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**The Asia Foundation**

# COMMUNITY POLICING

Changing the Way We Think About Public Security

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Hasan Mazumdar, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation

The Foundation is cooperating with 4 implementing partners on this program: Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK) in Gaibandha, Lighthouse in Bogra, Manab Kallyan Parishad (MKP) in Thakurgaon and RDRS Bangladesh in Rangpur. Together, this network of organizations is:

- **Strengthening Police Responsiveness to Citizen Needs.** Through classroom education, CBP is fostering law enforcement's understanding of the role of community policing in increasing citizen support.
- **Increasing Citizen Engagement and Trust in Law Enforcement.** CBP is empowering citizens to participate in crime prevention through Community Policing Forums. The CPFs serve as critical bodies for joint police-citizen activities in the areas of gender-based violence, human rights and disaster responsiveness.
- **Expanding the Mandate for Community Policing.** CBP is encouraging a strategic dialogue among senior police, civil society and policy makers to widen the institutional support for community policing.

To date, CBP has supported the Bangladesh Police in activating 518 Community Policing Forums and 16 District Coordination Committees, training 260 police and 650 citizens, and holding over 1,000 awareness raising activities, including street songs, dramas and debates. This newsletter underscores some of these accomplishments and the lessons learned from the experience.



Citizens and Police Talk about Crime Issues during a CPF Meeting

## News from the Field

### *Early Marriage in the Mogolhat Union of Lalmonirhat*

*Fourteen-year old Khamartari Nuri lives with her father, mother and younger brother Golapi. She is a star-student at the top of her class in grade eight at the local Mogolhar Adorsho High School.*

*One month back, Nuri and a small shop owner in the Mogolhar Bazaar decided to get married. She approached her family about the matter. While Nuri found her parents to be supportive, they did express concern regarding her getting married at such a young age. Nuri's parents felt the most important thing for her was to continue her education as long as they could afford to support her.*

*After speaking with her parents, Nuri was unsure what to do. She and her family sought help from community leaders and members of their village Community Policing Forum. The president and other key members that attend the group's monthly meetings counseled them on the benefits of waiting a few more years to marry. They stressed that continuing her education can increase Nuri's standard of living and overall preparation. Simultaneously, the police reminded Nuri and her family that the legal minimum age to marry in Bangladesh is 18 for women and 21 for men.*

*After much discussion, the police and local community leaders were able to convince Nuri and her family to hold-off on getting married a few more years. Nuri is happy with this option, and has decided to instead continue attending classes at the high school for now.*

## CITIZENS' ACCOUNTS OF SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO REDUCE GAMBLING IN GAIBANDHA

My name is Abdul Gani. I am the chairman of the Community Policing Forum in Kamarpara, Gaibandha. Since I was very young, I always dreamed of living in a crime-free community. As chairman of the CPF, I have worked to facilitate this by coordinating monthly meetings where citizens and police can come together in a neutral setting to identify and discuss solutions to common problems.

Most recently, we decided to focus our efforts on the high rate of gambling. I myself have personally spearheaded this effort, and even contributed a small amount of money to developing posters and other education materials. As a group, we have done public speeches, cultural events, street dramas and debates on the negative impact of gambling. With full support and participation by the police, we went door-to-door to share this message in meetings, organized workshops, schools and mosques.

This campaign has been ongoing since May 2011 and is producing excellent results. Now, the community of Kamarpara is almost free of gambling. In fact, many of the citizens that were involved in gambling have taken up work so that they can support their families. This is all thanks to police and citizens' willingness to work together.

## COMMUNITY POLICING: CONCEPT AND KEY FEATURES

A.K.M. Shahidul Hoque, BPM, PPM, Additional Inspector General (Admin)

### What exactly is community policing?

Community policing is a philosophy of collaboration between police and citizens to prevent, detect and stop crime. It seeks to encourage effective crime control and prevention, in addition to dealing with other social issues. The approach is proactive and involves community-driven solutions to problems. The ultimate goal is to address the causes of crime, fear and other community issues with a view to create a better and safer place to live and grow.

To be effective, police must become a part of the neighborhoods where they work, with an emphasis on stopping crime before it happens. This helps police to better understand residents' needs, while increasing citizens' trust in law enforcement. In essence the community joins hands with the police to create a better and safer place to live and grow.

### What are its specific features?

Community policing helps establish a bridge of friendship between law enforcement and the citizens which they serve. It applies the idea that prevention is better than the cure.

The following are some of the main features of community policing:

- **Philosophical change to an organizational approach:** It is a proactive department-wide philosophy that reshapes traditional police management and operational strategies.
- **Consultation and problem-solving:** Trust and mutual understanding between police and citizens are increased through regular face-to-face contact, interactions and joint problem-solving actually within the community, instead of the police station or vehicle. Voluntary citizen input and feedback are crucial to the approach's success.
- **Individually tailored community-driven crime prevention through mobilization:** Citizens get an opportunity to play an active role in identifying problems and working with police to support the appropriate strategy of detention and prevention. Solutions are developed locally based on available resources and needs.
- **Geographical focus:** Officers focus on specific geographical areas on a more long-term basis, so that they can learn more about the citizen in the area and increase mutual cooperation.
- **Partnership and increased accountability:** Police maintain a sincere and proactive attitude by taking on the responsibility of educating the public about the law, police functions and their duties. They engage in awareness building and motivational programs, especially targeting vulnerable populations. Meanwhile, citizens work to ensure the officers' accountability to the community.



Community Policing Course Participants

### How does community policing differ from more traditional approaches?

In more traditional policing, the government is responsible for crime control; however, in community policing, the public are the police and police are the public. Efficiency is measured through the absence or reduction of crime, instead of detection and arrest rates. Professionalism in community policing is defined through the ability to maintain a close cooperative relationship with the community through good client-oriented service, as opposed to simply a swift response to individual serious, but isolated crimes. Accountability is to local needs, not only to government bureaucracy, rules and regulations. Prosecution is one of many tools in an officers "tool kit"; however, not the end goal, as it is in more traditional policing.

## Case Study

### Helping to Resolve Dowry Disputes in Kurigram

*Dowry has been illegal in Bangladesh since the introduction of the Dowry Prohibition Act in 1980. However, notwithstanding current legislation, and efforts to change the public perception on this issue, dowry continues to be a problem in our country. Law enforcement and citizens are working together to solve this problem. Like the case of a young woman in the Halakhana Union of Kurigram. After many months of receiving pressure from her husband, he sent to her to live with parents until they were able to cover her dowry. Seven months passed without any resolution, until the local police were informed via the neighborhood Community Policing Forum. The CPF president and police sat with the husband and wife, and heard the story from both their sides. Upon listening to their accounts, the citizens and police tried to explain that dowry is illegal and punishable by law. They also pointed out the negative impact dowry is having on the couple's relationship, and successfully convinced them to let go of the issue. Through a small intervention on the part of the Community Policing Forum, the family managed to peacefully resolve their issues and avoid any legal proceedings*

### What are the ultimate benefits of community policing?

People of all walks of life are starting to realize the positive impact of community policing. However, while the idea has been successfully marketed, applying it in daily practice is the responsibility of the Bangladesh Police. Many officers have already begun to implement the community policing approach within their jurisdiction. These individuals have come with their own stories about the experience. The Crime Prevention Centre at Police Headquarters is playing an active role in overseeing this effort. While preventing crime and disorder is everybody's business, not just the police, the responsibility of institutionalizing this effort with the police leadership. It requires integrated actions and a holistic approach by all stakeholders to be sustainable.



Citizens Engage Police during a Community Service Call

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