

Community Policing in Action: A Study of the Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack

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Introduction

The modern police has to face newer challenges everyday where it is made conscientious to deliver a wide range of assistance to the people. The police is expected to deliver services ranging from detection of the highly sophisticated cyber crime to providing assistance to the elderly and the marginalized sections of the society. Modern police is supposed to uphold the philosophy of community policing to ensure more proactive, people-friendly and problem-oriented policing. The fundamental philosophy underlying 'community policing' programmes is that the police not only need public support in order to accomplish their goal, but that they have an obligation to involve the community in the process of deciding what they do and how they do it. The new professionalism implies that police serve, learn from and are accountable to the community. Behind the new professionalism is a governing notion that the police and the public are co-producers on crime prevention. (Skolnick and Bayley 1985:212-3). The Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack has initiated a handful of community policing programmes to provide enhanced services to the people. In lieu of this, the present study seeks to provide an insight into the present scenario with respect to community policing in the twin cities and also

provide some suggestions as to what more can be done.

Community Policing: A Summary of Relevant Literature

In trying to follow the traditional methods of controlling crime and maintaining discipline the policeman has become increasingly unpopular and anti-people. The image of the police has been tarnished by its failure to come to the aid of the common man. In order to restore the faith of the people on the police, the social scientists are drawing their attention to the concept of community policing to improve police public relations. Interest in public view of the police began in 1960s in the United States as a result of urban riots. The civil rights movements and anti war protests, highlighted the strained relationship that existed between the police and the public in many communities. (Reisig and Parks 2004:139-67; Schafer 2003:440-68). Community Policing actually evolved out of two early experimental foot patrol programmes in Newyork, New Jersey, and Flint, Michigan. Foot patrol officers were used as a strategy to involve officers directly in community problem solving with the officers trained to do far more than to act as a viable deterrent to crime. Community policing provides a new way for the police to provide decentralized and personalized police service that offers every

law abiding citizen an opportunity to become active in the police process. Community policing stresses exploring new ways to protect and enhance the lives of those who are most vulnerable - juveniles, the elderly, minorities, the poor, the disabled, the homeless. Community policing (1) is a philosophy, not just an isolated programme (2) involves a permanent commitment to the community including average citizens (3) broadens the mission of the police beyond crime control (4) provides full-service, personalized, and decentralized policing; (5) focuses in problem solving (6) enhances responsibility (7) uses both reactive and proactive policing; (8) must operate within existing resources (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux 1990:5-7).

At the heart of any community-oriented policing programme is the idea of identifying and utilizing a variety of resources to deal with and solve targeted problems. Typically these include the resources of the police departments, as well as other city departments and agencies, community organizations, neighbourhood groups, civic clubs, fraternal organizations, educational institutions and others. Too often, police officials are inclined to look no further than their own organizations when seeking resources to deal with new or unique problems. To police practitioners, community policing can yield a number of benefits, including (a) a sense of pride in their work (b) a realization that patrol work can be more interesting than they thought, (c) a growth in their sense of efficiency, (d) a realization that citizens may welcome the opportunity to work with the police (Wycoff 1988:111).

While community oriented policing is a broad effort to develop new relationships, within all or designated parts of the community, problem oriented policing is a narrower effort to deal with a specific problem oriented policing attempts to

engage productively with the community by “(1) assigning officers to areas for longer periods of time to enable them the problems of concern to the community; (2) developing the capacity of both the officers and the department to analyse community problems; (3) learning when greater community involvement has the potential for significantly reducing a problem; and (4) working with those specific segments of the community that are in a position to assist in reducing or eliminating the problem” (Goldstein,1990:26-7).

Community policing is impacted by the technological advances in computerization and crime prevention strategies. Three of the more significant advances include (1) **Crime analysis**: there are three components of crime analysis-tactical crime analysis used to identify crime trends and patterns; strategic crime analysis, preparation of statistics and summaries designed to aid in long term operational planning; and administrative crime analysis, used to aid in administrative decision-making on social, economic, and geographic information; (2) **Computer-Aided Dispatching**: enables police officers to capture and retrieve many types of crime and operational data that had previously been unavailable or extremely time consuming to generate. It adds global positioning information that enabled dispatchers to track movements of police cars in order to make better decisions in assigning calls for service; and (3) **Crime mapping**: highly sophisticated graphics which enable investigators and crime analysts to obtain accurate and detailed maps of past, present, and potential crime areas within their jurisdictions (Hunter 2008: 246-47).

A possible negative effect of community-oriented policing is that the police run the risk of dividing the community between those who are willing to work with the police and those who are not. The police may thus find themselves caught

between various community factions, causing greater alienation and anti police sentiment (Mastrofski 1988:57). However other identifiable and persistent constraints to the development of community policing are: (a) the culture of policing is resistant to community policing; (b) Community policing requires emotional maturity more likely to be present in older officers; (c) The innovative management cop is receptive to a more expansive vision of the police role. Traditional management cop remains rooted in his earliest training experiences; (d) The responsibility to respond to limitation of resources; (e) The inertia of police unions who see community policing as a threat to police professionalism; (f) The two officer car engenders a sense of security and job enjoyment among those who are policing and it may also generate a sense of remoteness from the population being policed; (g) Command Accountability; (h) Reward structure as it is impossible to measure the amount of crime a certain police officer prevented; (i) Public expectations of police; (j) Failure to integrate steps for crime prevention; and (k) The ambiguity of community as police community reciprocity can be achieved when there is a genuine bonding of interests between the police and the served citizenry and among definable section of the public (Skolnick and Bayley 1988: 18-28).

Community Policing: The Government of India in Action

A Consultative Committee Meeting of Home Ministry of the Government of India was held on 25.11.2011 to consider setting up a separate wing for Community Policing with entirely different uniform. While discussing 'Community Policing', Members stressed the need to make it effective for each region by taking into account their different needs. Various initiatives have been taken by the Police in different cities and States to involve the community in the process

of policing, to overcome the problems faced by the public and the police, and to provide assistance to victims of crime. The Union Home Minister said that some of these programmes have been successful and have continued to work even after the individuals who have initiated these programmes have moved on to other responsibilities. Different Community Policing (CoP) Models are being implemented in various parts of the country. The Union Home Minister also informed the members that new Courses are also being developed in police academy to sensitise the Police for their role in Community Policing. It was emphasized that none of the CoP schemes were really institutionalized. Adhocism is another characteristic of the CoP efforts in India. Some of the reasons outlined by members were that the experiments and programmes are not always tailored to community's needs. They work well in times of crisis. Once the emergency passes, they lose momentum. The Police-Community relationships have mostly remained an urban phenomena. Suspicion and misunderstanding creep in after some time. Some individual police officers make a difference. However, when they leave, the programme suffers. The members were unanimous in their opinion that more beat constables are required all over the country. They expressed concern over vacancies in law enforcement agencies, poor infrastructure and low morale (See <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=77580> visited on 24.12.11)

Community Policing in Action: The Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack

The community policing initiatives undertaken by the Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack are a breakthrough in bridging the gap between the police and the people. However success of the programmes depends on the morale of the police officers

themselves in gaining the confidence of the people at large. Moreso, peoples participation is also a very important prerequisite in making these efforts effective. The following are some of the programmes launched by the Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack:

a) Police Public Interface: As an initiative to improve contact with members of the public, a system of public –police interface has been taken up in the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The meetings have generated a positive response from the office bearers of Residents Associations and Local development Organisations and the local residents in general. Such interaction provides the Commissioner of Police with a platform to communicate with the people and the citizens also get a chance to voice their grievances as well as make the police aware about the day to day affairs of the area including law and order, traffic management, security issues and so on.

b) Special Police Officers: By virtue of powers conferred upon the Commissioner of Police U/s 13 of OUP Act, 2003, nineteen Special Police Officers (SPOs) have been appointed on honorary basis. They share the same powers, privileges and immunities and are liable to perform the same duties and responsibilities as an ordinary police officer. The main responsibilities of the SPOs are: (1) to promote public order and create a feeling of security in the community, (2) help people in distress or in danger of physical harm or injury, (3) collect information relating to crime, public peace, law and order and share it with the officers of the local police station, (5) perform evening/night patrolling in association with regular police officers, (6) assist the police in traffic management in their jurisdiction, (7) provide assistance to victims of road accidents, women, children and (8) interact regularly with the inspector in charge of the local police stations

within his jurisdiction area. (See http://bhubaneswarcuttackpolice.gov.in/community_policing.php visited on 23.12.11)

c) Senior Citizens Security Cells: With the aim to coordinate the safety and security of senior citizens and sensitise them about personal security, Senior Citizens Security Cells (SCSC) have been started at Capital, Nayapalli, Kharavelnagar, Chandrasekharapur and Shahidnagar Police Stations of Bhubaneswar; Chauliaganj, Markatnagar, Bidanasi and Lalbag Police Stations of Cuttack Urban Police District. Each cell is headed by an officer of the rank of Sub Inspector of Police designated as the Nodal Officer, assisted in the discharge of his duties by a constable. The Inspector In-charge of the Police Station supervises the functioning of the cell and is monitored by the office of the Commissionerate Head Quarters, Bhubaneswar. Senior Citizens who are of the age of 60 or above are eligible to register with the SCSC. Nodal officer has been suggested to visit the registered senior citizens every fortnight and advice them security measures. A Telephone Directory containing all emergency numbers have also been provided to the registered senior citizens. The Nodal Officers are also responsible to keep records of the identity of domestic helps and tenants (if any) of the senior citizens. (See http://bhubaneswarcuttackpolice.gov.in/senior_citizen_desk.php visited on 26.12.11).

Suggested Measures to be undertaken to make Community Policing effective:

There are four elements that should be stressed to make community policing a reality: (i) community based crime prevention, (ii) reorientation of patrol activities to emphasize non emergency servicing, (iii) increased accountability to the public and (iv) decentralization of command including under

certain circumstances civilianization. These can be attained by pursuing and introducing the following measures:

1. The policemen must understand the idea of community policing. This is important as it will help them to shed their inhibitions and colonial stigma. The philosophy of community policing if incorporated can make the police people friendly and incorporate the masses in police work. This will utilize the people in a wide array of policing services like surveillance, traffic control, organizing festivals, controlling eve-teasing and other crimes like theft, burglary, terrorism and so on
2. The common people should also be made aware of the community policing programmes introduced by the Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. This will make the people take interest in policing activities and help the police in its mission to make the city peaceful. The police can thereby ward off the stigma of being authoritarian, repressive and biased.
3. Young people from each of the neighbourhoods should be bestowed the responsibility of patrolling at night under the supervision of officers from the police station.
4. Frequent foot patrolling by officers everyday to make their presence felt among the citizens of Kolkata.
5. Regular, if possible monthly meeting should be conducted with the seniors of each neighbourhood to discuss problems if any and also seek their suggestions for possible remedies.
6. A rumour control programme should be developed as a useful forum for discussing common police problems in many neighbourhoods where unfounded or exaggerated rumours can be identified and exposed.
7. Community based teams under a commander can be formed to deliver police

services to particular neighbourhoods. These opportunities include closer, more stable ties with neighbourhood residents, citizen participation in planning and delivery of services, and participation and input from all team members with regard to team management and activities.

8. The number of women policemen should be increased to at least 10% of the total police force. Women police stations should also be set up where crimes concerning atrocities on women and children should be given special attention. Each of the police stations should have adequate number of women police officers to provide security to women in today's world.
9. Children and adolescents of the locality should be included in the drive towards pollution control.
10. Greater transparency should be ensured in the activities of the police station by informing the residents the developments in cases which have been lodged by different people of the locality.
11. Police station tours must be conducted by civic organizations and school groups to make the people aware of the operation of these bureaus.
12. Steps should be taken to make the police organization accountable and transparent taking into consideration the Right To Information Act 2005, which has been bestowed to the citizens of India.

Conclusion

The Police Commissionerate of the twin cities of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack has introduced a few community policing initiatives to provide enhanced services to the people. In this regard, it must also be taken into account that the programmes are praiseworthy and can reduce the social distance between the police and the public. It will also help the police shed inhibitions and

become more people-friendly. A positive response from the common people can strengthen the ties between the police and the public. However, there are other issues which too, if addressed can help the police to become more transparent and accountable to the public. As already suggested, more people-friendly initiatives by the Police Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack through large scale people's participation can make community policing a reality and can act as an effective CoP model to other cities in India.

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