

Perspectives on KwaZulu-Natal

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Tackling crime while developing Cato Manor

The results of a victim's survey conducted in Cato Manor, Durban found that the area did not pose the hazards one might expect from the mix of public housing and informal settlement. Researcher **Ted Leggett** expects that the area will become safer still if development continues with security in mind.

The Cato Manor area in Durban has a long contentious history. The vibrant Indian and black community that had settled in the area was forcibly removed in 1955 and the land lay vacant for many years. As apartheid began to crumble, blacks began to settle on the land informally as workers from rural areas sought a home base closer to the city centre. By the time of the democratic transition, there was a resident population large enough to merit special government attention.

This resulted in the creation of the Cato Manor Development Association (CMDA) in 1993, an organisation dedicated to the "integrated development" of the area. The idea behind this was that no development intervention should take place in isolation from others and thus programmes to provide infrastructure, housing, education, economic opportunity, social outlets, and the like should be coordinated by a single management organisation. Receiving substantial funds from both national government and European funders, the Cato Manor project was viewed as a pilot for community development initiatives across the country.

It was quickly realised, however, that one facet of community development had been left out of the integrated model - security. Without adequate security, even the provision of basic infrastructure was undermined as contractors were robbed when attempting to build in the area. In one shack area faction fighting and criminal violence made progress impossible.

This resulted in the appointment of a full-time head of security for the CMDA and a series of community safety programmes. The South African Police Services (SAPS) and Durban Metro Police formed a special investigations task team to investigate serious offences in the area. The City of Leeds, Durban's sister city in the United Kingdom, worked with the CMDA to produce a holistic security strategy for Cato Manor. In late 2000, the CMDA initiated a crime audit of the Cato Manor area, funded by the Metro Council via the Safer Cities project. This was done to gauge the effectiveness of crime prevention programmes in place and to provide some sort of benchmark for future initiatives. The decision was made to take an approach consisting of a representative victims' survey, the results of which would be compared to police crime statistics for the area. The findings would be fed back to the community and their response elicited in a series of focus groups.

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A total of 841 households, about one household for every 100 residents, were surveyed. These were located in various parts of Cato Manor which differ in characteristics such as the level of formality of the housing, the origin and arrival date of the residents, political leadership, ethnicity, and so on.

From the 843 people surveyed, victimisation levels were found to be surprisingly low and the tentative conclusion was drawn that Cato Manor is actually a relatively safe place to live in.

Burglary

Burglary, which was the most commonly reported crime, was the crime most often cited as the one that hurt residents the worst. While this is a direct product of the fact that more people experienced burglary than any other crime listed, this does show that burglary is the crime causing the most damage in the area. The financial impact was mentioned more often than emotional or physical harms as the most hurtful aspect of criminal victimisation.

The high rate of burglary can be traced in part to the lack of basic security infrastructure. The lack of basic security in housing, including state-constructed housing, illustrates how security is not generally factored into development thinking. Ideally, all government projects should include door locks and burglar bars over the windows. The provision of these basic security features provides an opportunity for local entrepreneurs.

Residents were at home in about half the burglaries and threats or violence were used in 30% of the cases. In terms of South African law, these were not burglaries at all - they were home robberies. Given the size of most of the homes in the area, it is likely that in the 20% of the cases when the victims were at home but where force was not used, the victims allowed the burglars to go on about their business without confrontation.

Burglary is generally classified as a property crime, but robbery is a violent crime, and is generally regarded as a lot more serious, particularly when the incident occurs in the home and when whole families are threatened. In 20% of the cases, a gun was used. In

Facts and Figures about Respondents

Cato Manor is an area of very high unemployment and low education levels where local people try to find work in the nearby CBD or formal suburbs.

Most residents are dependent on public transport and although many claim home ownership, many reside in shacks.

65% of the respondents were female

Nearly half were "unemployed, actively seeking employment"

Field workers were able to interview the head of the household in about half the interviews; in 56% of these cases the head was female

40% of the heads of households reported being unemployed

Of those employed 40% worked in the Durban CBD and 20% in their own home

Just over 40% were living in shacks, one third in government multi-roomed housing and 16% in independent brick and mortar housing

The median household size was four members, three of whom were adults

90% were Zulu-speaking

Very few non-South Africans were found in the sample

Few residents had access to personal vehicles (12% owned a car or other vehicle), while 84% owned their own home

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eight percent injuries were inflicted. In six percent hospitalisation was required. This is not burglary in the ordinary sense.

The burglaries do not involve covert entry and stealthy pilfering, which are unnecessary when doors can be kicked in or have no locks. It can be difficult to tell whether the residents are at home or not in the dark of night, so one must be prepared to use force. If you can con or frighten the hapless victim into letting you in, all the better.

One might expect that a single incident of this sort could lead to a certain amount of home improvement on the security side, but 56% of the victims did not add security following the burglary, most probably due to poverty.

Unfortunately, only 41% of the victims reported this crime to the police. This is a very low reporting rate for burglary and is probably due to the fact that in only 17 cases (13% of cases where property was taken) was the property insured.

Of those reporting, only 27% were satisfied with the police response. Property was recovered in 13% of the burglaries and in all but one of these cases, the property was found in Cato Manor. In 58% of the cases, the victims said they knew who burgled their homes. This is truly remarkable for a crime where firm leads on suspects are usually hard to find. In nearly a quarter of the cases, there was some witness to the crime, either a neighbour or the victims themselves. In only 11 cases was it believed that the burglars were from outside Cato Crest. In the majority of cases, it was believed that the perpetrators were under the age of 25 and in 28 cases it was believed that they were members of a gang.

Thus, burglary in Cato Manor has some unique features. It is a crime of personal confrontation in which the victim is more likely than not to know the perpetrator. Most of the time the burglar simply comes through the front door. Still, nearly 60% of these crimes go unreported to the police. There is need for both improved infrastructure and improved police performance in this area.

Robbery

While many of the burglaries recorded in this study were actually robberies, true robberies were also the second most commonly experienced and the second most feared offence with 10% of the respondents having been robbed since 1994.

As with burglary, most of these incidents (66%) took place after dark. In 87% of the cases, the robbers succeeded in taking something of value. In 84% of the cases, the victim did not know who the robbers were. In the remaining 15% of the cases, 55% of the time the victim knew the robbers by name, in 27% of the cases they were known by face.

Surprisingly, in 9% of the cases, women were involved. Unlike the burglary suspects, 41% of the robbers were believed to be from outside the area.

Most (78%) of the victims were on the street alone at the time of the incident. The majority of the incidents involved only threats, but nearly half involved some violence. The most commonly used weapons were a gun (43%), a knife (32%), or no weapon at

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all (20%). In 20% of the cases, injuries were sustained and in 60% of these cases medical attention was required.

Only 30% of the victims reported the crime to the police and only 35% of those who did were satisfied with the response. Of those who did not report, 47% said it was not necessary or important enough, 15% said they did not trust the police and nine percent said the police were not accessible.

The most frequently stolen item, surprisingly, was clothing (including sunglasses), which was taken in 37% of the cases. Money was taken in 22% of the cases, followed in frequency by handbags or briefcases (16%) and jewellery (11%). Property was only recovered in four percent of the cases.

Thus, robbery seems to be a less personal crime than burglary, perpetrated more often by strangers and outsiders to the community. The property taken seems to be petty but the force considerable with handguns and knives being used in the majority of the cases, and serious injuries being common. Since most of these incidents occurred after dark, the issue of street lighting is again implicated, as is access control to the area.

Assault

Half the 49 assaults recorded occurred in the victim's own home, 25% on the street in a residential area. In 61% of the cases, the victim was not alone with the perpetrator. In about half the cases, no weapon was used, but in 18% a gun was used and in 16% a knife was used. Surprisingly, guns were most likely to be used in the home. In 71% of these cases injuries were involved and in 80% the injuries required medical attention. In one case, a death was involved and in 39% of the cases the victim felt their attacker was intent on killing them.

The incident was not reported to the police in 60% of the cases. The reasons given for not reporting were varied, but most common were fear of the perpetrators (17%), distrust of the police (17%) and inaccessibility of the police. Happily, of those who did report, nearly half were satisfied with the police response.

The most frequent assailants were known community members (33%) and spouses or lovers (22%). The assailant was unknown in about a quarter of the cases. Most of the attacks were due to sudden personal anger towards the victim (27%), jealousy or other romantic motive (22%) and money or other financial motive (14%). Few incidents involving political, racial, or authoritarian violence were recorded.

In 41% of the cases, the assailant was believed to have been drinking or taking drugs and in 27% of the cases the victim had also been drinking or taking drugs. Over 40% felt the perpetrator was likely to attack them again.

It therefore appears that the forms of assault are varied, with several types of violence between intimates being picked up in this survey: domestic abuse, drunken brawling, disputes over money. What is remarkable is the seriousness of the attacks, with most of the assaults resulting in a need for medical attention and perceived intent to kill being present in a sizeable minority of the cases. Guns were also a feature in a surprising number of household incidents. The most likely explanation for extreme nature of these attacks is that the respondents simply did not bother to mention less violent episodes.

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This would suggest that the rate of chargeable assault is likely to be higher than these figures capture and that the community has simply become inured to lesser background violence.

While those who reported the incidents were slightly more likely to be dissatisfied than not, the higher approval ratings given to the police in this category are encouraging. Part of this is likely due to the fact that cases of assault involve no recovery of property, which is probably behind a lot of the dissatisfaction experienced by respondents in the previous two categories.

Murder

A total of 28 households reported that one of their members (defined as one who sleeps under their roof every night) had been murdered since 1994. Eight of these incidents occurred on the streets of Cato Manor while six occurred at home. A gun was used in 23 of these murders. In 39% of the cases the person murdered was a source of income for the household.

The incident was reported to the police in all but one case and the respondents were satisfied in five cases. The one person who did not report said other means were used to resolve the case.

In 20 of the cases the respondent was convinced they knew who the killer was, in six cases because the respondent witnessed the murder. In most of the cases, the killer was an unrelated community member, either known (39%) or unknown (21%). Possible motives were varied, with attempted robbery (four cases) being the most commonly cited reason. In 12 cases, the respondent did not know why their household member had been killed. Alcohol or drugs were involved in five of the cases, and 11 people said that this killing was part of an ongoing problem that is likely to result in more deaths.

While it is hard to generalise on the basis of so few cases, it is worth noting that many of these deaths were to the respondents fairly random events involving their fellow community members. The sense of insecurity and distrust this must engender within the community could pose a formidable obstacle to cooperative security.

In addition to the crimes mentioned above, five people reported being hijacked and only ten women reported either actual or attempted sexual assault. As a result these crimes were dropped from further analysis. Although vehicular ownership was low in Cato Manor (12% of households), it is surprising that so few hijackings were reported, given that the Bellevue Road area has come to be known as "hijack alley". Apparently, people from outside the community are targeted, either incidentally or intentionally. There were only six cases of vehicular theft reported. While this number is small, it is about what would be expected given that only 12% of the households owned vehicles.

Perceptions of safety

Most of the respondents (69%) reported feeling "very safe" or "fairly safe" when walking in their area during the day. Unfortunately, these perceptions shifted drastically after dark, when 80% felt a bit unsafe or very unsafe walking in their area. The feelings of security varied sharply by area.

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This extreme contrast between daytime and nighttime safety is unusual and points to an infrastructure problem - lack of street lighting. Victims reported not being able to identify perpetrators in the dark, allowing criminals to act with immunity. In the area where night was feared the most - the shack areas - there are not even streets to light.

When asked what precautions they take to protect themselves from crime while walking, the most popular response was "don't walk after dark". The second most popular response was "avoid certain areas".

However, residents did not generally regard Cato Manor as the most dangerous part of Durban. The Northern townships (and KwaMashu in particular) were listed as the area respondents most fear.

Precautions taken to protect the home also point to a serious lack of security infrastructure. Over 40% of the respondents said they took no precautions to prevent being victimised, including simple door locks. Clearly, in shack areas, traditional "target hardening" makes little sense. Few Cato Manor residents kept dogs (6%).

Opinions of police and related structures

The overall appraisal of police performance was surprisingly good, although opinions were divided. More respondents thought that the police were doing a good job (48%) than thought that they were not (46%). Reasons for disapproval focused on issues of access and attitude, rather than corruption and racism, which is also reassuring. The most common reasons given for disappointment with the police were:

- the lack of visible patrol or refusal to enter the area (listed in 37% of the cases)
- laziness and an unprofessional attitude (43% of cases)
- taking money from or working with the criminals (17% of cases)

There were comparatively few references to racism, favouritism, lack of resources, or general tardiness in responding.

An even more impressive response was found to the question "Do you think you can trust the police to make things better after reporting a crime?" A striking 56% responded affirmatively. This suggests that some disapproval is due to the lack of crime prevention efforts rather than investigative response. Still more compelling was the 90% that said they would report a crime to their local station if victimised today, although their actual reporting rates were considerably less.

Questions geared to evaluate community policing were not as convincing, but were still relatively positive. Only 14% could name a local police member who they could approach with a problem. This emphasises the issue of visibility and accessibility. Although Cato Manor residents feel relatively safe and therefore positive about the police, they do not find the police accessible enough to report problems when they do arise.

Only 43% said they knew of a community police forum (CPF) in their area. Of those who knew of one, however, half said they had attended a meeting, which is remarkably high.

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Of those who knew of a CPF, 60% said they thought the forum was making their area safer, which is also a fairly high approval rating. Nineteen percent said they were aware of other community safety programmes in their area, but only 36 people had heard of the special investigative task team.

Crime trends and problems

In addition to their relatively positive view of the police, the respondents were more positive than might be expected about the crime situation. Although 57% thought crime had got worse in recent years, 29% thought it had decreased, and 13% said it had stayed the same. Thus, 42% felt crime had not got worse, which is remarkable given general perceptions about growing crime in the country in general.

Respondents were asked to name any of the local gangs they knew of. This question was asked to determine whether the gangs in the area existed as a named institution independent of any individual members (as is common in the coloured townships of the Western Cape and Johannesburg) or whether these gangs were just temporary associations of local criminal youths. Thirty-four percent said there were no gangs in their area, and all but two could not give any name to the local gangs. Of those who felt they knew who was committing most of the crime in their area, however, 62% felt that the local criminals were organised into gangs or syndicates and 47% felt local youth were responsible for most of the crime. A total of 77% of those who felt they had knowledge said local people commit most of the crime.

Questions about the kinds of drugs used and sold in the area were added as an afterthought, as this is one area in which this researcher has particular expertise. Traditionally, drugs other than cannabis are unusual in the black community, due to the isolation and poverty this community confronted in the past and due to the influence of the African Independent Churches, which ban use of intoxicating substances among members. Urine tests among arrested people conducted by the Institute for Security Studies and the Medical Research Council have found that hard drug consumption levels among blacks are still much lower than among other ethnic groups.

It was, therefore, highly surprising that, in addition to high levels of cannabis use, other drugs were also commonly mentioned. Eighty-eight percent of the people polled said dagga was used in their area, and 85% said it was sold there. Forty-three percent said mandrax was used and 32% said it was sold in their area. Seven percent said crack was used and four percent said it was sold in their area. Fifty four percent of respondents said they knew someone in Cato Manor who needed drugs every day.

Though many believe the crime situation has not deteriorated in recent years, the residents are most concerned about being burgled and robbed. They see the source of crime as internal, primarily caused by local youth working in informal groups. A surprise finding was that drugs are more common in the area than most, including local police, would have guessed. Petty theft victimisation rates are about average, as are reporting patterns in this area. The remaining crime types will be discussed individually, in order of frequency.

Conclusions

While part of this relative safety experienced by Cato Manor residents is due to law

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enforcement, part is surely due to the advantages of living in a presidential lead project. Although nearly half the daytime populace is looking for work, people living at Cato Manor have more reason to be optimistic than people in a similar social class living elsewhere. They have access to a variety of programmes and facilities, as well as many having secure tenure of their homes. Community structures are strong and general community cohesion is growing. Many of the classic requirements for crime prevention are in place.

That having been said, there is still a long way to go toward making Cato Manor safer through development. Lighting, residential security, roads, and formal housing will all add to community safety and allow residents to enjoy the freedom of movement they lack at present. And development goes beyond infrastructure to include employment and education, including civic and life-skills education. Drug awareness may become an increasingly important aspect of this programme in the near future.

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