

# 'I fought the law and the law won': Community Policing in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia

Paul Jackson, E. Houston Shearon and Demelash Kassaye  
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## About the authors

Paul Jackson is Professor of African Politics, University of Birmingham, and Research Fellow in the Centre for African Studies, University of the Free State.

E. Houston Shearon is a Researcher at the University of Birmingham.

Demelash Kassaye is a Lecturer at Addis Ababa University.

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# Abstract

'Police in previous times were brutal in their actions. We used to run when we saw them. Now the changes are dramatic ... developing the mentality of serving the community is always on the mind of police officers.'<sup>1</sup>

This paper examines the introduction of community policing in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, and the relationships in the district between formal policing structures and non-state security actors. It draws on fieldwork (spring, 2017) to show that these relationships are complex – there is neither a simple dichotomy between state and non-state nor an emerging clear and hybrid system. Rather, the institutional multiplicity available gives a series of choices to those seeking justice and also to those providing it.

The community police initiative offers a positive way of reducing friction between the different policing providers – by acting as an interlocutor; but also by recognising the legitimacy of local actors in some instances and enforcing the state's legitimacy in others. In this way, local providers can use local actors to enhance their reach and effectiveness but also to extend the reach of the state and the legitimacy of the law at the local level.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Tadele and Motuma, aged 22 and 18, Village 5, 12 March 2017.

## Introduction and background to hybridity

This paper explores an example of hybrid security provision in Dire Dawa in Ethiopia involving collaboration between the state and the local community through the extensive development of community policing approaches. Several disciplines use the term 'hybridity' to define processes or institutional outcomes that result in mixed organisational practices, procedures and structures. Within policing, and specifically within the discourse on community policing, hybridity is used to describe the relationships and structures that arise when different policing providers co-exist and work together to police a particular community.

This paper draws on the experience of community policing in Dire Dawa to explore whether this initiative, while successful, has anything to offer beyond a version of legal pluralism or adding more resources to a stretched police service, and perhaps to reflect Abrahams' 'fundamental nature of the problems of relations between ordinary villagers, criminals and government' (1998, p.52).

The concept of hybridity has largely been taken up by a group of theorists looking specifically at 'the liberal peace' and its limits. Alongside academic efforts, there has also long been a dialogue within the policy community on the state-centric approaches of many international agencies. This dialogue is reflected mainly within evaluations and case study approaches that perhaps do not use the label of hybridity but that make use of similar concepts to show how state institutions and other actors interact. There is also a stream within development studies that recognises hybridity as an alternative to the linear predictions of early development theory and the assumed direct trajectory of socio-cultural development from traditional to modern.

Given the longevity of the dialogue on hybridity, we could see this as a new label for something that already exists rather than as something that is actually new. However, the real value in using hybridity as a lens is that we can move away from divisions of the world into simple binary systems, to recognise the fluidity of social systems and their politics, focusing on the effects of internal and external forces on changing local dynamics.

The discussion of hybridity is also partly a discussion on the balance of power between alternative sources of legitimacy, recognising that the extent of hybridity is partly a political choice and partly the result of institutional pressures arising from institutional constraints. The international categories of 'state' and 'non-state' create a bias that prevents analysis of the real nature of domestic politics, or the 'politics of the everyday' (Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). This raises a number of issues around legitimacy and political power at the local level; part of any analysis of a hybrid system has to include a view of where the power lies within such systems, and who exercises it and how.

More recent literature has begun to examine the nature of these local political interactions and their role in shaping, resisting and constraining international projects. Pouligny (2006) and Autesserre (2010) both focus on viewing peacekeeping from below, and there is also a growing literature on the role of domestic elites not only in taking opportunities to benefit from international interventions but also in developing international approaches to democratic transition. Richmond (2011) and Mac Ginty's (2010) work in particular takes this discussion forward by attempting to see the political actions of local actors as being more than mere 'spoilers' in a positive process of attaining liberal peace. Hybrid forms of governance are constructed through the complex interaction of multi-layered actors, and it is the result of these interactions that can be said to be 'hybrid'. The particular outcome is unpredictable and variable: not all hybrid orders are the same. State and customary forms of government 'do not exist in isolation from each other, but permeate each other and, consequently, give rise to different and genuine political orders that are characterised by closely interwoven texture of their separate sources of origin' (Boege et al., 2008). In other words, the state becomes just one of many actors within the state-building process (Jackson, 2011).

## Overview of the research

This paper presents community policing in Dire Dawa, eastern Ethiopia, as a potential example of hybridity in policing. Policing in Dire Dawa has managed to radically improve security for local people as a result of collaboration between police commanders in the district, allied with traditional leaders and community members. This is an achievement in a country where the police were once seen as the biggest threat to personal security, and has been achieved through adaptation and incorporation of traditional systems to enhance the low level of resources of the police. Formal policing is supplemented by case diversion to traditional mediation, the use of community police officers recruited from the local community and community policing committees that facilitate dialogue between community and police.

The research was undertaken by local and international researchers in Ethiopia and the UK between February and June 2017, and included fieldwork in Dire Dawa in March 2017. The research focused on the district (*woreda*) and village (*kebele*) levels, where most disputes are mediated. Seven *kebeles* were visited, four urban and three rural, and in each location we interviewed police commanders, community police officers, clan leaders and members of advisory councils. When possible, this involved a mixture of male and female police officers. Advisory councils were a mix of men and women. Clan leaders are male but in rural areas women's associations exist, and members of these were also interviewed. Non-police interviews were conducted in private rooms without police present. In total, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted with police commanders in both urban and rural locations, and 15 interviews with non-governmental organisation (NGO) representatives. There were 12 focus group discussions with clan leaders, police officers, local associations and community advisory council members.<sup>2</sup>

Ethiopia is a country of around 82 million people, including more than 80 distinct ethnic groups and governed by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which follows a broadly socialist and state-led model of development. Emperor Haile Selassie ruled until 1974 using an elitist approach that created deep societal cleavages and inequality. He was eventually overthrown in 1974 by the Derg military regime of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam. This espoused socialist intentions but was extremely harsh, and left a lasting legacy of police brutality that remains. As Ethiopia became increasingly riven by ethno-nationalist conflict, the Derg regime used the police to maintain control, meaning violence against the local population. The background to any police reform, therefore, remains a history of arbitrary arrests, violence and rape.

In 1991, the Derg was overthrown and replaced by Meles Zenawi, who ruled until his death in 2012. Meles remains an important figure, not least because he managed to use his cross-ethnic power base and credibility as former head of the Tigray People's Liberation Front to establish a new constitution, including reform of the police. In 1994, he established a transitional police regime comprising former militia while he dismissed or retrained the Derg police force and trained a new force (Denney and Kassaye, 2013).

Given its history of violent regime change and oppressive militarised rule alongside strong political separatist movements, Ethiopia has been subject to a series of pressures that have led to competition between the central and the local. This has not least entailed continued attempts by the centre to impose rule on reluctant local areas, using the police as the main tool of oppression. Currently, regime security is regarded as a critical element of the state strategy, given external threats from Somalia and Eritrea, internal threats from several separatist groups and a significant threat from domestic and international terrorism.<sup>3</sup> High rates of violence, particularly against women, mean personal security is also high on the agenda (Burton et al., 2011).

However, as Baker (2013) points out, the state itself is aware of the limited resources available to it and its own inability to extend effective control in some areas, particularly over the 83% of the population in rural areas. In keeping with much African practice, security is delivered alongside local providers, and traditional authorities retain influence at the local level. However, these authorities have their own resource constraints and may also espouse values that are incompatible with modern perceptions of human rights or gender issues, for example. With a poor policing infrastructure, users are faced with a choice of inadequate state provision and lengthy delays in investigation or court cases; or a justice system that reflects local political structures and social hierarchies.

This paper begins by outlining the links between community policing and hybridity. It then moves on to examine the situation in Dire Dawa, showing the interaction between local and police views on community policing and crime. Finally, it draws three conclusions about community policing in this part of Ethiopia that may have broader implications for approaches to policing more generally.

First, the paper makes the point that community policing here has been successful in building considerable trust. This has resulted in every interviewee reporting reductions in crime while crime figures have increased. This shows clearly that reporting has increased, strongly implying that much crime under previous regimes remained hidden.

Second, some specific groups have benefited from the state-led and -sponsored reform, specifically women and girls. Certainly in Dire Dawa, while gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage remain huge issues, the community police have managed to rapidly increase the numbers of women and girls reporting these. Previously, these practices remained hidden, and local authorities perpetuated them to protect the interests of the conservative and highly unequal social order. The community police and the constitution seem to have had a major effect in reducing their occurrence.

2 In 2016, Ethiopia experienced political protests resulting in a declaration of emergency, the suspension of some internet communication services and restricted movement in the country. While in Dire Dawa, the researchers were escorted from site to site by assistants to the area police commander. This increased willingness to be interviewed but it was not possible to work without the help of the police.

3 The internal threats include active separatist movements in Afar, Gambella, Ogaden, Oromia and Sidama, or five out of the nine regional states of Ethiopia, whereas terrorist threats are frequently related to either Ethiopia's Somali region in the east and south, but also to al-Shabaab.

Finally, the process of community policing has been a delicate balance between recognising the legitimacy of local authorities to tackle certain instances of crime and educating local people on the modern law of the constitution. Ultimately, hybridity here represents a process of incorporation of traditional rule and subordination into the rule of law as far as this is manageable, rather than generating a new system.

## Community policing and hybrid security arrangements

Community policing is a concept that has been adopted across Africa in varying forms, including in Ethiopia (Baker, 2013; Di Nunzio, 2014), Mozambique (Kyed, 2010), Nigeria (Hills, 2014) and Sierra Leone (Albrecht et al., 2014). However, this cannot be interpreted as either a wholly bottom-up or a consistent initiative, since much of this development has been undertaken by donor-led programmes that are reinterpreting approaches from the global North. In addition, the structures and processes of policing itself vary greatly across Africa. The classic, Weberian bureaucratic police structures are somewhat patchy and empirical policing is characterised by opacity of the police force itself and heterogeneity of providers drawing on a wide range of authorities (Bierschenk, 2017). The police, in Copans (2001)'s memorable phrase, largely consist of an 'archipelago of elements'.

In practice, as Baker (2009, 2013) points out, community policing in Africa has been interpreted as the creation, recognition and incorporation of alternative security providers with a wide variation in terms of their capability, legitimacy and links to the state police. This is also a conceptualisation that has become engrained within security sector reform approaches more broadly, with the advocacy of 'multi-layered' approaches to security that recognise non-state actors as 'the primary purveyors of day-to-day service delivery' (OECD, 2007, p.7). This is partly a pragmatic recognition of the reality on the ground, with the lack of resources available to the police preventing coverage, particularly in rural areas (Baker & Scheye, 2007). It also puts the African state in a permanent state of negotiation or mediation (Menkhaus, 2006) with non-state providers and a hybrid political system (Boege et al., 2008). The state is only one provider among many, and boundaries between state and non-state are problematised by complex interactions and interpenetration of providers following different logics and drawing on varying sources of power (Luckham & Kirk, 2012).

Several studies have focused on security and justice as examples of hybrid provision, but hybrid order is difficult to examine empirically, and may encompass actors and institutions that rarely measure up to Western normative standards of justice, or that even gain from political disorder as a tool of political power (Chabal & Deloz, 1999). In some places those responsible for delivering justice may actually be those most responsible for insecurity in the first place, or alleged agents of insecurity may be providing a particular form of security. This may explain why the concept of hybridity may actually be more useful as a tool to critique liberal approaches to peace-building rather than offering a credible alternative strategy or a practical approach (Luckham & Kirk, 2012).

There is no real exposition of what a fully hybrid alternative to state-building might actually look like, and there is considerable disagreement over the main effects of hybridity: is it an agent of disorder, as in Democratic Republic of Congo, or one of order, as in Somalia? This is a feature of what Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) refer to as substituting 'hybrid' for 'complex' and of using the term 'hybrid' to describe what is actually institutional multiplicity. Hesselbein et al. (2006) describe institutional multiplicity as a context whereby multiple rule systems confront individual actors providing distinct and different normative frameworks and incentive structures in which they act. An end-user seeking justice may therefore be faced with a series of institutional choices, each with different consequences and different sources of legitimacy, power and agency, rather than being subject to one coherent hybrid system.

Most literature refers to arrangements that are probably best described as institutional multiplicity, rather than hybridity in its pure form as a new form of institutional system (Cross, 2016). Multiple institutions co-exist and interpenetrate rather than merging into completely new systems. Meanwhile, international organisations have identified hybridity as one way of boosting the flagging resources of the state. Adding non-state multipliers to service provision, given that the police, for example, may not have the resources to reach a rural community, means it is possible to extend reach. This is clearly the case with community policing, where there is logic in seeking greater governance effectiveness by incorporating local providers through, at the very least, improving intelligence-gathering and managing local ethnic, family or clan clashes before they get to the state police.

As Baker (2013) points out, citing Bourdieu (and Wacquant 1992), the police may be strong in terms of economic capital (state and donor support), cultural capital (training and experience) and social capital (history), but private firms may be able to compete in terms of economic and cultural capital. As such, there is a case for hybrid arrangements. At the same time, non-state actors are usually strong in terms of symbolic capital (prestige and local legitimacy), particularly where the police are perceived as corrupt, incompetent, violent or agents of foreign powers. The attraction in a hybrid arrangement is that non-state actors and the police can gain in these hybrid arrangements, non-state actors gaining economic, cultural and social capital and the police gaining symbolic capital (Baker, 2013).



In practice, this is a difficult set of arrangements to develop, and critics point to the idea of 'bargain-based governance' (Meagher, 2012, p.1078). Local institutions may not have a monopoly on local legitimacy, and also tend to reflect local social hierarchies within which some parts of society often miss out on access to justice. Access to resources and networks with which to engage in hybrid arrangements are not equal at the local level, which tends to have a political logic in itself. In addition, actual hybridity on the ground may be characterised by a series of exchanges of capital on the boundaries between actors (Baker, 2013). Given this, such arrangements will tend to be dynamic and uneven, and some will have more options than others. They will also rely on the motivations of the actors involved to frame the nature of these dynamics – something we return to in the rest of this paper.

## The context of Ethiopian community policing

The Ethiopian federal state structure is mirrored by the police. There is a federal and a regional police structure for each of the nine regional states. The Federal Police are responsible for the federally administered areas of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, and also provide support to the Regional Police, varying from the 'more developed' regions of Amhara, Harare, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region and Tigray, where support is a negotiated activity, through to the 'less developed' areas of Afar, Benishangul-Gamuz, Gambella and Somali. In these latter, the Federal Police operate more extensively and frequently beyond the remit of the regional government (Green and Kebede, 2012).

Despite these relatively clear structures, the situation on the ground is far more complex, and policing in its broad sense is characterised by a multiplicity of institutions and legal pluralism. These incorporate a variety of conflict resolution mechanisms, including sharia courts, women and youth groups, peace committees and particularly traditional authorities and elders, who are the most used reconciliation mechanism in Ethiopia (Baker, 2013). These leaders are in very respected positions and preside over crimes ranging from minor individual issues through to clan disputes over cattle-raiding and even revenge killing, and the police frequently refer cases to them for decisions (*ibid.*). The judgement of the elders is frequently taken as the main form of justice, and any leadership exercised in terms of community policing must take them into consideration. As local leaders, they can oppose or enact significant elements of security and justice emanating from the central state.

In addition, there are militia present at the local level, usually significantly outnumbering the Regional Police. Militia are effectively a politicised paramilitary comprising armed volunteers, frequently from the ethno-nationalist militia that opposed the Derg. They usually mount community patrols and man checkpoints on major roads. However, although they outnumber the police, they are also seen as a political wing of the government and are therefore viewed with some element of suspicion (Denney and Kassaye, 2013).

Community policing is seen as a way of bringing some of these diverse elements together and providing a leadership role for the police following perceptions of rising crime during the dramatic 2005 elections (Denney and Kassaye, 2013). In 2006, community policing was included as part of a broader police reform programme. In many ways, this form of centralised introduction was surprising for a policy that is held to be a bottom-up solution. Communities were essentially informed that they would get community policing as the new model, and there does not seem to be any evidence indicating broad demand. In Dire Dawa, the police embraced these reforms and community policing was incorporated into police training. In addition, local community members were selected (by the community) to go for police training and then returned to their communities.

It is important to note that, given the pluralism of the Ethiopian system, the idea of community policing in a broad sense is not actually new, and the idea of dialogue with local communities is an older way of policing, particularly in mending fences after the brutal approaches of the Derg. As Denney and Kassaye (2013) point out, the process of community policing was partly perceived at the local level as a means of formalising structures that had existed for some time. However, it should also be noted that many of these systems have grown up in the absence of effective policing, and, although Ethiopia has a long history of dualism, it has not been a history of hybridity: it has been one of interaction, not integration (Baker, 2013). The development of community policing since 2006 has been a fundamental change, with the country's government explicitly pursuing a policy of hybridity and incorporation of local justice into regular policing activity, creating institutions that bring police and communities together.

History looms large in Ethiopian policing, and the nature of the change itself has been twofold: one change from the brutality of the Derg to the new era and a further change to community approaches after 2006. A key narrative arising from the research in Dire Dawa relates to the underlying development of a relationship between the police and the community itself. This was routinely stated within interviews, usually using the phrase 'bringing the police and the people near'. Interviewees repeatedly identified this change while communicating support for the reduction in crime and satisfaction with the current practice of policing. Nearly all interviews contained references to practices during the time of Haile Selassie's time in power and the transition to the Derg regime:

'During the previous time, we were afraid not only of them but of their shadows as well. We attempt to escape... when we see them at the time of controlling the area through patrols... We see police as if they are always there to attack people.'

Many of the police commanders, clan elders and community advisors lived through previous eras of brutality. These experiences influenced the national desire for police reforms and for a transition in their lifetime to a situation of reduced crime and increased trust in the state police.

Baker (2013) outlines a number of reasons for the changes to a community policing approach. In general, our research supports his assertion that, before 2006 and probably up until 2010, the process was really one of recognition and interaction rather than integration. After this period, the process intensified, and community policing has become about integration into an explicitly hybrid approach that incorporates traditional policing. Given the philosophy of the Ethiopian state and the top-down introduction of the reforms, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are several features that point to the formalisation and incorporation of traditional mechanisms into the state system rather than the genuine creation of a hybrid.

The drivers of change within the Ethiopian system are closely related to the overall philosophy of the state, which, drawing on a socialist and developmental ideology, seeks to provide services to all people. However, lack of resources meant this could never be realised, and so the state needed partners to supplement its own services. The state ideology also dictates that non-state actors should not sit outside the centralised system. As such, the process of incorporation has been largely one of systematising non-state actors with the aim of enhancing state provision of justice through the use of existing and popular mechanisms of justice provision (Baker, 2013; Denney and Kassaye, 2013; Di Nunzio, 2014). What this means in practice is that police officers have more than one option open to them in dealing with any one crime, and can refer cases to the traditional authorities instead of waiting for the inefficient court system to deal with them.

Our research also supports the view taken by Denney and Kassaye (2015) that absence of resources and the ideological drive of the state for control are not the only things that influence community policing. While it may be that this makes community policing attractive for the government, the police themselves and communities point to a different set of reasons for the introduction and subsequent success of community policing. The intention behind community policing is to improve outcomes, reduce crime rates and improve relationships with the community.

The police themselves very much see community policing as a means of reducing crime. This was routinely mentioned in interviews, and the police are very keen to present community policing as effective in giving people responsibility to tackle crime and support the police. Police officers felt community policing was effective in gaining intelligence on criminal activity, but also in empowering citizens to talk to community police officers about crimes. The local police commander identified trust as essential to this core task.<sup>4</sup>

A local youth organisation viewed its relationship with the police as being built on trust and mutual respect. In return, police are able to utilise the network of youth as an extension of their information network, so they know what is going on with youth throughout the city and into rural areas. This was put forward in several discussions, but outlined eloquently by a member of an advisory council:

'Police in the previous days were distant from people. The contemporary policing... cannot discharge all its responsibilities unless it obtains support from the public. So both parties in community policing attempt to build trust to collaboratively work against crime and antisocial behaviour.'<sup>5</sup>

This would suggest the local community has bought into the idea of improved information flows between the community and the police in tackling crime. This broad approach to policing has meant community members can use their own accepted means of mediation and conflict resolution if they so wish. It is also possible for community police officers to refer individuals to non-state conflict resolution groups. This is not really seen as a means of avoiding involving the police, but rather as the police being respectful towards the role of traditional institutions. It is also notable how the top-down nature of the relationship works here. While there may be traditional rules for specific offences, the constitution overrules most of them:

'The neighbourhood communities are cooperative in passing information to police when they observe insurgents or stringent in their surroundings. Harmful practices... are still oppressive against the right of women rectified by the country's constitution of the country.'<sup>6</sup>

While traditional practices like FGM still take place, the Ethiopian constitution has banned these, with the only remaining task being to educate those who fail to comply. As a rural chief told us:

4 Interview with Dire Dawa Police Commissioner, Dire Dawa, 15 March 2017.

5 Interview with police sergeant, Police Land, 9 March 2017.

6 Interview with police chief, Police Land Station, 9 March 2017.

'We developed the programme to educate people to enhance their level of consciousness to the constitution of the country.'<sup>7</sup>

The overriding understanding of community policing both publicly at high levels and also within the community at *kebele* level is based in the idea of state development and of community policing as an integral part of that strategy. This includes the practice of further spreading state influence to areas where it has previously been patchy. As one community police officer stated:

'Before the Police Commission opened office in this rural village, the area community was unaware of what police mean. They do not know the police uniform and legitimate power to arrest criminal offenders. The community was in general polemical. However, the community did not take a long time to understand the value of police and their presence to create safe and secure environment.'<sup>8</sup>

The idea of the community and police being part of an overarching development strategy came forward in several of the interviews, and the idea of the community playing a part in reducing crime as part of this was mentioned frequently. These issues were raised in conjunction with 'taking the constitution to the people' and overriding local practices. One local police chief stated:

'The main problem here is... [that all decisions of the elders] need to comply with the constitution of the country, while some are inappropriate to regulate the social order of the area. For example, when homicide happens, elders of the area attempt to settle the cases through a traditional way, which are absolutely cases to be seen only in the formal judicial system of the country. There are cases that are not to be seen by the elders committee; rather, they are under the mandate of the court. To avoid all this, we developed a programme to educate people to enhance their level of consciousness of the constitution of the country.'

The police, therefore, at least partly see community policing as spreading a judicial system into community areas, and using the constitution as the overarching vehicle for doing so. The power of the constitution is such that traditional leaders frequently cited this as a reason for having changed their behaviour. The law is 'winning'.

## What does community policing look like in Dire Dawa?

Dire Dawa has five main police departments: Criminal Investigation, Police Academy, Human Resources, Finance/Logistics and Community Policing. The Criminal Investigation Department involves armed rapid response units as well as units that handle more serious crimes. The Human Resources and Finance/Logistics Departments provide administrative support. The Community Policing Department oversees management of all the community policing officers in the region. The community policing structure in Dire Dawa consists of 11 urban zones and 4 rural zones. Each zone is then broken down into different subdivisions: *kebeles*, *katana*<sup>9</sup>, blocks and 'family police'.

An important, but potentially confusing, application of the word 'policing' emerges at this level. There are community police officers paid by the state who perform an official role, but equally important to the strategy of community policing is the assistance of the community in the process – and these community members are also referred to as 'police', or 'community advisors'. In one zone, there were 115 advisory council members, all elected by members of that zone. This is the same for village 'police', block 'police', campus 'police' and family 'police'. At the village and block level, the 'police' are members of the community, often elders, priests or other individuals of influence. The block structure is related in some way to the physical layout of neighbourhoods in Dire Dawa.

At the campus level, the 'police' are children whose responsibilities include making sure peers do not bring mobile phones to school and students do not skip classes. Family police are typically fathers or older sons, but mothers can on occasion occupy the position. The function of the family police is to address family disputes, children's behaviour and other petty crime. A police chief said:

'If the conflict goes beyond the ability of the family to solve, it will be reported to the [block] policing and the police will immediately get to the homes to stop [the conflict] before it gets worse.'

7 Interview with police chief, Village 6, 13 March 2017.

8 Interview with police officer, Wahile, 11 March 2017.

9 A *katana* is a grouping of housing blocks.

A strong emphasis of the policing reforms in Dire Dawa, along with monitoring of crimes and the formalisation of previously informal arrangements, has been on families or local councils solving petty crimes rather than letting the situation escalate to require police involvement.

Further, community policing officers are hired from the communities in which they will work. As with the various levels of advisory councils, officers are nominated by the community to serve in the community, which also vets them. The community is additionally responsible for funding the construction of the community police stations in their immediate area. These stations are typically one-room buildings open 24 hours a day with an area attached for the officers and their families to live in. Communities open bank accounts and citizens contribute money until the goal is met, then the community participates in the construction of these simple structures.

Crime in Dire Dawa is dominated by 'assault'. Between 2012 and 2016, there were 6,903 assaults, 3,011 thefts, 2,883 anti-social behaviour incidents or minor fights and 2,067 minor disputes.<sup>10 11</sup> Homicide is low, with only 84 murders and 61 attempted murders recorded. Anti-social behaviour entails acting outside of the desired cultural norms, and minor fighting is defined as a small fight involving punching or breaking of teeth, but is different from assault as there is no intent to cause great harm or potential death. Minor disputes – referrals from the community courts – are offences that would normally not rise to the level of a court-related matter but reflect instances where people have appealed the decision of the community court at the state court.

All of these figures fluctuated significantly over the period, but there has been a relative increase overall. For example, thefts increased in number from 301 in 2012 to 856 in 2016, which is clearly at odds with the overwhelming sense of reduced crime among local people. These are official figures, and so do not reflect incidents that were dealt with in the informal system – so this suggests either that a major crime wave is happening (which is unlikely, given the interviews) or that many more crimes are being reported than before and entering into official figures.

This is certainly what is claimed by local gender activists advocating against gender-based violence, and several members of the community and police reported an increased rate of individuals feeling empowered to report crimes, specifically domestic violence.<sup>12</sup> A women's group interviewee stated that one of the key factors stopping women from reporting domestic violence was economic dependence on males. Prior to the community policing reforms, if a wife's complaint about domestic abuse sent her husband to court, it might be weeks or months before the case was heard, and the accused might be held in prison the whole time, with a negative impact on the family's financial situation. Thus, whether to seek justice for abuse was a question of both justice and economics. Being able to address some instances of domestic violence at home, rather than involving the court, is reportedly encouraging women to increase their use of community policing/local mediation to address negative realities at home. As one member of a women's organisation stated:

'Female applicants coming to us to get justice show considerable an increase on what we saw in earlier days. They do not remain at home when they are beaten or raped by males.'<sup>13</sup>

The shift to a community policing approach has resulted in more changes than just increased confidence to report crimes. Interviews with police and other leaders identified interconnected changes in and around Dire Dawa. Along with reduced crime, both police and local leaders identified reduced caseloads in court, reduced incarceration, less fear of the police and improved coordination with community leaders as direct results of the implementation of community policing. Police and local leaders reported that, prior to the introduction of community policing, every type of offence went before the courts, which were swamped. The accused were left waiting in cells for extended periods of time waiting for trial. Now petty cases can be mediated outside of the formal court system, increasing the speed of a verdict for both the victim and the accused.

Community police also reported a decreased caseload as a result of non-federal cases being handled by community leaders before the police intervened. This in turn has resulted in a better relationship between the police and community leaders, who work together to mitigate the impact of conflicts between neighbours. A recurring issue between pastoralists and farmers related to interpersonal or land disputes escalating into physical confrontation.<sup>14</sup> When this happened, individuals would bring their farming tools into the fight, resulting in serious injury. Police and clan leaders worked with people to get them to drop their tools before fighting, reducing the long-term impact of conflicts. Clan leaders also created a rotating system of access to communal water to reduce tensions between farmers and pastoralists.<sup>15</sup>

10 The crime data were compiled and provided to the researchers by the Dire Dawa police commissioner for the purposes of this report. While demographic data are readily available for sub-stations, and multiple police chiefs stated that incidents of crime were used to determine when individuals were patrolling the community, this information does not seem to be centralized in any meaningful way.

11 Out of a total population of 341,834 and total reported crimes of 16,978.

12 Interview with a deputy inspector, Department of Women and Children Services, Gendekore, 13 March 2017.

13 Ibid.

14 Interview with police chief, Wahibia, 13 March 2017.

15 Interview with clan leader, Wahibia, 13 March 2017.

Land is one issue that traditional leaders identified as under continual negotiation. Disputes over land are one of the most common issues in rural Africa in general, not just in Ethiopia. Traditional leaders frequently play an important role in managing land for the community and presiding over land disputes related to family issues. In Dire Dawa, a meeting with elders and clan leaders specifically centred around land disputes.<sup>16</sup> What this revealed was a dual responsibility: a government mandate for the police but a need for community reconciliation and patience to achieve long-term peace. At the same time, there is some resistance when the police intervene, and there may be more conflict when clan leaders are involved in resolution. The relationship works but is not without its frictions.

Beyond land, the most difficult issues relate to the experience of women and girls, frequently cited as problematic, with non-state actors engaged in maintaining a particular social hierarchy. Throughout the interview process, it became clear that experiences for women and girls have been particularly difficult, especially in the recent past. FGM, child marriage and child abduction were three issues mentioned in multiple interviews.<sup>17</sup> Despite the on-going difficulty of underreporting, many individuals commented that the rate of reporting of domestic violence to the police or local mediators had increased.<sup>18</sup> Certainly, local advocacy NGOs and local women all recognised that improvements had occurred, although interviewees identified gender issues as a major continuing issue because it was so deep-rooted despite the gains made.

The impetus for these police reforms came from the highest levels of the Ethiopian government, so opposition to change was not an option for government workers. Though clan leaders occasionally defy proper order and attempt to settle violent crimes without notifying the police, those interviewed insisted such behaviour was becoming increasingly rare and was typically limited to rural areas.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the way it has been done appears to have placated the local chiefs somewhat in terms of their losing some influence. The idea that they are still responsible for minor offences and take part in detailed consultations with the police seems to have reassured them that they are still part of the security infrastructure. Where they seem to have given ground is in their management of social hierarchies, particular gender relations: this has gone from a system where almost nothing was reported to one where the police deal with certain traditional practices, like FGM, where the chiefs are not really involved. Where there have been disputes over this, the police are also quick to invoke the constitution, which seems to have an overarching positive effect in relation to the incorporation of local communities.

## Hybridity or assimilation?

Ethiopian policing came from a bad place in terms of effectiveness and, earlier, involved a deeply oppressive approach to policing that destroyed relationships with communities. Community policing is seen as a way of overcoming some of these historical issues while also making policing more effective. To implement such a top-down approach, a large network of leadership was required to bring in changes to policing in Ethiopia, and particularly Dire Dawa.

The initial decision to adopt community policing came from the national government. In each district, the police commander and their subordinates are responsible for implementing the reforms. With regional commanders on board, it then becomes a process of convincing clan leaders, and creating community advisory councils in urban areas to assist in ushering in the desired change. Further, as communities are now required to nominate individuals to be officers in their area, this places the vetting demands on the community before an individual can even begin training at the police academy. The implementation of community policing is very clearly top-down, but also requires the cooperation of government, traditional clan structures and urban elders.

The key aim of police reforms in Ethiopia is to execute the decentralisation plan for police services in order to enable more local control throughout the country. When asked about their aim for their community, officers repeatedly returned to the idea of a space without crime. One police inspector interviewed said his vision was to create an area free of crime.<sup>20</sup> Another officer said his vision was for an area where crime was less and a community free from the fear of crime.<sup>21</sup> A community advisory board member had a similar response.<sup>22</sup> A youth committee interviewed echoed these notions. A separate community advisory board member gave a very comprehensive answer:

16 Interestingly there was also a discussion of FGM, which these leaders all said had been 'unseen' before the police came along, but was being dealt with in a positive fashion. There was recognition that women could play an important part in the community.

17 Interview with representatives from Dire Dawa Women's Association, Dire Dawa, 14 March 2017.

18 Interview with officers in Women and Children's Department, Dire Dawa, 12 March 2017.

19 Interview with Dire Dawa police commissioner, Dire Dawa, 15 March 2017.

20 Interview with police inspector, Wahile, 11 March 2017.

21 Interview with police officer, Village 6, 13 March 2017.

22 Interview with community advisory council member, Amese, 11 March 2017.

'We need to see our country full of peace. Our vision is to create a community sensitive to peace and security of the living environment. We need to ensure peace and reduce the congestion of the justice system, which is our major aim. All this will be sustained in creating a number of platforms where people can exhaustively discuss issues related to creating a crime-free area and development in both social and economic affairs.'<sup>23</sup>

If we take these views together, a particular picture of policing in Ethiopia begins to emerge. The top-down reforms were adopted quickly, and under the aim of decentralising the structure of the police to better reflect local needs, both local police and community advisory members mentioned that their actions were because it was written 'in the constitution'.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, clan leaders and community members, talking about changes related to FGM, child marriage and other practices that negatively affect women, felt confident that these problems were issues of the past, because the constitution had resolved them. As one police chief said:

'Harmful practices, as explained above, are still oppressive against the right of women rectified by the country's constitution of the country.'<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the view of police reform that emerged from both police and members of the community was that policing is holistic and end-based. It is holistic in the sense that the community policing approach focuses not just on crime but also on good relationships throughout the community that are essential for peace. It is end-based in that, for many, the aim is not to reduce crime or increase police response time, but rather to eliminate crime and the fear of crime, which is seen as a negative construct of peace.

The successful implementation of community policing relies primarily on dialogue. Officers discussed the implementation of community policing reforms with all community members. The process of dialogue met little resistance in urban areas, but rural clan leaders were slightly more resistant – albeit generally compliant. Ideally, clan leaders work with the police and, if a crime occurs, 'by people naughty and aggressive, their case will be directed to the police after leaders of the clan have exhausted all means of tradition-oriented problem-solving approaches'.<sup>26</sup> One clan leader said:

'I can say that the work of the clan leaders is almost the work of the government. Community policing in this villages is organised by members extracted from clan leaders, police and the community. The police teach people not to commit crime and inform the police when they observe suspects.'<sup>27</sup>

One of the most significant obstacles facing the police reforms is the general view of women in Ethiopian society. This is a challenge because the constitution aims to have women filling 50% of government jobs, including in the police, and generally improving their everyday lives.<sup>28</sup> One proverb dominated discussions around gender: 'Women are for the kitchen.' A local women's association interviewed was both realistic about the struggle but encouraged by the progress:

'Problems arising from cultural ideas still exist. For example, FGM started in the [time of the Pharaohs and is] religiously accepted. We were struggling [to promote feminist thinking and gender equality] and replaced [FGM] in time by [improving attitudes towards] equality in social and political [spaces] through mainstreaming the idea [of gender equality] across the community.'

This women's association pointed to a general reduction in early marriage, an increase in married women continuing their education and improved women's literacy. Progress made by the women's association has been achieved through dialogue with others, often in the context of traditional coffee ceremonies. This is a space where community police officers are particularly useful because they are in consistent dialogue with the community and see gender equality and improved gender awareness as an important part of their job.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the continuation of some isolated reluctance by traditional leaders to involve police in disputes, both the police leadership and traditional leaders were very accepting of the benefits of community policing. These benefits include a widely shared perception of crime reduction, coupled with an increase in certain specific crimes, notably gender-related crimes like FGM. Gender-related crimes in particular were described as being 'unseen' in previous regimes but as being reported now, which may indicate an increased confidence in the system and the police more generally. Certainly, women's groups we talked to recognised that gender-related crime remained a problem, but at the same time they saw that it had vastly reduced and was far more generally regarded as unacceptable.

23 Interview with orthodox priest and community advisory council member, Village 6, 13 March 2017

24 Interview with Dire Dawa police commissioner, Dire Dawa, 15 March /3/2017.

25 Interview with police sergeant, Police Land, 9 March 2017.

26 Interview with chief of police, Wahibia, 11 March 2017.

27 Interview with clan leader, Wahibia, 11 March 2017.

28 Burton, et al. 2011: 6, interview with youth association leaders, Dire Dawa, 13 March 2017.

29 Interview with police commissioner, Dire Dawa, 15 March 2017.



Much of this has been achieved as a result of the police and community working together. A sergeant in Village 6 described this as follows:

'The traditional leadership has its own advantages and disadvantages. Ethnic conflict is common in Dire Dawa and the police are in charge of stopping the conflict. The main method of the police has been to identify traditional ways of resolving conflict recognised by area elders and to work together with the elders in a mediation process. Participation of social institutions such as churches, mosques and other associations formed to extend help to each other during funerals and marriage are involved in every step of the mediation process. Conflicts appearing between the dominant ethnic groups – the Oromo and Somali – have been solved using all these outlets.<sup>30</sup>

So this approach represents an excellent illustration of both the enablers and the obstacles of leadership in this environment. First, both sets of leaders, within the police and the community, have to recognise that they have an important role to play here. The leadership alone cannot resolve such disputes. This leads to collaborative leadership based on trust. Second, this partnership relies heavily on trust, both between the parties but also between the leaders and the community. Third, the alliance between the police and community leaders is one of establishing legitimacy in resolving disputes as well as recognition that such conflicts rest on underlying issues that cannot be resolved by solving a case in a formal police enquiry or a court. Finally, this approach also illustrates some form of shared vision as to why policing is important. Our fieldwork shows clearly that this shared vision comes partly from the legitimacy of the state as embodied in the constitution, and from strongly identifying reduced crime with 'development', but also come from the shared belief that reducing crime is a public good that is necessary for everyone.

This raises some interesting issues around the process itself, and whether this is actually community policing or an attempt by the state to use community systems as a multiplier to reduce crime. Certainly, it is clear that community policing in Ethiopia more generally cannot be divorced from the political-economic context within which it takes place (Denney and Kassaye, 2013). There is clearly an element of this in the approach of the Ethiopian state, although saying this is a little too reductionist. The end result supports Baker's (2013) proposal that the community policing model is really about incorporation into the state itself, rather than the creation of a new system.

The pattern of police engagement is also enlightening in this respect: it implies that people do not follow the constitution because they know no better; and they therefore need to be educated in this regard. It also implies that, if local authorities do not obey the law, they will be educated: the law wins.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that community policing in Ethiopia represents a particular view of hybridity in terms of mixing state and non-state policing. Specifically, elsewhere in Africa, it may offer an alternative approach for impoverished formal justice systems that are trying to deal with a lack of resources or reach. Baker (2013) argues that the Ethiopian case is not simply one of a community policing model, but more one of a comprehensive hybrid model that entails not only an attempt to manage non-state systems but also recognition of them and a transfer of jurisdiction to them. The Ethiopian police refer cases through the local court system, and police practice has altered as a result. This is in marked contrast to most donor-led police reform, whereby community policing is really about gathering intelligence to support the police. The Ethiopian approach can be said to be distinct both in terms of accepting some principles of local justice and in that the community police are from and live within the communities themselves – it is an embedded approach (ibid.).

However, this paper also argues that the picture is not one of a completely new hybrid system, but one of a more complex system of mediation between formal state policing, backed by the developmental ideology of the government, and local communities, which have been locked in a localised struggle for authority over decades. Community policing in this sense is a means of reducing friction between these two distinct spheres of juridical activity, utilising the community police themselves as a bridge.

Moreover, the police use the constitution as an overarching framework to assert the authority of the state over local justice systems where those systems are said to have encroached onto the legal ground occupied by formal institutions. This is primarily about cases of murder or rape, among others, where the state will assert authority even when local institutions feel they should deal with them. Our research shows there has been some conflict with regard to some of these cases, with some local officials feeling they should be responsible but the state has then stepped in.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with police officer, Village 6, 13 March 2017.

One of the biggest areas of change has been in gender-based crime, where the evidence shows a clear increase in reporting to formal authorities. This seems to indicate that sexual and gender-based crime was previously hidden, which would support the findings of earlier surveys that claimed underreporting was happening, as a result of a generally conservative attitude to women whereby beating was commonly accepted (Burton et al., 2011).<sup>31</sup> The same survey also reported that more than half of the women surveyed felt there was no-one they could talk to about domestic violence.

The development of a highly publicised gender-related legal framework, and training within the police, appears to have emboldened women in terms of going to the authorities to report violence against them. Evidence from local women's groups as well as individual interviewees suggests the community police are able to mediate and approach this issue far more than before. At the same time, given that the local authorities rarely intervened in cases of domestic violence – reflecting the attitude that men know best within the household – this seems to be an area where local authorities are happy to accept the community police as legitimate under the umbrella of the constitution.

The centrally led community policing programme is at least partly an exercise in recognising the benefits of working together rather than attempting a wholesale replacement of a local legal system perceived as legitimate by local people. The interviews show that, even though the number of crimes reported has increased, the increase itself is a result of fewer crimes and increased reporting, partly because of improved relations between formal and informal agents.

However, while there is recognition of the benefits, there is also a hierarchy involved here. A very common theme within police interviews at the local level was 'They do not understand therefore we had to educate them.' This reflects a modernising philosophy that derives from the overarching developmental approach of the Ethiopian state. The extensive use of the constitution as a framework to back up activity by the state in opposition to those who resist at the local level has not only been successful but also represents a situation whereby local legal systems may in fact be incorporated into formal state approaches, rather than the formation of a new hybrid system of policing. Ethiopian community policing at least partly reflects the desire for the state to spread, but also recognition of its limitations. This system of working together has had clear benefits for the population in terms of crime, or at least perceptions of crime.

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31 This report also contains significant baseline data from the Ethiopia Gender Survey, which compared underreporting of gender violence and, to a lesser extent, early marriage with a comprehensive attitudinal survey.



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The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP)  
International Development Department  
School of Government and Society  
College of Social Sciences  
University of Birmingham  
Birmingham B15 2TT, UK  
+44 (0)121 414 3911  
[www.dlprog.org](http://www.dlprog.org)  
[info@dlprog.org](mailto:info@dlprog.org)  
[@DLProg](https://twitter.com/DLProg)