

# Third World Development, Loss of Entitlements and Community Safety

**W**ORKING WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL organisations in Africa in the early 1990s I was involved with the development of participatory methodologies, such as participatory appraisal and evaluation. These were a reaction and a response to centralised, top-down planning processes which catered little for the needs of local people. These methodologies have since found their way from developing countries to the UK.

In the mid to late 1990s I became involved in the evaluation of humanitarian relief programmes in complex emergencies, e.g. famine in the Horn of Africa. A dominant theoretical framework for understanding poverty and famines is Amartya Sen's Entitlement Theory<sup>1</sup>. Sen proposed that the reason why poverty and famines occur was that people lost their entitlements to live a productive life, through losing their entitlements which enabled them to produce food, to purchase food, exchange goods for food, to inherit or be given food or goods and to have access to land. When people's entitlements change, poverty and disadvantage can occur.

Since early 2000 I have been working within the community safety domain, initially with Nacro, and currently for Barefoot Research and Evaluation, with a particular emphasis on the impact of crime and disorder on local communities.

Having researched and evaluated many initiatives across the public, private and voluntary sectors, and seen the community response, I am beginning to realise that Sen's Entitlement Theory can also be applied to issues of community safety. Although we are not dealing with famine, we are still dealing with a vulnerable<sup>2</sup> population who suffer disadvantage, and as a result experience crime and disorder.

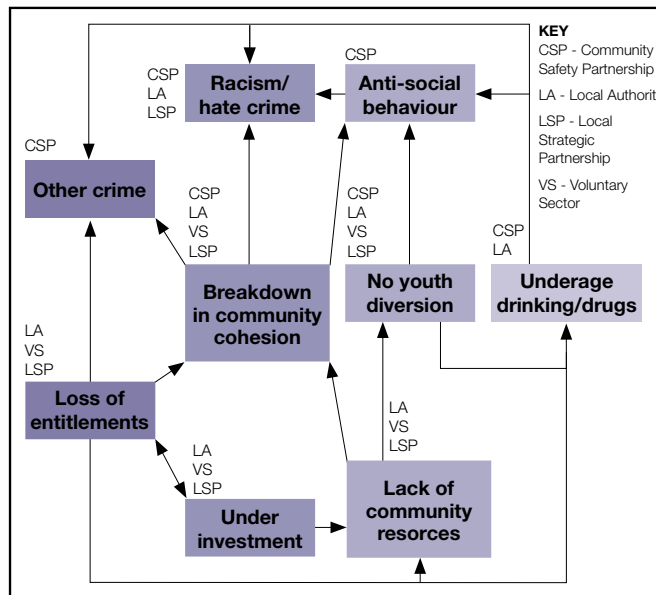
*For example, people's entitlements concern the entitlement to:*

- The democratic process
- The planning process
- Community resources
- Employment
- Education
- Health care, and
- A community safety response.

In disadvantaged areas many people have lost these entitlements and suffer vulnerability and crime and disorder as a consequence. I have attempted to show the links between loss of entitlements, breakdown in community cohesion and crime and disorder in the diagram above (top-right).

<sup>1</sup>Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981; New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982.

<sup>2</sup>In general, the poorer a household is, the more vulnerable it is to disruption in its income supply (formal or informal employment), its health, education, and access to resources and services. Vulnerability is both a condition of and a determinant of poverty.



## Links Between Loss of Entitlements, Breakdown in Community Cohesion and Crime and Disorder

What Sen's Entitlement Theory does is broaden the debate around which agencies are responsible for tackling crime and disorder. Next to the components in the diagram are those responsible for addressing the issue or delivering key services in that area. What we see is a higher incidence of agencies who are not principally involved with community safety but those whose responsibilities concern public service delivery and social and economic development.

To illustrate, recent research into disadvantaged areas in Newcastle, it became apparent that the lack of community resources, and specifically youth diversionary activities, were the main contributors to local crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour. It therefore becomes apparent that play and youth services, (both statutory and voluntary), are a dominant community safety service; a service which is not traditionally seen as a community safety agency and one which may fall outside of the main negotiations about delivering community safety.

Strengthening and improving people's entitlements will lead to safer communities: firstly, people will be unwilling to tolerate crime and disorder and be able to respond via community mobilisation and access to enforcement and preventative services; and secondly, and more profoundly, by allowing communities to engage in productive formal life without having to live through informal or illegal means. Increasing the socio-economic status of communities leads to strong entitlements, improved community cohesion and community safety.

Therefore, Sen implies that for sustainable community safety we need to begin with reducing disadvantage and vulnerability, and this is achieved through good service delivery and inward investment.



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