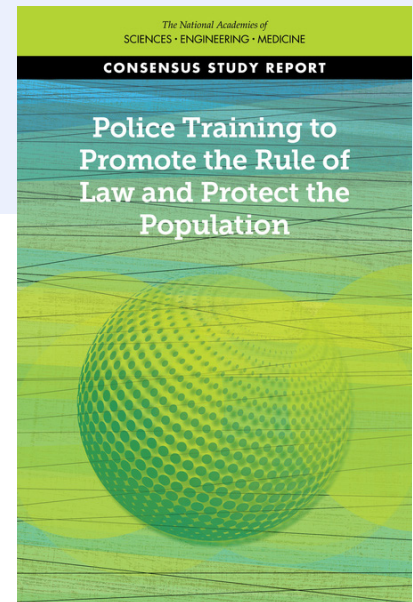# Policing Training to Promote the Rule of Law and Protect the Population

Strengthening the international law enforcement community to promote the rule of law and protect the population is particularly important as most nations face significant challenges. Advancing the role of science and research in these efforts is particularly important to key agencies involved in this work, including the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). INL's mission is to help "partner governments assess, build, reform, and sustain competent and legitimate criminal justice systems, and [develop and implement] the architecture necessary for international drug control and cross-border law enforcement cooperation." Training police in the knowledge and skills necessary to support the rule of law and protect their publics is a substantial component of the activities of INL.

As part of its efforts to design and deliver training in partner countries, INL requested the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to convene a committee of experts to gather scientific evidence and assess research needs for effective policing. The committee, whose expertise includes criminology, economics, international and organized crime, law, policing, and political science, was charged to produce a series of five reports addressing questions of interest to INL and the State Department. This second report in the series, *Police Training to Promote the Rule of Law and Protect the Population*, identifies critical knowledge and skills, informed by decades of research on crime and crime prevention, that are often absent in police training. The report also highlights the need for investigating the mechanisms and methods for teaching and developing these core skills.

The committee's organizing framework for its review stems from an evidence-based approach to policing. Evidence-based policing is an approach to police practice and management that involves using scientifically derived knowledge to strengthen police departments' decision-making, tactics, strategies, and overall agency functioning. It also offers guidance and describes opportunities for strengthening evaluations of police training.

INCREASING POLICE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THROUGH EFFECTIVE AND EVIDENCE-BASED TRAINING

The committee drew on briefing papers and workshop presentations to shape its own proposed approach to knowledge management for agencies like INL. This approach offers a generic means for developing country-specific assessments of what training is needed and how it can be shaped.

The approach includes the idea of "reform-based training," as well as broader principles of training, an inventory of police knowledge and skills, ways to assess the effectiveness of training, and tracking, testing and evaluating training on a continuous basis.

REFORM-BASED TRAINING

Instead of using training itself as the primary aspiration for seeking change, a country-specific "reform-based training" approach considers the need for training in alignment with other elements necessary to achieve specific objectives. Reform elements are likely to include creating stronger capacity to support the rule of law and protect people from violence.

Training can help to do that in conjunction with other elements of reform, such as creating or redefining operational units, appointing new leaders in those units, changing organizational tasks, priorities, incentives, and strategies, creating partnerships with local community groups, and winning political support in the national legislature or from civil servants in key ministries.

Thus, training needs to be launched along with other changes within an organizational system to reinforce its message, so that it becomes part of a comprehensive policing transformation. Yet if it is offered as an isolated, stand-alone reform, the committee concluded, training is less likely to accomplish its objectives.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING

An evidence-based approach to police training emphasizes five principles, including that training should incorporate the following principles:

1. Do no harm

2. Be based on policing activities, tactics, and strategies supported by evidence demonstrating effectiveness in promoting the rule of law and protecting the population

3. Use educational training methods shown to be effective in transferring critical knowledge and skills to police

4. Be continuously evaluated

5. Be flexible and contextualized in its delivery

Evidence-Based Knowledge and Skills for Police Training

Basic and ongoing training are critically important for police officers and must incorporate knowledge derived from the science of policing. Several key facts drawn from decades of research, include that crime is concentrated in a small fraction of all places in any community, at certain times of the day and days of the week, and among few offenders and repeat victims, are relevant for police training. Another important fact is that youthful offenders are also likely to stop offending over time.

Training on the causes and patterns of crime (and antisocial behavior), rule of law, and human rights is needed in both recruit training and advanced training of police. Officers must also be trained on tactics, strategies, and actions that have been shown through high-quality research to effectively promote the rule of law and protect the public.

Training on the consequences of their violating the rule of law can help police understand the role they play within society. Training in human rights needs to be developed and tested so police understand the degradation that may occur to their authority when they abuse their power or fail to control police torture and corruption.

Training is essential for developing skills for interacting with the public, and for problem-solving in partnerships for proactive responses guided by critical thinking and data analysis. Police training that includes content and analysis of routine data collection is likely to help police better identify and prioritize high-risk people, places, and vulnerable victims.

EFFECTIVE TRAINING METHODS AND DELIVERY

Training not only needs to focus on effective policing approaches to promote the rule of law and protect the population. It also needs to use effective educational methods and pedagogy. The way police officers are trained may well matter as much as the content of skills and knowledge on which they are trained. Generally, effective training is developed through a systematic process that includes conducting a training needs analysis, developing training objectives, selecting methods of training, pilot testing the training design, and evaluating the outcomes of training.

Given the lack of research on teaching effectiveness in the policing context, future implementation of promising methods should be evaluated to confirm whether they support officer learning and use of knowledge and skills in practice. Finding effective ways to train police officers under different conditions of population density (urban/rural), available resources, and IT capabilities need to be developed, avoiding a one-size fits all assumption. With knowledgeable and respected instructors, using experiential and problem-oriented approaches may be key to advancing reform-based training.

TRACKING, TESTING, AND EVALUATING TRAINING

The body of evidence on outcomes from different training content or methods is limited, particularly around testing the connection between training and actual policing behaviors in communities. Investments in evaluation of police training are likely to increase police capacity to promote the rule of law and protect the population. Rigorous evaluations of police training outcomes must occur prior to, or at least in concert with, widespread promotion and implementation of any training programs.

The report outlines opportunities to advance evidence-based training to support the core knowledge and skills needed for police to promote the rule of law and protect the public. This report serves as a starting point for developing stronger knowledge about how overseas assistance can help improve training outcomes for police institutions in varied contexts.

To read the full report, please visit
http://www.nap.edu/26467

Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education

NATIONAL ACADEMIES *Sciences Engineering Medicine*

The National Academies provide independent, trustworthy advice that advances solutions to society's most complex challenges.
www.nationalacademies.org