author of a study titled ‘The Importance of a Police-Community Partnership (Co-production): A Study of the City of Johannesburg’, which was published in the *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. “Our research on community policing addresses one of South Africa’s most pressing societal concerns: the security and safety of lives and properties.”

“The role of society as an active participant in taking agency is addressed in the context of co-production,” adds study co-author Professor Natasja Holtzhausen of the SPMA.

The study echoes a concern voiced by Thandi Modise, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, in February 2022 about the “low level of trust” between members of the public and various law enforcement agencies.

“We will endeavour to rebuild trust between community members and officers deployed in communities,” Modise said. “This will entail reviving community policing forums [CPF], which will work with local police stations to fight crime. This will ensure an inclusive approach to assessing threats in communities and put in place the necessary responses.”

“Our research on community policing will contribute towards police-community partnerships that reduce crime in cities such as Johannesburg,” says Dr Tyanai Masiya, a senior lecturer at the SPMA.

Communities are affected by high crime of all types, including murder, sexual offences, assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, common assault, common robbery, robbery with aggravating circumstances and hijacking.

UP’s research shows that stronger, well-resourced, more effective CPFs can make a significant impact in reducing such crimes. A police-community partnership closes the gap between the police and community members by establishing a working relationship and deep engagement between the two. Communities share responsibilities with the police such as street patrol and guarding private and public properties.

“In order to improve neighbourhood security, CPFs should be better supported by the South African Police Service [SAPS],” Dr Mangai says. “Infiltration by criminals should be prevented and structures should be well funded. This should include keeping accurate and centralised data on CPF activities at police station levels, if possible.”

The University's research also clearly points out the challenges that police face. In a second study published by the same authors, this time in the *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, police officers revealed that they lacked resources such as vehicles and human resources to ensure full coverage of policing areas. According to them, policing in informal settlements and hostels are particularly difficult because of inaccessibility and overcrowding respectively.

A community partnership could mitigate these challenges by, for example, asking businesses to donate resources to the police and, since the police shares resources with communities – such as trailers and caravans for street patrollers – getting community members to volunteer to increase police manpower is another option. Police could also make use of drones to monitor settlements where houses are closely built together.

However, there is still a long way to go when it comes to creating safe environments in Johannesburg. The government, SAPS, civil society and private security companies will need to work together to eliminate neighbourhood security challenges.

Incorporating co-production will ensure that innovative and inclusive security initiatives are created. In addition, it will require reform within the police force and the proper implementation of newly created security initiatives to reduce Johannesburg's crime rates and the public's insecurities.

"This research indicates that strong organisations require strong ethical organisational cultures," Prof Holtzhausen says.

-----END-----

Media enquiries

Please email Liesel Swart at liesel.swart@up.ac.za or liesel@roundtree.co.za, Cell: 082 672 0067

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on the Hatfield Campus, Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also the largest producer of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only University in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, ranked top in Africa. Overall has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 55 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes.

UP is one of the top five universities in South Africa, according to the 2019-2020 rankings by the Centre for World University Rankings. It is ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide in three fields of study (veterinary science, theology, and law) and the top 1% in eight fields of study (agricultural sciences, clinical medicine, engineering, environment/ecology, immunology, microbiology, plant and animal sciences and social sciences).

In May 2020, the annual UK Financial Times Executive Education Rankings again ranked GIBS as the top South African and African business school. The University also has an extensive community engagement programme with approximately 33 000 students involved in community upliftment. Furthermore, UP is building considerable capacities and strengths for the Fourth Industrial Revolution by preparing students for the world beyond University and offering work-readiness and entrepreneurship training.

For more information, go to www.up.ac.za