

Assessment of the South African Police Service (SAPS)



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CSVR Presentation to Portfolio Committee, 14 March 2007

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Introduction

- OSF funded project – Strengthening Police Accountability in SA.
- CSVR component – 2 phases focusing on democratic policing
 1. Development of measures and indicators (The police that we want – handbook)
 2. Assessment of SAPS
- Throughout – consultation of role-players in police accountability

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The police that we want

- Adopts a framework of democratic policing
- Handbook for oversight of police in SA
- Addresses: what are the key questions that oversight bodies should focus on in holding police accountable?
- 5 areas + 39 measures
- Assessment uses this framework to evaluate SAPS



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The police that we want - 2

- The 5 Areas
 1. Protecting democratic political life;
 2. Governance, accountability and transparency.
 3. Service delivery for safety, justice and security.
 4. Proper police conduct
 5. Police as citizens

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The assessment of the SAPS

- Draft report completed November 2006.
- To be released in May 2007.
- Conducted with SAPS permission for research access.
- Interviews, focus groups + literature are sources
- Most comprehensive attempt to evaluate state of policing (SAPS) in SA to date.
- Snapshot of state of policing in 2006 but with overview since 2000.
- Draft report 290 pages – this presentation only selected aspects of it, and of key recommendations.
- Limits: a national snapshot of policing based on 5 Areas, 39 measures – doesn't deal with provincial, local variations.

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Main findings and recommendations

- SAPS one of biggest police services in the world (most countries have more localised policing).
- High level of instability in period since 1994 - restructuring, new paradigms of policing, new mandate and responsibilities, massive expansion.
- Strengthening organisation requires stabilising.
- New framework of devolving responsibility to stations, empowering & strengthening them.
- Increased staff compliment requires strengthening management and supervision + consistent quality of promotions.

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Assessment Area 1: Protecting democratic political life

- Positive findings regarding policing of demonstrations, policing of elections, response to violent groups (Boeremag, PAGAD), seriousness about political violence in KZN.
- Recommendations:
 - Some heavy handed actions of social movements; local level policing in KZN not always non-partisan;
 - Need to prioritize responses & investigation of these cases.
 - SAPS needs to clarify policies & strategies on public order policing, & should maintain specialized public order capacity, esp. in preparation for 2010 World Cup.

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Assessment Area 2: Governance, accountability and transparency

Some findings:

1. Due to size & complexity of SAPS – oversight bodies cannot hold SAPS accountable without dedicated research capacity;
2. Good SAPS compliance with official accountability requirements
3. Internal governance undermined by weaknesses of management and supervision.
4. S 206 of the Constitution should be amended to provide provinces with residual authority to determine provincial policing priorities, as long as this is not inconsistent with national policing policy.

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Assessment Area 2: Governance, accountability and transparency (cont.)

- **Crime information and statistics** – while SAPS generally supports transparency, the policy around crime statistics undermines this
 - SAPS should encourage internal flow of crime information & stats.
 - Support undertaking to release crime statistics shortly after close of financial year.
 - Need also to release info on arrests, prosecutions & convictions, & in relation to priority crimes.
 - Need to be able to link changes in crime trends with strategies that have been employed.
 - Need to develop more clarity for police managers on crime stats, and when information may be released

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SAPS annual reports

- SAPS annual report should refer to key data reflecting police conduct (also covered in ICD report). Should include:
 - The policing of demonstrations and how the police have addressed any problems in this regard.
 - What measures have been taken to control the use of force
 - Complaints against police & measures taken to address these
 - Efforts to improve police conduct, including torture, corrupt practices, & info on criminal & disciplinary measures taken.

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Assessment Area 3: Service delivery for safety, justice and security

- Service delivery is uneven (has especially bad impact on poorer communities).
- Unevenness – also reflected in e.g. rapid response, detectives.
- **Recommend – key areas of support to police managers:**
 - SAPS needs to develop a more sophisticated understanding of different types of crime & good practice in addressing these. Should also disseminate information to station commanders.
 - SAPS should commission research on key obstacles to effective crime investigation.
 - Police should receive in-service training to deal with conflict situations.
- SAPS should expand its role in partnerships, especially those that support diversion and integration of suspects/offenders into the communities; and in the private security sector.

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Assessment Area 4: Proper police conduct

- SAPS – big difference from pre-1994 policing – interactions with members of the public generally respectful.
- But major problems:
 1. Diverse forms of corruption
 2. Especially in policing of immigrants.
 3. Continuation of torture and brutality (though not comparable to pre-1994)
- Lack of proper commitment to tackling the above problems.

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Assessment Area 5: Police as citizens

- Favourable findings in terms of conditions of service including pay.
- Lack of reliability with promotions – also has negative impact on members.
- Employee Assistance Services – good frameworks but access sometimes not so good.
- Lack of proper support to members in relation to use of force – undermines self-confidence.
- Recommend: SAPS should produce statistics on circumstances in which police members are killed
- More attention needs to be paid to police safety.

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Conclusion

- Report emphasises - strengthening organisation requires stabilising.
- Supports new framework (devolving responsibility) – but this requires strengthening management and supervision and thus consistent quality of promotions.
- Rapid en masse recruitment and training is likely to be reflected in shortcomings in quality of training – will need to be rectified in medium term through major in-service training.
- Full report: total of 50 recommendations.

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