

An Evaluation of Challenges Confronting the South African Local Municipal Role in Crime Prevention

Kholofelo A. Rakubu¹ and Sogo Angel Olofinbiyi²

*¹Department of Safety and Security Management, Tshwane University of Technology,
Pretoria, South Africa*

E-mail: RakubuKA@tut.ac.za

^{2,}Department of Criminal Justice, School of Law, University of Venda,
Thohoyandou, South Africa*

E-mail: Sogo.olofinbiyi@univen.ac.za

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ABSTRACT Approved in the 1990s, “the policy documents such as the 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) and the 1998 White Paper on Safety and Security (WPSS)” are explicit with respect to the local government’s role in ensuring crime prevention, safety and security of people living within its jurisdictions. The foregoing schemes provide the local governments with novel roles of coordinating and implementing crime prevention programmes within their areas of jurisdiction. The former stipulates the necessity of the local government to facilitate continuous reporting, enhancing and reviewing of its crime prevention programmes, while the latter prescribes the role of municipalities as a unit expected to cooperate and partner “with the local South African Police Service (SAPS), national and provincial departments, private sector, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)” in developing and implementing strategies aimed at reducing crime. This article evaluates the municipality’s role in crime prevention by assessing existing challenges on this strategy. A total of 30 community safety unit officers were purposefully selected for interviews across five (5) districts in the Limpopo Province using unstructured “in-depth interviews”. Findings revealed that most of the safety officials are not familiar with the tenets (which collectively mandate the municipal role in crime prevention) of the proposed legislations by the NCPS and WPSS. Moreover, a lack of political buy-in across local municipalities is a militating factor against effective crime prevention. In the same vein, the majority of municipalities fail to adhere to the policies mandating implementation of municipal crime prevention strategies regarding the request and mandate of the Provincial Department of Community Safety. The study embraces “Dr. Bengt-Ake Lundvall’s four knowledge taxonomy principles (Know-what, Know-how, Know-why, Know-who)” as an assessment tool to evaluate the local municipal compliance with the tenets of safety policies in crime prevention. It further recommends recurrent reviews of crime prevention policies and intense training of municipality safety managers on crime prevention strategies.