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## STRENGTHENING LAW ENFORCEMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN ADDIS ABABA

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**Abstract:** Effective policing demands active participation and engagement Received: 20-07-2024 of the local community. Addis Ababa Police Commission implemented community policing to work with the community to solve crime-related problems proactively. However, the nature and type of power granted to the community affect the objectives. This study examined the roles of community empowerment in community policing at the Ketene level in Addis Ababa. A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed to collect detailed information. Participants in the study were purposefully selected from different community groups qualitative data was collected by using interviews and focus group discussions. The community residents engage in community policing through problem identification and definition. Another way of community engagement is dispute handling and resource utilization. Hence, there are two major outcomes achieved as a result of community engagement; first, beyond reducing the burden on the police department, mandating citizens to handle social disputes promotes the culture to solve problems among residents at the grassroots level proactively; second, community empowerment has created a fertile ground for community residents to develop a sense of ownership in the entire activity of the police department. Hence, this study came up with an insight that urges social work to revisit the conventional approaches of community empowerment to include other program implementations including community policing in the course of framing the emancipation of people from structural barriers.

**Keywords:** Community Concerns, Community Engagement, Dispute Handling, Problem Identification

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Crime is a worldwide issue that poses a threat to community safety and security as well as being a major factor that could undermine the social, economic, and political function of institutions in nation-states (Ruddell and Trott, 2022). As cities grow, so do the types, levels, magnitudes, and frequency of criminal acts; in developing countries, where there is a high degree of social and economic unrest, crime is particularly perceived as severely impeding citizens' day-to-day activities (David and David, 2014). As a result, governments worldwide have established institutions aimed at promoting people's normal functioning, both individually and collectively (Oliver, 2000). Schnebly (2008) pointed out that various nations use various policing strategies based on the type and definition of crime that persists in a given environment. One of these approaches is community policing. To balance the participation of community members in police departments' operations at all levels, community policing was implemented (Ganapathy, 2000; Schnebly, 2008; George et al., 2002). Ethiopia is among the many nations that have recently come to recognize community policing; nevertheless, how these policies are put into practice differs from one nation to the next and from location to location (Nunes, 2012). Community policing ethos allows the police and the community to work together in partnership to solve crime-related problems proactively. The philosophy of community policing advocates that success can be attained when there is genuine partnership, cooperation, and active participation in problem-solving among the police, communities, stakeholders, and other role players (Moore, 1992). However, there is no marked difference in terms of acknowledging the importance of working in close collaboration with the community residents. Community involvement in ensuring stability was a peculiar feature of ancient egalitarian communities (Stephen, 2009). Nevertheless, despite its increasing significance, there is still disagreement over the definition and constituent elements of community policing. The foundation of community policing is the belief that law enforcement cannot prevent crime and improve the quality of life for locals on their own (Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action, 1994). Sharing authority and giving the local community the tools, it needs to successfully address issues related to crime are therefore essential. Active involvement and engagement of the local community and other stakeholders are necessary for effective policing. In Ethiopia, community policing as a policing strategy is a relatively new development. The USA and the UK are the primary sources of inspiration for the concept of community policing. The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission (EFPC) focused on community policing, stressing the importance of community involvement in the fight against crime and criminal threats as well as maintaining the rule of law and order. The Addis Ababa Police Commission (AAPC) currently operates community policing in each of Addis Ababa's police stations. This study looked at the functions of community empowerment at Ketena level community policing. Enabling the community to make effective use of the resources that the community deems necessary to maintain a livable social environment. The degree to which community contributions are integrated into a police department's everyday operations determines the success of community policing implementation and the community frequently plays a crucial role in this process. The kind and extent of authority bestowed upon the local community does influence the accomplishment of the aims and purposes of community policing. However, the majority of the empirical research that has already been done on the subject of community policing has looked at problems associated with actual implementation, such as difficulties that the program has faced. Because of this, not much is understood about how community empowerment functions in community policing programs. Accordingly, this article endeavors to examine the role of community policing implementation in promoting the capacity of community residents to assume control and

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agency in the overall implementation of community policing in the study area. This study communicates new knowledge concerning the implication of community policing in initiating and nurturing community empowerment at the grassroots level.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study utilized a qualitative multiple-case study design to obtain deep and meaningful information from a small group of participants in their natural settings. In addition, this design is intended to obtain the advantage of flexibility. The case study method was applied for methodological reasons; firstly, to provide an in-depth examination of community policing programs; secondly, the participants were asked only to share their views towards the role of community in promoting community empowerment; and thirdly, to focus on issues having contemporary relevance. The participants were purposively selected from different community groups. Furthermore, the study area was selected on the rationale that it is among the few communities in Addis Ababa with the highest level of crime. This study applied qualitative data collection tools such as in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), field observation, and document analysis to collect data from informants. The data were collected from a diverse set of sources including informal community-based associations, youth associations, community residents participating in different implementation structures, senior and mid-level commanding police officers, and line officers in charge of coordinating community policing implementation at the grass-roots level. Moreover, relevant policy documents and organizational reports were reviewed to collect the data relevant to the study. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants for In-depth interviews, Key Informant Interviews, and focus group discussions. This study, in total, included 22 participants; comprising six community residents, seven Ketena Advisory Council (KAC) members, and nine police officers. This article followed a qualitative approach to identify, analyze, and report themes within data.

### **Results**

This study used qualitative data and the results are summarized about the role of the community in the identification of social concerns, problem definition and prioritization, and dispute handling.

#### **Identification of Social Concerns**

The status of community residents to assume an active role in community policing programs is among the major elements of community empowerment. Community engagement is an essential element of community policing whereby citizens actively seek meaningful representation in the overall activity of police departments. Depending on the philosophy of police departments towards 'policing' and 'community', citizens' engagement may take different forms. Hence, some police organizations may facilitate the active engagement of citizens in the overall effort to reduce crime and disorder by transferring power down to citizens and community groups. Others, on the other hand, only provide lip service to community engagement and prefer the 'participation' of citizens in the service packages of the police department. Community engagement in this article is portrayed as the ability of residents at the grassroots level to assume control over the programs being implemented and critically reflect on the root causes of problems to sustainably address concerns. In the study area, community engagement is implemented through the mechanism of a grassroots discussion forum known as Shay-buna, where residents at the block level gather once a week to discuss local peace and other related issues. The discussion forum is facilitated by the block committee and all residents (at the block level) are invited to attend the discussion. The block committee informs block residents ahead of time and residents are also asked voluntarily to contribute a small amount of money that will be used to cover the cost of accommodation such as bread, tea coffee, and water.

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The residents are free to attend the discussion sessions irrespective of their monetary contributions. The monetary contributions are not fixed and it ranges from 1 birr to hundreds. The Shay-buna discussion sessions are usually attended by KAC and community policing officers facilitating the implementation at the Ketena level and representatives of the local government administration. Identifying major issues that compromise local peace at the block level is the major agenda of discussion forums. During the discussion, the residents indicated a multitude of crime and crime-related issues. In addition, the residents identify social problems. The residents actively discuss the existing and emerging social issues in the neighborhood and they suggested that poverty and unemployment are the major causes of trouble in the neighborhood. Accordingly, the discussion focused on identifying and facilitating assistance to households experiencing severe problems. Moreover, it was indicated that the discussion is also a vital platform to ensure the continuity of strong social networks and interaction. Exchanging information during the discussion sessions was important to check for new events in the social environment of the neighborhood such as birth, sickness, and the like. Settling disputes among residents is the third major activity conducted at the discussion forum. Households attending the session are usually provided with the chance to present any complaints or disagreements in their neighborhood. Disputants are encouraged to bring the issue forward, but if they fail to do so, other neighbors will raise the issue for discussion. The discussion forum also discusses business activities in the area. In this regard, the discussion particularly focuses on commercial sex because the area is one of the wellknown sites for prostitution in Addis Ababa as women from all corners of the country flock to the neighborhood to engage in commercial sex work. Although local government representatives were expected to participate in the forum, their participation was short-lived. In this regard, the feeling of participants is, however, diverse. Some study participants expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction as their (government officials) presence could have been better in terms of addressing problems at the Ketena level. This group of participants argues that solving problems in the community demands concerted efforts of different stakeholders of which local government administration takes the lion's share. Other study participants, on the other hand, seemed less concerned about the withdrawal of government officials from the discussion sessions. Even some participants positively saw the inability of local administration indicating that government officials are more interested in maximizing their political gain than helping residents overcome problems at the grassroots level. This group of participants argues that government officials attend the sessions whenever there are major political events such as elections or when they think the youth in the locality raise some political issues in religious or public events. Otherwise, their engagement is superficial and brings the community nothing positive. The only thing that they care about is politics. The residents in the community participate in different implementation structures to identify major community concerns in the area. The block is the most commonly utilized structure to engage residents in the course of identifying major community concerns. Besides, community residents are also provided with the opportunity to present their concerns at the KAC and woreda levels. The block structure is the most efficient in attaining genuine and critical engagement from residents. This is the best mechanism to uncover and address them because problems are manifested at the household or neighborhood level. Moreover, residents at the block level know well each other and this facilitates smooth and genuine discussion.

### **Problem Definition and Prioritization**

Identifying and defining community concerns at the Ketena level is the main way through which the community residents engage in community policing programs. Setting priorities is the other essential element whereby

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engagement in community policing programs was conceptualized. This article analyzed the consensus of the residents concerning their engagement in identifying major community concerns including crime. It is better to raise the awareness of residents to function responsibly, without causing harm and discomfort to others. This article assessed the engagement of the community and procedures followed in setting priorities for the problems identified. The response, both from interviewees and discussants, revealed that prioritizing problems is a messy process involving multiple actors with diverse sets of values. Some participants reported that community residents particularly at the block (Qiyas) level participate directly in identifying and prioritizing concerns. The block (Qiyas) committees then took identified and prioritized problems to KAC. The advisory council, in consultation with block (Qiyas) committees, produces a comprehensive list of problems (service needs) of the Ketena. The prioritized service needs, finally, will be evaluated against the service plan and priority of the Woreda police department, specifically, and the AAPC in general. Problem identification and setting priorities at block level is a relatively consensual process and there exist little or no problems among residents. This may be related, to the fact that the blocks are designed based on similar social and economic backgrounds. Hence, residents living in the same block may exhibit little or no difference in identifying concerns at the block level. Issues started to emerge when efforts were made to define problems and set priorities at the Ketena level. In this regard, every block representative attempts to influence the entire problem definition and prioritizing process at the Ketena level, in favor of his/her block. Moreover, there were multiple cases where the interests of blocks (Qiyases) antagonized each other. For instance, informal local cinemas are identified as a major source of trouble for residents' safety in one block and are being used as safe havens for individuals perpetrating criminal offenses against residents in other blocks. He further stated that 'the noise coming from these cinemas is annoying for people living around'. These cinemas, on the other hand, are the major source of income for residents of the neighboring block. In contrast, they are the only reliable source of income for many households living in other blocks. Further, the focus group discussion session shows a multitude of interests and values behind the problem definition and prioritization process. By using conditions in chewing Khat among youngsters as the major cause of social and security concerns arguing that Khat is creating an addicted and depressed generation with diminished desire and habit to work. This group of residents urged the closure of businesses selling Khat. In contrast, the second group of participants argued in a completely different direction justifying that Khat is not the major cause of crime in the Ketena. In particular, they justify that there are several residents who chew Khat with behaviors of hard work and discipline; hence, there is no moral or legal ground for banning selling or chewing Khat in the Ketena. Khat is served in religious ceremonies such as Du'a (prayer); a respected gift presented by guests during a visit; and a source of foreign currency for the country.

After uncovering the existence of multiple interests among residents in defining and prioritizing concerns at the Ketena level, this article assessed the procedures followed to bridge exhibited differences. This article identified that the main strategy employed to handle the conflicting interests is conducting recurrent dialogue with block representatives and Ketena residents. In this regard, KAC carefully points out issues constituting differences among residents, and, then, the council facilitates different discussion sessions at different levels (block and Ketena) where people with differing views are provided with the opportunity to present and justify their claims. Furthermore, the advisory council conducts a repeated consultation with community groups to uncover their motives and identify the best way out of the issue. KAC proposes potential solutions that hurt none of the interested groups by encouraging compromising some of their interests. In many instances, differences in service



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priority are settled following a recurrent face-to-face discussion between concerned bodies. However, there are few cases where the advisory council is forced to make decisions on the competing priorities and disputants usually accept the decision made by KAC. The other strategy employed to settle differences in service priority is referring the issue to the woreda community policing structure. At this point the issue is out of the control of KAC and the task of KAC is limited to providing information about the issue. The Woreda community policing structure usually refers to the police commission's annual plan to decide on the differences in service priorities. The article identified that if service priorities are not settled at the Ketena level, the Woreda community policing structure will decide on the matter. This happens very rarely and residents wanted to resolve differences in service priorities at Ketena level.

### **Handling Civil Disputes**

The AAPC community policing implementation manual indicated that community policing programs should facilitate the establishment and proper functioning of structures at the grassroots level to enhance residents' capacity to deal with issues at the local level. Accordingly, residents at the Ketena level are provided with the power to deal with disputes and minor disagreements in the community. More specifically, members of KAC are mandated to address disagreements that may arise among community residents. The mandate of the advisory council, however, is limited to civil or social cases. In other words, the advisory council is not allowed to precede issues having an element of crime including physical injury. Civil or social disputes are part and parcel of community life in the study area. Disputes in the study area usually happen at different places and in varying contexts; between neighbors in residential areas, employees, and employers. There were circumstances where family members sought external help to settle disputes within the household. Settling disputes of any kind was previously a mandate given to the police department. Police departments, before the implementation of community policing, were overwhelmed in dealing with minor disagreements. Many people used to visit police stations even for minor misunderstandings during conversations. However, the probability of these minor disagreements causing a major criminal offence is immense, if not addressed early. Involvements of police departments in settling minor disputes have had serious consequences on their overall performance because minor disputes have stolen a great deal of time that would have otherwise been used to attend to other major criminal offenses. Besides, the routine nature of such issues has also made police officers show leniency in addressing those issues. This, as a result, had resulted in many criminal offenses that incurred damage to human life, body, and property. This article identified two major outcomes achieved as a result of community policing implementation. First, beyond reducing the burden on the police department, mandating citizens to handle social disputes promotes the culture of proactively solving problems among residents at the grassroots level. Moreover, it also prevents unnecessary waste of time, money, and other resources that would be spent to proceed in the legal process. Second, delegating citizens to manage civil or social cases at the Ketena level has created a fertile ground for community residents to develop a sense of ownership in the entire activity of the police department. In other words, community policing entails an element of empowerment that leaves the police under the scrutiny of citizens. This study identified that settling disputes is not new to communities at the grassroots level. In particular, it is reported that different informal social structures such as ladders and other religion-based structures (senbete) have long been serving as the best platforms to mediate disputes at the community level. However, informal community structures may not be equally accessible to all segments of the community at the same time as they are organized around a particular religion or culture. Accordingly, informal community structures are not

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preferred to settle disputes involving people from different values or cultural groups. To this end, many people used to visit formal government structures such as the police to settle social or civil disputes. Following the implementation of community policing programs, community representatives are delegated to handle social or civil disputes that may arise among Ketena residents. Particularly, KAC is granted the autonomy to facilitate the process of solving a multitude of disputes that do not entail criminal elements. Moreover, the duties and mandates of KAC concerning settling civil disputes are indicated in the AAPC community policing implementation manual. Social dispute settlement at Ketena level purely relies on the interest of disputants and the disputing parties have the right to refer the issue to the police station. In most cases, disputants prefer to settle their disputes at the Ketena level and also show conformity to the decision made by the advisory council. KAC, furthermore, documents every case applied and decisions made at the Ketena level. The purpose of doing this is two-fold. First, the document is vital to understanding the nature, causes, and types of social disputes across the Ketena. Second, documenting the dispute resolution process at the Ketena level also provides police officers with the first account of events if the dispute reported or addressed at the Ketena level is turned into a crime. Study participants reported a few occasions where disputants were unable to settle their issues at the Ketena level. In some instances, disputes resulted in physical confrontation and even violent crimes. In this case, police officers investigating the crime review the document to uncover the initial accounts surrounding the event. Mandating community representatives to handle social or civil disputes seems to be one of the most observable fruits of community policing programs at the grassroots level. The move from the police department to delegate civil dispute management to community representatives has brought practical benefits to the community. Other in-depth interview participants similarly agree with the assertions of Debebe regarding the dispute settlement at the Ketena level. The mandate given to community representatives, in general, is reported to have several implications for community residents at the Ketena level. First, KAC in charge of settling disputes at the Ketena level is directly elected by community residents. This is crucial in winning the trust of all cultural and religious groups across the Ketena, which in turn is enhancing conformity among disputants. The advisory council represents the community as its members are also diversified in terms of religion'. The autonomy granted to KAC to deal with social disputes also enhances the performance and acceptability of decisions made by the council. KAC, hence, fills the loopholes exhibited in the formal and informal dispute resolution structures. The mandate given to KAC to settle civil or social disputes is also helping residents overcome minor disagreements without harming the existing social interactions amongst themselves. It is reported that many of the issues that the advisory council dealt with are minor. However, the probability of causing harm is immense as disputants may be full of emotions. The first step that the advisory council does in settling disputes is just to help both disputants calm down. Then disputants are provided with the chance to present their version of the story. In many instances, problems are solved after both sides tell their version of the story as the issues quarreling people found to be simple misunderstandings that would not happen if [disputants] were calm enough to listen to each other's perspective. Beyond helping residents avoid disputes immediately, the entire social dispute settlement activities at the Ketena level are aimed at preventing further escalations and above all, ensuring solidarity among community residents. While dealing with social disputes, KAC usually follows a win-win approach, where disputants are encouraged to compromise their interests so that they cannot only solve their differences but also keep their intact social interaction. But if one of the disputing parties is not happy, the advisory council ceases the proceeding and advises disputants to seek other alternatives.

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The social dispute resolution procedures at the Ketena level are also crucial in preventing unnecessary confrontations between police officers and youths in the neighborhood. There were several occasions where KAC averted potential confrontations between police officers and youths living in the community. KAC, in collaboration with the Ketena community policing officers, attempts to identify the local youth and the police officers engaged in confrontation. Both sides, were then, invited to discuss their problem in the presence of KAC and the Ketena community policing officers. There are few problems that occur between police officers and the youth because they know the community very well. The social dispute resolution activities at the Ketena level are one of the best practical outcomes of the community policing programs in the study area. Several efforts are made to institutionalize the dispute settlement activities at the Ketena level. The community policing programs in the study area have set the foundation that helps residents settle disputes that do not have an element of crime. Besides, there were occasions when KAC independently addressed several social disputes at the Ketena level.

## **Discussion**

Discussions are presented based on results focusing on the role of community empowering community policing for social concern identification, problem definition and prioritization, and dispute handling. Social Concerns Identification Role Grass-root community dialogue sessions, commonly referred to as beat meetings in community policing, are important ingredients to establish partnerships and solve problems at the community level. Grass-roots discussion forums are vital to initiate community dialogue about major causes and potential remedies to address problems. These forums in community policing, however, are mainly portrayed as part of police officers' strategy to stay connected with the community residents. The argument here is that community meetings have always been approached in terms of their potential to reinforce the legitimacy of the police department. The finding of this study revealed that community policing programs were crucial in nurturing the culture of dialogue among residents concerning major community problems at neighborhood level. Moreover, the program installed an essential platform, known as shay-buna, through which residents weekly discuss matters of local peace and security. Grassroots discussion forums are reported to have enhanced community residents' capacity to critically examine the services delivered by the police department at the community level. This, however, is limited to services delivered within the framework of the community policing programs. Services provided by units, other than community policing, are still the major sources of complaints and dissatisfaction for residents in the study area. William (2003), for instance, reported that regular meetings with community residents have an important role in fostering the relationship between community residents and the police department. Besides, these meetings were vital in identifying and addressing problems of crime and disorder at the community level. Dessalegn (2020), similarly, revealed that community meetings have promoted positive interaction and in some instances trust between residents and the police department. Gasper and Davis (2016), for instance, reported that grassroots community meetings facilitated critical engagement of citizens in police service, which in turn was vital in installing active citizenship. Moreover, community meetings were reported to facilitate the incorporation of the voices of people in the entire police service, particularly in marginalized and disadvantaged community settings. Consistent with the findings of Gasper and Davis (2016), the current study has also revealed that grassroots community dialogues have played some critical roles such as identifying problems and negotiating with the police department about service priorities. Unlike the findings of Gasper and Davis (2016), the impact of these grassroots discussion forums was limited only to police services provided within the framework of community policing. Dessalegn (2020), further, illustrated that grassroots discussion forums have an insignificant



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role particularly in the problem definition and prioritization process as discussion forums are poorly attended by community residents and police officers in Adama City. Several factors may account for the noticeable difference between the findings of this study and earlier studies. First, the entire implementation of community policing depends, to a great extent, on the performance of police officers to mobilize people and resources toward a common goal. Second, the aforementioned studies were primarily focused on evaluating the overall performance of community policing implementations through employing quantitative techniques. Thus, the issue of community empowerment was not directly addressed as the focus of the inquiry was to examine the status of community policing programs against the central philosophical assertions of the concept. Despite the discussion forums being vital in initiating the power transformation process at the grassroots level, the practice exhibited major limitations when critically examined from Freire's critical pedagogy perspective. For instance, the discussion forums were initiated by the police department, and community residents have had limited or no role in the course of planning the implementation process. This in turn misses the fundamental principle in Freire's community empowerment model since community residents were seen as objects, not owners, in the program implementation. Moreover, the sphere of influence of community dialogue practices in the study area was limited at the Ketena level. In other words, community meetings have diminished or no influence over the entire police service provision in the study area. This is mainly because the meetings are not structurally integrated with police units, other than community policing. Thus, beyond negotiating with community policing officers at Ketena level community dialogue practices have limited relevance in promoting change above the block and Ketena structure.

### **Problem Definition and Prioritization Role**

The problem definition and priority-setting process in the study area is a complex process that involves various stakeholders with diverse values and interests. The process seems smooth and consensual at lower implementation structures, particularly at block and Ketena levels. The problem definition process at the Block and Ketena levels was better in representing and bargaining multiple interests within the community. The problem identification and priority setting process have two paradoxical features. At the Ketena level, community policing programs facilitated active and genuine engagement of residents to take part in identifying and prioritizing major community concerns. Accordingly, citizens at the Ketena level are delegated the power to define and prioritize major problems in the neighborhood. Structures above Ketena, however, are technically closed for active and meaningful engagement of residents to participate in problem definition and priority-setting activities. Local government officials occupying Woreda and Sub-city advisory council positions are contributing few to at least consult community residents about major community concerns and potential remedies to address problems. The report by AAPC stated that the role of local government administration was vital in facilitating grassroots engagement of community residents in problem definition and priority-setting processes (AAPC, 2019). This contrasts with the findings of this study on at least two major fronts. First, non-police participants argued that officials from local government administration had little or no interest in attending grassroots level community discussion forums and it has been a while since appeared in these meetings. Second, structures beyond the Ketena level are not easily accessible to facilitate dialogue and communication between the political elite and community residents. Hence, the claim that the political elite promoted community control seems bizarre. In agreement with this, topping (2008) argued that community policing provides a relatively better platform that promotes citizens at the grassroots level to forward diverse (sometimes conflicting) interests concerning the police service. Particularly, community policing programs are efficient in representing the service needs and priorities of

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marginalized groups. Moreover, Kocak (2018) concluded that community policing facilitated both proactive problem identification and co-production solutions that are in-reach of community residents. In contrast with the findings of this study, several organizational reports developed by AAPC claimed that community policing implementations at all levels facilitate active engagement of citizens in problem definition and priority setting process. For instance, the inspection report produced by AAPC reported that the implementation of community policing programs in Addis Ababa city has enhanced the capacity of residents to actively engage in identifying and addressing community concerns at the grassroots level.

### **Dispute Handling Role**

Dispute resolution, in community policing, has long been understood within the framework of initiatives or strategies geared towards solving problems at the grassroots level (Segrave and Ratcliffe, 2004). Devolving real power to citizens to settle civil disputes constitutes an essential element of empowerment since residents' input toward problem-solving is integrated into the overall effort to maintain order in the neighborhood. Carr (2003), similarly, found that neighborhood organizations are the most efficient avenues to deal with disputes that may arise among community members. In light of the findings of this study, Baker (2004) argued that community-based policing has had a vital role in establishing a working relationship with the police department in the overall efforts to prevent and/or settle disputes in the context of three African countries (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Rwanda). The author further asserted community policing provides a relatively better platform to address intra-community disputes, without straining social relations among community members. Argued that community policing has served as an important platform in the course of installing resilience in the very structure of communities. The findings of this study slightly differ from previous inquiries on at least two fronts. First, beyond examining community-based initiatives to handle civil disputes, this study critically analyzed community policing programs in the study area in terms of nurturing a sense of ownership and/or control toward community policing. Second, the current study has also revealed the dynamics surrounding the entire civil dispute resolution process at the Ketena level. Particularly, the study revealed how other community-based associations collaborate with community policing structures in the route of addressing civil/disputes. However, this study uncovered that community policing programs provide a relatively strong and inclusive platform to address civil/social disputes. In other words, informal community-based initiatives to settle disputes in the neighborhood were established along religious or ethnic lines. Thus, in many instances, the performance of such informal structures is limited to mediating disputes among members of the same group. Civil dispute settlement practices within the framework of community policing, on the other hand, serve as a bridge connecting various informal structures, producing a more complete quasi-formal structure that functions beyond social and demographic boundaries. This study has exhaustively explored the status of community policing programs in enhancing the capacity of community residents to exercise control over various programmatic elements. Accordingly, the study unearthed community policing initiatives such as civil dispute resolution schemes and grassroots community dialogue platforms that have enabled residents to exercise power within the framework of community policing implementation, although the problem definition processes are still beyond the reach of community residents. Causes for limited control of residents in ensuring accountability and transparency are not sufficiently examined in this study and hence, demand detailed exploration in future studies. Reflecting needs further examination to gain a more comprehensive picture of the nexus between community policing and community empowerment. Furthermore, potential

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measures to improve the community's control over community policing programs shall be subjected to further scholarly inquiries.

### **Conclusion**

The study, in general, uncovered that community policing programs in the study area have multiple implications for the empowerment of community residents at the grassroots level. However, the study also identified that community policing programs in the study area have varying roles in terms of enhancing the capacity of residents to deal with major concerns at the community level. Concerning mandates and/or power given to community residents and groups in the course of implementing community policing, this article concluded that different programmatic elements of community policing have different implications in the process of enhancing the capacity of residents to exercise control over community policing programs. Put simply, the study revealed that not all community policing programs have played an essential role in the route of enabling residents in the community empowerment process. Community groups and residents are not provided with sufficient power to decide on crime and non-crime safety issues in the neighborhood. For instance, community policing implementation has not established sufficient platforms to enhance the capacity of community groups and residents to make the police department at every level transparent and accountable to the general public. On the other hand, other community policing programs such as the establishment of grassroots discussion forums are playing a central role in enhancing the capacity of community residents to identify problems and setting service priorities. Moreover, community groups, particularly KAC have been provided the power to deal with social/civil disputes at the community level. In this context, it is evident that community policing implementations have successfully transferred power to community groups to address their issues. This article explored community policing programs in light of their implication for the community empowerment process. Accordingly, the findings revealed that different community policing programs have different implications for the empowerment of community residents at the grassroots level. The findings from this article came up with an insight that urges social work to revisit the conventional approaches of community empowerment to include other program implementations including community policing in the course of framing the emancipation of people from structural barriers. In simple terms, community policing programs provide an additional platform for how community residents at the grassroots level could be engaged in community concerns. This article provides an additional framework for social work practices wherein community policing programs could be used to incorporate the voices of citizens in the overall activities of the police department. Community policing programs, hence, could serve as the best avenue for social work practitioners to frame the grassroots participation of communities in community governance activities.

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