

## DOREEN PREMDEV

**S**TREET committees have cut crime by 80% in the three months since they were introduced in Newlands East in July, according to committee branch chairman Sipho Nkosi.

ANC president Jacob Zuma came up with the idea of the committees, saying it was a way for communities to reclaim their neighbourhoods from criminals.

The initiative has won support from community policing forums and other organisations intent on reducing crime in Durban.

Newlands East street committees have 10 members per street.

"The committee functions like a neighbourhood watch. Members take turns to patrol. Neighbours keep their eyes peeled and alert police if they notice anything suspicious," said Nkosi.

Grant Coka, who chairs Greenwood Park Community Policing Forum, said street

communities had been established in his neighbourhood two weeks ago. They were now fully functional, with 62 members involved in fighting crime.

"Communities must not take the law into their own hands, but help the police fight crime," said Coka.

"Kangaroo courts are out of the question. The aim of street committees is to get communities to work with the police. The committees are very effective in weeding out criminals and ensuring their prosecution for crimes they commit."

Sagren Naidoo, the former chairman of Havenside Community Forum, said a crime initiative launched in 2002 that was similar to street committees had put an end to crime in Havenside.

"Before the Havenside crime project was launched, 18 to 20 hijackings took place in the neighbourhood every month. This figure dropped to zero after the project started. These initiatives do succeed if the community is willing to work together and with the police."

Chatsworth Community Policing Forum chairman Logan Chetty agreed that street committees were a good idea:

"Most communities don't have any faith in the police, because crime in their neighbourhoods is high and police have not provided the security they need. But fighting crime is not just the job of police. We need to fight crime together to make our neighbourhoods safer," said Chetty.

Phoenix Community Policing Forum chairman. Saved Rajack said neighbourhood watches and sector policing had served as a deterrent to criminals in his community.

"Phoenix is a big area. The police don't have enough staff to police the entire area. By getting the community involved, we can make a difference.

"The street committees have been doing well in Newlands East and we will share ideas with those involved so that we can improve our crime initiatives and bring down crime in our neighbourhood as well," said Rajack.