South Africa’s National Crime Prevention Strategy
Introduction

- After the transition to democracy South Africa went through major policy and legislative developments, including developments on addressing crime.
- It was recognised that a complex range of issues drives crime.
- A new paradigm for enhancing safety and security was needed which would, inter alia, change the emphasis from an exclusive focus on crime control to include crime prevention.
- This paradigm would require police officers to focus significantly on crime prevention.
The NCPS

• This approach to addressing crime was first articulated in the National Crime Prevention Strategy in 1996
• The NCPS is premised on support and buy in from different government departments (local, provincial and national level) & requires participation and engagement of role players and stakeholders in communities
• The NCPS was based on 4 pillars
1. **The Criminal Justice Process** aimed to make the CJS more efficient and effective. It sought to provide a sure and clear deterrent for criminals and reduce the risks of re-offending.

2. **Reducing Crime through Environmental Design** focused on designing systems to reduce the opportunity for crime and increase the ease of detection and identification of criminals.
3. **Public Values and Education** concerned initiatives aimed at changing the way communities reacted to crime and violence. It involved programmes which utilized public education and information in facilitating meaningful citizen participation in crime prevention.

4. **Trans-national Crime** included programmes aimed at improving controls over cross border traffic related to crime, and reducing the refuge which the region offers for offenders in international criminal syndicates.
The NCPC

- To achieve the objectives of the NCPS, the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) was est.
- The Centre was meant to facilitate ongoing research into social crime prevention topics to identify areas for improvement and to manage & oversee central funding.
- The Centre was located in the Secretariat for Safety and Security but was later relocated to function as a component of visible policing within SAPS.
- The SAPS became the lead agency in the implementation of the NCPS.
- The NCPS shifted governments approach to crime in a significant way.
Limitations of NCPS implementation

- The NCPS was however not without limitations
- The Strategy has never been fully implemented
- Location of the Centre within the SAPS minimised the status of the Strategy & limited its impact and effectiveness
- Crime prevention within a *policing context* suggests links with issues around deterrence and police visibility
- *Social* crime prevention is directed towards addressing the root causes of crime
Limitations continued…

• There was ongoing tension in relation to the role of the SAPS as the responsibility for implementation of social and environmental crime prevention had little do with the SAPS mandate and function

• Reliance should have been on other organs of state at national, provincial and local level

• Because SAPS has always been seen as the lead agency, the other organs of state did not always prioritise their role in this process
Limitations continued…

- Areas of social and environmental crime prevention extend beyond the SAPS as well as core departments within the criminal justice system.
- It was argued that the issues involved in social and environmental crime prevention are in fact not issues specific to crime prevention, and speak to broader issues of safety, service delivery and building sustainable communities.
- Social crime prevention is difficult to measure, thus departments tended to lean to the police for interventions on addressing these issues.
Limitations continued…

• Much of the social crime prevention activities of the 4 pillars of the NCPS focussed on public values and education to change the way communities perceived and reacted to crime and violence.

• It focused on programmes which utilized public education and information, and partnerships with communities, in crime prevention activities.

• With hindsight more emphasis should also have been on social, economic and environmental issues which act as drivers of crime.
A new Strategy

• To address this oversight, there was a need for a proper reconfiguration and location of the Strategy
• To this end, a new White Paper on Safety & Security (WPSS) is being drafted
• The WPSS continues to pursue a developmental approach to addressing crime issues
• It pursues the involvement of relevant government departments to the extent that the departments can be held to account for the developmental aspects of crime falling within their mandates
A new Strategy cont…

- This would then allow the police to focus on their core mandate of law enforcement
- The new WPSS suggests the NCPS be aptly renamed the “National Safety Strategy (NSS)”
- The current challenge is locating the NSS in an office where all the required departments can be held to account
- The Ministry of Police and SAPS cannot hold these departments to account
A new Strategy

• The current recommendation is to locate the NSS within the Justice, Crime Prevention & Security (JCPS) cluster
• The JCPS is a cluster of government departments established to foster an integrated approach to governance, aimed at improving government planning, decision making and service delivery
• While the JCPS was previously a coordinating body, this role has been expanded and the mandate has been broadened
• The objectives of the NSS dovetail best with the activities of the JCPS cluster as it specifically focuses on safety and security issues
Conclusion

- The NCPS remains an important strategy despite some of its shortcomings
- It served to shift government’s approach to crime in a significant way
- The NSS it is hoped will address some of these challenges
Thank you

Bilkis Omar
Chief Director: Policy & Research Unit
Civilian Secretariat for Police
omarb@saps.gov.za