

People's security — today's challenges of a new approach to policing: Working experience of the Community Security Initiative (CSI) project in Kyrgyzstan 2011

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Context for co-operation

According to a recent survey ordered by the UNHCR, 172,477 people currently residing in southern Kyrgyzstan were directly and indirectly affected by the June 2010 events, 91,817 had lost some sort of property, 30% of the respondents claimed that protection is one of their major needs. It also shows that 25% regard employment as a top need and this, in turn, reflects another result in that self-employment has almost halved as a main source of income while social welfare needs have risen sharply. Approximately 470 people died in the context of the June events, 1,900 were injured, over 200,000 have been temporarily displaced and 2,800 properties damaged. Immaterial damage measured by changed perceptions of lacking security or even a widespread fear of the events among victims are accordingly estimated to be very high. Do law enforcement agencies, the government and local administration provide sufficient security, independent of ethnic provenance? Is it safe to invest money in the reconstruction of businesses? Will there again be some economic development and opportunities for employment for everybody?

According to most observers, the general security situation in the South has been steadily improving over the last year and particularly with the peaceful conduct of presidential elections in October 2011. However, the process of socioeconomic rehabilitation, interethnic reconciliation, reconstruction, compensation and the provision of security for all still remains somewhat basic. Positive economic development requires essential public security and a comprehensive strategy making the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the South a top political strategy for the country. This has not yet happened.

Law enforcement agencies, mainly the judiciary and the police, are to play a key role in establishing the required security environment for rehabilitation, reconciliation and socio-economic reconstruction. People, victims and investors will feel safe if they are treated equally, professionally and according to the rule of law including the resulting respect for human rights. In this sense, after the June events the Transitional Government of the Kyrgyz Republic understood the need to support its police force and it requested additional assistance from the OSCE.

Following this request a project called the Community Security Initiative (CSI) was elaborated between the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and the OSCE. It was initiated in January 2011 and after the first positive results, it was extended for the year 2012.

CSI working concept

The basic objective of the CSI is to support Kyrgyzstan's police in addressing the specific security situation after the June events and to contribute to the professionalism of the Kyrgyzstan police in providing human security for all members and communities of the Kyrgyzstan population, irrespective of ethnicity. The Needs Assessment Team quickly discovered that an underlying distrust and lack of confidence existed between civil society and police, and ethnic tension remained potent in many communities thus affecting the areas' potential for peaceful reconciliation.

In order to address this particular situation three operational priorities were identified: (i) Respect for and the protection of Human Rights by the police service; (ii) Establishing public trust towards the law enforcement agencies; (iii) Having a diverse and ethnically representative police force in a multiethnic country. These goals have been impeded by (a) verified reports of Human Rights violations, the majority of which refer to cases of extortion, arbitrary arrests and abuse in detention without an established systematic approach to deal with such offences; (b) a devastatingly corrupt past as a hindrance for society and officers in viewing the police as

a public service (c) a shared problem entailing the need to promote a representative police force as well as sensitizing and socializing the police and the communities to experience mutual responsibility.

To tackle these challenges the CSI was given a mandate to advise and support designated police counterparts by being co-located in assigned police stations as well as engaging with local civil authorities and representatives of the local population. Ten districts, eight in the South and two in the North, were chosen as pilot locations where the CSI was assigned to work together with the departments of community police.³ These locations were chosen for their direct relevance as either having been particularly affected by the June events or their volatile history.

CSI advisors are to support and coach national community police officers in their daily interaction with the population, local administration and civil society organisations. They are never meant to substitute the work of the national police. Over time, these professional relationships have strengthened, as the police force see the CSI as an informative resource, and ally in protecting communities.

At its disposal and as its primary instrument of implementation the CSI has four teams of International Police Consultants (IPCs), in turn subdivided to cover all designated districts. During its first year two Consultants were assigned to each district and each team was steered by a Team Leader. In 2012 the role of team leaders was abolished as they have been redeployed as Consultants allowing an expansion of project activities into new districts. With the assistance of locally hired Community Support Assistants and a National Community Mediator the teams are able to bridge cultural and/or language barriers. Together they interact on an almost daily basis with their local police counterparts and have frequent contact with partners from local authorities and communities.

Through this close cooperation they are able to advise and support their police partners on basic issues regarding upholding the rule of law and such aspects as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the protection of potentially vulnerable persons, confidence building and facilitating dialogue and other conflict prevention activities. They are accordingly promoting police-public as well as inter-communal partnerships, and facilitating and, if necessary, mediating a cooperative approach to assessing and addressing security concerns/needs.

Results achieved in 2011

In order to achieve its preset goals in accordance with its concept the CSI has implemented, apart from providing on-the-job and day-to-day advice as well as certain in-service or targeted training by the International Police Consultants, a few other tools so that it is able to succeed in its mission.

For the promotion of dialogue a forum has been set up called Community Safety Working Groups (CSWG). These exist in each district and are held on a monthly basis. Representatives of law enforcement as well as communities makeup its participants and they discuss topical problems and possible actions to increase accountability and informational exchange.

Customised minibuses functioning as Mobile Police Receptions (MPR) have been deployed to each of the districts which gives the police a certain outreach that they did not have previously. Using these vehicles the

³ These are, from north to south: Chui, Zhayil, Bazar Korgon, Suzak, Uzgen, Kara Suu, Suleiman Too, Ak Buura, Kyzyl Kya, Isfana.

police can reach into communities both in cities as well as remote villages where state authority had been nearly non-existent. During such visits residents are able to report their complaints and problems directly to the Neighbourhood Inspector operating the MPR.

A particular part of the budget is allocated to small-scale targeted projects through what has become called the Community Initiative Fund (CIF). Specific criteria have been established for the use of this fund and it is intended to be used in line with initiatives proposed by the CSWG. So far, the project has mainly supported community-police events, support to LCPCs, sporting events involving youth groups, video camera supervision of local pre-trial detention facilities, and more. These means allow for a community voice in improving their own neighbourhoods.

Together they form a system where community problems are noted by the MPRs and these problems are then presented to the CSWG in which they are discussed and a solution is then proposed and sometimes carried out using the CIF. This system does not currently work flawlessly, but its infrastructure and logistics have been successfully put in place.

Measuring success was initially a challenge for the project as it was prevented from conducting a baseline study in 2011 which would assess public opinion towards the police, establish benchmarks and in turn be able to be followed up. The MOI has since agreed to such monitoring surveys, the results of which will be prepared by 20 March. In general, the CSI assesses itself through qualitative internal reporting and the activities conducted; there are also certain statistics which can be followed up in relation to the MPRs. Also an external assessment was carried out by the OSCE Secretariat in August/September which looked at where the project had come so far and it provided recommendations on how to move forward.

Certain success is also credited by tangible examples when, in particular, rumours have circulated in the wake of some worrisome events by either the police acting on specific advice by IPCs or by mediation by members of CSWGs. Here follows a sketch of the perceived results in each of the three priority areas.

Community-Police Relations

Since their introduction in August 2011, the MPRs have aided thousands of people and make frequent regular visits to a wide selection of neighbourhoods, communities and villages. Their schedules are determined by the Chief of Neighbourhood Inspectors in consultation with the CSWG and by advice from the IPCs. These schedules are set on a monthly basis and may be changed in accordance with updated perceptions of where they are most needed. General reactions by both the police and the public are positive. Albeit not overwhelming, they are receiving complaints from people who also voice their concerns. These are most often of an administrative nature rather than criminal activities involving petty crimes and social issues. Prior to their deployment the CSI provided initial training on their purpose, role and tasks as well as on police-public dialogue and problem-solving techniques. IPCs have then regularly accompanied officers on duty and provided on the spot mentoring often dealing with how to interact with the public as officers have often shown insecurity in how to approach and address the public or to speak in front of people.

A slow change in public perception and a willingness to report problems in most sensitive areas can now be witnessed. There still remains a reluctance to draw attention to issues of serious interethnic or human rights issues. This, in turn, suggests a remaining distrust which is still a challenge for the CSI to overcome. The CSI has liaised with other international and local (rights) organisations for assistance and has engaged in lobbying so

as to spread information about the MPRs. A sense of ownership for the project has been instilled in the officers who go on patrol, and citizens request the MPRs' operational schedules in order to anticipate their visits.

Apart from such formal collaboration, various community events have been organised in cooperation so as to boost the public image of the police. For example, several Police Open Days have been held for the general public and sometimes for specific groups such as, for instance, schoolchildren. A campaign against school racketeering has also been carried out and in general the youth are also regarded as an important target group. Thus the cooperation between Neighbourhood Inspectors and Juvenile Delinquency Inspectors is a choice which has so far led to positive results and activities which are supported by the communities.

Police Ethics including Respect for Human Rights

Though human rights violations continue to be reported, it is worth noting that no violations have been carried out in the presence of IPCs and thus their simply being present has a certain deterrent effect. One case of alleged torture resulting in death was reported a CSI monitored district, Bazar Kurgon, but the CSI has been able to show that the international community is keeping a close eye on the case by regularly inquiring into its progress. The local CSWG was also successful in reducing anger and the spread of rumours following the incident.

In its two northern districts the CSI has provided in-service training in human rights and the topic has been introduced in discussions by the IPCs in all their sites whenever possible. Commemorations of International Human Rights Day have taken place with eventful activities. Most commendable, perhaps, is the successful lobbying for the installation of security cameras in detention facilities in the two districts of one of the teams. These security cameras will provide protection for both inmates against abuse and police officers against false accusations, which, in turn, is also a problem. This involved discussions with the regional police and the prosecutor who decided to install these cameras in the whole province. Recently, representatives of one of the CSI's other partnering regions have inquired into the possibility of following suit and even more recently the Prime Minister has announced that these cameras will be installed throughout the country. Another significant achievement is the ongoing production of a citizens' rights manual which came about as a suggestion within one of the CSWGs and has undergone and been the cause of much debate within that group. The manual will highlight citizens' rights in relation to the police and will come in the form of an easily overviewed pamphlet.

Deliverables in the protection of and respect for human rights by the police are so far modest but promising. The CSI has engaged in good and systematic cooperation with local counterparts and organisations, and it has laid the foundation for hopefully more positive results in the coming year.

Multiethnic Policing

With regard to multiethnic policing and interethnic relations, the deliverables have been less than expected. This issue remains pertinent as occasional reports are received of fights between youths from different ethnic backgrounds. Youths are a particularly vulnerable group with a high rate of unemployment and crime. Most CSI Teams have helped to organise a number of events and roundtables, which have brought different ethnic communities together. Those events, mostly with the CSWG in the leading organisational role but with CSI support, have been well attended and received, and have also been a good opportunity for CSI public outreach. Such community activities are useful building blocks, particularly when they complement other activities by the OSCE Centre in Bishkek or the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), for fostering reconciliation, peaceful and constructive interethnic dialogue and mutual understanding and respect

— aspects that lie at the heart of conflict prevention. There has been no progress, however, on proportional ethnic representation in the police although it continues to be discussed at higher levels, including within the MOI. In close cooperation with the HCNM and the Police Reform Programme of the CIB, in 2012 CSI will take up this issue once again and a new assessment will be made of ethnic representation in the Kyrgyzstan police and, from there, positive changes may be advocated in the near future.

Future perspectives of CSI


Co-operation between the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the Ministry of the Interior was initiated in 2002. The initial years focused on technical assistance in all the main areas of policing. From 2005 until 2012 police reform became the priority of cooperation. Although strong foundations have been laid for open dialogue between the police and public, several areas have not been successfully confronted as of yet. These impasses exist because:

- i. The absence of political will among people with power to incite change. The CSI has been disappointed in their disinterest in questioning the existing system, with its specific *raison d'être* and self-funding mechanism;
- ii. No significant progress with respect to the balanced representation of ethnic groups and women in the Kyrgyz police force, on the contrary: more representatives of non-Kyrgyz ethnic groups have left the police following the events;

Without addressing the problems experienced over the last few years, real progress towards democratic policing will again not be achieved in the future.

The ongoing Police Reform Programme (PRP) of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and the CSI will work in a complementary fashion to achieve this long expected paradigm change. Whereas the OSCE CIB Police Reform Programme will continue to focus on its advocacy for change with respect to attitudes, behaviour and combating corruption, CSI will continue to focus on the establishment and development of a relevant and positive working relationship between the police and the public at the twelve assigned critical police stations. An additional 'roaming' team of IPAs will support other police stations following a risk-based approach. This will allow for some operational flexibility to respond to new community-police problems or demands. This requires systematic security risk monitoring by the MOI and the local/regional administration. According to recent surveys the level of trust between the police and the public is in comparison to Western countries still at a very low level. In regions affected by the recent conflict the situation is considered to be even more critical. This mistrust will dissipate with each MPR visit and public interaction between authorities and the people, as they each come to see each other as partners.

International experience demonstrates that a significant improvement will need a great deal of time. Decisive for any real results will be the political will of the Government and a change of attitude among the public which demand, from the police, a more professional, unbiased and transparent provision of security services. Respect for the police ethics code and for civil and human rights is imperative for real progress. The OSCE in this context will support the Kyrgyz Government in its stabilisation and rehabilitation efforts but by doing this it will also contribute to the development of a paradigm change in its new policing concept. People and their justified security concerns have to be at the centre of such a new policy.



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Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

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