The Effective Response to Crime and Social Disorder: Developing Sustainable Police-Community Partnerships in Limburg-Zuid

Final Report

Prepared for the Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

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INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the findings from a field research project that was conducted in the Limburg-Zuid police region during the time period June-December, 2005. The project involved two visits to the region, one in June and the other in December. The initial visit was designed to familiarize the researcher with the structure, context, and dynamics of police work in Limburg-Zuid Region as well as to identify the research activities to be completed during the second phase of the project. Initial contact was established with the police, politicians, representatives of non-governmental organizations, municipal governments and social service and justice personnel.

Recommendations that are presented in this report are based on an assessment of the materials that were gathered during the project and, as well, are informed by best practices of leading edge police organizations in North America and Western Europe.

Field work during the first visit focused on documenting the nature and extent of current community involvement with the police and the current status of any initiatives that had been undertaken to enhance these relations. To this end, there was a specific focus on the extent to which community residents were currently involved in police-sponsored crime prevention and crime response initiatives and on the potential for recruiting and retaining volunteers from the community for such initiatives. An additional area that was explored was the current state of relationships between the police and specialized populations, including youth, the elderly, and ethnic minorities.

With a view toward the future, another objective of the initial field work was to develop preliminary ideas of the current and potential capacities of the police to develop sustainable police-community partnerships. This included the identification of potential strategies for facilitating the involvement of community residents, enhancing the organizational and operational capacities in the police to establish and sustain effective police-community partnerships, and the potential for creating the capacity to provide information to the community on levels of crime, crime prevention, and police activities.

> *Experience in other jurisdictions has shown that police-community partnerships in crime prevention and crime response can function to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the police and can be a major factor in reducing the levels of crime and social disorder in communities.*

The field work in Phase 1 involved walk-a-longs with Area Officers in the communities of Geleen and SBS, a ride-a-long with patrol officers in Sittard, and interviews with a variety of community, police, governmental, and social service and justice personnel (see Appendix A). Although the current project was not designed as an organizational review of the Limburg-Zuid Regional Police, an in-depth consideration of the potential for developing sustainable police-community partnerships does require an

examination of the organizational capacities that need to be developed, or enhanced, to facilitate such partnerships.

Drawing upon information gathered during the first phase of the field work, this report will identify potential strategies for engaging, and sustaining community involvement in police-community partnerships to prevent and respond to crime. It will consider the challenges that are imposed on these endeavors by the framework within which policing services are funded and delivered, as well as the current state of police-community relations. These initial impressions and ideas will be supplemented by materials to be gathered via focus group sessions and additional one-on-one interviews during Phase 2 of the project. (1)

This report from Phase 1 of the project, premised on four days of on-site field work, should be considered as only a preliminary consideration of the issues and of the possible strategies and options for developing sustainable police-community relationships. The suggestions presented are necessarily tentative and remain to be explored further during Phase 2 of the project. It is likely that the additional information gathered in Phase 2 will result in the modification of some of the ideas presented in this document and the addition of new possibilities.

This document should be considered as only a first draft of what will be a more extensive discussion of the issues and potential for developing police-community partnerships in Limburg-Zuid.

POLICING IN LIMBURG-ZUID

"It's not just a matter of more police; it's better use of the police."
                                                    - Representative of a senior's organization

There are currently 1800 authorized police positions for the region. This number has fluctuated depending upon the formula for dividing up the 75,000 police positions that are available nation-wide. Under the current staffing formula, the region is scheduled to receive an additional 300 officers.

One factor that was raised by both police officials and persons interviewed in the community was the relative youth (average age 20) of new police recruits. It was noted that new recruits often do not have high levels of education and may lack life experience that would assist them in their policing activities. This factor may affect specific crime prevention and crime response initiatives and requires special attention on the part of senior management. Consideration, for example, might be given to a campaign to attract older, "second career" applicants to the police force.

There are a number of key features surrounding the current delivery of policing services in Limburg-Zuid. These include, but are certainly not limited to:

- a high crime rate
- crime issues with respect to "drugs and domestics"
- the open borders with Belgium and Germany which facilitate the free flow of criminals and criminal activity, including drugs
- the contract between the regional police and the federal government

The Policing Contract

"It is a long way from The Hague to the community." – City Manager

A unique feature of policing in The Netherlands is a multi-year contract between the police and the federal government which provides the framework for the delivery of policing services. This performance contract sets out strategic objectives and benchmarks that must be met during the term of the contact. The contract itself is heavily weighted towards crime control and law enforcement and specific production targets. The Ministry of the Interior sets the framework and provides the money for police services and the Regional Council (Regionaal College) determines how the funds are to be expended. However, no more than 20% of the budget can be allocated for administration.

Significantly, for purposes of the present discussion, the contract contains no mention of the potential role of the community in the prevention and response to crime and social disorder. Nor does there appear to be any provision for local community input into the development of the contract. In the Preface of the current contract, it states that Limburg-Zuid Regional Police will "Make an effort to use a large part of its capacity, for a

balanced and coherent system of activities aimed at local policing. This will be based, for instance, on local scans, crime analyses and local demand." This very general statement, however, is not accompanied by any specific benchmarks or performance measures.

As well, the contract states that the department will improve on the numbers of citizens who are "very satisfied with their most recent contact with the police." This is to be accomplished by further development of "the local way of policing with the emphasis on the concept of 'to know and to be known' in the neighborhood…" Again, there are no specific benchmarks or performance requirements nor is there any mention of the potential involvement of the community in police-community partnerships.

Concerns about the contracts have been raised at the highest levels. In the document 'Policing in Development' (2005), produced by a project group of the Council of Chief Commissioners, several negative aspects of performance-based contracts are identified. These include the one-dimensional focus on statistical outputs at the expense of the flexibility of the individual officers and at the expense of the most appropriate policy for the region, an emphasis on the measurable, crime control role of the police, and the excessive concern of police officials with assessment, reporting, and accountability, which the authors refer to as "*number fetishism.*"

> *These arrangements present challenges to the Limburg-Zuid police to establish mechanisms to ensure ongoing contact with the general public, to develop strategies to maintain communication with communities, to be sensitive to community needs and priorities, and to demonstrate to community residents that the police department is "their" police department.*

Given this context, any efforts to create sustainable partnerships of the police and community residents must be initiated and sustained through the efforts of the senior police leadership in the region.

Central Planning and Community Policing

The centralized nature of Dutch policing is also reflected in the national telephone number for the police and the national website, wherein each Region and District are listed. These arrangements appear to be the source of considerable dissatisfaction among community residents and other stakeholders. As well, the centralization of the strategic planning process has not, to date, been facilitative of community involvement in addressing crime and social disorder.

> *A common theme in the observations of many of the persons interviewed during Phase I of the project was that "the priorities of the government are different from the priorities of the community." This is reflected, in particular, in the focus of the police on traffic-related offences, which appears to be a*

considerable source of annoyance for community residents who feel that the police should be focusing on more pressing problems.

There was the perception among a number of persons interviewed that police officers were often limited by the demands of the policing contract which, in their view, focused an inordinate amount of police time on enforcement. The Area Officer in SBS, for example, noted that the focus of police activities has always been on the contract and the priorities set out in it. This, in his view, often served to limit police activities in other areas. It also seems to create the perception among many in the community that the efforts of the police are guided by planners in The Hague rather than by the needs of local communities.

As noted, there appears to be no community input into the planning process and so the potential for community input exists only at the Regional level. This view was reflected in the comments of a number of persons who were interviewed. A City Manager, for example, stated: "The Hague doesn't know what the people want." A similar view was expressed by an Area Officer: "The further away from The Hague, the less influence you have." And, the performance objectives contained in the contract were perceived to hinder long-term initiatives, a City Manager observing: "The focus on results often hinders initiatives. They are not given time to succeed. You need years rather than months." A representative of a senior's organization stated that the community does not agree with the national approach to policing: "What the citizens and the government are thinking is not the same." In her view, "The police are too formal and contacts with community residents are too formal."

A City Councillor shared these views, stating:

> The problems are identified by the government, not by the communities, and the priorities of the government are different from those of the communities. The government focuses on ticket quotas, while the concern of the community is to minimize crime, including stealing from houses and drugs…. To citizens the real priority is law and order in the neighborhood, i.e. fights, youth groups, noise, litter, burglary, not incidental things such as seat belts and traffic.

And, in the words of one Area Officer: "All facets of police work are in the hands of the government. The amount of police depends upon what the government will spend, not what the City Council will spend."

In the Introduction to the 2003-2007 Limburg-Zuid Vision Plan (2003), it states that it is important that the police are "known" in the community and that the delivery of policing services should be centered on community policing. It is also important, this document notes, for the police to know about the relationships between citizens. Police priorities should be established on the basis of territorial, area, and neighborhood scans and on an analysis of crime rates and citizen concerns. The development of sustainable police-community partnerships would seem to be an integral component of these efforts.

The Annual Monitor Survey

The annual Monitor survey conducted by the federal government gathers information from citizens on their perceptions of, and satisfaction with, the police. The Monitor survey is based on a telephone survey of households and includes respondents 15 years and older. The sample of respondents is selected from the telephone directory. The sample does not include persons who do not speak Dutch nor does it include persons who do not have a residential telephone (which is an increasing number due to the proliferation of cellular telephones). As well, the survey is very generic and does not tailor the survey questions to the specific communities in which the respondents reside. The survey does not include any questions about the Area Officers and their activities, which hinders a determination of the effectiveness of this community policing strategy. As well, the survey does not include any questions about the potential role of community residents in crime prevention and response.

For these, and a variety of other reasons, the findings of the survey have limited value to the police in their efforts to develop police-community partnerships. The most recent results of this survey, for example, indicate there are low levels of satisfaction with the police in Sittard. However, the sources of this dissatisfaction are not identified, as it is not possible within the context of fixed-choice survey questions posed in the telephone interviews to probe the responses provided by residents. This precludes an understanding of the reasons *why* community residents hold particular attitudes about the police and, as well, the identification of the factors that may contribute to these attitudes, e.g. personal experiences with the police, knowledge of another person's experiences with the police, reports in the news media about the police, depictions of the police in television dramas and in films. And it limits the ability to incorporate these findings into the development of a framework for proactive policing designed to raise the levels of citizen satisfaction.

Ideally, this type of survey would include a series of questions as to the respondent's expectations of the police, questions that would require the respondent to prioritize the activities of the police, and additional questions that would assist in contextualizing the respondent's views of, and attitudes toward, the police. If, for example, a respondent has unrealistic expectations of the police, due, for example, to depictions of the police in television dramas, this may affect their responses to the survey questions. As well, to be of benefit to the police, the findings of the survey should be supplemented by qualitative information gathered in focus group sessions or one-on-one interviews with smaller samples of community residents. In the absence of such information, it is not possible to determine *why* the specific responses were given to the Monitor survey questions.

> *The absence of information on the sources of public perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the police makes it difficult for the police to use the findings from the Monitor survey as the basis for developing specific initiatives designed to improve police-community relations and to establish sustainable police-community partnerships.*

There also appears to be some degree of variability in the extent to which senior police managers utilize the information contained in the Monitor report and what specific initiatives could be undertaken to address the issues raised by the findings in the report. A staff member in the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle stated that most police managers were not familiar with the contents of the Monitor report and the findings of the survey are not incorporated into their strategies: "Most managers do not know about, or pay attention to, the Monitor." In his view, this was important information that should be considered: "Management must open up the report and collect local information."

Given the limitations of the Monitor survey, the Limburg-Zuid police may want to consider developing the capacity to conduct a survey of community residents on an annual or bi-annual basis. This would provide an opportunity for the department to solicit community feedback on specific initiatives, and to record and track experiences with, and attitudes toward, the police among specific populations in the community, including youth, the elderly and members of ethnic minorities.

The Delivery of Policing Services: Patrol Response and Implementing Team Policing

The Department is currently in the process of altering the shift schedules so as to be more responsive to the demands for service. As well, the department is introducing the concept of Team Policing which will result in teams of officers being assigned to police specific areas of the region. This will increase officer familiarity with the neighborhoods being policed as well as, it is hoped, improve the levels and quality of police-citizen interaction.

The Department's decision to implement Team Policing will provide the basis for enhancing police contact and communication with the community and could serve as the basis for developing police-community partnerships. It was noted that the teams will conduct environmental scans, set out goals and objectives and have time to do specific tasks. However, dedicated foot patrols were not mentioned as being a component of the Team Policing model and it is not known whether there are plans to include this deployment strategy as part of the team policing plan.

The department is also altering its patrol response arrangements. Formerly, there were dedicated 1-1-2 cars that only responded to serious calls for service. However, the department is moving away from this. The acceptable response time to 1-1-2 calls is 15 minutes or less. The view expressed by senior police executive was that having dedicated 1-1-2 response cars worked well for the police organization, but not for the community. It was done for organizational reasons rather than to improve the delivery of policing services.

One problem was that the public would see/report a serious incident and there would be a police car in the area, but if it was not a dedicated 1-1-2 car, then it would not

respond. The public would not know why the police were not responding. This often resulted in poor impressions of the police. The department is also moving to adjust shift schedules to better meet call demand levels. This will require more officers to work in the evening hours and the officer's union has agreed to this change.

Additional Factors Affecting the Delivery of Police Services

During the initial stages of the research, a number of factors were identified that may significantly affect the delivery of policing services in the region. These issues will have to be considered as part of any attempt to develop sustainable police-community partnerships. Although an indepth consideration of these issues is beyond the scope of the present project, they are noted for future reference.

The Lack of Patrol Car Technology and the Impact on Police Presence in the Community

The absence of Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) in patrol cars appears to have a significant impact on the availability and presence of patrol officers in the community. Initial impressions are that patrol officers in Limburg-Zuid spend an inordinate amount of time at the police station writing reports that, in North America, are completed by officers in their patrol cars. The availability of computer technology in the patrol car would allow the police officer to remain in the community while incident reports are being completed, thereby increasing police visibility and maintaining "blue on the street."

Patrol Deployment *One and Two-Officer Patrol Units*

A key issues that emerged during the initial phase of the project was the availability of patrol unit and the perception of community residents that there was not sufficient "blue on the street." Subsequently, the senior management has implemented a number of specific initiatives designed to address these concerns. These include:

- one officer units
- motorcycles
- mdts.

These initiatives have the potential to increase the response times of units to calls for service as well as the number of units that are visible in the community. However, to maximize these resources and strategies, it will be necessary to conduct a study of patrol deployment to ensure that that existing resources are deployed as efficiently and effectively as possible. As well, the LZRP should develop the capacity to monitor, on an ongoing basis, demands for service and response by patrol units. A method for accomplishing this will be set out later in this report in the section titled "A Program of Research."

decided to move toward one-officer patrol unitsDuring the initial phases of the project, tAnother factor that appears to have a significant impact on the availability of patrol units is the deployment of officers in two-officer patrol units. With specific exceptions, e.g. evening shifts and policing in high crime areas, one-officer patrol units are widely considered to be a "best practice" in policing and have been generally found to be safer, more productive, and to provide officers with more time to interact with the community and to develop positive relationships with residents.

The LZRP have made a commitment to move toward one-officer units which has the potential to increase the number of officers in the community and increase the amount of "blue on the street.", which appears to be a major concern of community residents. While the shift to one-officer patrol units during certain time periods would most likely require the cooperation of the police union, the union's recent agreement to alter shift scheduling suggests the possibility of securing union support for such an initiative. As well, any move to increase the number of one-officer patrol units would require additional patrol cars and ancillary support.

Patrol Officer Morale

The morale of patrol officers in the region appears to have been significantly impacted by a number of factors, including:

1. The lack of state-of-the art technology and equipment. As noted, in contrast to their North American counterparts, patrol officers in the region do not have MDT's in their patrol cars. Further, there were also complaints about a lack of access to new-generation body armor that would be less cumbersome and more likely to be worn by patrol officers. Several of the patrol officers stated that they did not have the training or the equipment or resources to police effectively. Initial impressions are that patrol officers in Limburg-Zuid are not equipped with best practice force options or equipment, despite the fact that these officers police in a challenging environment.

2. Recent federal directives that police officers are not to travel more than 20 kph over the posted speed limit in response to 1-1-2 calls and in pursuits of criminal suspects

3. Efforts by the current federal government to reduce pension benefits

4. An absence of what some officers perceive to be clear criteria for performance assessment and promotion. One officer commented that there was a need for more focus on individual officers and the career path of officers. More specifically, his view was that officers need to be provided with clear criteria as to what the requirements are for promotion, what courses need to be taken and what projects need to be done. At present, in his view, this is all quite vague.

The extent to which these issues would impact and affect efforts to build sustainable partnerships with the community cannot be determined at this time and will be explored in a focus group with the patrol officers in Phase 2.

Any initiatives that are undertaken to develop sustainable police-community partnerships will require the commitment and participation of patrol officers.

The Role of Planning and Research

Planning and research can be an integral part of any policies that are designed to develop sustainable police-community partnerships and can also be utilized to support initiatives that are implemented. To this end, the region does produce a Vision Statement, a five year regional plan and an annual plan. The Police Monitoring and Policy Cycle staff have access to leading edge technologies that allow them to prepare a variety of reports and outputs that could be utilized by the police and, as well, communicated to community residents.

Initial information received from the staff in this unit, however, suggests that the capacities of the section may be underutilized. More specifically, in their view, there is no framework to facilitate the generation and dissemination of information. One staff member noted, for example, that while the section had the capacity to use Crime Point and crime mapping, these strategies and the information that could be generated from them was not presently a priority for senior police management in the region. Further, it was stated that the crime analysis capacity is not integrated with police operations. As one analyst stated, "There is the capacity to do this, but management does not use it."

THE AREA OFFICERS

Area Officers are deployed on the basis of one officer per 5,000 residents. Area Officers are given the flexibility to adjust their schedules to accommodate the requirements of their specific area and officers may work days, nights, and weekends. The Area Officers also interface with regular patrol officers. The objective is for the Area Officers to have a close connection to the neighborhoods and residents they police.

It was suggested that there is considerable diversity among the Area Officers in the types of activities performed in the neighborhoods. This variability in the activities and levels of commitment of the Area Officers is due, in part, to the history of the program. The Area Officer program was created in 1992 as part of a general reorganization. At this time, police officers at the rank of Sergeant were informed that they were to be transformed into Area Officers and would work in the field rather than in the office. While many officers welcomed the challenge of this new role, others did not.

In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the Area Officer program. The Area Officers have come to be recognized as a key component in the delivery of policing services and officers are now selected on the basis of their interest. Over the years a number of Area Officers have moved into the position of Inspector and these officers have an appreciation of the importance of the Area Officers.

Area Officers use a number of strategies that are designed to increase contact and communication with community residents. These include:

"Drop-In" Sessions

A frequently used strategy is for Area Officers to hold "drop-in" hours at either the police station or at a location in the community. This provides an opportunity for area residents to bring concerns to the attention of the police. Both of the Area Officers contacted during the initial field work, set aside specified drop-in hours every week for community residents at a local community service centre. One of the officers often holds drop-in sessions along with a social worker. In this community, the hours of the Area Officer's availability and the location are published in the community newspaper, along with other information from the police.

However, there does not appear to be a standard practice for drop-in sessions among Area Officers. Rather, it appears to depend upon each Area Officer and their particular approach to their work. While some Area Officers have made arrangements to hold weekly drop-in hours at a local community service centre, others hold sessions at the police station. For a variety of reasons it is important that a location other than the police department be accessible. For many persons, there may be a stigma attached to attending the police station. This may be particularly true for community residents who are members of ethnic minorities.

The two Area Officers contacted during the initial field work indicated that only a small percentage of community residents take advantage of these sessions, which hinders any effort to mobilize the general community or neighborhood to address a problem or issue. One of the Area Officers noted that most of the issues raised by residents are of a minor nature and often related to "trash and traffic." It was also noted that it is particularly difficult to make contact with youth and also that youth rarely, if ever, take advantage of the walk-in access. This officer also noted that residents in the minority communities did not access the police via the drop-in program.

> *While an important component of an overall strategy to engage the community, drop-in sessions, in themselves, are not sufficient to provide the foundation for building sustainable police-community partnerships.*

Most often, residents bring issues specific to their circumstance or to their immediate area and these are related to the police officer who is then expected to take the appropriate action to remedy the problem or to address the issue. In the words of one Area Officer: "The most motivated person is the person involved in addressing their own problems." At present, there does not appear to be a framework within which the concerns expressed by community residents at the weekly sessions can be addressed on a collaborative basis by community residents and the police. And, it is likely that community residents who do contact the Area Officers during these weekly drop-in sessions do not consider how they, as citizens, could act to address the identified problems.

Community Meetings

It appears that most of the Area Officers convene meetings with the community two or three times a year. These meetings focus on identifying community problems and the areas of the neighborhood that residents want improved. Community meetings, however, are not necessarily facilitative of police-community partnerships as they may tend to be oriented toward how the police can "fix" a specific problem being experienced by community residents. And, too often, public meetings are dominated by a small number of persons with individual agendas.

> *While one component of an overall strategy for building sustainable police-community partnerships, community meetings are not, in themselves, a sufficient catalyst for mobilizing the community.*

Neighborhood Scans

The Area Officers complete environmental scans of the areas to which they are assigned and these are a valuable source of information about the types of issues that exist in the neighborhoods. However, at the present time, it appears that these reports are submitted only to the Unit Level and are not forwarded to the District level. There is a

need to explore the potential for creating a process by which the information contained in these environmental scans can be collated and analyzed at the District level and be incorporated into Community Action Plans. The Area Officers do discuss with their supervisors on a monthly basis what is occurring in their neighborhoods although this does not appear to be a formalized process.

Community Projects

In walk-a-longs with two Area Officers, it was very apparent that the officers had an indepth understanding of their communities and of the patterns and types of crime and social disorder in their areas. These two officers were also very proactive in their approach and in carrying out their mandate and had been involved in a number of specific projects that involved community residents.

Consideration should be given to the ways in which the skill sets of the Area Officers can be strengthened, particularly with respect to developing best practice strategies for mobilizing community residents to participate in crime prevention and crime response initiatives. It appears that, at the present time, the Area Officers have only limited contact with one another and have few, if any, opportunities to meet on a regular basis. A number of preliminary ideas for enhancing the role of the Area Officers are set out later in this discussion.

The Area Officers are currently the primary link between the police and community residents. Given this strategic position, it is important to develop strategies that will function to enhance, strengthen, and empower the position of these officers. Further, there appears to be few mechanisms in place to improve and assess the performance of individual Area Officers. While the position of the Area Officer will always, to some extent, be dependent upon the particular personality and skill sets of individual officers, more could be done to "professionalize" this position. This is particularly important given the low turnover among Area Officers.

One of the Area Officers stated that there was a need to build the credibility of the local, uniformed officer, to empower the Area Officers and to raise their profile and authority in the community. For example, Area Officers are generally not involved when specialized squads conduct an operation in the community. As well, this would assist in raising the profile of the Area Officer in the community. His view was that the Area Officer should be involved in taking the lead in such operations, given that it is often undertaken on the basis of information and intelligence supplied by the officer. Unfortunately, in his view, there has been an increase in specialization, often at the expense of line level patrol officers.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE POLICE

> *"The community has unrealistic expectations of the police."* – Area Officer

There appears to be a widespread perception that the police are not available and are not responsive to the needs and concerns of citizens and that the efforts of the police are directed primarily toward fulfilling the requirements of the federal contract. As previously noted, there also appears to be considerable public dissatisfaction with what the public perceives to be the inordinate amount of time spent by the police on traffic enforcement. One figure provided was that 85% of the citations that are issued by the police are for traffic infractions. As one community stakeholder noted: "The police have other priorities and only spend 10-20% of their time in the community, when it should be 80."

This view was shared by a member of the Sittard City Council who stated:

> What citizens think about what the police should do is different from what the government thinks the police should do. The government focuses on enforcing of fines, while the citizens are concerned with their safety. The problem is that the government wants maximum results with no financial investment.

This councillor also stated, "People only see the police when there is trouble or they are being issued a ticket." A representative of a senior's organization concurred, stating: "We only see the police when there is a crime; there is a need to bring the police and seniors together; the police should speak with citizens." She also stated that the primary contacts that occur between community residents and the police are in the context of traffic stops and requests for specific information.

> *The attitudes that community residents hold toward the police may be due, in part, to unrealistic public expectations of the ability of the police to prevent and respond to crime, coupled with a lack of ongoing communication between the police and communities, and few opportunities for citizens to become involved in crime prevention and crime response initiatives.*

As one City Manager stated, there should be more contact between the police and the community: "There is much that is unknown about the police." One of the Area Officers commented that Dutch citizens have high, and unrealistic, expectations of the police: "They expect the police 24 hours a day on every street. They command the police to come. People are still focused on the small things; they think the police should solve all of their problems."

One Area Officer stated that the police must take the lead in developing police-community partnerships. This officer noted that the community has many unrealistic expectations of the police. This view was echoed by other patrol officers spoken with

during the field work. The development of effective police-community partnerships is one way to address these unrealistic expectations, as it provides the opportunity for residents to become more familiar with the demands that are made on the police and the limited ability of the police to effectively prevent and respond to crime and social disorder without the assistance of the community.

Contributing to the expectations that the public have of the police is an apparent shift in attitudes among Dutch citizens. One Area Officer observed: "Society is changing and expectations change. There are more gardens with fences. People are asking the police to do more. There has been a hardening of attitudes in the community." This view was shared by a patrol officer, who noted that the task environment was changing and that this had contributed to low public satisfaction with the police. Interestingly, the public expectation that the police should take ownership of, and solve, community problems and take whatever means to do so is somewhat contradictory to the often-stated notion that the Dutch are resistant to any initiatives that may be perceived to be social control oriented.

The recent vision document (2005) produced by senior Dutch police officials raises a number of key issues about the role and core functions of the police, asking whether traffic, fraud, and the environment of criminality should be among the core foci of the police. These and other discussions currently underway in the policing community in The Netherlands can provide the context within which additional materials are gathered for this project and utilized for the development of a framework for police-community partnerships.

Proactive Policing and Community Contact

Initial observations suggest that there appears to be a noticeable absence of proactive police-community initiatives that bring the police and the community together in a non-law enforcement context. A City Manager noted that there was very little communication between the public and the police: "The police need to meet with the people; there needs to be more conversations with people." A representative of a senior's organization stated that a major problem is that seniors don't see the police on the street: "The police have promised that more police will be there but they aren't, so people don't trust the police." She indicated that persons aged 50-75 accept the problems better, but those persons who are aged 75 and above don't: "They have difficulty." She noted that seniors often come to the police department about a crime, but they never hear what happened to the case. In her words, "The police don't say anything." She stated that there is often no follow up and that seniors often feel that the police are not involved or do not give their situation serious consideration. As a Sittard City Councillor stated, "The police often appear to be irritated that they have been called." And, although the police do generally respond to calls for assistance or calls to deal with various "annoyances", it appears that in many cases there is little follow up with the complainants and/or victims after an incident occurs. In other words, the police do not "complete the circle."

This further suggests the need for the Limburg-Zuid Regional Police to develop capacities for more extensive proactive, and reactive, contacts with the community. As discussed below, citizen volunteers (particularly seniors and retired police members) could fill a variety of roles in assisting the police to develop these capacities.

A general impression that remains to be explored in the focus group sessions is that there appears to be a general distrust of the police, city councils, and city managers on the part of community residents.

According to several of the persons interviewed, this is due in part to past unfilled promises and, perhaps, unrealistic expectations of the police on the part of community residents. In the view of one City Manager, there is a need to dedicate officers for the long term to develop police-community partnerships.

One City Manager interviewed stated that there was low citizen satisfaction with the police because there are too few police officers and, as a result, "The police say a lot of 'No's.'" Among the other points made by the City Managers:

- there is a need for police initiatives to dispel the perceptions that community residents have and to demonstrate that the concerns of the community are the concerns of the police
- there is a need to move away from the government as Big Brother and the "we will take care of you" mentality that has been fostered in The Netherlands
- the community should be involved in the solution and the community must work with the police to come up with solutions to problems
- "People need to see more blue on the street"

The City Managers who were interviewed stated that community residents were disappointed in the City Council and, since the City Managers and the police have not had time to innovate, "People don't trust us now." One manager asked: "Do we have time to find the question behind the question?"

This will be explored further in the focus group sessions to be conducted during Phase 2 of the project.

A representative from a senior's organization (a retired social worker) stated that the primary concerns of senior citizens are burglary and purse snatchers. She also indicated that seniors do not feel safe opening their doors to persons in the evenings. Seniors generally feel less safe in their homes and in their communities. She also mentioned that her organization does meet with the police to learn how to make their homes more safe and also to receive information on how to avoid being victimized while outside of their homes. She pointed out that older persons are accustomed to authority and that they miss the authority that the police used to have in the communities. In her view, the police have become too "national" and are removed from communities and their citizens.

The low levels of public satisfaction with some of the police departments in Limburg-Zuid may be due, in some measure, to the unrealistic expectations that the public has of the police. Preliminary information gathered during the first site visit suggests that the majority of community residents may have little understanding of the role and activities of the police are not aware of the activities of their Area Officer, have little contact with the police, and have little information about police activities and crime patterns. Also, at present, there appears to be limited opportunities for community residents to become involved in police-community partnerships.

> *One strategy for addressing the issue of unrealistic expectations is to provide as much information to the citizenry about the demands being made on the police, the challenges that the police face in meeting these demands, and the importance of building partnerships with the community to more effectively carry out crime prevention and crime response initiatives. As long as they are "on the outside looking in" it is easy for community residents to be critical.*

Should community residents become involved in collaborative partnerships with the police, they will see, first hand, the complexity of the demands that are made on the police. It is likely that community residents will gain a better understanding of, and appreciation for, the role of the police. Significantly, neither of the Area Officers with whom the researcher spent time during the first phase of the project had recruited and utilized volunteers for other than very specific projects of short duration, e.g. community clean ups. As one of the officer's commented, "They are hard to get."

It appears that there are two major issues that need to be addressed with respect to the community: 1) more consultation with the community to fill a substantial information gap between the police and the community that results in residents not knowing what the police are doing, the levels of criminal activity in their neighborhood, and how they could become involved in addressing these issues; and, 2) the need to create problem-solving frameworks and programs involving police-citizen collaboration.

Perceptions of the Area Officer Program

The views of the Area Officer program held by various stakeholder groups in the community remain to be determined through focus groups that will be conducted during Phase 2 of the project. Preliminary information gathered during the first phase of the project suggests that community residents have some concerns about the program. None of the civilians interviewed during Phase 1 of the project knew their Area Officer or had contact with the Area Officer. The senior's representative did not feel that the Area Officer program was working effectively. She stated that she would not know the difference between her Area Officer, a regular patrol officer, and an auxiliary patrol officer. Others who were interviewed did not know their Area Officer and stated that they had not seen the Area Officer in the neighborhood.

These initial findings suggest that there is a need to raise the profile of the Area Officers and to support the efforts of the Area Officers with other police resources.

This highlights the limits of attempting to have one officer per 5,000 population and the danger of over-reliance on the Area Officers to be the primary point of contact with community residents. It may also, inadvertently, result in a situation where regular patrol officers leave to the Area Officers the responsibility for initiating and maintaining contact with community residents, when such activities should be the responsibility of all police members.

One Area Officer, who is assigned to a high trouble community, stated that Area Officers need to be available and present for an extended period of time. If given the time, he noted, the Area Officers can assist in solving problems in their areas. Another Area Officer commented: "It is important to make certain that the Area Officers can spend time in the community. They should spend 80% of the time in the neighborhood and 20% of time on other activities.

One Area Officer commented that the position of Area Officer should not be the first to be subjected to cutbacks when there are budget reductions. He also stated that the Area Officers need support from police managers and from the community: "Managers may say that it is important, but often don't support the Area officers. It often gets superseded by other issues." A staff member with the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle noted that local Area Officers receive a monthly report of statistics in their area and this is combined with their own knowledge of the area. They decide on their own priorities for the area going forward. He noted, however, that "There are always resource issues. They have to make do with less."

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO CRIME AND SOCIAL DISORDER

Community involvement in crime prevention and crime response initiatives provides the basis for developing sustainable police-community partnerships.

There are two major dimensions to the issue of involving community residents in crime prevention and crime response. The first is the strategies that are required to mobilize neighborhood residents to deal with short, medium, and long-term issues. The second is the strategies that are required to recruit, and retain, community volunteers to participate in initiatives in the larger community in which they reside.

Information gathered during Phase 1 suggests that there are a variety of social, cultural, and historical and, possibly, political reasons why the Dutch have not developed an extensive system of police-community partnerships and why community residents may have less than positive perceptions of the police in many regions of the country. The role that regionalization has played in the current dynamic that exists between the police and community residents is difficult to determine, but most likely has had some impact.

A recent report for The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy (2005) stated that government "must have the courage to give responsibility for safety and livability to the neighborhood." The author of the report discusses a number of projects throughout the country whereby community residents have assumed ownership over their neighborhoods and in which local governments facilitate, but do not interfere. Several prevention projects are described, including the creation of neighborhood networks wherein one resident (the "puller") sets up a website where residents can report places where youth hang around, where litter is being dropped illegally, and where drug dealers are working. The police have access to the website and contact the "puller" on a monthly basis to discuss actions that can be taken. One police chief cited in the report stated that every neighborhood should have a prevention committee that organizes residents to work together.

The recent document (2005) produced by a working group of senior police officials, addressed the issue of the "core functions" of the police and identified a number of key activities for the police going forward. The document notes that community safety can only be achieved if there is the participation of all of the key stakeholders, including politicians, public prosecutors, public and private organizations and, most importantly, community residents. Within this framework, the police are viewed as only one component of a much larger effort to reduce criminal behavior and to create safe communities.

This "future scan" document identifies ten major developments on the horizon, including the importance of the police contributing to public safety. Another point is that the police should increase their presence in the neighborhoods and that effectiveness is more important than efficiency. Police officers are to fulfill a number of roles in the neighborhoods, including being a best friend, providing supervision, and serving as a

referee for disputes. As well, police officers are to involve themselves in mobilizing other parties. The "added value" that policing can bring to securing public order and community safety is by always being present in the communities and being "on the front lines" to assist in resolving conflicts and addressing safety problems. Another of the ten points that is relevant for this discussion is that the police are to engage in community policing.

Information gathered during Phase 1 of the project indicates that, at present, there appear to be few opportunities for community residents to become involved in crime prevention and crime response initiatives and programs. More specifically, there do not appear to be any established crime prevention programs operating in the region. It is not known at this time whether the neighborhood "puller" program cited above is operating in Limburg-Zuid and this will be explored in Phase 2 of the research.

At present, residents are not proactively involved in identifying and prioritizing issues in the community that require attention. Rather, when problems are identified, the police are expected to respond.

> There appear to be few mechanisms in place for the residents to assume "ownership" of the issues that arise in the neighborhoods. Rather, residents appear to be in "reactive/expectative" mode.

The Area Officer in SBS noted, for example, that it had become difficult to attract residents to volunteer to be school crossing guards and cited an instance in which the municipality had to construct new traffic lights and redo the street in order to improve safety for school children in lieu of a traffic crossing guard.

Challenges in Involving the Community

To the outside observer, it seems that, to some degree, the Regional police operate within a fiscal and accountability framework that does not emphasize or reward the development of sustainable police-community partnerships. For example, community residents are not included in the policing contract and there are no questions on the annual Monitor survey as to the role and involvement of community residents in the prevention and response to crime and social disorder. As previously noted, community meetings are only one component of a much broader strategy for establishing and maintaining police-community partnerships. In themselves, they are not sufficient to provide a foundation for collaboration.

One Area Officer who was interviewed felt that it was possible to involve the community if they are involved as an equal partner and can express their concerns. The notion of community residents as equal partners in the prevention and response to crime was a key point made by the City Managers and other civilians as well. A youth social worker in SBS, who holds weekly walk-in sessions with the Area Officer, stated that, in

every area, there are citizens who are interested. However, she stated that it is important for citizens to see that things are done.

> *The development of sustainable police-community partnerships requires both citizens who are willing to become involved in various crime prevention initiatives and volunteers to staff specific programs that are established.*

A staff member in the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle felt that "98% of the community can be mobilized" although, in his view, at the present time police contact with the public is generally limited to situations where there are problems. The representative from the senior's organization indicated that there was a high level of interest among seniors in getting involved in crime prevention initiatives and other partnerships with the police. As well, the preliminary indication is that retired police members may be interested in becoming involved as volunteers in specific initiatives.

A member of the Sittard City Council offered a contrary view about community involvement. In her view the government already asks too much from citizens: "People have to make too many choices today. Civilians are being asked to participate in their living areas, to be volunteers, to assist at schools, in addition to their full-time jobs and raising children." The councillor argued that there was already "over-participation" of citizens and, that "When they put a lot of time into a project and it doesn't work out, they are more disappointed than if they had not participated in the first place."

This was a view that was not shared by any other of the persons who were interviewed during Phase 1 of the project.

> *Regardless of the specific initiatives that are taken by the police, it is important that community participation not remain an abstract concept.*

There must be opportunities for substantive community participation in projects and initiatives that provide residents with a sense of satisfaction and in which they can see tangible results from their efforts. The field work to be conducted during Phase 2 of the project will involve exploring with community residents in a focus group format the level of interest in participating in these types of initiatives.

The Area Officer in SBS noted that every area in Beek has its own community meetings and that there was ongoing interaction between the police, social workers, and the citizens. This, in his view, explained the high levels of satisfaction with community residents in Beek on the Monitor survey. This suggests that one possible initiative would be to require that each Area Officer ensure that community meetings (despite the above-noted limitations) are held on a regular basis.

At-Risk Youth

A youth social worker in SBS identified drugs, alcohol, Lonsdale, and being truant as the main youth-related issues. She noted that, in an attempt to provide positive experiences for youth in the community, street dances were organized as well as field trips to such locales as Six Flags. Some of the youth who participate in these activities are on probation. The social worker stated that she can only work 10 hours per week with youth and that many more hours per week were required to work with at-risk youth.

The School Adoption Officer and two unit managers at Graaf Huyn College noted that many of the students in the school have problems at home and in their families and are involved with police and social workers. There is a core group of students at the college who are at high risk. The officer stated that she follows up with this group of students outside of school and attempts to find solutions to their problems. There is also concern with the "loverboys" - men who hang around the school and take the girls into prostitution in Amsterdam. The unit managers and the officers agreed that the parents of youth looked to the police to solve their children's problems. The officer shared her view that she should be full-time in the schools, given the nature and extent of the issues surrounding youth.

During the initial fieldwork, information was provided on two initiatives for at-risk youth: the Youth At Risk (YAR) program and the Youth Prevention Program (JPP). Although no staff from the YAR program were interviewed during Phase 1, discussions were held with the police officer and social worker involved in operating the JPP.

The YAR was adapted from a program that was developed in the United States and is focused on youths and young adults ages 16-23 who have committed crimes and are at risk of becoming immersed in the criminal justice system. The police are involved in selecting youth to participate in the program and these youth participate on a voluntary basis. The program provides participants with the opportunity to better themselves and to alter their attitudes and behaviors. It is centered on a series of challenging activities that require the youth to set, and attempt to achieve, positive goals. As well, the youth meet with psychologists in a group setting to discuss their issues. The program also provides an opportunity for the parents to become involved and, as well, each of the participants is matched with an adult mentor who assists them. Often, the mentors are from the youth's neighborhood.

Among the persons interviewed, there were differing views as to whether the Youth At Risk program had been a successful initiative. Generally, the program has experienced difficulties in recruiting volunteer mentors for the youth and problems in securing financial support. As well, concerns have been expressed about the mental health of many of the youth. The School Adoption Officer and other officers felt that it was a successful initiative, while the City Managers and others were less positive in their assessment of the program. Among the problems that were identified by the City Managers were a lack of interest from the community, an inability to recruit volunteers and the fact that many youths did not complete the program. It was noted that attendance at the program is not mandatory and that there are no consequences for youth who do not complete the program.

At this initial stage, it is difficult to assess the current operation and effectiveness of the Youth At Risk program, particularly in terms of the issues surrounding the recruitment of community volunteers to be mentors and the retention of these volunteers. It was noted that the program is currently being evaluated and it would be beneficial during Phase 2 of the project to gather more detailed information on the operation of the program and the "lessons learned" from this initiative.

The other program on which information was gathered is the Youth Prevention Program (JPP) which is run on a collaborative basis by a Sittard police officer and a social worker. This program focuses on at-risk youth and young adults in the 8-23 age range. Youth are selected from a list of those who have committed crimes. The program coordinators look at the youth and the whole situation, gathering information from the police and social workers. There are youths with high needs, including youth with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The Public Prosecutor, in consultation with the police, decides if the youth can participate in the program, based on their crime and their social background. There is a long list of youths and the program coordinators attempt to select those youths who would benefit most from the program.

The program coordinators may have the youth sign a contract and make an individualized, personal plan. Victim-offender mediation is utilized in some of the cases. If the youth does not abide by the conditions of the contract, they can be sent to youth court. Youth can be on the program for a month or as long as a year and a program can be made for a group of youths. It was stated that 72% of the youths who participate in the program do not return to the system in the District.

> *Although the coordinators of the Youth Prevention Program indicated that there are currently no volunteers involved in this program, they expressed an interest in having volunteers participate.*

The problem has been that, in the past, persons who volunteered did not remain with the program. Because of this experience, the coordinators indicated that any future volunteers would be required to sign a contract. Also, a problem with recruiting volunteers is that people are too focused on their own individual concerns. The coordinators of the program indicated that they would be receptive to having seniors participate as volunteers in the program.

Building Sustainable Partnerships with Ethnic Minority Communities

No information was gathered from the Turkish and Moroccan communities during the initial fieldwork. Nor, significantly, is there specific mention of the ethnic minority communities in the policing contract or the annual and five year plans for the region. A staff member in the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle noted that, at the present time, there was very little community consultation and no strategy for mobilizing community residents from ethnic communities in the prevention and response to crime.

In Phase 2, interviews and focus group sessions will be conducted with minority community leaders and community residents to explore their perceptions of police-community relations and to identify potential initiatives that can be developed to strengthen these relations and to involve community residents in crime prevention and crime response initiatives.

The Potential Role of Planning and Research in Developing Sustainable Police-Community Partnerships

> *"There are lots of ideas in the head, but not in the hands."*
> – Staff member, Police Monitor and Policy Cycle section

A staff member in the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle indicated that there is a need to improve the planning process, which would include devising strategies to involve community residents in sustainable partnerships with the police. Further, that the police often say that they will take initiatives, but don't. And, where they do, there is a lack of follow up.

He noted, for example, that there is no requirement that the Area Officers hold drop-in sessions nor are there any specific directives as to how and where access is to be provided to community residents (in-department or at a location away from the department). His view was that there should be provisions for the Area Officers to meet with community residents somewhere other than at the police station: "We must go where the people are and not wait for the people to come to us." He also noted that the Annual Reports are not used as a review of activities of the Area Officer and that this was symptomatic of a larger issue: "Reviewing is the weakest part of our work here at Limburg Zuid."

As an example of the lack of police consultation with the community, this staff member cited the recent renovations for the entryway in one police department. Even though this is a public area, he noted, there was no public consultation: "There was money to pay the architect, but no money for community consultation." He did indicate, however, that there were many possibilities to organize crime prevention initiatives that would involve community residents.

The initial information gathered during Phase 1 of the field work suggests that there is considerable potential to utilize research and planning to develop police-community partnerships.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO CRIME AND SOCIAL DISORDER

> *"It's about opportunities, but it's a slow process."*
> - Area Officer speaking about the potential for involving community residents in crime prevention and response

As previously discussed, the strategies at the present time for securing community input seem to focus primarily on individual-complaint taking on a weekly, drop-in basis and the use of general community meetings. There are limitations to both of these approaches: individual drop-ins are individually focused and do little to develop community capacities or to build police-community partnerships. Community meetings have a number of limitations, one of which is that a few persons may dominate the proceedings and there is such a wide range of issues covered that it is difficult to mobilize residents to focus on a specific set of issues.

> *The current general lack of community involvement with the police in addressing problems of crime and social disorder should not be taken as evidence of a lack of interest among community residents in becoming involved in such activities.*

Rather, it is likely due to an absence of *opportunities* to become involved in partnerships with the police. One Area Officer commented on the importance of altering the perspectives of the police to provide opportunities for community residents, stating: "The police are used to the fact that problem-solving is only for the police."

Within the Limburg-Zuid police region, there appear to be very few, if any, of the more common community crime prevention initiatives. Noticeably absent are programs such as Neighborhood Watch, Block Watch, Crime Stoppers, and Citizen's Patrols. Further, it appears that, among patrol officers, there is little or no knowledge of these and other community-based crime prevention programs. Although the effectiveness of these types of crime prevention programs is the subject of ongoing discussion, these initiatives continue to receive the support of police departments and communities throughout North America and there are similar programs in the UK. These initiatives provide the basis for police-community partnerships.

The senior's representative noted that, while police officers do provide seniors with information on how to make their home secure and how to protect themselves on the street, there were no formalized arrangements for police-community interaction. There are ten different elderly organizations in the region and there is a representative in every neighborhood. In her words "They are in the neighborhoods, they know the neighborhoods." Despite this, it appears that, to date, there has been little, if any, consultation with seniors about their potential role in crime prevention and response.

The senior's representative indicated that seniors would "absolutely" get involved in partnerships with the police.

There appears to be no collaboration between the police and seniors on any initiatives at the present time, nor any established links between senior's organizations and the police. Seniors represent a significant pool of talent and energy that has yet to be mobilized. Among the potential roles that seniors could play as volunteers are staffing community police offices, making follow up phone calls to complainants and victims of crime and participating in a YANA (You Are Not Alone) program, which would involve volunteers making regular contact with residents in the neighborhood who are elderly, infirm and/or home-bound. The activities of senior volunteers could be effectively supervised by a civilian coordinator.

A staff member in the Police Monitor and Policy Cycle also identified the need to develop the capacity to share information with the community, to inform the community about crime patterns and trends, and to share intelligence with them. This is a key component of building police-community partnerships and for crime and social disorder to be viewed as shared problems for both the police and community residents to solve. However, in the words of one analyst, "We are afraid to involve the community and only do it when it is too late."

This same staff member noted that there is a Vision Statement for the police and there are pilot projects all over the country. However, these projects are generally not sustainable. There are a number of factors that could, potentially, compromise the long-term viability of pilot projects. These include the absence of community consultation processes and the lack of community "ownership" of the issues being addressed. As well, there may be no clearly defined, long-term strategy that would provide a framework within which specific initiatives could be sustained.

MOBILIZING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT: LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the widespread view that community residents are overdependent upon the police and that it is difficult to recruit volunteers from the community, there were several examples of community involvement in crime prevention and response provided to the researcher during the initial field work.

> *These examples suggest that there is considerable promise for creating sustainable police-community partnerships.*

Information was provided about neighborhoods becoming involved in initiatives designed to address specific issues and to improve the quality of life in the community. A Stein City Councillor noted that there is a Citizen's Patrol in one neighborhood that was initiated in response to problems with stealing and kids hanging around on the street. It has been operating for several years in a traditional neighborhood with high social cohesion. It is a one km area and people are feeling safe and it has reduced crime. A Stein city counselor was the initiator of this. The police are supportive and the residents have contact with their community officer. The councillor noted, however, that an attempt to form a similar citizen's patrol in a nearby neighborhood was not successful.

A City Manager for Sittard, Geleen, and Born related the example of a neighborhood that was afflicted by drugs, alcohol, and violence and was transformed through a partnership involving the residents, the police, and other agencies. The Manager noted that a primary reason why the project was successful was that the people in the community were consulted. They were asked how they would solve the problem. In so doing, the residents became partners and it became "our" problem – a problem for both the residents and the city. This illustrates that positive changes can be affected even in the most highly troubled neighborhoods and further, that, with the right strategy, the residents themselves can play an integral part in this transformation.

Perhaps the most successful example of the involvement of community volunteers is Victim Services.

The Victim Services Program

An interview with a coordinator for the Victim Services program provided important insights into the requirements for attracting, and retaining, community volunteers. Victim services has 15,000 contacts a year in Limburg-Zuid. Victim Services responds to the needs of, and supports, the victims of crimes and traffic accidents. The coordinator indicated that "We are not the police" although he noted that the agency does work with the police.

The organization includes both volunteers and professional staff and has been in operation in Limburg-Zuid for over a decade. The volunteers are available to provide

assistance at all times. There are currently 150 volunteers, the majority of whom are in the 40-62 age range. Volunteers commit to one-half day per week for 3-5 years. The Victim Services organization also does Victim Offender mediation. When a crime occurs, they can bring the offender and the victim together. Or, mediation can be done following the offender's time in custody in order to reconcile the parties. This year, as of mid-June, 26 cases had been mediated.

Volunteers for Victim Services are recruited through advertisements in community newspapers and information nights. There are a number of criteria that are used in selecting volunteers for Victim Services. These include:

- does the person have the personality and the skill set to go to a victim's home?
- is the person willing to develop him/herself?
- can they listen? Can they bring their message?
- do they believe in humanity? Can they provide assistance? Can they be empathetic?

Most of the volunteers, in the words of the coordinator, are "common people." The coordinator noted that volunteers are not selected on the basis of education or expertise, although there are doctors, bankers, and professionals on the volunteer roster. The coordinator indicated that university students were not a potential source of volunteers, stating "Students want to get paid for their work" (although the head of the regional volunteer agency indicated that students might be a source of volunteers and that this should be explored further).

The coordinator identified a number of factors that have contributed to the success of the Victim Services program in recruiting, and retaining, community volunteers and to the overall success of the program. More specifically, the volunteers:

- have an interest in victim support
- are given "ownership" of their cases and receive positive feedback
- are asked to do something substantial that has a direct impact on others
- are given responsibility for making their own agenda; the office provides the initial information on the case and then the volunteers follow up
- are provided with individual and group support by the organization which builds confidence
- have the opportunity to take courses for self-improvement and for additional knowledge
- participate in activities that are designed to build 'group loyalty", including outings; as well, small groups (6-8) of volunteers get together every three weeks or so and share ideas on cases with the professionals.

The success of the Victim Services program in recruiting and retaining volunteers provides an excellent illustration of the strategies that could be used to involve community residents in sustainable police-community partnerships.

As an aside, the coordinator noted that the community service centre in which the Victim Services program was situated had switched to volunteers for their public service telephone line and the levels of client satisfaction have increased significantly from when the service line was staffed by paid personnel. This was cited as another example of the potential of volunteers and of the commitment that volunteers bring to their work.

The Victim Services coordinator offered a number of suggestions to the police in their efforts to recruit and retain volunteers and to develop sustainable police-community partnerships:

- don't make false promises
- continue talking
- do things for the long-term
- be positive to the people
- develop true partnerships
- take problems seriously
- spend more time in the communities
- give Area Officers and patrol officers more authority and discretion to solve problems in their areas

The coordinator offered that "The police have problems because they don't do these things. Respect for the police is low." He also stated that the police need to spend more time in the communities and attend community activities. In the Netherlands, he noted, "Social control is not a good word."

POTENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Despite the constraints imposed by the requirements of the policing contract, information gathered during the first phase of the fieldwork suggests that there is considerable, and at present unfulfilled, potential to involve citizens in the prevention and response to crime and social disorder.

At this preliminary stage of the project and analysis, it is possible to identify a number of organizational and operational initiatives that may serve to increase police contact with the community and provide an opportunity for community residents to become involved in sustainable partnerships with the police. These include specific initiatives with respect to the Area Officers. These ideas will be further refined, and supplemented, on the basis of information gathered during Phase 2 of the project.

Organizational Initiatives

1. Install Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) in patrol cars. This would allow patrol officers to remain in the field to complete incident reports, rather than returning to the station.

2. Create a "peer interview panel" composed of serving patrol officers who will interview prospective candidates for the police as part of the application process.

3. Develop a comprehensive strategy for the recruitment and deployment of volunteers, drawing on the experience of programs, such as Victim Services, that have been successful in recruiting and retaining volunteer community residents.

4. Review the current structure for planning and examine ways to improve the utilization of information by senior police managers as well as mechanisms to increase public awareness of, and access to, police-generated information.

5. Make more extensive use of planning and research to support police-community initiatives and to communicate information to community residents.

6. Create a regional police website, to convey, on a real-time basis, information to community residents about crime patterns and police initiatives and to increase public access to the police. (see below)

7. Develop the capacity to gather feedback from community residents on an ongoing basis, beyond the scope of the annual Monitor survey.

8. Utilize the principles and practice of intelligence-led policing to ensure that available police resources are deployed efficiently and effectively.

9. Create the position of Community Support Officer/Community Service Officer. (see below)

Operational Initiatives

1. Develop a strategy for identifying potential pools of volunteers, recruiting and retaining these persons, and "points of entry" for their participation with the police. (see below)

2. Increase the number of one-officer patrol units, particularly during low demand times (this could perhaps be negotiated with the officer's association as a condition of providing the officers with updated equipment).

3. Recruit and train seniors and retired police members to staff community police offices and to conduct telephone follow up contacts with complainants and victims of crimes.

4. Create opportunities for residents to become involved in specific crime prevention and response initiatives and in volunteer positions.

5. Increase the opportunities for police-citizen encounters in non-enforcement contexts.

6. Collaborate with other agencies and organizations in community justice initiatives. (see below)

7. Conduct community forums on a regular basis. (see below)

8. Consider establishing a Citizen's Police Academy. (see below)

Enhancing the Role of the Area Officers

1. Develop a comprehensive strategy for strengthening and empowering Area Officers in their efforts to build relationships with communities and neighborhoods.

2. Create a number of community police offices in high traffic areas, staffed by volunteers and under the supervision of the Area Officers (with the assistance of a civilian coordinator. (see below)

3. Explore the potential of creating a Limburg-Zuid Regional Police website. (see below)

4. Involve current Area Officers in the selection of new Area Officers.

5. Create an annual meeting of Area Officers, featuring guest speakers, the sharing of case studies and strategies for problem-solving and for building police-community partnerships.

6. Provide Area Officers with access to workshops and training courses that will enhance their skill sets.

7. Compile a "best practices" manual, composed of specific case studies involving police-citizen collaboration, and setting out "lessons learned" in terms of effective policing in the neighborhoods.

8. Develop criteria for assessing the performance of Area Officers.

9. Create cell phone and internet access to the Area Officers (particularly given the difficulties with the national police number and the critical position of Area Officers in the community).

   During Phase 2 of the project, these and other potential initiatives will be explored in focus group sessions with Area Officers and with senior police management. The levels of support for, and the feasibility of, implementing these and other initiatives will be documented and discussed with the Area Officers.

POTENTIAL INITIATIVES

> *It is imperative that any pilot projects that are developed in Limburg-Zuid have a high likelihood of success.*

Within the general framework of community policing, Western police organizations have, over the past several decades, developed a myriad of crime prevention and crime response programs, many of which are premised on collaborative partnerships with the community. These have ranged from organizing neighborhoods to be vigilant against property crimes, initiatives for youth such as "Cop Camps", and citizen neighborhood patrols.

Among the more common programs and strategies that could be components of an overall strategy to build sustainable police-community partnerships in Limburg-Zuid are:

Community Police Offices

Community police offices are one way in which the police can extend their presence beyond the police station and the patrol car. These offices are generally supervised by a uniformed police member or civilian coordinator and staffed by volunteers who take reports for minor incidents, serve as a referral source to other community services and resources and provide information on home and personal security. The offices are most often situated in high-traffic areas such as shopping centers, pedestrian malls, major transportation interchanges, and high density neighborhoods. The community police offices provide a permanent, highly visible police presence in the community, as well as increasing public access to the police.

Community Justice Programs

The Dutch government has established a number of Justice in the Community offices (JiB's) throughout the country although, at this stage of the project, it has not been determined what the nature and scope of their activities are in Limburg-Zuid nor the interface between these programs and the police. These programs, which are often centered on victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing, provide an opportunity for community residents to become directly involved in conflict resolution. There appears to be interest on the part of the police and the social workers who are currently involved with youth at risk in exploring the possibility of establishing a youth-centered community justice program. In many jurisdictions, including Australia, North America, and England, the police are directly involved in facilitating restorative justice processes that have proven to be successful in addressing the needs of crime victims, offenders, and the community to a much greater extent, in many instances, than the conventional criminal justice system.

Community Support/Community Service Officers

Police departments in the U.K. and in the United States have created the position of Community Support Officer (U.K.) and Community Service Officer (U.S.) respectively. Community Support Officers in the UK work alongside the police in a supporting role, providing a visible presence and helping to reassure the public. They patrol their local area, providing assistance and dealing with incidents of nuisance and anti-social behavior which do not require full police powers. By dealing with minor incidents, the Community Support Officers enable sworn police members to make more effective use of their time.

Many police departments in the U.S. employ non-sworn personnel, known as Community Service Officers, who fulfill many of the same functions as their English counterparts. Community Service Officers may handle a variety of duties, including parking enforcement, assisting police investigators, property and evidence control, conducting initial investigations and preparing police reports on criminal issues such as burglaries, missing persons, thefts, vandalism, vehicle thefts, identity theft, disturbing phone calls, City Ordinance and animal control ordinances. In some departments, Community Service Officers handle as much as 80% of routine reports which enables police officers to spend more time responding to emergencies and engaging in community policing.

Both Community Service and Community Support Officers contribute to an increased police presence in the community.

Disseminating Information to the Community: The Potential of the Internet

There appears to be considerable potential to improve citizen access to information by expanding the police website. This would involve increasing the information available on the national police website and, as well, developing a website specific to the Limburg-Zuid Regional Police. It is noted that the Amsterdam police have established a dedicated website and, during Phase 2 of the project, specific attention will be given to determining the levels of interest in, and the components of, such a website for Limburg-Zuid. The website would serve a number of functions, including making information more accessible to community residents, and "localizing" the communication of information on crime, crime prevention/response, and various police and community initiatives.

> *Best practice police departments, including the San Diego (CA) Police Department and the Portland (ORE) Police Bureau, utilize the internet to increase public access to information, to increase citizen accessibility to the police, and to increase police responsiveness to the community.*

These departments have a number of forms that can be completed on-line by citizens, including, among others, forms whereby a citizen can file a complaint about the police or a police member, provide a complement on a police officer, report a suspected drug

house and street-level drug dealing, and report minor victimizations such as the theft of a bicycle.

Citizen Police Academies

As part of an overall effort to increase public knowledge about the police and to provide citizens with the opportunity to interact with police officers in a non-enforcement environment, many police departments in North America have established Citizen Police Academies. These academies, which may be designed for either youth or adult participants, generally consist of a total of 10-12 sessions, with one session held per week. The program is designed to give the adult or youth participants an overview of the function and operational procedures of the police and to improve police-community relations.

Many of the sessions are similar to those received by police recruits at the police academy, although the weekly sessions are not designed to train the participant as a police officer. Among the more common topics covered in the sessions are patrol, case investigation, use of force, communication, police ethics, and police pursuits. Academy classes are generally taught by police executives and veteran police officers.

These academies have proven to be very effective mechanisms for improving public attitudes toward the police and, particularly for youth participants, providing insights into policing as a possible career option. Academies have also been proven to be an effective mechanism for identifying potential police recruits from ethnic minority communities.

Police-Sponsored Community Forums

Community forums are an effective strategy for providing information to community residents on specific issues, such as drug use among youth, and can provide the basis for the identification of problems areas in the community and the development of a collaborative police-community response.

POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER POOLS AND ENTRY POINTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Possible sources of volunteers in Limburg-Zuid include retired police officers, seniors, and university students. Possible entry points for volunteers are neighborhood crime prevention programs, YANA (You Are Not Alone) programs, as mentors for youth in the Youth at Risk program, as staff in community police offices, and to conduct follow up telephone calls to complainants and to victims of crime. There would also be the potential to train volunteers to conduct mediations between victims and offenders and to staff community justice programs designed for youth in conflict with the law and at-risk youth. Residents from ethnic minority communities could also be recruited to serve as members of a Diversity Action Committee that would meet with senior police administrators on a monthly or quarterly basis.

The potential for developing these and other initiatives and for involving community residents as volunteers and as collaborators will become more clear after Phase 2 of the fieldwork is completed.

PHASE 2 RESEARCH PLAN

The research activities during Phase 2 of the project will centre on conducting focus group sessions with key stakeholder groups among the police and in the community and conducting additional one-on-one interviews with selected individuals. The objective is to continue gathering information that can be used to develop a framework for building sustainable police-community partnerships and to identify specific pilot initiatives that can be implemented by the Limburg-Zuid police. The comments of one City Manager that "There is a need for successes, even small successes" will guide the development of this programmatic framework. Many of the organizational and operational initiatives are interrelated, e.g. installing MDT's in patrol cars and increasing the number of one-officer cars will increase the level of "blue" on the street with a resulting change in the perceptions of the police held by community residents.

Focus Group Sessions

A number of focus group sessions will be conducted during Phase 2 of the research. Ideally, representatives from the following groups can be identified and organized to participate in focus group sessions:

- Area Officers
- patrol officers
- senior police management
- volunteers with the Victim Services program
- seniors
- school-aged youth (including minority youth)
- residents in the Turkish and Moroccan communities
- representatives of NGOs, including the Salvation Army and the Churches
- community representatives
- Mayors
- Public Prosecutors and staff from the JiB program
- community residents from the transformed neighborhood described by the City Managers
- City Managers
- retired police officers
- members of business owners, e.g. MKB and service clubs, e.g. Rotary Club

In addition a number of interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, including leaders in the Turkish and Moroccan communities.

SUMMARY

The information gathered during Phase 1 of the project has provided a number of important insights into the potential for developing sustainable police-community partnerships in Limburg-Zuid. A key finding was that, within the current framework of police service delivery, there are few mechanisms to facilitate initial and ongoing police-community contact and, further, that community residents are, with a few notable exceptions, not involved in crime prevention and crime response initiatives. Although this may be ascribed to the traditional reluctance of Dutch citizens to serve as volunteers, there are examples of programs such as Victim Services, in which community residents are substantially involved in providing services to the victims of crime and make a significant commitment in order to do so.

This suggests that, if the proper framework and opportunities are provided, community residents will become involved in partnerships with the police. Creating these frameworks and opportunities, however, will require that the police examine a number of specific facets of the organization and delivery of policing services. This includes implementing initiatives that are likely to increase the interest and commitment of patrol officers, strengthening and enhancing the role of the Area Officers, increasing community accessibility to information, and introducing a number of specific crime prevention and response initiatives.

It is unrealistic to expect that the police will ever have sufficient resources to address all of the concerns and expectations of community residents. Even with additional resources, the police are limited in their ability to prevent and respond to crime. This provides further impetus to focus on the development of police-community partnerships.

The information gathered from focus group sessions and in interviews during Phase 2 of the project will be incorporated into a final report that will set out a number of general strategies for creating sustainable police-community partnerships as well as identifying specific crime prevention and crime response initiatives that can be implemented on a collaborative basis.

FOOTNOTES

1. Focus groups:

- are a widely-used, cost effective technique for obtaining information from various groups within a community on a specific issue or set of issues
- bring together small group (generally 8-10) individuals who share a common attribute, such as age (adult/youth), gender (male/female), ethnicity, or who share a common position, such as community resident, police officer, and/or who share a common experience, such as crime victim.
- are led by a facilitator, who is generally a person from outside the community
- may last from one or two hours to a full day

In the focus group, the facilitator draws out the experiences and opinions of the participants and directs the discussion toward the major issues surrounding the topic at hand. The information gathered in the focus group sessions is then compiled to create an overall view of the issue(s) and to provide the basis from which policies and programs can be developed and implemented. Focus groups also serve to involve community residents directly in the identification of, and subsequent response, to the issue(s) that have been identified. Community residents are more likely to assume "ownership" of community problems if they have been consulted and focus groups are one way that this can be achieved.

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2005; *Trust in the Neighborhood.* The Hague.

APPENDIX A

PERSONS CONTACTED/INTERVIEWED

Gerdien Aarts   Police Officer/Juvenile Coordinator, District of Sittard,
Limburg-Zuid   Regional Police

Karel Arzt   Chief of Unit, Stein-Beek-Schinnen, District of Sittard, Limburg-Zuid
          Regional Police

A.C. Barske   Mayor, Municipality of Stein

F.G.J.M. Beckers   Mayor, Municipality of Schinnen-Onderbanken

Peter Boelens   Juvenile Coordinator, District of Sittard

Buys (Mrs.)   Representative of Seniors, Geleen, District of Sittard

Rosita Custers   City Councillor, Sittard-Geleen

W.J.A. Dijkstra   Mayor, Municipality of Sittard-Geleen

Jan Ehlen   Unit Manager, Graaf Huyn College, Geleen

Jan Fasen   Unit Manager, Graaf Huyn College, Geleen

Rob Hutschemaekers Chief, District of Sittard, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Peter Jaspar   Deputy Chief,   District Investigation Department, Sittard,
          Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Frans Jacobs   Police Officer, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Jos Lassauw   Victim Support Coordinator, Bureau Slachtofferhulp, Beek

Tony Ortu   City Manager, Municipality of Sittard-Geleen-Born

Nancy Peters   Police Officer, District of Sittard, Limburg-Zuid Regional
Police

Rob Rasch   Area Officer, Geleen, District of Sittard, Limburg-Ziud
Regional Police

Jos Starmans   Police Monitor and Policy Cycle, Limburg-Zuid Regional
Police

Piet Tans — Chief, Communications Department, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Walter van Haaren — Deputy Chief of Police, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Luuc van Hoof — Police Officer, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Gert van Marion — Area Officer, Stein-Beek-Schinnen, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Pink van Nieuwburg — City Manager, Municipality of Sittard-Geleen-Born

Wim van de Ven — Senior Public Prosecutor, Maastricht

Raymond vd Burgt — Deputy Chief of Police, District of Maastricht, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Wim Velings — Chief of Police, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Ilona Vroomen — School Adoption Officer, District of Herleen, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Will te Winkel — Chief of Unit, Geleen, District of Sittard, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police

Paul Wolfs — Deputy Chief of Police, District of Sittard, Limburg-Zuid Regional Police