



Superintendent Kim Anne Hiorth's story

WHEN COVID 19 HIT NORWAY.

In March 2020 when Covid -19 hit Norway, we had a lock-down for several weeks. Everything normal became "turned upside down" and in Oslo the epicenter was in the city-center among the minority population. Media started to address this problem, and the minority population became even more marginalized and hated to be blamed for spreading the virus. The schools and day-care centers were closed and the students in Norway were taught online by the teachers. A great number of the children with minority background in the city-center of Oslo live in large families, the parents are dependent on social welfare, they live in relatively small apartments owned by Social Welfare and the pandemic added another burden to their lives which became even harder than it already was.

Since the rules and information about the virus and how to behave to prevent it to spread are in Norwegian, a great number of the people in the minority communities did not grasp the severity of the pandemic, so they carried on like before. But now the young people were hanging more out and visiting each other, the situation became critical.

The minority population felt that they were the "scape-goats" in all what the media had it`s focus on, and they began to do a lot of criminal acts in Oslo. The fines were high if a person left their home while in quarantine and the effect of this created hatred towards the Norwegian society.

As a Community police officer working with the female minority population in Oslo, I felt that we had to do something. During the 11 years that I have built my Pioneer work with the female minorities in the different denominations in Oslo, I have been able to build trust and understanding with the minority group and closing the "gap" that existed. So, I started to co-operate with the Health Department in the city-center of Oslo and offered to help using all my good contacts in the minority communities.

I summoned a meeting online with the female leaders of all the minority groups (denominations and NGO`s), and together we translated the important and vital rules about the virus into many different languages and spread it on all the platforms and Facebook groups that my fellow female citizens already had established for their acquaintances and female groups. One Somalian lady that I have known for a long time had 5000 followers on her Facebook platform, and the important rules were spread to her followers on the Somali language. We translated the rules into 5 different languages and also made a video to show how to put a facemask on, always wash your hands, use anti-bac, do not visit sick people (which is very common in many cultures) etc.

We saw the effect of this work quite quickly. During the summer of 2020 the minority population was not the epicenter anymore.

We believe that if anything was not done to help the minority population in this crisis, a lot of the young people that started to get involved in criminal behavior would have ended up radicalized and started hating our society. With all the negative news in the media, the young people felt that it was "us against them"!

Trust building in the minority communities is crucial and of great importance to prevent VERLT.

We try to "catch low to prevent high!" I have several examples from my police work!

Some thoughts:

To ensure communities are prepared to respond to a rise in VERLT and the responses that seek to divert, rehabilitate and reintegrate affected persons at various stages of violent radicalization is the key to success.

Trust building: It takes time to build trust – it is not an overnight miracle! Most people from outside Europe are not used to a friendly Police Force! So I have done this work since 2009 and it took years before "the results" were visible.

Best regards from Police Superintendent: Kim Anne Hiorth, The Norwegian Police Force.
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