Workshop on
Community Policing

"Police Reform Too Important To Neglect,
Too Urgent To Delay"

[Date: December1, 2002]
<u>Bhilai</u>

B A C K G R O U N D   N O T E

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Over the last five years, the CHRI has been campaigning for police reforms by trying to promote an informed debate on important issues concerning the police. For this purpose, we have organized workshops in different parts of the country.

The present workshop on community policing is an attempt to bridge the gap between the police and the public. The workshop will discuss the concept of community policing and examine its relevance and importance in the context of local needs and expectations. The Workshop will also attempt, through small group discussions, to evolve an action plan for community policing in the city of Bhilai.

The Concept:

The basic idea underlying the concept of community policing that will be discussed at the workshop is the citizen's involvement or participation in police work. This idea dates back to the to the very origins of policing. However, there has been increasing acceptance of the idea even amongst the police due to the realisation that they on their own can not control crime and maintain law and order and that the community's support and involvement in police tasks are absolutely important for them to achieve their objectives.

Community policing has become a promising alternative to the traditional mode of law enforcement, which is repressive, rendering the police ineffective and alienated to the public. The new concept gives a significant role to the community in identifying their policing needs and in guiding police performance.

> The police force in India is supervised under the 1861 Police Act which leaves little scope for citizen-police interaction. The Police Act of 1861 mentions about the community or inhabitants of an area only in terms of their responsibility to maintain order and penalties that should be imposed on them in case of failure to do so.

In today's society, it is definite that the police alone cannot resolve problems of crime and disorder, no matter how elaborate their resources and strategies are. The involvement of the community in their work does help them to achieve better control over crime.

Classifications:

The discussion on the police with relevance to the community reveals that policing must as far as possible be practicable where the community can take up the functions (along with the police) to maintain peace and security, safety of citizens, effective law enforcement, crime control and orderly flow of traffic. If the functions that are mentioned are taken care of, this will leave ample time for the police to execute their remaining functions such as investigation of cases etc.

Community policing can be explained by three essential and **complementary components:**

- ➤ community partnership
- ➤ problem-solving
- ➤ awareness building

1. Community partnership recognises the value of bringing the people into the fold of policing process by emphasizing that there is a need to make the neighbourhood free of crime and disorder through police and people's cooperation.

A common form of partnership is arranging for night watchmen by the community; patrolling an area and obtaining remuneration from the house-holds of the area; security arrangements in housing complexes, factories and industrial areas; etc. Besides this, citizen's groups may be formed such as Nagarik Suraksha Samitis or Gram Raksha Samitis as seen in parts of Madhya Pradesh, Special Police Officer Schemes and Traffic Warden Schemes as in New Delhi to mention a few etc.

In New Delhi there has been a few initiatives towards community policing. In the community partnership programme, the Delhi Police has experimented with the Police Beat boxes in different nooks and corners of the city in the early 1980's. Besides the police stations and police outposts, the beat constable would be in a position to record cases and keep an eye on delinquents and the unsavoury elements in the community. The community in turn would know the policeman

of the neighbourhood better. However, due to lack of funds this scheme was shelved and replaced by the Residential Welfare Association and Traders Associations, Thana level Committee. They hold periodical meetings with follow up action and execute various responsibilities for prevention of crime in their respective areas. This is similar to the popular Neighbourhood Watch Schemes in the United States where the police instruct the citizen's in home security measures and enlist their assistance in watching neighbour's homes from being burgled.

Special Police Officers and Traffic Wardens also help to liaison with the police and the community. The institution of Special Police Officers has been used to make an effort to build a bridge between the police and the public since the 1980's in Delhi. This was introduced sometime after the November 1984 Anti-Sikh riots, which had led to immense criticism of the Delhi Police. The SPO's were appointed to control property offenses, educate the local people in various security measures and protect their lives and properties.

Recently, however, there has been criticism of these SPO's as they have been known to be involved in extortion and other offenses. The Community Liaison Committees (as mentioned in community partnership) are an offshoot of the SPO's scheme.

Recently, the United Nations Development Project in collaboration with the Bureau of Police Research and Development is working on an important project titled "Improving of Organisation and Management and Law Enforcement System in India". This project involves training of change agents and training of trainers amongst police personnel who set a model example amongst their peer groups. A part of this training programme is the formation of Community Liaison Groups (CLG) (details given in Selected Readings). In 1999 this programme was tested as a pilot study in three states in India: Assam, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. Presently this has been extended to 24 police stations through out the country. Presently, such Community Liaison Group Schemes are running in South Delhi.

2. Problem solving community policing involves where a specific priority problem area is identified through joint police–community interventions, which threatens the safety and well being of the community. The problem is solved through partnership programs, which can finally take the shape of community partnership programmes as mentioned earlier.

Perhaps the best examples in this category is Bhiwandi and Mumbai at the time of communal riots (in December 1982 - early 1983 and late 1992 respectively), Mohalla committees were set up to provide a platform for the people of different community to meet and plan out a way to solve common problems together. In Bhiwandi, the Mohalla committees were a success to prevent riots. In Mumbai, mohalla committees were set up at "Beat" as well as police station levels. These committees are presided over by an officer-in charge of the police station. These committees deal with solving small disputes and civic problems (which often blow out of proportion to become major incidences.) The police in Mumbai has taken the initiative to organise street plays, cleanliness drives, health camps etc. to reach out to the people. Today, at the time of festivals and other public gatherings, volunteers help in maintaining law and order with the police.

However, there is a need to ensure the continuity of such programmes, as most of such initiatives are individual initiatives and is dependent most of the time on the implementer.

3. 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 social issues, is a way to reach out to the community and make themselves visible.

Recently, the Juvenile Justice Act for the year 2000 which has been enacted recently provides for one trained and sensitised Juvenile/Child Welfare officer to be posted in each of the 16000 police stations in India to handle child victims, delinquents and those who need protection.

The other programmes that have received moderate success are the Student Traffic Education schemes in Kerela. The Crime Stopper facility of Kerela, 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 identity.

A few documented initiatives

- ➢ Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in a few pockets of North West Delhi
- ➢ Juvenile Aid homes now functioning under the name of PRAYAS
- ➢ Community Liaison Groups of South Delhi
- ➢ Friends of the Police in Chennai
- ➢ Mohalla Committees of Nagpur, Mumbai and Bhiwandi
- ➢ Women and Child helplines of Bangalore
- ➢ Nagarik Samitis in Guwahati and the Aashwas helping the victims of insurgency.
- ➢ Model Police stations in Bolpur and Bidhan Nagar in West Bengal and the UNDP funded CLG in Port Division in Kolkata.
- ➢ The Active Group Scheme in 22 Police Stations in Himachal Pradesh.
- ➢ Beat Officers System, Slum Adoption System and Complaint Box System are simultaneously running in Trichy.**How can we get started?**

After a brief study of the types of community policing that are available in the country and the experiments that have been presented by the experts at the workshop, it is time to think and carry home the message of creating a better society in cooperation with the local police. But how do we start?

Ideally, members of a community desiring a transition to community policing must have a basic understanding of the philosophy underlying it and the strategies required to make it work. A step in that direction is to read and disseminate the information to others of the community; organise a discussion with the local police; enrol the group or body with the local police; work hand in hand with the local police to identify problems of the community with respect to its safety and security or any other social problem; evolve a mechanism for solving the problem by adapting tangible means and find ways of continuing this action.

There is no single recipe for successful community policing implementation. The appropriate implementation of community policing will depend on the resources and ingenious attitude of the local police and the community. However, to achieve all goals it is imperative to have an ongoing dialogue, cooperate, coordinate and finally bring in change in partnership with the police.

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

➢ That the concept be institutionalised. The Police Act or the Constitution must have details on police community relations, such as what methods are to be adopted, what are the objectives and the composition of such initiatives. Presently, only the Constitution of South Africa mentions in detail about the need for community police relations. The Police Act of 1861 is silent on this subject. Join in the campaign to repeal this archaic piece of legislation and opt for a new and modern people friendly Police Act.

➢ Ensure continuity of any initiative. It should not be dependent on one individual, but it should be a collective effort.

➢ 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.