

The Emergence of Community Policing in Karnataka: An Analysis

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Abstract

Community policing is a practice prevalent in India for ages wherein the people from the neighborhood participate in the system as moral police and keep a watch around their locality with an intention to maintain peace and tranquility. As a modern system policing has community involved in its functioning as a mandate now, the major aim being (a) to help police reach places and problems where they have limited access and be omnipresent with civilians as their eyes and ears, (b) to bridge the gap that has long been created between the police and people due to errand ways of police working and reduce the fear that is instilled in common minds. There are many states that have community policing as a practice running successfully.

Although fervent attempts have been made in the state of Karnataka to run this practice successfully as an obligatory system, the one initiated By Janaagraha, an NGO situated in Bangalore has been basking in the limelight since its initiation in June 2013. The attempt has earned popularity and common support as it has started in one police station in each of the 7 zones in the Bangalore city. The present paper is review on the emergence of the practice of community policing in Karnataka state and its modernization with the advent of Janaagraha as a prime mediator between the police and public in recent times. The article is purely based on secondary review and information from newspapers and journals on the subject.

Keywords: Community policing; Jan suraksha samithis/Area suraksha mitras (ASM); Citizen volunteers; Community safety; Bengaluru police

Introduction

Community Policing is the collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems. The police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active allies in the effort to enhance the safety and quality of neighbourhoods. The expanded outlook on crime control and prevention, the new emphasis on making community members active participants in the process of problem solving and the patrol officers' pivotal role in community policing require profound changes within the police organization. The neighbourhood patrol officers, backed by the police organization, helps community members mobilize support and resources to solve problems and enhance their quality of life. Community members voice their concerns, contribute advice, and take action to address these concerns. Creating a constructive partnership will require the energy, creativity, understanding, and patience of all involved [1].

What is Community Policing?

The concept of community policing is relatively new to the Commonwealth countries. Due to their colonial past, people never saw the police as a friendly force. Instead, the mutual trust quotient has always been low as policemen in these countries were seen not as protectors but as tools of a foreign power to keep people under control and in awe of their colonial masters. Thus, historically speaking,

people have always feared the police, and this fear, this gap, this widening mistrust between the police and the public has remained intact till date to a considerable degree [2].

Global Perspective

The success of community policing largely depends on the faith that a community bestows on its policing system and the attitudes the citizens carry about the police. There have been very limited work done in this context one such being by Holmes, M.D., Painter, M.A., Smith, B.W. that focused on the theoretical and analytical effects of community context, police organization and individual characteristics on attitudes about police. The study carried out in the small town of Iowa, at a community level observed that social disorganization was negatively associated and social integration was positively related to trust in the police and in totality contextual, organizational and individual predictors all had important effects on attitudes about police in this study [3].

A work by Blaustein, J., analyzes the implementation of a Swiss community policing model in Sarajevo Canton, Bosnia-Herzegovina. The study depicts how officers from one community policing unit were able to facilitate cultural legitimation for their community policing role within their sector by linking it to established, subcultural definitions of police work [4].

Another article by Topping, J. provides a structural and operational analysis of policing beyond the police in Northern Ireland. Thus, the this paper provides an empirical assessment of the complex, non-state policing landscape beyond the formal state apparatus; examines definitions and structures of such community-based policing activities;

and explores issues related to co-opting this non-state security 'otherness' into more formal relations with the state.

Through a global perspective there have been a lot of experimentations done to monitor the success of community policing in various parts of the world the above reviews are a mere reference of three such examples of various attempts made to curb the lacunas existent in police-public relationship. The present paper gives highlights on such community policing practices tried in Karnataka state on the basis of different models and a detail account on the most successful model implemented by the Janaagraha [5].

Community Policing in Karnataka

Community policing system being a mandatory has been initiated in many parts of Karnataka State some of these initiations have had mammoth positive outcomes and have attained remarkable due to excellent police public co-operation.

In Chikmagalur district a 15-member community interface team was formed in Sringeri in October 2005 in addition to the community interface teams consisting of two police personnel from all police stations in Koppa and Chikmagalur sub-divisions. This has been a huge booster in setting several personal and community problems right in the naxal affected areas in these regions (Press release, H. N. Nagaraj, Superintendent of Police)

In Mysore a total of 400 men are roped in by the police to assist them in ending the menace of chain-snatching in the city. The men are called community police officers. The concept of community policing was thought of owing to increasing number of chain-snatching incidents in the city. The police had invited applications from interested persons in this regard. One of the conditions imposed by the police for the applicants was that they should have a two-wheeler and a mobile phone. A rigorous scrutiny was done to select 30 men in the limits over every police station for the project over a period of two months. These men have also been given identity cards and their assignments were on priority during cultural programs and also proving information relating to investigation [6].

Recently in Bangalooru the Police from some divisions have introduced one more new system called "SLUM DOMINATION". This is a very unique and latest step adopted by the police to reduce crime rate by visiting the slum areas regularly and maintaining the social accountability in those slum areas, Police also meet all the people who were involved in criminal activities in the past and people in the Rowdy Sheets and young and first time offenders and keep a check on all their daily activities, if nothing wrong or suspicious is found then Police give them assurance of removing them from the rowdy Sheet and charges on them will be lessen. This is also a part of community policing where police is taking initiative to control crime and other illegal activities in the society [7].

The most Modern and recent attempt of community policing in Karnataka has launched been launched by Janaagraha, an NGO situated in Bangalore in affiliation with the police force. Jana Suraksha Samithis (JSS) were created earlier in 2013 as community meetings between Area suraksha mitra's (ASM). Police officials actively involved in the Community Policing Programme. For the initial stages now it has been started in 7 police stations limit one in each zone. The Jana Suraksha Samithis (JSS) carry out the meeting between police and public and discuss the different safety issues. These meetings provided

a touch-point for communication, relationship building and Problem solving [8].

The aim of the Community Policing Programs is to use participants from entire citizen population to improve the safety and security of the neighborhoods. Citizen volunteers are called Area suraksha mitra's (ASM), work in partnership with police.

Awareness Programme by JSS

Awareness Programme being carried out in Jana Suraksha Samithis (JSS) meetings by the various organisations [9,10].

- Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (KSCPCR)
- Karnataka State Commission for women (KSCW)
- Child Welfare Committee (CWC)
- Center for Addiction Medicine (CAD)

The purpose of these awareness educative programme is to sensitize Area suraksha mitra's (ASM) and Police Personnel so they can better monitor their own activities on their field and raise awareness among the communities they represent.

Beat Level Awareness

To bring the success of the Community Policing Programme it is necessary that all Area suraksha mitra's (ASM) and Police Personnel must meet citizens in there beat areas regularly, in order to do so, the Community Policing team in facilitating beat level awareness programmes, with participation from Area suraksha mitra's (ASM) and Poice Personnel.

Social Media Platform

The Police in Bengaluru have taken a new initiative of making their presence felt in the Social Media platform and to engage with the whole community. With the help of the Social Media Channels like Face Book, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs...etc., the bengaluru police desires to take existing relationship of police and community to the digital world. This will make them have a good communication to build better Police Community relations.

As it is, Bangalore is the IT capital of the County. The number of persons using various Social Media Channels is quite high in Bangalore as compared to other Cities. Thus, it is imperative that we make our presence felt in these Community tools and make use of them to communicate with the people.

This engagement has to be done real time, 24 x 7 basis, so that people get the information they want instantly. For this, a dedicated team is being setup and trained exclusively by Havas Worldwide [11].

The Objectives of this programme are

- Building awareness with the citizens about the organization and work being done by Police.
- A Source for all the information's, news, updates regarding crime, criminals, law enforcement situation in the City.
- To use it on as extended PR tool by giving news, views and official statements via tweets updates... etc to avoid rumours.
- For crisis Management by providing citizens with the information, they look for during the times of crisis.

- To build community policing using social media.
- Gather information from Social Media Monitoring.

With this initiative, the Police will be able to engage, energize, analyze and interpret Community needs in a much better way and deploy adequate resources to resolve these things properly. With this, the Police would also be able to know the pulse of the people and know what is agitating them. This can also act as early warning system for the Police who can then think of appropriate remedial measures.

A dedicated team has been earmarked for this purpose, which is being trained by Havas Worldwide Digital Matrix. This team of Police Community Managers will be deployed round the clock to listen and respond to conversations on the various Social Media channels simultaneously.

Besides various custom made applications, will address specific target groups like Senior Citizen, Children and women & strive to provide them the much needed support and confidence [9].

The Following are some of the ways in which a community member, involve himself and help the community

- Neighbourhood Watch Committee vigilance of each other houses during holiday, etc.
- In localities which are susceptible to dacoits, robberies, burglaries, member along with the beat Constables can perform night beats.
- Informing police about person in the locality is spending lavishly without any authenticated livelihood person to your jurisdictional Police.
- Informing police about new comers in your area or locality.
- Keeping eye on youths if they are into any bad habits
- Taking assistance of the unemployed youngsters, not letting them wasting their time.
- Participate in Civilian Rifle Clubs and organize civilian rifle training in consultation and association with Police.
- Inform police if any stranger wandering in your locality.
- Arrange for social and cultural get-togethers, and know your neighbours well.
- Help the elders if there is no one to look after them by giving service of being available for medicine, hospital, banks etc. and no stranger should get make them target.

Conclusion

Since the Community Policing is a unique relationship between Police and Public it finds its strength in mutual trust and sensitizes

people to perform their role in solving their own problems and enhance overall quality of life in community. By practicing some of the above mentioned factors in your community by police citizens pertaining to their locality would be getting the many benefits which they never got from earlier police system and if the participation of the general public also takes one more step ahead as goodwill amongst neighbours the benefit for the society can be multiplied.

Now Karnataka is also becoming an evidence of major reform in policing system by practicing some of the activities related to community policing and encouraging the people to find out new creative ways to solve the problems on both side (Police/Public) by bringing some quality change in role of police as 'Enforcers of Law' to Advisors, Facilitators, Friend, Service Providers to the Community at large. In the present paper we can some of the examples of this in our state and its Functions, Objective, Programmes and some of the things which are practicing and to be practiced for the benefit are mentioned in the later half part of the article.

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