



Community Policing and Challenges in India

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ABSTRACT

Community policing is an important pillar of law enforcement across the world. It is practiced in different forms with varying results in different countries. Its main goal is to assist the social environment in creating law and order. Today, India is moving ahead as one of the powerful country we need to have all elements of a powerful and secure nation. One of its important constituents being a potent law and order machinery with effective policing. We have a reasonable police force and a law and order set up whose primary role is to provide a peaceful, orderly and crime –free environment in the society. But today the police are over burden and they focus only on major crimes and give less importance to minor crimes. Crime free environment indeed requires the involvement of community and the police to work together to tackle crime. Though the community police serve the community at large, it faces many challenges while implementing the law and order in to the society. Some of the challenges are inactive participation of society in preventing crime, less attention given from government to the community policing, etc. The study finds the reason for failure of the community policing and a better legal solution for crime free environment.

Key Words: Law, Police, Community, Society, Responsibility.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Crime causes social, economic, health, and psychological effects on victims and society at large. It is a serious social problem that directly reduces the quality of life of individuals and the community¹. To respond to this problem, societies have developed the polity as an institution where the police, among others, are recruited, trained and deployed. In support of this idea, Morgan stated,

“the primary function of police is concerned with preventing crime and catching criminals”².

Community policing is a policing whereby the people take active part in their own affairs; the police are not seen as a problem or stranger whose presence stands for danger but as partners in development and those members of the community are co-producers of justice and quality police service. This fact indicates the need of involving the community, the local government and the police to work together to tackle crime. Therefore, community policing has emerged as a major issue in the development of public safety for many countries in the world. Community policing is a worldwide growth.

It is generally recognised that India is facing a grave crisis of governance today. The manifestation of this crisis-the all pervasive, inefficient state, increasing lawlessness, criminalisation of polity, ever-growing nexus between money power, crime & political power, excessive centralisation.. etc. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of this crisis is the failure of police in enforcing rule of law, maintaining public order or controlling crime

Crisis in policing or the causes for emerging community policing in India

The first and most vital function of the state is maintenance of public order and peace in any society. The police are the agency to enforce the will of the state, the way the police function is an index of liberty & rule of law in a democratic society. Rule of law is the corner stone of any democracy. Rule of law essentially means equality before law, and all individuals being subjected to the same laws in same measure. The ultimate test of rule of law is the way the police and criminal justice system enforce law, protect innocent citizens and use coercive power to ensure compliance of law³.

¹ O’Block RL, Donnermeyer JF, Doeren E(1991) Security and crime prevention. 2nd edn. US: Butterworth-Heinemann

² Morgan JB (1996)The police function and the investigation of crime. Avebury: Gower.

³ A.C. German, the Police: A Mission and Role.



The police in India have an enormous power and prestige. It is common even today for mothers to frighten young children in the name of police. The fear of the police force is extremely common in most parts of India. This situation is further complicated by an increasingly illegitimate political and electoral system, which is largely based on abuse of unaccountable money power, regular development of criminal muscle power and many distortions in the electoral arena. Obviously, such an illegitimate political system is inclined to use the police force illegally to buttress itself.

In addition to these systematic problems, the resources, technology weapons and procedure available to the police have not kept pace with the times. Today the criminals are using superior technology in committing crime. The police forces are not in position to match such criminal gangs because of inadequacies in their function. By the judicial pressure on the police forces they produce results by hook or by crook is always mounting. In order to produce short term results, the police are often compelled to resort to third degree and extra judicial torture and punishments. Therefore it is not only the responsible of the police to maintain the law and order and create crime free environment.

Definition of term and Concepts

Community-Community is the term that refers to a group of people who share three things-they live in geographically distinct area (such as a city or town), they share cultural characteristics attitudes and lifestyles and they interact with one another on a sustained basis. Thus, community could be understood as group of people sharing the same city, similar social class, having same culture, sharing the same objectives and have similar psychological makeup.

Crime- crime is an illegal activity which causes physical or moral injuries to the society and that it was prohibited by law⁴.

Crime prevention-crime prevention is an attempt to eliminate crime either prior to the initial occurrence or before further activity.

Community policing - Community policing brings police professionals, government officials and community and neighbourhood leaders together to identify and evaluate problems within the community and work together to solve them. As stated by Deluca and stone- community policing is the desire to bring policing closer to citizens whose lives and property are supposed to be protected.

The benefit of community policing are broken down into three areas for the sake of brevity such as community specific benefit, police specific benefit and shared benefits. Community specific benefits include identification and resolution of community concerns, ownership of local problems, improved local physical and social environment and reduced fear of crime, the police specific benefit include an improved police-community relationship, positive attitudes towards the police, a community perception of policy legitimacy and most importantly, an increase in the job satisfaction of police officers. The international and national best practices exhibit certain shared benefits such as a decreased potential for police-citizen conflict, a reduction in crime rates and a better flow of information between police and community

In previous policing models, police departments spent a vast amount of resources and manpower reacting to crimes that had already been committed. Instead, problem-solving policing and its offshoots emphasize building relationships to prevent crimes. The key concepts of community policing rely on three core components-community partnerships and problem solving and implementing community policing organization features

Community partnerships- Community partnerships also require the active participation of members of the community; they must be actively engaged in efforts to enhance community safety themselves⁵. This requires that the resident people have to providing information to the police and to promptly report crimes when they occur. Citizen involvement also requires citizens to participate in activities such as youth-oriented crime prevention projects or sanctioned neighbourhood patrols. These types of activities serve to help develop trust between the police and the community. This in turn, allows the police to gain access to important information from the community which can lead to the prevention of crimes, increase support for crime control measures. To build trust for an effective partnership, the police must treat citizens with dignity and respect. Arrogance, rudeness, and the unnecessary or excessive use of force will diminish the willingness of community members to engage with and provide information to the police. Developing and maintaining the trust of the community is pivotal to the success of community policing

⁴ Prof. N.V. Paranjape, Criminology and Penology, Central Law Publications, Reprinted 2006, p. 291.

⁵ Community Policing: Principles and Elements 1996 by Gary Gordner Eastern Kentucky University



Problem solving or problem-oriented policing-

Problem-solving differs from traditional policing in that it is proactive rather than reactive. As mentioned above, the police racing to crime scenes to gather reports from victims and witnesses characterized traditional policing. The theory behind problem-oriented policing is simple. Underlying conditions create problems. These conditions might include the characteristics of the people involved (offenders, potential victims, and others), the social setting in which these people interact, the physical environments, and the way the public deals with these conditions. A problem created in one of these conditions may create one or more incidents. These incidents, while stemming from a common source, may appear to be different. For example, social and physical conditions in a deteriorated apartment complex may generate burglaries, acts of vandalism, intimidation of pedestrians by rowdy teenagers, and other incidents. These incidents, some of which come to police attention, are symptoms of the problems⁶.

The problem –solving or problem oriented focus of community policing is embodied in the SARA acronym, which represents the elements or stages of police work aimed at identifying and resolving problems in the community SARA stands for-

1. Scanning-: Identify problems and prioritize them incorporating community input.
2. Analysis- : Study information about offenders, victims, and crime locations.
3. Response- Respond: Implement strategies that address the chronic character of priority problems by thinking “outside the box” of traditional police enforcement tactics and using new resources that were developed by the community to support problem-solving efforts.
4. Assess: Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy through self-assessments to determine how well the plan has been carried out and what good has been accomplished⁷

Problem-solving can also involve reducing the number of occurrences of a specific problem. Drug-dealing and associated problems such as robbery or gang activity may be decreased if the police, community members, and social services agencies, such as health centers, set up rehabilitation and counseling facilities to reduce drug use. In order to

⁶Eck, John E., “Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers,” Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Problem-Solving Tools Series, No. 1. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999.

⁷ Goldstein, H. (1990). *Problem Oriented Policing*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

be effective, problem-solving and problem-oriented policing demand significant changes in both police structure and levels of police authority. . This usually requires the restructuring and decentralization of police departments.

The final component, administrative decentralization, is closely linked to the implementation of community policing. Building effective community partnerships and developing effective problem-solving strategies requires the adoption of a new flexible style of policing management. The community policing approach requires a shift of responsibility, decision-making, and accountability down through the police organization to the patrol officer⁸. The patrol officer is granted broad discretionary and decision making powers in order to determine, with the input of the community, what should be done in a given community and how it should be implemented. The whole police organization must be restructured in a way that supports the enhanced role of patrol officers and supports their efforts as well as encourages a cooperative approach to solving problems. Community policing requires the police organizational structure to become decentralized; important problems are identified and decisions are to be made from the bottom up instead of from the top down.

Community policing requires organizational reform by:

- decentralizing operations;
- eliminating some mid-level positions in order to flatten the organizational structure;
- increasing the accountability and responsibility of officers;
- changing departmental performance and evaluation systems;
- And training officers in new skills.

These new skills include:

1. working with local residents as partners in solving problems;
2. making presentations to community groups; and,
3. Involving other public and non-profit agencies in community improvement efforts.

Awareness Building and educational partnership: is where the police personnel through education and awareness through workshops, help lines (for the aged, children and women in distress), visits to schools to educate children on various

⁸ Community characteristics and policing styles in suburban agencies L. Edward Wells, David N. Falcone and Cara Rabe-Hemp



social issues, is a way to reach out to the community and make the visible⁹.

The other programmes that have received moderate success are the Student

Traffic Education schemes in Kerala. The Crime Stopper facility of Kerala, is another form of community policing which was appreciated by the National

Human Rights Commission in a letter dated December 22, 1999. The programme involves that a citizen can dial a toll free number "1099" to share information on crime and criminals without the disclosure of the callers' identity¹⁰.

The Community Policing joined hands to carry out routine exercise with the youngsters of city colleges and welfare club to spread the 'caution word' door-to-door. In this initiative the CP with youngsters distributed pamphlets to citizens to make them aware about personal safety and security. These pamphlets include symptoms of drug addiction, home safety tips, prevention of theft, safety and security tips, safety of senior citizens.

Some other prominent community policing initiatives worth mentioning was started at various parts in India¹¹:

- Janamaitri Suraksha Padhathi, Kerala
- Friends of Police Movement (FOP), Ramnad district, Tamil Nadu¹².
- Parivar Paramarsh Kendra, Raigarh district, Madhya Pradesh.
- Community Liaison Groups, Uttarakhand.
- Trichy community policing, Trichy district, Tamil Nadu.
- Gram/Nagar Raksha Samiti, Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh¹³.
- *Mohalla Committee Movement trust*: It was established in Mumbai in the wake of Hindu-Muslim riots of 1992 and 1993¹⁴. Mohallas or beat patrol met regularly to address variety of issues concerning the community such as concerns relating

⁹ James Jr. Forman, Community Policing and Youth as Assets, 95 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 1 (2004-2005)

¹⁰ www.thehindu.com-nov.29,2013

¹¹ community policing - Indian perspective by shodhganga

¹² Friend of police –a concept for empowerment and a movement in community policing –prateep.V. philip

¹³ <https://naidunia.jagran.com>

¹⁴ <https://mohalla-committee-movement.com>

to health, education, environmental issues, issues related to communal harmony etc.

Challenges to community policing in India

Insufficient human resource- The ratio of the police force has been seen to be greatly affecting community policing efforts. The limited financial and human resources, they cannot meet the diverse safety and security of the society. Therefore the police are unable to provide security for satisfy the population at large. Therefore, it is needed to involvement of community members into developing the neighbourhood watches in all estates in the country.

Inadequate working facilities and poor communication - Community policing is an effort between the different security agencies that identifies and solves community problems such as insecurity issues. The poor working conditions, poor pay, lack of recognition from the public, inadequate working facilities, and poor communication channels were among the major challenges facing private guards and police. Moreover, the police who are faced with these challenges may result to corruption in order to sustain their families.

Mistrust - The mistrust between the police and the private security guards which is lead to lack of information sharing between the two agencies. This in turn affects the community members, thus they are prone to insecurity incidences¹⁵.

Lack confidence -The police participation in crime prevention activities is often constrained by limited resources. the police have lacked facilities in ensuring the enhancement of community policing. The public may lack confidence in the police due to the lack of facilities¹⁶. Renovations and funding should be done to improve such facilities. An improved facility entails improved service delivery to the community members thus improved security.

Inadequate training- Inadequate training among the police has been seen to be lacking towards community policing efforts Effective community policing requires training for both police personnel and community members. Effective training aids the development of new police attitudes, knowledge,

¹⁵ Global community policing –problem and challenges edited by arvind verma, dilipk das, manoj abraham

¹⁶ Global community policing –problem and challenges edited by arvind verma, dilipk das, manoj abraham



and skills and facilitates reorientation of perceptions and refinement of existing skills¹⁷.

The above are the some challenges face

II. CONCLUSION

Crime has become a major concern. Each year the percentage of major felonies (burglaries, car theft, robberies, assault, rape as and murders) has risen. Cities have been controlled by drugs and gangs, not the community and the police. The new approach of community policing removing officers from the traditional police cars and placing them in a community or neighbourhood. This allows the officers to become familiar with their surroundings and lets them pay closer attention to smaller crimes like vandalism. Thus the Community policing plays a major in creating the good relations between the police department and the community. This in turn means that the police get a good platform to eradicate crime and maintain the safety of the citizens within country boundaries.

Recommendation

Finally, to make community policing a success it is absolutely important to ensure:

1. That the concept be institutionalised. The Police Act or the Constitution must have details provision regarding to police community relations, such as what methods are to be adopted, what are the objectives and the composition of such initiatives. The Police Act of 1861 is silent on this subject and to repeal this piece of legislation and opt for a new and modern people friendly Police Act.
2. There is an urgent need to set up intermediary bodies that can put an effort to bridge the gap between the police and the community and independently evaluate such initiatives.
3. And develop awareness among the urban people regarding to benefit of community policing.

¹⁷ William A. Norris, International Police Training Journal issue 2, Feb., 2011.