



# National Institute of Justice

Research in Brief

September 1994

## Case Studies of Community Anti-Drug Efforts

by Saul N. Weingart, Francis X. Hartmann, and David Osborne

In response to the illicit drug trade that became especially troublesome in the late 1980's and early 1990's, a remarkable community anti-drug movement has formed, with groups becoming active in some of the most afflicted neighborhoods. Armed only with their courage and imagination, citizens have devised a variety of clever strategies and tactics to

reclaim their streets and parks from drug traffickers. This Research in Brief examines a number of factors that gave rise to these community anti-drug efforts and sustained them over time.

A literature search and 13 onsite case studies revealed evidence of widespread grassroots community responses to illicit

drugs. Even a cursory review supports the conclusion that these responses may represent an important asset in the Nation's assault on drugs. If policymakers could better understand how to harness this community capacity, society could unleash a potent vehicle for reclaiming drug-plagued cities from the dealers and users who hold them hostage.

### Issues and Findings

*Discussed in the Brief:* Case studies of 13 grassroots community responses to illegal drugs in their neighborhoods.

*Key issues:* The wide variety of citizen initiatives revealed by the case studies showed how the groups assumed different levels of responsibility, functioned within social networks, and were influenced by various leaders. Assessing the success of their efforts involves determining improvement in the quality of life in the neighborhood with respect to the drug trade.

#### Key findings:

\* Effective community anti-drug efforts show wide variations in institutional robustness and in the breadth of approach to drug problems. In general, the researchers recommend that citizens be encouraged and helped to address drug problems from a perspective broader than that of drugs alone. In addition, community efforts that provide a comprehensive approach to drugs and crime are more likely to be sustained.

\* Policymakers need to appreciate and support community efforts focused primarily on drugs. Although some of these efforts were found to be fragile and tenuous, such informal associations can be an effective and viable entity in combating drug problems.

\* Useful forms of citizen anti-drug efforts have emerged in a variety of neighborhoods, including those seriously afflicted by crime and violence that were previously not considered likely to engage in this form of community action.

\* Citizen drug fighters emerge from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. They need and appropriately use both conventional and unconventional resources to meet their objectives.

\* Policymakers should consider carefully the broad scope of help they can provide citizens, which ranges from financial help to granting access to decisionmakers, from providing a meeting room to offering technical assistance on organizing and implementing program activities.

4- Police play a particularly pivotal role in citizens' assault on drugs. Many citizens initially regard the drug problem as one of obtaining adequate police protection but, in general, partnerships involving citizens, police, and other agencies provide useful strategies to combat drugs.

4- To forge productive relationships between police and citizens, police executives should actively support local patrol officers in working with citizen groups. Police officers should be encouraged to respond to all interested citizens, even those who initially may be rancorous and complain, since these individuals often evolve into hard-working partners with the police.

Since no single community response to drugs can be considered the best, research should continue to identify approaches that work best under specific conditions and in various neighborhood settings.

*Target audience:* Policymakers at the Federal, State, and local level; police officers; and community organizations.

By collecting detailed accounts of a series of anti-drag initiatives, the study aimed to identify important features of community groups that affect anti-drag efforts overtime. Careful study of the variables that are most critical to the initiation and maintenance of community anti-drag efforts may help policymakers identify those interventions that work best to promote the success of neighborhood drag fighters.

## Case selection and preparation

Using several computerized newspaper and magazine indexes to identify articles about neighborhoods and drags, the researchers collected 170 articles published between January 1986 and June 1990 that described 218 individuals or groups in 25 States and the District of Columbia that had planned or participated in a grassroots anti-drag activity. This list was augmented with entries from directories of citizen anti-drag groups.'

**Selection criteria.** Unlike other studies of the effect of citizen action on crime, this study selected only efforts that were citizen-initiated and citizen-controlled. The most important criterion was that they be truly grassroots,<sup>2</sup> voluntary operations. No initial presuppositions were made about how many members a group needed to have, how often it needed to meet, or the kinds and range of activities it needed to pursue.

The operating assumption was that the unit of analysis in this project was the citizen anti-drag "initiative": a group of individuals who joined together in an activity oriented against drags. Candidates needed to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- *Law enforcement, anti-drug approach:* Initiatives were sought that focused on suppressing drag dealing in particular communities. Groups that were primarily concerned with anti-

crime measures in general were eliminated from consideration.

- *Citizen-driven rather than agency-driven:* Researchers eliminated groups that were primarily vehicles of government agencies, including police departments and housing authorities, since the literature on community anti-crime programs already focuses on these kinds of efforts.

- *Variety of institutional affiliation:* The study sought some groups that were *operated* by and some that were *affiliated* with other organizations. These other organizations included neighborhood associations, churches, and city governments.

- *Length of time in existence:* Groups that had been active for at least 6 months but not longer than 3 or 4 years were sought, under the assumption that most older groups lose some of their grassroots identities.

- *Size:* A slight bias was developed toward smaller groups, which tended not to have significant funding sources and professional staff.

- *Geographic location:* The study sought geographic diversity by selecting groups in different parts of the country and different parts of cities (from impoverished to more affluent sections) that represented entire cities or one particular neighborhood.

Other key variables came under consideration but did not serve as full-fledged criteria in narrowing the field.

Census data were invaluable in helping to fill in the details of the neighborhood demographic profiles that became an important part of each of the community anti-drag cases. Interviews were the primary source of information; the number of people interviewed for each case varied but averaged 12.

## Summary of Case Studies

The following summaries encapsulate each of the 13 case studies<sup>3</sup> that are the

foundation of this analysis. While we encourage reading each case in its entirety, the summaries will familiarize the reader with the activities discussed in the cases and will enable the reader to understand the variety of community responses to drags from which the conclusions have been drawn.

## Ad Hoc Group Against Crime, Kansas City, Missouri

Kansas City's Ad Hoc Group Against Crime was formed in 1977 after a meeting between angry members of the black community and police officials to discuss the police response to a series of grisly homicides of young black women. The meeting was organized by Alvin Brooks, a former police officer who had become an assistant city manager.

While working as a city official, Brooks coordinated Ad Hoc, a loosely constructed grassroots volunteer association whose mission was handling police-community relations and fighting crime. But in 1985, the drag problem had begun to overwhelm Kansas City, and Ad Hoc turned most of its attention to combating drags. In addition to its existing activities, which included an anonymous witness hotline and crime-tip reward program, Ad Hoc initiated anti-drag marches, rallies, and drag-house "blitzes." These activities, particularly the blitzes, came to be supported by police, insofar as they had an effect on their targeted areas. The activities also brought plaudits to the police, who regularly appeared at Ad Hoc events.

The relationship between Ad Hoc and the Kansas City Police Department became close, in part a reflection of the dedication of the group to its cause, and in part as a result of the close working relationship between Brooks and the police department leadership. Ad Hoc members also worked closely with police and the district attorney to threaten landlords with civil forfeiture if they failed to evict drag-dealing tenants.

## Allerton Neighborhood Anti-Crime Committee, the Bronx, New York

When crack cocaine sellers overran the area in and around Zimmerman Park in the Bronx neighborhood of Allerton, the Neighborhood Initiatives Development Corporation (NIDC), a tenants' rights and housing revitalization organization, responded by establishing a Task Force on Drugs. This task force brought together representatives of the community and New York law enforcement to work on developing solutions to the problems related to the drug situation in the neighborhood.

Although this enhanced communication between law enforcement agencies and the community netted a number of drug arrests, a larger effort was needed on the

community side of the equation. With the help of the Citizens Committee for New York City, NIDC organized the Allerton Anti-Crime Committee, an organization that tried to enlist Allerton residents in an effort to improve the neighborhood through education and community activities.

By 1990, the Anti-Crime Committee began to tackle drug problems head-on. The situation in Zimmerman Park, the heart of the neighborhood's drug problem, called for drastic action. Some residents sought a 9:00 p.m. curfew in the park and others also wanted benches removed to prevent people from congregating. Although the police nominally accepted the idea of a curfew, they could not provide the level of enforcement to satisfy the most active community residents.

To keep the peace in the Zimmerman Park area, the Allerton Anti-Crime Committee returned to its roots: sponsoring events intended to bring people together. The police believed that significant change would require citizens to take an even more active role.

## Fairlawn Coalition, Washington, D.C.

When a cocaine market took over the Washington, D.C., neighborhood of Fairlawn in the late 1980's and police seemed unable to mitigate the situation, residents responded by openly patrolling their streets, using novel tactics to drive the drug dealers out of the neighborhood.

An earlier experience with a police crime watch program had taught Fairlawn resident Edward Johnson two lessons:

### Historical Overview

Citizen anti-drug initiatives first came to the attention of the general public and to some policymakers through a collection of startling newspaper and magazine articles. With dramatic headlines like "Neighbors Fight to End Drug Plague," "Residents Fed up With Dope Dens, Prowlers," and "Neighbors' Fury Shakes Drug Ring," news reports of citizen drug fighters have revealed a number of surprises.

First, citizen activists deployed an array of anti-drug tactics and strategies. In addition to the block watch programs that law enforcement agencies have promoted for many years, citizens developed a variety of creative responses aimed at reestablishing control over their neighborhoods. These included marches, innovative use of video cameras, street-corner vigils, public meetings, solidarity-building tactics, citizen foot patrols, and demonstrations at known drug houses. Other citizens initiated new partnerships with police departments, prosecutors' offices, and other city agencies to devise novel solutions to the illicit drug trade.

Second, innovative strategies flourished in desolate and seemingly disorganized neighborhoods—neighborhoods characterized by poverty and other disadvantages, with few apparent resources to draw upon. These efforts took place in neighborhoods with high levels of crime, violence, fear, and disorder.

Many researchers and community organizers believe that while crime may be an effective organizing issue, it has little value for sustaining citizen participation. Most believe that crime is a no-win issue, and few organizers would be willing to jeopardize their organization's survival by exclusively fighting crime.<sup>4</sup> Because information about crime and crime prevention has often increased residents' fear of crime and of one another, some prevention programs have had the paradoxical effect of decreasing citizen participation in crime-ridden areas.<sup>5</sup> As a result, many scholars and organizers believe that it is necessary for a citizen anti-crime group to broaden its agenda if it is to mount an effective response. Neighborhood groups involved in crime prevention activities have been

shown to be more effective and able to maintain active support if they deal with a variety of neighborhood problems as well as crime.<sup>6</sup>

Police researchers and police themselves have become increasingly aware of the importance of the community as a resource, especially within the context of the community policing approach. This awareness stemmed in part from programs that demonstrated civic willingness to aid the police in crime control and prevention.

Another approach that contributed to the idea that communities play a role in preventing crime was "crime prevention through environmental design." It is a strategy based on the concept that the layout and the management of buildings and neighborhoods can be changed to help citizens become more secure in their environments and make potential offenders less likely or able to commit criminal acts.<sup>7</sup> Crime prevention through environmental design focuses on physical design in the context of the ways that residents think about and utilize the area in which they live.

first, that citizens passively watching the street from inside their homes did little to deter crime in their neighborhood, and second, but more important, that it was the community's responsibility to help the police. With this in mind, Johnson began organizing neighbors to adopt a sense of personal responsibility for their community, which in turn would motivate police to take a stronger interest in the community as well.

Following a kickoff anti-drug rally, a number of residents organized themselves into nightly patrol groups to walk the streets of Fairlawn and act as a deterrent to drug trafficking. Wearing their trademark bright orange hats, the members of the Fairlawn Coalition first drove drug dealers from their positions merely by standing out on the streets with them, and later by bringing in video cameras, still cameras, and the bright light of publicity.

The local police district assigned a couple of officers to walk with the group, initially as protection. Then, as the police came to understand the dedication of the Coalition members, strong ties developed between the police and the neighborhood. The two patrol officers undertook creative problem-solving efforts to decrease criminal activity in the neighborhood, setting up roadblocks, tracking down outstanding warrants, and even knocking on doors of known drug dealers and asking them how business was. As the neighbors saw the commitment of the police to the neighborhood, they in turn began providing more useful information to aid in investigations. Soon a full-fledged police-community partnership was in place.

But the backbone of the Fairlawn Coalition's efforts remained the nightly patrols. Through these patrols, residents felt safer walking the streets of their neighborhood. The commitment of the Fairlawn Coalition to these patrols convinced police that a creative, fruitful

partnership could in fact improve the quality of life in the neighborhood.

### **Hill Street Crime Watch Committee, Boston, Massachusetts**

The Hill Street Crime Watch Committee was formed by residents of a troubled Boston neighborhood to help police crack down on the drug trade that was instilling fear and creating disorder there. The area, which one narcotics officer called "the worst section in the whole city," was well known to police as a major center for drug dealing.

Frustrated by conditions in her neighborhood, Hill Street resident Carmen Peralta called Christopher Hayes for help. Hayes, a civilian employee of the Boston Police Department who ran its Neighborhood Crime Watch Program, had already organized crime watch groups in about 100 Boston neighborhoods. After meeting with Peralta and other Hill Street residents and recognizing the extreme fear and danger present in the community, Hayes asked then Police Commissioner Francis (Mickey) Roache to meet with the group. The meeting between Roache and the Hill Street residents convinced the commissioner that drastic measures were needed.

To give the Hill Street neighborhood high priority, the police department established a special drug task force for that area. The Hill Street Crime Watch members were asked to participate in the drug reduction efforts by acting as informants, providing police with information that could lead to arrests and abatement of the problem.

However, after an intensive effort in the area, the cooperation began to break down. The task force was transferred from the local police district to the department's city wide Drug Control Unit. The Hill Street Crime Watch Committee members felt abandoned, as they

perceived that police efforts in the neighborhood waned while drug trafficking and related threats of violence continued. Intimidated relentlessly by drug dealers, the Crime Watch leader left the group and moved his family out of the country. Fear escalated among group members, and the effort fell apart.

### **Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

The Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition evolved from a number of disparate local grassroots efforts against drugs. The primary impetus for the coalition came from a group called Mantua Against Drugs (MAD), the brainchild of a University of Pennsylvania professor and an inner-city community activist. Russell Ackoff, the professor, and Herman Wrice, the activist, formed Mantua Against Drugs with a handful of other Mantua residents, after determining that better communication would be needed in order to maximize efforts to rid the city of a common enemy: drugs.

Wrice began a dialog between the local Philadelphia police district and the Mantua Against Drugs members. Meanwhile, Wrice and two MAD associates staged a raid on a crack house and, with the blessing of the police, boarded up the building. They held an anti-drug rally a week later. Other successes followed, and word began to spread throughout the city about activities in Mantua. Spinoff groups began to form in other neighborhoods, and alliances were formed among these organizations.

Tactics varied from neighborhood to neighborhood but generally revolved around community vigils. These vigils, staged outside troublesome crack houses, were a means to involve large numbers of people from the community, and the vigils in turn empowered the community to feel as though it could make progress against drugs.

As the police became more comfortable with working with MAD and other spinoff groups and publicity about the various anti-drug efforts grew, interest in a citywide anti-drug initiative increased. From this round of activity emerged the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition, an umbrella organization that distributed funds, resources, and information to smaller efforts against drugs.

## United Neighbors Against Drugs, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

In 1985, several years before MAD was initiated, United Neighbors Against Drugs (UNAD) was formed in response to growing drug-related problems in the Norris Square area of Philadelphia. At that time, the heads of a handful of local churches and social service agencies held an anti-drug rally in Norris Square Park, the center of the neighborhood. Attempting to build on this success, the organizers of UNAD held a number of subsequent "little rallies" in local churches, with the support and aid of the Norris Square Neighborhood Project.

At the same time, the Philadelphia police also contributed to the effort, adding a number of patrol officers to the area. In addition, relations between police and community groups and organizations in the area improved as the police increased their efforts to reach out to the community and keep it informed of police activities there.

However, the effects of the community's accomplishments soon faded. The drug dealers who had been driven from the park retaliated, violently assaulting two UNAD leaders on several occasions and harassing them on others. To make matters worse, a police captain who had done valuable work for the community was transferred to another district. By 1986, the initial UNAD effort dissolved, mostly because of fear and disillusionment.

Three years later, the drug situation had deteriorated badly in the nearby

Kensington neighborhood. A representative of the Neighborhood Project met with Herman Wrice, the activist who had formed the MAD organization. With MAD as the spark, the UNAD effort in Kensington was rekindled, using MAD as its model.

Participants in this second UNAD effort again tried to enlist police help and protection and, again, received support from a new, sympathetic police captain, Gerald Baker. In addition, UNAD successfully broadened its agenda, addressing not only the drug problem, but other, larger community issues.

UNAD members organized anti-drug vigils and marches, educational meetings, trash cleanups, youth activities, and housing initiatives designed to address the problems of abandoned buildings in the area. These activities, combined with a much-improved relationship with the local police district, had a positive effect on the community.

The specific anti-drug effort lasted little more than a year, and attendance at UNAD vigils and public meetings began to fall off. Captain Baker was transferred out of the district, just as his predecessor had been a few years earlier. UNAD continues in the Norris Square and Kensington neighborhoods, proud of its past accomplishments and proceeding with more of a focus on neighborhood rehabilitation.

## Whittier Block Watch, Denver, Colorado

Shortly after Jan Johnson and her family moved into the Denver neighborhood of Whittier, they discovered that it was rapidly deteriorating into a haven for drug trafficking. Because she felt the police were not responding as effectively as they might, Johnson and her neighbors mounted a persistent effort to document and report suspicious activity in the neighborhood and to hold police and other city agencies accountable for the condition of the neighborhood.

When the extent of the drug trade grew intolerable, Johnson organized a meeting of an existing neighborhood block group and other concerned residents. The new group, which members simply called Block Watch, had a two-pronged agenda. First, they wanted to convince the police to intensify the law enforcement response to the drugs. Second, Johnson and her fellow Block Watchers pressed zoning officials to implement a new nuisance ordinance that permitted the eviction of drug-dealing tenants.

Drug-related activity soon began to abate. Several months after Block Watch began, Johnson and her neighbors held their last meeting, convinced that they had accomplished much of what they set out to do by improving the quality of police enforcement in the area and reducing the level of drug trafficking. (The police, on the other hand, felt that the role of the neighborhood group had not been as large as the community believed.) Jan Johnson and her neighbors then began to play a more active leadership role in a larger, existing neighborhood association.

## REACH, Detroit, Michigan

Once a modest neighborhood of one- and two-family homes, Detroit's Pilgrim Village was hit hard by the crack epidemic of the mid-1980's. Flourishing crack houses, shootings, break-ins, and other criminal activity became commonplace, driving many homeowners away. In the midst of this spiral of decay, the 12th Street Baptist Church, led by Reverend Lee A. Earl, undertook a number of activities to stabilize the community.

Beginning in 1981, church collection plate funds were used to buy one or two abandoned houses per year, to renovate the structures with labor provided by church members, and to sell the properties at a discount to needy members of the congregation or community. In 1986, the church created REACH (Reach Everyone, Administer Care and Hope) as a separate entity, responsible for the housing development program, a food

distribution program for low-income residents, and a summer youth enrichment program. Other services were gradually added, including a Narcotics Anonymous group, a day care center, a teen recreation program, a senior citizens' outreach program, and a community development corporation.

REACH also organized a citizens' anti-drug committee called the REACH Community Group in 1988. The group has staged several spirited anti-drug demonstrations, including a "funeral" for crack, and has sponsored neighborhood cleanup efforts.

By virtue of its close affiliation with the church, REACH reaped a number of benefits. It shared personnel and office space. It benefited from Reverend Earl's reputation and his gift for public relations. Because it was established as a distinct, nonprofit organization, REACH was able to obtain separate liability insurance and to solicit and accept funds from government agencies, foundations, and corporations that would not have donated funds directly to the church. In its first 3 years as a separate entity, REACH's annual budget grew to \$450,000.

## **Stella Link Revitalization Coalition, Houston, Texas**

Link Valley, once a comfortable neighborhood in the heart of Houston, had become an open-air, drive-through drug bazaar. Only 1 out of 10 available residential units was occupied, and the abandoned units, broken fences, litter, and disrepair made the area a convenient location for drug dealers and, in the eyes of the police, a dangerous site. In addition, Link Valley offered easy access for drug users. It was close to a highway, allowing consumers to drive in from other areas, make a purchase, and leave quickly.

Police efforts to control the rising tide of drugs in the area had not achieved the hoped-for impact. Arrests, though substantial in number, did not make any

headway. The police, like Sergeant J.W. Collins, who was assigned to Link Valley, began to feel that a new strategy was necessary. It would be two-pronged, focusing on the buyers rather than the dealers themselves and addressing the physical decay that seemed to be contributing to the problems of the area.

The turning point was the murder of an elderly resident in 1988 in a neighborhood close to Link Valley and the arrest of her assailants soon after in a Link Valley drug den. Representatives of nine neighborhood associations organized themselves against drugs and formed the Stella Link Revitalization Coalition. After meeting with police, the coalition soon became committed to the new police strategy, offering to become an equal partner in cleaning up Link Valley.

With the support of superiors in the police department and the collaboration of the coalition, Houston police cordoned off Link Valley to prevent drive-through drug buys and conducted a 100-officer sweep of abandoned buildings to look for squatters and drug traffickers. At the same time, the coalition coordinated a massive cleanup of the area, picking up trash, cutting down weeds, and hauling out garbage. Coalition members also worked with city agencies to facilitate the enforcement of health and housing ordinances. As a result of these efforts—keeping drug customers away and making drug dealing less convenient—the Link Valley cocaine market vanished.

## **The Blockos, Manhattan, New York**

During the first half of 1989, street-level drug dealing entered the middle-class neighborhood of 30th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues in Manhattan. About 15 residents met with a police department Community Affairs Officer to see what could be done. The police, the officer said, already were stretched too thin and residents could do little else except call 911 if they saw street dealing. After holding a few more meetings, with

more and more people attending each, the residents decided to go out into the street as a group and simply stand near the dealers. The plan had immediate results: two dealers joined by a group of these residents muttered, "Looks like we're not wanted," and left.

The second night that this tactic was tried, drug dealers responded by mimicking the group's tactics, bolstering their number in an attempt to intimidate the residents. When the residents failed to be intimidated, none of the dealers returned. The "Blockos," a nickname allegedly coined by a disgruntled dealer, continued their street patrols, sending 10 to 15 men and women of all ages onto the neighborhood streets to stand beside any dealers they saw. They changed their hours as the drug dealers changed theirs.

The Blockos employed a wide range of resources. A graphic artist provided posters to announce the meeting. A friend of a Blockos member persuaded the *New York Times* to publish a story on them. Through advertising connections, *Crane's Weekly* and *Ad Week* covered their story. TV stations also ran stories on the group. Two or three members who were not employed devoted time to organizing and maintaining interest in the group. The group also received assistance from the Manhattan District Attorney's Office.

Their operation was soon successful; dealers were pushed farther downtown. As the dealers' territory shifted, the Blockos were joined by the 29th Street Block Association, expanding the area of operation. Although the group no longer conducts its nightly patrols, it has the capacity to revive and respond effectively should the need arise.

## **210 Stanton, Manhattan, New York**

On Manhattan's Lower East Side, 210 Stanton is the address of a building that in 1985 became the headquarters of a major drug selling operation. Buyers lined the hallways and prostitutes came

in to buy drags, scaring tenants away from mobilizing the tenants' association to protect themselves.

One resident, Marie Christopher, contacted Felice Kirby, a community activist with the Citizens Committee for New York City, a nonprofit organization that provides training to police and community groups to help them coordinate anti-crime strategies. Together with Sergeant Michael Walsh, a police department Community Patrol Officer, they devised a strategy to evict the dealer.

Community Patrol Officers guarded the entrances to the building, requiring all visitors to sign in. If they were headed to the apartment where the drag dealing originated, officers accompanied them, on the pretext that the building was infested with drag dealers.

Meanwhile, Christopher organized the residents' response. She persuaded the building manager to file a site complaint in Housing Court against the dealer on behalf of the building's management corporation. Christopher then asked the Manhattan District Attorney's Community Affairs Unit to help advise residents on ways to build a better case against "problem" residents. Information provided by residents helped solidify the case against the apartment where most of the drag dealing took place; search warrants were issued, charges were filed, and the resident convicted. In his wake, a revitalized tenants' association emerged, working to improve the quality of life for the building's residents.

## At-Taqua Mosque, Brooklyn, New York

Late in 1988, 2 years after crack dealers invaded the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, members of At-Taqua Mosque decided to take their Brooklyn community back from the dealers. They soon targeted a nearby apartment building that hosted a number of drag dealers. Armed with martial arts weapons, five mosque members, including the Iman, entered the building and ordered the

## Community Anti-Drug Tactics

An organization's strategy sets out the broad guiding principles that define the approach to a problem. An organization's tactics, in contrast, are the set of particular activities that define the strategy in operational terms and bring it to life. Citizen drug fighters have invented, adopted, or adapted a remarkable battery of anti-drug tactics to their own needs.

**Grass roots vigilance.** In many neighborhoods, citizens collect information about the neighborhood drug market in a systematic, organized, and detailed fashion and then communicate the information to the police department. Information exchange is often an informal process. Citizen drug fighters in almost half of the groups in these case studies met regularly with police officers to discuss the drug problem in the neighborhood and to convey information about drug dealing.<sup>8</sup> In addition, citizens organized formal crime-reporting schemes, which included block watch programs (Denver, Boston, and Kansas City)<sup>9</sup> and hotlines (Kansas City).

**Establishing a presence on the street.** A second tactic was to take an open, public stand against the traffickers. This included crack house raids (Kansas City and Philadelphia), raids and marches, citizen patrols—regular

evening events in which small groups of residents searched the neighborhood for signs of the drug trade (Washington, D.C.)—and street-corner vigils (Philadelphia). In this study, the vigil served as a particularly appropriate instrument to combat drug dealing in well-established locations, while the patrol seemed better suited to a mobile and fluid drug trade.

**Advocacy on behalf of the neighborhood.** A third tactic involved citizens approaching the authorities—usually the police—to help them combat drug trafficking in the neighborhood (see "Quality of Relationship With the Police"). In addition, citizen drug fighters in many locations sought to influence the behavior of city agencies. UNAD activists in Philadelphia, wearing their white hardhats and T-shirts, encouraged greater judicial accountability by attending court proceedings for suspected neighborhood drug dealers. Stella Link Revitalization Coalition members pressured Houston landlords and government agencies to secure or tear down abandoned or unsafe Link Valley buildings. The activists facilitated this process by identifying the title holders of Link Valley properties. Members of the Denver Block Watch reported excessive noise, overcrowding, and truant children to city offices.

dealers to leave. The dealers called the police, who arrested the five Muslims and charged them with felony weapons possession.

Undaunted, Iman Ibrahim Bilal met with 79th Precinct police and proposed a strategy to end the drag dealing that plagued the neighborhood. Police would conduct a drag sweep, which would be followed by 40 days of Muslim patrols to take back the neighborhood. The police agreed to the plan.

The members of the At-Taqua Mosque also had the media on their side. The

apartment building arrests drew a sympathetic response from media covering the event, and favorable coverage continued once the strategy began. After the police "swept" the area of drag dealers, the Muslims followed with 40 days of patrols, using walkie-talkies to connect patrol groups on the blocks surrounding the mosque.

The effort was successful. Dealers fled from the area. Perhaps more important, relations between the Muslims and the police grew strong, based on their positive interaction in designing and implementing the strategy.

## Umma, Brooklyn, New York

Five Muslims who were concerned about the level of crime in their North Flatbush, Brooklyn, community founded Umma, a diverse grassroots initiative seeking to reduce crime and improve the quality of life for residents of that neighborhood. Led by Ed Powell, the organization initiated two-man patrols to break up sidewalk dice-shooting, reduce the volume on blaring radios, walk children to and from school, and report burglaries and drug sales to police. Umma—which means "community" in Arabic and Swahili—has some 100 members, representing the diverse ethnic and religious makeup of North Flatbush.

Umma has sought to improve relations between the community and the police, working closely with police to develop a neighborhood crime hotline, as well as short- and long-term anti-drug strategies for the 70th Precinct. By cultivating this relationship and serving as a link between the community and police, Umma has helped the rest of the community to become more accepting of the police. The police, in turn, have come to trust Umma members and credit them with improving the quality of life in the community.

## Case Study Analysis

This wide variety of citizen initiatives reveals that different factors characterize the groups' formation, operations, and successes. The study analyzed the ways the groups demonstrated various levels of citizen responsibility and approaches to dealing with fear and danger, and how they responded to different types of leaders, functioned within social networks, related to other neighborhood institutions, and expanded their roles beyond eliminating drug traffickers from their neighborhoods. How these factors apply to defining the success of a citizen initiative was then explored.

## Citizen responsibility

The hallmark of the "new" citizen drug-fighting initiatives is the shift in the locus of responsibility for dealing with the drug problem away from the formal, constituted authority of the police department to the citizens themselves. For example, the Fairlawn (Washington, D.C.) group came to the conclusion that "the only solution was us.... If we wasn't [sic] willing to pay the price to save us," no one else would either. In Houston, the Stella Link Revitalization Coalition was the first group that one city employee had seen take the position: "We will do this together, and what can we do as a part of this?" Citizens in Fairlawn and Stella Link, as well as the Philadelphia-based Mantua, were willing to do more than complain; they insisted on sharing responsibility for solving the drug problem.

In contrast, Boston's Hill Street Crime Watch Committee and Boston Police Department officials confirmed and validated citizens' conventional definition of the problem facing their Hill Street neighborhood: there was insufficient police presence to suppress the drug trade. By defining the problem as an undersupply of police services and the solution as a commitment of police resources, the citizen role was minor. Citizens should "lay low" and report crime, and police should do the rest.

The Stella Link Revitalization Coalition's story illustrates how redefinition of the problem can inform the choice of strategy and in turn yield substantial improvements in solving neighborhood drug problems. As in Hill Street, the dominant strategy had been to focus on arresting drug criminals. In Houston, when residents saw there were always more arrests to make, the problem was redefined, this time from an economic perspective. Since markets are driven by consumer demand, they reasoned, reducing demand should dry up

the market and force sellers to take their goods elsewhere.

This created opportunities for citizens to participate in the Link Valley operation. Since physical decay was a problem, citizens organized a cleanup. They identified owners of Link Valley properties. They worked with a variety of city agencies, including health, sanitation, and housing, in order to bring rundown buildings up to code. As the operation took shape, a sharp division of labor emerged between the roles of citizens and police. Citizens did not patrol the streets or establish street-corner vigils but participated with city agencies as planners and as behind-the-scenes facilitators. By limiting vehicular access to Link Valley and advising motorists that they were entering a high-crime area, police were able to close down the drug market completely.

## Citizen action in the face of danger and fear

Indirect evidence about drug dealers' willingness to make and carry out threats of violence emerged from the case studies. The level of violence is important because it translates into the ambient level of fear in the neighborhood. Some drug markets create so much fear in the community that the residents' ability to mount a community response is severely compromised, as it was on Boston's Hill Street. Other markets may engender some fear among residents, but do not have such a chilling effect on citizen action. In the Washington, D.C., and the two Philadelphia case studies, citizens took to the streets in their effort to fight drugs, placing themselves in a most vulnerable position.

The behavior of drug dealers in the Washington and Philadelphia neighborhoods seems quite different from the behavior of dealers in Boston. The idea that neighborhood drug markets differ significantly from one another is consis-



tent with what has been reported in the small number of participant-observer studies that describe the life of young men who trade drugs on inner-city streets.<sup>10</sup> At present, however, there is not enough information to determine whether the vulnerability of a drug market to citizen intervention is due to the way the market is organized or to the efficacy of a particular citizen anti-drug initiative.

**Achieving visibility and building strength in numbers.** The more participants that organizers could rally together for a particular event, the less likely that drug traffickers would risk an attack. At the same time, an enormous public turnout communicated a message to both the law-abiding citizens and the drug dealers that residents could still control the neighborhood. Organizers in the Bronx staged a "Unity Day" in Zimmerman Park that attracted many residents. REACH organizers held a series of spirited public rallies in their Detroit neighborhood. Fairlawn activists in Washington held a rally and march early on. And organizers in Philadelphia's Mantua and Norris Square neighborhoods held regular rallies and marches before each vigil began. Even a relatively small gathering of neighborhood residents seems to mitigate the fear of retaliation if the residents can manage to attract the news media, especially television.

**Keeping a low profile.** On the other hand, because prominent citizen anti-drug activists become ready targets for disgruntled drug dealers, citizen activists in several communities tried to conceal their anti-drug activities. In the Bronx, for example, the early members of the Allerton Anti-Drug Committee decided to recruit additional members by reaching out only to close acquaintances. A low-key, informal recruitment strategy, Citizens Committee consultants suggested, would be less apt to attract attention than a public campaign.

Observing, recording, and reporting crime to the police from the relative safety of their own homes seemed to offer a reasonable measure of comfort to neighborhood crime watchers on Boston's Hill Street, and in other cities (such as Denver and Kansas City) that used this tactic. However, collaborative police advice to members of the Hill Street Crime Watch Committee to "lay low" in the face of danger resulted eventually in the demise of citizens' efforts. In these kinds of cases, significant external resources, often in the form of police presence, may be necessary to permit citizen groups to participate, especially to participate overtly.

**Police protection.** Having the support and cooperation of the police department has been seen to embolden citizens. In Philadelphia's Norris Square neighborhood, UNAD members inadvertently elicited police participation by planning a rally in a dangerous area. When the police captain realized that the citizens were intent on marching regardless of his misgivings, he set up a search light on top of a building for UNAD's first vigil. It served as a potent symbol of the police department's intention to expose drug criminals to the light of justice, support for the efforts of citizen anti-drug activists, and commitment to protect citizen drug fighters from harm (especially from rooftop snipers).

**Drug fighter exchange programs.** But fearing that continued street vigils and other somewhat confrontational anti-drug tactics would expose them to retribution by local drug retailers, members of various groups within the Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition (such as MAD and UNAD) took turns participating in vigils in neighborhoods outside their own. These "exchange programs" provided nearby neighborhoods with additional participants and an injection of enthusiasm and also helped to reduce the danger. Since local dealers were less likely to recognize a vigil-keeper who lived in

another neighborhood, the visitors were in less danger of retaliation.

**Avoiding confrontation.** In Washington, D.C.'s, Fairlawn area, the citizen group decided not to invite the Guardian Angels or Nation of Islam into the neighborhood because they feared that these groups' aggressive tactics could escalate into violence. Instead, they included men and women aged 40 and above in their nightly patrols to create a presence on the street but to pose no threat to the physical well-being of dealers. As a result, the Fairlawn patrols provoked no retaliation.

**Rapid communication and assistance.** In Fairlawn, citizens also used walkie-talkies to ensure rapid, two-way communication on the street. Furthermore, by stationing one citizen at home with a walkie-talkie, mobile patrols could readily relay information to the police. Patrols would transmit their observations over the radio, and the individual at home would telephone the information immediately to the police department.

## Types of Leaders

Two groups of individuals played leadership roles. The first group was composed of neighborhood residents who decided to do something to address the drug problem. The second comprised professional community organizers, individuals who did not necessarily live in the community but who provided advice, inspiration, and resources to the group. Individuals who assumed positions of leadership in the neighborhood anti-drug effort were usually citizen-activists rather than professional organizers. In Washington, D.C., two of the Fairlawn leaders had been active in a number of voluntary organizations such as the PTA and Boy Scouts.

The situation was similar in other cities. Although none of the organizers of Boston's Hill Street Crime Watch Committee had previously belonged to orga-

nizations that fought drags or crime, several principal players had the combination of interpersonal skills and work or volunteer experience that equipped them to become leaders. A neighborhood that to some observers may seem deficient in human resources may have a ready store of able individuals with leadership talents that have developed in a different context.

While nonprofessional citizen-activists played leadership roles in Houston, Boston, Washington, and Denver, professional community organizers exercised leadership in other sites. Herman Wrice and Sister Carol Keck in Philadelphia, Al Brooks in Kansas City, Danny Bakewell in Los Angeles, Chris Hayes in Boston, and Andrew Laiosa in New York are examples of professionals who played important roles in citizen anti-drag initiatives. While the nonprofessional activists described above served as anti-drag organizers on nights and weekends, some professionals' full-time paid occupations were those of community organizers.

## Effect of social networks

Existing social networks often serve as the nucleus for the formation of anti-drag efforts. Organizers begin with friends and neighbors, expressing concern about neighborhood problems and sharing ideas about plausible solutions. The groups then begin to organize formally and to reach out for additional participants. The Fairlawn Coalition, however, is an example of an anti-drag effort that created and then solidified relationships that did not necessarily predate the anti-drag initiative. Early organizers contacted the minister at the Garden Memorial Presbyterian Church, who helped plan a community rally and march. The coalition announced the rally and march with hand-lettered flyers and invitations to ministers, representatives of city organizations, and other leaders in the Washington area.

An outstanding feature of the Fairlawn Coalition was the creation of a cohesive

social group from the citizens who agreed to participate. The nightly patrols, each begun with a prayer, and the barbecues, picnics, and parties forged a durable camaraderie that included the police officers who patrolled the neighborhood as well as the citizens. In sociological terms, the "purposive incentives" associated with stifling the drag trade were initially augmented and subsequently transformed into "solidarity incentives"; i.e., collegial feelings for one another.<sup>11</sup> This transformation may account for the difference in character between anti-drag groups like Fairlawn's and many of the traditional crime prevention activities that social scientists have examined.<sup>12</sup>

## Role of neighborhood institutions

Although individual citizens have started drag-fighting groups with little or no outside assistance, standing neighborhood institutions often play an important role in establishing new groups. They are almost always a major part of the supporting network that is generated. In some cases, a standing institution will create an anti-drag initiative to address a problem or need that the institution's leaders have identified. Subsequently, the anti-drag initiative may spin off and become a separate entity.

Several cases illustrated how an anti-drag initiative can evolve from an existing neighborhood institution. In Kansas City, the anti-drag committee, established in 1985, grew out of the earlier Ad Hoc, established 8 years earlier. In the Allerton area of the Bronx, the Anti-Crime Committee was created in 1989 from the NIDC established in 1982. And in Link Valley, the Stella Link Revitalization Coalition emerged from existing neighborhood institutions.

Churches were the significant neighborhood institution in several groups: REACH in Detroit, Fairlawn in Washington, D.C., and UNAD and MAD in Philadelphia. The sponsorship of a local

church can play a significant role in fostering the work of citizen activists by providing them with facilities and materials, staff time, free publicity from the Sunday pulpit, and a credibility they might not otherwise have. "If you have preachers involved, you have access to a lot of people who will be getting information from some very credible sources, people they respect," according to Reverend Floyd J. Naters-Gamarra of Philadelphia's Norris Square.

## Political clout

Anti-drag organizations can become a large or important constituency that decisionmakers cannot ignore. In addition to the number of citizens who participate in an anti-drag initiative, the group's influence is also a function of the reputation and credibility of the participants, their degree of organization, the sophistication of their strategies, and their ability to draw media attention.

For example, in Houston, since the Stella Link Revitalization Coalition represented 6,000 homes, it could muster considerable political clout. Size alone commanded respect from the city councilman, the assistant police chief, and city health and housing officials who agreed to meet with coalition representatives.

Kansas City's Ad Hoc Group Against Crime was also able to develop sufficient clout to wield independent influence over the city government. Ad Hoc is distinct among the study groups in that it was, from the beginning, a citywide organization without allegiance to a specific area. It was formed after political leaders asked the assistant city manager to meet with leaders of the city's black community. This request must have reflected the politicians' judgment about the level of tension in the minority community following the murder of several young black women. Ad Hoc quickly became an established institution. Its activities were well known in the community through fundraising on

## Quality of Relationship With the Police

The case studies present ample evidence that the police response to citizens' efforts profoundly affects the character and success of the venture. The quality of the relationship between police and citizens is a decisive factor in determining the course and character of the community response to drugs.

### Early confrontations

With few exceptions, citizen drug fighters complained bitterly about the amount and quality of the police services that they received early on. Drug dealers swamped the neighborhood, many seemed to say, because the police were ineffective in keeping them out. These sentiments led to confrontational meetings between citizens and police in Philadelphia, Denver, Boston, Kansas City, and Washington.

In Kansas City, the mayor and a member of the city council called a meeting between the police and black leaders in the wake of the murders of a number of young black women. The meeting, planned as a session for 100 representatives of the black community, became a contentious public forum where angry residents confronted police and city officials.

Unfortunately for the police, demands for better service are one of the earliest and most consistent responses in the citizens' repertoire. The police, if they are to meet the needs of the communities they are charged to serve and protect, must have the professionalism that enables them to see community anger as an opportunity to address problems of drugs and crime. They may find it counterproductive to interpret such anger as a rejection of the role of the police or to take it as a personal affront. Anger is rather a reaching out on the part of the community, and responsible police depart-

ments will see past the heat of confrontation to seize the moment.

### Building a relationship

One of the critical features in the development of a productive relationship between police and community is the establishment of contact with a senior police official who is willing to take the citizens' group seriously and to work with it. A single receptive police official can have a profound effect on the development of a community response to drugs, as shown by the contributions of officers like Captain Beheler and Sergeant Collins, in Fairlawn and Link Valley, respectively. Yet, no department had a formal protocol for dealing with citizen anti-drug groups, or a policing philosophy that encouraged officers to be responsible for promoting and nurturing citizen efforts. The officers developed the relationships not because of their department's philosophy and organization, but despite it.

### Hazards of conventional policing

Aggressive law enforcement remains a crucial prerequisite to citizen action in many of the most disorganized neighborhoods, but this approach, which involves traditional law enforcement, is often insufficient. The Boston case is a compelling example of what can happen when police employ traditional strategies in their interactions with citizen drug fighters without using community resources to maximum effect.

In Boston's Hill Street neighborhood, then Police Commissioner Roache responded to citizen complaints with the traditional response of establishing a three-person special task force to break the back of the drug trade. Here, the priorities of the police drove citizens' behavior: The residents learned how to provide detailed, reliable, and rapidly executed reports to police officers, often dialing into a telephone beeper carried by the patrol sergeant. These measures

helped the police dramatically increase the number of arrests. Although the police response was a genuine effort to assist, they retained total control over the planning and execution of the enhanced enforcement effort.

Police officials rated the Hill Street neighborhood as a high priority because of the severity of the problem (drug trafficking, gangs, and violence). They focused less on the nature of the solution (competent partners at the grass roots). In other words, police involvement in Boston derived from an overall law enforcement strategy for the city and the need to respond to problem areas, but to do so in the traditional way. The police response included but was not based on close relations with the residents, shared aspirations for a neighborhood, and personal commitments. (By contrast, the Houston police were heavily involved in the Link Valley anti-drug effort and did not use arrests as a major means to solve problems.) Thus, when the police special task force was transferred from the Boston neighborhood, the community's relationship with the police reverted to the status quo ante, as citizens' former misgivings about the commitment of the police and their trustworthiness reemerged.

The residents might well have asked: How could everyone do the right thing with so little to show for it? The answer may have something to do with the "enforcement-resistant" character of the drug market on Hill Street. But it also implicates the police strategy, which could have more fully exploited the creative solutions that the citizens have the potential to deliver. The Boston cases illustrate the need for law enforcement to leverage, not replace, citizen initiative. When the police use conventional responses, they often assign citizens to narrow and limited roles and thus reduce the likelihood that those citizens will invent novel tactics or participate in innovative partnerships.

black-owned radio stations and through the programs it organized. The mayor helped to raise funds on behalf of Ad Hoc, and the assistant city manager continued his leadership role.

## Services to the community

Citizens organized a variety of activities to prevent drug abuse, assist crime victims, and improve the physical environment.

**Prevention programs.** Citizen groups organized an extensive array of drug prevention programs directed primarily to neighborhood youths. These programs included initiatives that emphasized drug education, employment, counseling, and recreation. The Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition organized a summer youth olympics. Detroit's REACH organized a youth basketball association. Kansas City's Ad Hoc Group created a program in which adult volunteers taught young people about the realities of prison and the criminal justice system; Ad Hoc activists also ran a counseling program for first-time juvenile offenders. The Allerton Anti-Crime Committee in the Bronx sponsored basketball tournaments and dance contests for neighborhood kids, organized an anti-drug play for teenagers, and brought a drug education program to a local school.

Some programs also served adults. For example, both REACH and the Allerton Anti-Crime Committee set up Narcotics Anonymous groups. The Allerton group also distributed fliers that listed treatment programs for drug addicts.

**Victim assistance.** Kansas City's Ad Hoc Group developed a set of victim assistance programs as part of its broad anti-crime mission. They included the organization of volunteers to install locks for elderly citizens who had been victimized, a counseling program for victims of sexual assault, a program to help resolve family disputes, and an effort to pay the expenses incurred by crime witnesses when they testify in court.

**Neighborhood improvement.** Since physical deterioration of a neighborhood can create an environment conducive to drug trafficking, citizen drug fighters responded with efforts to remove trash, "dress up" the street, and promote redevelopment. During MAD-sponsored vigils in Philadelphia, participants brought garbage bags to clean up street corners where drugs were regularly sold. Stella Link Revitalization Coalition participants in Houston filled 10 semi-trailer-size dumpsters with 250 cubic yards of trash on a single Saturday. REACH sponsored flower planting and curb painting and initiated an ambitious effort to renovate abandoned houses in the neighborhood.

## Defining effectiveness

**Longevity and political clout.** The success of an anti-drug effort—size, political clout, longevity, and the desire and capacity to take a comprehensive approach to neighborhood quality of life issues—enhances the possibility of impact. An anti-drug effort that reaches this stage of institutionalization can carry out a systematic assessment of interrelated neighborhood problems and of resources available, marshal a broad array of resources, develop opportunities for employing various tactics, and promote a comprehensive response to local drug problems. Almost any neighborhood would be substantially aided by having such assets at its disposal.

Nevertheless, since most neighborhoods do not and will not develop large and well-organized anti-drug initiatives, measuring a community response to drugs in these organizational terms alone is unsatisfactory. The most striking counter example is the case of the Blockos in Manhattan. In order to discourage street-corner drug traffickers who had moved into the neighborhood, Blocko members began to patrol the streets of their neighborhood on weekend evenings from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. Like members of the Washington, D.C.,

Fairlawn Coalition, the Blockos would stop, stand, and stare at the traffickers until they moved along. Within a short time, the dealers had left the neighborhood and the Blockos decided to end their patrols. A similar sequence of events took place in Denver's Whittier neighborhood, where the Block Watch was so successful, in the view of its members, that it went out of business within seven months of its establishment. The fact that these efforts did not result in the creation of durable institutions does not make them failures.

Despite general agreement among organizers and researchers that anti-drug efforts addressing a variety of related problems from a more comprehensive perspective are more desirable, citizens do not always aspire to create robust and long-lasting institutions. Citizens have other interests and activities that compete with their commitment to fighting drugs. To expect that grassroots citizen anti-drug initiatives must develop into large, well-integrated organizations seems inappropriate. Furthermore, the Blockos and the Whittier Crime Watch left an important legacy: the latent capacity for mobilization of a citizens' response if one should be required in the future.

**Objective measures.** A second approach to defining the success of an anti-drug initiative is its impact on the level of drug dealing in the community. This perspective relies on objective measures of effectiveness rather than on an assessment of the group's viability as an organization. A successful anti-drug initiative, in this view, yields significant, measurable, and relatively long-lasting reductions in the level of neighborhood drug trafficking.

The cases documented measures of success that, despite being empirically based, are tenuous. The Stella Link Revitalization Coalition and the Houston Police Department together reduced Link Valley calls for police service by 44 percent, and serious crime in surrounding neighborhoods fell by as much as 12

percent. In the Fairlawn neighborhood of Washington, serious crime dropped 20 percent between 1988 and 1989, corresponding with the Fairlawn Coalition's anti-drug activities. These examples, however, do not form a sufficient empirical basis from which conclusions can be drawn.

Since statistical information is often inconclusive or unavailable, evaluators used another measure of success: the accomplishment of specific objectives. For example, the Kansas City Ad Hoc Group's "close-a-drug-house-month" campaign in February 1989 logged 600 telephone calls in identifying 217 suspected drug houses; 25 drug houses were closed during this 1-month campaign.

Different objectives can mean differences in what constitutes citizens' assessments of success. The objective of completely cleansing a neighborhood of drug trafficking may not seem realistic (or even necessary) from the citizens' point of view. For example, in Denver, community activists felt that the drug problem had been largely solved, even though two crack houses continued to operate in the area.

A successful community response to drugs should be large enough and last long enough to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood with respect to the drug trade. It need not obliterate all signs of drug trafficking, and it need not result in the establishment of lasting institutions. The initiative could wax and wane, or it could lay dormant for a time. Some recognizable outcome is necessary for the activity to count as a success, but the effect may be modest.

## Implications and Recommendations

Several implications can be drawn from the analysis of the cases, and recommendations for policymakers can be offered.

*Effective community anti-drug efforts show wide variations in institutional robustness and in the breadth of approach to drug problems.* Those that are able to develop and operate from institutional strength, see drug problems from a variety of perspectives, have access to a spectrum of resources, and connect responses to broader neighborhood quality of life issues seem more likely to maintain citizen cohesiveness around other issues. However, not every community will have the desire or capacity to operate from this broader perspective.

*Recommendations:* Citizens who are involved in community anti-drug efforts should be encouraged and helped to address drug problems from a perspective broader than that of drugs alone. This type of perspective allows the development of a variety of mutually supporting strategies. Encouraging it also allows citizens to think more inclusively about what resources (among them those of private and public agencies) might be available. Still, even anti-drug efforts whose activists are unable or unwilling to move beyond a primary focus on drug problems should be encouraged to do what they are able and willing to do.

*Community anti-drug efforts that are specifically and primarily focused on drugs are fragile and tenuous.*

Policymakers must recognize this quality and learn to appreciate and approach these efforts on their own terms. Rather than robust, durable, and well-established corporate entities, community anti-drug groups are often small, informal associations. Groups like Manhattan's Blockos or Denver's Block Watch stayed in existence only long enough to achieve their objectives. Others, like Philadelphia's United Neighbors Against Drugs, have had dormant periods, either as a result of their own success or because their members were intimidated by threats and violence.

Dormancy can represent a state of readiness, in which the community capacity for drug fighting exists but is not currently mobilized.

*Recommendations.* Police officials and representatives of other organizations that fight drugs can easily overlook a viable community anti-drug initiative if they do not know what to look for. Community anti-drug efforts are rarely organized as large, nonprofit institutions with offices, officers, and budgets. If policymakers seek out only well-established organizations, they will underestimate the informal capacity for drug fighting that exists in neighborhoods. Several Federal programs have approached established community organizations exclusively.<sup>13</sup> Future programs must reach deeper into the community to provide assistance to the smallest and most unstructured associations.

In order to reach down into the community, government agencies should begin to cultivate working relationships with institutions that are located closer to the grassroots. Community foundations, churches, and neighborhood service providers are among the institutions that could serve as intermediaries between government agencies and local anti-drug groups.<sup>14</sup>

*Citizen drug fighters emerge from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.* Some of these individuals have previous professional experience battling community problems, while others are concerned citizens who simply have had enough of the effects of the drug problem on their neighborhood. Community institutions also step forward to provide some unexpected or unanticipated resources. Citizen drug fighters need and will use a considerable variety of unconventional resources. Institutions like churches, philanthropic organizations,

and neighborhood development corporations offer the citizen anti-drug initiative financial resources, in-kind services, and moral support. Professional organizers act as catalyst, liaison, facilitator, and cheerleader.

*Recommendations.* Policymakers not only must recognize citizen drug fighters but should consider carefully the kind of help they need. While financial support is always useful, citizen drug fighters require other resources as well. In many cases, being taken seriously by the police and other public officials makes a dramatic difference in citizens' morale and in their willingness to participate. By sharing responsibility with citizens, by granting them access to senior decisionmakers, and by providing citizens with feedback on the impact of their activities, officials encourage additional participation.

Access to telephones, photocopiers, and meeting rooms facilitates citizens' ability to organize a campaign. To the extent that financial resources are available to promote citizen drug-fighting initiatives, a little bit can go a long way. Distinctive T-shirts, caps and hard hats, portable two-way radios, and other "tools of the trade" may enhance the safety of citizens on patrol and on vigil and promote camaraderie. Funds for advice about organizing and technical assistance can be a sound investment if the professionals know the neighborhood well, have experience and a commitment to anti-drug organizing, and are well positioned in the community or in the government to facilitate citizen access to decisionmakers.

*Of the resources that citizens' groups utilize in their assault on drugs, the police play a particularly pivotal role.* Because citizens and police share a common interest in reducing crime, drugs,

and disorder, they seem like natural allies. However, the relationship of the two is not always without problems. Many citizens' groups regard the drug problem as one of inadequate police protection. And it is true that only the police have the power to initially act in neighborhood situations in which the threat of violence is strong and persistent. But a conventional law enforcement approach, in which police retain all the power and responsibility for fighting drugs and crime, is likely to undermine citizen initiative and contribute to the persistence of drugs in the neighborhood. Shared responsibility for community security is essential.

*Recommendations.* In order for citizens and police to forge more productive relationships, police executives must be willing to support the initiative of local commanders who go out on a limb to help citizen drug fighters. Senior police officials must find better ways to manage the relationship with citizen drug fighters than some appear to have done in the cases documented here. Furthermore, police officials must be willing to recognize and to deal honestly and fairly with even those rancorous citizens who initially may complain bitterly that the police are the source of their troubles. Irrate citizens often evolve into the most valuable and hard-working partners that any police department could want.

## Conclusion

Because there is no single community response to drugs but rather a variety of responses, it is important to appreciate and cultivate variability and innovation. Perhaps different citizen initiatives have evolved to address different problems in different environments. Before specifying one or several model programs, it is essential first to initiate a program of research that can identify what works

best under what conditions. If we can evaluate community drug-fighting efforts and assess the kinds of interventions that work best in particular drug markets, then we can offer concrete, practical advice to citizens, police officials, and policymakers for the most effective strategy to defeat drugs neighborhood by neighborhood.

## Notes

1. These directories were identified by the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Center, the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the 1000 Points of Light award program, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Fighting Back Program, the Federal Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Citizens Committee for New York City.

2. "Grassroots" means originating among or carried on by the common people. *Webster's Unabridged New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language*, 1980.

3. Six of the case studies discussed here were prepared by Harvey Simon, a professional casewriter with Harvard University's Kennedy School Case Program: "Kansas City and the Ad Hoc Group Against Crime," Case C16-91-1023.0; "Curfew at Nine: A Bronx Neighborhood Looks for Solutions," Case C16-91-1088.0; "The Orange Hats of Fairlawn: A Washington, D.C., Neighborhood Battles Drugs," Case C16-91-1034.0; "Neighborhood Crime Watch in Boston," Case C16-91-1039.0; "United Neighbors Against Drugs," Case C16-91-1094.0; "A Denver Neighborhood Tackles Crack," Case C16-91-1063.0. All were published in 1991.

Three case studies were prepared by other Kennedy School casewriters for a 1990 NIJ-sponsored pilot study of community responses to drugs: Lundberg, Kristen, "The Philadelphia Anti-Drug Coalition," Case C16-90-937.0; Kates, Nancy D., "REACH: Fighting Crack and Crime in Pilgrim Village, Detroit," Case C16-90-936.0; and Kennedy, David M., "Fighting the Drug Trade in Link Valley," Case C16-90-935.0.

The remaining four case studies were prepared by Susan A. Powers of the Vera Institute of Justice and are included in "Community Response to Drugs," Working Paper 090-01-20, Program in Criminal Justice.

4. Skogan, Wesley G., *Disorder and Decline: Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods*, New York: Free Press, 1990:140.
5. For a more comprehensive review of these complex phenomena, see Skogan, Wesley G., "Communities, Crime, and Neighborhood Organization," *Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 35, No. 3, July 1989:437-157; and Skogan, Wesley G., "Community Organizations and Crime," in Michael Tonry and Norval Morris, eds., *Crime and Justice*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988:39-78.
6. Skogan, Wesley G., et al., "The Reactions to Crime Project: Executive Summary," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1982; see also Yin, R. et al., "Citizen Patrol Projects," Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1977.
7. Newman, Oscar, *Defensible Spaces: Crime Prevention Through Urban Design*, New York: Macmillan, 1972.
8. The neighborhoods with regular, informal contact with the police included Fairlawn (Fairlawn Coalition), Mantua (Mantua Against Drugs, or MAD), Philadelphia's Norris Square (United Neighbors Against Drugs), Kansas City (Ad Hoc Group), and the Bronx (Allerton Anti-Crime Committee).
9. Block watch programs have been discussed in the literature for many years. See for example, Rosenbaum, Dennis P., "The Theory and Research Behind Neighborhood Watch: Is It a Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy?" *Crime and Delinquency*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January 1987:103-134.
10. Fields, Allen B., "Slinging Weed: The Social Organization of Streetcorner Marijuana Sales," *Urban Life*, Vol. 13, Nos. 2-3, October 1984:247-270. See also Reuter, Peter, "Money From Crime," *RAND Corporation Report*, Santa Monica, California, July 1990.
11. Wilson, James Q., *Political Organizations*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.
12. Heinzelmann, Fred, "Promoting Citizen Involvement in Crime Prevention and Control," in Neil D. Weinstein, *Taking Care: Understanding and Encouraging Self-Protective Behavior*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987:254-279; Rosenbaum, Dennis P., ed., *Community Crime Prevention: Does It Work?*, Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1986.
13. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Substance Abuse Prevention, operates a large grant program for drug abuse prevention that requires substantial coordination at the local level but makes no explicit provision for participation by grassroots neighborhood groups. The National Institute of Justice awarded a grant to the Neighborhood Crime Prevention Center to fund several existing community organizations that proposed to become involved in anti-drug campaigns.
14. Mayer, Steven E., and David M. Scheie, *Supporting Low Income Neighborhood Organizations: A Guide for Community Foundations*, Minneapolis: Rainbow Research, 1989.
- Francis X. Hartmann is Executive Director and Senior Research Fellow with the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Saul N. Weingart, a Research Fellow with the Program, is now a physician at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston. David Osborne, Research Assistant with the Program, is now Special Assistant to the Director, Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice.
- The research for the study was funded by the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, grant 90-IJ-CX-0033.
- Findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.
- The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.*

NCJ 149316